

Walther LGU Air Rifle Review by Dale Foster

*Before I start the review I would like to state that the rifle under review is my own rifle that I bought recently out of curiosity to see what it is like. I am **not involved** in any way with the manufacture, distribution, sale or marketing of these guns and as such I will tell it straight. If there is something I think is wrong I will highlight it, equally where praise is due it will be given.*

Part 1 – The Rifle

Renowned German gun-makers Walther have been well known for their quality target airguns for many years. These guns have catered to the 10 metre target market as well to a smaller degree the FT scene. In the last couple of years Walther have started producing sporting spring airguns with the break barrel LGV in several variants appearing on the scene first. This has now been followed in 2014 with the release of the under-lever LGU rifle.

So, what does this new rifle look like? At first glance the rifle appears to be inspired by two established and well known air rifles, these being the Air Arms TX200 and the Weihrauch HW97K. The LGU barrel and under-lever has the visual appearance of the current HW97K, with the cylinder appearing more along the lines of the TX200. Following the 'bloodline' of these established rifles is no bad thing as both models have an established track record.



Starting at the front end, the muzzle sports an alloy muzzle weight / sound moderator assembly which also supports the under-lever retaining block. I have not dismantled the unit to ascertain if there are baffles present within it, but initial observations suggest that

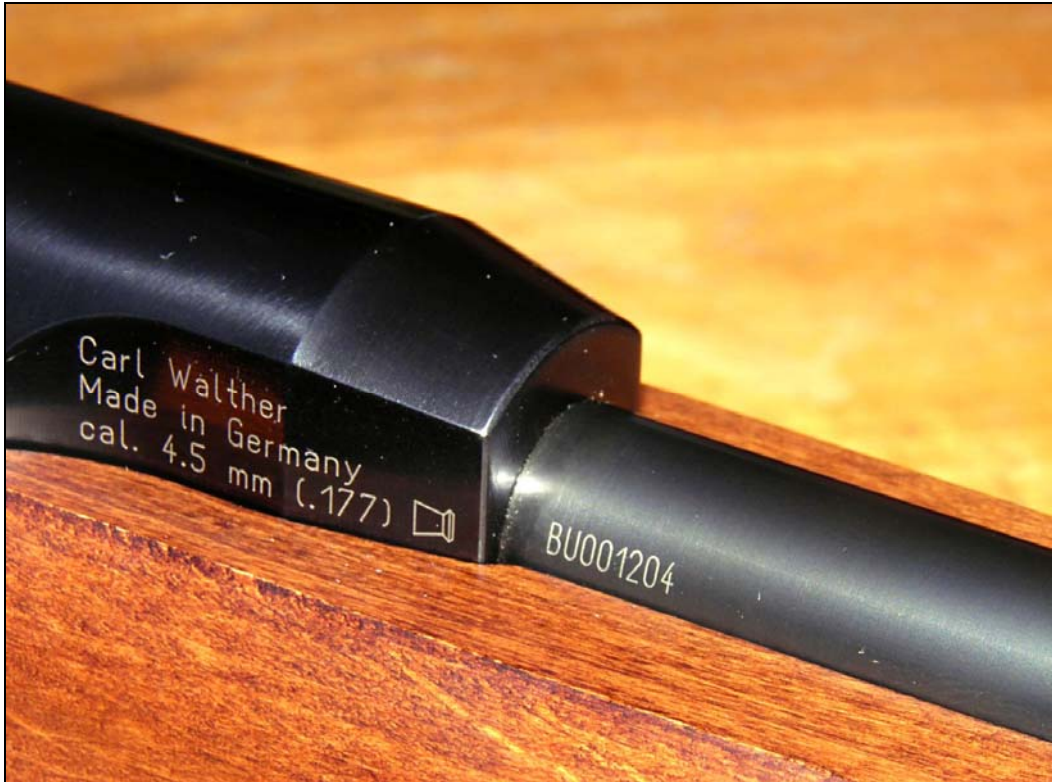
it has some effect in reducing muzzle noise as the rifle does not seem to have any excessive muzzle blast on firing. The unit is well finished and complements the appearance of the rifle.



The under-lever is retained by a ball bearing type sprung detent, retention is positive without being unduly stiff to operate. I would say that it would perfectly OK to fit sling swivels to the under-lever without issues of the lever popping free. Walther have chosen to fit a pair of large o-rings in two grooves close to the tip of the lever, I am guessing these are intended to act as buffer to prevent the lever striking the underside of the moderator if closed too energetically. Quite frankly they look ridiculous, but this is balanced out by them being easily removed. Removing them gives a better appearance and in normal use I do not see the lever being able to strike the moderator.

The barrel on the LGU is positioned to be central to the axis of the piston, as on the TX200. Consequently the lever also sits lower and there is sufficient clearance between the lever and the moderator to allow the fitting of a custom made cocking lever grip if the owner of the rifle so desires. Length of the under-lever is comparable to the HW97K so there is ample leverage to allow a comfortable cocking effort. The barrel itself is a Lothar Walther item and of a carbine length of 300 mm.

The junction of barrel to cylinder is relatively neat and shows what can best be described as a union of the styles used in both the TX200 and HW97K. The cylinder itself is well finished with a loading port set on the right hand side of the tube. The port is of ample size to allow easy loading of the pellet. I have noticed some people complain about the 'handed' loading port on the TX200 and I am sure those same people would level the criticism at the LGU, but personally I find this port style to be far easier in use if a large FT type target scope is fitted rather than the centrally positioned port of the HW97K.



The barrel appears to be attached to the action via a large nut visible within the breech very similar to the system seen on the TX200. Breech seal is provide by an o-ring on the compression tube, the breech of the barrel features a second o-ring that may augment the first seal but probably acts to align the compression tube on the barrel.





To the rear of the loading port on the right hand side of the action is an anti-beartrap system that is pretty much a copy of the system used on the TX200, no bad thing and certainly a vast improvement on the thin steel trigger intercept that passes for an anti-beartrap on the HW97K. While this style of safety system might seem cumbersome at first, it quickly becomes second nature to operate. There are only two intercept notches that are close to the end of the cocking stroke so the anti-beartrap is not overly noisy when cocking the rifle. The cylinder is equipped with a generous length of scope rail of approximately 9.5mm width, three arrestor pin holes are provided as well.



In terms of metal finish overall it is very good, my particular rifle shows a slightly different colour on the barrel, but I would not consider that to be a deal breaker in terms of choosing the rifle. The Walther LGU logo has been laser etched on the top of the main cylinder just forward of the scope rails.



Moving to the rear of the action the trigger housing block / end plug is a two piece casting out of alloy. A resettable auto safety is located on the rear upper surface of the block, this is automatically set to safe upon cocking the rifle and is pushed forwards to fire. It can be reset by sliding it rearward at any time. One small thing to note is if you have a scope with either a large diameter eye-bell or on very low mounts the amount of space to manually reset the safety is a touch limited.



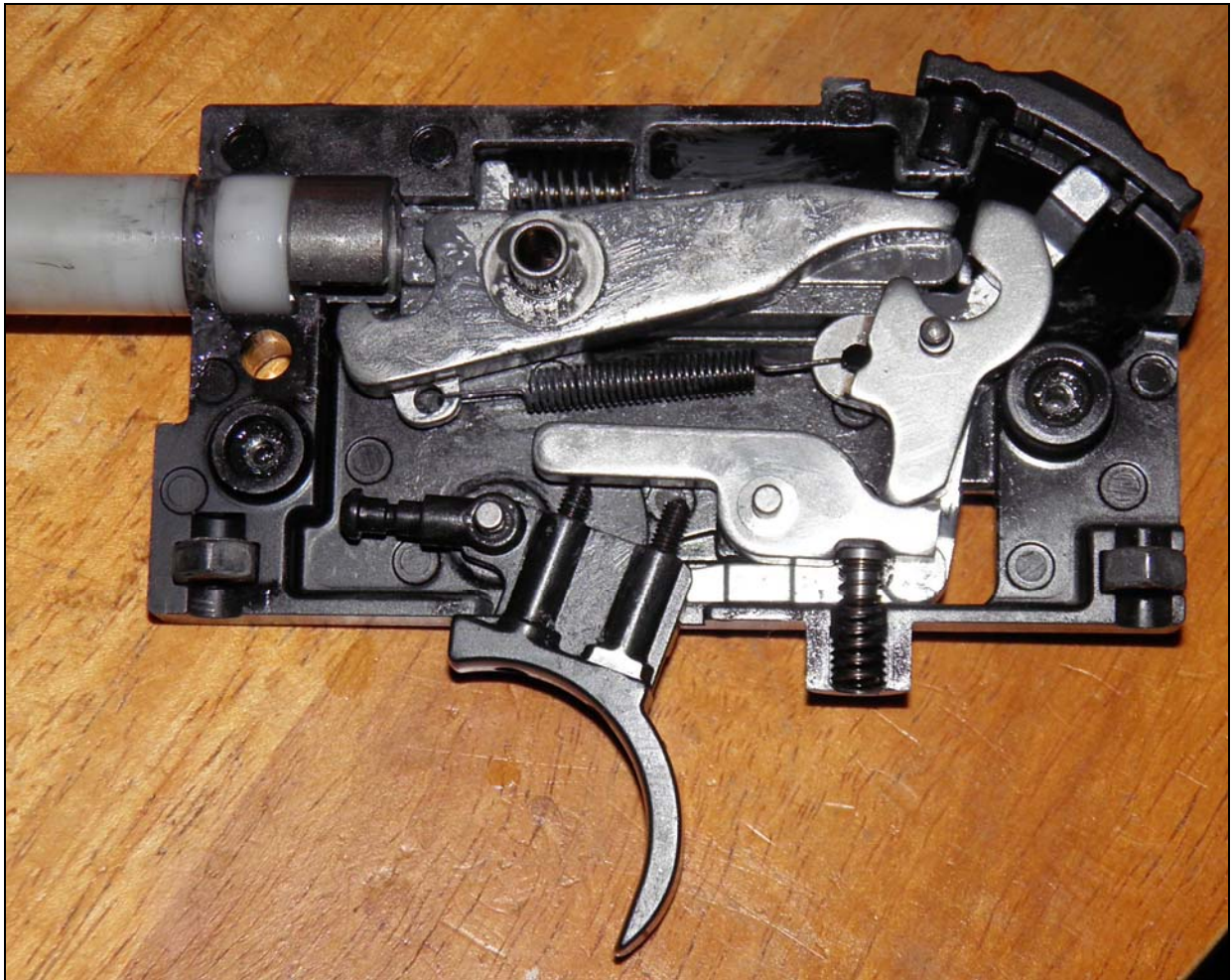
The trigger is a two stage system. As set by the factory it has a very long first stage, however on the UK imports the trigger blade is metal and is supplied with two adjuster screws allowing fine tuning of first and second stages. Trigger release weight is adjusted by a third screw located in the underside of the trigger block to the rear of the blade.



On first trying my rifle I found the trigger felt a little gritty in operation, so I decided to remove the mechanism from the rifle and investigate the cause. The trigger block is retained by two cross pins – note removing these releases the trigger block and also releases the mainspring as well, however, there is little preload on the main spring so no nasty surprises.



The two halves of the trigger block can be parted upon removal of two screws. Word of warning – remove the trigger weight adjuster screw first, otherwise this will fly out like a miniature missile when the two halves of the block are parted. With the halves parted the sears can be inspected and removed if required. Close examination of the sliding engagement surfaces of the middle and lower sears on my rifle disclosed the presence of a small nick that was causing the grittiness. This was very carefully stoned out taking great care not to interfere with the angles and edges. Once removed the faces were carefully polished, lubricated with a light smear of moly paste and reassembled. A point to note, whilst the trigger block is a cast alloy, the load bearing points use steel inserts so this should prevent undue wear over time.



With the two halves of the unit reassembled but prior to inserting into the rifle I decided to adjust the unit to give a shorter first stage. This is easily achieved by screwing in the forward adjuster screw in the trigger blade – note this also reduces the total sear engagement so don't overdo it – once this has been done the rear adjuster screw will also need adjusting to give a correct second stage intercept and break point. The initial setting positions can be obtained by manually cocking the trigger unit out of the rifle, leaving the fine adjustment that will be required when the unit is operating under the full mainspring loading.

One thing I did notice about the adjuster screws in the trigger blade is they are very loose, unlike the trigger blade on a TX which is equipped with a small nylon bush that acts as a friction brake to prevent the adjustments drifting. In light of this sloppiness in the adjusters, I added an M3x3mm length grub screw on top of each adjuster once the settings were to my liking to act as locking screws ensuring that my settings remain constant.

Whilst the rifle was apart I decided to examine the power plant as well. The rear spring guide is a nylon item and is a snug fit within the spring. The guide is retained within the alloy trigger block and a steel washer sits over the guide against the surface of the trigger block to prevent the spring causing wear to the alloy. The spring was quite liberally coated with light grease and featured a snug fitting top-hat at the forward end. Removing the piston from the compression tube revealed a surprising amount of lubricant within the compression area forward of the piston seal, this was fully cleaned out prior to reassembling the rifle to avoid any risk of dieseling. Both the piston and the compression tube run on synthetic bearings to avoid metal to metal contact, which is a nice touch and certainly aids the smooth operation of the rifle.

There has been considerable discussion on the Airgun BBS from some members who have a well earned reputation for their ability to work with spring rifles, concerning the size of the transfer port on the LGU, this being 2.6 mm from the factory. The general consensus being that this size is a little on the small side giving a higher static compression ratio than is required for efficient performance leading to excessive piston bounce and premature spring fatigue, especially if pellets in the heavier 9-10 grain range are used. Having examined these discussions, it is suggested that a port diameter of 3.1mm or 3.2mm is better suited to the stroke length and gives a sweeter firing cycle. Based upon these discussions, I have chosen to enlarge the port on my rifle to 3.2mm (note: this has invalidated my warranty but I am happy to accept that), I would have to say the rifle does seem sweeter than with the smaller factory original port size.

The under-lever on the rifle is quite similar to those on the TX and HW, there seems to be no undue play in the hinge when the lever is unclipped. Unlike the other two mentioned rifles the cocking arm that acts on the piston and compression tube is made of two pieces of steel joined together rather than a single forged item. So far in use this doesn't seem to have any disadvantage but does suggest cost saving on the manufacture. The arm is held into the cocking slot by a polymer block assembly that slides in a channel within the stocks inletting, it is possible that long term durability of this part could be an issue, but that is balanced out by it being easy to replace.



Turning to the stock, this is manufactured by Minelli of Italy and is made from beech. Starting at the rear, there is a comfortable lightly curved and ventilated rubber butt pad fitted that grips the shoulder nicely in use. Moving forwards there is a well executed ambidextrous cheek piece with a comb height that will be satisfactory for most mount heights, although if the rifle is going to be used for FT type shooting with a scope that features a 56-60mm objective bell then I think cheek weld will be compromised.



The pistol grip section is nicely upright and equipped with neat panels of what I would imagine are laser cut chequering with a neat Walther logo below the panels. Reach to the trigger blade is perfectly fine for me, if someone has particularly small hands or short fingers they might have an issue as the trigger sits quite well forward in the trigger guard. The trigger guard itself is alloy and nicely finished. The rear of the guard sits close to the face of the grip and anyone with very large finger might find them brushing the rear of the guard, but the low level of the recoil won't cause any discomfort.

Moving forwards the fore-end is long and nicely deep at its rear, not quite to the full depth of the trigger guard but not far short the sides of the fore-end feature a shallow scallop that I find comfortable in use. The fore-end features a Schnabel type tip, from a purely personal perspective I don't like the look of that but it may appeal to others.



The finish of the stock is a pleasant brown lacquer, being beech grain can be hit or miss. On area of criticism regarding the stock finish is to be found in the cocking slot where the lacquering has not been applied in my example, there are also a fair number of whiskers of wood suggesting that full attention has not been applied to finishing in this area. I do not know if this is indicative of all stocks or whether mine is a one off as I have not had the opportunity to examine any other examples at the time of writing this review.

So there we have an overview of the mechanics of the LGU. Part 2 of this review will examine how the rifle performs on the range.

To be continued.....

Part 2 – Shooting the LGU

Following on from the initial look at the technical side of the LGU, now we can examine its initial performance on the range.

Taking a brief step back to the technical element, as mentioned in part 1, I dismantled the rifle and opened the transfer port out to 3.2mm from its original factory dimension. At the same time I took the opportunity to clean out all the factory grease from the spring and removed a surprising amount from the compression chamber and piston seal.

Upon reassembly I wiped a very light smear of dry moly paste on the piston seal, taking care to avoid any going forward of the sealing lip, with further light applications of this lubricant on the synthetic bearings. The main spring and guide I sprayed with a coating of dry moly lube and allowed the carrier to evaporate leaving a thin and tenacious dry film.

Chronographing the rifle upon reassembly yielded an average velocity of 750fps using Air Arms Field pellets giving a muzzle energy of 10.5 ft.lbs. Now some people may consider this to be unacceptably low, however for a brand new gun that is yet to bed in with use, I feel that it is a perfect starting point. The difference between 10.5 ft.lbs and 11.5ft.lbs using the AA pellets is about 30fps of velocity, which in the grand scheme of things in terms of performance on the range is precisely bugger all. It will be interesting to see how the rifle performs once it has devoured a tin of pellets.

Owing to not having a suitable set of 30mm scope rings in my box of bits I was unable to fit my Edgar Brothers 20x42 to the rifle, so for the initial test I dropped my old Leupold M8 6x36 onto it using a set of BKL double strap two piece mounts.

An opportunity to get to 'my' test range occurred on Saturday afternoon, so I grabbed the LGU and my Venom TX200HC Ultraglide and headed off to the old mine site where my office is based, the company kindly having given me permission to shoot on the site.



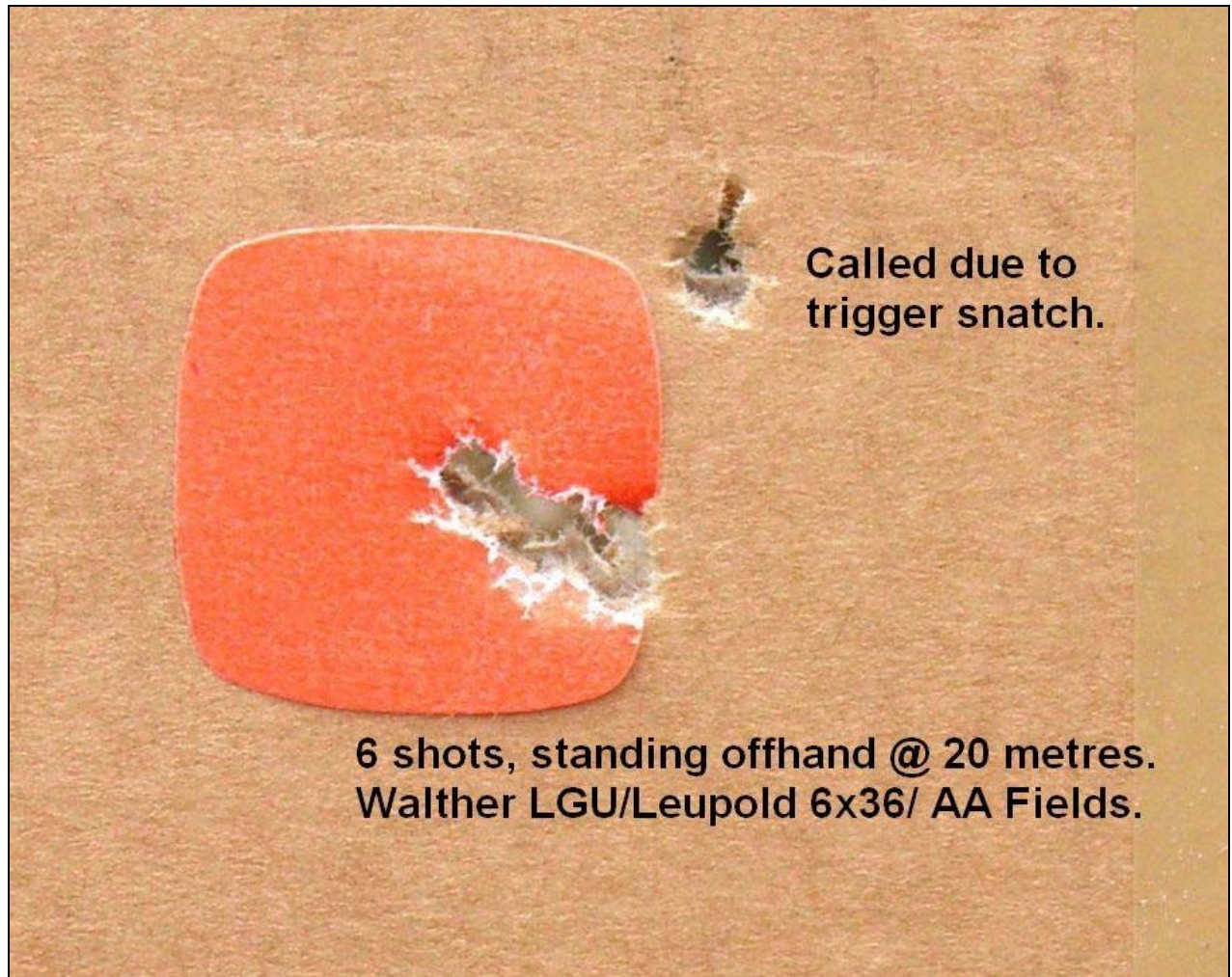
As it was a bit breezy I set out the initial zeroing target at 20 metres to get the gun roughly sighted in. So pulling down on the under lever I noticed the cocking action feels agreeably smooth, no groaning or other noise coming from the rifle apart from the two clicks of the anti-beartrap safety engaging its notches just prior to the trigger engaging. Loading pellets is easy enough as the port is quite generous, then disengage the beartrap and return the lever to its parked position.



Shooting initially from the FT seated position I shouldered the rifle and flicked the safety forwards – it falls nicely to the thumb of the shooting hand. Aim and take up the first stage of the trigger to the stop point, then carefully trip the trigger. The rifle has a very quick but mild firing cycle, very quiet too. Recoil was felt but I noticed that there was no loss of sight picture, I watched a hole appear in my zeroing target high and left of my

aim point. A few more shots and I comfortably had the rifle zeroed in and pellets grouping satisfyingly tightly.

Just for the hell of it I decided to try shooting a group from the standing position. I fired a total of six shots, apart from one that I called as I snatched the trigger all the other shots formed a group of touching holes!



I then took some shots using my TX200HC. This rifle has had the Venom Ultraglide treatment using a lightweight alloy and steel composite piston. The rifle performed exactly as expected barely a touch of recoil and no fuss to land pellets into a tight group.

Given the breezy conditions I decided not to try the rifle seriously at longer distance on the first session as I felt it wouldn't offer a fair test of its capabilities, plus I would like to get some re-settable knock down practice targets as beyond pellet testing and zeroing a rifle I find shooting groups a little bit boring. Given the interest in this rifle for FT, shooting at appropriate type targets would be more appropriate.

So, based on the first impressions is the LGU better than the Venom TX? Well no not quite, BUT, for a rifle that costs less than half what the Venom converted TX cost, it is a bloody brilliant rifle. I would say I would not sell my TX in favour of the LGU, but if I did not have the TX I would certainly go for the LGU. For the price it is currently retailing at in the UK - around the £350 mark – it is a lot of kit for the cash.

When I get some better weather conditions and some other targets I will return to report on the longer range performance of the rifle in a third part of this review.

Part 3 – On The Range (again)

Since the last time I was able to get onto the range with the LGU, I acquired a set of Sportsmatch 30mm mounts so I could fit my Edgar Brothers 20x42 scope. So with this duly mounted it was back out on the range today (4th October). While a dry and sunny day, unfortunately the wind was blowing a lot worse than on my first outing, so I wasn't totally satisfied with the results today as the wind was definitely having an effect.



As well as the mounts I also acquired two 'Gun Tuff' resettable metal practice targets from JS Ramsbottom. Essentially these are a face plate much as you would see on a normal field target but fixed rather than falling, mine are shaped like a rabbit. There is a kill zone of approximately 40mm diameter and hanging under the target is a re-set disc. Basically knock the kill zone down then hit the lower disc to set it back up again. These have an integrated ground spike allowing easy setting out. I set these targets out, one at 40 yards, the other at 70 yards.

Once I had zeroed the rifle and established the dial setting for 40 yards, knocking down and re-setting the 40 yard target was refreshingly easy with the LGU even in the variable breeze. Whilst doing this I decided to examine how sensitive to hold the rifle is. This came as something of a revelation, initially I used my 'normal' spring gun FT hold – target went down an up consistently. Next I tried gripping it like it was a .458 Win Mag with full house ammo – no detectable change in impact target still going up and down every time. Next just resting the rifle in my left hand and lightly in my shoulder with

barely a touch on the grip up, down, up down, then gripping right at the front of the fore-end and pulling firmly into the shoulder – up, down, up down, well you get the picture.

Within reason I varied my holds as much as possible and couldn't seem to get an appreciable change in how the rifle performed. Now perhaps it wasn't hitting the same pellet mark each time, but in normal FT circumstances it would hit a full size 40mm target at 40 yards seemingly irrespective of what hold I applied!

Going onto the 70 yard target was more variable as the wind was just playing havoc, but, picking lulls in the wind and firing I managed to get a 45 mm group of six shots and knocked it down a few times too, but realistically given the conditions today that was fun and games than a true indication of how the rifle will perform at ranges beyond those you would encounter in competition and way beyond what would be ethical for live quarry work.

I will now wait for a really good day to test at 50 yards as from what I am seeing I think the rifle will perform well.

So, summing up, I think that at the retail price for this rifle (in the UK), it is a very good gun and should make the other manufacturers of similarly styled rifles sit up and pay attention. It isn't a perfect rifle, but let's face it no mass produced rifle is ever going to be totally perfect, but out of the box you would be hard pressed to be overly critical of this gun.

So, comparing it against it's major competitors and guns that have evidently inspired it's design, the following is a points rating:

Make:	LGU	TX200 Mk3	HW97K
Bluing:	9/10	10/10	8/10
Stock Design (Beech):	9/10	8/10	8/10
Firing Cycle:	10/10	8/10	8/10
Trigger:	8/10	10/10	9/10
Consistency:	10/10	9/10	9/10
Value for Money:	10/10	9/10	8/10