

Inletting The Flobert Rifle

The Flobert design is not like any conventional action. Inletting it proved to be a interesting challenge.

by Dominick Pisano

When a customer called asking if I had ever heard of the Flobert action I said yes, but wasn't familiar with it. He said to expect something unusual. When the barreled action and machined stock arrived several days later I understood what he meant by "unusual." I had indeed never seen anything like it.

I first referenced *Single Shot Rifles and Actions* by the late Frank De Haas and looked it up. De Haas said of the Flobert, "For the many years that I have been living in the world of guns I have seldom if ever heard anything complementary said about a Flobert rifle or pistol and I imagine this has been more or less true since the first Flobert gun was made." Strong words and I do not disagree with them. The most striking thing about the action is that there isn't any receiver! The chamber is made in the breech end of the barrel — and that's it.

The second thing one notices is the peculiar mechanism used for opening the breech block for load-

ing and unloading cartridges. The breech block is part of a lever system which is attached to the barrel by a breech block hinge screw. The action is opened by first cocking the hammer, locking everything in place and lifting a small knob pivoting the breech block upward about 120 degrees actuating the extractor. This moves rearward extracting the cartridge and exposing the chamber. While the function is difficult to explain, the photos should illustrate how the Flobert system works. Built into the upper tang is a fairly stout slotted metal abutment to which the hammer is fitted. This serves as a safety mechanism of sorts just as the bolt handle on Mauser rifles does.

To make this action yet more interesting is the separate trigger plate to which the trigger assembly is attached. There isn't any indication as to how the trigger plate is aligned with the action. I set it in place by

aligning the trigger in the opening and hoping things would work out.. Fortunately for me I was apparently right on as the trigger, though rather crude, functioned perfectly. Thus we begin.

I chose to inlet the trigger plate first because that's how I usually begin. I noted a couple of things to pay attention to. The crude machine inletting did not completely allow for the shape of the forward portion of the trigger plate. I carefully placed the trigger plate in-place and then noted that the forward screw hole was not centered, nor did I have any screws. I found a small screw that would serve to allow me to complete the inletting and traced the outline of the forward portion of the trigger plate on to the wood using a sharp scribe. By working inside the scribed line I was fairly certain that I could fit the forward tang into the stock. Then I turned my attention to the rear tang of the trigger

Below left: Bottom view of the original stock. Note the outline of the forward portion of the lower trigger tang. Below right: Using a scribe to outline the forward tang of the trigger plate.

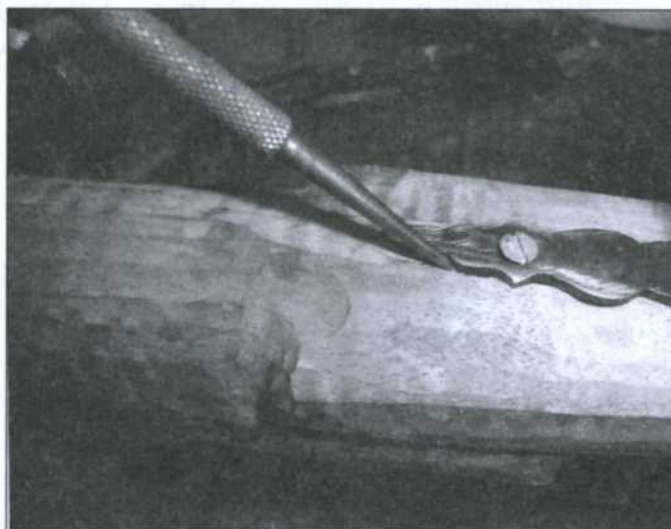
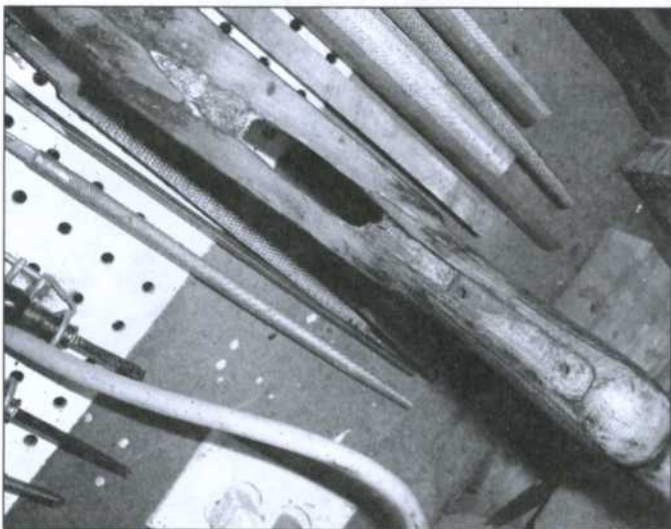




plate. Again I did not have the prerequisite screws, so I used two small wood screws to allow me to inlet the rear tang into the wood. Working slowly and carefully, I removed wood where the inletting marking agent indicated the need and soon had the trigger plate fully inletted into the stock.

Next was the top metal. This was done using the time honored spotting-in technique. There was the problem of the missing rear tang screw, so once again I used a handy wood screw to hold the top tang in place. When the top metal was about three-quarters inletted I decided it was time to fit the forend screw to help me draw down the barrel to the correct depth. This is always a tricky proposition but I figured out a way to do it by fitting a screw into the drilled and tapped hole in the bottom of the barrel. This was the incorrect screw but it would fit loosely into the screw

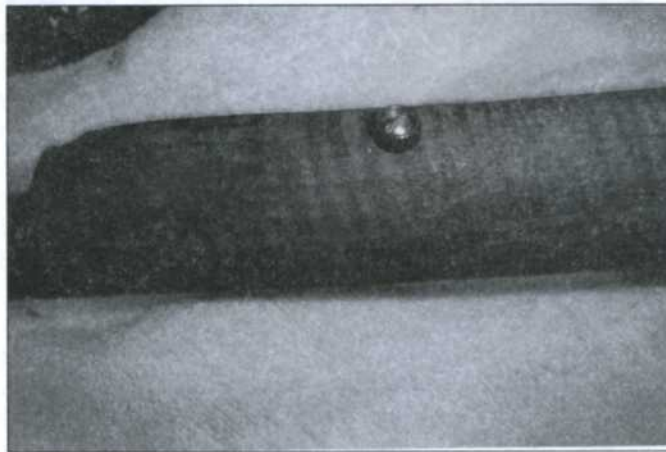
Above Left: Trigger plate screwed in place, inletting almost complete. Note makeshift wood screws mentioned in the text. **Above Right:** Small screw in place in the barrel used to identify correct position of the forend screw hole in the barrel channel.

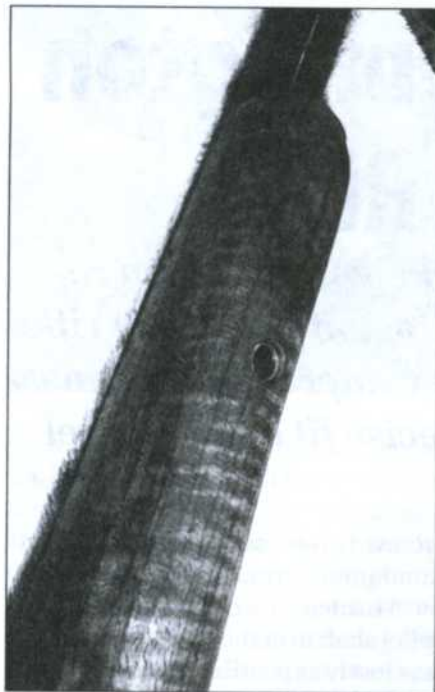
hole. I then cut the screw off so that just the head was protruding from the bottom of the barrel and placed a bit of marking agent on the screw head and carefully lowered the top metal into position into the sock. When I removed the top metal — glory, glory! — the screw left a black mark in the barrel channel which then was used as a guide to drill a hole in the stock. I used a forend screw that I had on hand, which was a bit larger than the original screw, as a guide. I took this screw to my gunsmith with instructions to drill out the original hole and tap it for the new screw. When I collected the gun

several days later the forend screw fit perfectly into the barrel channel. Now I could complete the inletting and draw the top metal tightly into the stock. After completing the inletting I used a small amount of Acraglas gel to maintain the fit in perfect alignment,

I called the customer and told him the Flobert was ready to be returned with the advice that the screws I used would have to be replaced with ones more suitable. The customer, being an excellent machinist, said he was familiar with the problem and would take care of it upon receipt of the rifle. He said he didn't know what to

Below left: Mark left in barrel channel to indicate location of the screw hole to be drilled. **Below right:** Forend screw in place with escutcheon.





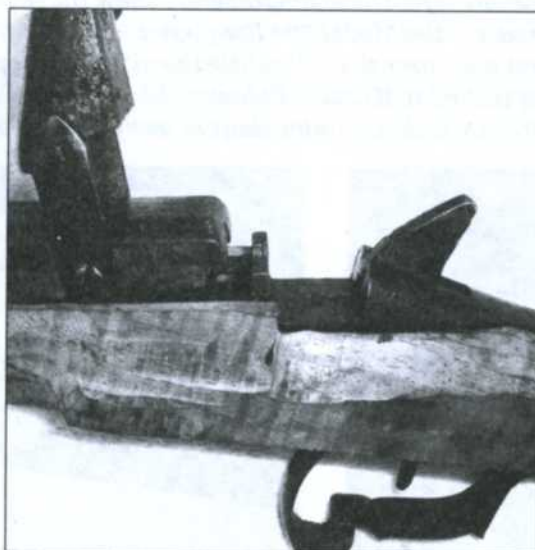
Above Left: Escutcheon in place. All that remains is to sand the wood flush with the top of the escutcheon, for a neat and very professional job.
Above Right: View of rear of action. Note the knob which controls the opening and closure of the breech.

do about the off center forward trigger tang screw but would mull it over after seeing the rifle.

What started out to be the most cockamamie barreled action I had

have ever seen turned out to be a first class challenge which, according to my Doc, is just the ticket to keep me alive and well for a long time to come. **AG**

Below left: Another view showing the breech block and the hinge to which it is attached. **Below right:** Left side view of the action in the open position. Note the lever attached to the breech block. The extractor and hammer are in the cocked position.



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