



An Unusual Advertising Snuffbox

Having now viewed some 1,200 Mauchline/Laurencekirk integral-hinge snuff boxes, this is, surprisingly, the first that I have seen with an advertisement labelled onto what is presumably a plain lid. A few days after seeing this I was shown another similar advertising box, but I do not think they can be common survivors. The rest of the box is plain. Presumably sycamore, it is 6.2 x 4.0 x 1.5cm in size. It has a convex lid, which fits into the sides, leaving them level with the lid when closed.

The label shows a shotgun mechanism, trigger etc, with wording - 'HONORS AT PARIS 1878.' (above barrel) 'TREBLE GRIP' (on barrel). 'G.E.LEWIS' (on stock) 'THE GUN OF THE PERIOD, HAMMERS BELOW THE LINE OF SIGHT' (at top right) and 'ORDER OF MERIT & MEDAL AT MELBOURNE 1881.' (bottom left).



My friend, Ken Elks, knowledgeable on guns, was able to tell me quite a lot about it: 'George Edward Lewis (the name showing on the gun in the engraving) was a manufacturer of shotguns in the 19th Century, with premises in 32-33 Loveday Street, Birmingham. Originally in business as a gun engraver, he began the manufacture and supply of shotguns (also pistols and rifles) to the trade in 1859 and also undertook repairs and rebarreling. Among his customers were the Confederate Army during the American Civil War (1861-1865), and the French Army during the Franco-Prussian War (1870-1871). He also developed export markets in India and Australia.

From 1871 onwards, he began to sell shotguns of his own manufacture, the first being exhibited in Vienna in 1873. His most important design was the self-styled *Gun of the Period* double-barrelled shotgun which is the subject of the engraving on the snuff box. This was a high quality shotgun produced in hammered (as on the snuff box) and hammerless versions. It was first shown in the Paris Exhibition of 1878, where it won a gold medal (as stated

on the box). It won further honours in Australia, at Sydney in 1879/1880 and at Melbourne in 1880/1881, where it was also awarded a medal at the latter year's exhibition. It was also exhibited in Calcutta in 1884 and Birmingham in 1886. I think the shotgun was still being manufactured at least until 1901. The fact that the snuff box does not mention these later honours suggests to me that it dates from around 1881-1885.

By 1873 the firm had opened showrooms in London, but these closed circa 1905. However, G. E. Lewis continued in business at Loveday Street for over 100 years more. During the final 70 years or so, the business was managed by his son, but when he died in 1988 it was sold off.

As to the gun's technical details - it was a box-lock, non-ejector type, had 28 inch barrels and had a type of recess choke boring. It had a treble grip action (see box) and top-lever opening, chamber length of 2¾ inches, and was made to take either 12 bore or 20 bore cartridges. On a personal note I did briefly own one of these and it was engraved on the top with "Honours at Paris 1878 Sydney 1880 Melbourne 1881".'

Michael Stewart

Anniversary Notelets

Our Anniversary notelets are obtainable in packs of 10 (2 of each design) for a minimum donation of £2. 50, which includes postage, from the editor or, in the USA, for \$5 from the American Club address (see back page). Arrangements can be made for European

members to pay in euros — please contact the editor first. Packs will also be available at the Lincoln Convention.

