



Westley Richards .32-40 Express Double Sherwood Rifle

Serial Number 17310

\$25000.00

DESCRIPTION

While the double rifle will forever be synonymous with hunting on the African continent, at the turn of the twentieth century, English rifle makers made just as many small-bore double rifles intended for deer stalking. Having invented and patented the first successful hammerless action for double guns and rifles 25 years prior, and ever at the forefront of innovation, Westley Richards & Co. offered a variety of hammerless double rifles in cartridges suitable for small and medium sized game. In 1901, W.R.&Co. introduced its .300 Sherwood. Renowned for its accuracy, the .300 Sherwood was a centerfire, smokeless powder cartridge designed around W.R.&Co.'s groundbreaking "L.T." Capped bullets. Bullets were .300" caliber, 140gr and shot at 1,400 fps, generating about 600 ft-lbf of muzzle energy. The firm offered the cartridge in both single shot and double rifles.

Double rifles chambered for the .300 *Sherwood* were known as the "Light Double Sherwood Rifle" and they were based on the firm's Anson & Deeley hammerless action. Much of this rifle's allure is how small the actions can be made for this cartridge. They are roughly the same size of an appropriately scaled .410 bore shotgun. The rifles were referenced as a "Sherwood" obviously due to the trade mark of the cartridge, but the the "Double Sherwood Rifle" was also advertised by the firm as being available in .32-40 Winchester Center Fire.

This cartridge was originally developed for the American made Ballard Union Hill Rifle No. 8 and No. 9 as a black powder cartridge in 1884. The .32-40 quickly gained a reputation for good accuracy and by 1886 both Marlin and Winchester were chambering their own lever action rifles for the cartridge. Originally it shot a .32 caliber, 165gr bullet, backed by 40grs of black powder, at a muzzle velocity of 1,350 fps with a muzzle energy a little over 650 ft-lbf. With the advent of smokeless powders, 18gr of Cordite was the smokeless powder load Kynoch offered prior to WWII. The .32-40 was quite comparable to .300 Sherwood and was undoubtedly offered by Westley's to appeal to the U.S. market, due to its popularity and availability there. A clear example that Westley's had a global marketing strategy prior to the first world war.

While this model was offered by Westley's for decades, only 12 were ordered in the ".32-40 *Express*", as the barrel of the rifle featured here is marked.

The .300 Sherwood is an obsolete cartridge but components and loaded ammo in .32-40 WCF was still in production prior to 2020 and can still be had.

Prescribed in the firm's centenary catalog of 1912:

"The W.R.&Co. Double Sherwood Rifle is a special departure in rifles constructed exclusively for smaller game. Special attention is directed to these handy and effective little weapons, weight, .300 bore 6 3/4 to 7 1/4 lbs, 32/40 bore, 7 lbs 10 oz to 7 lbs 14 oz. With the copper-capped expanding bullet they have proved highly satisfactory for use against cariboo (as spelled in the original literature), black bear, mountain sheep, various kinds of buck, nilgai, wild geese, etc., etc. These rifles are specially adapted for use in India, Australia, New Zealand, South Africa, America, and for Continental sport."

"This is a wonderful little weapon for its weight, for Buck, Fallow Deer, and Roe it is confidently recommended as thoroughly reliable; its performances abundantly proving it a weapon of exceptional merit and efficiency. It is specially adapted to similar sport in India, New Zealand, South Africa, Canada, and elsewhere."

"The Sherwood Double Rifle is now made by us chambered and regulated for the .32/40 - a slightly more powerful cartridge and one especially adapted to Buck shooting."

Rifle number 17310 was ordered in 1910 as an A&D *Highest Quality Double Hammerless Sherwood Rifle* with fixed locks, two triggers and fitted with Westley's iconic Snap lever and Doll's Head extension. The rifle was also ordered with a bolted safety and Westley's patented ejectors, which were additional upgrades at the time the rifle was built.

Historically the *Highest Quality* grade of the *Double Sherwood Rifle*, just as the *Best Quality* grade of the big bore double rifles, was engraved with Westley's traditional small scroll on each side of the action body with the Maker's name in a flowing banner and game scenes on the cover plate and guard bow. These game scenes depicted fauna appropriately hunted with such a rifle and this one features European species like Roe buck and doe on the cover plate and a brown bear on the guard bow. The words "BOLTED", "SAFE" and the serial number are in gold.

This rifle was completed for Lyon & Lyon of Calcutta in December of 1911.

The original stock has a 14 ¼" LOP over the original checkered horn butt plate, right hand cheekpiece and checkered panels with drop points. The finely checkered "pistol" hand has a solid steel grip cap and extended guard tang and the original splinter forend is checkered to match with a Deeley forend latch and Westley's distinctive horn forend tip. A brass disk is inlayed in the cheekpiece and engraved with the the letters "D" and "M" intertwined and with scimitars on either side, a "smiling sun" on top and a ribbon beneath that reads: *MOEN UD DOWLA*". This refers to **Amir-e-Paigah-e-Asman Jahi, Moin-ud-Daula Bahadur Innayath Jung** , born in 1891, who was an Indian nobleman and one of the 3 great Paigahs of Hyderabad State. There is also the number "7" inlayed in the stock and most likely an armory's rack number. The stock oval on the toe line remains blank.

The 26" barrels are made of W.R.&Co.'s "Special Steel" with saddle lumps and Westley's pattern quarter rib with 1 standing/4 folding leaves (100, 200, 300, 400, 500 yds) "platina" lined and engraved with their respective distance. Combination foresight with brass beaded blade and flip-up moon sight with Westley's registered foresight protector. The rib is engraved with the Maker's mark as was standard for the time period: "*Westley Richards & Co. 178 New Bond St. London. Gunmakers By Appointment to His Majesty George V. Rex. Et. Imp.*".

Also present are the original handmade sling swivels of a ¾" width sling; the forward one mounted to the bottom of the barrel's rib and the rear swivel mounted between the stock oval and toe of the butt stock.

The rifle weighs 7 lbs. 16 oz.

The rifle retains all of its original parts and remains in its original configuration and underwent a very subtle, but complete refurbishment by Doug Turnbull, Keith Owen, and Bruce Bradshaw over a decade ago. The rifle remains excellent as refinished. The bores and chambers are also excellent and the barrels are tight on face. In addition, the rifle produces more than acceptable accuracy at 50 yards and load data is available.

A very rare rifle by any measure and another great example of Westley Richards' diverse catalog from the first half of the twentieth century.

SPECIFICATION	
Location	US
Make	Westley Richards
Calibre/Gauge	.32/40
Action	Anson & Deeley Fixed Lock
Triggers	2
Ejectors	Deeley Ejector
Barrel Length	N/A
Rib	Quarter
Chamber	N/A
Choke Right	N/A
Choke Left	N/A
Stock	Right Hand Cheekpiece
LOP	14 1/4"
Weight	7lbs 14oz
Case	Lightweight Canvas



