

# Lincoln's Elite



**Richard Atkins** tests the Lincoln Elite De luxe: a very attractive gun and a fine performer



**Richard Atkins** has been shooting clays since the early 1960s. He is a prolific author of articles on shotguns, cartridges and technique

**S**maller gauge guns definitely have an attraction of their own and a special place within the market. Those who use them frequently often treat them with considerable affection too. On occasion they are imbued with seemingly magical powers that only the genie in the 20-bore or smaller bottle can bestow. Many will have heard what can sound like a shooter's tale, and no doubt some exploits recalled do

contain a hint of window-dressing (and from personal experience the extent of such embellishment tends to be applied in inverse proportion to the calibre of shotgun concerned). The fine results achieved with 16- and 20-bore guns have yet to match what some of the finer exponents of the 28 and .410 have tried to regale me with.

However, I'm not one to dismiss anything concerning shotgun performance so lightly, as I am also aware, from personal experience, that the smaller guns can perform beyond expectations at times. In fact, while testing a 20-bore over-and-under Browning, I was invited to a day's driven pheasant shooting; a very rare thing for me. I decided to take the 20 as there was a lot of walking with some of it over plough that I had been advised was

extremely claggy and well able to take its toll on weary legs later in the day.

I had the day of my life and, on one particular drive where the 20 would have appeared to be at its greatest disadvantage, me being positioned towards the foot of a steep escarpment below most of the other guns, with the birds driven from crops on the field above and beyond, so they were quite tall. I feared I may be just a spectator. Those pheasants rocketed over the tree line and then swooped steeply down and curled along the bank to get to woods across a road and well below the shooting line. Hence they were dropping fast and curling by the time I could shoot, many having evaded both barrels from 12-bore guns further up the hillside.

**“**I am also aware that the smaller guns can perform beyond expectations at times**”**

The slim grip allows thumb to overlap first finger





I didn't hit them all, but enough (and all stone dead) such that a rather pleased picker-up came to pat my shoulder and say, "Well shot, sir". My respect for what the 20-bore can do remains forever raised in my personal estimation.

Thirty years plus of testing guns and ammunition have taught me that you cannot get more out than you put in; a cartridge with half the shot load cannot produce a pattern as well filled as a heavier shot load. Also, the extra height of the shot load in smaller gauges puts extra demands upon the ammunition and its components (as will be explained in the current series on shooting with smaller gauge guns). The compressive forces produced require the shot pellets to be higher grade in a smaller gauge than a large one, just to obtain the same pattern with the same shot load (it being possible to have a standard 12-bore load of 28 grams in 16, 20 and even 28-bore cartridges; but they will not all perform in the same way).

It's important to know that but there's no need to be put off by it; the trick is to use ammunition that will do what you require for the sport in hand. The real beauty of the smaller, easy-handling guns can then come to the fore. For clay

shooting getting that wrong only means the odd target slipping away but for live quarry it means wounding, and we must all seek to avoid that.

So, when the opportunity to be reacquainted with a 20-bore shotgun came along I was delighted. Eley were kind enough to send some of their excellent CT 20 competition Clay cartridges in 7.5, 8 and 9 shot sizes and I went to shoot some Sporting clays.

But first, a little about the gun. It's a very handsome over/under, which becomes clear upon opening the sturdy plastic travel case it comes in. Once assembled it looks a treat; at the clay club it immediately drew admiring glances, compliments and requests to have go with it.

The wood is of the latest 'FX Wood' enhanced type where a special inking process applies a permanent degree of figure that makes what might have been

a grade one piece of walnut appear at least grade three. Its oil finish gives a smooth, semi-lustre to it with a soft feel in the hands. The fore-end is of typical Schnabel style as made popular on Sporting clay guns, but now having made the transition to game and field types too. The pistol grip has a fairly open radius that is comfortable and gives a good reach to the trigger, while slightly less upright than a competition gun would likely be. Chequering is very finely laser etched and the Scottish pattern gives the appearance of many fine diamonds within more heavily bordered large diamond patterns for a different look.

The action is typical Brescia pattern following that used by the manufacturer, FAIR of Marcheno, Brescia, Italy. This means it has large and replaceable trunnions in the receiver front side walls upon which the barrels hinge, plus the full width locking bolt that emerges from the base of the standing breech that engages with a wedge shaped recess cut below the bottom barrel in the breech monobloc. It's a very strong arrangement used by many Italian makers and has proven robust and given a long, trouble-free service life. So successful has FAIR become that they are now


## Tech spec

<b>Make:</b>	Lincoln
<b>Model:</b>	Elite de Luxe
<b>Type:</b>	Over/Under shotgun
<b>Bore:</b>	20 / 76 (3") chambers
<b>Overall length:</b>	45½"
<b>Barrel length:</b>	28" (30" option)
<b>Weight:</b>	6lbs 7oz (2.92 Kg)
<b>Trigger:</b>	Single selective (mechanically operated)
<b>Safety:</b>	Automatic (can be de-activated by gunsmith)
<b>Trigger pulls:</b>	4 lbs 10oz (bottom) & 4lbs 14oz (top)
<b>Top rib:</b>	6mm wide parallel RVR
<b>Chokes:</b>	FAIR Technichokes (5 supplied)
<b>Pull length:</b>	365mm (14.5")
<b>Drop at comb:</b>	37mm (1.45")
<b>Drop at heel:</b>	56mm (2.2")
<b>Cast:</b>	3mm @ heel and 6mm @ toe
<b>SRP:</b>	£1,299 (includes hard case etc)
<b>UK distributor:</b>	John Rothery (Wholesale) Ltd

See [www.bisley-uk.com](http://www.bisley-uk.com) for details of your nearest dealer

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Sideplates are purely for added decoration, sliding into action body sides

“It has large and replaceable trunnions in the receiver front side walls”

Action internals are very well made and assembled; note double-bents for safety

The Lincoln opens to a wide gape for easy loading



the second largest producer of over-and-under guns in Italy.

Barrels are straight, well polished and nicely blacked. The raised ventilated rib has a semi-circular cross-hatched top surface to stop glare and an LPA optic fibre front sight. Side ribs are solid, good on a gun to be used in the field as well as on the range as there's no chance for water to get trapped between the tubes. The lightness of the smaller 20-bore barrels means they don't require the weight-saving of ventilated ribs to achieve a superb balance; the Elite balances about 12mm in front of the hinge point which gives that lovely combination of fast swinging yet not too flighty; a characteristic that will be readily appreciated once you are accustomed to the lighter overall weight. I must admit that, being used to much heavier clay guns, I was initially over-leading some clays, but as I settled the scores began to build.

The trigger pulls were nice enough and it's clear that the action is assembled with care; I got on with the trigger feel straight away.

## Conclusion

I thoroughly enjoyed my time with the Lincoln elite. I tackled a tricky pair of clays travelling in opposite directions with the second far enough away that some using 12s came away shaking their heads, and, putting a half choke in the top barrel and Eley CT 20 with 7.5 shot, I smashed those long birds so convincingly it made up for the closer targets I had flashed past earlier.

What a neat combination – swift, easy handling, quick pointing and the ideal balance ensuring that it's a gun I know I could quickly settle in well with.

If to be used mainly for clays, I personally would opt for the 30-inch barrels but for a mixture of game and casual clays then either length is fine; barrels always look longer in smaller gauges anyway and point all the more instinctively for that.

The Lincoln Elite is well constructed, looks elegant and handles well. It is sufficiently heavy to handle 28-gram clay or game loads too, so no disadvantage there and there is plenty of choice for lighter loads too. Anyone thinking of treating themselves to a lighter gun in 20-bore really should put this one on their shortlist. ■

The monobloc breech is strong and nicely jewelled



The Lincoln comes with five FAIR Technichoke tubes