

LAYERS OF HISTORY

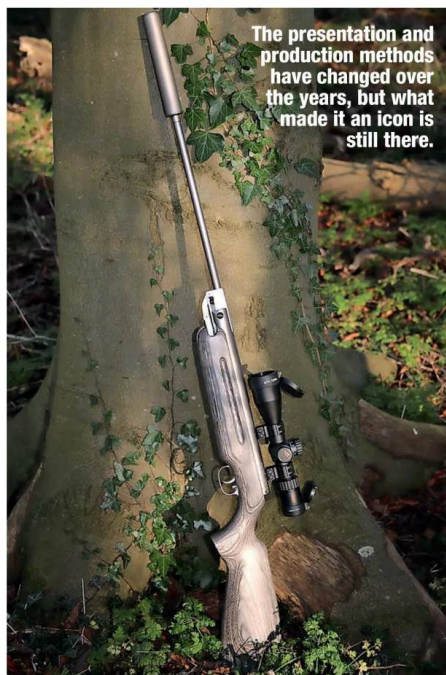
The Editor recalls a turning point in his sporting life - courtesy of the iconic Weihrauch HW35 – this time in a limited edition, blue laminate presentation

It was the Weihrauch HW35 that kick-started my current relationship with airguns, back in the early 1970s. A mate bought an HW35E, with that superb walnut stock, that 22-inch barrel, a degree of solidity and pure quality I'd never seen before, and of course that incredible Rekord trigger. I couldn't afford a 35E but I managed to scrape up enough cash to buy a standard model, and my lifelong exploration of airgun performance began.

The main motivation for me was that a company had recognised that airgun shooters deserved something as well made as an HW35, and it was the Rekord trigger unit that became the focal point for my faith in the future. That trigger mechanism changed everything for me, not least by teaching me the value of good technique, and from one lesson, so many more emerged, and it's still happening.

THE MORE THINGS CHANGE ...

So many memories came flooding back when I clamped the MTC Optics Copperhead scope to the nickel-finished '35's dovetail mounting rails. Back in the day, my HW35 was fitted with a Singlepoint red-dot sight for most of its working life, until I developed the desire to shoot smaller and smaller groups at ever-more-distant targets, and a Tasco



The presentation and production methods have changed over the years, but what made it an icon is still there.



The superb Weihrauch HW35 Limited Edition Laminate. If you're lucky enough to own one - please shoot it.

2-7 x 32 took its place. Here, on my first outing with the test rifle, I immediately shot a series of post-zero groups that would have absolutely astonished me back then. I guess so much has changed over those decades, but this limited edition rifle also proves that much remains the same.

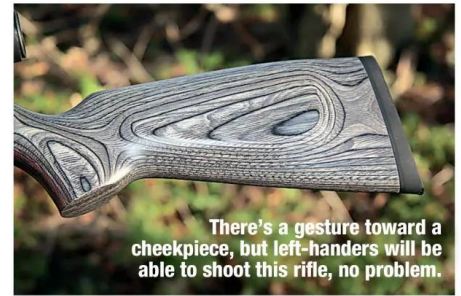
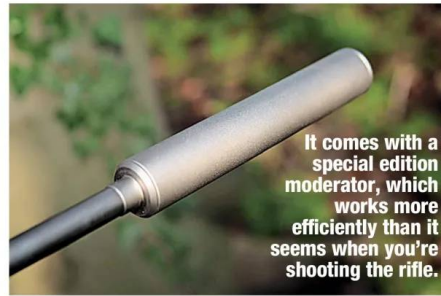
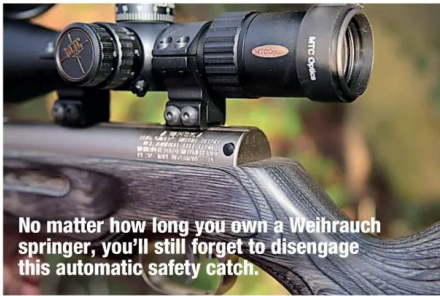
THE HW35K SPECIAL EDITION LAMINATE

Its 'stainless steel' metalwork and blue-grey laminate stock apart, everything that impressed me so much almost half a century ago is still there on the HW35K Laminate. There's that super-solid build quality, where everything operates with the type of clicks, clacks and clunks that audibly

assure me that this rifle will last a lifetime. There's that heft, those smooth lines, and the fuss-free nudge at the shoulder as the rifle discharges. All pure Weihrauch HW35, and all in perfect harmony with the changes introduced over the years.

THEN AND NOW

Where my HW35 had a leather piston seal, today's example enjoys the efficiency upgrade of a synthetic version, along with the manifold benefits of Weihrauch's current mix of state-of-the-art production machinery and traditional gunsmithing. I've visited Weihrauch headquarters several times, and I've seen for myself how this company bases its production



on methods that bring the best result, be that via CNC machines, or a technician with a leather apron and a set of skills that rely on pure craftsmanship and experience.

SUBTLE DIFFERENCES

The only major omission from this limited edition – just 215 will be available – HW35 Laminata is the adjustable open sights that I used, even for lamping, way back then. Instead, the top surface of the rifle's breech block is smooth, and in place of the dovetail grooves at the muzzle, there's a silencer and it's secured by around an inch of thread. This silencer is included in the HW35K Laminata package, and like most moderators fitted to spring guns, it does a much better job than its user can readily appreciate. Whilst shooting the rifle, it's impossible to appreciate fully the noise-cancelling effect of the silencer, due to being literally cheek by jowl with the action during the firing cycle. Distance yourself safely from the rifle, by getting someone else to shoot it, and you'll see just how well that supplied silencer works.

That said, its attachment stretches the overall length of the rifle to a full 48 inches, and although a 'reflex' silencer that slides down the barrel for four inches or so would perhaps bring the visuals a little more in line with modern styling, the physical balance of this 8.5lbs. springer is just about perfect.

STOCK REPORT

No HW35, and very few production rifles of any kind, had a more impressive stock than those early 'E' models. Says me ... and plenty of others, actually. This laminate version is stronger, due to its non-warp, weatherproof construction, and in its way it's more eye-catching than any of its predecessors, but at the risk of being picky, I would have preferred to see some stippling on the grip, and perhaps an embossed Weihrauch logo on the underside of the stock at some point, or even on the butt. Perhaps the lack of these things is typical Weihrauch understatement, but I'd still like to see a little more embellishment.

My southpaw chums found no problem lining up behind the scope, despite the stock's slight nod to being right-handed, courtesy of a barely discernible cheekpiece.

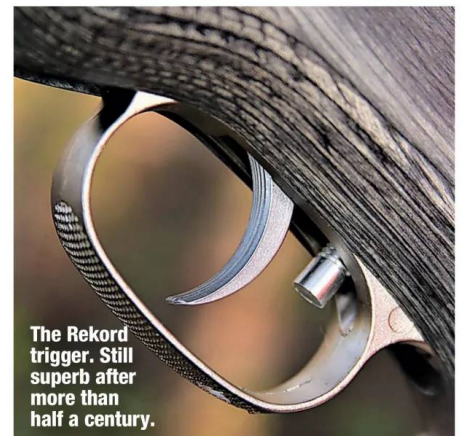
FIXTURES AND FITTINGS

I'm still not certain of the exact nature of this rifle's metal finish, but whatever it is, it's perfectly applied. Small contrasting features, such as the trademark HW barrel latch, the breech fixings and the buttons for the automatic safety catch, complement the silky silver of the action, and the overall effect is impressive and pleasing to the eye, and hands. Yes, this is a 'touchy-feely' rifle, for sure.

WHO NEEDS THIS RIFLE?

Weihrauch collectors will love this HW35K Laminata, and the limited production run will certainly sell out, if it hasn't already. At £573, this is not a purchase to be taken lightly, but compared to some limited edition guns, it's a flat-out bargain.

Personally, I'd love to see these guns owned by people who actually shoot them, rather than keep them preserved like museum pieces. This tribute to the rifle that played such a part in carrying forward our entire sport deserves to be appreciated for what it is – a magnificent airgunning milestone, that still shoots superbly today. ■



TECH SPEC

Model: HW35K Laminata
Manufacturer: Weihrauch
Country of origin: Germany
Type: Limited edition, break-barrel, spring-piston sporter
Calibre: .22, .177
Cocking/loading: Break-barrel, loaded direct to breech
Trigger: 2-stage, adjustable, with automatic safety
Stock type: Blue-grey laminate sporter
Weight: 3.6 kg (8.5lbs) rifle only
Length: 1219 mm (48") including supplied moderator
Barrel: 457mm (18ins)
Average energy: 11.7 ft.lbs.
Contact: Hull Cartridge Co. www.hullcartridgeco.co.uk

RRP £573