

UPGRADING A LEGEND

Tim Finley tests the latest version of an airgunning icon



Tim shooting the HW77K Special Edition with open sights, and loving it.

It's true icon time now; the Weihrauch HW77 is the most recognised and most loved of the 1980/90s field target air rifles. Its availability and rock-solid design single-handedly drove the expansion of FT in the early days. I started shooting FT in 1987 when ALL of the top shooters shot an HW77 of some description because they were easy to work on, and therefore to customise as well. The venerable HW77 is still going strong today and it's no surprise why; it's an underlever springer built to specification, not down to a price.

I bought my first HW77 in 1987 and modified it within weeks of getting it. The barrel and underlever were shortened, and a custom stock with a higher cheek piece fitted. The original length HW77 has a 470mm long barrel, and coupled with the steel underlever, this puts a lot of weight toward the end of the barrel. FT had a few standing shots on a

course and these were normally match winners – a front-heavy gun is not ideal for positional shots, especially standing.

Weihrauch took all of the after-market modification on board, shortened the rifle so you can now buy an HW77K – the K stands for 'Karbine' and taking 100mm off the front of the rifle works wonders for the handling.

TRY THE OPEN SIGHTS!

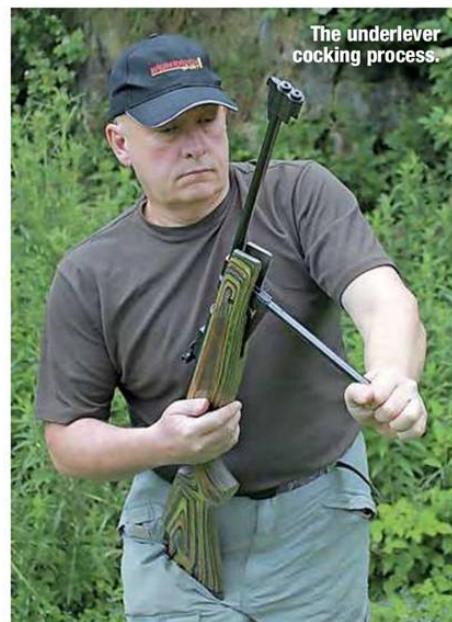
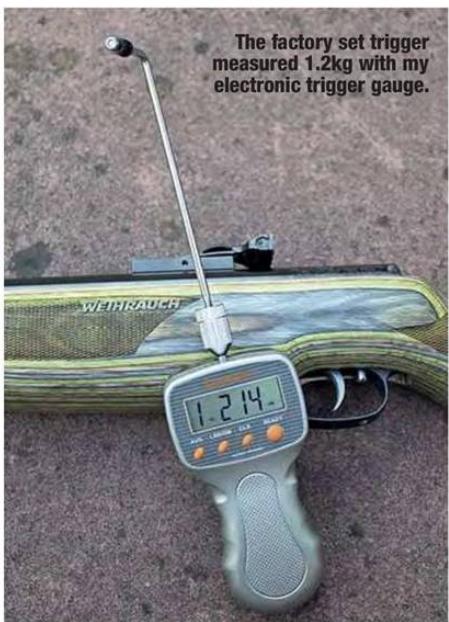
They also have much, much better stock available from the factory than they did back in the day. Hull Cartridge, the famous importers of all things Weihrauch into the U.K., sent me the latest HW77K in a green and brown laminate stock. The K model is factory shortened, so it retains a front post for open sights and the fully adjustable rear sight slides on to the 215mm-long, 11mm optical sight dovetails that are perfectly machined into the top of the steel

cylinder. Please do not just take the rear sight off and throw it into a spares box – have a go with the open sights. I did and loved it. There's nothing more satisfying than knocking over a 30-yard FT target with open sights.

THAT FAMOUS TRIGGER

Let's take the world-beating legendary Rekord trigger as a given. When it's set correctly, it's arguably the finest production spring-recoiling rifle trigger out there, and has a major part in making the HW77 as accurate as it undoubtedly is. The test rifle's trigger measured in at 1.2kg with my electronic trigger weight gauge. It's also the predictability of the trigger that makes it so good. You tune into it and you 'know' when it's going to break the sears.

There is an automatic safety catch that pops out at the rear of the cylinder, upon cocking the action. Please keep hold of the underlever



during the loading process; I know it's fitted with an anti-bear trap device, but do not rely on such things.

SPECIAL EDITION

Over the chronograph, the .177 test rifle performed as expected with a shot-to-shot variation of less than ten feet per second. With 7.9 grain lead round-headed pellets, it produced 11.2 ft.lbs. Weihrauch has made a lot of improvements, taking note of what owners and customisers were doing.

Back in the day, like most, I also opened out the loading gate on the top of the rifle. Longer and bigger scopes were coming into FT and it was hard to load the rifle with the small loading port on the original 77s. The loading gate now extends down to the edge of the stock on both sides of the

rifle, making it easier to load pellets into the breech for both right- and left-handed shooters.

LAMINATED STOCK

The laminate stock is ambidextrous and a thing to behold. There's only one word for the Special Edition brown and green laminate stock; stunning, superb, gorgeous, a work of art ... well, okay, that's a lot of words, but it deserves them all – it's utterly fantastic!

It has chequered panels for grip on the fore end and pistol grip sides.

'Weihrauch' is also picked out on each flank. The colours are wonderful and the laminate stock is much, much stronger than a standard beech variety. I tried a few positional shots and the stock shape helps with all of these.

THINGS TO THINK ABOUT
The undisputed daddy of underlever spring air rifles. It led the way and still has a place in top flight FT and HFT competitions, or just pure shooting fun.

ON THE RANGE

Fitting a scope is really easy; there are three holes in the top of the cylinder, at the rear, for placing a recoil arresting pin on a scope mount. I fitted a 3-9 x 40 Hawke because they are a dependable scope, and groups at 35 yards were under an inch once I'd got into the groove. The weight of the HW77K adds to its stability. This is an adult air rifle and I would say a target rifle, but that's not to say you can't have a blast plinking with the gun – I did, especially with the open sights.

The legend continues and with special editions like this it's still a world beater.

Thanks to Tom and Chris at Hull Cartridge for organising the HW77K Special Edition. ■

TECH SPEC

Manufacturer: Weihrauch

Distributor: Hull Cartridge 01482 34257

Model: HW77K Special Edition

Type: Spring-piston

Barrel length: 370mm

Calibre: .177 or .22 (.177 on test)

Action: Underlever

Sights: Rear notch – adjustable (with 11mm dovetail optical sight ramp)

Sight base: 540-695mm

Trigger: Two-stage adjustable

Trigger weight: 1.2kg

Overall length: 1020mm

Length of pull: 370mm

Weight: 4kg

RRP £496

