



HISTORY

W W Greener was a member of the second-generation family which had been involved with gunmaking from 1829 to the present day. Today the company still makes the finest sporting shotguns and rifles in its Midlands workshops. William Greener was the first to make guns. After serving his apprenticeship with John Gardner in Newcastle upon Tyne he worked for Joe Manton, probably the best English gunmaker in the early 1800s. Returning to Newcastle in 1829, he set up on his own to make percussion muzzle loading sporting and military shotguns and rifles, as well as harpoon guns for the Dundee Whalers. However, there it was difficult to obtain the best materials, so he moved to Birmingham in 1844 where Greener gunmaking has remained ever since.

William was an inventor and during his lifetime he invented; the expansive bullet (1835), an electric light (1846 - long before the modern 'Ediswan' lamp was patented in 1879), a device to open the four gates of the railway level crossing simultaneously, a self-righting lifeboat (1851) and modifications to the Miner's Safety Lamp. But first and foremost he was a gunmaker and the quality of his guns soon attracted the rich and famous, among these Prince Albert, consort to Queen Victoria. At The Great Exhibition of 1851 he won two gold medals and a diploma. He went on to win medals at the New York exhibition of 1853 and Paris Exposition of 1855. William wrote three books, The Gun in 1834, The Science of Gunnery in 1842 and Gunnery in 1858. He also wrote a pamphlet - The Proof House - The bane of trade - which was instrumental in reforming the Gun Barrel Proof House in the act of 1855.

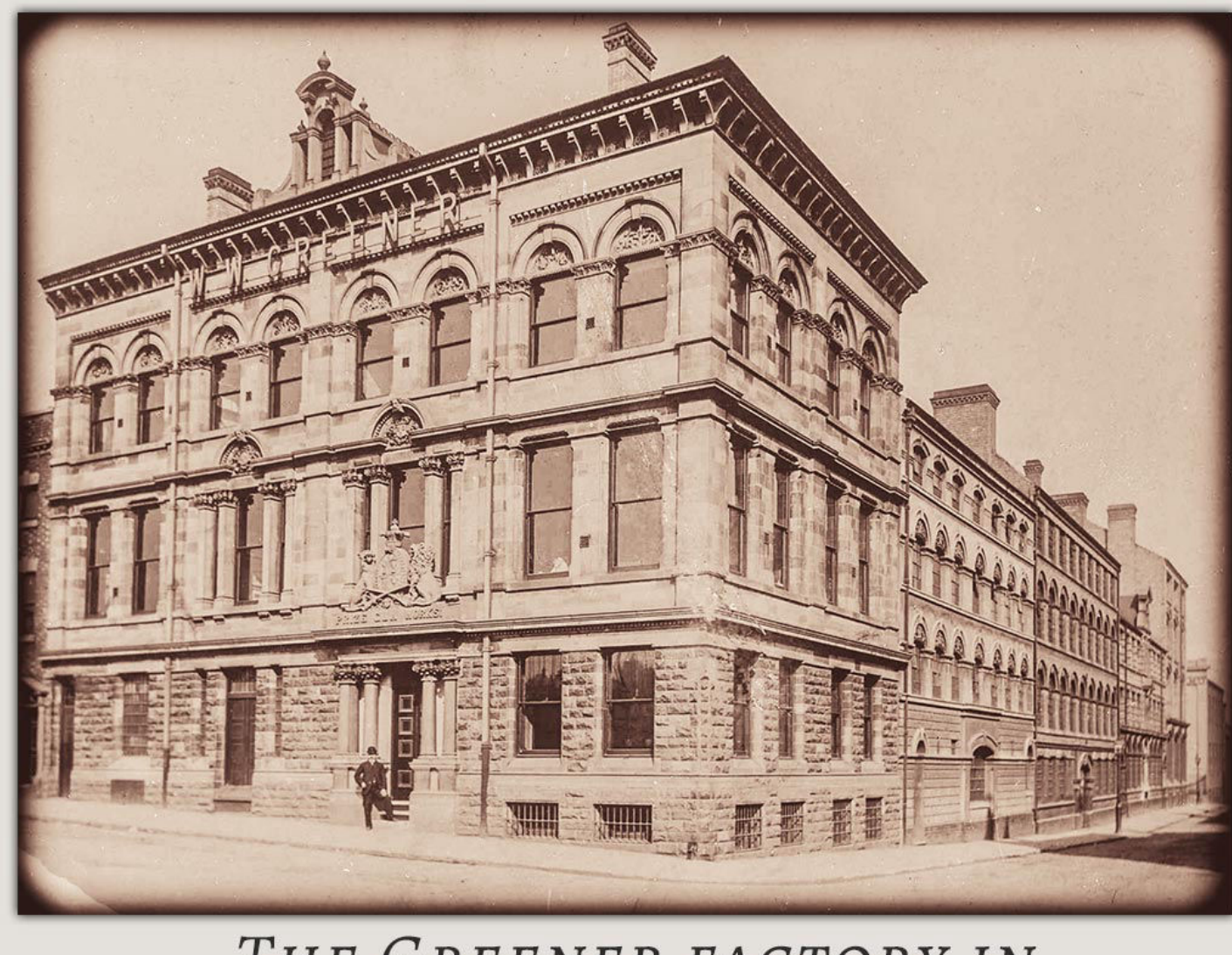


INSIDE THE GREENER SHOWROOM

After William's death in 1869 his second son, William Wellington Greener, continued the family tradition of making high-quality sporting and military guns, and his inventions helped to develop the breach-loader to make it the modern sporting gun we know today. Probably W W Greener's greatest contributions were, affecting the system of choke boring, and, inventing the famous cross-bolt. The former allowed him to win all The Field Trials from 1875 to 1879 and this led most wing shots to use Greener guns to win prizes and competitions all over the world. The cross-bolt which he invented in 1867 to strengthen the action of breach loaders resulted in the strongest action, weight for weight, of any gun made. By the turn-of-the-century in 1900 he had the world's largest sporting gun factory employing over four hundred and fifty skilled craftsmen. Like his father he wrote several books the most famous of which The Gun and its Development was published in 1881. This book, like The Breachloader and how to use it published in 1892, ran to nine editions.

W W Greener's two sons Harry and Charles took over the business from their father in 1910 and ten years later the firm was incorporated into a limited company. Production was switched to military requirements during two world wars and during the intervening period demand for very high quality sporting guns diminished. The company under the two brothers, and later Leyton Greener, Harry's son, concentrated on well-made, but less expensive 'Empire' models and single barrel GP shotguns - developed from a riot control gun for the Egyptian Ghaffir police force.

But the building of the inner ring road in Birmingham meant the factory complex fronting St Mary's Square had to go. So, in 1965 the company was sold, the old factory with its imposing Victorian edifice was pulled down and production for the company as a family run business ceased. Webley, which acquired the gunmaking part of the business continued to make the single barrel GP for a few years, but it was not until 1985 that the company was bought by its present owners, David Dryhurst, Graham Greener (W W Greener's great-grandson), Ken Richardson and Richard Tandy.



THE GREENER FACTORY IN BIRMINGHAM ON ST MARY'S SQUARE.

The next few years saw a return to making best quality sporting guns. To promote this in 1987 the new 'St George' 12 bore side-lock was made. This design was chosen as the company was making 'best' guns again and the lock plates provided a large area for some very special chiselled relief engraving of St George - it would be the link between the previous 'Show Gun', a Unique ejector 'St George' shotgun, made by Harry Greener in 1907, to the very best Presentation quality guns that company was now making. Finished in 1992 and engraved by Alan and Paul Brown this gun led to many orders being placed in the years that followed. Recently a new hammer gun with carved engraving has been made and a .375, double Facile Princeps rifle. Guns built today can be ordered in all bore sizes. From 10, 12, 16, 20, 24, 28 and 32.

THE TEAM

In 1985, David Dryhurst, Graham Greener and Richard Tandy became part owners of W W Greener. Below you will find a brief history of how the three colleagues ended up being involved in making such exceptional guns.

DAVID DRYHURST

David Dryhurst started his apprenticeship in the gun trade at W W Greener in 1958 where he was fortunate enough to work under the guidance of some of the men that were there in the 1920s, learning his skills from some of the best. By the mid 1960s he had set up his own workshop as he was unable to find employment in the Birmingham area building Best guns.

At this time he was lucky enough to meet Mr Albert Smith, an elderly gentleman highly regarded in the gun trade, who had spent most of his life mainly working for Holland & Holland and Boss & Co. It was Smith who taught Dryhurst the skills required to build Best London sidelocks. When Smith decided Dryhurst was ready, he introduced him to Holland and Holland who immediately gave him orders to build new guns and for many years he produced the Badminton model and subsequently undertook new sidelocks for Henry Atkin, Charles Lancaster, Churchill's and Stephen Grant, he also built the John Robertson boxlock for Boss & Co.

RICHARD TANDY

Richard Tandy entered the Gun Trade in 1972, straight from college, starting at the Birmingham factory of Churchill Ltd (formerly S.Wright and Son). It was here that he learned all his basic gun making skills and had the guidance of the then foreman, Ken Halbert, who instilled the principal "make sure each section is complete and perfect before moving on to the next", excellent advice for an aspiring young gun maker.

During his time in Birmingham, he would visit the workshop of David Dryhurst who had helped him acquire his job at Churchill's. Tandy was impressed by the Best London sidelock guns that Dryhurst was making for Holland and Holland and others and was determined that he would do the same one day.

Photograph of David and Richard taken in 2004.



Richard Tandy went on to set up his own workshop in the early 1980s and was busy carrying out complicated conversions from non-ejector to ejector, two trigger to single trigger etc. and building new side lock actions for other gun makers. During this period Dryhurst and Tandy decided to start working on projects together but remain independent of one another, building guns or actions for Boss and Co, William Evans and Holland and Holland. Amongst the projects they undertook for Holland and Holland was a 10 bore double barrel percussion shotgun to celebrate their 135th anniversary, also Royal and Dominion sidelocks. Independently, Tandy was also building actions and part actions for P.V.Nelson and designing a round body self opening single trigger sidelock for Westley Richards in 12 and 20 bore.

A major collaboration during this period was when Dryhurst and Tandy were commissioned by the then Holland and Holland factory manager Mr Geoffery Brooks to design and build a new 20 bore sidelock over and under. This was successfully completed and became the new Royal model over and under with Dryhurst and Tandy building several production guns.

Once Tandy and Dryhurst became part owners of W W Greener in 1986, an opportunity presented itself to build guns that were not to another makers pattern but to produce something that would reflect their own taste and personality, heavily drawing on the exhibition guns built by Greeners in their hey day. Tandy and Dryhurst continue to build interesting, sometimes unique guns in 32 to 10 bore to the highest possible standard and they are currently developing a new over and under which they hope to produce in 20, 24, 28 and 32 bore.

At the end of the 19th and beginning of the 20th century W W Greener was one of the most famous and revered Gunmakers in the world, Dryhurst and Tandy have now re-established Greeners as a world class gunmaking name once again, having produced well in excess of 60 exhibition guns, most including new Damascus barrels, all of which are now in some of the world's finest collections. Please do visit the images section of this website to see samples of these very special guns.