



Precious cargo

Beretta 687 Diamond Pigeon a real gem, writes John McDougall

From the long-established stable of well-made sporting arms and the oldest manufacturing company in the world enters the Beretta 687 EELL Sporting, another fine example of exquisite workmanship. Beretta have for many years produced guns of superb quality with their higher-grade sidelocks just sensational and while the 687 EELL isn't a sidelock sporting arm, it does have wonderful sideplates adorned with magnificent hand-cut engraving.

In comparison to a sidelock costing around \$30,000 the 687 EELL at roughly \$12,000 remains a boxlock sporting arm but with the addition of that beautiful engraving which, coupled with the walnut stock, contributes to the premium price you'd expect to pay for such a gun. So let's have a closer look at this beauty and see what it has to offer.

Barrels

Impeccably soldered and hammer forged to precise specifications the steelium barrels

are assembled and immaculately blued without blemish and at 760mm (30") are fitted with the latest Beretta Optima choke tubes, being fully internal and 70mm in length. All Optima choke tubes are suited to high performance steel shot loads up to Modified (half choke) and Beretta don't recommend using anything tighter than Modified with these loads as they say patterns become distorted and the barrel and chokes wear substantially.

Topped with a parallel 4mm rib this is low for a Sporting model but when mounted, my eye looked straight down the middle albeit a little flat, more like a Field-grade rib than a Sporter. I was disappointed a mid-sight bead wasn't fitted straight out the box though Beretta provide an excellent service where buyers can visit the warehouse and have their gun custom-fitted.

The top rib is nicely ventilated and side ribs solid which I can only think is to give the gun a better feel and balance as the stock wood is quite dense and full of character. In all my years of testing and owning

Beretta firearms I've always appreciated the lengths they go to give their under-and-over shoguns a perfect balance and what I call 'Beretta feel'.

At the chamber end of the barrels the monobloc is well finished, jewel polishing perfectly and abundantly completed to enhance the aesthetics and retain valuable lubricant to augment longevity and service of the shotgun. Chambered for 76mm (3") cartridges the Beretta 687 EELL Diamond Sporting is well suited to waterfowling, including geese, as it's proofed for high performance steel shot loads. The ejectors are strong, solidly built and timed to perfection, removing spent cartridges quickly from the chamber.

Bifurcated jointing of the barrels to the action gives the gun its customary low profile and a feeling of great balance and ability to swing evenly, this system having been used by Beretta for decades and it certainly characterises their shotguns. The trunnions in the receiver wall are also replaceable and located perfectly with the



View of the action open showing the extent of jewel polishing about the monobloc and engraving about the receiver.



Top tang with its engraved finish, well-tensioned top lever and safety-cum-barrel selector.

semi-circular bites in the monobloc and the fact these trunnions can be replaced ensures a Beretta gun, whether a basic 686 or a 694 top model along with the 687 series will provide generations of reliable service.

Receiver

This is the centre of interest with its hand-cut scroll engraving. Magnificently done and stunning to look at, for many this'll be the pride of ownership. It's akin to a work of art and that's exactly what you have in your hands, a crafted gun with impeccable and faultless engraving which almost covers the whole receiver, sideplate and triggerguard and is a tribute to the master craftsmen contracted to Beretta.

Design of the top lever is superb and tensioned so as to require even pressure by the handler to operate. Its shape is ergonomically devised to work comfortably, being well in reach for quick opening of the barrels from the receiver for fast reloading, another benefit of the bifurcated jointing of Beretta shotguns whereby their lower

receiver profile presents a shorter gape (less of an angle for the barrels to drop) for reloading.

The triggerguard is well shaped and complements the overall lines of this gun, adorned with fine scroll engraving which completes the presentation. Design of the triggerfoot was perfect for my grip although I'd have preferred an adjustable one, maybe gold-plated for a model such as the Diamond grade as this would really set off the engraving about receiver and side-plates and add a further air of grace. Might be something for Beretta to consider in future models. Trigger pulls are well adjusted at just on 2kg for each barrel.

Stock and fore-end

Although told by my Beretta contact the stock and fore-end were of Grade 3 walnut, I could imagine them being another step up as the character and grain direction is superb with a lot of the appearance often seen in walnut closer to the roots of the tree. Magnificent woodwork with stunning hand-cut chequering faultlessly executed at

around 20 lines/inch provided excellent grip for good gun control. I found the standard factory stock dimensions suited my style of shooting and build as the gun mounted comfortably, bringing my preferred right eye to look straight down the barrels.

Being a standard-shaped stock and not a Monte Carlo design the gun fired beautifully on clays, right on point of aim (neither higher nor lower) for the height of the barrel rib. I was looking forward to shooting this beauty more either at clays or in the field and thankfully, to top off the stock a good recoil pad is fitted should you decide to shoot some hyper-velocity steel shot HP loads on waterfowl.

In the field

I had a great time reviewing this gun and many others who took the chance to mount and shoot it were also suitably impressed. It was like taking a work of art for a walk around the simulated field ground, trying to bag as many clay targets as possible and was a delight to shoot with RC2 loads supplied by Beretta. Being low recoil they



The elegant Beretta 687 EELL Diamond Pigeon is sure to turn heads.



Underside of the Beretta Diamond Sporting featured beautiful scroll engraving, including the triggerguard.

The gun in lockable hard plastic carry case with accessory chokes, spanner, gun oil and instruction booklet.



Five choke tubes are supplied along with gun oil and propeller-style choke tube spanner.

weren't what I'd normally be using but claimed their fair share of targets at the Frankston ground and at the Steve Bettoni shoot on Phillip Island. I was rapt with second barrel shots with RC2 loads through the Improved Modified choke as targets beyond 50m succumbed with regularity.

Overall the Beretta 687 EELL Diamond Pigeon is a well-designed, well-tuned and spectacular gun to look at, the woodwork and sideplate engravings exceptional to make any shooter proud to own one. Anyone in the market for a versatile shotgun which smashes clays with its

steelium barrels and Optima choke tube combination will find it hard to beat and, coupled with Beretta's 'Forever' service arrangement and personal fitting, it offers excellent value for discerning shooters. ●



Design and inletting of the fore-end catch is perfect.

Specifications:

Manufacturer: Beretta, Brescia, Italy

Distributor: Beretta Australia

Overall weight: 3.5kg/7lb 11oz

Barrel weight: 1.40kg/3lb 2oz

Overall length: 1205mm/47½"

Barrel length: 760mm/30"

Bore diameter and chamber: 0.732" bore, 76mm/3" chamber

Proof: HP steel shot (stamped with the CIP Fleur de Lys)

Chokes: Cylinder 0.730", Improved Cylinder 0.720", Modified 0.710", Improved Modified 0.705" and Full 0.695"

Trigger pulls: Under and over both 2kg/68oz

Length of pull: 375mm/14¾"

Drop at comb: 37mm/1 3/8"

Drop at heel: 60mm/2 3/8"

Warranty: 12 months plus a further two years if registered with Beretta

Price: About \$12,000 with moulded and lined lockable case, instruction booklet and accessories