

Thames Valley Guns

Krico 640S

Introduction

In the past I have owned a .22 Krico 302 and worked on a number of .243 Krico 600 hunting rifles and my first impression is that they are well made and good quality rifles. In fact the .22 was so good from an engineering standpoint that I felt that only my Mauser rimfire's could better them. Having said that you do not see many Krico's in the UK and I am unsure why that is. One possibility is that they are typical German rifles, many with "hogs back" or mannlicher full length stocks, which are more suited to



the German market and therefore lack a more UK or international appeal. They are reasonably expensive but seem unable to challenge the likes of Blazer, Sauer or Mauser with the result that sales appear small and therefore seem to lack a regular and long

term importer. Another factor maybe the manufacturer themselves being unable to keep up with the changing market place, a good example may be reflected in their very dated website.



All the rifles I come across are always in the hunting/sporting configuration and therefore historically I have taken little interest in these fine rifles. More recently when searching the Guntrader website in April 2014, I stumbled across a rifle advertised as a "Krico 640S Sniper" which instantly caught my attention as something different. Researching it further I found that Krico did indeed produced a sniper variant of its 600 series rifle

in the mid 1980's targeting the military/law enforcement markets and was therefore keen to have a look. A quick call to the seller secured the rifle until I could get down to Somerset and inspect it in more detail. The sellers pictures confirmed the rifles external quality but I wanted to inspect the barrel to ensure the internal condition matched its external appearance and therefore was very pleased when I found the bore, bolt and action to be in superb condition.

General

The Krico 640 sniper as the name suggests is part of Krico's 600 series rifles and represents the latter refined models that were introduced in 1983 in .222, .223 and .243 and .308. In .308 Winchester this rifles proof mark indicates it was manufactured in 1989. It has a match stock, adjustable butt plate, cheek pad, enlarged bolt knob, 5rd detachable magazine, fully floating heavy match barrel, matt phosphate finish and a military spec flash eliminator.

The 640 is a traditional bolt action rifle with a detachable five round magazine and has no provision for Iron sights. The rifle weighs 10lb 13oz (with scope), is 45" (114.5cm) in length and 1.9" (4.9cm) at its widest point, not including the bolt handle.

Information

Although the company of Krico still exist, (KRICO Kriegeskorte Handels, Vermietungs und Entwicklungs GmbH) its market appears very small and limited to a few sporting centrefire and rimfire models with the 600 & 700 series probably representing the companies heyday. Information is almost non existent and is limited to a few pictures on the Internet. The only publication I could find with some reasonable information was John Walter's "Rifles of the world". The company does have a website, but it is very basic and appears outdated.

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Receiver

The receiver is manufactured to a high quality and is reflective of good German engineering. Although the receiver is unremarkable



from a design point of view it has neat & tidy layout with no projections and is pleasing to the eye. The receiver is a little over 8" in length and 1.92" at its widest point. The recoil lug is secured between the barrel and the receiver and the bolts two locking lugs engage in corresponding recesses in the front of the receiver in much the same way as the Remington 700. Roughly midway in the receiver is the ejection port and below this the magazine well. Behind the ejection port and on the right hand side is the bolt handle recess. I am unsure if this acts a thirds safety locking point, but should a main locking lug fail, I am sure it would add some

element of safety. The front face of the bolt handle recess is case hardened and there is a small recess for the bolt handle detent which provides a positive positioning of the bolt, when fully closed. At the top of the recess is a small cam which provides primary extraction for the bolt and directly to the rear is the clearance for the bolt handle during cycling and removal.

To the rear of the magazine well is two machined faces which the trigger assembly sits along and is simply and effectively secured with two screws. The rear of the receiver has a pleasant curve which matches a corresponding curve on the bolts cocking piece and typifies the neat & tidy layout that I mentioned earlier. On the left side of the receiver is the companies logo, title, location, serial number and various German proof marks as shown above.

Trigger Assembly

The trigger assembly is a neat one piece unit secured with two screws and washers. Unscrewing and removing the two screws permits the trigger assembly to be removed from the receiver as a single self contained unit, thereby avoiding the various components of the trigger disappearing in all directions.



The safety sits on the right hand side and consists of a large thumb plate which has a very positive and long pivotal motion which provides the shooter with an obvious on-off action. When the safety is removed a red peg is shown to indicate the rifle can be discharged, this cant be seen in the dark, however the shoot can feel the recess the peg sits in.

The safety catch can only be applied when the bolt cocked. The safety catch locks the sear and the large side plate engages in the bolt and locks it in the closed position. In this trigger design the sear also acts as the bolt stop, not a problem for the other hunting and target rifles in the series but personally I think this is the less than ideal as a live round or empty case cannot be extracted from the chamber with the safety applied, which could be a requirement for the Police or Military Sniper.

When cycling the bolt, the sear acts as the bolt stop. On the left side of the trigger unit is a smaller lever which when depressed allows the trigger to rotate further. This action permits the sear to be lowered further than would be normal and the operator can withdraw and remove the bolt from the receiver.



This trigger is a single pull unit releasing at 4.57lbs which was crisp but a little heavy in my opinion and upon inspection there appeared to be no obvious adjustment, which I thought shortcoming to what was otherwise a good trigger unit.

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Breech Block

From the casual glance the bolt is very traditional, however if the reader looks closer it is an exceptionally clean and effective design. The locking lugs are the standard twin lug similar to what readers will see on many rifles including the Remington 700. The



bolt face is recessed with a plunger style ejector and a claw extractor. The bolt body is nicely jewelled as a standard feature.

The bolt handle is slightly unique, unlike many bolts which have the bolt handle welded in place, this bolt handle passes through the bolt body and is retained by the

firing pin and cocking piece assembly. I have seen this feature before on the mini Mauser bolts from CZ but which company was the originator I am unsure. The standard bolt knob is 16.5mm in diameter and is integral with the bolt, however on the 640S the bolt knob has been replaced by a plastic screw on version which is 32mm in diameter and improves handling considerably. However a minor criticism at this point, which concerns the thread of enlarged bolt knob. The thread is simply tapped directly into



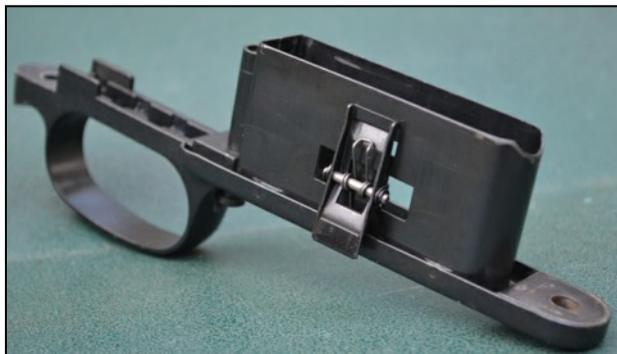
the plastic knob and this design lacks sufficient strength and weakens throughout the life of the rifle. My repair was to secure with Loctite but it is a little too early to verify whether this was a long term and successful repair. In the stem of the bolt handle is ball bearing which acts as a positive detent when opening and closing the bolt. Directly below the bearing is a slot cut into the bolt, which permits the safety catch to lock the bolt in the closed and cocked position.

At the rear of the bolt is the cocking piece which has very similar configuration as the bolt head. When the bolt is driven forward, this configuration allows the cocking piece to be held to the rear on the sear, the bolt to rotate, lock and the cocking piece to remain in the receiver guide ways. At the rear of the cocking piece is a plastic shroud, it serves no functional purpose other than providing a pleasing profile which matches the end of the receiver, as can be seen in the image above. However this plastic shroud has a tendency to fracture as it is a push fit onto the cocking piece. This is a shame, it's a tacky part to what is otherwise a good design, the shroud should have been made from steel or as a casting which is secured with a grub screw.

Magazine and magazine assembly

The magazine is a combination of press steel stampings and a cast trigger guard assembly. The trigger guard assembly is spot welded to the floor plate as is the magazine housing. Fitted to the magazine housing is the magazine catch and either side is strengthening plates which are inserted and spot welded into place.

I may be wrong but studying the magazine indicates it is two Krico three round magazines cut to size and spot welded together to form a five round unit. The magazine is inserted into the housing and is removed with ease and without fault. Loading the magazine with rounds requires little effort and is not awkward in anyway and I have yet to identify any form of mis-feed. However I must admit I am a little disappointed in the magazine not being a purposely designed 5rd unit and like the plastic shroud on the cocking piece, this appears to be a cost saving measure. If I was a potential Police or Military customer this would give me concern as a potential weak point in the design that in the field, may let me down at a critical moment. However to be fair the magazine and the magazine assembly has been totally reliable to date, which is what an operator exactly requires.



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Barrel

All Krico's barrels are produced by Lothar Walther and the 640S shoots with nail tacking accuracy, which confirms the quality of this manufacturer's barrels. The barrel is 23" long and is fitted with a flash eliminator similar to the standard German Army Heckler & Koch G3 rifle of the same era. The barrel is 1.1" diameter (28mm) at the chamber and tapers to 0.75" (19.25mm) at the muzzle.



The barrel screws into the receiver in much the same manner as the Remington 700 and has a recoil block secured between the barrel shoulder and the receiver. The barrels finish together with the receiver is a mil spec non reflective phosphate. Marking is limited to .308Win on top of the barrel and the customary German proof marks near the chamber.

Woodwork

Woodwork is good quality walnut, with a stipple effect on the pistol grip and fore end which enhances the operator's grip. The barrel is free floating but the action is not bedded. The fore end has fourteen "vents" along its length but I hardly think they serve any practical purpose with regards to heat dissipation or reduction of the thermal picture. Therefore, besides cosmetics my only



thought is they will assist in reducing the weight marginally. Metal to wood fit is excellent as depicted in the image above and the telltale witness marks and therefore I have no plans to bed the action. However I do think this is a shortfall in the design as any prospective customers, especially the military would not want a wooden stock that could distort in the rigours of the world's climates.

One novel feature is the sling swivels. As you may notice from the image above, there are a series of ball bearings mounted in the swivel stem. There is a corresponding shaft inserted into the stock and when a plunger on the stem is depressed, the bearings retract and the swivel can be removed. Novel they maybe, but it is complicated, expensive and problem generating if debris is to get into the bearings. More recently the stock has been fitted with QD studs which permits the fitting of a bipod.

One good feature is the adjustable cheek piece, however it took some time and a little help to figure out how you adjusted the cheek piece for height. On the left side of the butt you will notice what I thought initially was simply a spare sling swivel. The shaft that this sling swivel engages in, is in fact a screw which is part of the cheek piece assembly. By rotating the sling swivel you loosen or tighten the screw which in turn controls the height of the cheek piece. A clever feature that requires no tooling and can utilise the two remaining swivels should one be lost.

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The stock also sports an adjustable rubber butt plate. I am unsure if this is an original fitting or is a more recent addition as this butt plate appears to relate to more modern designs. Whilst the butt plate has been fitted adequately it has not been fitted well as the plate does not blend well with the woodwork, which somewhat confirms my suspicion that this butt plate was added at a later date.

Scope and Mounts

As the rifle is a relatively uncommon design, scope mounting options are limited. The rifle was supplied with 1" Australian Hillver rings and bases. Whilst acceptable for hunting, they are typical 80's technology and in my opinion a little flimsy for a sniper rifle. EAW produce an excellent set of rings however they are very expensive at £300 plus which was somewhat more than I had intended to pay. Fortunately Recknagel produce a set of Weaver/ Picatinny bases at modest cost which opens up the options somewhat. I would have preferred to fit a set of period rings but I was unable to source anything, so therefore I settled on a decent

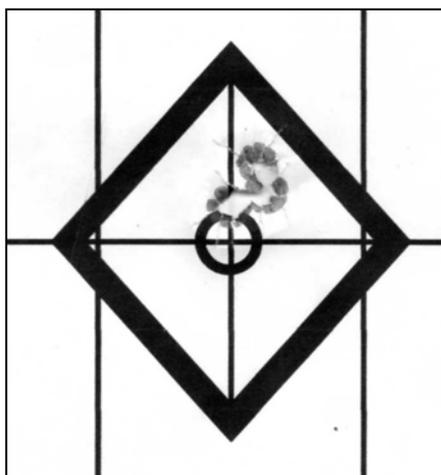
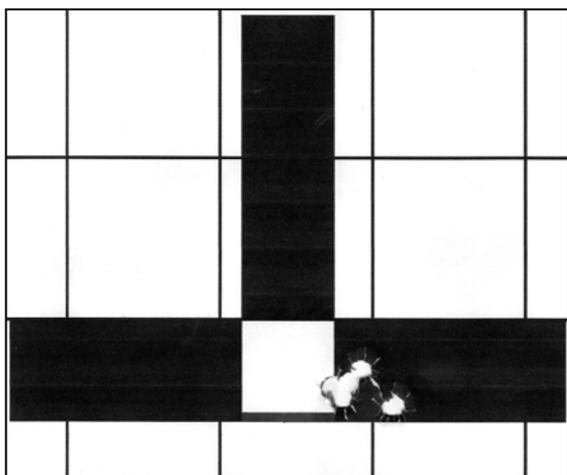


set of Leupold 1" rings.

As this was an 80's rifle, I wanted an period scope and was fortuitous to have what I regarded as an ideal scope for this rifle. I had a Pecar 4-10 Variable in my collection that was in superb condition and had been used by many military and police forces as a sniper scope and therefore fulfilled the role perfectly.

Range Test

When I purchased the rifle the seller provided some range testing facilities and I was offered the opportunity to test fire the rifle. Provided ammunition was .308 Prvi partizan softpoint which is not the most accurate ammo on the block and the seller when



installing a temporary scope did not complete the task successfully, therefore when I shot, the scope moved under recoil and the group was approx 2" at 50yds.

I was embarrassed as I thought both the rifle and I were capable of far better groups and had to wait another week before I could prove what the rifle was capable of. By the following week I had carried out a major service and fitted the Pecar scope using the original Hillver rings and bases.

Using 43.5gr of Vihtavuori N140 and 155gr Sierra HPBT bullets set 0.0025" of the lands I shot various groups shooting from a bench, rest and at 100yds. The rifle shot extremely well and looking at the left hand image and if you discount the "flyer" the four round group measures 10.59mm. This wasn't a fluke and two weeks later I had replaced the Hillver rings with the Recknagel and Leupold rings and shot the second three group which measured 8mm.

Whilst this was definitely a capable rifle, the range test highlighted two further points, both the bolt knob and the magazine insisted on coming loose. Neither faults are disastrous and are easily repaired but it proves the benefit of range tests not just for accuracy but also to confirm the functional reliability of the rifle.

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Summary

In summary I don't want to appear unfair and therefore I will summarise the 640S at two levels. The Krico 640S is a good rifle but as an Armourer that has worked on many different sniper designs over the years, I would state this is not a sniper rifle in the true sense. At best it is a good sporting rifle that the company has tried unsuccessfully to elevate into the Military and Police Sniper markets by adding a larger capacity magazine, an oversized bolt handle and a military flash eliminator. Had Krico utilised the basic action/barrel, combined it with an experienced sniper rifle designer and invested some money, then I think this rifle has some huge potential. However by the late eighties sniper rifles design were already starting to encompass composite stocks,



bipods, tactical rails and ten round magazine capacities and therefore the Krico 640S was out of the race before it even began.

At the second level and as a sporting rifle, I think this is an excellent rifle which is highly under-rated. Not only is it extremely accurate but in a sporting environment completely reliable. The original sling swivels had already been replaced with more modern QD studs and therefore I was at liberty to fit a Harris bipod, otherwise I have hardly touched the rifle in terms of modifying the design. The stock is excellent for sporting use, the enlarged bolt knob makes for far more efficient handling of the action and the five round magazine is far more sensible than the three round flush fitting models found on the hunting rifles. As a sporting rifle it's hard to find criticism, if I have a minor point, it is the adjustable cheek piece. Once elevated "it sings" which means that you can feel and hear the recoil as it passes through the stock.

In summary a fine accurate rifle that is a pleasure to shoot and a fine addition to my collection.

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