

## Parker Hale M82 Sniper Rifle

### Introduction

Building a M82 Sniper Rifle had not occurred to me until I restored a Parker Hale Scout earlier in the year. The M82 is based on the Parker Hale 1200TX target rifle and over the years I seen a few of these rifles in my travels but the target rifle format held little interest for me and therefore I never took the matter any further. I had come across a number of Parker Hale rifles over the years



but always in a hunting configuration. Build quality of the hunting rifles is reasonable but as the action was built around the standard Mauser mechanism I felt the rifles didn't offer anything that was particularly innovative from a design standpoint and therefore provided little interest to me.

However the scout was more interesting and similarly converting the 1200TX into a M82 offered a similar challenge. Therefore these notes will be more about my experiences in converting the 1200TX rather than technical detail concerning its action.

### History

I had never seen a M82 in the flesh and my research did not reveal a huge amount of information. There are various articles on the Internet, ranging from reasonable to complete rubbish. Best publications that I identified was John Walters Rifles of the World, 3<sup>rd</sup> edition and The Worlds Sniper Rifles by Ian Hogg and Greenhill Military Manuals. However I found the best pictures of the M82 where in the Greenhill manual and this was important as I required some form of pictorial reference to assist me with the conversion.

I have no exact date when Parker Hale introduced the M82 but I am guessing by the designation that it was the early eighty's and production continued until 1990. The rifle is derived from the companies target rifles and the receiver and bolt is based on the tried and tested Mauser action with a heavy barrel. The rifle achieved reasonable commercial success and was sold to the Australian, New Zealand and Canadian armed forces with a cadet version being sold to the British Army. Each force had different designation and slight variations in scope and sights etc with the Canadian C3 being the most different with a strengthened receiver and six shot magazine.

### General

The Parker Hale 1200TX is the 1980's quintessential single shot target rifle, utilising a Mauser action that was technically a design that had remained largely unchanged since the turn of the century and aperture/tunnel sights that equally would not have seemed out of place in the 1920's. The principle difference was the heavy fully floating barrel and the self contained trigger/safety assembly. The trigger is fully adjustable and the safety catch when applied will lock the trigger, sear and bolt. In essence the 1200TX was a capable and accurate rifle and therefore it made good commercial sense to offer the rifle as a Sniper package.

It seems strange now with our dedicated precision sniper rifles but the M82 was the last of a generation, it was produced at the end of an era when the mindset still dictated that sniper rifles were typically a service rifle conversion. Generation 1 was your service rifle conversion, generation 2 were conversions from target rifles and generation 3 is the current crop of very specialised sniper rifles purposely design for the task that we see today. Another good example of this mindset is the ability of the rifle to be converted back to a target rifle for use by military shooting teams. Cost saving exercises when the "powers to be" failed to recognise the sniper as the effective weapon system that we recognise today.

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The 1200TX is a single shot target rifle which is 46" long and 2.5" at its widest point and weighs approximately 10lbs. The barrel is a heavy fully floating chrome molybdenum steel design and is 26" in length. Woodwork is a tradition bedded design typical of the era and fitted with the usual sling swivels and hand stops etc.

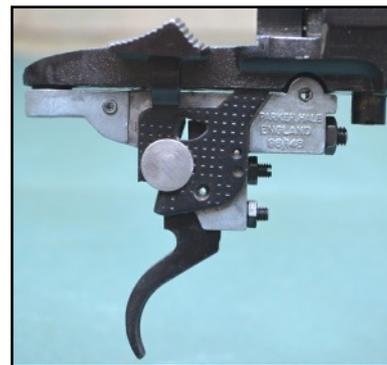
### Principle differences between the 1200TX & the M82

Although there are minor variations of the theme the principle differences are as below:

- Magazine/Trigger Guard - The single shot configuration was replaced with a magazine and trigger guard assembly from the Parker Hale 1200 hunting rifle. This gave the M82 a internal magazine with a five round capacity. The trigger guard had a pivotal floor plate which allowed unused rounds to be removed from the base of the magazine.
- Scope bases - Parker Hales scope bases were typically aluminium, however the M82's were replaced with all steel models to facilitate the fitting a military specification scopes and night vision devices.
- Stock - Two major changes, the fitting of the one piece trigger guard/floor plate for the magazine and the fitting of spacers to permit adjustable butt.
- Iron Sights - Retention of the aperture sights for use as a target rifle.
- Bedding - Receiver is bedded to ensure perfect metal to wood fit.

### Trigger Assembly

The mounting of the trigger assembly is the same as for all Mauser's utilising a singular pin, however Parker Hale has done away with the traditional Mauser trigger and replaced it with a self contained unit of their own design. It is a neat, effective and compact design that secures to the receiver using the customary pin and the rear king screw. For its diminutive size the assembly contains the safety catch, bolt lock, adjustments for backlash and trigger pressure. The safety has a good thumb plate with plenty of grip and when operated has a positive on-off detent action. The safety can only be applied when the action is cocked and in doing so, locks the sear and raises a plate which passes through the receiver and locks the bolt in the downward position. If the operator removes the trigger assembly or adjusts it in any way then the trigger must be "set-up" as per instructions otherwise the sear can bind and the rifle cannot cock. Trigger pressure adjustment can be varied between 2 & 5lbs.



### Barrel

The M82 barrel as far as I am aware is the similar to the 1200TX and is a typical heavy fully floating design 26" long, 0.96 at the chamber narrowing to 0.90 at the muzzle. A possible difference is the foresight block, on the 1200TX the block is secured by two screws and on the M82 it is a sleeved. The crown is recessed and the barrel is finished with a good quality deep blue. Markings on



this rifle is the words "Parker Hale Ltd, Birmingham, England and Model 1200TX 7.62mm NATO, however I guess this would alter to Model 82 for the Sniper version. The bore is in good condition with some minor wear, has four grooves and a twist rate of 1 in 12.

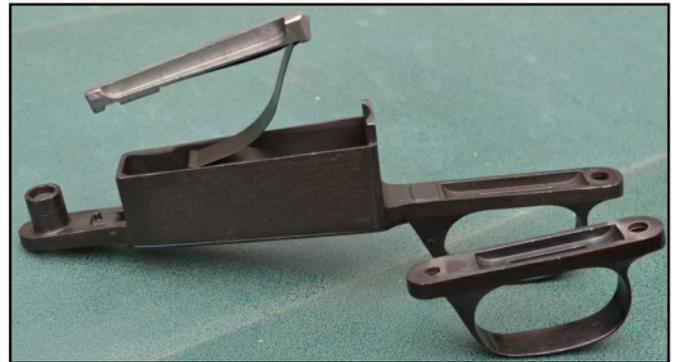
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### Breech Block

The breech block is very much the traditional, classic Mauser design and therefore I have no intention of dwelling upon it. The only minor difference is the bolt shroud and bolt knob. As the safety catch is now part of the trigger assembly, the old "flag" style safety, typical on the old Mauser is redundant and therefore the shroud is now profiled to the receiver, giving the rifle a more modern appearance. The bolt knob is round on the top and flat on its base permitting a flatter profile against the stock and greater clearance for the scope.

### Trigger Guard/Magazine housing assembly

The 1200TX is a typical target rifle designed for single shot operation but it is still fitted with a spring loaded magazine platform. The platform sits in a solid stock, has a shorter spring with sufficient space for one round. Its purpose is essential as the cartridge must feed up into the chamber with the rim of the round positioning itself below and behind the extractor claw. Any attempt by the operator to hand feed the round straight into the chamber, ram the bolt forward and expect the extractor to override the rim will be disappointed and may well break the extractor for his efforts.



With the single shot facility there is no need for a magazine assembly and therefore the 1200TX only has a simple trigger guard as shown in the image above.

Traditionally Mauser designs utilise an internal double stacked box magazine which usually consists of the trigger guard, box magazine, floor plate, spring, magazine platform as a complete assembly and the two king screws pass through the assembly and secure to the receiver. It is highly efficient mechanism with rounds either being loaded singularly or utilising a clip and rarely suffers any form of mis-feed as the magazines lips are integral within the receiver and therefore not subject to damage. Parker Hale utilise this design in many of their hunting rifles and therefore to give the M82 a multi-shot function it was a simplistic task to integrate this magazine/trigger guard assembly.

### Furniture

The M82 stock is where the majority of modifications have taken place. The butt has been remodelled to incorporate a series of spacers thereby making the butt adjustable for length. To achieve this and to add strength a bar has been inserted into the butt which two substantial bolts pass through the recoil pad/spacers and secure into.



To achieve this using a 1200TX stock requires a milling machine and some reasonable wood working skills. The butt has to be cut considerably shorter as the three spacers and the recoil pad add 2.5" to the stocks overall length. This should be done using the milling machine as a square cut is essential, plus the milling bit is required for cutting the slot for the bar. The 1200TX butt is not designed for this modification, therefore once the recoil pad and spacers are fitted the whole butt requires alteration and refinish-

ing to achieve the correct profile. Besides the fitting of a rear sling swivel the next major change that is required is the fitting of the trigger guard/magazine assembly. This requires the magazine well being machined out and the trigger guard/floor plate fitting.



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One of the major differences on the 1200 is the use of a bedding bush as seen on the previous page. This rifle has one but I have seen two on some rifles. These are secured by the front king screw and as a result has to be in-filled.

This particular 1200TX was already bedded but if not, I would recommend that the stock be bedded to maximise the rifle's performance. The M82 and 1200TX were fitted with an ancillary rail and therefore this should be retained and strengthened. As the M82 was designed to be converted from Sniper to target rifle as required by the user, it retained its hand-stop, which appeared to be finished in black, where its civilian counterpart retained its natural finish.



### Scope bases, Rings & Scope

The M82 was fitted with various milspec scopes from the period, namely Kahles, Pecar and Unertl. Good Pecar & Kahles scopes can still be found but at a cost which will probably exceed the purchasing price of the 1200TX, however the chances of finding a Unertl in the UK are fairly remote, bordering on impossible. I was fairly fortunate in that I already had a good quality Pecar 4-10x44 with a German No1 reticule which was in immaculate condition, plus I was able to source a set of steel bases and correct Parker Hale scope rings.



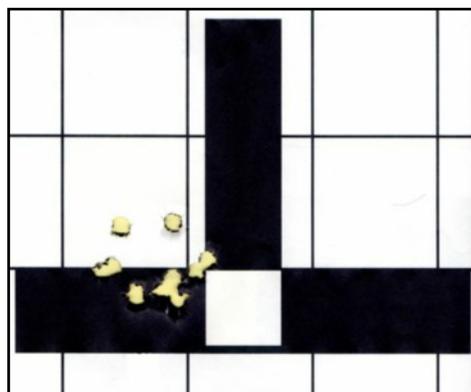
Fitting the scope, I thought was going to be fairly standard procedure, however as is fairly typical in the Armouring business this was not to be the case. The 1200TX was fitted with a aperture rear sight and its original fitting was not all that square and whilst that

minor issue did not effect the target shooter, it was to the successful fitting of the scope bases as it would not permit the scope to align correctly with the bore. In an ideal world and with the scope reticule centred, the scope should align with the bore, thereby giving plenty of windage adjustment. However the more the bases are misaligned the less adjustment that becomes available and with seventies technology scopes that do not have self centring reticules this means your reticule is hard over to the left of right. The solution was to elongate the mounting holes of the rear block by 1mm either side and therefore allow adjustment of the base when fitting. Thus correct alignment was obtained and as can be seen from the image above, height, alignment and eye relief were perfect.

### Range Test

When I first purchased the rifle I took the opportunity to test the rifle's accuracy in its standard target configuration and as can be seen in the image it happily placed ten rounds in a group just under 2" which made it acceptable rifle for conversion.

With all the rifle's modifications now completed, I function tested the rifle, checked headspace, firing pin protrusion and was ready to range test. The function test did reveal a minor issue, the 1200TX was a single shot affair but because of the extractor the round had to place onto the right side of the platform and depressed until it was held in place by the receiver lips, however the rifle was now magazine feed which means like a K98 the rounds are double stacked and rounds feeding from the left side were binding.



Ammunition was a standard load straight out of the Hornady manual which was a 150gr Sierra FMJBT bullet and 43.5gr of Vihtavouri N140, which I was using for range testing all my magazine feed rifles.

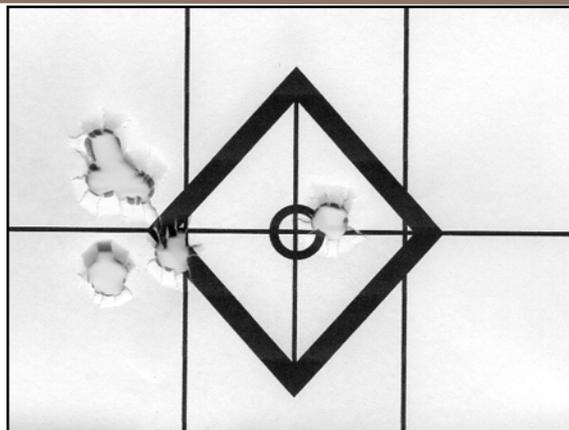
My first range test was on a lovely autumn day and the purpose was to zero and attempt a group. I had some concerns concerning the group as this was not a new barrel, although the barrel appeared to have been well looked after during its history and therefore there was no pitting, deposits or discolouration, the lands were starting to wear at approximately 30%. I was shooting from a bench at 100yds, using a rest with no noticeable wind, I obtained a 25mm group and went on to accurately zero the rifle as can be seen in the image on the next page.

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However my earlier comment concerning the left hand round in the magazine not feeding smoothly continued to haunt me. The reason for the problem was the distance between receiver feed lips being insufficient to accommodate rounds being feed from left & right onto the feed ramp. With hindsight this was not surprising as the single shot rifle was designed only to feed from the right side of the platform. The solution was to remove a few thou from each lip which in turn provided sufficient clearance for each round to feed without binding.

### Summary

The M82 represents together with its donor rifle the 1200TX some of the last commercially successful rifles produced by Parker Hale. The M84, M85 and the L81A1 Cadet rifle came later and were generally the last before the



company was sold to Gibbs in the USA and in doing so the last large UK firearms manufacture came to an end. Therefore I am keen to preserve this rifle and its history. From a historical aspect this rifle is of interest as it represents the transitional period between the converted infantry sniper rifle to the dedicated machines we see today.

The M82 is an accurate rifle and I had no trouble getting three rounds all touching in one ragged hole at 100yds and therefore

in the accuracy stakes it is definitely a step up from the converted infantry rifle, however its target rifle heritage shines through and therefore as a sniper rifle it is overly heavy and shooting standing or kneeling would excessively tire the Sniper. However on the flip side the extra weight absorbs recoil and therefore it is easier and quicker to re-acquire the target.

Converting the 1200TX was not a “walk in the park”, however it was not hard either but did require good research, access to Parker Hale Parts, a good period scope and sufficient gunsmithing skills to carry out a professional job. The project took approximately three months in between work for other people but was well worth it in the end as the rifle is a joy to shoot. Although not shown in the images above, original Parker Hale bipod's are still available and therefore it is my intention to replace the handstop and the old front sling swivel with the correct bipod as a modern Harris just wouldn't look the part.

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