

WORCESTER NORTON SHOOTING CLUB

MINI-RIFLE SHOOTING

The only type of semi automatic (or self loading) rifle that can be legally owned in the UK is .22 rimfire. This follows the Hungerford tragedy, when a licensed shooter 'ran amok' with a self loading rifle.

The .22 semi automatic rifles we use are generally known nowadays as "mini - rifles".

The guns.

The mini rifle market is dominated by just one make and model - the Ruger 10/22. All the club semi-autos are 10/22's. The 10/22 is available in a variety of "guises" as standard - wood stock, synthetic stock and so on. As standard gun comes with a 10 round magazine and open sights. An example is pictured on the right.

It has to be said though that as standard these rifles are ripe for "development" and because of their popularity there's a vast array of components to improve them on the market, from replacement stocks, trigger and bolt kits, and extended magazine releases through to barrels. If you have very deep pockets you can build up a custom gun with very little of the original remaining!



There's an example of a custom build pictured left. Whilst this rifle hasn't had the "extreme" makeover that some indulge in it sports a laminated stock, extended magazine release, titanium firing pin and custom bolt and a bull barrel. For a rifle like this you're looking at an outlay of several hundred pounds, plus sights and extra magazines.

The author shoots mini-rifle as a "fun" discipline so didn't want to invest a large amount in equipment. The rifle pictured right is a Sabatti (10/22 "clone" made under licence in Italy) and cost the princely sum of £70, secondhand from the club shop. A cheap and cheerful (£30) red dot sight was added, a muzzle brake at around £10 and a couple of 25 round 'banana' magazines (around £25 each for good ones) completed the set up. Less than the cost of even a budget air rifle!



There are, of course, alternatives to the Ruger 10/22 available BUT the limiting factor to most of these is the lack of availability of high capacity after market magazines. The majority of semi-auto rimfires (including the 10/22) come with a 10 round magazine as standard. Mini-rifle competitions have a high round count so high capacity magazines are an absolute must. 25 and even 30 round magazines are freely available for the 10/22 but there's little available for other makes. So, if you want to shoot mini-rifle competitions a Ruger 10/22 (or one of its "clones") it pretty well has to be.

Equipment.

Apart from a rifle sight (red dot or scope + a laser for some) and magazine(s) little else is required, apart from cleaning equipment. Some like to add a muzzle brake to the 'business end' of the barrel - you can see one on my rifle above. The idea of this is to dissipate the gases from firing evenly, reducing muzzle flip, and getting the gun back on target quickly in speed shooting events.

Running costs

The beauty of rimfire shooting is that ammunition is so cheap. 50 rounds can be had for as little as a couple of pounds. Even the high velocity copper washed rounds used by many for mini-rifle competition shooting come out at less than £3 a box (50). Note that rimfire ammunition cannot be home loaded.

Competitions.

Semi-auto .22 rimfire rifles aren't the best choice for precision style shooting at static targets. That's not to say they're inherently inaccurate, just that bolt action rifles are a better option for precision shooting. Where the semi-auto excels though is in mini-rifle competitions.

These are move and shoot events, against the clock and there's a mini rifle competition at the club on the third Sunday (morning) of every month and its great fun.

A typical course of fire might be as follows:-

Standing around 6 feet away from a door containing a rectangular opening (app. 2 ft by 2 ft) at roughly chest height and with the gun loaded and cocked engage 6 targets with one round each.

Take the prone position, on a mat, still behind the door and engage the same 6 targets with one round each through a letter box style opening near the base of the door.

Stand, move forward approx. 18 feet, reach down and pull cord that's on the ground. This activates a moving target visible for around 4 seconds before disappearing from view. Engage the target with two rounds.

Move to the right, around 20 feet, where there's a car wheel flat on the ground with a pole rising vertically from the centre. Standing on the rim of the wheel, engage 6 targets with one round each from the left side of the pole And then one round on each from the right of the pole. (This means shooting one of the 6 shot strings from the weak shoulder and a magazine change too by now).

Move around 10 feet right and 6 feet forward (to a marker on the ground) and, shooting from the hip, engage 5 baton rounds ("rubber bullets" - quite small) until all have fallen.

Remember, all of this is against the clock - your score on the targets is divided by the time taken to arrive at a result for each shooter. So, there's a choice to make - slow and super accurate or fast and sacrifice accuracy.

The picture below will give you some idea of what a layout (not the one described) looks like, but its far better if you see one for yourself - just come along and watch when there's a competition on.

