

Brothers in arms

The William Evans Pall Mall is the result of an Anglo-Spanish collaboration which brings together quality materials and expert craftsmanship. **Martin Puddifer** reports.

In 2010, the best London gunmaker William Evans joined forces with Grulla Armas, based in Eibar, Spain, to create an affordable shotgun which exemplifies the best of English and Spanish gunmaking. The result was the Pall Mall, a side-by-side sidelock with William Evans' hand-engraved foliate scroll, which dates back to the 1920s. The made-to-measure shotgun, which comes in a range of bores, is manufactured in Spain using five of Grulla Armas' finest craftsmen. It is finished - time and specification allowing - in the UK.

The people at the forefront of this Anglo-Spanish relationship are Robin Hawes, manager of the William Evans gun shop at Bisley Shooting Ground, and Jose Luis Usobiaga, general manager of Grulla Armas who, along with his son, Inigo, the export manager, oversee the production of around 315 handmade shotguns, rifles and double rifles each year.



Nigel Hadden-Paton of William Evans (centre) with **Inigo Usobiaga** & **Jose Luis Usobiaga** from Grulla Armas.



The new Pall Mall is a side-by-side sidelock available and costs £15,000.

Q Why did you want to work with another gunmaker to create a shotgun?

INIGO USOBIAGA: It was a good opportunity for both William Evans and ourselves. William Evans asked perhaps the best gunmaker in Spain to manufacture its new model and we had the opportunity to manufacture a high quality shotgun. This puts Grulla Armas right in the shop window, both in the UK and elsewhere too. We admire the professionalism of the William Evans team, from gunsmiths to salesmen, and this has laid the foundation for the clear and fluent relationship we currently enjoy with them.

ROBIN HAWES: I first met Jose Luis at the Game Fair three years ago and liked him straight away. It's great to be working together with Grulla Armas. Over the past 125 years William Evans has worked with the likes of Webley & Scott and John Robertson, so our relationship with Grulla

Armas is a continuation of that tradition of collaboration. Most recently of course we worked in collaboration with the Italian gunmaker Caesar Guerini to create the St. James over-under, and through the Pall Mall we can add an affordable side-by-side to our collection.

Q How did you negotiate on what materials to use for the Pall Mall - what factors influenced the choices you made?

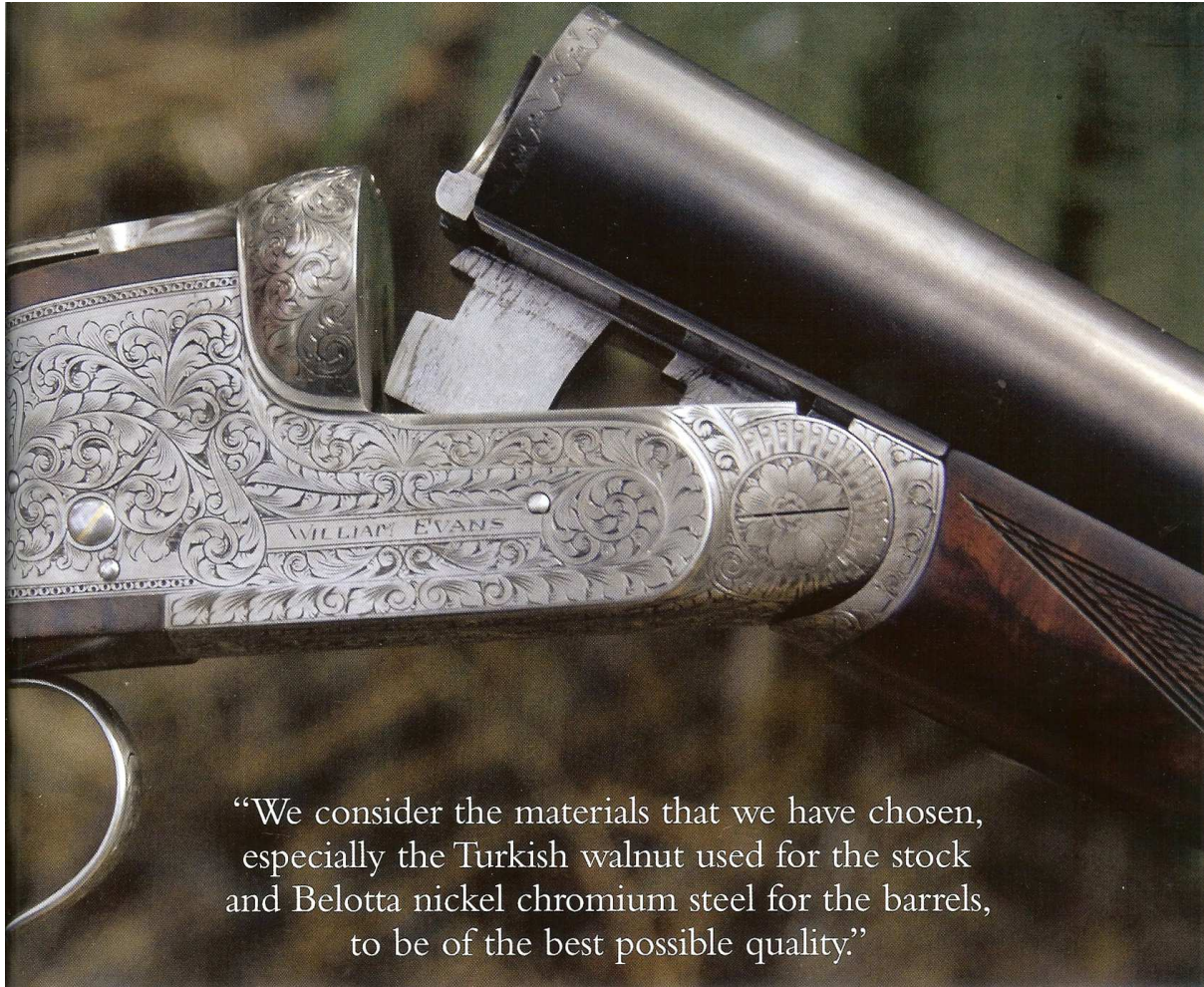
INIGO USOBIAGA: We consider the materials that we have chosen, especially the Turkish walnut used to create the stock and the Belotta nickel chromium steel for the barrels, to be of the best possible quality.

ROBIN HAWES: We obviously have great faith in Grulla Armas so we gave them a lock plate from one of our guns of 80 years or so ago to copy the engraving. This worked well. Their locks have

proved themselves more than adequate. The King of Spain uses them after all. The stocks are made of highly figured Turkish walnut so the only other thing to concentrate on was the barrels which are made from excellent steel.

Q How do you think the Pall Mall demonstrates the best of English and Spanish gunmaking values?

ROBIN HAWES: The William Evans and Grulla Armas self-opener is a copy of the Holland & Holland one, which was patented in 1922. It's a little heavier than the Holland (the Pall Mall 12 bore weighs 7lb), which makes it the perfect high bird gun. In terms of difference between the Pall Mall and other guns in our range; there's the price - its under half the price of our best London guns; the weight - we want the Pall Mall to be a high bird gun; and the engraving - you haven't got a choice



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of the engraving on the Pall Mall because of the deal we struck with Grulla Armas at the beginning of our relationship.

Q Were there any particular dilemmas you had to overcome in the design/construction process?

ROBIN HAWES: There are things like the ribs being tinned or brazed, whether or not to proof them in England or Spain, and of course the engraving. The guns are engraved in Spain and have Grulla serial numbers as well as our own. Spanish barrels normally have their ribs brazed whereas in UK they are tinned.

Q How do you manage your relationship given the distance between you?

ROBIN HAWES: I have been a regular visitor to Eibar for some time now, but both Nigel Hadden-

Paton (a William Evans director) and myself, have a mutual friend who is not only bilingual but also passionate about shooting. His wife is Spanish and he's the perfect person to manage our relationship with Grulla Armas. We really couldn't have hoped for a better person to have on our team.

Q All Pall Malls are made to fit the individual measurements of the customer. Given the gun is being made in Spain, how can a customer in the UK be confident their gun is going to fit them if they've never held it?

ROBIN HAWES: William Evans is co-located with Bisley Shooting Ground and they have two qualified gun fitters who can give our clients gun fittings. After that it's down to barrel length and wood, and if the client wants we can always get

photographs of the wood while it's in the blank form. If absolutely necessary the client can go to Eibar to make sure they are happy with the way in which things are progressing.

Q Are there plans to collaborate with Grulla Armas in the future?

ROBIN HAWES: We're the sole agent for Grulla Armas in the UK, so anything they do they do through us and we're delighted with that. Yes they make double rifles, and we might extend the Pall Mall range into that too. In the past we have had clients who have had double rifles made and they are extremely happy with them. ■

The William Evans Pall Mall retails at £15,000 including VAT. For more information contact 01483 486500 or visit www.williamevans.com. For Grulla Armas visit www.grullaarmas.com.