

HUNTING WITH A HOME MADE WHEEL-LOCK

By Michael Carrick



Figure 1. Contemporary made wheel-lock by Earl Wyatt.

An article on contemporary gunmakers in NZ in the June e-Gazette brought Earl Wyatt of Upper Hutt to mind. About twenty years ago I was driving around NZ flogging my CSI equipment and supplies to the police. While waiting in the airport to fly home to Oregon, I came across an article in an old magazine about Earl Wyatt. He was shown shooting a wheellock rifle that he had made. When I got home, I wrote to him and asked if he had one of his wheel-lock rifles for sale. He didn't. But a couple of years later he wrote to tell me his health was not so good, and he offered to sell me his personal wheel-lock. He also asked me to shoot some big game with it, as he had always hoped to do that himself, but now it would not be possible. There is a very fine four-page article in the July 1991 issue No. 5 of *New Zealand Guns* about Earl and several guns he made, including this one.



Figure 2. The author with a wildebeest.

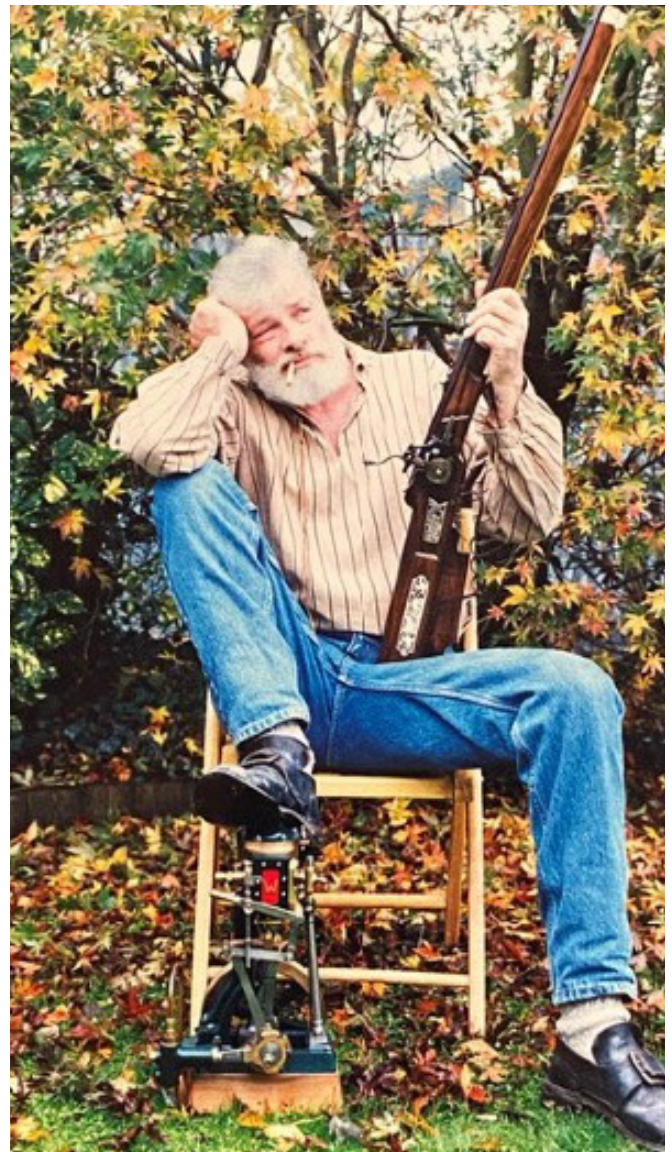


Figure 3. Earl Wyatt - He made the gun, the chair, the steam engine, and his shoes.

I first took it to the island of Ni'ihau, in the Hawaiian chain, and shot feral pigs and rams. This was a learning experience. There are several steps to shooting a wheel-lock; wind the wheel, bring the cock down on the top of the wheel, pull the rear set-trigger, squeeze off the front trigger. I had the gun on cross sticks aiming at a large ram at about 75 yards, squeezed the front trigger, the clock-spring wound serrated wheel whizzed, and nothing happened. I had neglected to pull the cock holding the iron pyrites down on top of the serrated wheel. Eventually, I got the steps into muscle memory, and the hunt was very successful.

Next outing was to a very large game ranch near Port Elizabeth, South Africa. I also took a largebore flintlock rifle built in Fort Collins, Colorado, as an exact copy of an 1790 John Manton. I hunted one day with the flintlock, and the next day with the wheel-lock, for seven days. The Kudu that I shot with the wheel-lock ranked No. 3 in the Safari Club Record Book for game taken with a muzzleloader in Africa.

The rifle is .575 cal round ball, and I used 105 gr FFFg for the Kudu. I used 75 gr for the Hawaiian hunt. The stock is NZ Walnut. The ivory inlays are scrimshawed by Syd Holland.



Figure 4. The author with a kudu.



Figure 5. An original 1666 dated wheel-lock owned by the author.

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