

Puppy LOVE!

It's been a long time coming, but an all-new model bearing the Brocock marque has finally arrived – and, as **Nigel Allen** finds out, its ground-breaking concept could well set a new trend for PCP manufacture...

Brocock is a name long associated with unique products. Formed by the Silcock brothers, Gary and Nigel, in 1989 – hence the name: *Brothers Silcock* – the original airguns were synonymous with the unique Tandem Air Cartridge system until its prohibition in 2003. Revolvers like the Orion 6 and Cobra, along with other magnificent creations like the TAC-firing Safari and Fox rifles, helped establish Brocock as a very *avant-garde* gunmaker.

This was further emphasised when CO2 airguns came off-ticket in 1997; Brocock was one of the first gunmakers to distribute the Umarex-made CO2 semi-auto air pistols modelled on firearm equivalents such as the Walther P88, Colt A1 1911 Government and Beretta 92. Indeed, alongside the TAC models, the CO2-powered *doppelgänger*s were a very natural association. And when Brocock branched out into the PCP world, they delivered us very interesting takes on a pneumatic theme, such as the skeleton-stocked, ultra-compact Contour.

After a long, quiet period following the acquisition by the Dianna Group, Brocock's newest release continues the company's tradition of supplying innovative airguns – and it comes in the form of a side-bolt, multi-shot PCP called the Compatto. Those who speak Italian will know that translates as 'compact' – and it's so named because the rifle is built around a semi-bullpup concept.

What's a semi-bullpup? Rather obviously, it's a halfway house between a carbine rifle and a fully cut-down bullpup. Is there a need for such a gun? Well, when I first heard of the project, I had my doubts – but after a few months testing various prototypes and, now, the full-production model, I'm totally sold on its concept.

On its handling attributes alone, I'm sure the Compatto is going to prove a roaring success for Brocock. I also think it will lay a foundation that many other PCP makers seriously consider offering themselves.

Bullpups – where the action is dropped a long way back into the stock – aren't everyone's cup of tea. Like or loathe the bullpup look, there's also the fact that (with, perhaps, the exception of Daystate's Pulsar) too many engineering sacrifices have to be made – not least the linkage that's required to set the trigger much further forward. And then there's your cheek placement, which ends up being rather uncomfortable on the breech, rather than any part of the stock.



The trigger has been engineered further forward by design



The reach-forward ramp acts as an intermount, providing a good base to fit a scope onto

TEST: BROCK COCK COMPATTO

TECHNICAL SPECIFICATIONS

MAKER: Brocock, England
MODEL: Compatto
TYPE: 10-shot, semi-bullpup precharged pneumatic
COCKING: Straight-pull side bolt
CALIBRE: .177 (tested) and .22
MAGAZINE: 10-shot rotary, removable
FILL PRESSURE: 200BAR maximum
SHOTS PER FILL: 80+ (on .177 test model at full power setting)
OVERALL LENGTH: 826mm
BARREL LENGTH: 470mm
WEIGHT: 3.04kg (unscoped; manufacturer's claim)
SIGHTS: None fitted, scope only
STOCK: Ambidextrous skeletal thumbhole, ballistic polymer
LENGTH OF PULL: 366mm
TRIGGER: Two-stage, adjustable
SAFETY: Manual in-guard switch, resettable
POWER: Variable – 9-12ft/lb. FAC versions available
SRP: £589 incl. quick-fill probe
CONTACT: Brocock • www.brocock.co.uk



But by creating a semi-bullpup, Brocock have brought together the perfect blend of comfort and handling – and it all starts at the trigger which is engineered much further forward by design, rather than through modification.

Stick it all inside a fairly orthodox-looking stock – made from ballistic polymer in the Compatto's case – and you end up thinking: "Why hasn't anyone done something like that before?" Actually, I'm sure many gunmakers will be kicking themselves under their design tables, wondering why they never thought of it. With the luxury of hindsight, it seems such an obvious thing to do!

Aesthetically, the Compatto looks almost like any 'normal' pneumo. Brocock present us with a rather tasty-looking thumbhole skeleton stock (which bears homage to their highly popular Contour series) and a typical PCP action, with a barrel-over-cylinder design emanating from a standard breech block incorporating the bolt and magazine assembly.

Pick it up, however, and the differences immediately become apparent. Were it not for its weight being more like that of a rifle, you'd be forgiven for thinking that you're bringing a shoulder-stocked pistol onto aim, such is its compact frame and overall 'pointability'.

As well as the trigger's being positioned further forward – at the front end of the breech block, rather than the usual rear – the overall action has been nudged a bit further back in the stock. However, it's not so far back as to dispense with a conventional cheekpiece. What the ambi-stocked Compatto has is a very comfortable comb that allows you to nestle in in pretty much the same fashion as on any conventionally stocked air rifle.

But be that as it may, your head position is obviously much closer to the breech and, therefore, closer to a breech-mounted scope. While you *can* use the 11mm dovetail sections either side of the magazine housing on the breech block to mount a telly, you'll struggle with eye relief unless you like to hold your head well back on the comb.

So the way Brocock has overcome this problem is to incorporate a giant reach-forward ramp – a kind of intermount – which clamps to the front section of the breech block and provides a good base onto which you can then mount a scope in the usual fashion.

It slightly raises the eyeline, so you'll have to steer clear of high mounts, but I don't think it'll be a problem as there's plenty of space between the



The butt pad is height-adjustable

shrouded barrel and even the largest scope's objective with medium mounts. I had no issues when mounting a 30mm Optisan EVX 3-12x44i – and despite this being quite a chunky scope, the medium mounts lifted its eyepiece well clear of the magazine, too.

Because it's an innovative concept, the more I shot the Compatto, the more it became abundantly obvious this isn't a rifle which has simply been transferred from the drawing boards straight to the end product; there's clearly been lots of hands-on evaluation in between. It's one of those rifles that you get straight 'into', and you'll want for nothing.

While my test sample's action was the full-production version (albeit with a trial finish), Brocock advised me midway through my testing period that they had managed to change some of the internal structure of its synthetic stock to knock the rifle's overall weight down to 3.04kg. This was after concerns that – even at my rifle's 3.5kg weight – the Compatto's smaller dimensions present an illusion that the rifle's heavier than it actually is.

I understand where they're coming from, although the scales proved to me that the 'apparent' weightiness of my test sample was a figment of my imagination! I don't think 'my' Compatto's mass needed reducing, but if what arrives in the gun shops is 400 grams or so lighter, it won't be to the rifle's detriment.

Although it's ambidextrous, the Compatto's handle feels tailor-made and without compromise – something many ambi stocks don't quite pull off. I love the skeletal butt, and the sculpted contours from its belly to the front of the trigger guard really soften what is an otherwise quite angular shape.



Above: The Compatto is a perfect blend of comfort and handling

At the rear is a height-adjustable butt pad, while into the short forestock is moulded a 50mm long Weaver/Picatinny accessory rail. This will allow gadgets like a bipod, sling, flashlight or laser to be added and I'm told there's a cover for this which will be included with the first batch of rifles that arrive in gun shops. Furthermore, if you want to add a sling, there's a hole already pre-drilled into the toe of the butt.

The rake of the thumbhole pistol grip is relatively steep – almost match-like – yet thanks to a slim girth, it feels totally 'sporter' in the hold. Oddly, considering it's slightly longer than average, the pull length of 366mm also feels absolutely right; it's another one of those instances I mentioned earlier, where Brocock has dismissed what would be 'the norm' on paper in favour of what works in practice.

By the same token, I never felt short-changed despite the forend measuring up at only 180mm. Whether I was shooting in the kneeling, standing, sitting or prone stances, it again felt natural. There's no chequering, nor stippling, but such is the very ergonomic shaping of the Compatto's stock, I didn't feel it was at all necessary.

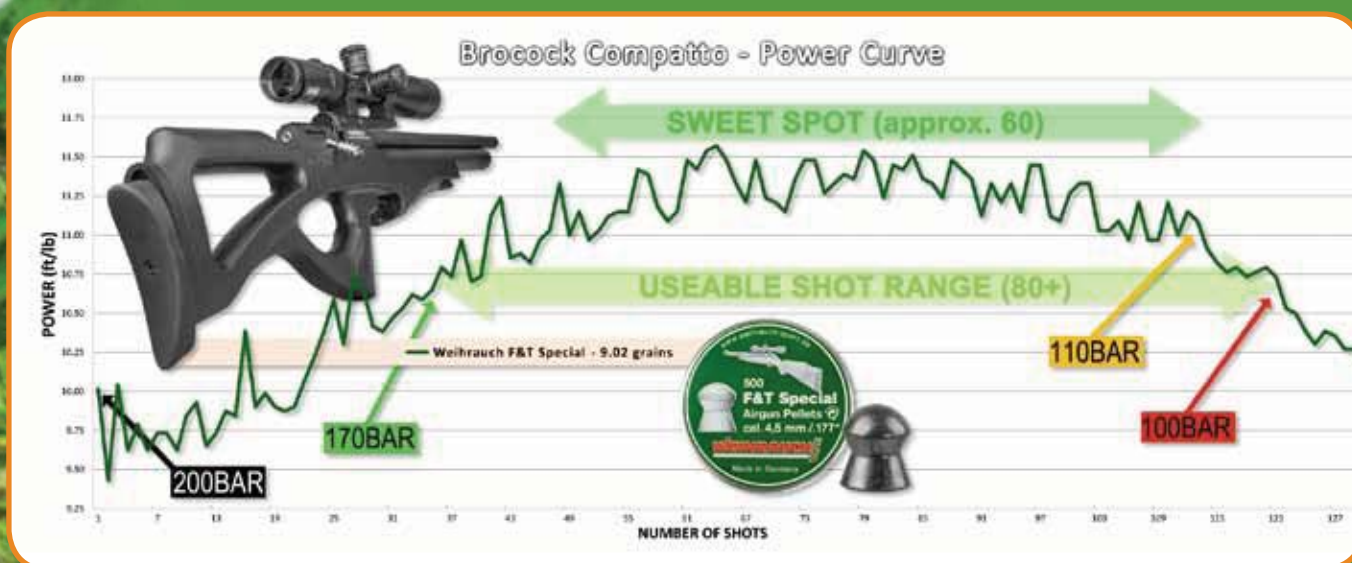
The action is held in place via just the one bolt – a long job that runs all the way through the pistol grip, à la vintage BSAs. Being



There's 50mm of moulded Picatinny rail for accessories



The rake of the grip is quite steep, but its slim girth makes it feel totally 'sporter' in the hold



a hi-tech moulding, the action-to-stock fit is extraordinarily solid, and Brocock have applied a 'no touch' philosophy forward of the breech block.

In other words, no part of the air cylinder is in contact with the stock, so any minuscule movement that may occur with the change in pressure as the gun cycles through its charge will not manifest itself in the form of zero-shift.

Brocock issue a 200BAR maximum instruction, but you can see from the power curve above that my sample's start pressure was lower, at 170BAR. When filled to this, the Compatto's diminutive air cylinder returned just over 80 shots within a 0.75ft/lb power curve, with a good 60 of them falling in a flat 'sweet spot'. Bearing in mind this was with ammo plucked straight from the tin, such stats are excellent – testament to the 'slingshot' valve system.

Designed from scratch especially for Brocock by airgun engineer, Steve Harper, the valve uses an anti-rebound system to stop the hammer bouncing to a halt on the valve stem after the initial hit – something that occurs on many precharged pneumatics to waste air after the shot. The result is that the rifle uses air far more efficiently throughout the charge – hence a better return on shots.

The charging procedure is via a standard plug-in probe (supplied), and the inlet port is protected by a rotary collar that can be 'closed' to stop any dirt ingress into the system. In front of this is a manometer to let you know how your air's doing – just make double sure the rifle's unloaded and safe before you look at it.

Interestingly, Brocock have chosen to equip the Compatto with a power adjuster – a turnscrew located to the right of the breech. Turning roughly through an eighth turn between high and low power, it's primarily for overseas markets – though it will work on UK-bound, sub-12ft/lb guns, too. Daystate say you'll be able to reduce power by about 30 per cent, though I could lower my sample gun's velocity by 300fps. For close-quarter hunters, it's a strong sales feature.

For field shooters wanting to keep everything cranked to full power, the Compatto's muzzle report is kept tamed courtesy of an integral reflex sound suppression system. Ahead of the muzzle proper, Brocock have installed a baffled deflector chamber which 'reverse-thrusts' all the noisy air surrounding the pellet back down the void between the barrel and its shroud, where its sound is dissipated. However, if you want to soak up what report that remains, simply



Charging is via a standard plug-in probe. The inlet port is protected by a rotary collar



Forward from the side bolt is a turnscrew to adjust power



You can unscrew the knurled collar to attach a secondary silencer to the 1/2in UNF thread



The large cutaway section makes magazine loading very easy

unscrew the knurled collar and attach a secondary silencer of your choosing to the Compatto's 1/2in UNF thread.

Cocking is via a rather neat, straight-pull bolt on the right side of the breech block. Made from stainless steel, once lifted from its keeper position, it cycles through a 26mm throw to cock the hammer and index the rotary magazine on the rear stroke, loading the pellet into the rifling of the Lothar Walther barrel on its return.

The magazine extracts from the left of the breech and is an all-metal affair that is a significant improvement on Brocock's previous S6 multi-shot models. Featuring a 10-shot, spring-activated rotor within the main cassette, it performed flawlessly on my test rifle thanks to its integral pawl system which is activated by the bolt's probe. It's also a very easy magazine to load up, courtesy of the large cutaway section which allows you to press pellets into their chambers.

You can load pellets individually into the barrel, but it's a little fiddly; I only did this to establish if there were any pellet/bore alignment issues with the magazine that may have affected accuracy. Needless to say, I was able to group the mag-fed pellets every bit as well as the individually hand-fed ones – we're talking 20mm groups at 35 metres and hunting-acceptable accuracy out to 45 metres.

It came as no surprise that, barrelled with a Lothar, the Compatto performed best with all the quality brands – AADF, AccuPell, H&N's FTT, RWS's Superdome and Rangemaster Sovereign – and some of my rested long-range five-shot groups (with Sovereigns) printed 15mm clusters. That's a target performance in my book, and far more than is needed for the field – but, as a hunting rifle, the Compatto has got everything going for it.

It's compact enough for shooting out of a hide, and light enough to hike up hill and down dale... and you'll have no problem holding it steady for the shot from whatever stance is dictated. Rarely do I shoot from a standing position, unrested, but I was regularly able to flatten a 40mm knockdown silhouette with the test rifle with an entire magazine – right out to 40 yards!

Of course, a good trigger is an essential for results like this, and my test gun's accuracy especially highlighted what an excellent job Brocock's designers have done with the Compatto's. It may have been placed a little further forward than 'normal', but its performance doesn't suffer because of it. Not one jot!

It's a two-stager with plenty of adjustment; I had a very light first stage coming to a noticeable stop-point, which required minimal pressure to break through. There was no creepiness, nor sponginess – and the flat-faced, curved blade all added to the very, very enjoyable trigger experience. I don't say that about many triggers – and definitely not about 'bullpup' ones.

It's backed up by an in-guard, manually operated safety catch. Again, Brocock have given us another slight departure from the norm in that it's a switch that moves from side to side, rather than the usual back and forth. It 'clicks' beautifully into its left and right positions – a sign that it's as well engineered as the rest of the rifle.

That said, though, the 'on' and 'off' positions are a little confusing: the rifle's in 'fire' mode when the side with the red dot on it has been moved to its outermost position. Trouble is, because that red dot is so visible, you're never quite sure if the catch is fully across or not! (If this were my own rifle, I'd probably put dabs of green and red paint on either side of the guard to remind me which way is 'safe' and which way is 'armed'.)

However, it doesn't take away from what is a truly remarkable rifle – especially given its asking price of £589 which places it firmly at the affordable end of the market. While this new gun bears all the hallmarks of the Brocock PCPs that have gone before it, the Compatto carries a certain individuality which heralds a new era for the now Staffordshire-based gunmaker. In fact, the Compatto is more than that. I believe Brocock's semi-bullpup interpretation is about to change the face of PCP design as we know it... ●

The manual safety catch comes in the form of a switch that moves from side to side within the trigger guard

