

# SPORTING Gun

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# Case law

**Robert Morgan** marvels in the 'box of goodies' designed for the travelling gentleman of the 19th century to deal with any danger that came his way

**W**e live in comparatively safe times, despite the impression one can garner from the media. It is unlikely that your car will be pulled over by armed highwaymen while driving on the M25, or that you will be held up and robbed walking home from work. Incidents like these are rare in this day and age, but it wasn't always so.

In Georgian and Victorian times travelling over any reasonable distance could be a perilous affair, and no self-respecting gentleman (or indeed lady, for that matter) would dream of undertaking a lengthy journey unarmed. Add foreign travel to the equation and the situation was a whole lot worse. For if someone committed a heinous crime against your person, while news did travel, it didn't travel very fast and it could be weeks or months until your family back home knew of your fate. It was your right to defend yourself by whatever means necessary, and anyone with any wealth or items worth stealing would do so.

**"It contains arms for almost every eventuality and all the necessary accoutrements"**

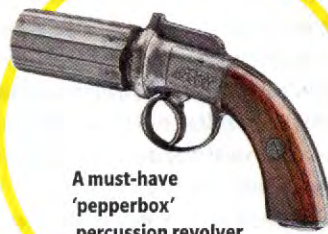
## All eventualities

The cased set pictured on these pages is a rare survivor from these troubled times, for so many have been broken up into their components and scattered to the four corners. It is the type of casing that a gentleman who intended travelling to the subcontinent would acquire to accommodate the various weapons he may need, both during the journey and afterwards on arrival. Not only does it contain arms for almost every eventuality but also all the accoutrements required to both load and fire those weapons.

So, what did he consider he needed? First, there is a pair of percussion muff or

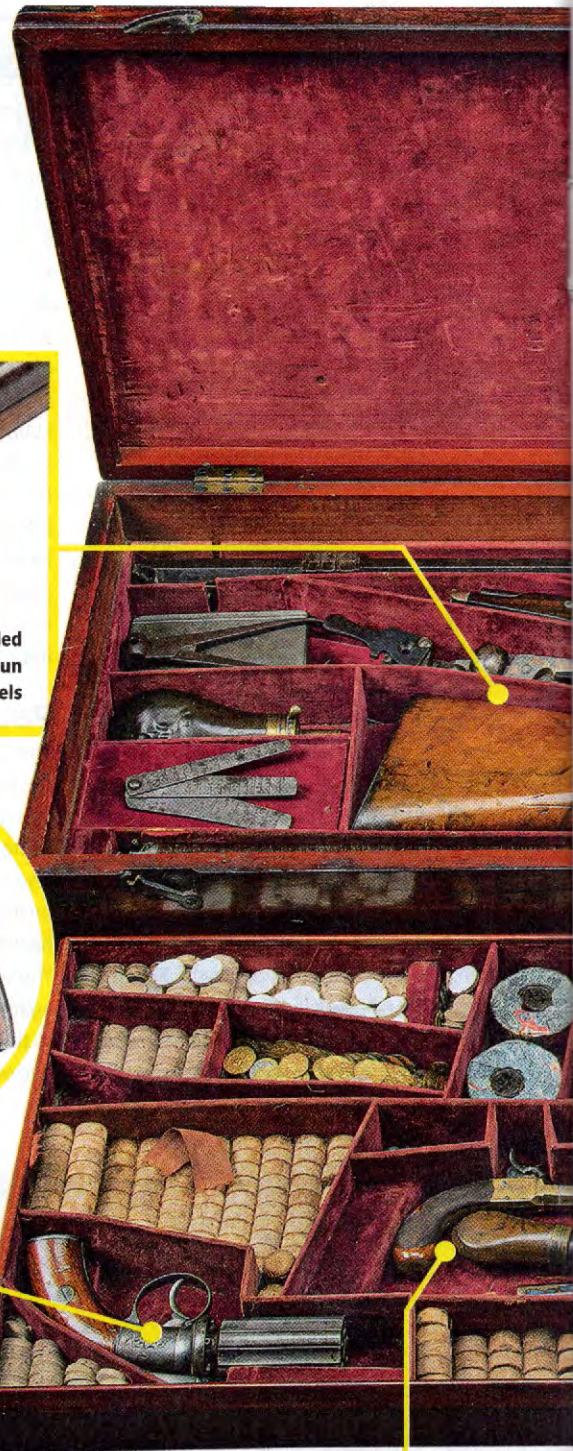


A double-barrelled 14-bore sporting gun with damascus barrels



A must-have 'pepperbox' percussion revolver

pocket pistols. These small pistols packed quite a punch at close range, and they could even have been for use by the owner's wife or partner. A definite must-have when riding a coach or carriage through potential 'badlands'. Next, there is a 'pepperbox' percussion revolver. Used for much the same purpose, it also had a somewhat sobering effect on the unruly. The sight of six barrels pointing in your general direction was usually enough to bring a halt to a dangerous situation, the rapid-fire capability a bonus. Then there are a pair of holster or belt-pistols. Much larger in the bore and of officer or duelling size, these



A useful pair of percussion muff or pocket pistols

This case is a rare survivor from more troubled times

were great items to carry if you were on horseback; possibly the owner was an officer and intended to use them for military purposes. Beneath the tray that holds these five pistols is another layer, and this layer holds both a medium-calibre percussion rifle and a double-barrelled percussion shotgun. The rifle would be good enough for most soft-skinned animals, even dangerous ones, and the shotgun is a classic item for putting food on the table.



A 60-bore, single-barrel rifle, signed 'Akrill', is part of this collection

### Provenance

Interestingly, all the pistols are by Jeavons, a Birmingham gunmaker of some repute, but the rifle and shotgun are both by other lesser-known makers. We cannot know for certain, but the scenario was probably as follows: a gentleman, name unknown, has to travel to India in the 1840s. Up until now he has had no use for self-protection weapons, but that is about to change. He goes to the establishment of Jeavons in Birmingham and asks if they can equip him with a large and a small pair of pistols, a revolver that can be carried in an overcoat and can they case everything, including his two existing Sporting arms, together with all the accessories that he is going to have difficulty

obtaining while abroad. There is a chance, of course, that the rifle and shotgun have been replaced at a later date and the originals were also by Jeavons, but the fact they fit the case exactly makes this unlikely.

All in all, a rare set. I have only seen one other in 40 years and that one did not include the pepperbox. Even the cases are rare, the few that have survived have invariably been stripped of their trays and compartments. Today, it might be better termed 'an instant gun collection'. ■

The holster or belt-pistols are of duelling size



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