

The Husqvarna Model 1907 9mm BL features a grip safety and five-inch barrel.

to the Husqvarna's classic profile and its aura of times past.

Having been imported into the United Kingdom, the Husqvarna had necessarily been submitted to the Proof House for formal testing, and therefore

was rejected due to perceived shortcomings in caliber and penetration (but then, after the .455 Webley, *anything* seems a little anemic!).

In 1903 to 1904, however, an improved Model 1900 — the Model 1903 — was submitted for consideration by

Handloading the 9mm Browning Long

Nigel Utting

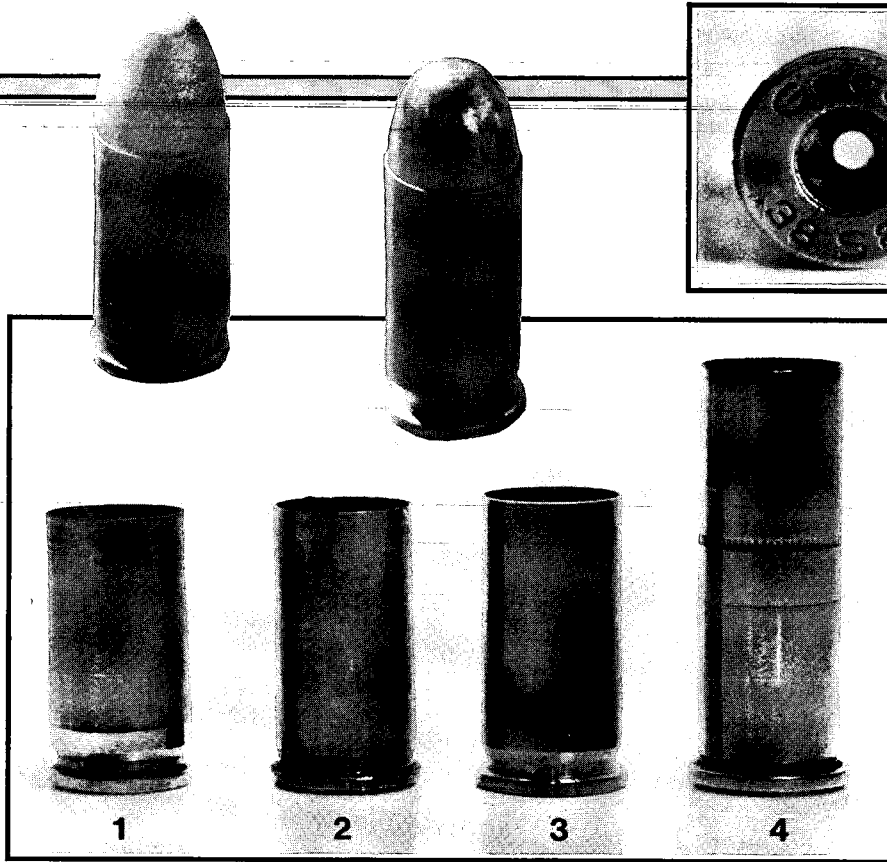
THERE ARE some days when you visit your local gunshop for something mundane like a box of primers, and leave with slightly more. Then you spend the entire evening trying to explain to your long-suffering spouse what a wise investment you've just made, i.e., another gun! My impulse purchase — sorry, investment — was a Husqvarna Model 1907, the Swedish-manufactured version of the Browning Model 1903. Until that day I had not been much of a collector of old guns, but I was strongly attracted

bore the imprint "9mm .80." As an avid handloader, what I had treated myself to was not a standard 9mmx19 (9mm Parabellum), which would have been marked "9mmP .752," but a pistol chambered in 9mm Browning Long.

The pistol which would develop into Browning's excellent model of 1903 was preceded by the models of 1899 and 1900, the latter having been adopted in 7.65mm (.32) by the Belgian government in July 1900 for use by the military, the Gendarmerie and the Garde Civique. The same model was considered in that year for adoption by both the British army and navy, but

the Swedish army and triumphed against stiff opposition from Mannlicher, Frommer and even Colt. The Model 1903, which was chambered for the rather more authoritative 9mm Browning Long, was adopted for military service in Sweden in 1907 and, subsequently, for official issue in Belgium, the Netherlands, Russia, Turkey and even Paraguay.

Although early supplies for Swedish issue were purchased direct from Fabrique Nationale in Belgium, the World War I occupation of that country by German forces obliged the Swedes to undertake domestic manufacture of



Left, the 9mmx19 (1) and a .38 Special (4) are shown with a .38 S&W (2) and .38 Special (3) modified to 9mm BL. The modified .38 S&W case is shown with a Speer 100-grain FMJ and a 9mm BL UK-made Silvalube 125-grain LRN bullet. Above, the conversion from .38 S&W to 9mm BL requires reducing rim diameter and case length, and enlarging the extractor groove.

the .38 S&W brass were turned down from .433 inch diameter to .404 inch, and if an extraction groove was lathe-cut just forward of the remaining rim, a slightly short (.78 inch as opposed to .80 inch) 9mm BL substitute case would emerge.

Having prevailed upon a friend to make the alterations to a batch of .38 S&W brass, I ended up with 20 9mm BL substitute cases for testing. In the meantime I had ordered a 9mm BL sizing die from North Devon Firearm Services (3 North Street, North Devon, EX33 1AJ, England) together with a 9mm BL shellholder. I found later that most standard 9mmx19 shellholders (but not RCBS) will work satisfactorily with 9mm BL cases.

My reason for ordering the 9mm BL sizing die alone was that my RCBS 9mmx19 expanding and seating dies would be perfectly adequate for 9mm BL loading since both calibers use .355-

Browning's Model 1903 (which they referred to as the Model 1907). Production of the 1907 by Husqvarna Vapenfabriks Aktiebolag lasted until 1944, by which time a total of approximately 95,000 pistols had been produced.

A quick tour of the gun shows it to be a magazine-fed, self-loading pistol with a five-inch barrel and a concealed hammer. If this seems familiar, however, attempting to strip the Husqvarna in the same manner as a Colt 1911 or Browning HiPower will bring you only frustration, for the barrel does not swing down to unlock the breech as in Browning's later designs. This is a blowback pistol with a barrel effectively fixed to the frame by means of matching annular ribs on those two components.

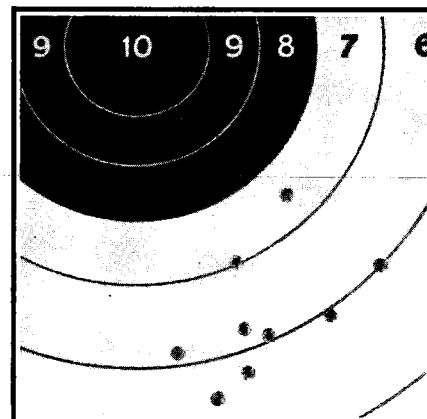
Stripping is accomplished by ensuring the gun is unloaded, locking the slide to the rear (using the safety catch) and twisting the barrel 120 degrees counterclockwise (viewed from the muzzle), at which point both barrel and slide can be run forward from the frame. Sound unusual? It's a lot easier with the pistol in your hands!

Enough on the gun — What does it

shoot? The 9mm Browning Long (9mm BL) cartridge is a semirimmed case (as is the .32 ACP) propelling a 110-grain 9mm bullet at 1,100 fps. The 9mm BL case is effectively of identical dimensions to the .38 ACP case, but is .80 inch in length rather than the .38 ACP's .90 inch.

Although Norma factory 9mm BL ammunition is reputedly available, I was unable to locate any, and so moved swiftly on to the matter of handloading. The initial problem, as ever, was the matter of cases; surprisingly, a supply of empty brass was easily found, but these turned out to require 5mm Berdan primers. On the basis that my life contains sufficient complications already, I bypassed the problem of acquiring 5mm Berdan primers and investigated the possibility of finding Boxer-primed brass.

Being a hoarder of empties of any caliber, I had acquired a box of fired .38 S&W (not .38 Special) cases in the dim and distant past on the basis that they would come in useful at some point in the future. Well, the future had arrived; a quick check with the dimensional tables in Frank Barnes' *Cartridges of the World* suggested that if the rims of



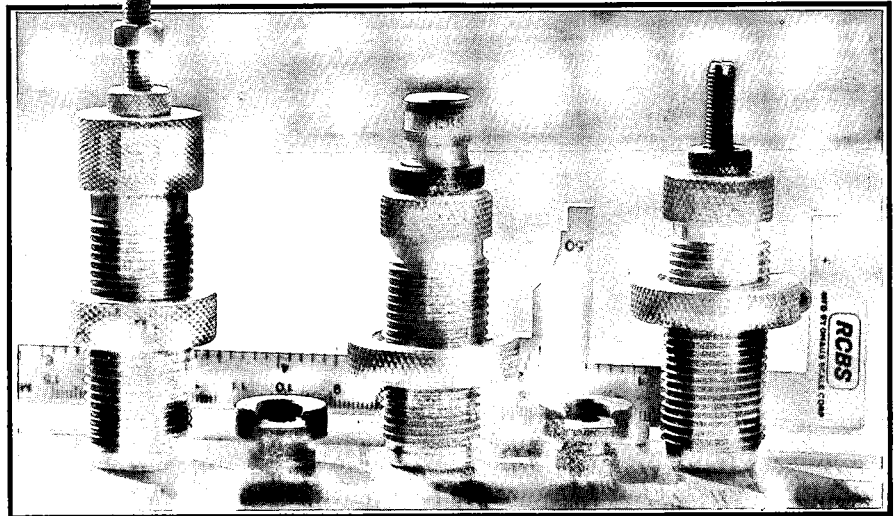
This first-ever group fired by the 9mm BL was shot offhand at 25 meters.

inch bullets, and I would be using the 9mmx19 sizing die (less decapping stem) to taper-crimp the finished rounds. In any event, this has turned out well (NDFS does, of course, produce complete 9mm BL die sets as well).

As luck would have it, between altering the .38 S&W brass and the arrival of the NDFS sizing die, I discovered that 9mm BL brass — in the form of altered .38 Special cases — is available from Empire Arms (14 Empire Parade, Great Cambridge Road, Edmonton, London N18 1AA, England) and — in the form of freshly manufactured empties — from Midway Arms in the U.S. (7450 Old Highway 40 West, Columbia MO 65201).

Having acquired a supply of Empire Arms' cases, all that was left was to choose a suitable powder/charge. I had previously read that many Husqvarnas imported into the United States following World War II were converted to .380 ACP (9mmx17). Since, in comparison with the 9mm BL, .380 ACP loads employ lighter bullets (95 grains) at lower velocities (955 fps) albeit in slightly smaller cases, I elected to use a .380-type load as a starting point.

Checking what little published loading data I could find, I decided to combine 3.6 grains of Hercules Green Dot (in my experience a good powder with 9mmx19) and a Speer 100-grain FMJ with an overall loaded length of 27.0 mm.



Dies used for loading the 9mm BL include a resizer and decapping die from NDFS (UK), RCBS expander die and RCBS seating and crimping die.

The first firing of a load of your own devising — no matter how logically you reach the recipe — is a worrying experience. However, my notes for the first test-firing show that this load was very soft, with perfect self-loading, but weak ejection. Further sessions involved gradually increasing the powder in .1-grain steps until I reached 4.0 grains of Green Dot with the 100-grain bullet; recoil was still light.

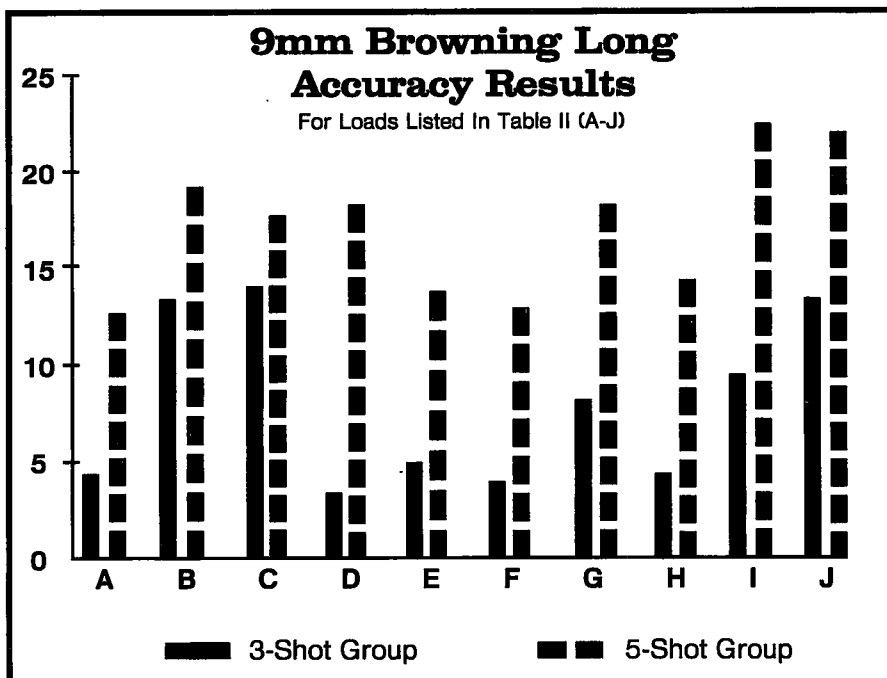
Meanwhile I also was experimenting with lead as opposed to jacketed bullets. Although it seems that a great many handloaders have had bad ex-

periences with lead bullets in 9mmx19, I have had great success with a range of lead projectiles in this caliber, both home-cast and commercial. While I also wished to find an alternative powder to Green Dot, I avoided the classic mistake of changing both bullets and powder at the same time.

I therefore loaded a batch of United Kingdom-produced Silvalube 125-grain LRNs with test loads of 3.6, 3.8, 4.0 and 4.2 grains of Green Dot; overall loaded length was 27.5 mm with this bullet (28.0 mm is the effective maximum overall length imposed by the magazine's dimensions). On firing, the 3.6 and 3.8-grain loads were decidedly soft, and I had a single failure to eject with 3.6 grains. A load of 4.0 grains was stronger with 100 percent ejection and feeding.

Like my choice of the Silvalube bullet and Green Dot, my later choice of Nobel Pistol Powder No. 2 as an alternative was based on good experience with 9mmx19. I was tempted away from Nobel powders early in my handloading career, but after several years of using only Hercules powders, I have returned to the fold and consider Nobel propellants to be a useful addition to anyone's stock of powders.

Chronograph testing with Nobel Pistol Powder No. 2 loads of 3.6, 3.8 and 4.0 grains and the 125-grain LRN produced the results shown in Table I. Velocities are lower than the 1,100 fps supposedly delivered by factory bullets using a 110-grain bullet.



Remember that these are my load combinations and are not recommended loads from Hercules or Nobel. Caveat handloader!

Although workable loads had been reached in terms of mechanical functioning, accuracy with lead bullets was rather disappointing, with six-inch groups at 25 yards, and irrespective of velocity the lead bullets keyholed unfaillingly.

For reasons of economy — and since accuracy with lead bullets in my S&W Model 39 is exemplary (four shots into .875x1.25 inches at 25 yards from a Ransom Rest), I rarely load jacketed bullets in 9mmx19; in the case of 9mm BL, however, I was forced to change my outlook. At the same time, my stock of Green Dot ran out and, since no more was immediately available, I changed to the very similar, but equally versatile, Hercules Red Dot.

By this point I was content to use published 9mmx19 starting loads for 9mm BL and to gradually work upward to about halfway between recommended 9mmx19 starting and maximum loads. Bear in mind that your Husqvarna (or other 9mm BL pistol) is at least 40 years old, and that nothing is to be gained (while much is to be lost) by overstraining a weapon of this age.

My next batch of 9mm BL loads consisted of Samson (IMI) 115-grain FMJs, Speer 125-grain JSPs and (British) Ballistic Precision 130-grain JSPs backed by various charges of Hercules Red Dot or Nobel Pistol Powder No. 2. A marathon session ensued where sample batches of each bullet/powder combination were fired for both velocity and accuracy. The velocity results are shown in Table I.

On the understanding that, as stated, these loads are of my own devising and have not received the kind of exhaustive testing and analysis that a major powder or bullet manufacturer applies to suggested loads, I recommend them — *with one exception* — to the careful and conscientious handloader as a basis for experimentation only.

The load *not recommended* is the 4.8-grain Nobel Pistol Powder No. 2, 130-grain JSP combination; this was definitely over the top. The Husqvarna is only a blowback pistol (albeit a strong one) and 9mm BL really is at

the upper limit of acceptability in such a design.

In addition to taking velocity readings, samples of the loads using jacketed heads were fired from a Ransom Rest and details of group sizes were collated. In my original test fir-

ings (handheld over a sandbag) it appeared that the Husqvarna preferred the 125 to 130-grain bullets rather than the 115-grain bullets. In view of the fact that the factory load used a 110-grain bullet, I found this

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Table I

9mm Browning Long Load Data

bullet	powder	charge (grains)	velocity (fps)
Silvalube 125-grain LRN 27.5mm	Hercules Green Dot	3.8	830
		4.0	860
		4.2	904
	Nobel Pistol No. 2	3.6	750
		3.8	765
Samson 115-grain FMJ 28.0mm	Hercules Red Dot	4.0	790
		3.6	923
		3.8	973
	Nobel Pistol No. 2	4.0	990
		4.4	962
Speer 125-grain JSP 28.0mm	Hercules Red Dot	4.6	1,026
		4.8	1,077
		3.6	864
	Nobel Pistol No. 2	3.8	935
		4.0	941
Ballistic Precision 130-grain JSP 28.0mm	Nobel Pistol No. 2	4.4	907
		4.6	961
		4.8	1,002*

* This load combination is *NOT* recommended!

The load combinations listed in this article have proved safe in the author's pistol, but may produce different results in other firearms. All powder charges should be reduced by 10 percent for starting loads. Neither the author nor publisher will accept responsibility for use of this data.

Cases — Modified Geco .38 Spl.; Primers — CCI 500; Pistol — Husqvarna; Chronograph — Skan.

Be alert — Publisher cannot accept responsibility for errors in published load data.

Table II

9mm Browning Long Accuracy Results

bullet	powder	charge (grains)	5-shot group (cm)*	3-shot group (cm)*
Samson 115-grain FMJ	Hercules Red Dot	A 3.6	12.1	4.0
		B 3.8	18.7	12.5
		C 4.0	17.2	13.1
	Nobel Pistol No. 2	D 4.6	21.5	10.1
		E 4.8	21.2	12.8
Ballistic Precision 130-grain JSP	Hercules Red Dot	F 3.6	17.7	3.3
		G 3.8	12.6	4.9
		H 4.0	11.2	3.5
	Nobel Pistol No. 2	I 4.4	18.0	7.5
		J 4.6	13.2	3.8

* Multiply centimeters by .4 to convert to inches.

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Handloading the 9mm

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preference for heavier bullets mildly surprising.

In short, the Ransom Rest tests confirmed my previous findings, with the heavier bullets consistently outperforming the 115-grain bullets. Since, in each five-shot group there was generally an excellent three-shot group, typical results for both whole groups and the best three shots in each group are given in Table II. This same information also is supplied in the bar chart where the left-hand of each pair of bars represents the three-shot group for a particular load, and the right-hand bar represents the five-shot group.

Why was there not better overall accuracy? First, the Husqvarna is built to battlefield tolerances not to Free Pistol standards. Secondly, as a semirimmed case headspacing on only $\frac{1}{8}$ of its minuscule rim, the 9mm BL suffers the same problem as the early .38 Supers. Replacement barrels which headspace the case on the case mouth are available for the .38 Super, but no such barrels are available for the poor old 1907!

Could any general principles be dredged from the mass of data acquired from this handloading exercise? As previously stated, 9mmx19 starting loads also make good 9mm BL starting loads, but stop about halfway between the 9mmx19 starting and maximum loads.

Having made the Husqvarna shoot, what now? With typical military-style sights, a less than perfect trigger pull and a grip safety that never fails to bite the web of my thumb (thank heavens for the P.A.S.T. Corporation's shooting glove), X-ring accuracy is hard to produce with this pistol. Reasonable accuracy, however, is there if you can extract it, and I shall persevere!

Two applications for the 1907 come to mind: classic self-loader competition is the first, the Husqvarna is a relatively inexpensive, but not unworthy, entree to the discipline; secondly, the 1907 is just plain fun to shoot and will retain its present favored position in my gun cabinet.

Note: The load combinations listed in this article have proved safe in the author's pistol but may give very different results in other weapons. Responsible loading methods should be strictly adhered to and no responsibility can be accepted by the author or the publisher for the use of this data. ●