

STOCK REVIEW



Wouldn't it be every rifleman's dream to have a stock that fitted perfectly? Just imagine getting down into position and finding the rifle pointing itself at the target and you so comfortable you could fall asleep.

That dream has taken a step nearer reality with a new stock just appearing on the market from a company called RMFTC Ltd. Just when you thought it was impossible to make a stock more adjustable along comes the subject of this review.

The man behind this adjustability is Richard Fowke a well known shooter of high standard. Driven by a desire to get his stock adjusted to his position and not the other way around Richard ran out of adjustment on standard mass produced stocks.

Having an engineering background gave Richard the opportunity to design the features that he wanted and finding that impossible in the current crop of stocks decided to start from scratch with his own design.

Having spent several years designing his own electric trigger it made a new configuration possible. With the standard mechanical trigger you cannot separate the pistol grip very far from the receiver but with an electric trigger it's different. You can connect the two with wires and put the actual trigger blade to suit the position of your hand rather than put your hand where the trigger is.

And so a different stock design was born.

As I hope you can see from the accompanying photographs this is a radical departure from the norm'. The first thing that strikes you on opening the case is the size and futuristic appearance.

Those of you still lovingly polishing your selected walnut stocks are not going to fall madly in love with the appearance. This is not going to be hung on a wall in a glass case and admired as a thing of beauty unless you are of an engineering bent and love well made pieces of engineering.

And this stock *is* well engineered, not only in the manufacture but in the design behind that manufacture. It may look big and black (it would delight some journalist looking for a dramatic picture), but it does look nice in the detail.



As you would expect with something this adjustable then there is a comprehensive manual. If you are used to buying modern gadgets you will know you usually get a great thick manual most of which is in fourteen different languages to the one you speak and the bit you can read is covered in the first five pages. In this case there are 16 pages of an A4 sized manual all in English and believe me you'll need it.

There are also seventeen excellent photographs notated with numbers to illustrate the points in the text.

With all that adjustment then some of it will need tools, they are supplied of course, but as is usual it is impossible to use the same size bolt for everything so there is a selection of various sized Allen keys supplied along with a screw driver and spanner. As you will see later that still wasn't enough but the final production models will be complete.

The basic design concept starts with a tube. That means rotational movement is easy as well as backwards and forwards adjustment. Your barrel is a tube so why not surround it with a tube? Your barrel fits inside this tube and the receiver is bolted down to another tube which contains the trigger mechanism. Below that is another tube which extends backwards to the butt plate.



The stock does not have a conventional forend but three rings which slide on the barrel tube and offer three independent rotational and forwards adjustment. The furthestmost ring holds a long attachment to take your sling hook. That is adjustable for height and allows you to relieve all the pressure on the back of your hand from the

sling. Of course if you like a lot of sling pressure on the back of your hand then there is a range of vertical movement of about 45mm. The sling swivel itself takes the ball ended sling loop as fitted to the Anschütz 4751 and 4734 handstops.

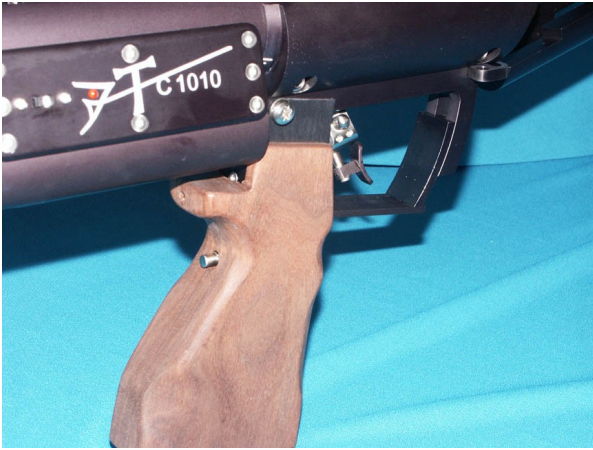


Next coming rearwards is the actual handstop, a round tube fixed vertically into its ring. It is 25mm diameter and 45mm deep which should be a comfortable enough size for most people.

Then behind the handstop is the hand rest. This is a 113mm long semi-circular in section and can be angled horizontally and vertically to suit the hand. It has a nice big comfortable, round feel and unlike the forend of a normal stock can be changed to fit to the hand rather than the other way around.



Immediately behind the hand rest is the trigger block and pistol grip. The pistol grip is carved from wood (black walnut) and houses part of the trigger mechanism. The trigger, which is all Richard's own design is electric, i.e. it is operated by electricity from a battery, that involves a solenoid and the trigger blade acts as a switch.



A novel feature on this smallbore target rifle stock is a switch on the back of the pistol grip which is depressed automatically as you locate your hand around the pistol grip before the rifle will fire. Except it didn't in my case because I don't wrap my hand around a pistol grip to shoot but those of you that do won't have that problem.

The trigger is single stage and adjustable in weight from about zero (not recommended) to about 1000g which will probably be enough for most people. The engagement is adjustable as well to give a very light, crisp let off.

The battery driving all these electrics is a readily available PP3 9V type and the type supplied has a shelf life of about ten years and has been tested to give over 80,000 shots so you will probably change rifles before you change batteries. Like most electric triggers there is a dry fire mechanism for practice and a slight delay of 2-3 seconds while the solenoid recharges between trigger pulls.

While the action of the trigger is light and crisp it does move in a slightly downward motion because it pivots downwards. That takes a little getting used to at first, as the feel is so different to a normal trigger. If you like a heavy trigger action, as some of you do, then the downward motion would be much more noticeable.

That leads us onto one of the major design features of the stock. The pistol grip is directly beneath or slightly in front of the breech area. This means the right hand traverses backwards to the bolt in an arc from the pistol grip. This could mean you leaving your right elbow on the ground while

reloading if you so wish. On a normal stock the trigger has to be under the back of the bolt and usually means lifting the right elbow off the ground to reach forward to insert a round in the breech.



The pistol grip is adjustable by rotating its sleeve and can be tilted backwards, forwards, pivoted sideways and practically locked into any position you would like. Don't get carried away with the rotation bit though you could find yourself resting your shooting hand on the pistol grip and unconsciously pushing the rifle down with the right hand.

Obviously there still has to be a mechanism to hold the firing pin back into position and that is housed in a block under the rear of the bolt. This is also where the power switch is located to turn on the electrics. There is an LED light to indicate contact but that fades after short time to conserve battery power. The switch is readily to hand in the shooting position.

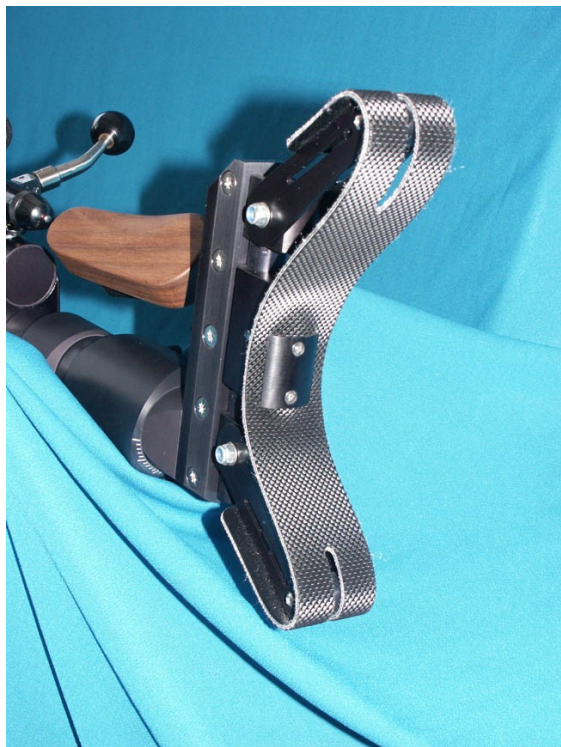
Under the switch box is another tube which carries the butt plate and cheek piece mechanism. The main body of the butt plate can be slid backwards and forwards on this tube while rotating to a suitable cant. The cheek piece mechanism is located on a ring which rotates and moves independently back and forwards. These movements are controlled with clamping levers for easy quick adjustment.



The small wooden cheek pad can also be raised lowered and rotated horizontally but that will need an Allen key.



As you would expect the butt plate has a huge range of adjustment but does include a very novel feature not seen on a rifle before to my knowledge. The actual pad part is a flexible material much like that used in modern non-stretch slings. That means it will conform to the actual shape of your shoulder when in the shooting position. The tension of that strap is variable as well as having all the up and down and rotational movement you could wish for.



While there is lots of rotational movement in the butt plate there isn't any sideways movement available. There isn't usually a lot in any of the existing plates and you aren't likely to need much but it is my job to point these things out.

Adjusting the length of the butt is simply a matter of releasing one clamp lever but be warned that also allows rotational movement so you may find yourself adjusting two things at once.

That brings us to the back of the rifle and completes our tour.

Now a few general things to take into account. The stock is designed to take the round action Anschutz receiver and to my knowledge there are no plans at the moment to accommodate other actions. The supply of the stock includes fitting your barrel to ensure everything works correctly. Your rearsight may require a different clamping knob which will be supplied if necessary that is to allow clearance between that knob and the top of the tube. (That was the one extra tool not included in the tool kit).

The version I tested also had a modified bolt handle to crank it forwards to make reloading easier. Modifying your bolt handle is not included in the price but can be done for an extra price of about approximately £50.00

The end of the tube nearest the muzzle includes a soft sealing ring to stop the ingress of dirt down between the barrel and tube. Those of you in the habit of leaving your rifle standing vertically in a gun rack will appreciate that little item.

The overall appearance of the stock is of a very well made and engineered piece of equipment. The anodised finish is good and the markings are very clear and precise. At first sight it may look unusual but this is all about functionality so how did it shoot?

At this point I must thank a shooting colleague, Dave Clark, who gave the stock a thorough testing for me.



It was fairly obvious and pretty much as you would expect that the first time on the firing point was going to be spent adjusting this and adjusting that. There is a huge range of adjustment on this stock and Dave commented that it did take him several hours to get comfortable.

That time is well spent if you aren't prepared to spend the time to get it right then you will be wasting your time.

When in the prone shooting position comfort is very important and Dave had lots of praise for that aspect. He said the handstop and hand rest were the most comfortable he had ever tried. He also found the butt plate very comfortable and quite easy to set up.



Dave particularly liked the cheekpiece but did notice the cheekpiece adjustment didn't have reference markings unlike most of the other adjustments. So you will need to be careful if you adjust cheekpiece height between different ranges.

The stock is heavy but the balance is good so in the shooting position the extra weight is hardly noticeable and the extra weight helps with reducing recoil. That shows up particularly on the Noptel machine which Dave used while testing.

Being in the right position can mean a lot of fine tuning to a stock and with a stock as complicated as this then there is a lot of tuning to be done. But as I am so fond of saying "if the adjustment is not there then how can you adjust?"

Dave was also very impressed with the quality and finish of the metalwork "it appears to be very well made of good quality materials and well engraved" he said.

Now I wouldn't be telling the truth if I said everything was perfect, there will always be something that doesn't suit someone and so it must be with this stock.

It won't suit someone of small stature. There is a limit to how far back the hand rest will move and the pistol grip is also a long way forward and that will penalise people with short arms.

There is nowhere to attach a bipod at the front of the rifle so you can stand it on a table to do your cleaning. So be prepared to make yourself a rest that will hold the rifle securely while you vigorously wield your phosphor bronze brush.

It would be impossible to keep removing the barrel from the stock to clean it so it would have to be cleaned in-situ which means being very careful not to allow any cleaning fluid to find it's way down under the action and into the trigger.

This stock is not going to suit anybody who doesn't take their shooting seriously. That much adjustment means a lot of setting up and you may need help from a colleague or shooting coach. Having said that then that also applies to lots of other things so it is the usual story of getting out what you put in.

The whole kit comes in a plastic lockable plastic case; in case (pun intended) your case isn't big enough, complete with enough tools to do all the adjustments.

Now you are all waiting for the crunch figure which is how many weeks do you have to go to work before you can afford this amazing piece of equipment. Because I don't know how much you earn a week I will just tell you the price and you can work that out for yourself.

The price is £1610.00 including VAT. There is no delivery because the barrel really has to go to the stock rather than the stock just being delivered for you to fit. You can have any colour of stock you like as long as it is black.

The price includes fitting the customers barrel to the stock, setting the striker depth, trigger weight and checking the headspace. For those of you nervous about embarking on such an undertaking Richard has allowed for an hour of his time to help you with the setup and on a range if you prefer.

The stock will be available off the shelf when you read this but in the event of "sorry sold out" expect about 3-4months manufacturing time.

Richard has plans for various extras which may interest you. They currently are:

A palm rest to be used in the standing position.

Different trigger shoes.

A flying lead trigger switch which means being able to release the trigger without actually touching the rifle. Very useful for bench testing.

Alternative pistol grips.

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Richard using a prototype

