

# MUSGRAVE

*Danie Joubert*

## HISTORY

### Early Days

Long before the establishment of the Musgrave factory in Bloemfontein, Benjamin Musgrave (1900-1987), widely known as “Oom Ben,” was firstly acknowledged as a long range target shottist, then for the results he achieved in accurising rifles and only afterwards for the quality rifles which he made in his small gunshop.

Oom Ben had participated in full-bore target shooting since 1933. The service rifles then in use were the Lee-Enfield, the Lee-Metford and the Pattern 1914 (P14) rifles, all in .303 British calibre. Since Oom Ben had successfully experimented with ways in which he could improve the accuracy of his rifle, he was soon being asked to accurise rifles for his fellow target shottists.

### Musgrave & Sons

Oom Ben was originally employed as a clerk by the South African Railways in Bloemfontein. This meant that his work on rifles had to be done on a part-time basis up until 1950. By that stage, the demand for his work had grown to such an extent that he could not keep up with the requests from his customers, so he convinced his son Trevor to join him and assist in his gunsmithing business. Trevor was at the time an apprentice at Eskom

in Vereeniging (one source, Lategan and Potgieter, say in their book *Die Boer En Se Roer* that he was a fitter and turner with the South African Railways).

Musgrave advertising literature confirms 1950 as being the year in which the company was founded.

In 1952, Oom Ben was awarded his Springbok (South African national) colours and joined the first South African post war national Bisley team to visit England, where the team won the coveted Kolapore Cup. While in England, he was introduced (by Arthur Ilsley of Birmingham) to the barrel maker WD Lain (some sources suggest that barrel maker’s name was WD Lane). It was agreed that Mr Lain would train Trevor Musgrave on the manufacture of barrels on the machine in his shop in England. This was done with the intention that Oom Ben would buy the machine afterwards and ship it back to South Africa.

The machine was brought to South Africa in 1953. It was hand operated and made use of the cut-rifling method to form the grooves in the barrel, one at a time. This slow process did not, however, allow them to produce barrels in any large numbers. The barrel blanks were imported,



*Oom Ben and his sons. From left to right – Trevor, Oom Ben and Bennie (photos courtesy of Musgrave archives)*

**Ambidex rifle Technical Data**

The Musgrave Ambidex action is unique inasmuch it can be reconfigured for either right or left-handed shooters. This is done by removing the bolt and then reversing the bolt handle before replacing it.

The action consists of a lever mechanism which when pushed forward meets the barrel face which acts as a stop. This causes the lever mechanism to cam the cross bolt which acts as a bolt lock through the receiver housing and lock the bolt in place. The mechanism is mechanically safe, as the firing pin cannot be released unless the bolt is fully locked.

When the bolt is pulled back, the lever mechanism rotates slightly around the axis pin and disengages the firing pin. At this stage the bolt remains locked. If the bolt handle is pulled further back, the bolt lock unlocks and only then can the bolt travel back to eject the spent casing.

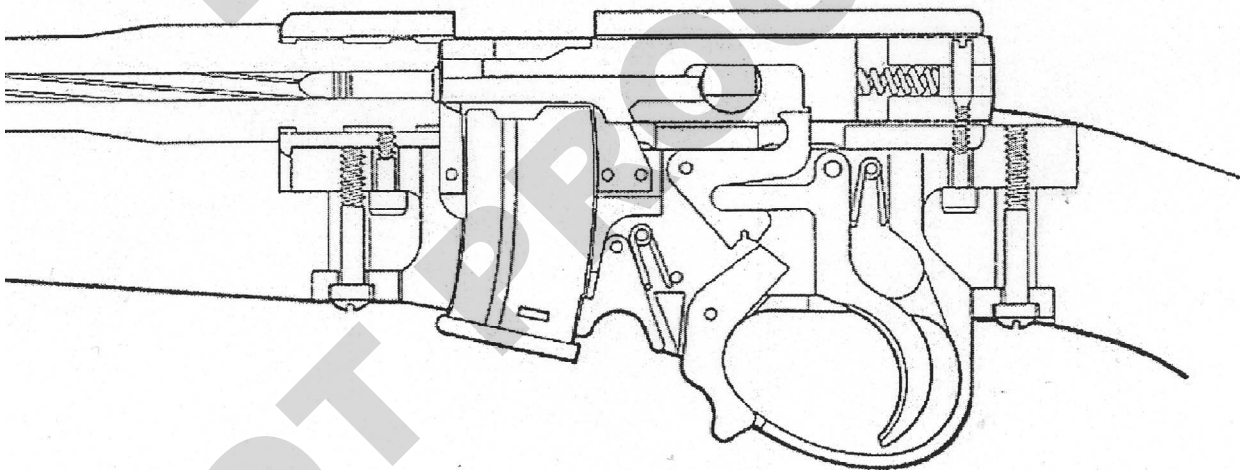
The bolt stops its rearward travel when it comes to rest against the sear. This allows the magazine to present

a fresh round to be fed into the chamber. When the bolt is pushed forward, the firing pin is cocked against the sear. Just before the bolt meets the barrel face, the cross bolt again engages and locks the action. The bolt is fitted with twin ejectors, which has proved to be a strong design. The bolt is removed by depressing the trigger while sliding the bolt back.

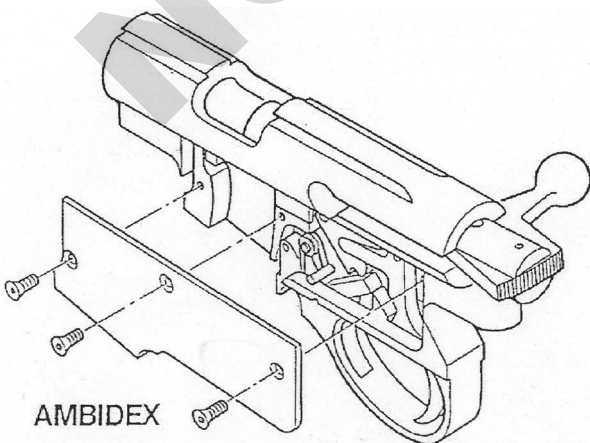
There are three models of the Ambidex rifle - the Standard, Deluxe and Supreme. There are two variants of the Supreme, the Mk 1 and Mk 2, which may be distinguished from each other by the differences in the safety catch design. The Mk 1 has a tang safety whereas the Mk 2 has a safety in this trigger guard.

Magazines are similar to that of the Mauser Mm410B and Ms420B rifle magazines and are available in five, ten and fifteen round capacities.

The extractors on the Supreme action pivots around its retaining pin whereas the extractors on the other



*Left-hand view of Musgrave Ambidex action from the Musgrave apprentice notes. (Courtesy of Johan Morkel)*



*Isometric view of Musgrave Ambidex action from the Musgrave apprentice notes. (Courtesy of Johan Morkel)*



*The Mauser type magazines which are used by the all models of the Ambidex.*

<b>Model 80 Rifle Specification</b>	
Calibres	.243 Win; .270 Win; .308 Win and .30-06 Sprg
Barrel length	610 mm long made from 42CrMo4 steel
Action	Musgrave designed Model 80
Front Sight	Williams type ramp with bead
Rear Sight	Williams type. Adjustable for windage and elevation
Magazine	Four rounds. Fixed magazine with hinged floor plate
Stock	Walnut with 365 mm nominal length of pull. Left hand on request.
Recoil Pad	Ventilated rubber
Trigger	Musgrave design, fully adjustable
Grip cap	Wood
Safety	3-Position.
	*Fire position
	*Unloading (locks cocking piece, but bolt can be opened)
	*Safe position (locks cocking piece and bolt)



*Model 80 rifle. Left hand view.*



*Model 80 rifle. Right hand view.*



*Early Model 82 (Magnum) rifle marked with the Mod 82 legend. Left-hand view.*



*Early Model 82 (Magnum) rifle marked with the Mod 82 legend. Note the one cross bolt and the black fore-end tip. Right-hand view.*