



**Fancy a special treat this Christmas? Richard Rawlingson looks at the limited edition Beretta 682, available (with or without gift wrapping) at a dealer near you now.**

In the flurry of new guns over the last couple of years (not least from the Beretta stable itself) it might be easy to overlook the continuing appeal of that old warhorse the 682 Gold E. Even in its current guise the 682 has been around for over five years and that is a long time in today's fast moving market. On the other hand if you sat down with the basic Beretta design and sketched out the ideal mid range competition gun it would surely not be a million miles from the gun as it is now, so why change?

Keeping long running best sellers fresh is always a marketing challenge and an important one for Beretta, because I suspect the 682 is one of their most profitable models. Just as car manufacturers make much more on their top of the range cars than the bog standard 1.6L, so Beretta are able to charge a premium for the 682 over their mechanically similar cheaper guns. But

how to sprinkle a little marketing magic dust over a product that needs little improvement?

The solution (again popular with car makers) is the limited edition route. If the clubhouse bragging rights are being usurped by newer models then a special edition can propel your old favourite back up the 'must have' charts. Enter the 682 LTD, which is finding its way onto the dealers' shelves just in time for the Christmas rush. We managed to divert one of them our way before it got snapped up. Normally we would not do a detailed test on a limited availability gun (there will be only 1500 made in total of which around 175 will come to this country) but it does give us a chance to reprise the 682 range, which I note we last tested as long ago as June 2000.

### THE LTD SPECIFICATION

Let's look first of all at what is unique to the LTD edition. Our test gun is a sporter but a fixed choke trap version is also available. The sporters will come with either 30 or 32 inch barrels, the trap guns are 30 inch only. In overall specification they are identical to the standard 682 Gold E models.

The differences are mainly cosmetic and financial (the LTD carrying a price premium of around 30% over the standard guns). A large part of that cost will be due to the wood upgrade as all 1500 guns will have strongly figured dark Turkish walnut. On our sample the finish was a rather flat matt oil, but it certainly had the potential to be very attractive with a bit of conditioning and elbow grease.

Two different thickness recoil pads — 20 and 25 mm — are provided, giving some scope for summer or winter settings.

# THEY'VE GOT YOUR





They are though the pads from the standard gun and on the sporter at least they could do with a smooth finish on the heel to facilitate mounting. I am rather surprised that Beretta did not take the opportunity to differentiate the LTD more by fitting their excellent Gel-Tek pad.

The attractive visual appearance of the woodwork is also enhanced by the use of very fine traditional chequering (around 24 lines per inch by my count) rather than the elliptical laser pattern used on the Gold E. As usual the grip has a palm swell.

At first glance the most distinctive area of the LTD is the finish and decoration of the receiver. This is not just surface decoration because the bottom edges of the frame have a chamfer that is not there on the standard gun. It carries the frame lines from the sides through to the underside and is one of those styling details that you may not notice at first but which makes the old gun look rather plain without it. It frames the Beretta logo in a

laurel wreath motif and also the gun's limited edition number. The series also has its own serial numbers, the letters LTD being followed by the four digit identification number.

On the action sides the rather fussy graphics of the standard gun are replaced with a clean laurel leaf above the Beretta name and logo in gold inlay. The 682 LTD identification is the only other decoration apart from the two-tone matt and gloss



# NUMBER

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CLEAN LINES ARE A FEATURE OF THE 682 AND THE NICKEL-BASED FINISH SHOULD BE HARD WEARING.



**THIS SHAPING TO THE ACTION IS NEW ON THE LTD — NOTE TOO THE LIMITED EDITION NUMBERING.**

finish. This finish is incidentally a nickel-based ionic treatment that, according to the technical information, impregnates the surfaces with ceramic compounds and metals such as titanium and chrome, giving very high protection against corrosion and wear.

The clean and simple lines are accentuated by the lack of decoration on the minor furniture. The trigger guard, fore end latch and top lever are all left plain — always a sign of confidence in a gunmaker, for flaws in unadorned surfaces are much harder to hide (one of the reasons cheap guns are often covered in crude engraving). Here Beretta lets the quality of the machining speak for itself and the air of understated excellence is



**THE TRIGGER BLADE CAN BE SET IN ONE OF THREE DIFFERENT POSITIONS.**

enhanced by those other typical Beretta details such as the gold locking screw perfectly aligned in the larger screw head holding on the trigger guard. Small details maybe but if you are handing over more than two and a half grand it is nice to think that someone has taken some care putting it together.

The warm feelings are continued when you look at the accessories package. The LTD guns come in their own design of fitted case, with three locks. It houses the choke case and additional three choke tubes as well as a spares kit containing two different front beads and an alternative trigger blade. There is even a tiny Beretta screwdriver to help you change it over!

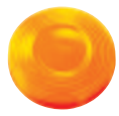
## BEYOND COSMETICS

That then is the skin-deep side of the

682 LTD; beyond that it is pure 682. As I said in my original test of the 682 Gold E, this marked a distinctly different phase in the evolution of the model, enough that some makers might have given it a completely new name. In the 20+ years that the 682 has been a major player on the competition scene it has steadily changed in character. In car terms the original gun was a big bruising 4x4 (some less kind critics might have called it a truck). Gradually it



Finely cut chequering replaces the laser patterns of the standard gun.



If the Beretta is for you then I advise you don't delay because every gun is already pre-sold to a dealer and they won't be on the shelves for long.

shed bulk and gained agility, to the point that the current models are more sporty little two seaters than sports utility vehicles.

Much of that change was achieved in the barrel department. Old 682 barrels would weigh in the 1500-1800 gram range whereas the first Gold E barrels I tested weighed just 1350g. This has been maintained — the LTD's tubes are marked at 1370g, as confirmed by my scales (without chokes). Much of the saving is from the ribless area under the fore end.

As expected the gun has the Optima-Bore barrel profile first seen on the Gold E, together with its matching Optimachoke system, although the trap model retains 'classic' boring. For those not familiar with Beretta terminology, I should explain that the Optima specification represents a significant move by Beretta away from the traditionally tightly bored Italian barrels of around .724" (18.4mm) to a mild degree of overboring. The test gun measured .731" in the top barrel, .732" in the bottom (just under 18.6mm). Although this is quite a big difference compared to previous models, it is still some way short of what some rival makers use. Browning and Miroku guns with Invector Plus

boring are in the .736-740" range and the new Blaser F3 has .735" bores, although Krieghoff's standard bore is also 18.6mm (.732"). What is 'optimum'? I don't know — and neither it would seem does the trade.

The Optimachokes have proved to be a big hit for Beretta and a huge disappointment to makers of aftermarket chokes. Even though the extended tubes are fully 90mm long, they are feather light and superbly finished. They are also so easy to use, with identification simple thanks to the colour coded markings and finger pressure all you need to get them in and out.

The trigger is adjustable to one of three set positions after slackening off a small grub screw. As always the trigger pull is superb, just under 4lbs for the bottom barrel, just over for the top and with not a hint of drag. This should be a benchmark for any manufacturer of mass produced guns.

My memory of the last Gold E I tested was of

a gun that had gone from one extreme to another — if anything I remembered it as too light and fast handling for my taste. That wasn't the impression on picking up the LTD for the first time. Checking back in my files, I find that test gun in 2000 weighed just 7½ lbs (3.4 kg). Although the Beretta catalogue quotes 3.45 kg for the LTD Sporter, our gun was more like 3.6 kg (almost exactly 8 lbs) and all the better for it in my opinion. Some variation is going to occur because of the different densities of the walnut blanks used and if you want a heavier gun it is worth checking guns on the rack. The balance on our gun was still very neutral and the handling consequently lively, but it did feel as if it had more meat to it somehow.

The big question comes down to price: is the 682 LTD worth over £600 more than the standard gun? From a pure performance viewpoint, almost certainly not. That however has never stopped buyers of Brownings and Mirokus going for grade three or five guns rather than the base models, so if you like the looks and like nice wood, go for it. Other than the higher grade Browning/Miroku guns, likely rivals in this price bracket include the slick new Blaser F3, Macnab's Claymore or the new Kronos from Zoli. If the Beretta is for you then I advise you don't delay because every gun is already pre-sold to a dealer and they won't be on the shelves for long.

**THE EXCELLENT OPTIMACHOKES ARE USED ON THE LTD.**



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