M y first ever serious airgun was a Webley, a MK 1 Vulcan in .22 and how I loved that gun. It made 'legal limit' power as we knew it back then. 12ft.lbs. was a big deal in those days and I, like everybody else at the time, shot pellets into blocks of wood and telephone directories to 'test' the power of my new super gun and also the performance of all the different pellets I could find.

Of course, I understand now that told us nothing about ballistics in reality, but we loved it all the same. Luckily my parent’s garden allowed a 35-yard range if I shot from the back door diagonally across the garden to the compost heap, which made a handy backstop if my pellets missed the catcher.

From a supported position I was ‘murder’ on the paper targets I bought that had pictures of the quarry species I so dearly longed to hunt, but real hunting opportunities were few and far between, amounting only to the occasional visit to a friend’s farm, which was a long way away. It was during these precious times that I began to question why I wasn’t coming home with armfuls of rabbits and pigeons. There were plenty on offer and the cold hard reality dawned on me that it would take skill and precision shooting, not just a powerful shiny rifle to make it happen.

Accuracy
This was when I began to work on my personal accuracy as the rifle was already doing its part and made sweet little groups right across the garden. Or was it? I began to notice that when I rested my leading hand against something solid, like a fence post the shots missed. Also, shooting from prone changed the zero from where it was when standing. I understood that something was happening.

Even the coldest weather was no problem for the Raider

but had no idea that it was the recoil the gun exhibits before the pellet even leaves the barrel that was the cause.

As my shooting career progressed I learned how to minimise the problem with good technique and moved on to super-tuned Weihrauch HW77s which suffer less from these difficulties, as their recoil is very little compared to a lightweight break-barrel sporter. Even so, I was frustrated that any inconsistency on my part could well result in a miss, and if that was a precious shot at a rabbit, I was really upset.

Pre-charged pneumatic (PCP) rifles came along and were accepted by many people but I held out, refusing to give up on my beloved spring guns, but during a conversation with a top shooting journalist, I asked if the PCPs were really that much better. The answer was simple. Yes they are. Their recoilless shooting cycle simply makes them more forgiving of mistakes, and I make plenty of those, I promise you.

So that was it: I took the plunge and bought my first PCP and was honestly amazed at just what an easy rifle it was to shoot. I no
longer needed to worry about hold and grip. Just make sure that the crosshair is on the target and that’s where the pellet will land. From that day to this, much of my hunting has been done with a PCP.

Despite the clear advantages that a PCP offers, the downside of ownership has been that they’re more expensive to make than a springer, so their price in the shops has been higher, a fact that puts some people off buying one.

Value

This long-winded introduction was intended to bring me to this month’s Big Test subject, which is the Webley Raider 10. It’s a fine piece of PCP engineering and has one remarkable feature that stands out above all the others and that’s this: it’s cheaper to buy than a top class German barrel spring gun! Yes you did read that right. It’s in your local gunshop for £359.00 including a top class QGS silencer and two magazines. When you think that the silencer sells for over £40 and the spare mags are £25 that makes this a £300 rifle which you have to concede is a great price. These two extras are ones that you’ll definitely want, so are a very welcome inclusion. If they weren’t included you’d only buy them later.

“The internals are well developed and efficient, an idea backed up by the fact that the rifle gives over 80 shots per fill in .22 calibre”

This rifle has been around for a long time, so you might well be wondering why I’m testing it now. The reason is that the rifle has just undergone a series of upgrades, most of which are internal and can’t be seen, and are improvements in durability and reliability. This is one of the good things about buying a ‘mature’ model.

The manufacturer has had time to see what wears out and make new parts that last better. The internal modifications see the reservoir and rear lower action now being built as separate components, which makes servicing quicker and easier. But the thing that you notice most about the new model is the thick barrel that is made from high-grade German steel, to assure that the rifling is as good as it can be.

Webley have accepted the fact that this costs a bit more, but felt that it was worth the price as accuracy is the most important feature of any gun. The older model had a slim barrel inside a shroud which was a little bit lighter and the extra weight is noticeable when you have the gun on aim, but I like it as it makes the gun steadier, in my opinion. Also by eliminating extra parts, it reduces the chance that something might work loose or cause a vibration that affects accuracy.

The rifle is quite conventional in its layout, with the breech and barrel sitting on top of the reservoir but it differs from most PCPs in that the bolt operates in the lower part of the action rather than in line with the barrel in the upper receiver. I don’t know if this makes any difference to performance and the test gun worked smoothly and reliably throughout the test. The bolt handle is short and straight and the force needed to cock the rifle is low, suggesting that only a light hammer spring is needed despite the gun making over 11ft.lbs. of muzzle energy. This tells us that the internals are well developed and efficient, an idea backed up by the fact that the rifle gives over 80 shots per fill in .22.
Ambidextrous stocks are all the rage these days and the Raider follows this with a nicely designed one that fitted me well. I like the clean simple lines and I guess it would be nice to have some chequering panels, but to achieve this price I'd be happy to go without. The fore end had long grooves that help your fingers get a solid grip, something that's important to the hunter crawling or climbing fences.

The all-metal magazines are simple and strong being indexed around by a mechanism in the action, rather than relying on a spring. This should aid durability and also idiot proof the gun. The delicate little springs in some mags get regularly mangled by ham-fisted shooters, but I'd expect these ones to last.

With each of the chambers in the mag filled, inserting it into the action is a two-part operation. Firstly, you need to lift the bolt up, back and then down into the slot that forms the 'keep' position. Next push the mushroom-shaped handle on the bolt that the mag pivots on, forwards and then up into its keep position too. The mag is now free and can be slid horizontally right along a track machined into the opening, and then you can slip the full mag in and reverse the method described. It sounds a bit long-winded but you soon get the hang of it.

To fill the reservoir to its recommended maximum pressure of 200 bar, you remove the dust cover from the six o'clock position at the front of the reservoir and then put in the probe from your pump or dive bottle. Filling slowly is always best.

“Webley’s own Tri-Pump is a good choice to pair up with this gun. It costs about £140 which is about half the price of a 12-litre diver’s bottle and has all the modern features you could want”
steel reservoir, where it could cause rust. Clearly pumping is slower and takes more effort than using a bottle, but the saving in cost is huge and I expect most of us could do with the exercise, I know I could. With the gun filled and loaded I settled down to shoot some groups using the Webley Accupell supplied, which I know from experience is a top quality pellet so I expected top performance and I wasn’t disappointed. With the QGS silencer fitted the rifle was very quiet, making only a slight ringing noise on firing which sounds like the hammer spring to me. It was smooth with no apparent vibration and some pretty little groups were soon appearing on my target cards right out to 40 yards, which is well beyond the range I hunt at, so I know that I have all the accuracy I need. I was also impressed by the trigger. This is usually an area that’s weak on inexpensive guns, but the Raider’s was smooth with only a slight creep in the second stage, but nothing that worried me. I really rate a good trigger as an important part of any gun and this one gets a big thumbs-up from me.

Webley set the power of these rifles at around 11.2 to 11.4ft.lbs. which is plenty to dispatch even the biggest rabbit, and safely on the right side of the law. Through my trusty Skan chrono, the Raider was spot on, giving a consistent 595 fps with the 14.3 grain AccuPell which calculates out at our specified 11.24 ft.lbs.

I like this gun much more than I was ready for. My previous experience has only been with the single and two-shot versions, and as a hunter, I like the 10 shot version best. It handles well, has a good trigger and has good accuracy too. I wish it had been around when I was deciding if I should change away from my springers to a PCP, as it would have moved me on sooner and I’d have been able to enjoy the benefits for longer. The performance is worthy of guns costing far more than this, and with that in mind, I feel that it has to offer among the best performance to cost ratio on sale today and has totally won my respect.