

# Beretta Paralleli Società

*This issue doesn't showcase individual guns, but celebrates Beretta's paralleli of the pre-war era. I've had fun researching these early guns with the help of several Società members: Giovanni Parato and Gianluca Garolini from Italy, Nikitas Kypridemos from Greece, and Pete Mikalajunas and Ron Overberg here in the US. The information below is the best we have*

*on the leaf-spring, hammerless boxlock (Anson Deeley) guns, but I'd bet there are errors and inaccuracies; I would consider it a great favor if you'd point those out to me. And by all means, if you have additional pre-war catalog information, please let me know. We especially need information from 1926, 1927, 1928, 1931, 1933, 1934, 1935, 1937, 1939, 1941, and 1942.*

*If you own a pre-war Beretta paralleli, I would love to hear about it. Also, let me know if this information whets your appetite for these old beauties...or just puts you to sleep ☺*



## “PULL”



*Beretta's 1910 catalog displays awards dating back to 1769.*

Whether you think of the Space Race, the Gran Prix, or those testy shoot-offs between storied English makers a century ago, it is clear the competitive dynamic has been an important catalyst for innovation and improvement. Even if you never fill in a score card at a shooting event, we all owe a debt to the competitors who settled for nothing less than absolute reliability in their guns. Using hunting guns for competitive shooting at live birds or artificial targets has been around since the 17th century, when participants were mostly aristocrats from high society – often putting their fortunes on the line with each released bird (usually pigeons). One of the first sporting associations formed was at Italy's Tivoli shooting club in 1867. Guns for this sport soon became specialized; they were often heavier and more ornately embellished. The everyday rabbit and bird hunter wanted to emulate these shooting heroes and soon the designation “Pigeon” or “Piccione” on hunting guns came to stand for the highest quality level. Even today live pigeon shoots are held in the US where tens of thousands of dollars are wagered on a single shot

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## Early Beretta Anson Deeley Guns

In the very early years of the 20th century Beretta catalogs offered paralleli made by other manufacturers. However, Beretta manufactured their own Anson Deeley SxS guns beginning in the mid-1920s; these guns were produced along-side, and ultimately replaced, a less costly Model #6 Hammerless Stella which was based on Beretta's earlier hammer guns.

The Anson & Deeley boxlock action dates to William Anson and John Deeley's patent of 1875; at the time both were in the employ of Westley Richards, who marketed the early guns. Their revolutionary concept used the leverage created by the barrels as they pivot on the hinge to cock the gun. The Anson Deeley action has four parts: cocking lever, leaf mainspring, tumbler, and sear; all mounted on three pins that fit into holes drilled through the side of the action body. This design won tremendous market acceptance, and once the patent expired this same action was made by many different manufacturers, and promoted as the "Anson Deeley". Beretta's A&D guns were made as a 3-model series, beginning with Models 9, 10, & 11; and continued through Models 409, 410, & 411. Major production of these guns ended in the mid-1960's; the last decade of 409/10/11 guns overlapped production of the 424/425/426/427 series of coil-spring guns.

This is the 1929 catalog listing for Beretta's A&D Model #9:

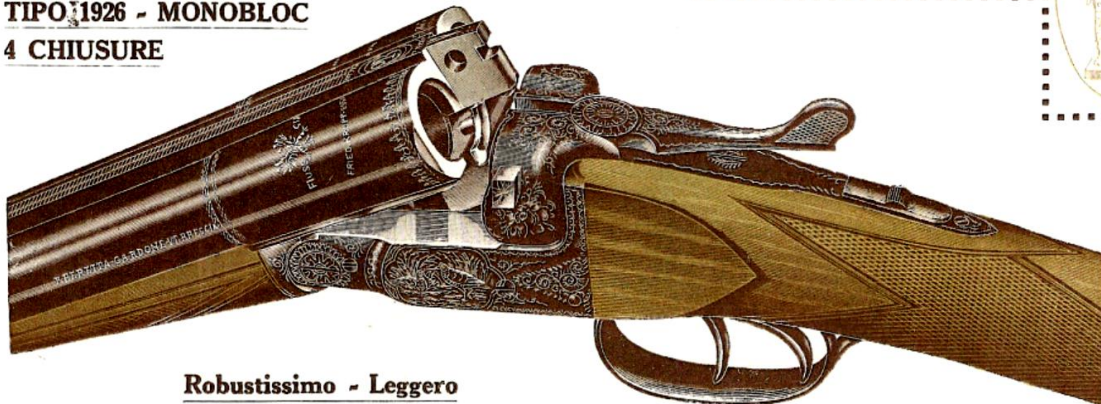
**NUOVISSIMO HAMMERLESS**

**"BERETTA,, MARCA P. B.**

**TIPO 1926 - MONOBLOC**

**4 CHIUSURE**

PIETRO BERETTA  
GARDONE VALTROMPIA - (BRESCIA)



**Robustissimo - Leggero**

5.<sup>a</sup> PROVA DEL  
BANCO GOVERNA-  
TIVO, A FUCILE  
FINITO, PER POL-  
VERI SENZA FUMO,  
CON TUTTE LE  
CARATTERISTICHE  
DESCRITTE A PA-  
GINA 2 - 4 - 5

There is always a bit of frustration and guesswork involved when comparing a gun in-hand to old Beretta catalogs; differences between models can be minor – and you find instances where the gun in-hand and the same-year catalog just don't match up. In those days Beretta produced catalogs more than once per year, and over time their basic A&D gun was assigned a number of different model designations – probably more for marketing purposes than anything else. Beretta's headquarters in Gardone offers help in model identification, but several fires during the Second World War destroyed a number of their original records, and there are some questions they just can't answer.

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Over their ~4 decade production evolving model numbers, prefixes and suffixes signified feature differences in the A&D guns such as:

- number & type of locks
- fins or side clips
- gas escape valves in the breech
- engraving
- sideplates
- metal finish
- chrome finishing of the inner parts
- barrel maker & type of barrel steel
- rib type
- ejectors w/toplever pigeon inlays
- wood grades.

Early catalogs also offered “special features as requested”, so variations are truly endless – you could even order a specific rib height! From the mid-1920s into the very late 1940s, common characteristic are:

- a straight line joining of the rear action bar and stock
- a fairly crisp 90° angle at the action sides and bottom
- an elegant taper from the action bar to the hinge pin
- stock fixed to the receiver with vertical screws

In the late ‘40s several changes are apparent, though some of the previous styles carried over to early ‘50s guns...probably as they mingled parts inventories:

- more often 1-2 curves, or trapezoidal shape where the rear action bar joins the stock
- a softer joining of the action sides at the bottom
- more of an abrupt “step” to a shoulder on the action bar
- stocks attached by horizontal throughbolt from the end of the butt
- in 1949 Beretta catalogs began describing barrels by the type of steel, rather than the supplier – signaling in-house production perhaps?

If you are the type who thirsts for detail, my review of historic catalogs showed the following:

1929	Mod. 6 Hammerless Stella Mod. 9 bis Anson Mod. 9 Anson Mod. 10 Anson Piccione Mod. 11 Anson	Not an Anson gun; evolution of their Stella hammer guns; lower priced 4 locks, receiver and tubes Krupp steel; blued action; minimal engraving 4 locks, Krupp receiver, “Special” Krupp tubes; case colors; game scenes 4 locks, Krupp receiver, “Special Long-Range” Krupp tubes, game scenes 4 locks, Poldi Anticorrosion tubes, chiseled engraving, sideplate
1930	09 bis 09 PB 09E PB 010 Piccione 010E Piccione	4 locks, receiver and tubes Krupp steel; blued action; minimal engraving 4 locks, receiver and tubes Krupp steel; case colors, game scenes As above, w/ejectors & “Prima” Krupp tubes, chiseled fences 4 locks, Krupp tubes; case colors, game scenes, wood upgrade As above, w/ejectors & “Prima” Krupp tubes

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	011 Finissimo 011E Finissimo 011C Finissimo	4 locks, Poldi Anticorrosion tubes, superfine chiseled engraving, sideplate As above, w/ejectors, unparalleled elegance As above, w/ejectors & Greener system with hidden bolt
1932	Mod. 109 bis Mod. 109 PB Mod. 1009E PB Mod. 1010 Piccione Mod. 1010E Piccione Mod. 1011 Piccione Extra Mod. 1011E Finissimo	4 locks, receiver and tubes Krupp steel; blued action; minimal engraving 4 locks, receiver and tubes Krupp steel; case colors, game scenes As above, w/ejectors & "Prima" Krupp 4 locks, "Prima" Krupp tubes, artistic game scenes, wood upgrade As above, w/ejectors & "Prima" Krupp 4 locks, Poldi Excelsior, sideplate, toplever gold pigeon inlay As above, w/ ejectors & Greener system with hidden bolt
1933 1934 1935		Somewhere in these years is the series "209-210-211"
1936	Mod. 309 bis Mod. 309 PB Mod. 309E PB Mod. 310 Piccione Mod. 310E Piccione Mod. 311 Piccione Extra Mod. 311E Piccione Extra	4 locks, Krupp tubes; minimal engraving 4 locks, "Special" Krupp tubes, case colors; game scenes 4 locks, "Prima" Krupp, ejectors, game scenes; toplever gold pigeon inlay 4 locks, "Prima" Krupp, artistic engraving w/game scene As above, w/ejectors & toplever gold pigeon inlay 4 locks, Poldi "Excelsior" tubes, sideplate engraving w/artistic carvings As above, w/ejectors & hidden bolt
1938	Mod. 409 bis Mod. 409 PB Mod. 409E PB Mod. 410 Piccione Mod. 410E Piccione Mod. 411 Piccione Extra Mod. 411E Piccione Extra	4 locks, Krupp tubes; minimal engraving 4 locks, receiver and tubes in "Special" Krupp, case colors; game scenes 4 locks, "Prima" Krupp, ejectors, game scenes; toplever gold pigeon inlay 4 locks, "Prima" Krupp, engraving w/game scene, inner parts chromed As above, w/ejectors & toplever gold pigeon inlay 4 locks, Poldi "Excelsior", sideplate, pigeon inlay, inner parts chromed As above, w/ejectors & hidden bolt
1940	Mod. 409bis Mod. 409 PB	4 locks, receiver and tubes in Krupp steel, fins 4 locks, Krupp receiver, "Prima Krupp" tubes



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	Mod. 409E PB	As above, w/ejectors
	Mod. 410 Piccione	4 locks, "Prima Krupp tubes", special engraving
	Mod. 410E Piccione	As above, w/ejectors
	Mod. 411 Piccione Extra	4 locks, stainless "Excelsior" tubes, sideplate, toplever gold pigeon inlay
	Mod. 411E Piccione Extra	As above, w/ejectors
1949	Mod. 409 Bis	3 locks, Ausonia Chromium steel tubes, minimal engraving, St Etienne rib
	Mod. 409 PB	3 locks, Ausonia Chromium steel, rich engraving
	Mod. 409 L	3 locks, Ausonia Chromium steel, rich engraving
	Mod. P 409 PB	Purdey locks, Ausonia Chromium steel, rich engraving
	Mod. 410 Piccione	3 locks, Titania steel tubes, artistic engraving, silver pigeon toplever
	Mod. 410 E Piccione	As above, with ejectors
	Mod. P 410 Piccione	Purdey locks, Titania steel tubes, artistic engraving, silver pigeon
	Mod. P 410 E Piccione	As above, with ejectors
	Mod. 411 Piccione Extra	3 locks, Chrome Molybdenum steel tubes, sideplates, silver pigeon
	Mod. 411 E Piccione Extra	As above, with ejectors
	Mod. 411 Piccione Extra	Purdey locks, Chrome Molybdenum steel tubes, sideplates, silver pigeon
	Mod. 411 E Piccione Extra	As above, with ejectors

Each of these pre-war boxlocks is a collection of inventions and patents that have popped the caps on cartridges for more than a century, such as Purdey's double underbolt and Greener's crossbolt of 1863; Scott's toplever spindle of 1865; Anson's Pushrod Release of 1872; Anson & Deeley's action of 1875; Pieper's monobloc. of 1881; in many cases Beesley's Southgate-type ejectors of 1889. And the finished guns are testament to Beretta's skilled workers of the era; in the 1920's & 1930's many of these designs were hand-shaped into finished components by craftsmen working long hours at their home or factory workbenches. Modern guns may resemble the surviving pre-war artifacts – but lore, legend, and a patina of history adds unmistakable character to these old paralleli.

One way to appreciate a vintage gun is to have a glimpse at the world it was born into; 1932 for example. In Fascist Italy Mussolini had given a "categorical order to confiscate the largest possible number of weapons of every sort and kind" – so firearms were pretty scarce to begin with. The Great Depression started in 1930 and the U.S. economy bottomed in 1932. That same year in Italy many industries were failing and Italian banks were bailing or buying them out – but these were often just illusionary moves, as the assets banks were using to fund the bail-outs were largely worthless; this led to a banking crisis.

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Italy had begun to industrialize, but was still largely an agricultural economy; in 1932 average annual income for an Italian farm worker was \$123, and \$166 for a factory worker; executive pay averaged ~\$600 per year. Beretta's 1932 catalog lists a Mod. 109 for sale at 1,050 lire, or the US equivalent of \$54, which was more than four month's wages for an average Italian; someone would have to be both affluent and politically connected to own one. In addition to sportsmen, I suspect there were also a few folks who felt safer stashing savings in a high quality hometown gun rather than depositing it into a failing banking system. If in fact someone with that intent closeted away a Beretta Mod. 9 eighty years ago, it was a pretty good gamble. Inflation transforms that \$54 into \$905 in today's dollars; with these guns selling today for several multiples of that, a Beretta paralleli was a pretty good investment in 1932.

## True Holland Sidelocks

The historical information above focused on Beretta's Anson paralleli, but during this same period they also made very fine sidelocks on the Holland type action. The advertisement below, courtesy Società member Giovanni Parato from Mola di Bari Italy, is from a 1931 edition of "Diana – the Magazine of Hunting", which was Italy's premier outdoor publication for many years. The advertisement features Beretta's Holland Model 050 Piccione. These sidelocks were the very best guncraft and commanded a price two to three times higher than Beretta's well-finished Anson boxlock.

Note that interested parties could come to Verona September 27 to watch Sig. Calzoni shoot quails with Beretta's 050 Piccione.

**Due secoli e mezzo di vita**  
**Prima Fabbrica Italiana d'Armi**  
**P. BERETTA**  
FORNITORE della R. Marina - R. Esercito Italiano - R. Finanza - R. Aeronautica - Ministero Colonie e Stati Esteri.  
RILEVATARIO di tutto il macchinario e attrezzamento della F. A. L. C. - FABBRICA D'ARMI - LARIO (Como)  
e della Premiata Fabbrica d'armi S. ZANOTTI di Bologna.  
GRANDIOSE OFFICINE FORNITE DEL MIGLIOR MACCHINARIO MODERNO ED AZIONATE DA TRE POTENTI CENTRALI  
IDROELETTRICHE DI PROPRIETÀ DELLA DITTA. — SPECIALITÀ IN ACCIAI INOSSIDABILI DELLE MIGLIORI FABBRICHE

**1680 - 1930**  
GARDONE — VALTROMPIA — BRESCIA

Diacine di migliaia  
di ARMI  
sempre pronte



CENTINAIA  
DI  
ONORIFICENZE

**FUCILI MONOBLOC** a cani esterni e Hammerless di tutti i calibri per caccia e tiro, economici, fini, finissimi, di gran lusso e con canne anche inossidabili.

**SPINGARDE** per caccia sui laghi e sui fiumi cal. 33 41 53.

**PISTOLE AUTOMATICHE** da difesa - da guerra e di lusso 6,35 - 7,65 - 9 mm.

**HAMMERLESS SPECIALI** da tiro con Ejetttore.

**MOSCHETTI AUTOMATICI** a 12 e 25 colpi calibro 9 mm.

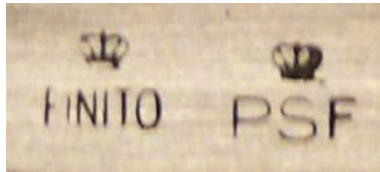
**ALLO STAND DI VERONA** - Tiro alla Quaglia 27 Settembre  
il Signor GIACOMO CALZONI divide il 1° e 2° premio sparando con  
**Fucile "BERETTA", mod. 050 tipo Piccione**

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## ***“Proof Marks” – the original Good Housekeeping Seal of Approval***

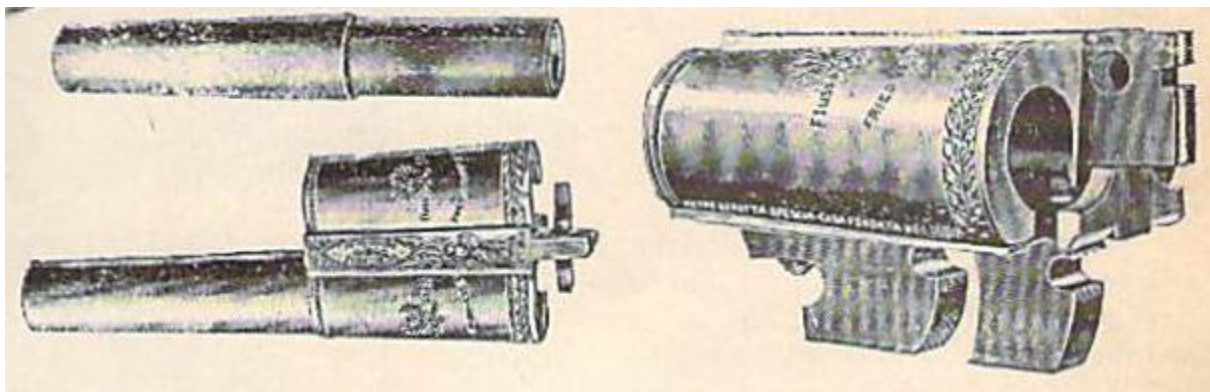
Modern manufacturing is characterized by CAD/CAM, product safety, risk aversion, and a focus on customer satisfaction – but that wasn't always the case. From a historical perspective, gun barrels were manufactured by myriad different craftsmen or companies...from a wide variety of materials...using non-standardized production techniques. Explosions killed or maimed lots of shooters; customers concerns were so great that early Beretta catalogs advertise guns as being pre-fired and tested for safety. Laws were eventually made requiring proof testing by the government. Firearm proofing began shortly after the invention of black powder; Italy was one of the later countries to adopt this process. The National Proof House in Gardone was founded in 1910, but did not begin operations until 1920; proof was not compulsory until 1923, at which time proof marks were applied to the tables as evidence of passing the tests. And in 1928 Italy and several European countries signed reciprocal agreements to honor the arms tests performed by their respective Proof Houses.

Italian proof marks on Beretta guns include the coat of arms of the Banco Nazionale di Prov per le Armi in Gardone Val Trompia, Brescia, identified by two crossed rifles with an anvil and hammer. This mark is surmounted by a crown (Italian proof symbols changed to a circled star in 1950). Also stamped is the “Crowned PSF” (Polvere Senza Fumo) as definitive proof for guns with smokless powder, and the “Crowned Finito” meaning the gun was tested in completely finished condition. The year of proof is stamped as well; all Beretta guns produced from 1929 through the present were proofed at the Gardone Proof House.



## ***Krupp Tubes often found on Early Beretta Monoblocs***

As illustrated in the catalog, Beretta introduced their version of the monobloc in 1903; it would become a signature on Beretta guns throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century.





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Belgian gunmaker Henri Pieper patented the monobloc barrel-jointing technique in 1881; rather than using Pieper's screw threads for joining, Beretta reduced weight by putting lathe-turned tube ends into the counter-bored breeches, and bonding the union via solder and heat treatment; they also modified the original monobloc design to include extractor/ejector mechanisms.



Steel was the underpinning of most economies in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. As the world transitioned from the Industrial Revolution to the First World War, there was huge demand for steel-based infrastructure as well as armaments. Friedrich Krupp Stahlwerks was a prominent 400-year-old dynasty from Essen Germany, famous worldwide for their steel production and for their manufacture of armaments.

Today, most notable gunmakers not only assemble and finish their final product – they also fabricate the major components, in most cases including the barrels. But early 20<sup>th</sup> century gunmaking in Italy, England, and Belgium was a “guild” collaboration where individuals fabricated gun parts in their homes, and sent their parts for the maker of record to finish, fit, and assemble. In the case of barrels, the process of forming steel required a factory setting and a relatively small number of firms in England, Belgium, Germany, and Italy itself (including the company Fiat) produced barrels for many gunmakers.

Although Beretta's history includes many references to barrel making, it could have been more expedient for them to purchase that component in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century; or in the case of Krupp, Beretta might have wanted to associate with that brand image – because at the beginning of the 20th century, Germany was the industrial capital of the continent, and Krupp was the largest company in all of Europe. Krupp supplied Beretta and many other gunmakers with barrels, which were identified by a 'three-ring' logo on the flats, and several variations of





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the marking “Fried. Krupp Essen; Prima Gewehr Lauf Stahl” (top-quality gun barrel steel). Early Beretta guns also carry tubes from a number of different manufacturers, including Poldi and barrels made in the Ausonia region of Italy.

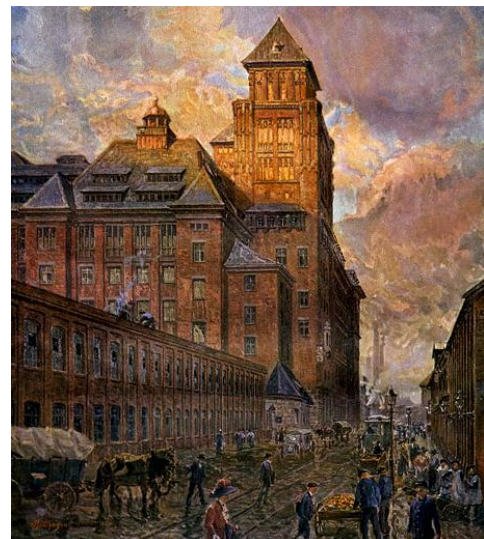
**Krupp’s Stahlwerks in Essen, Germany Circa 1912 – this photo conveys the enormity of the campus, and Krupp had others across Germany.**



**Machine Shop No. 9**



**Office Complex, Main Office**



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Krupp was a key element in Germany's Third Reich war machinery; during the war Allied bombers targeted Krupp's Essen factory many times, and after the war the plant was dismantled.

