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Alexander Arms .50 Beowulf

by Jeff Quinn

photography by Jeff Quinn

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It has been many years since I last had to give a report on Beowulf, and this time, I actually had a great deal of pleasure in researching the project. This article has nothing to do with sixth century Scandinavian warriors or dragons, but deals with a new cartridge that bears the name of the great hero of the oldest surviving piece of British literature.....Beowulf.

Alexander Arms LLC is the manufacturer of the new cartridge and weapon system that is based upon the AR-15 family of rifles. Located at the **U.S. Army Radford Arsenal** in Virginia, Alexander Arms is involved in several interesting projects with military, law enforcement, and civilian applications, but the focus of this article deals with their innovative Beowulf rifle concept. In building the .50 Beowulf rifle, Alexander Arms has taken the proven AR-15 design and adapted it to reliably fire and function with an entirely new and much more powerful cartridge.

The Alexander Arms .50 Beowulf cartridge packs awesome power in the AR-15 system. Think of it as a lightweight, handy, semi-auto .45/70 but with a larger diameter bullet and greater velocity. The .50 Beowulf uses a bullet of a true .500 caliber, with loaded ammunition offered from the factory in either a 400-grain soft point or a 325-grain hollow point, with velocities listed at 1800 and 1950 feet-per-second, respectively. This kind of

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Alexander Arms, LLC, has introduced a fine new gun / cartridge combination. The .50 Beowulf marries the proven AR-15 design to a truly powerful cartridge designed to function with minimal modification to the AR-15 design.

power radically changes the performance aspect of the AR-15 type rifle while retaining the excellent handling and shooting qualities of the weapon. The .50 Beowulf cartridge utilizes possibly the maximum diameter bullet in the biggest case that can be made to reliably function in an AR-15, while operating at a relatively low pressure to assure smooth operation and longevity of the rifle.

From outward appearances, the Beowulf is just another high quality AR-15, until you look into the hole in the end of the barrel, which resembles a piece of rifled water pipe! That half-inch hole looks completely out of place on an AR-15, and really changes the performance concept of the weapon.

The gun that was sent to me for testing is what Alexander Arms calls their "Entry Gun". It has a flat top upper receiver with Piccatinny rail and a sixteen-inch barrel. The gas block also has provision for mounting a front sight or other accessory on top, just forward of the hand guard. The sample gun came supplied with an excellent scope mount which readily accepted my 3-BUCC brass catcher. The standard magazine accepts seven of the fat Beowulf cartridges. The magazine is a slightly modified standard .223 AR-15/M-16 magazine, and larger capacity magazines can be used with the Beowulf by carefully bending the feed lips to reliably feed the larger cartridge. I managed to get twelve of the .50 caliber cartridges into a 30 round AR magazine. The .50 Beowulf cartridge has a rebated rim to fit the standard and readily available 7.62x39 bolt face. In fact, Alexander Arms has wisely built the Beowulf rifle to use as many standard AR-15 parts as possible.

As I was very anxious to test this new rifle, I wanted to mount a scope that would be appropriate for the intended use of such a rifle. Therefore, I passed over my selection of higher powered optics in favor of a low powered variable and chose a **Tasco** World Class 1.75 to 5 power scope. I was a bit concerned that the Beowulf's recoil would beat the inexpensive scope to death, but the Tasco performed well, and proved to be a tough little compact sight, well-suited to the Beowulf rifle.

Before bench testing the rifle for accuracy, I did quite a bit of informal shooting of the Beowulf at rocks, posts, and other targets of



At first glance, Alexander Arms' "Entry Gun" appears to be just another high-quality AR-15, but...



THIS AR-15 has what looks like a stovepipe for a barrel!



The behemoth .50 Beowulf dwarfs the .223 cartridge shown for comparison. It's hard to believe these cartridges function in guns that are not all that

opportunity to assess the handling and shooting qualities of the weapon. The trigger pull on the Beowulf had a good feel, breaking at a bit over six pounds. I fired the rifle in many positions, rotating it sideways and vertically. The gun functioned perfectly; feeding, firing, and ejecting without a hitch, every time. While the .50 Beowulf recoils more than a standard .223, the felt recoil is quite manageable, much like shooting a twenty-gauge shotgun, and not at all in the painful category when wearing a shirt. I did some shooting without a shirt, and the checkered butt plate was somewhat abrasive to the bare skin. This gun would be a real sweetheart to shoot if fitted with a soft recoil pad, such as a **Pachmayr** Decelerator, but the standard AR butt plate serves very well as issued.

I carried the Beowulf with me to the **Shootists' Holiday** in Raton, New Mexico, where I passed the gun around for several others to shoot. The first reaction of everyone who handled the gun was one of delight. The word most commonly used to describe their collective opinion was "awesome"! At Raton, we fired the Beowulf at targets of both steel and paper, and at rocks ranging in distance from 135 yards out to 577 yards with great success. With little practice, hitting the distant targets was almost routine with the handy little carbine. On paper, the gun displayed its fine accuracy by consistently placing the shots into groups of under an inch, when I did my part. The 400-grain factory loads were a bit more accurate in the test gun than was the 325-grain hollow points, placing three shots into three-quarters of an inch. This is great accuracy from a target grade .223 AR-15, and amazing performance for a big-bore semi-auto. I believe that the design of a straight-walled case operating at moderate pressure contributes greatly to the accuracy of the rifle.

My intention was to carry the Beowulf on a bear hunt in Idaho, which should be the ideal situation in which to test the performance of the .50 caliber bullets on game. The hunt fell through at the last minute, but based upon past experience with large caliber bullets at moderate velocity, I believe that the .50 Beowulf would exhibit splendid performance on big game with the 400-grain soft point, and do likewise with the 325-grain hollow point on medium sized thin-skinned game such as whitetail deer and wild hogs. Seven rounds of the .50 Beowulf in a semi-auto package like

different in design. Note the rebated rim of the .50 Beowulf cartridge.



The .50 Beowulf's rebated rim allows it to function with a standard 7.62x39 bolt face. The .50 Beowulf was designed to function within the parameters of a standard AR-15 rifle where possible, resulting in surprisingly few modifications to the base AR-15.



The design of the .50 Beowulf allows standard AR-15 magazines to be used with slight modifications to the feed lips. Surplus high-capacity magazines can be modified easily for use with the .50 Beowulf.

this entry gun should prove to be an ideal defense against large, dangerous animals for someone who travels in bear country.

Besides the obvious hunting uses for the Beowulf, there are many tactical situations in which the penetration and power of a 400-grain half-inch bullet fired from an AR-15 type weapon could be very advantageous. The .223 is notorious in exhibiting poor penetration of automobile glass and other obstacles. The .50 Beowulf can easily penetrate barricade material and still engage the target with power to spare. There are many law enforcement situations in which the standard-issue handgun or shotgun lacks the power and accuracy to do the job. Every highway patrol car should have a powerful, handy carbine such as the Beowulf as standard equipment. Every rural sheriff's deputy should have such a rifle at his disposal.

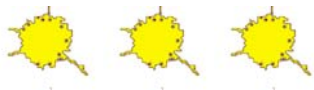
In designing and building the .50 Beowulf, Alexander Arms has taken a proven weapons system and made it better. The .50 Beowulf does away with the only valid criticism of the AR-15, that being the .223 cartridge. The Beowulf places real power in a compact, accurate, and reliable package.

Alexander Arms provides the rifles, ammo, reloading components, and accessories for the .50 Beowulf through licensed dealers or directly to law enforcement. View the .50 Beowulf and other weapons online at:

www.alexanderarms.com.

The .50 Beowulf is the first real improvement in the AR-15 in many years, and adds greatly to the usefulness of that fine weapon.

Jeff Quinn



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Alexander Arms' "Entry Gun" includes a provision to attach a front sight or accessory forward of the hand guard.



Alexander Arms' scope mount is made to accept the nifty [3Bucc Brass Catcher](#), available from

www.3bucc.com.

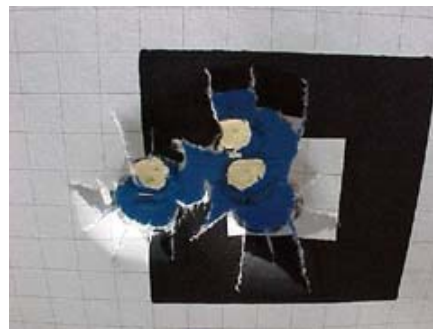


Factory-loaded ammunition is available from Alexander Arms. Currently offered is a 400-grain Jacketed Soft Point (left) and 325-grain Jacketed Hollowpoint (right). Jeff considers the big 400-grain JSP to be an excellent choice for big game, while the 325-grain JHP should be a fine performer on medium game such as deer or wild hogs. The familiar AR-15 design of the gun, coupled with the ballistic superiority of the .50 Beowulf cartridge, makes the Alexander Arms gun an ideal choice for tactical law enforcement as well.



Shooter fires the Alexander Arms .50 Beowulf from the bench at the 2002 Shootists' Holiday, held at the NRA Whittington Center in Raton, NM. Reaction to the .50 Beowulf was universally

positive and enthusiastic.



A good deal of the enthusiastic response to the .50 Beowulf resulted from the excellent inherent accuracy of the gun / cartridge combination. This 3/4" 100-yard group is a testament to both the design of the cartridge and the quality of the rifle.



As this "exit wound" in a 10-inch treated wood post shows, the accuracy of the .50 Beowulf is matched by its power! Author considers the .50 Beowulf to be one of the best things to ever happen to the AR-15 design.



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