

FN-150 Turret update February - March 2019

February was beset with challenges which tended to slow progress for a while. It started with an un-scheduled drive to Madrid (not turret related) which took a while! Then there was the ill-advised comment, in the last update, that I wanted to be putting the Valve Box and bracket assembly in for the last time – that tempted fate.

Before moving on to the Gun Cradles, I needed to make and fit a few small parts. In the event, when I tried to manufacture and fit the Control Rod Centre Support I realised that there was no way that it could fit in without fouling either the hydraulic supply and return pipes or the Rotation Motor banjos. After much thought and reading I realised that the Valve Box was actually configured for a different mark of FN turret – probably FN-5, where the foul with the Rotation Motor would not occur. So, all of the central area had to come out again.



Control Rod Centre Support – This one is on the FN-5 as it is easier to photograph

Then the challenge really began. No reasonable amount of heat or torque would shift the Valve Box banjos, especially given its relic state in the first place. Then a lucky break – the Valve Box that I had produced for my FN-5 was configured for the FN-150. This was actually a mistake on my part but turned out to be very helpful in the end. The two Valve Boxes got swapped and all the rest could go back into the FN-150 centre section, maybe for the final time this time? But probably not.

The area between the two side frames was complete with just a little touching up of paint to be done.

Also, before the Gun Cradles go in the top bracket for the ammunition rails on either side needed to be replaced as the original had corroded and fallen off. I produced four of these

(two for each turret) and then came the task of drilling out the bolts on the old brackets. I'm very glad that I did this before the Cradles went it as space is very tight indeed.



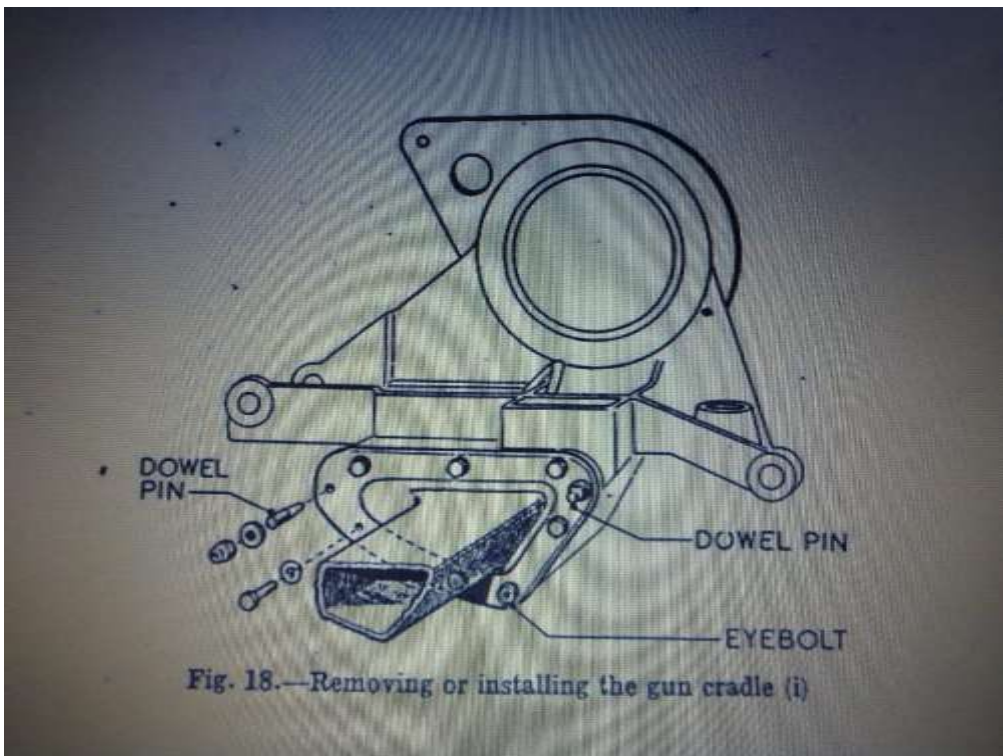
Ammunition rail top bracket – Again on the FN-5 for ease of photography

That done, it was back to the intended task of the Gun Cradles. The left hand one was in the best condition and so I started with that. Once again came some challenges. Firstly, the Cradles are not from an FN-150 and, therefore, do not have the mounting cast into them for the interrupter arms – this means something will have to be made and bolted on to do the job. Secondly, it appears that the already corroded bearing races have been sand blasted which will make having the turret functioning likely to cause seizure at some point (I had been thinking of making the turret move under electrical power as the hydraulic system is way too far gone).



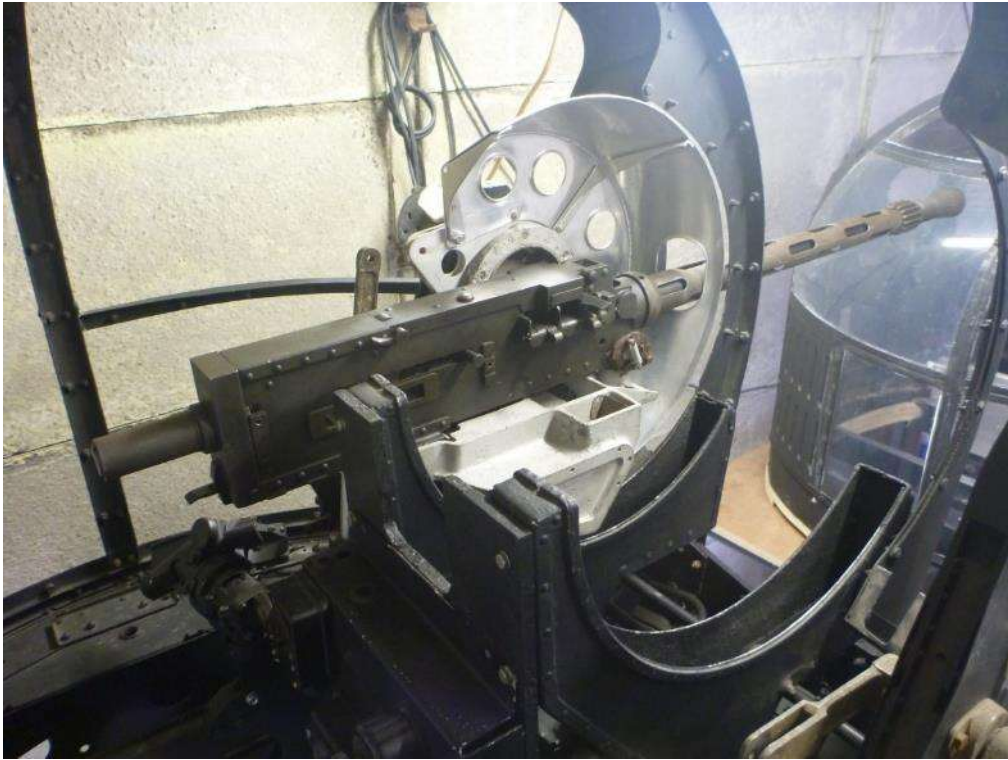


A view of the left side Gun Cradle showing the lack of Interrupter bracket



A view of how the Gun Cradle should look

Back to the good news. So, the shroud was assembled, which meant a small amount of careful drilling and solid riveting. It was then bolted to the alloy casting so that the clearance between the shroud and the cupola could be checked (with the cradle fitted). All good. I then fished the front gun mount out of the WD40 bath where it had been residing since last summer and found that it was now completely free. With two new springs fitted it worked perfectly and I took the opportunity to fit a Browning into the mount. The Gun Release mechanism was missing and so I pinched one from the FN-5 as I need to make/find more in any case.



The turret sporting a rare Vickers built Browning MkII* for the first time in many years



Visible here is the front Gun Mount with new springs.

With this done, the left side Gun Cradle is nearly complete except for the missing interrupter bracket and firing solenoid. These can be added later and so the next task is to dismantle, paint and re-build it before fitting it to the turret.

March also saw a long awaited crusade on nuts and bolts. The FN series of turrets seem to be almost exclusively held together with 2 BA nuts and bolts and if designers wanted more strength they just used more 2 BA rather than a larger size. I had a great time buying old 2 BA parts on the internet and then cutting them to length and re-tapping as required to get the nuts in safety. This gives a much better look than the zinc plated metric equivalent that is about the right size but is, in reality, a European imposter.

Hopefully, April will see both of the Gun Cradles nearing completion which will be a major milestone as then both Brownings can go in for a photo shoot. We could still do with a pair of deactivated Brownings for this turret as I need mine for the FN-5.