

A guide to the value attributes of collectible firearms as defined in Section 17(1)(a) of the Firearms Control Amendment Act (FCAA) (2007) as promulgated in March 2012

Introduction

The changes to the Firearms Control Act afforded us an opportunity to anchor the attributes of a 'collectible firearm' in the Principle Act , in line with international practice . We were able to draw on the experience of the first 5 years, and to incorporate elements of Australian, Canadian, UK, and New Zealand legislation , as well as our own Regulations , into a comprehensive definition of collectability which eliminates a lot of confusion and/or subjectivity . In testing this against our Members interests, it appears that all genuine collectors' interests can be accommodated in this definition which has been accepted and approved as follows -

Section 17. (1) (a) A firearm which may be possessed in a private collection is any firearm approved for collection by an accredited collector's association, based upon such historical, heritage , technological, scientific, educational, cultural, commemorative, investment, rarity, thematic or artistic value (*of the firearm – ed*) determined by the association.

There is a subtle shift of emphasis now in the FCAA as compared to the FCA in that the Collectability attributes now clearly refer to a specific firearm , although obviously this must still be aligned with the intent and content of the Member's approved Theme(s) or Field of Interest .

The requirement in the Regulations that the firearm must "fit" into the Member's approved Theme(s) or Field of Interest (or both) , and in a specific Category (D, C, B, or A) was also anchored in the Principal Act by the incorporation of the wording "*and qualifies to collect the firearm*" in Section 17(2) -

(2) The Registrar may issue a licence in terms of this section to a private collector if the application is accompanied by a sworn statement or solemn declaration from the chairperson of an accredited collectors association, or someone delegated in writing by him or her, stating that the applicant is a registered member of that association *and qualifies to collect the firearm,*

Value Attributes

An absolute definition of what the various collectability attributes (historical, technological etc.) should include is difficult, as these are often informed by a specific members focus and Interest, but some general interpretations have emerged -

Historical:

Depending on the nature of the member's interest this section would look at –

- the history of the development of the firearm, the person who designed it, and the company who made it , or
- the history of how and where it was used and by whom , or
- in some instances both .

Technological:

The design, engineering, and functioning of the firearm, including any distinctive characteristics which differentiate it from firearms of the same era, e.g. pros and cons of different types of locking mechanisms.

Scientific:

Although similar in some respects to 'Technological', we tend to look here at the 'Science' behind the design of the firearm. Examples might include a study of the different types of materials used in firearm manufacture such as steel, stainless steel, or polymer plastics, changes resulting from the transition from black to smokeless powder or the impact of different types of rifling and bullet shape on ballistic performance.

Educational:

This covers anything to do with a 'teaching' or 'learning' context, either of the firearm itself such as training rifles or (licencable) cutaways, or where the firearm regularly forms part of a dioramic display or re-enactment for the benefit of others.

Cultural:

This would be relevant where the firearm formed an intrinsic part of the day-to-day life of its owner in the society of that time. Pioneers, Frontiersmen, the 'Wild West', and our own "Die Boer en sy Roer" heritage would all be good examples.

Commemorative:

Many manufacturers over the years have brought out 'special editions' or limited production runs to mark a specific milestone, person or event in the history of the firearm or the marque. For example Mauser brought out a limited range of the Luger P-08 in various configurations in the 1970's , and Walther marked the end of production of its famous PP and PPK models with special edition cased sets .

Investment

While most quality firearms have appreciated in value over the years, what we are looking at here are typically the 'high end' rifles, shotguns and handguns which command premium prices, or where the present or future financial value of the firearm played a significant role in the decision to acquire it, normally in conjunction with one or more of the other attributes .

Rarity

This comes into play for a couple of reasons – either only a few examples of the firearm were made, or only a few have survived, or only a few found their way into this country .

Inversely it would also be appropriate to highlight the purchase of a Replica or look alike under this attribute, where the 'real thing' was virtually unobtainable, or unaffordable for the Collector concerned.

Thematic (to be included in all applications)

Courtesy of our Legislation which requires that a Collector have an approved Theme into which a collectible firearm should fit, one could argue that all our firearms are 'Thematic' which is true .

- A brief description should therefore be included as to how and why the firearm fits into the relevant theme in question . This includes the "story" and provenance of this specific firearm
- The reason for including this attribute separately is however also to provide for the instances of a legitimate Theme which does not readily fit into the other attributes. An interesting example we have encountered is "the collection of examples of firearms used in famous Spy stories and Films over the past 80 years".

Artistic

Many firearms can be considered as examples of 'engineering art', particularly if they are engraved, or are 'special editions' of particularly high quality in terms of choice of materials and finish. This doesn't only apply to the better known 'exotics' as we have seen outstanding examples of engraving, exotic wood and inlitting on readily available handguns and long arms. Even the humble SMLE ,303 came out in a selected deluxe version in the 1920's .

Heritage

'Heritage' is often confused either with 'history' or 'inheritance'. In this instance we are looking at the definition as it applies to South Africa's 'National Estate' as set out in the National Heritage Resources Act i.e. a firearm which is associated with famous people or events of South African significance or involvement .

- If the firearm is particularly significant e.g. was the known personal property of a famous South African person, it would qualify to be considered as a "Heritage Object", and would have to be certified as such by the Heritage Resources Agency in terms of Section 17(1)(b) .
- However not all firearms which have a measure of Heritage value are "Heritage objects", and this value can be described under this attribute e.g. a Boer War Mauser which is representative example from that conflict but didn't belong to a particular famous person .
- Many of us collect firearms which we 'grew up with', and have a particular interest in and fondness for. This 'personal heritage' can also be described here, in addition to the other relevant dimensions .

Conclusion

On average between three and five of the above attributes apply to any one firearm within the context of the Members approved Theme(s) or Field of Interest.

Those which are not applicable should be left out so that an accurate and succinct description of the firearm can be presented, and a clear picture can emerge of the value of the firearm to the member, and how it fits into his or her collection .

Where there is nothing "unique" about a specific firearm and it is being collected as a "representative example" this should also be clearly stated .

Addendum : Replicas

A "Replica" for purposes of Private Collection is defined as follows :

"Replica" means a reproduction or re-creation of a "well-known historical firearm" (quote) which has been specifically created as such

The motivation for a Replica would therefore follow the same attributes and criteria as for an original , but would also include some additional detail of how the Replica came to be created