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Since its foundation in 1993, Holt's Auctioneers has grown to become the world's dominant auction house in the field of modern and antique shotguns, rifles and associated militaria.

KL magazine talks to Director Nick Holt about his work and support for the important and time-honoured craft of skilled gunmaking...

KL MAGAZINE: Could you give us a brief overview of Holt's Auctioneers?

NICK HOLT: I set up the company in 1993, and during the ensuing years we've become the dominant auction house in our field, worldwide. We specialise in fine modern and antique shotguns, rifles, edged weapons and militaria. We're based two miles from Sandringham and hold quarterly sales in London.

KL MAGAZINE: What does your role as Director entail on a daily basis?

NICK HOLT: It's totally unpredictable! Every day is different and whilst one day I'll be valuing a collection in Suffolk, the following day I might be heading out to Norway or South Africa!

KL MAGAZINE: When's your next auction?

NICK HOLT: Our next auction is on Thursday 19th June. We're just beginning to accept consignments for this sale – but we already have some really interesting pieces. Two that immediately spring to mind are a very early example of a breech loading gun by Lang dating to the 1860s, and a very rare example of a LeMat carbine – of which very few are known to exist.

KL MAGAZINE: What's the most unusual item you've ever auctioned?

NICK HOLT: Probably 'The Triumph of Love' – a most extraordinary rifle profusely carved, engraved, jewelled and plated in gold and silver. It was a real 'objet d'art' and sold for an impressive £120,000.

KL MAGAZINE: What's the most rewarding part of your job?

NICK HOLT: Spotting a gem and then releasing it to the market and watching it fly at the auction. It's also great to work in an area where you're constantly learning – no matter how long you've been in this business, there's always something new to discover.



KL MAGAZINE: What have you learned from your work?

NICK HOLT: A very great appreciation for not only the craftsmen who build fine guns, but also how important a role gunmaking and shooting has played throughout the ages – and hopefully will continue to do so.

It's also one of the reasons that as a Liveryman of the Worshipful Company of Gunmakers, I really wanted to get involved in helping to further promote the future of British gunmaking by becoming a Trustee of The Gunmakers Company Charitable Trust.

It's been established to provide financial support for the development of craft skills and new technology associated with the gunmaking trade. This mostly involves bursaries to support trainee gunmakers, but also helps with other grants in other areas, such as training and education for conservators working in arms and armour at the V&A and the Glasgow Museum, or supporting charitable activities of the City of London and the Borough of Tower Hamlets.

KL MAGAZINE: What do you like best about Norfolk?

NICK HOLT: I like the fact that it remains relatively quiet and untouched – it provides the perfect antidote to a life in airports or on the road.

KL MAGAZINE: In your free time, how do you like to relax?

NICK HOLT: I really don't get time to relax!

KL MAGAZINE: Who's your biggest inspiration?

NICK HOLT: The Queen.

KL MAGAZINE: What's the best piece of advice you've ever been given?

NICK HOLT: Specialise in a small commodity and you'll become a wanted commodity.

KL MAGAZINE: What was the last book you read?

NICK HOLT: I probably spend more time reading newspapers than books, as I like to keep up to date on current affairs.

KL MAGAZINE: Tell us something about yourself that would surprise people...

NICK HOLT: I have one O-Level (in art) and I left school at 16.

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