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WEST NORFOLK | NORTH NORFOLK | COASTAL



ABOVE: An extremely rare survivor from the First World War - the sniper rifle and its original accessories that Lt N.W. Methven MC used as part of Abe Bailey's Sharpshooter Unit. Just of the lots in Hots Auctioneers most recent sale, to date it's the only known example in the world

Made as weapons. Loved as works of art.

*Important episodes in British history, unique survivors from the First World War, European royalty - it's no surprise that **Holts Auctioneers** is one of the most famous specialist auction houses in the world*

Last month the eyes of people around the world were focused (thanks to a network of laptops, telephones and live feeds) on a small part of the royal estate of Sandringham as Holts Auctioneers held its final sale of 2021. Over two days in mid-December, one of the very few specialist gun auctioneers in the country offered 2,000 extraordinary and historically-important lots, which included antique, vintage, sporting and modern guns, taxidermy, books, edged weapons and

militaria.

It was a typically eclectic collection that covered virtually every corner of the world and an extraordinary range of major historical events.

"Guns and weapons are obviously made for a purpose, but for many people that's the least important element of them," says Nick Holt, who moved to Norfolk from London nearly 30 years and founded Holts Auctioneers in an old dairy farm in Wolferton. "These are beautiful works of art and outstanding examples

of craftsmanship. And they're also important parts of our heritage - without them much of that history would be lost forever."

From 18th century duelling pistols and a naval cutlass from the American revolutionary wars to a Luftwaffe dress sword and a Japanese officer's katana from the Second World War, every lot has its own fascinating story to tell.

Take the single-barrelled sporting gun belonging to Sir Benjamin D'Urban, for example. He was born in Norfolk in 1777, became the Governor of Antigua,

and would eventually have the South African port of Natal named after him - today we know it Durban.

Even more fascinating is a very rare double rook rifle made by the London-based gunsmiths Holland & Holland in 1900 for Umberto I, who'd been the king of Italy for 22 years before he received the gun at the end of May 1900. It's in remarkably good condition, but there's a rather sombre reason for that. It's unknown whether or not Umberto ever had the chance to use it - because the king was assassinated less than eight weeks later.

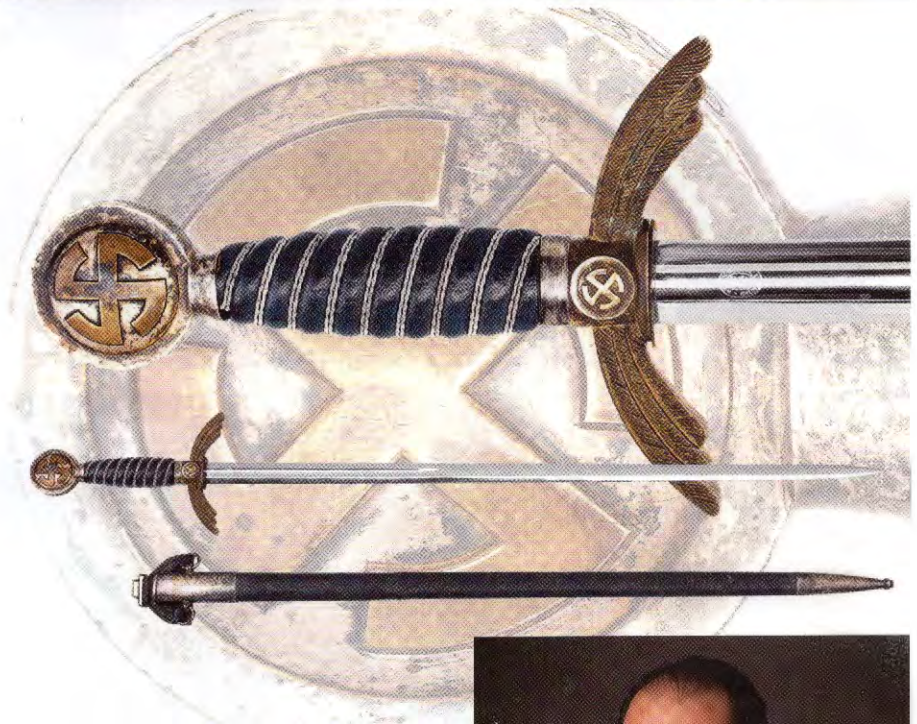
One of the most outstanding lots is the exceptionally rare sniper rifle of Lt N.W. Methven MC, which may well be unique. It's the only rifle known to exist from Abe Bailey's South African Sharpshooters during the First World War. The young Methven himself was one of only six members of the 24 serving soldiers in the unit to survive the war. Even the rifle's accessories - including its folding tripod and its original telescopic sight and trench periscope in their respective leather cases - have been carefully preserved to this day.

"It's those kind of details that make all the difference, which is why we put such an emphasis on provenance," says Nick Holt. "We all work incredibly hard at it and we never use words such as 'reputedly' or 'possibly' because the true value of these guns lies in being 100% accurate about their origins, their owners and their history."

Holts Auctioneers is now a truly international operation. Nick has a network of almost 50 agents around the world sourcing guns and related items - from the USA to Australia, and from Pakistan to China. In Norfolk, he's built a team of over 20 highly-experienced people including ballistics experts, researchers, photographers, media and digital specialists, and gunsmiths - one of whom is Scott Wilson.

"It's wonderful having Scott here, because he's the son of my father's gunsmith John Wilson when we lived in London," says Nick. "That was where my love of guns started, and I served my apprenticeship with John as soon as I left school - that's really where the story of Holts Auctioneers begins."

Supreme artistry, exquisite craftsmanship and major historical importance - we can't want to see what the next chapter in the story brings to the saleroom.



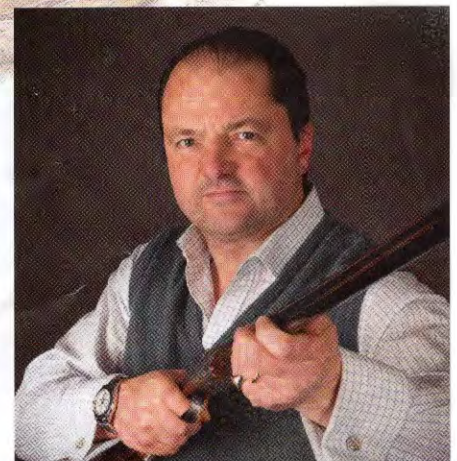
ABOVE: Top left is the rifle made for the Italian King Umberto I (top right) who probably didn't survive long enough to have used it. Above is a beautiful Luftwaffe dress sword from the Second World War. Nick Holt (right) and his team are now one of the most famous specialist gun and militaria auction houses in the world.

NEXT SALES

Mon 21st March: Antiques
Tue 22nd March: Modern
Thurs 31st March: Sealed Bid Auction

VALUATIONS

To maintain owners' privacy, valuations take place on an appointment-only system, and you should call Holts on 01485 542822 to book. Please bring any documents or information relating to provenance, as that can have a huge impact on the value of your item(s).



Holts Auctioneers

Church Farm Barns, Wolferton,
Norfolk PE31 6HA
01485 542822
info@holtsauctioneers.com
www.holtsauctioneers.com

