

# IN THE FIELD

JUNE 2021

By Sir Johnny Scott Bt.

## “HOLLANDS FOR HOLTS”

A press announcement on the 1st February confirmed rumours that had been ricocheting around the gun trade since December, that Beretta Holding had acquired 100% of the internationally revered gun makers Holland and Holland from Chanel, who have owned it for the last twenty five years. Included in the sale are the factory in Harrow road, where every component of the iconic shotguns and rifles are handmade: the famous Bruton street show room; the gun room in Dallas and the prestigious shooting grounds at Northwood, which boasts some of the finest facilities worldwide and a magnificent new lodge, with indoor rifle cinema, Bordeaux wine room and restaurant.

Beretta have been manufacturing firearms since 1526, with the Beretta family maintaining continuous control of the company for nearly five hundred years. Today it is run jointly by the fifteenth generation, brothers Pietro and Franco. Beretta supply a broad range of civilian, military and law enforcement firearms internationally, with sporting guns making up three quarters of sales.

The company had been seeking to acquire a premium luxury brand for some time and Holland & Holland fitted the bill perfectly, fulfilling all the elements of the finest gun making, a rich heritage dating back to 1835, royal warrants, independent manufacturing facilities, skilled craftsmen and outstanding products. Beretta Holding is committed to the shooting sports sector and has a proud history of investing in brands that come under its umbrella. They will continue to do so with their newest acquisition, Holland & Holland, to the benefit of this famous gunmaker.

The President, and CEO of Beretta Holding, Pietro Gussalli Beretta, said: “This is a truly exciting development and a great achievement for the Beretta family, further increasing the group’s international footprint. Faced with the Brexit challenges, I am very pleased to increase our direct presence in the important UK market, where we are already active with our well-established distribution subsidiary.”

The well-established distribution subsidiary is GMK Ltd, the leading UK importer and distributor of shotguns, rifles, ammunition and accessories. GMK – Gunmark until 1998 – is privately owned and managed by the Waktare family since it was founded in 1971, when Bjorn Waktare moved from Sweden to the UK. He was joined by his sons Karl and Oskar in 1994 and 1996, who now head the company following Bjorn’s retirement in 1998. The association with Beretta started in 1977, when



Sir (Walter) John Scott, Bt. MFH

Sir Johnny (as he is better known) is an author, natural historian, broadcaster, columnist, countryside campaigner, artisan snuff manufacturer and retired hill farmer.

He wrote and co-presented the BBC2 series *Clarissa and the Countryman* with Clarissa Dickson Wright. He writes for a variety of magazines and periodicals on field sports, food, farming, travel, history and rural affairs.

A lifetime devotee of the countryside and its sports, he is currently:

- Joint Master, The North Pennine Hunt
- Regional Director, Vote OK.
- President, The Gamekeepers Welfare Trust.
- President, The Tay Valley Wildfowlers Association.
- President, The Newcastle Wildfowlers Association.
- President, The Association of Working Lurchers / Longdogs.
- Centenary Patron and Honorary Life Member, British Association for Shooting and Conservation.
- Patron, The Sporting Lucas Terrier Association.
- Patron, The Wildlife Ark Trust.
- Patron, The National Organisation of Beaters and Pickers Up.
- Board member, The European Squirrel Initiative.

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Gunmark was appointed distributor for the UK, quickly developing Beretta into one of the two leading shotgun brands in the British market. In 2006, Beretta bought 20% of GMK, increasing their share of the business to 60% in 2013. The Beretta Gallery at the top of St. James', wholly owned by GMK, was opened in 2005 and is the showcase store for the Beretta brand, with two floors dedicated to luxury clothing and accessories, whilst the third houses the gunroom.

Following the acquisition of Holland and Holland, Beretta assigned the company to GMK and it is now wholly owned by them within Beretta Holding. The new board of directors are; Franco Gussalli Beretta; Paolo Zannoni - the Beretta Holding company secretary - and Oskar Waktare, whilst his brother Karl is the director of the US based subsidiary, Holland & Holland Sporting Weapons Ltd.

Since February, Oskar Waktare has been operating as managing director, but on 29th April, Hollands announced that as of 17th May, Nigel Stuart will join the company as Chief Operating Officer. Nigel has been managing director of Spirit Yachts, who design and manufacture in the UK some of the finest bespoke wooden yachts in the world. The board of directors are confident that his experience in managing manufacturing companies with high value custom-made products, which combine the finest craftsmanship and technology, makes Nigel ideally suited to take Holland and Holland forward.

Commenting on the appointment, Franco Gusalli Beretta said; "I am delighted that Nigel has agreed to join Holland and Holland. He is uniquely experienced for this wide-ranging role and will also bring a fresh perspective to our industry. We were very keen to bring in a British leader to respect the unique history of the brand, whilst looking to build for the future."

Beretta Holding and GMK wish to preserve the precious heritage of Holland and Holland in the United Kingdom, with a high dedication to skilled craftsmanship. Now that it is under their stewardship, the future of one of the greatest names in the history of British gun making is in safe hands.



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