

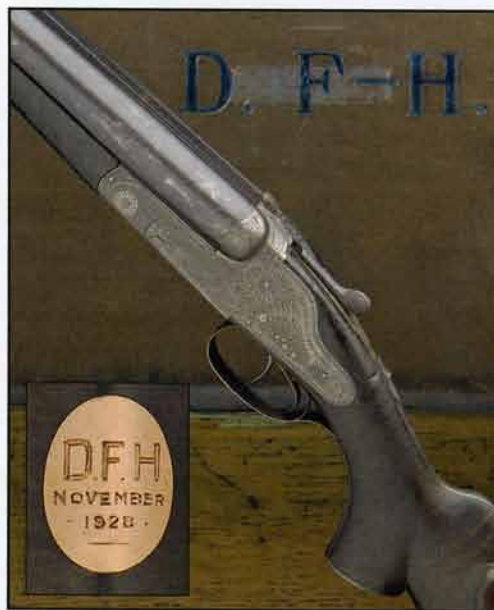
UNDER THE HAMMER

Jonathan Downs gives the heads up for Holt's December sale

HOLT'S
10 December
London

We're giving you a good run up to this auction, so there are no excuses, and it's definitely one for the keen collector. Holt's will be wading in aristocracy in the December sale, where several items of impeccable birthright will come under the hammer. The first of these are the guns of none other than His Majesty Edward VII. It's a pair of 16-bore Hodges patent rotary-underlever hammergeuns by Stephen Grant. The first gun comes complete with a gold escutcheon marked 'Albert Edward NOV. 9th 1870' and the second is dated 'DECr 25th

1870'. Both come in their individual brass-cornered leather case, the lids marked with the crest of the Prince of Wales. The guns were commissioned by Queen Victoria as presents for the prince's birthday and Christmas – but on one of the many shoots with his good friend the 12th Duke of Hamilton and Brandon he enjoyed little success, and became dissatisfied with his shooting performance. The duke offered his own guns, and the exchange was later made permanent, the duke's family caring for the royal guns ever since. This will be their first appearance on the open market and strong bidding is anticipated for these princely firearms. They are estimated at £50-£70,000.



The .450 cal. big game rifle of Denys Finch Hatton, estimated at £60,000-80,000

Another extraordinary piece coming up for sale is the Denys Finch Hatton big game rifle. This .450 calibre gun is very much an Africa special: a Charles Lancaster .450 (3/4) nitro express back-action sidelock double rifle, it has 25" engraved replacement nitro chopperlump barrels (replaced by the makers in 1929 from their original .475 cal on Hatton's request) with matte sight rib, open sights and ramp-mounted bead foresight (though it's missing its protector). It has a fine rose-gold escutcheon plate inscribed 'D.F.H. – NOVEMBER 1928' and comes in the original lightweight leather case, the lid initialled 'D. F-H'.

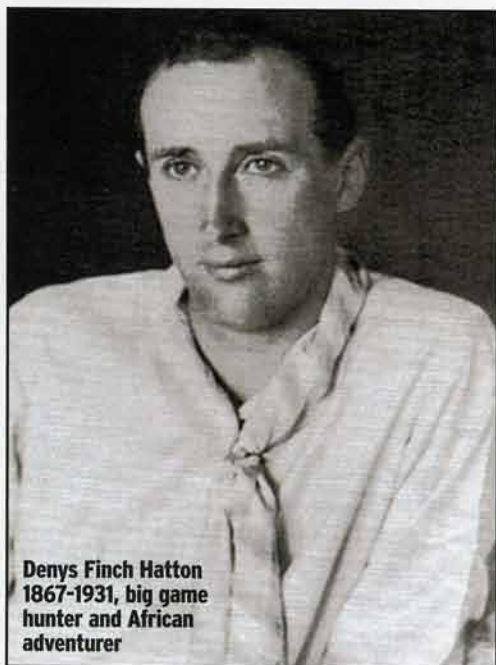
Hatton was a fascinating character and the stuff of '20s and '30s romantic and adventure fiction. The son of the Earl of Winchelsea, he invested in land in British East Africa in 1911, enabling him to spend most of his time hunting – which he did every autumn and winter. In 1925 he became a professional big game hunter, taking the great and the good on safari, including the Prince of Wales, the future Edward VIII. As was the fashion of the day, he learned to fly and took to the skies in a De Havilland biplane, but it was this taste for adventure which led to his end: he was killed in a fatal air crash in his Gypsy Moth in 1931. His only known romance was with Karen Blixen, the events of their affair immortalised in the Redford and Streep film *Out of Africa* (1985). Upon his death the gun was gifted to his childhood friend Viscount Cole, but ownership subsequently passed to the Dawson family in 1960, for £100. Holt's estimate the selling price at slightly more today, somewhere in the region of £60-80,000. For details of this and other lots see www.holtandcompany.co.uk.



Pair of 16-bore hammergeuns, commissioned by Queen Victoria for Edward, Prince of Wales in 1870. Estimated at £50-70,000



Denys Finch Hatton and companions after the kill



Denys Finch Hatton
1867-1931, big game
hunter and African
adventurer