

# BUYING A QUALITY GUN AT AUCTION



Feel like treating yourself to a fine shotgun but can't afford to buy new? **SELENA BARR** says pre-owned bargains regularly come under the hammer.

"Auctions can deliver," says Chris Beaumont of Holts Auctioneers, adding: "It would be hard to find such a diverse selection of available guns under one roof under any other circumstance – and whatever your budget or requirements may be, there is almost certainly going to be something there that fits the bill."

Certainly Holts cannot be beaten for variety when it comes to gun auctions, and whether you are looking for a little-used modern gun or an old classic that you'd like to take into the shooting field, auctions are the place to look.

Buying a brand new gun can be a big investment, and, as with many markets, the difference in the price of a pre-owned gun and a new one can be substantial. There are, of course, advantages to buying new: you can select exactly the model you want, the wood, the engraving style and pretty much any specification, almost to the point of ordering a bespoke gun, as well as having the serious advantage of a warranty. However, the cost compared with a pre-owned gun can mean this is not feasible, particularly when one adds in VAT and, in some cases, the waiting time for delivery.

So, if a new gun is beyond your wallet, perhaps a pre-owned gun of a similar calibre isn't – and certainly it is a more immediate solution. Specialist auctions can have a huge range of modern guns in their sales, and it's well worth investigating. Chris says that while there are bargains to be had, you should do your homework: "Talk to the auction house, or enlist the help of a friendly

gunsmith, as they may be able to offer you some good advice on what is going to be a gun for practical use."

While guns sold at auction are legal in terms of proof, they aren't stripped or tested and of course there is no guarantee, so it's worth going to viewing days to take a closer look.

"At auctions, as with any type of sale, if something seems too good to be true, it probably is," says Chris.

A William Evans 12-bore boxlock ejector pigeon gun, ordered in 1933 by Sir Ernest Edward de Winton Wills, 4th baronet of Hazelwood. Sold for £2,700 (estimate: £1,500 – £2,500)

"But that being said, auctions can be a fantastic source for a good, working gun at a reasonable price."

When it comes to how much to bid on a gun, check what a new example would fetch, as well as what a used gun might cost when buying retail. And don't forget to factor in the buyer's premium, as well as whether VAT is applicable (on new or imported items). Holts Auctioneers now has a handy system to do this on the online catalogue: the 'Total Price Calculator', which will show you the total price including buyer's premium and VAT if applicable. There is another online tool: 'What is Your Spending Limit', which allows you to set your overall spending limit on a lot.

## CONDITION CHECK

You aren't going to get the chance to test a gun that's being sold at auction, but you

can find clues on an external inspection of its condition – if the barrels still have their blueing, the chequering is sharp and everything feels tight, it's a good sign. As Chris puts it: "Age doesn't necessarily mean that it has been much used or tie in to the life that is left in a gun."

Key words to look for in a catalogue are 'new and unused', 'virtually unused' or 'little used', according to Chris. He adds: "Look for positive descriptions. Words that mark the gun out as being special may

well mean it can be hard to find a similar example, and certainly if you do your research you will find one-off or unusual guns that can give you a lifetime of use in the field."

You can pick up great examples of fine British-made guns at auction for under £5,000 as well as considerably more exotic models if your budget runs to five or six-figure sums.

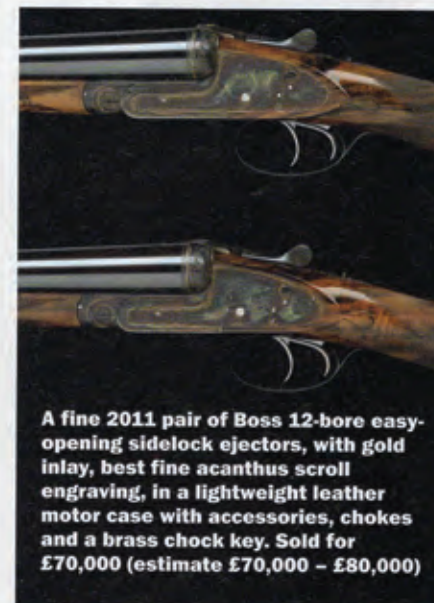
For more information, visit [www.holtsauctioneers.com](http://www.holtsauctioneers.com)



## Here's some examples of guns recently sold by Holts Auctioneers:



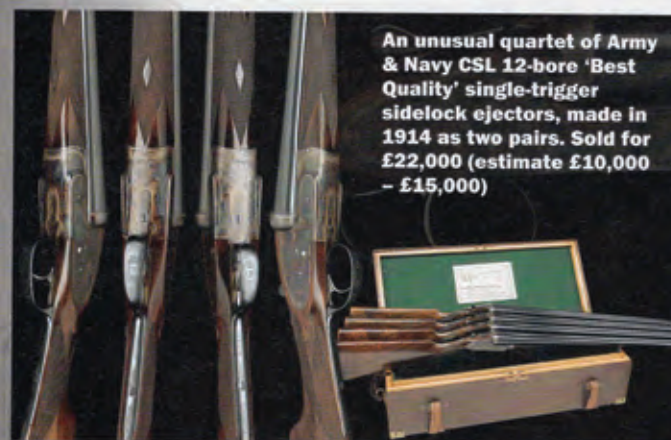
A Celtic-engraved 12-bore sidelock ejector by Scottish maker Alex Martin, in leather case. Sold for £4,100 (estimate £2,500 – £3,500)



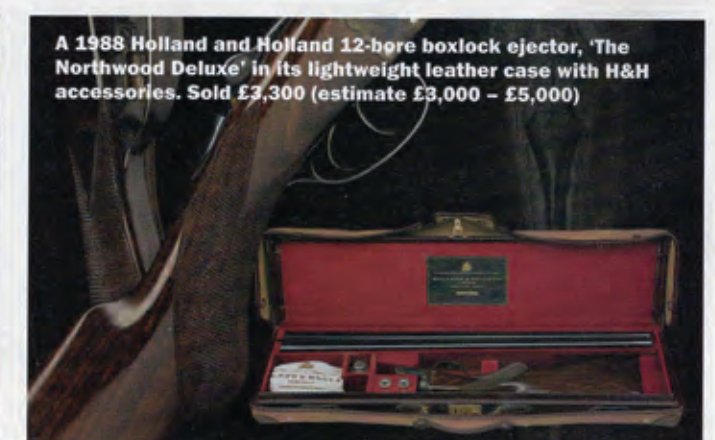
A fine 2011 pair of Boss 12-bore easy-opening sidelock ejectors, with gold inlay, best fine acanthus scroll engraving, in a lightweight leather motor case with accessories, chokes and a brass choke key. Sold for £70,000 (estimate £70,000 – £80,000)



A little-used 28-bore Churchill 'Hercules Finest Quality Model' boxlock ejector, fully scroll engraved, with lightweight leather case. Sold for £8,500 (estimate £5,000 – £7,000)



An unusual quartet of Army & Navy CSL 12-bore 'Best Quality' single-trigger sidelock ejectors, made in 1914 as two pairs. Sold for £22,000 (estimate £10,000 – £15,000)



A 1988 Holland and Holland 12-bore boxlock ejector, 'The Northwood Deluxe' in its lightweight leather case with H&H accessories. Sold £3,300 (estimate £3,000 – £5,000)