

HOLT'S

AUCTIONEERS OF FINE MODERN & ANTIQUE GUNS

In the Gunroom

It might be more apposite to entitle this piece 'In the Creel Room' as we are taking a fishy journey into the fascinating, but potentially muddy waters of high-end, modern and vintage fishing reels, and the people who collect them.

Why are we making this journey? Well it's very simple; we have decided to add collector's reels and equipment into the eclectic sporting mix that we are fortunate to offer at each sale. This doesn't mean that we're diluting the core stream of what we do, we are expanding it, but in a reasoned manner. After all, huntin', shootin', fishin' is our *raison d'être* so why not add the last of the sporting tri-umvirate to our sales? We have sold some notable reels in the past, but these have been as occasional Lots rather than a dedicated section of the sale. Most notably in March 2008 we sold a remarkable pair of 'Field' model tarpon reels by Hardy Bros. that realised a hammer price of £16,500. They were built for Lord Desborough and may have resulted from a unique commission, a service that the makers offered to select clients.

In many respects the qualities that make best English 'family' guns appeal are the very same as those found in fine reels. Collectors look namely for originality, and a reel that has been allowed to grow old gracefully will have more appeal to most collectors than one that's been refinished, even if to a high standard. It seems that the market for collectable reels has mirrored that of English guns, and the market is extremely buoyant (the fishy puns seem to be unavoidable I'm afraid). As the financial world has faltered, and our collective faith brought into question, many of us have sought new areas to inject money into. One of these areas is reels, and prices are continuing to rise with Hardy Bros. seemingly in most demand, indeed, all-brass and brass-faced 'Perfect' models have been achieving record results both domestically and overseas. It is a predictable irony though, that as values have risen, so have the incidence of counterfeit reels. Some of these are of a very high standard, and a deal of care has been taken to pass them off as a true vintage reel.

Mindful of this, we are very fortunate on being able to call on the services of Roger Still to assist with the reel section. Roger will be known to many of you and has been a keen Rod all his life, as well as possessing an encyclopaedic knowledge of vintage reels and tackle. He echoes my thoughts on the reel market in general, observing that, "In a climate of minimal return on money invested in financial institutions, many more people are turning to fine collectable tackle." Ignoring the fiscal side of things, I asked Roger to expand on the appeal of these old reels. His eyes sparkled as he warmed to his theme, "So many of the collectible Hardy reels had very low production runs, and taking into account lost, broken and never to be found, this makes them a prized find. The Hardy Barton is a good example; [it] had only a total production of 109 reels in

the 1930s. Cascapedias from the same era, in four different sizes a little over 100 reels in total! Hardys were also good at doing 'one-offs' for important customers, so some reels can have a production run on one!!"

As one who shoots with ancient, worn, but much loved guns, I wondered if the vintage reels still take to the river in the same way that their barrelled cousins still perform wonders (not in my hands I hasten to add) in the field, "Most of the elite reels are housed by collectors in cabinets or safes, never to be fished" began the answer, "but there is a growing band of anglers who seek collectible reels to fish with. Hardy Perfects have a unique sound when the check screams from a traditional fly reels that are in demand, as Roger explains, "Many overseas anglers seek casting reels, like the Hardy Silex or Allcock Aerial to fish for hard fighting species such as steelhead and salmon. Playing a big fish on a single-action revolving drum reel like this takes some beating for angling thrills!" He continues, "One Scandinavian angler I know of will always upon purchasing an antique rod or reel, including great weighty greenheart and brass winches, take them out and catch a salmon before retiring them to the shelf."



Lot 263
Hardy Bros. A Highly Scarce 4in Silent
Check 'Perfect' Salmon Reel.
Estimate: £1,800 - £2,200

Humour plays its part in any field, and the reel world is no exception. One piece that has fired my interest is known as the Hardy 'Eunuch'. This model of Perfect was produced during and shortly after the Great War when many materials and components were diverted for War Ministry use. This meant that ball-races were unavailable to the makers and so the spool ran on a plain bearing instead..... No balls you see.

Any further text would seem superfluous after that!

Roland Elworthy