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The guns of South Kensington

Donald Dallas reflects on the lots that went under the hammer at the recent Holts sale.

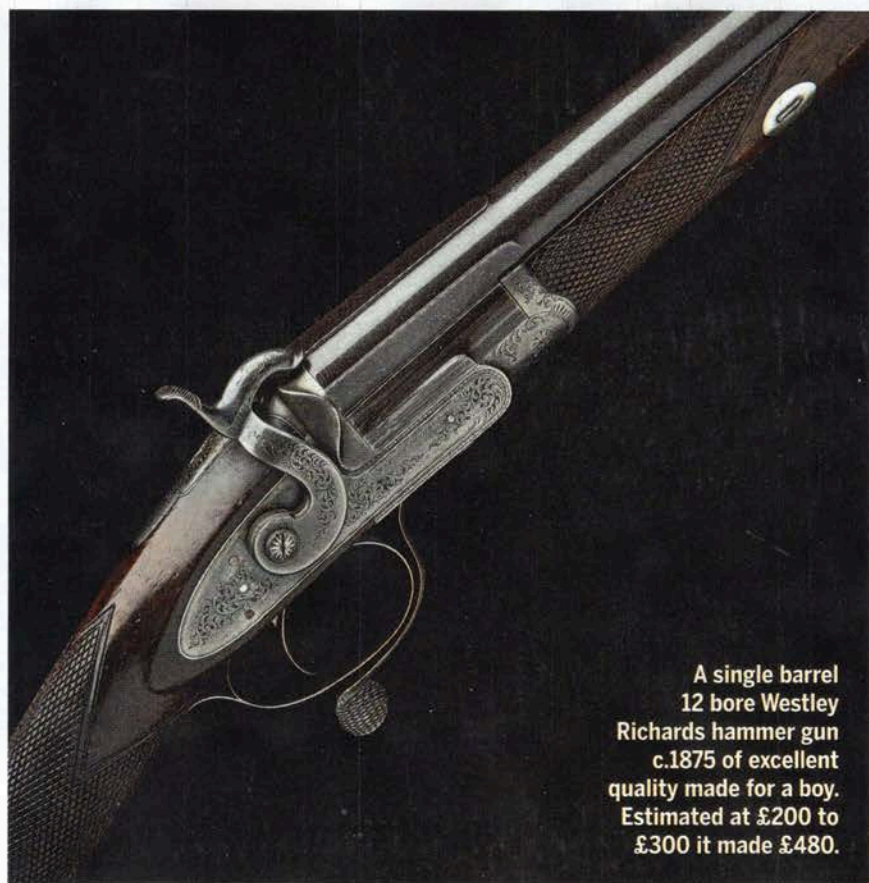
The Holts March sale was conducted at its new premises in South Kensington. This is a temporary venue and from September Holts returns to its original premises in Hammersmith.

There were a very large number of brass barrelled blunderbusses in the sale and Lot 405 was a blunderbuss with a history. It was an example made by Edward North, London, c.1770 but what made it really interesting was evidence of vicious sword cuts on the butt, the result of some violent encounter. The vendor explained the original owner was in a fracas with a customs official and he subsequently lost his life. Estimated at £1,200 to £1,600, it made £1,200.

Duelling pistols have a seductive mystique and are quite different to self-protection pistols due to their light weight and slim lines. Lot 463 showed a nice pair of flintlock duelling pistols in untouched original condition, complete with ancient woodworm in the fore-ends. Simply marked 'PB' they were built around 1800. Estimated at £2,000 to £3,000, they went unsold at the auction.

From the collectors' end of the Holts sale to the purposeful end saw Lot 1208, a magnificent Holland & Holland .375 Magnum Royal sidelock ejector double rifle. The .375 Magnum cartridge in both flanged and rimless varieties was introduced by Holland & Holland in 1912. It proved to be a real winner and could be used against a great variety of quarry with its high velocity, flat trajectory and great penetrative powers. This double rifle built in 1924 was in excellent condition and estimated at £20,000 to £25,000, it made £20,000.

One of the bargains of the sale was Lot 1507, a 16 bore boxlock ejector by John Wilkes of London. A lovely quality gun with nice engraving, original finish, 27in barrels and weighing just 5lbs 14oz. The stock was



**A single barrel
12 bore Westley
Richards hammer gun
c.1875 of excellent
quality made for a boy.
Estimated at £200 to
£300 it made £480.**

ANDREW ORR/HOLT'S AUCTIONEERS

a decent length although the extra wooden extension of half an inch needed replacing with a traditional orange rubber recoil pad. Good name, great condition, desirable bore size, completely usable. Estimated at £500 to £700, it made £700.

One gun I really liked was Lot 1599 as it was a quality unusual gun. This was a single-barrelled 12 bore Westley Richards hammer gun. Most single-barrelled guns were built for boys and gamekeepers and are of second quality but not this one. It was a best quality example with a lovely 30in Damascus barrel sporting much original finish. Although made for a boy, the stock was a decent length at 14 ¼in. A very handsome gun and estimated at just £200 to £300, it made £480.

If I ask you what your ultimate gun would be you would probably say a Boss or a Woodward over-under 20 bore. Such guns are the best of the best and rare if they are 20 bores. Well, Lot 1603 showed a 20 bore Woodward over-under sidelock ejector. Boss & Co. patented their over-under gun in 1909 followed a few years later by Woodward in 1913 with a similar design. Both firms got the design and construction just right to create handsome, beautifully made guns. Not a great many were made by either firm and today such guns are in high demand as they do not come on the market often. This 20 bore Woodward had 28in barrels and the stock had been replaced. Weighing just 6lbs it was a magnificent gun and estimated at £20,000 to £30,000, it made £20,000. 🦅