

**108 PAGES:** RIFLES, SHOTGUNS, STALKING, GUNDOGS, GEAR

# SPORTING Gun

**RATED**

Browning's  
Ultra XS Pro  
clay-buster

SEE PAGE 98

JUNE 2023 | £4.25

## GUNDOG SPECIAL

How to get your dog to negotiate obstacles  
when retrieving

**SOLD A  
DUMMY?**

Don't be misled  
by social media

**BASC SAYS NO TO  
GAME LICENSING  
IN WALES**

**NEW SECTION**

**RIFLE  
SHOOTING**

Foxing, stalking,  
kit, instruction  
and more





# A hunter to the fibre of his being

**Robert Morgan** looks at the fascinating life of one of the 19th century's most notable adventurers and his premature end

**T**o some, what is pictured on the right and over the page are just a plain safari shirt and bush hat. But this shirt and hat belonged to the professional hunter, conservationist and explorer Frederick Courteney Selous.

Frederick Courteney Selous (1851–1917) will need little introduction to some of you. His interest in explorers and adventurers began at a young age, with his own hunting exploits starting at the age of 19 in Matabeleland, a region in what is now south-western Zimbabwe. With the permission of Lobengula, King of the Ndebele, to hunt his lands, Selous explored the regions north of the Transvaal and south of the Congo Basin, shooting and collecting specimens for all kinds of museums and private collections.

## Guide

Having been convinced by Cecil Rhodes to join the British South Africa Company in 1890, Selous was a guide on an expedition to Mashonaland. In 1892, he was awarded the Founder's Medal of the Royal Geographical Society in recognition of his extensive explorations and surveys, the subject of his journal *20 Years in Zambesia*.

He took part in the First Matabele War in 1893 and was wounded in action in the advance on Bulawayo. This prompted a period in England, where he would marry the following year. Returning and settling in Matabeleland with his wife in 1896, Selous again took a prominent part in the fighting at the outbreak of the Second Matabele War, serving as a leader in the Bulawayo Field Force. In 1896, Queen Victoria sanctioned the issue of the British South Africa Company medal to troops who had served in the First Matabele War, which was extended the following year to those who served in the



Selous gave his shirt to William Robert Colton as a present



The shirt features in Colton's sculpture of the adventurer



Selous's clothes are important pieces of history

Rhodesia and Mashonaland campaigns of the Second Matabele War.

Selous's hunting career spanned most of the continents from 1871, all the way up to World War I, and led him to count the likes of Theodore Roosevelt among his friends.

In 1902, Selous was elected as an Associate of the Boone and Crockett Club. This was a wildlife conservation organisation that was founded by Theodore Roosevelt and George Bird Grinnell.

In 1909, Selous set up his own





endeavour, the Shikar Club, which was an association for big game hunters.

When World War I broke out, having initially been rejected for service due to his age, he managed to secure a post as a subaltern in the British Army. He fought against the German colonial forces in the East Africa Campaign. In 1915, he was promoted to captain in the 25th (Frontiersmen) Battalion, Royal Fusiliers. The 25th was made up of an eclectic mix of men, many of a similar age to Selous himself. It is recorded that among the mix there were several big game hunters, an opera singer, a Scottish lighthouse keeper, a British millionaire, a naturalist, a circus clown, an Arctic explorer, a photographer, a lion tamer and several American cowboys, with a number of French Foreign Legionnaires.

Selous was awarded the Distinguished Service Order (DSO) on 26 September 1916 "for conspicuous gallantry, resource and endurance", and for setting "a magnificent example to all ranks. The value of his services with his battalion cannot be overestimated".

Sadly, tragedy then struck. On 4 January 1917, Selous was fighting on the banks of the Rufiji River against German forces. His unit was outnumbered by the enemy, and he was killed by a German sniper.

On hearing the news, Theodore Roosevelt

## "Following his death, Selous's private collection of trophies was donated"



The bronze sculpture of Selous by Colton in the Natural History Museum

The explorer's hat is still in good condition



In association with  
**HOLTS**  
AUCTIONEERS OF FINE MODERN & ANTIQUE GUNS  
holtsauctioneers.com

wrote: "He led a singularly adventurous and fascinating life, with just the right alternations between the wilderness and civilisation. He helped spread the borders of his people's land. He added much to the sum of human knowledge and interest. He closed his life as such a life ought to be closed, by dying in battle for his country while rendering her valiant and effective service. Who could wish a better life or a better death, or desire to leave a more honourable heritage to his family and his nation?"

Selous was buried in East Africa, in what is now Tanzania. His historic hat and shirt were kept in the family of the sculptor William Robert Colton RA (25 December 1867 to 13 November 1921), professor at the Royal Academy, president of the Royal British Society of Sculptors and full member at the Royal Academy.

### Collection

Selous had previously sat for Colton in his Kensington studio in London, wearing this actual hat and shirt. Following his death, Selous's private collection of trophies was donated to the Natural History Museum, containing over 5,000 plant and animal specimens. As a result, the bronze sculpted by Colton and dedicated to him was mounted in stone.

It was placed in the main hall of the

Natural History Museum in 1920, in recognition of Selous's remarkable life and the significant 'Selous Collection' that formed such a big part of the museum's inventory.

This magnificent depiction of Selous can still be viewed in the Natural History Museum in London today. The memorial tablet dedicated to Captain Selous DSO is positioned at the head of the north-west staircase in the central hall of the museum. The figure and plaque are in bronze, and the tablet is in stone. The tribute consists of a cast bronze portrait

of Selous in uniform, carrying a rifle, and is set into a niche in the stone tablet. Below the niche is a bronze relief of lions. The inscriptions are arranged in two side panels in raised block lettering. The sculptor's name is placed at the bottom-right. The inscription on the left panel reads "Captain Frederick C Selous DSO, hunter, explorer, and naturalist". On the right, "born 1851, killed in action at Beho Beho, German East Africa, 4 1 1917".

Fortunately, when Selous was being sculpted by Colton, he gave the shirt and hat to him as a present. Nora Law (née Colton), the daughter, subsequently inherited these items on Colton's premature death in 1921, aged 53. They subsequently passed to her son. If it wasn't for this, these important historical artefacts would have been lost to the world forever. ■



Gold embossing on the inside of Selous's hat