

# IN THE FIELD

APRIL 2026

By Sir Johnny Scott Bt.

## MADAME BALTAZZI

Without exception, there is always one particular Lot in every auction of Holt's Fine Modern and Antique guns, with a fascinating provenance and number 1501 in the April sale is a classic example. This scarce Boss and Co 16-bore Perkes Patent sidelever back-action ejector was ordered by A. Nugent Esq in 1887 for Madame Baltazzi, nee Ugarte, the daughter of Count Josef Von Ugarte, a member of the Austro-Hungarian Imperial nobility and envoy to Wurtemberg.

The Empress Elisabeth (Sisi), wife of the Emperor Franz Josef, a passionate and proficient horsewoman, who often came to hunt in Leicestershire and Ireland, started a fashion for equestrian sports among Viennese society. Following the trend, Anna Ugarte developed into a very accomplished horsewoman and in 1875, at the age of twenty, married Hector Baltazzi, the most famous amateur jockey of the late 19th century.

Hector Baltazzi was the second of the four sons of Theodore Baltazzi, an immensely wealthy Greek banker and landowner in Hungary, who made a fortune in Constantinople and his English wife, Elisabeth Sarrel, daughter Richard Sarrel, a Freeman of the Levant Company and Vice Consul of Constantinople. After their father died in 1860, Hector and his brothers, Alexander, Aristides and Heinrich grew up in England with their older half-sister Elisabeth, who in 1862, married Lt. Albert Nugent RN, later the 3rd Baron Nugent, the person named as ordering the Boss 16 bore for Anna in 1887. Their other half-sister, Helene, married Albin Von Vetsera (elevated to Baronial rank 1870) and moved to Vienna.

The Baltazzi brothers were all superb horseman and became involved in racing here and across Europe, with Hector developing into a champion "cosmopolitan rider", competing in races on fifty-seven different racecourses and winning a hundred and eighty-four out of five hundred and sixty rides, including the famous Pardubice Steeplechase in Bohemia, three times. The brothers established a racing yard at Newmarket and bought the stallion 'Kisbér', from the Royal Hungarian Stud, which won the 1876 English Derby and shortly afterwards, the Grand Prix de Paris. This was a remarkable achievement - only four horses in the last hundred years have managed to win both the Derby and the Grand Prix - and propelled the Baltazzis into society, enabling Hector to meet and subsequently marry Anna Ugarte.

It was not a happy union; apart from their shared interest in horses, they had nothing in common. They were poles apart socially and even looked odd as a couple - she tall, blonde and graceful; he, short, dark and swarthy. More to the point, the Emperor Franz Josef regarded the Baltazzi's as pushy, nouveau



Sir (Walter) John Scott, Bt. MFH

Sir Johnny (as he is better known) is an author, natural historian, broadcaster, columnist, countryside campaigner, artisan snuff manufacturer and retired hill farmer.

He wrote and co-presented the BBC2 series *Clarissa and the Countryman* with Clarissa Dickson Wright. He writes for a variety of magazines and periodicals on field sports, food, farming, travel, history and rural affairs.

A lifetime devotee of the countryside and its sports, he is currently:

- Joint Master, The North Pennine Hunt
- Regional Director, Vote OK.
- President, The Gamekeepers Welfare Trust.
- President, The Tay Valley Wildfowlers Association.
- President, The Newcastle Wildfowlers Association.
- President, The Association of Working Lurchers / Longdogs.
- Centenary Patron and Honorary Life Member, British Association for Shooting and Conservation.
- Patron, The Sporting Lucas Terrier Association.
- Patron, The Wildlife Ark Trust.
- Patron, The National Organisation of Beaters and Pickers Up.
- Board member, The European Squirrel Initiative.

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riche upstarts who should be avoided and where Anna, as a member of the old Imperial aristocracy was still invited to state balls and court functions, Hector was always pointedly excluded. The Mayerling tragedy in 1889, when Crown Prince Rudolf, heir to the Austro-Hungarian throne, murdered his mistress, Baroness Maria Vetsera and then committed suicide in a lover's pact, was to end her marriage and plague Anna Ugarte for the rest of her life. Maria Vetsera was the daughter of Helene Vetsera, Hector's sister, known to be obsessively socially ambitious for her daughter and the Empress believed that she was involved in encouraging her daughter's relationship with Rudolf and therefore indirectly culpable for his death. To compound matters, Alexander Baltazzi's mistress, Countess Marie Larisch, the Empress' niece, was a close friend of both Rudolf and Maria, and had been the one who arranged their secret meetings. The Mayerling tragedy sealed the fate of the Vetsera's, Baltazzi's and Marie Larisch, as they were never forgiven by the Imperial family and ostracised by Viennese society - for many months the Baltazzi brothers were even watched by the Austrian secret police.

Anna felt the shame of her association with the Baltazzi's very keenly and left Austria, dividing her time between Paris and a house she rented in Leicestershire for the hunting. In 1891, she secured a judicial separation from Baltazzi and permission from the Emperor Franz Josef to revert to using her title and maiden name. The same year, shortage of money obliged her to accept an offer from Ernst Renz, the German circus proprietor, to appear as an haute école écuyère, in his Nouveau Cirque at Paris. Lady riders, écuyères, in circuses were enormously popular in the late 19th century - the artist, Toulouse-Lautrec featured them in his "Au Cirque" series - and to showcase an écuyère who was also a Countess of ancient Austrian lineage associated with the Mayerling Tragedy, would be a star attraction.

Twelve years after Mayerling in May 1901, an already chronically depressed Anna received a letter at her house in Oakham, which was so distressing that she immediately committed suicide by shooting herself through the heart with a revolver. Following the inquest, her body was repatriated to Austria for burial.



CONTACT HOLTS

[info@holtsauctioneers.com](mailto:info@holtsauctioneers.com)  
[www.holtsauctioneers.com](http://www.holtsauctioneers.com)  
+44 (0)1485 542 822