

# Holt's Auctioneers

## Sale of Fine Modern & Antique Guns : 15th December 2011

### SALE REPORT

(Extract)

I HAVE REACHED AN AGE where I tend to repeat myself, as a matter of course, in normal conversation but have always tried to avoid doing so in our sales reports. It is a far from easy task though and I find myself drawn back to the oft-used superlatives that I seem to trot out on a quarterly basis. On this occasion though I make no apology; you see, yesterday was a quite remarkable sale for our vendors and buyers. This is not an exercise in chest-beating though, far from it; after all, without our ever-growing client base we would have no sale. It is just that yesterday conspired to provide some truly impressive Lots and people with the necessary gumption to pursue them bravely. As I write this, the total hammer price sits at £1.6m but should approach £1.9m by the time we have concluded aftersales and added the result of the sealed bid sale.

I think that speaks for itself. Our London salerooms were busy all week with a rather higher number of personal visitors than is usual. This can be partly explained, perhaps, by the fact that two other houses had their sales in the same week. In the way of planets with an eccentric orbit, it is only occasionally that we meet in one place, and only then for a short time. This may have drawn people up to town who would normally have viewed online. This was coupled with feverish interest from both the telephones and internet, combining to make for an exciting and hungry atmosphere.

The morning session was composed of the usual healthy eclectic mix of Lots and began with airguns. Amongst these we saw a 'Military Pattern' .22 underlever by B.S.A. (Lot 6) fly up to £1,800 before we ventured off into the reel section, which included a 3 3/4 in. 'Perfect' salmon reel by Hardy Bros. (Lot 261) selling for £1,650. We had been entrusted with a small collection of Third Reich ephemera which included several interesting dress daggers which all sold well and often in excess of top estimate. My favourite among the items was Lot 359, a set of six napkin rings formed from variegated Bakelite and in their original art deco box. They were hammered down for £430 which was above the upper estimate by some margin. A good selection of antique firearms followed and I was very pleased to see a really fine pair of 16-bore flintlock holster pistols by Clark of Holborn (Lot 457) achieve a strong result. Dating to circa 1773 with finely decorated silver mounts, the pair sold for £13,000. We also sold a pair of flintlock officer's pistols by Egg (Lot 456), they were unusual insofar as they still retained their original skeletal shoulder stocks and had been with the same family since first purchase.

With lunch barely registering, it was time to start the afternoon session. The charged atmosphere and expectant room only fuelled our nerves as we took up station with our bank of telephones, for the most eagerly awaited Lot of the sale was fast-approaching. First though we successfully navigated our way through various gentleman's accoutrements which included several fob-watches with Omega movements. These dated to the early 1930s and featured highly erotic images applied to the faces, all with moving hands (and not just the ones designed to tell the time). All these sold well

with the final one, encouragingly entitled 'All the Girls Love a Sailor' being bid up to £1,400. After some excellent results for the Section 5 items we came to bolt-rifles and the most exciting part of the day.

Hartmann & Weiss of Hamburg are regarded by many as makers of the finest rifles in the world and we were fortunate, indeed, in having two quite exceptional pieces by them. Both were completed in 2000, superbly cased by Vincent Rickards and provided a tacit illustration of craftsmanship. The first, Lot 1150, was a take-down rifle with barrels in .243Win and .308Win with dedicated Leica optics for both calibres and this was taken quickly up to £55,000.

We then came to the six-barrelled set with a double-square bridge action at its heart, all complemented by the most exquisite engraving by Alain Lovenberg. The phone lines were buzzing and the rifle stormed away with a flurry of early bids starting at £138,000. Most quickly fell in noble pursuit until only two telephones were left in the game and these took the bidding up to a close of £230,000. What a wonderful result, which represents a definite nod of respect to the makers.

Christmas will provide a welcome, if brief, rest before we begin the build-up towards the next sale on 22nd March 2012. So, I hope I'll be in a position to repeat myself in three months' time.

*Roland Elworthy*

