

— THE —
SHOOTING FIELD
One hundred and fifty years
with HOLLAND & HOLLAND

Peter King


Quiller Press

Some Edwardians at Sport – and Royalty

Those were the Old Years, the Great Days; Lady Diana Cooper tells us in her memoirs that the express trains to Scotland would be stopped especially for the Duke of Rutland's party so that they could travel easily to his estate. 'At the station we tumbled out, laden with the paraphernalia of art and sport . . . The guns, rods, cameras, easles, books and opera-scores were trotted through the village, where the children, pouring *en masse* out of school, would cheer us home'. She describes how there would be about twelve people staying for a shooting party, all with maids, valets and large dress baskets . . .

'The guests would arrive on Monday and my father would expect them, so that would be all right, but when they left on Friday, and a new dozen arrived, not expected by my father and generally of a much younger generation, he would greet them ashen in the face with 'What train are you taking on Monday?' It was the shock; once recovered he was happy with them all and sad to see them go. We would always be at the shooting-lunches on the moors or in fields or in the farmer's parlour, eating mutton pies, or Irish stew and jam puffs and Stilton cheese, with sips of cherry brandy or Grand Marnier to keep the cold out, while the head keeper brought in the last of the bag and was rewarded with a tumbler of neat whisky.'

A number of amusing tomes have been written about the great shots and the great shoots of the Edwardian era. Holland & Holland provided the mechanisms with which many of these eccentric men – and women – would pursue their vocation.

One of these was the 6th Duke of Portland whose shooting experiences were written up – by himself – in his volume *Men Women and Things* from which the following quotations are taken.

'The two best game shots I ever met were undoubtedly, in my opinion, the late Lord Ripon, formerly Lord de Grey, and Sir Harry Stonor, both wonderfully good with either gun or rifle. In discussing shooting it is never necessary to ask whether de Grey or Stonor was 'in form': for neither of them ever seems to be 'out of form'. I think Stonor, until his eyes unfortunately and sadly failed him, was the most graceful handler of a gun I ever saw, though perhaps during the



The portrait of the Duke of Portland which appeared as the frontispiece to his memoirs *Men, Women and Things*.



The 6th Duke of Portland, a Holland user and author of a book on stalking.



GAME KILLED BY EARL DE GREY
from 1867 to 1900

DATE	RHINOCEROS	TIGER	BUFFALO	SAMBAR	PIG	DEER	RED DEER	GROUSE	PARTRIDGES	PHEASANTS	WOOD COCK	SNIFE	WILD DUCK	BLACK GAME	CAPERGAZIE	HARES	RABBITS	VARIOUS	TOTAL
1867							8	265	1,179	741	20	22	10			719	934	115	4,013
1868							35	201	1,418	1,601	28	67	23			690	543	113	4,719
1869							35	135	1,659	1,431	26	133	37			547	443	122	4,568
1870							21	498	2,309	2,117	36	53	30			833	626	137	6,660
1871							55	1,408	1,598	1,889	50	244	42			1,093	341	225	6,945
1872							38	1,408	2,083	2,835	27	60	31			1,108	756	235	8,671
1873							25	248	2,417	3,050	95	203	85			1,027	450	591	8,251
1874						3	5	90	2,878	2,345	229	462	131	5	4	1,200	302	1,200	8,854
1875							3	287	2,882	3,225	176	461	208			1,376	576	743	9,937
1876							3	1,554	3,394	4,110	30	25	37			1,248	890	266	11,557
1877						2	4	2,032	2,359	4,235	35	45	33	11	11	1,496	1,044	309	11,616
1878							4	9	1,669	3,378	4,679	43	44	55	6	2,152	667	503	13,214
1879							4	1,344	630	3,140	132	92	62	9	11	1,125	287	215	7,051
1880		9	6	18	31	73	12	1,131	682	531	9	47	54	26	5	501	141	408	3,684
1881							5	1,566	3,465	5,014	26	14	43			1,058	791	166	12,154
1882	2	2	6	1	66	104	10	3,025	2,123	2,370	14	21	44			464	1,122	117	9,491
1883							5	2,896	1,845	6,119	157	84	155			918	1,386	319	13,884
1884							10	3,073	3,523	4,347	134	70	70			713	1,896	453	14,289
1885							5	2,015	2,788	4,620	104	23	31			589	2,547	108	12,830
1886							20	1,989	1,463	3,383	105	87	72			357	786	349	8,611
1887							57	2,258	3,785	3,387	104	3	12			415	2,328	237	12,586
1888							4	3,060	853	5,072	31	151	10			307	1,523	85	11,096
1889							5	3,081	5,751	6,182	100	109	14	38	8	1,747	1,069	135	18,239
1890								2,006	7,002	8,498	172	105	28			1,446	1,120	123	18,500
1891								2,277	1,699	5,794	34	13				711	406	271	11,205
1892							1	1,412	6,784	5,580	7	10	5			453	1,233	281	15,766
1893								2,441	8,332	5,760	66	7	42			837	914	166	19,135
1894								2,441	7,331	5,064	76	7	12			935	580	222	16,695
1895							1	1,252	3,368	6,101	11	13	17			352	1,040	210	12,478
1896								2,149	2,611	8,514	13	11	4			314	557	177	14,852
1897							1	2,447	1,204	7,850	67	10	47			358	828	152	14,024
1898								1,623	1,200	3,432	18	3	6			169	298	144	6,963
1899								2,331	1,249	4,605	19	2	57			205	609	137	7,763
1900								1,063	1,322	6,762	24	8	95			223	819	141	10,427
	2	11	12	19	97	186	382	56,460	97,759	142,343	2,218	2,769	1,612	94	45	27,686	29,858	9,175	370,728

Stearns, in Paris.

A summary of Lord Ripon's remarkable game book.



Lord Rothschild, whose family were Holland customers.



Prince F. Dhuleep Singh (right) shot with three guns and two loaders. He learned to shoot at the estate of the Rothschilds.

day's shooting he did not kill quite so much as did de Grey. I think de Grey killed about twenty-five birds to Stonor's twenty; but for all that, I do not believe that Stonor missed more shots than de Grey, if as many.

I remember four extremely high birds passing over de Grey on the Groveley Beat at Wilton where the birds fly exceptionally high. He killed the first three quite dead, and I said to myself, 'The fourth has escaped.' But no! – it came down quite as dead as the others. One remarkable thing about de Grey's shooting was that one hardly ever saw a bird even flutter after he had fired at it.

I knew him exceedingly well, for in 1882 I went to India with him when his father was Viceroy and we shot together in Nepal. He was very often my guest at Welbeck for partridge and pheasant shooting. His game book is an extraordinary record; the rhinoceros mentioned at the head of the list must be those I saw him kill dead, right and left with a four-bore rifle, from the back of an elephant in Nepal.

'De Grey, I believe, was always accurate when asked the amount of game he had killed, and he did not exaggerate. I remember quite well that after a partridge drive my agent,



Mr T. Warner Turner, asked him how many birds he had killed. He counted the empty cartridge cases, of which there were 14 and said, "I have killed thirteen birds." Mr Turner told the keeper, whose duty it was to pick up the dead game to report to him the number of birds he found where de Grey had been shooting, and when he had done so, he told Mr Turner that there were 13.*

The Duke tells an excellent story about a novice sportsman. He writes:

'A keeper who had been accustomed to load for de Grey was employed to load for a novice sportsman. When the novice had missed far more birds, during a drive, than he had killed, he asked the loader, "Say, how many would Lord de Grey have killed?" "Three times as many as you did." At the next drive he fired two barrels into the brown of a pack, and down came four birds. He turned in triumph to the same loader and remarked, "I guess that beats your Lord de Grey. How many would *he* have killed with that shot?"'

'When I was travelling with de Grey in India, he advised me always to be very careful about what he called my "footwork" when shooting; and he said he considered correct footwork to be of the greatest importance, though it was only too often neglected. (Norman Clarke always said the same – plus correct gun-mounting.) He said that in order to shoot well, it was absolutely necessary to bring the right leg well round in firing at birds passing to one's left, and vice-versa; and that, in firing at birds passing straight over one's head, the feet should be in line, and well apart. He added – and I entirely agree – that, if one did not do this, one was

Lord Lonsdale deer-shooting in Lowther Park, near Kendal in the Lake District.

Edward VII, when Prince of Wales, gave up fox hunting, and shooting became his passion. But according to Lord Ripon, the greatest shot of the day, he was not always on form.



*A parallel story is that of Sir John Willoughby who dared to contend de Grey's account of the number of cartridges used to kill an astonishing number of birds. He was subsequently proved wrong.



The Duke of Westminster's shooting party at The Tower, Llanarmon, Wales.

Edward's son, George V, was however said to be one of the four best shots in the country. He is seen here at Balmoral.

very apt to fire behind birds, and either to miss them or to hit them in the tail.

'De Grey used hammer guns and black powder long after everyone else had given them up. He had his guns handed to him at full-cock, which possibly accounted for the extreme rapidity with which he shot.

'I several times asked de Grey whom he considered the best shot he had ever seen, and each time, without hesitation whatever, he replied, "Walsingham, with regard to both rapidity and accuracy." (Thomas, sixth Lord Walsingham, born 1843, died 1919.) It is rather curious that Lord Walsingham was the Hon. T. de Grey before he succeeded; so the best two shots in England at that time were Lord de Grey and Tommy de Grey. Of course they were often confused.

'Tom de Grey was a remarkable, a brilliant, and an eccentric person. He was a first-class scientist, one of the best entomologists in the world of his day, rich when he inherited and bankrupt when he died. His fortune went partly in the lavish manner in which he ran everything connected with sport or science, but in the main it was caused when Walsingham House, which stood where the Ritz now stands, was pulled down and London's first block of flats was built on its site. They were badly designed, proved a failure, and, if I remember right, Walsingham lost the better part of a quarter of a million pounds over it.'

The Duke of Portland's head keeper, Donald Ross, introduced heather burning in 1859 long before it was generally realised that this regenerated a plentiful supply of heather for the young grouse stock. By 1871 the total on his moors had



reached 2230 brace and the numbers kept going up. This success with grouse was later matched by his record partridge bags:

'In 1894 and 1895 partridge driving was first practised at Welbeck and Clipstone. In 1896 partridge driving really commenced. The peak year was 1929, when 3,349 brace were killed. In 1927 practically no partridges were shot at all, and in 1928 only 847 brace were killed. 1934-35 was also an excellent season, when 3,268 brace of partridges were killed, and in addition, 5,148 pheasants, all wild birds, as none had been hand-reared for several years. I believe more partridges have been killed in recent years at Welbeck than at any other place in England. On one occasion no less than 270 brace, and several times well over 200 brace, have been killed there in four drives.'

PARTRIDGE BAGS AT WELBECK

1879	5	1894	768	1909	1,487	1924	4,338
1880	40	1895	1,317	1910	1,805	1925	3,937
1881	319	1896	2,948	1911	4,140	1926	2,576
1882	418	1897	2,351	1912	238	1927	6
1883	428	1898	3,494	1913	726	1928	1,095
1884	961	1899	3,406	1914	4,868	1929	6,698
1885	961	1900	4,155	1915	2,718	1930	3,426
1886	601	1901	5,504	1916	1,057	1931	793
1887	2,119	1902	4,008	1917	1,964	1932	582
1888	1,194	1903	4,128	1918	2,573	1933	3,203
1889	1,920	1904	4,160	1919	3,235	1934	6,537
1890	1,688	1905	4,380	1920	126	1935	5,245
1891	961	1906	6,183	1921	3,952	1936	1,270
1892	770	1907	220	1922	2,208		
1893	1,184	1908	1,339	1923	3,102		

As a postscript, one might add that the Duke said, 'When I look back at the game book, I am quite ashamed of the enormous number of birds that we sometimes killed. This is a form of shooting which I have no desire to repeat.'

In his article 'Some Great Shoots and Great Shots' Wentworth Day made an attempt to discover who were the best twelve shots in the United Kingdom at that time. He sent out 500 letters to representative landowners, shooting men, head keepers and others. The 'winner' was another Holland customer, Captain Ivan Cobbold of Glenham Hall. But Wentworth Day concludes his tally with these words:

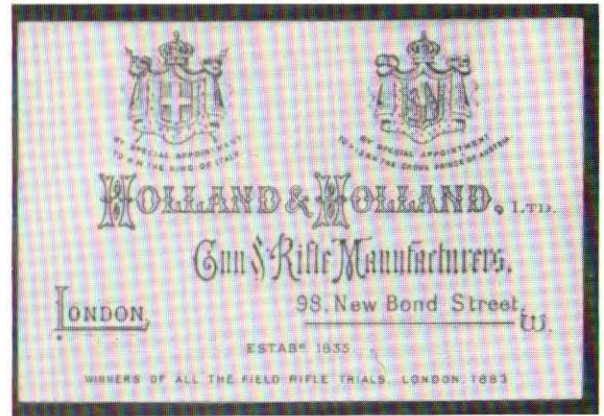
'But the mere mechanics of marksmanship are no criterion of the sport or of the true enjoyment of shooting. It is not the bag which matters – a true word as true as when it was first spoken. Shooting to the man who really loves it is as a picture-book of memories, cameos of recaptured dreams.

'Bitter dawns on the tide-line; moonlit nights and the mystery of a marsh moved by a quiet wind like mice in the reeds; the high blue of a Norfolk sky on a November morning outside one of those deep, warm fir coverts which hold pheasants and golden partridge, wrens, woodcocks



The Duchess of Bedford, one of the early women shots, complained about the length of her skirts.

Holland and Holland gun and rifle case labels show the extensive use made of royal warrants over the years. Top left is one of the earliest surviving Holland labels.



and clattering clouds of wood-pigeons; snipe on an Irish bog seen against the far vision of a Kerry lake; grouse speeding at your head, coming above bee-murmurous heather, hot in the August sun; partridges springing like brown bombshells from the green ocean of a field of mangold-wurzels. These are memories which remain, pictures painted on the mind.

'Those are the visions of the shooting man, the heritage of his happy experience. The whisper of wind in wet woods, the strong sea smell of tide-bared muds, the silence of a Highland glen in hot September, the whisper of the wings of birds in winter dusk. Of such sights, scents, and recaptured sounds is the magic of shooting.'

The obituary for the Great Shots appeared in *The Field* on 14 November 1936: 'The day of the great shots or, at any rate, of the great "professional" shots is over. No longer is it possible except for the very favoured few to pass the time from the beginning of August to the New Year in one country house after another, from moor to moor, from manor to manor.'

The glamour of the Great Shots is to some extent matched by the appeal which shooting has had for the Royal Family since the days of the Prince of Wales, later Edward VII, who after he gave up hunting took energetically to shooting. As a result, for many years, outside the shop of New Bond Street, and later at Bruton Street, Holland & Holland have been proud to give prominence to the Royal Arms and the words 'By Appointment to . . .'

The formality associated with the royal warrant is such that the following entry in Holland's Minute Book for 21 February 1911 may come as something of a surprise. 'The Secretary



The King of Portugal was an enthusiastic Holland user. Here he and the Queen visit Windsor for a shooting party in 1904. They are sitting on either side of Edward VII.



More Holland customers: the Comtesse de Paris, and King Alfonso of Spain who was shot at on his wedding day, but remained a keen sportsman nevertheless.





received from Sir William Carrington the Warrant which appointed the company Gunmakers to the King (George V). The Secretary afterwards attended at the Office of the Privy Purse and asked that the warrant might be altered to read "Gun Makers and Rifle Manufacturers to the King" and this amendment was made accordingly.'

It had been in September 1902 that Hollands were appointed gun and rifle makers to the Prince of Wales (Edward VII) and they had also supplied arms to his younger brother the Duke of Connaught, who popularised jodhpurs for riding on his return from the Durbar in India in 1902. A story is told of this Duke that when staying at Balmoral for the stalking, John Grant, the head ghilly, accompanied him. The Royal Duke missed two easy shots at stags. Grant said, 'Ye blitherin idiot! You've ruined the whole thing!'

The firm's succession of royal appointments, culminated in that of rifle makers to HRH Duke of Edinburgh, granted in 1963. The most famous of the royal shots was Edward VII and every form of shooting became a favourite pastime for him. J. E. D. Holland (later Colonel Holland) shot with him as a young man, and spoke highly of his ability, although Lord Ripon said, 'As a shot, King Edward was somewhat variable.' The fact is that he seems to have taken his sport as he found it. 'He could feel a boy's pleasure when the grouse came well to his butt, when he felt that he was shooting his best, and in fact, when everything was going right; but he was equally happy and contented when, as must often happen in Scotland, the grouse were few.'

The supply of Holland & Holland guns and rifles to members of other royal families was not of course a matter of the same warrant procedures; mention should perhaps be made of those who featured on gun case labels, including King Alfonso XIII of Spain who might have been supposed to have been put off

guns, since an attempt was made to assassinate him on his wedding day in 1906. Nevertheless he came to England that same year and caused some surprise by winning the clay pigeon trophy in the Isle of Wight contest (he was also a keen sailor at Bembridge and Cowes). He shot at Windsor, and in Scotland on the Duke of Sutherland's grouse moors. King Alfonso left Spain in 1931 because of political unrest and died in exile in Rome in 1941. Appointment recognition was also held for the Kings of Sweden, Portugal and Italy and for the Czar of Russia.

A postscript on the subject of royalty. A Holland & Holland customer, Lord Lonsdale, was taunted during World War I for having had the Kaiser shooting grouse regularly on his estates at Lowther. His reply was, 'It only shows how careful one should be about picking up acquaintances when abroad.'



The Actual Shooting Meant Nothing

The Days of the Raj



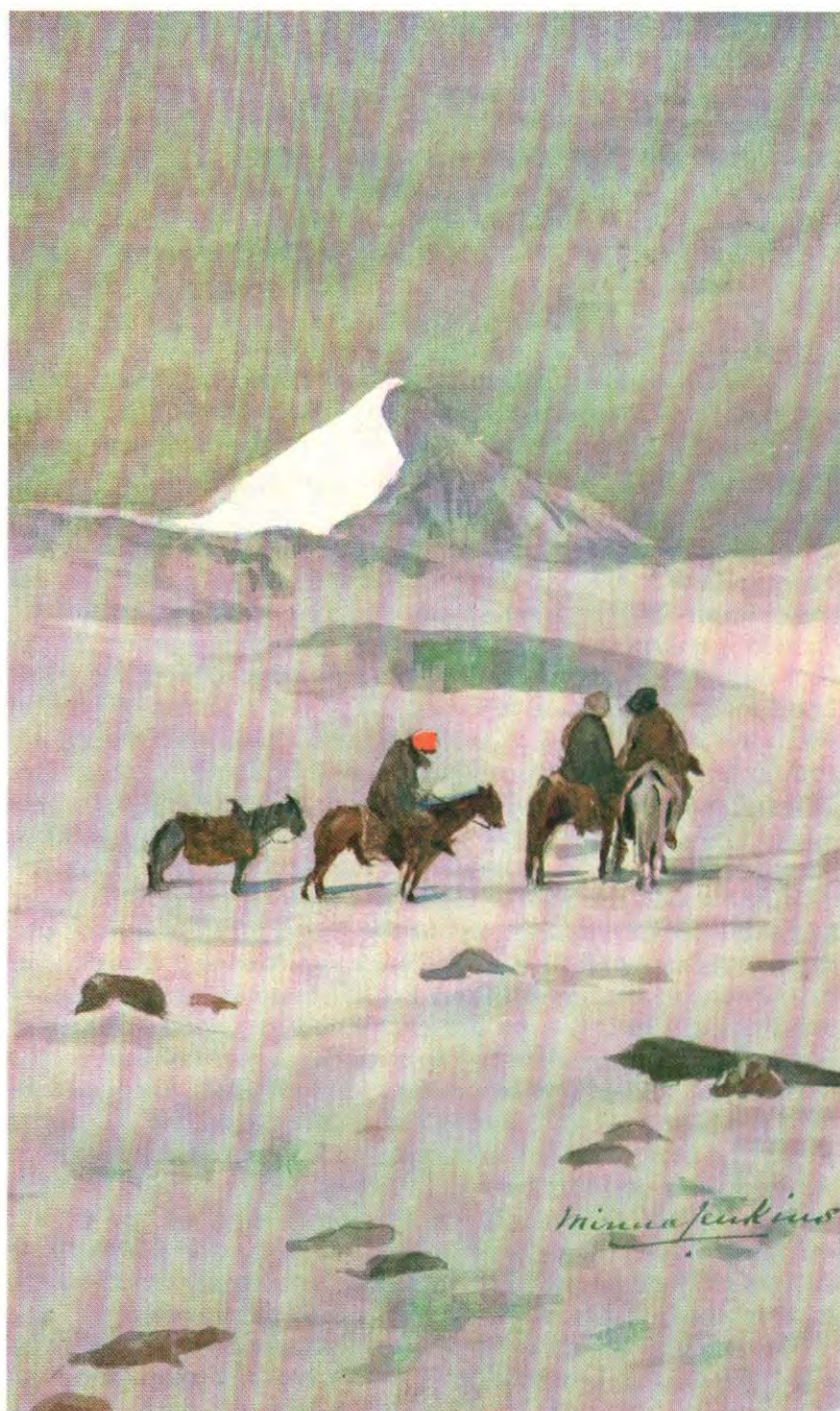
This stirring picture of 'A Sportswoman in India' is captioned 'With my last Barrel I fired'.

It has been said that the British gun trade was supported by the sportsmen of India, and there are several senses in which this is true. From Birmingham came the prodigious numbers of 'export' guns, often poorly-made affairs, which went out to the East by the thousand from the middle of the 18th century. The London gunmakers, in contrast, supplied a superior type of weapon to the East India Company men, although Birmingham components may well have been used in their construction. Later, during the first twenty years or so of the 19th century, the East India Company took almost one million military arms, according to De Witt Bailey and Douglas A. Nie.

Then in 1858 the British Government took over the military and administrative functions of the East India Company, and the arms issued to Indian troops were standardised. The smaller British manufacturers suffered, but the large makers of military weapons did not. We are not concerned here, of course, with guns of this type but with the superior weapons sold to the Maharajahs and to Indian soldiers for sport, and to sportsmen who made special journeys to India. But just as the East India Company supported the mass gun trade, so did the sportsmen support their London 'betters'. Famous names such as Manton became established in India as agents and, to an extent, manufacturers. To survey the kinds of weapons which firms such as Holland supplied to the Raj, it is necessary to look at the history of big game rifles, shotguns and cartridges.

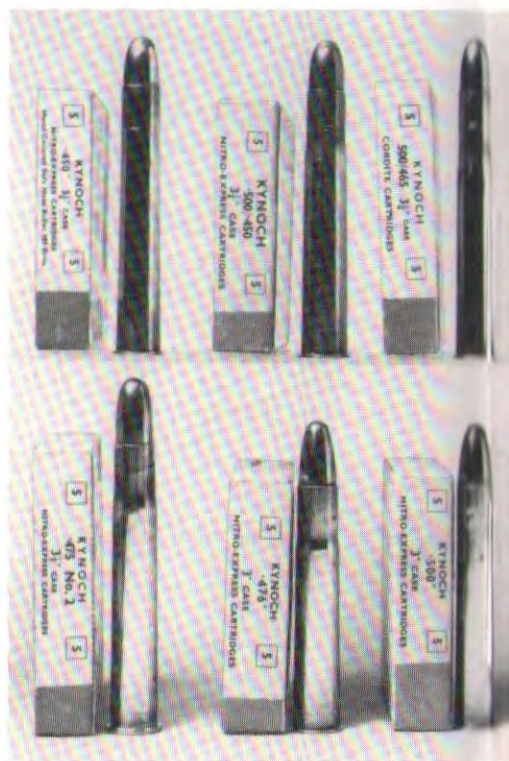
For the past century and more, these weapons have traditionally been double-barrelled, and were generally made to a high standard to ensure reliability in the face of danger. Many sportsmen and those interested in firearms say double rifles are the most compelling class of firearm. Perhaps this is because these rifles have stories to tell – the scenes that they have been part of since they left the maker, the balance they may have held between life and death, and the faith that men had in them. Perhaps it is because people feel instinctively that they represent the height of the art of gunmaking. Possibly it is from an aesthetic point of view – for a best quality British double rifle with finely tapered barrels, with sidelocks, fine engraving and finely figured wood can well be said to be the 'thoroughbred' of firearms.

There have been many gunmakers but very few double rifle makers, for the complexities of making them were too great for



'Crossing the Marsemik La'. A painting by the intrepid Lady Jenkins during her solo shooting trip with her Holland gun in Tibet, 1906.

A selection of modern big game rifle cartridges from .450 3/4" to .600 Nitro Express. Beside the .600 is a .458 Winchester Magnum Cartridge.



many. For a double rifle, the requirement is for a weapon giving more than five times the pressures of a shotgun, where the strength of the action and the jointing of the barrels to the action are of paramount importance to the safety of the user. The gunmaker is faced with making two barrels shoot with a 2" group at about 100 yards and where this accuracy may mean life or death to the user. These factors probably combined to inhibit many a gunmaker from embarking on the making of double rifles.

Whilst the continental countries such as Belgium, Austria and Germany have a tradition of double rifle making, the weapon is particularly associated with Britain and British gunmakers by

Close-up of Holland & Holland's 4-bore hammer rifle made for His Highness The Nizam of Hyderabad in 1885.

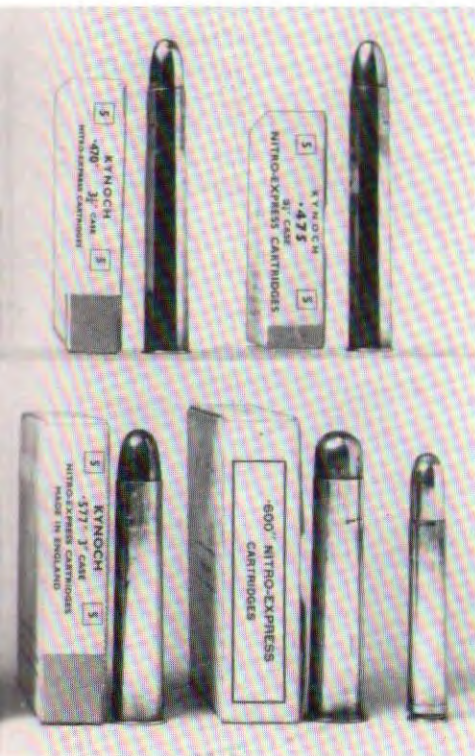


those who have shot big game or aspire to do so. This is because most of the famous big game cartridges were developed by the well-known British gun and rifle makers in conjunction with Eley Kynoch. In fact the rise of the double rifle is linked with the rise of the British Empire, and the peak period of development and manufacture was when Britain was at the zenith of its power at the beginning of the First World War.

Double rifles came into general use in the 1840s. They were made in 16 and 14 bore and a 'Best' quality London-made double rifle in those days sold for £34 – mainly for stag and boar shooting in Europe and for big game in India and Indo-China. Judging by the number of double barrel percussion rifles which have been handed down to this day, it would seem that Lancaster, Purdey and Westley Richards were among the foremost English makers of double rifles of this period. About 1865, when the first breech loaders started to be made, the calibre began to change, although the shot gun bore measurement continued to be used until the 1880s. It was during this period that the famous 8- and 4-bore double rifles were made, many of which were smooth bore, and from which the expression 'Elephant gun' arose. These large bores are particularly associated with Sir Samuel Baker, not only because he used them but because, with Gibbs of Bristol and other English rifle makers, he was closely connected with their development. They were generally smooth bore because they were only used at short ranges of up to 50 yards with spherical ball and up to that range had a lower trajectory, higher velocity and greater penetration than a weapon with rifled barrels.

Double rifles as we know them today began to appear about 1885, with the introduction of cordite and of hammerless actions. The early models were made in .303, .400, .450, .500 and .577 calibres (the last three having been very popular black powder cartridges), but were quickly followed at the close of the century by most of the famous big bore cartridges which are still in use.

Shooting was popular in India in the 1870s, without doubt, but much glamour was added to the pursuit by the publicity



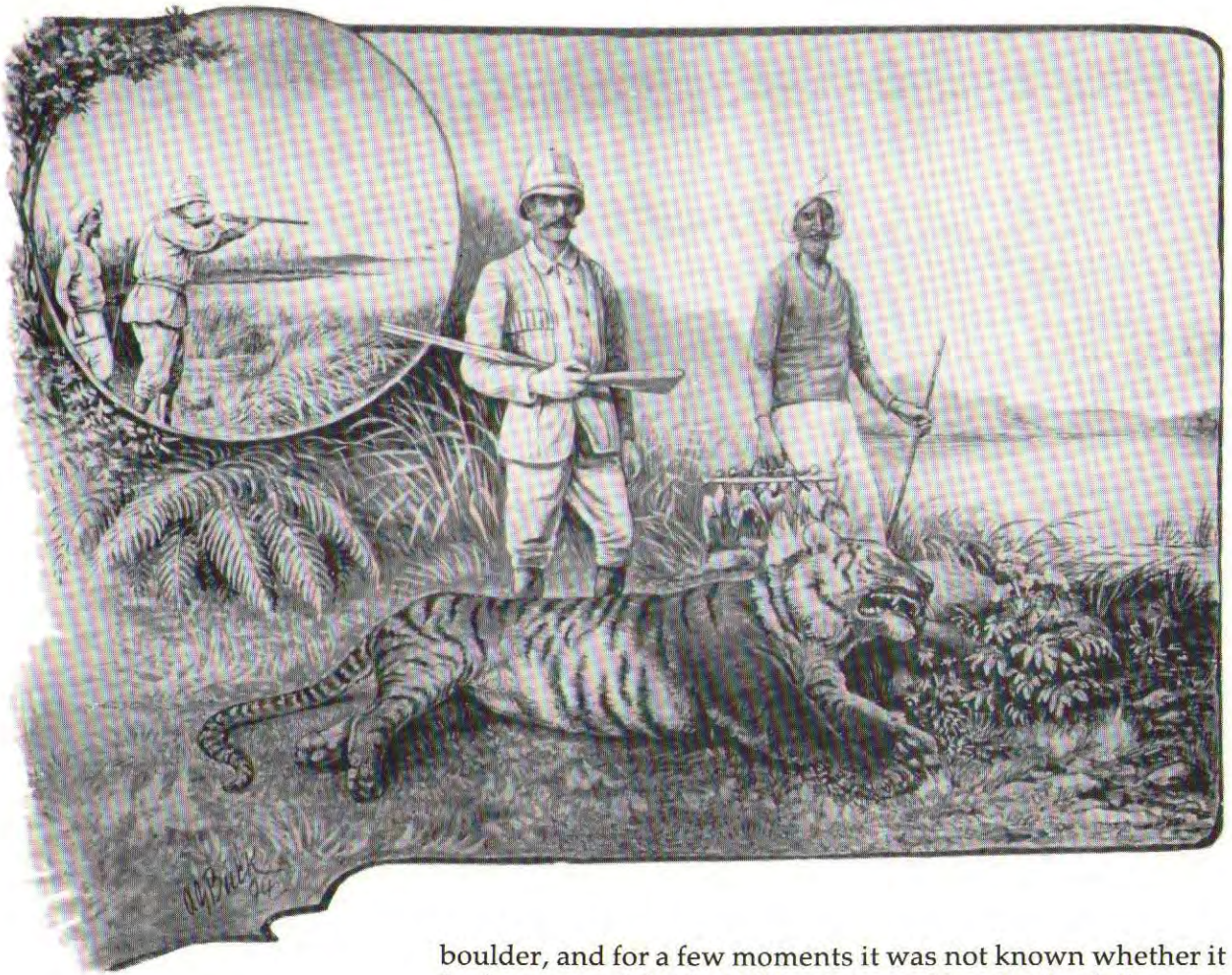


given to the then Prince of Wales's tour in 1875/76. Sport was the prominent feature of it. It was written up by Sir William Howard Russell, the great Crimean correspondent. Based on his account is the following description of a visit to Jeypore, 'A surprise and wonder for ever' as Russell describes it.

'This is the threshold of the land of tigers, and it is noted that the creatures exercise a great influence over the popular imagination, as is shown by the carvings on the walls of the houses and temples. On the day after the Prince's arrival, sport was afoot. Some of the party determinedly went to resume their pig-sticking, others in quest of deer, the Prince himself being taken to a rocky ravine in which it was suspected that a tiger was lurking. His Royal Highness was placed in the upper story of a shooting box, from which he could command a view all around him, and after waiting for a couple of hours the tiger was discerned creeping towards the house. When well within range the Prince fired, apparently missing with his first barrel, but a second shot rolled the brute over. He was not fatally wounded, however, regained his feet, and crawled into some thick bush, whither the Prince was anxious to follow him on foot, but was persuaded to mount an elephant. A volley of stones drove the tiger out of the ravine, and as he walked slowly up the opposite bank, the Prince fired again. The beast had disappeared behind a

In this advertisement for the Special .577 Double Express Rifle, Holland & Holland claimed 'This sporting rifle was first made to the order of the late Sir Samuel Baker, and has received great commendation from him and most leading 'big game' sportsmen.'





*With the Paradox 12-bore
'I have killed everything from
tiger to snipe' said an early
testimonial advertisement.*

boulder, and for a few moments it was not known whether it had gone on; it had not, however, and lay dead, a full-grown tigress, eight and a half feet long.'

Russell describes how the party visited Peepul Perao, a wonderful district for jungle life with duck, teal, kingfishers, reed warblers, painted and common snipe, rails, dappers, butcher birds, partridge and quail; parrots, many sorts of thrush or grackles, woodpeckers, fly-catchers, owls; jungle cock in the thick stuff, black partridge on the outskirts, and porcupines rattling over the dry watercourses; hares near the cultivated patches; by the edges of the woods little burrowing creatures like marmosets. Above all career eagles, falcons, hawks, buzzards and kites. But these were left unmolested, the quarry being tiger, and the sound of shooting, had guns been fired at insignificant game, would probably have driven away any of these beasts that might be in the immediate neighbourhood. 'The camp must have resembled a species of town. It contained 2500 persons, exclusive of General Ramsay's separate establishment; there were 119 elephants, 550 camels, 100 horses, 60 carts drawn by oxen, many goats and milch cows, 600 coolies, 60 tent-pitchers, 20 water-carriers, 40 messengers and attendants, 75 non-commissioned officers and men of the 3rd Gurkhas and their band, troopers of the Bengal Cavalry and Native Infantry, together with mahouts, camel-men, and the Europeans. The Prince's person was exclusively guarded by natives.' 'Certainly,' Sir William says, 'I should feel rather proud of myself if I were a wild beast and knew all this.'

In the period up to 1914 the British double rifle makers, such as Rigby, Holland & Holland, Westley Richards and Jeffery vied with each other to produce new cartridges to promote the sale of their products – just as the American manufacturers of single barrel rifles have been doing during the past 25 years or more. For example, in that pre-First World War period no less than eleven large bore cartridges were introduced, from the .450 Nitro Express up to the .500 ¼". Nine of these were of more or less the same ballistics – throwing a bullet of between 480 and 520 grains.

It was during this period too that the .375 Holland & Holland Magnum was introduced. The belted rimless version of this cartridge, which is widely regarded as the best all-round rifle cartridge in the world, was introduced in 1911, and the first double rifle chambered for the flanged version of this cartridge was introduced shortly after the war.

The production of the .300 H & H Magnum belted rimless cartridge was held up by the First World War, and this cartridge was not put into production until 1919. Its flanged version for double rifles was introduced in 1925. From then on and up to World War II, there was no further development of big or medium bore double rifle cartridges. Instead the trend went the other way with the introduction of a number of flanged varieties of small bores such as the .240 and .275 or 7mm.

To return to the early part of the twentieth century, it was also during this period that the great Indian Princes were competing with each other to have the finest armoury of high-quality weapons, and after the First World War this competition increased, and whole series of weapons were sent not only to dealers in India such as Walter Locke & Co., Manton's, Lyon and Lyon, and R. B. Rodda, but also directly to the Rulers them-

RIGHT: His Excellency the Governor of Madras (centre) and a party of 25 guns, shot some 850 duck at Parlakemidi in 1926.

This picture of the Prince of Wales's elephant charged by a tiger was published in 1876. But pictures of elephants being so attacked are common, perhaps more imaginative than documentary.





BELOW: HH the Maharajah of Cooch Behar described Holland & Holland's rifles as 'admirable weapons. I killed a bull bison with one of them with a single shot at 80 yards'.



selves, and the names of the Maharajas of Bikaner, Jodhpur, Surguja, Barwani, Rewa, Mysore, Kapurthala, Patiala and many others appear frequently in Holland's ledgers. Many of these weapons were highly engraved, inlaid with ivory and precious metals, and some had enamel work applied. Even the cases in which they were fitted were often of extraordinary quality, many being of crocodile skin, with silver mounts and fittings. The finest armouries probably belonged to the Nawab of Bhopal and the Maharajas of Alwar and Patiala. The Maharajah of Alwar was a strict Hindu, and would have no article of cowhide on any of his weapons, so the face-pads were supplied with sponge-rubber inserts, and the cases were either of oak or were canvas-covered.

'Up to the 1920s, the countryside was teeming with game. Along the road you could shoot peafowl, deer, partridge—anything. Of course, later it got shot out.' So reports an English resident in India. 'More than once we got bags of more than a thousand duck a day with eight guns,' reports another. The attitude was, 'there was so much game that there was no harm in it.' On viceregal and princely shoots, where game was 'slain literally by the hundreds' and scores were kept to compare one viceroy with an earlier occupant, trophy hunting and killing were gradually being replaced by a more natural philosophy 'It was in stalking and in hunting that you had your fun. The actual shooting meant nothing really. The only thing was to kill outright.'

It was an age in India of almost unlimited shooting for the Rulers in their private preserves – when, for example, the late Maharaja of Surguja could boast at the end of his life that he had killed 1,600 tigers. It was an age too when there was equally unlimited shooting for the British civil administration



and for Army officers. Many of them probably could not afford a 'Best' London made double rifle when they started their service, and instead were content with cheaper model Anson & Deeley or boxlock double rifles. These were made as a rule in Birmingham and bore many famous names like William Evans, Tolley and Boswell, as well as the Army & Navy Stores – the last port of call for hundreds of men before they left for India, Malaya, Burma or for the African colonies. There can be no finer recommendation for these cheaper British double rifles than the fact that large numbers of them are still in use today, with battered stocks but with barrels as tight on the actions as the day they were first sold.

Since the end of the Second World War, Eley Kynoch, the only makers of big bore flanged ammunition in the world, had gradually had to phase out production of these cartridges. Such calibres as the .476 Westley Richards, the .475 No. 2 Jeffery and the .500/450 Holland & Holland were discontinued. Others disappeared during the 1950s, until in 1967 the Eley Kynoch factory decided to cease manufacture of all flanged metallic cartridges. This decision had become inevitable for the annual sales of such famous cartridges as the .470 and the .500/465 have now been reduced to a few thousand per year. The fall in demand is due to several reasons. Firstly, the very restricted imports of ammunition into India since the handing over of power by the British in 1947, coupled with the fact that the plains and forest game of India is rapidly approaching extinction. Secondly, in Africa from 1900 to 1939, almost every European settler, who was keen on shooting, owned a double rifle. Now that the game is less and so many of the settlers in the former colonies have left, the ownership of the double rifle is restricted to the professional hunters and to the few sportsmen going on safari.

One of the keenest shots of all the Viceroy's was Lord Curzon, seen here standing up in his howdah to discuss tactics with a neighbouring howdah.

PREVIOUS PAGE:

When the Illustrated London News printed this picture by F T Daws, which was exhibited at the Royal Academy, they captioned it as follows: 'Tiger-shooting in India is traditionally a royal sport, of which both the King and the Prince of Wales have had experience. The painting here reproduced illustrates the occasion on which the Prince shot his first tiger, in December 1921, in the jungles of Nepal. He was the guest of the Maharajah Sir Chandra Shumshere Jung, and was accompanied by Lord Louis Mountbatten, Lord Cromer, Sir Lionel Halsey, and Colonel Worgan. On the first of four days' sport, the total bag was eleven tigers and two rhinoceros.'

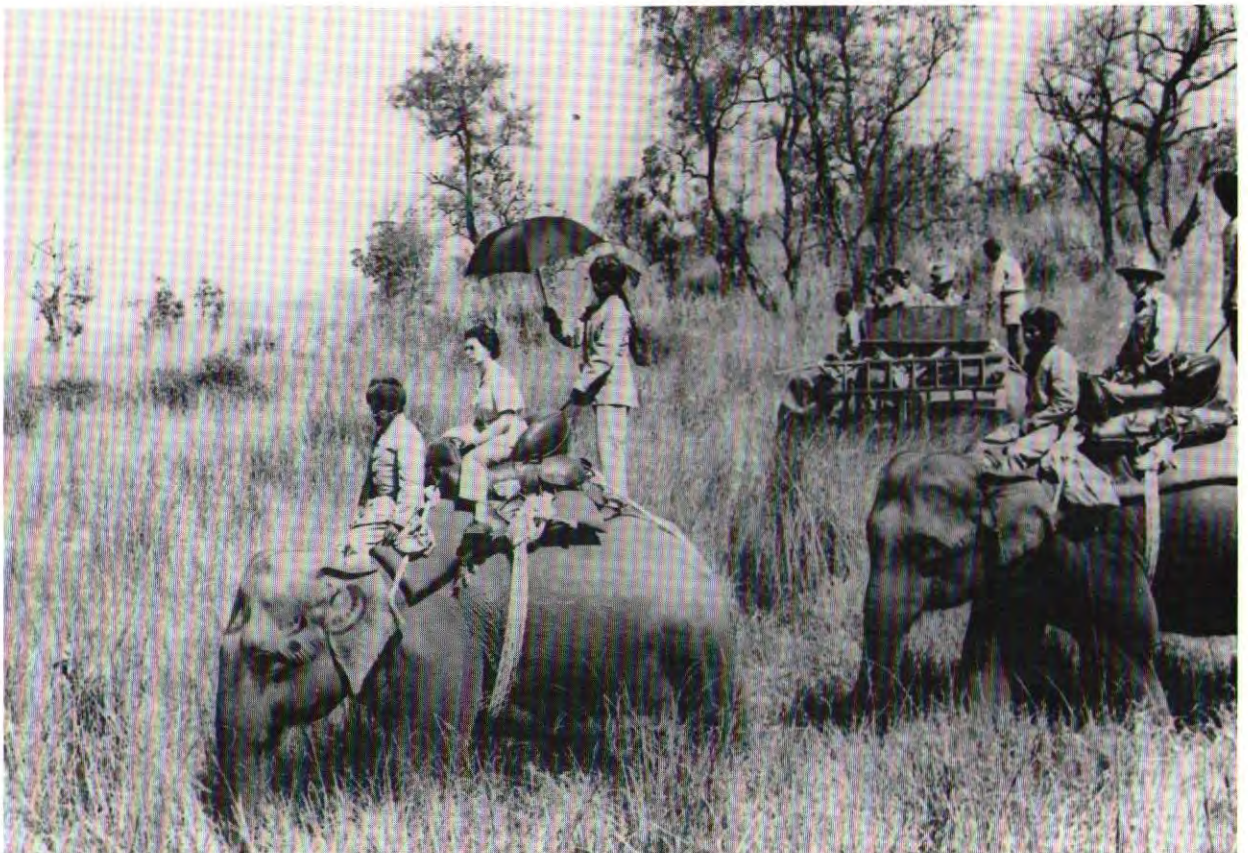
When Britain handed over power in India in 1947 the country was teeming with big game – tiger especially. The big game was preserved either by the former Indian rulers or, in British India, by the strict regulation of licences in the so-called blocks in the reserve forests. Most of the shooting was done by the rulers, princes, and by officers of the Indian and British Army or civilian administrators, and when the hand-over of power took place there was an estimated tiger population of well over 50,000. Today it is estimated at about 2,500.

By the early 1950s, many companies and individuals in India blossomed forth as *shikari* (*shikar* is the Persian word for shooting) outfitters, on the lines of the African safari companies. They built up considerable businesses which brought in large amounts of foreign exchange, but the big game of India has been decimated and most of these firms are today out of business. The destruction of the forest game has been due to the almost unrestricted issue of firearms licences, to poaching at night, to poisoning, and, finally and most important, to the destruction of habitat – the cutting down of the jungles for firewood.

Sanctuaries have been created but they are mostly sanctuaries in name only – even if there are no villages in them, the villagers from outside are allowed to graze their cattle, sheep and goats within the area – to the detriment of the feed for the herbivorous wild game. It is difficult to commercialize the wild life of India for viewing and photography, simply because so much of the plains game are forest-living animals, and are difficult to find and to see.

The big game of the mountains of India, which used to be so

A vivid contrast with the earlier royal visit to India was in 1961 when Queen Elizabeth and the Duke of Edinburgh attended a rhino shoot.



highly prized by enthusiastic British sportsmen who were prepared to undergo great hardships to shoot these wild sheep and goats of the Himalayas, now lie in restricted areas along the Himalayan range. These are virtually inaccessible to all but the Indian Army on the borders against China – and the Indian Army have themselves destroyed much of this unique fauna. Fortunately, there are kingdoms like Nepal and Bhutan where the rulers are keen sportsmen and conservationists and where the mountain game is preserved.

A number of countries in Asia have come to realize the great value of big game hunting as an earner of foreign exchange.

In Afghanistan, the Government had, before the Russian invasion, been issuing licences to a limited number of people each summer to go to the southern part of the Pamirs (which lie just in Afghanistan in the Wakhan) to shoot an *ovis poli*, the huge sheep named after Marco Polo, who first recorded it. A licence to shoot one cost £2,500 and the total cost of the trip amounted to £4,500 – and that was back in 1970.

Even the governments of the Soviet Union and the Mongolian People's Republic appreciate the value of foreign exchange to be earned from their big game and very expensive licences are obtainable to shoot red deer and bear in Russia, and the Mongolian wild sheep. But it was India which captured the imagination of those who only shot tigers from the arm chair in their club, and it was India in the days of the Raj which will long be remembered as the place where the actual shooting meant everything.



Holland & Holland reproduced this picture of a stamp in 1907, saying that seven consecutive shots at 100 yards would have struck a postage stamp. 'The group illustrated was made with the .365-grain bullet as fired from the .465 cartridge. It was produced at the very first attempt, and it constitutes what seems likely to stand for some time to come as a record amongst properly authenticated targets. The centres of the whole seven shots lie within a space practically 1 in. square (actually 1.00 in. by 1.05 in.), and the reader may satisfy himself from the reproduction of part of the actual target that all the shots would have hit a postage stamp. It is interesting to know that the sights used were of the open variety, and that orthoptic spectacles were not employed.

The bullet which produced these remarkable results, in conjunction with the cartridge and rifle under review, has been appropriately christened 'Velopex'.

As regards the ballistics of the cartridge, Holland & Holland have always aimed at a low chamber pressure, believing this to be necessary in view of the conditions under which sporting rifles are used in tropical climates. The rifle used was a .465-bore Express Cordite Rifle.



'Flooring the Elephant in Africa'

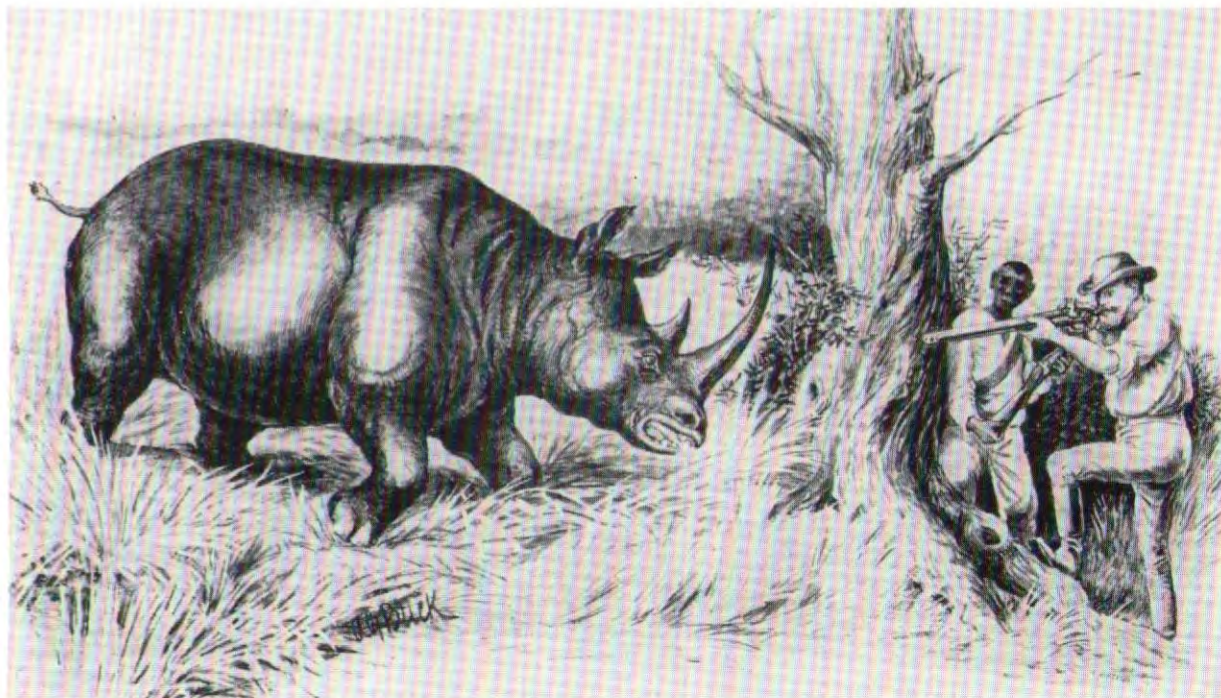
Big Game Hunting

The hunting of big game is an ancient and honourable sport dating back several thousand years in Asia and parts of North Africa, and at least a thousand years in Europe. It has always been the sport of the rich – rulers, princes and noblemen – and even today a licence to shoot one animal can cost at least £2000.

Most people associate big game with Central Africa but in fact it is a comparatively modern sport here developed during the past 100 years. The early settlers and administrators in Central, East and Southern Africa found a country with what appeared unlimited wild animals. They hunted big game for meat and for sport. And many species of these animals in Africa are named after people who first recorded them even as recently as 60 years ago.

From these early days, the hunters required specially-made guns and rifles to follow their quarry. When double rifles were first produced in the early part of the 19th century their *raison d'être* was greater fire power, and the introduction of repeating rifles might have led to their disappearance. However, the

This picture was used in an advertisement for the 10-bore Paradox ideal for shooting elephant, bison and other kinds of large game such as the rhinoceros. Lord Wolverton, writing in Five Months in Somaliland from which the picture is taken, is observing 'Coming suddenly on the rhino, I fired at his heart, knocking him over on the spot'.





*Teddy Roosevelt's safari
fording a river.*

Of another rhino he says, after making 'a tolerably fair comparison between his Winchester and the Holland for heavy game like rhinos and buffaloes, I found that for me personally, the heavy Holland was unquestionably the proper weapon'. And, later, 'I was confirmed in my judgement that for me personally the big Holland rifle was the only weapon, although I did not care as much for it against lighter-bodied beasts like lions'. Of course, the big Holland was a tough weapon to handle. 'The recoil of the heavy rifle made me rock,' he writes, 'as I stood unsteadily on my perch, and I failed to hit the brain. But the bullet, only missing the brain by an inch or two, brought the elephant to its knees; as it rose, I floored it with the second barrel. The blast of the big barrel, by the way, was none too pleasant for the other men on the logs, and made Cunningham's nose bleed.' He concludes that although the Winchester and the Springfield were good weapons for elephants, 'I kept to my belief that, for such very heavy game, my Holland was an even better weapon'.

The safari was, says his biographer, the 'great moment of his private life'.

The gunmaker and historian W. W. Greener concludes that 'To slay so ponderous an animal as a full-grown elephant, a weapon is required that will give good penetration with great smashing and paralysing power. Ordinary rifles are useless as the bullets smash up long before they reach the vital organ. An 8-bore or 4-bore will give excellent penetration and the paralysing power of the bullet crushing through the body will invariably drop an elephant, even when charging. 'Often nothing but the immediate flooring of the elephant will save the life of the sportsman and his attendants, and an 8-bore will frequently fail to stop the charge.' Holland made just such a gun, and, as we heard earlier, Henry Holland himself worked on



FIG. 3.

8-bore 'Paradox' steel cored bullet, taken out of bull elephant. Mr Digby Davies writes: 'Bull elephant shot at 25 yards. Shot through the shoulder and found sticking in the skin on the opposite side. Animal dropped dead on the spot.'



Theodore Roosevelt and one of his big lions. The photograph was taken by his son.

Samual Baker's big gun when he was an apprentice. This gun was the famous 'Baby', a single barrelled rifle which weighed 20 lb and fired a charge of 10 drachms of powder behind a half-pound shell. Baker took 'Baby' (as well as Lady Baker) on an African expedition in 1871, working his way across the Sudan and down the Nile to Lake Albert. The gun was an object of awe to the local population, and the Arabs named it *Jenna el Mootfah* (child of a cannon) and he claimed that he never fired a shot from it without getting his animal. He described his adventures in a book which was largely responsible for popularising big game shooting in Africa.

Sir Samuel Baker's first book *The Rifle and Hound in Ceylon* had been moderately successful, but his next, published in 1866, had acquired for him the reputation of the mighty hunter. This was *Albert N'Yanza, Great Basin of the Nile*, dedicated to Queen Victoria. On the expedition he described, he had carried a powerful pair of No. 10 polygroove rifles made by Reilly of Oxford Street. But he required something more powerful to deal with elephants and the like, hence 'Baby' described in the next book, *The Nile Tributaries of Abyssinia*. This is full of information about hunting elephants, buffaloes, rhinoceros and lions, for which purpose he carried ten guns, including a single rifle by Manton. Actually, Baker was a serious explorer, holding the Gold Medal of the Royal Geographic Society, who averred 'my pleasure is not in slaughtering . . . but to restrict my shooting only to specimen heads.' In his 1874 book *Ismailia* a narrative of the expedition to Central Africa for the suppression of the slave trade, he describes in detail how he shot elephant along the Nile, although he says, 'I should have thought it almost as likely to meet a herd of elephants in Hyde Park as to find them in this open and thickly populated country.' He rose to the occasion, observing: 'I always kept my guns and ammunition in beautiful order, arranged in a rack in the cabin. These included two Holland half-powders, that carried an iron lead-coated explosive shell, containing a bursting charge of half an ounce of fine grain powder. The two elephant rifles were very hard hitters and carried twelve drachms of powder.' When he fired at his first elephant, the gun 'by the recoil flew out of my hands for a distance of 12 yards'.

'The rifles were the same calibre and pattern as "the Baby" and made by Mr Holland of Bond Street, and are the most overpowering rifles I ever used. They were certain to kill the elephant, and to half kill the man who fired them . . . I was tolerably strong, therefore I was never killed outright, but an Arab hunter had his collar bone smashed by the recoil.' Baker ran out of ammunition after he had killed two of the ten elephants in the herd.

Books like these were an eye-opener to the better-off British shot, bored with beak and feather, and looking for something on a larger scale. The White Hunter and the professional safari were born, with the British playing the leading rôle for the next 60 years. But the better-off, or the really well-off, were joined or succeeded by the less well-off, as an article in *The Field* described in truly prophetic words in 1935. Of all sports, said *The Field*

'none has been more changed by modern inventions than big game shooting. Putting aside the immense advance in



sporting rifles of the past thirty, indeed of the past ten years, there are two factors that have influenced it in the realms of scientific invention – the perfection of the camera, and especially the cine-camera, and the internal combustion engine . . . The use of the motor car was at one time vilely abused in Africa by using it as a mobile butt. That is a thing of the past . . . the motor car is welcomed as an integral part of shooting from Cape to Cairo by sportsmen of the best type. It represents an immense saving in time, generally a considerable saving in money, and, most important of all, it removes so much of the difficulties of organisation required in a porter safari . . . But the factor that has chiefly revolutionised shooting is the aeroplane.'

Sir Samuel Baker's 'Baby' made by Henry Holland. It was trodden on by an elephant and repaired by elephant skin sheathed round the hand and action.

The writer foresaw 'an enormous increase in the number of people who will fly abroad to see, to photograph or to shoot big game'.

This revolution came about because there were plenty of well-off people who habitually went up to Scotland for six weeks or two months' holiday, spending a few hundred pounds on a shooting holiday, who now, thanks to Imperial Airways, found Africa to be within their time scale. This was true, too, for the Americans.

In the past 25 years most of the safari business has come from the United States, with, a long way behind, Italians, Mexicans and wealthy South Americans.

The cost of a safari in, say, Kenya today for one person for a month will come to about £80,000, and most of the safari companies in the former European colonies in Africa have a waiting list of up to two years. Most of the new African self-governing nations realise the tremendous economic value of the big game and are taking every measure possible to preserve the national parks for sightseers and photographers and the hunting areas for shooting.

To those who have never seen big game in the wild and who have seen wild animals only in zoos or on films, the case for shooting them may appear indefensible. The sportsman and naturalist, the late Colonel Richard Meinertzhagen, wrote in his big game hunting record book in 1946:

'This is a record of slaughter for which there is little excuse. Much was shot for food; it gave me good healthy exercise, it



taught me bushcraft and how to shoot straight. But was the cost of life worth it? I now have little to show for it and am not in the least proud of it. When I was young I had the hunting instinct strongly developed. That was satisfied to the full, but I now repent.'

One can understand what he meant. He had hunted between 75 and 100 years ago when the game appeared almost limitless. He wrote the words long before the World Wild Life Fund had come into being, and long before big game shooting had become almost a nasty word to mention in Britain.

Nevertheless, 'shooters' of big game are the greatest conservationists, and even though today they may not all be 'hunters' they do contribute either by what they pay or in other ways to the conservation of the game. In this connexion it is worth remembering that many species of Indian game especially, and some African species, have been introduced into large private ranches in parts of North and South America – albeit for sport – but where the climate suits them and where in a few years they may be the only ones of their kind left apart from those in zoos.

The 1920s and 1930s were the years of the 'White Hunter' and we know much about him, thanks to the films and books by the likes of Ernest Hemingway and Ruark.

The year 1945 marked the watershed of big-game shooting in Africa, with a number of countries becoming independent in the following years, and closing their borders, at least for a time, to the hunters. To mark the end of an era, Holland produced, during the 1970s, the last .600 bore double rifle using nitro cartridges.

The .600 bore Nitro Express was the most powerful sporting rifle and cartridge ever produced in Britain. It was not derived from a Black Powder version, and there is no information on who designed the cartridge. However, it is known that W. J. Jeffery (a subsidiary company of Holland & Holland) was the first to produce these rifles, and there is a relevant note in the first page of the Jeffery number book commencing 1901 which says '23/3/01 Thro' Bakers—4 pairs .600 bore tubes from Krupps @75/- per pair.'

The first Jeffery .600 bore double rifle, No 12175, was an 'under snap' Anson & Deeley action rifle, and weighed 15lb 10oz. It was finished in February 1902 and sold for £45. One of the first big game hunters to acquire a Jeffery .600 bore double rifle was Major P. H. G. Powell-Cotton, who describes it in his book *Unknown Africa*. He also mentions the calibre in the appendices of his earlier book *A Sporting Trip through Abyssinia* published in 1902. He recommends it as 'taking the place of the 8B'. Probably he saw, and possibly tried out, a .600 bore when he returned to England at the end of 1901. John Taylor also mentions in *African Rifles and Cartridges* that he owned one. A number of .600 bores of different makes were to be found in the armouries of the Indian Princes, and most of these rifles were in completely unused condition. The last one of the thirty-two double barrel .600 bores made by Jeffery was sold in 1929. In addition, the Company made twenty-four single barrel .600 bores, a few on Anson & Deeley actions, but the majority of falling block Farquharson actions. One of the latter is in a collection in Fort Worth and was used as an

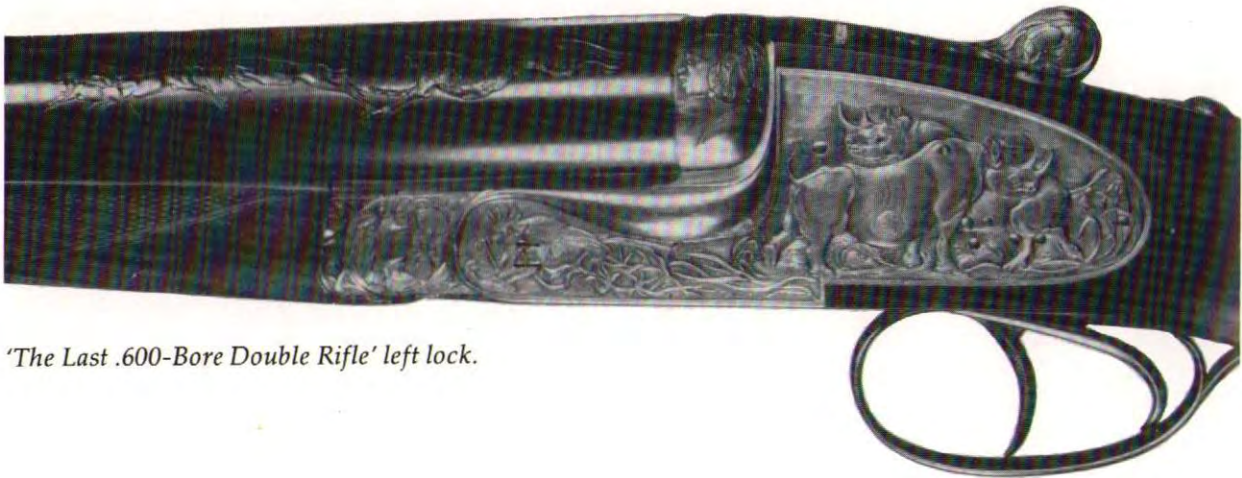


In Sir Samuel Baker's *Wild Beasts and Their Ways* he wrote 'My battery is one .577, one .400 and one 'Magnum Paradox,' No 12. The 'Paradox' is a most useful weapon, as it combines a shot gun (shoots No 6 shot with equal pattern to a best cylinder-bored gun) with a rifle that is wonderfully accurate within a range of 100 yards.'

'No. 1. – Struck a large Barra Singha deer upon the spine, and the bullet was found embedded in crushed bone.'

'No. 2. – Passed behind the shoulder of a full-grown bear, and struck the bone of another bear below the shoulder joint, a few paces on the other side of the first wounded animal.'

'No. 3. – This went through a bear, and was found beneath the skin upon the opposite side.'



'The Last .600-Bore Double Rifle' left lock.



... and right lock.



... and underside.

armament on a British vessel during the First World War.

A few .600 bore double rifles were made by other British makers – three by Westley Richards; nine by Wilkes – but Mr Tom Wilkes remembers his father saying that the firm made quite a number for the trade – possibly for firms like the Army and Navy Stores. Curiously, one of Britain's most famous makers of double rifles, John Rigby, says there is no record of having made a .600 bore. The Holland & Holland records show six 'Royal' Model .600 bores as having been made by the Company, and Purdey's have made the same number. Some too were made in Belgium, but it is doubtful if any were made elsewhere on the Continent. So, in all it is possible that about seventy-five .600 bore double rifles were made, which means that with the single barrel rifles made by Jeffery and some other makers, notably P. Webley, the total number of .600 bore rifles of all kinds which have ever been made would only slightly exceed one hundred.

The Kynoch records show that the first commercial batch of .600 cartridges were loaded in 1901. The Kynoch cartridges were available with 100 grains of powder – either Cordite at £23.00 per 1,000 or Axite at £28.15.0 per 1,000 (today, ten of these cartridges would be worth those prices, or more). Eley Brothers also made the .600 bore cartridge until 1918. An amalgamation then took place of all the explosive manufacturers in Britain, which was called Explosives Trades Limited for a few months until they re-christened themselves Nobel Industries in November 1918. From then on all .600 bore cartridges were head-stamped 'Kynoch', although strangely enough Kynoch was the smallest of the five explosive manufacturers who had amalgamated.

In later years the standard .600 cartridge was loaded with 110 grains of powder only. John Taylor in *African Rifles and Cartridges* says that all Jeffery rifles were sighted for the 100 grain powder load. This is not so. Latterly they were mainly 110 grains loads, and there is one Jeffery rifle recorded – No 12431 – made in 1902 which weighed 12½lb and was sighted in for a 120 grain powder load.

The .600 bore cartridge remained in current production until 1956, when the last batch of 2,000 cartridges was loaded by IMI (Kynoch) for Holland & Holland. During the fifty years of manufacture IMI (Kynoch) believe that as many as 200,000 cartridges were made, and say that after the Second World War several batches, each of 15/20,000 cartridges, were made. If 200,000 is correct, this means an average of 2,000 cartridges per rifle. Where they went and what happened to them is a mystery, for it is hardly credible that much more than 10 per cent were ever used.

The 'Last .600 Bore Rifle', which is probably the finest Holland & Holland double rifle ever made, was started in 1970 when the barrels were made by Mr David Winks in the Holland & Holland barrel shop. The finishing touches were made almost exactly five years later, just after Easter 1975. It is not possible to say exactly the number of hours which went into the design, thought and manufacture of the rifle by the craftsmen of Holland & Holland and its case, but it certainly runs into many thousands. During this time, the rifle was worked upon by almost all of the best craftsmen at Holland &

Holland under the personal supervision of Mr Geoffrey Brooks the Production Director.

It was decided to embellish the rifle by portraying some of the people, some of the fauna and some of the flora of Africa. A well known sculptor and artist made pencil drawings of the animal scenes which are engraved on the rifle, and a folio containing these original drawings accompanies the rifle. The magnificent portrayal of these and other scenes was sculpted by Mr Kenneth Hunt, in a unique style never before applied to a breech-loading British sporting gun or rifle. The very open scenes in high relief do not use heavy shading usually applied in relief engraving on firearms.

This beautiful weapon, The Last .600 Bore, is a fitting tribute to a sport where the camera has now replaced the rifle.

