

IN THE GUNROOM
HOLLAND & HOLLAND

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Of the British gunmakers, three of them are known as The Big Three, all with long histories dating back to the early 19th century, and in strict alphabetical order they are, Boss & Co, Holland & Holland and James Purdey & Sons.

Of The Big Three, Holland & Holland have experienced some fairly dramatic changes of late being bought by Beretta on the 1st July 2021 and are now part of this major group.

Lot 1355 in this auction shows a pair of recently built Holland & Holland guns at their very best. This lot comprises a pair of 20 bore (3'') Royal double trigger O/U guns completed in 2002. Engraved by J.G. Salt in classic Holland & Holland scroll, they represent the best in British gunmaking and are estimated at £80,000 - £90,000.

The acquisition of Holland & Holland by Beretta raised many eyebrows and there were fears as to the future of Holland & Holland. However, many famous British gun firms have capital outwith the UK behind them, as is the way of the modern world and this has proved to be no impediment to their credentials.

Beretta UK is owned by GMK and from the outset, the Beretta family saw Holland & Holland as the jewel in their crown and intend to retain that title for the future. They intend that the Holland & Holland Royal gun, first patented on the 1st January 1883 by John Robertson and Henry Holland, should remain the flagship of the range. The Royal has achieved an international reputation for design, style and craftsmanship over the centuries and should remain as such.

As well as The Royal, Holland & Holland became very famous for their rifles by the late 19th century winning every class in The Field Rifle Trials of 1883 winning every class from rook rifle to big game rifle. Their tiny rook rifles were built in their thousands and they introduced famous calibres like the .375 H & H Magnum. Holland & Holland were the most diverse of The Big Three, building everything from best quality sporting guns, to monster big game rifles, to punt guns, to Aero guns and bolt rifles.

With such an illustrious history behind them, Beretta were very proud to own the Holland & Holland name and have every intention of continuing the tradition of the best London gun. The factory will remain in London and the new Holland & Holland shop will be part of the Beretta Gallery in St James's Street.

The old Holland & Holland shop in Bruton Street was closed down in June 2021 and moved to the Beretta Gallery. Recent plans have seen the completion of the third floor of these premises in St James's Street dedicated entirely to the Holland & Holland range. This new shop opened officially in September 2022 where potential customers can view Holland & Holland guns and rifles and discuss their requirements. St James's Street is a traditional home for British gunmakers with William Evans currently still there today. In the past it housed many famous gunmakers such as Boss & Co, James Woodward, John Rigby, J.D. Dougall and so on.

This new shop is primarily a showroom for the Holland & Holland range as there is another shop at the well-known Holland & Holland shooting ground where customers can be measured and guns tried out.

The shooting ground is a business on its own and is very well-known for its venue and events. It attracts a large clientele and recently Beretta have sought to make it even more attractive by adding new restaurants, enhancing the gunroom and refurbishing the events room. New grouse butts have also been constructed. There has been an increase in corporate events and visitor numbers have been rising.

The factory in Harrow Road that has been in existence since it was first purpose built as a factory by Henry Holland in 1898, will remain as the Holland & Holland factory. Some small changes have been made, such as improving the quality of the barrels to cope with the new demand for steel shot. A great deal of effort was put into having all the blueprints and drawings properly documented and computerised to make production easier in the future. One change has been in the move away from the traditional narrow based skill of the gunmaker, specialising in one particular forte, to a more multi-skill workforce. Plans are afoot for a new O/U gun to be built at the factory and a new bolt action rifle. The intention is to keep everything hand-made and to continue with the existing acclaimed Holland & Holland range.