

IN THE FIELD

NOVEMBER 2023

By Sir Johnny Scott Bt.

BOB CHAMPION CANCER TRUST

The Holts annual charity clay pigeon day was held at the Old Shooting Ground on the Sandringham Estate, by gracious permission of His Majesty King Charles III, on 4th August. This is the fifteenth year Holts have held the immensely popular event, which has previously raised very significant sums for charities chosen by Nicholas Holt as being particularly deserving and approved by the Royal Estate. Previous beneficiaries have included The Gamekeepers Welfare Trust, Riding for the Disabled, Walking with the Wounded, The Game and Wildlife Conservation Trust and the Gurkhas Welfare Trust. This year's beneficiary was the wonderful Cambridge Children's Hospital, which aims to be the first to provide integrated physical and mental care for children aged from 0-19, including those with cancer. The day was generously sponsored by Holland and Holland, London's premier gunmakers; the Chestnut group of East Anglian pubs and restaurants, plus eight other local businesses.

As with previous years, the Sandringham Estate gamekeepers were on hand to assist the forty teams of four Guns who competed at five simulated game drives provided by Six Mile Bottom Clays. Run for the last twenty years by Richard and Jackie Clarke, who also provided tea, coffee and bacon rolls at the morning registration, and lunch in the marquee after the competition finished. The day ended with toasts to the King and her late Majesty the Queen, prize giving, speeches, auction and an announcement by Nicholas Holt, that the Royal Estate had agreed next year's shoot will be in aid of the Bob Champion Trust, which raises funds for the Bob Champion Cancer Research Laboratory, that forms part of the largest male cancer dedicated research facility in Europe, in particular, prostate and testicular cancer.

The idea for choosing the Bob Champion Cancer Trust came after Nicholas and his wife, Kathryn, were guests of Lt Col and Mrs Everingham at a fund raising dinner at the end of May for the Heacham based cancer charity Campaign Care 94, at which Bob Champion was a guest of honour and gave an update on the Bob Champion Cancer Trust he formed in 1983. The inspirational story of his battle against cancer, his remarkable 1981 win at the Grand National on Aldaniti and devotion in raising money for male cancer research, made his Trust a natural beneficiary for the 2024 Holts Sandringham Clay Day.

Born into a famous hunting family in 1948, when his father was hunting the Eridge, the family moved to Guisborough shortly after Bob was born when his father became huntsman of the Cleveland and he grew up in Yorkshire.



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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Eschewing hunt service for a career as a jockey, Bob won his first point-to-point aged fifteen, before moving to National Hunt racing. He rode the Grand National several times and won various prominent races including the Hennessy Gold Cup, the Black and White Hurdle and the Whitbread Trial Chase, plus others in America during the off season. In 1979, riding for Josh Gifford, he came third at the Cheltenham Gold Cup and second at the Scottish National on Aldaniti, owned by Nick Embiricos, whom he was hoping to ride in the next Grand National, when at the height of his career, he was diagnosed with testicular cancer.

In those days, the diagnosis was as good as a death sentence and doctors gave Bob a 30% chance of surviving, with three to four months to live. The early chemotherapy treatment was barbaric and he underwent surgery to remove one testicle and part of a rib to allow access to the centre of his chest where the cancer had spread. Josh Gifford stuck by him, promising him his job and the opportunity to ride Aldaniti in the Grand National if he pulled through, but a further blow was struck when the horse was badly injured at Sandown and the prognosis was that he was unlikely to race again. Against all the odds, both horse and jockey battled back to health; Bob had extensive muscle wastage and lung damage from the aggressive chemotherapy and Aldaniti was in plaster and box rest for months, but gradually, through sheer determination, they were fit enough for the 1981 Grand National and their miraculous recoveries gave them racing's greatest prize. This fairy tale victory earned them that year's BBC Sports Personality of the Year Team Awards and in 1982, at the Queen's Birthday Honours, Bob was appointed a Member of the Order of the British Empire (MBE).

Two years after his Grand National win, encouraged by his doctor, Professor Sir Michael Peckham and Aldaniti's owner, Nick Embiricos, he set up the cancer trust and has since raised millions for research into innovative treatments, diagnostics and strategies to help male cancers, through tireless fund raising. His indefatigable pursuit of these aims were recognised in the 2021 New Year's Honours, when Bob was appointed a Commander of the British Empire for services to prostate and testicular cancer.



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