



PRESS RELEASE

For Immediate Release

THE ROBERT E BROOKER COLLECTION PART II, AN EXTRAORDINARY ARRAY OF HELMETS, PRIVATE COLLECTIONS OF SPORTING GUNS AND SWORDS, AND A WATCH THAT SURVIVED BALACLAVA

Fine Antique Arms, Armour & Militaria
Wednesday 25th and Thursday 26th June 2025



Lots 97, 216, 120 & 275

LONDON, UK. JUNE 2025. Olympia Auctions' forthcoming two-day sale of **Fine Antique Arms, Armour & Militaria on Wednesday 25th and Thursday 26th June 2025 at 11am** reflects its dominant position as the only auction house in London holding live sales in this field. Private and institutional collectors have consigned from all over the world, confident in the exceptional expertise of a department now jointly led by Olympia Auctions' founder, Thomas Del Mar, and former Christie's and Bonhams expert David Williams who joined in April.

The Robert E Brooker Jr Collection of Rare Antique Arms and Armour Part Two: The Early Modern Period II. (Lots 23 -119)

Foremost among the sale's several collections are the 96 lots from Robert Brooker's collection, the finest private assemblage of antique arms and armour in the world, celebrated for its breadth, rarity, and exceptional state of preservation. Spanning more than three centuries and comprising a unique group of munition firearms, edged weapons and associated objects, its magnitude, breadth and quality are truly remarkable.

Robert Elton Brooker, Jr. started collecting firearms in 1954 at the age of 17, when he identified an original Colt revolver for sale in Morelia, Mexico. This led to a lifetime of collecting and scholarship related to technology development and geopolitics viewed through the lens of European military pistols. His first book, *British Military Pistols 1603-1887*, was published in 1978 and his last, published in 2016, is an updated version illustrated largely with items from his personal collection.

This second offering from the early modern period (specifically circa 1500-1780) gives collectors a rare opportunity to acquire several outstanding rarities, many of which remain in excellent condition. Among them is a rare brace of 40-bore German silver-mounted wheel-lock holster pistols (puffers) for an officer of the Saxon Electoral Trabantenlieb-Garde of Christian 1 (1586-91) or Christian II (1591-1611), late 16th century. Inlaid with engraved staghorn panels of marine monsters and hippocampi, they were almost certainly intended for a high-ranking officer and came originally to auction in 1974 from the Saxon Electoral Armouries, Dresden. (Lot 97 £25,000-35,000).

Dazzling collection of military helmets (lots 220 - 267)

Another highly unusual aspect of this sale is a fabulous collection of mostly British Militaria including helmets, plates and sabretaches offering an astonishing breadth of design, decoration, and military heritage. This spectacular collection, the property of a lady, spans continents, centuries, and empires, encompassing the full spectrum of ceremonial and battlefield headgear from British Empire and Indian subcontinent to Imperial Russia and Napoleonic France. Towering plumes, glistening crests of Sheffield plate or gilt metal, and skulls in leather, steel, or velvet — the helmets come in many shapes and are richly adorned with emblems and insignia. From the fierce elegance of a French Cuirassier's helmet with scarlet plume and Medusa's head (Lot 222, £500–800), to the opulence of a Russian officer's kiver crowned with a massive double-headed eagle (Lot 234, £800–1,200), the collection is a riot of colour and a treasury of historical and artistic detail.

What sets this collection apart is not merely its scale, but the sheer richness of regimental representation. Helmets from elite cavalry units such as the Prussian Garde du Corps (Lot 224, £1,000–1,500) sit alongside rare Indian Army pieces like the flamboyant 3rd Bombay Light Cavalry officer's helmet, its battle honours boldly emblazoned across a white metal front (Lot 235, £2,000–3,000). There are regal French examples from the Bourbon Restoration, such as a rare 1814 black leather helmet of the Garde du Corps du Roi, its ornate repoussé decoration surmounted by a crest of stiff black hair and black and white feathers (Lot 220, £2,000–3,000), and masterpieces of Victorian craftsmanship including the dramatic bell-top shako of the Queen's Regiment, mounted with a large diamanté star and in near mint condition (Lot 244, £1,200–1,800).

Feathers and horse or buffalo hair plumes abound, some thick and luxuriant like the massive black bearskin on a Cavalry Officer's Roman pattern helmet of the Inniskilling Dragoons, circa 1834-43 (lot 242 £2,000-3,000). Others have long, trailing "shaving brush" plumes like the Cavalry Officer's 1812 helmet of the Royal Irish Dragoon Guards (lot 243 £1,500-2,500). Other helmets are set off by pompoms - an officer's Albert Shako of the Indian Army, circa 1840-55, is adorned with a large red pompom in a burnished gold socket. (lot 237 £1,200-1,800).

Some helmets show elements of military functionality while others dazzle with theatrical excess such as the officer's chapka of the City of London Imperial Yeomanry (Lot 250, £2,500–3,500), its pale blue top crossed with gold gimp and orris cords, and a massively worked gold boss bearing the royal cypher *GR*. This is a collection that not only spans history but captures the spirit, ceremony, and symbolism of the armies that shaped it.

As well as helmets, there are ornately embroidered sabretaches (the flat leather pouch or bag traditionally worn by cavalry officers in the 18th and 19th centuries). One, fine example is that of a Yeomanry Officer of the Royal Gloucestershire Hussars, circa 1880 estimated to fetch £1,000-1,500 (lot 261). There is also a rare Napoleonic drummer's baldric, preserved in an oak frame with a plaque inscribed "Waterloo 1815" (lot 223 £800-1,000).

The George F Harding Collection (lots 120-128)

The Art Institute of Chicago is selling select items from the George F. Harding Collection to benefit the care, conservation and public exhibition of the remaining collection. George F. Harding Jr., a Chicago businessman and politician, amassed an extensive collection of arms and armour in the early 20th century. After his death in 1939, the collection was eventually transferred to the Art Institute in 1982, fulfilling Harding's intention to offer it to the people of Chicago.

Items coming for sale include a rare South German Estoc, circa 1520-40, from the Armoury of the Princes of Liechtenstein (lot 120 £8,000-12,000) and a North European rapier, probably 19th century, built around a 17th century pommel, the hilt decorated in encrusted silver chiselled with cherub's masks, flowers and foliage (lot 121 £7,000-9,000). The Harding section ends with a South German sporting crossbow, dated 1586, decorated with green pom-poms and inlaid staghorn scenes from the chase, estimated to fetch £5,000-7,000 (lot 128).

Swords from an important English private collection (lots 129-132)

A group of swords from the Medieval period to the 17th century comes to sale from an important English private collection – Lots 129-132. It includes a very rare English rapier with a chiselled and gold-damascened hilt, circa 1630-40, by Robert South, appointed Cutler to James I and subsequently Charles I. (Lot 132 £6,000-8,000). It also contains one of the oldest items in the sale, an early 14th century "Hand-and-a-half" sword, so called because it was designed to be used with either one hand or two. (Lot 129 £4,000-5,000)

Sporting guns and royal gunmakers (lots 275-306)

An excellent private collection of 19th Century sporting guns contains a 16-bore flintlock silver-mounted sporting gun by Griffin & Tow London. One of two belonging to Hugh Percy, 2nd Duke of Northumberland (1742-1817) of Alnwick Castle, Northumberland, it is estimated at £4,000-5,000 (lot 271). Guns by royal gunmakers include a fine and rare 20-bore flintlock D.B. sporting gun by Ezekiel Baker, London, No.1001, circa 1805, estimated at £6,000-8,000 (lot 275). The maker was inventor of the Baker rifle, Gunmaker-in-Ordinary to King George IV, influential in the King's shooting and collecting, and played an important role in the formation of the Carlton House Armoury.

Pocket watch worn at Balaclava (lot 216)

A William IV silver pocket watch, circa 1836, bears the inscription: *Worn by / Capt Thos Hatton / 4th L Dns / at the / BALACLAVA CHARGE / 1854* and is estimated to fetch £1,000-1,500. Captain Hutton rode in the Charge of the Light Brigade at the Battle of Balaklava (1854). He was shot through the right thigh during the advance of the Light Cavalry Brigade and on returning from the guns was again severely wounded through the left thigh. His horse was wounded in 11 places and had to be destroyed. After treatment at Scutari and Malta, he returned to England in March 1855 and received his Crimea War Medal from Queen Victoria at the presentation ceremony on Horse Guards Parade, 18 May 1855. Numerous items of uniform and other associated items including his sword and shako are in the care of the National Army Museum, Chelsea.

Olympia Auctions' Thomas Del Mar said: "We are delighted with this sale which includes so many remarkable highlights. It has been a great pleasure to have David on the team, whose experience and knowledge build on our outstanding record that celebrates its 20th year in October."

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About Olympia Auctions

Our experts have years of experience working at the top of their fields and have come together to form a new kind of auction house. At Olympia Auctions we believe in research, knowledge and taking time to share our expertise with clients, no matter what the value. We hold sales in almost all specialist areas: paintings, silver, jewellery, European, Indian and Islamic, Chinese and Japanese works of art, books, prints, posters, arms and armour and 20th century design and are innovators in the sale of artist studio estates, contemporary Chinese, Indian, Middle Eastern and African art.

NEXT SALE OF ARMS & ARMOUR: December 3rd, 2025