



AN INCREDIBLE ARGALI

Rowland Ward re-measures a magnificent Marco Polo sheep head that dates from 1944.



The Rowland Ward No. 4 Marco Polo sheep hangs on a wall at the Haileybury School in Hertford, England.

In October 2021, Rowland Ward was invited to remeasure a tremendous Marco Polo sheep (*Ovis ammon poli*) head that was obtained in 1944 by Lieutenant Colonel Evelyn Cobb in what is today Kukturuk Valley, Tajikistan. At the time, the region was called Central Asia or sometimes Soviet Asia.

Today the head is housed in the Haileybury School in Hertford, England, but it originally belonged to the Royal Central Asian Society (now the Royal Society for Asian Affairs or RSAA). Ludo Wurfbain, Director of the Rowland Ward Foundation, was given permission by Dr. Toby Parker to remeasure the head under the new Rowland Ward measuring system. The head is the fourth-largest on record in Rowland Ward, and thanks to the kind assistance of Rosie Llewellyn-Jones, who studied the minutes of the Royal Central Asian Society, we learned that the head was originally shot by a tribesman around 1944 and the horns were presented to Lieutenant Colonel Evelyn Cobb, who was Political Agent to the Gilgit Agency at the time. Colonel Cobb subsequently gave it to Field Marshal Wavell, who was the Governor General and Viceroy of India between 1943 and 1947.

Wavell offered it to the Royal Central Asian Society and it was packed up and dispatched from Delhi to London. When it arrived in 1945, Customs officials tried to charge the Society £100 duty (equivalent to nearly £4,000 in today's money). There was some correspondence and eventually the charge was dropped and the horns were allowed in. By then, unfortunately, the skin had deteriorated, and the head could no longer be mounted by a taxidermist. So only the skull and horns remain. It was mounted on a wooden stand and is today displayed in the school library.

The longest horn, on the left side, measures 71 $\frac{7}{8}$ inches, which is the same as it was recorded some sixty years ago. (It

should be noted this is incorrectly stated on a plaque under the skull as 72 $\frac{1}{2}$, but the head was never recorded at this length. This could possibly have been a "green" measurement, taken before the horns went through the drying period.) The shorter horn measures 69%. These are remarkable measurements indeed, as very few Marco Polo argali reach 70 inches.



Rowland Ward Foundation Director Ludo Wurfbain (left) and Dr. Toby Parker next to the ram.

Under the modern measurement system, there is a cumulative score of the length of both horns, the bases, and the first, second, and third circumferences of both horns. The total score under the new system is 243 $\frac{4}{8}$ inches. 

Rusa Deer from Africa Approved for Record Book

The editors of Rowland Ward Ltd. have established a new category for Rowland Ward's *Records of Big Game*: rusa deer from Mauritius. Although rusa deer were not originally found on this island, a one-time Dutch possession, they were introduced in 1639 by then-governor Adrian Van Der Stel. This is very likely the oldest transplanted population of rusa deer in the world, and marks one of the very first times deer were purposely introduced to a new area. A healthy population exists in several reserves on Mauritius; so far, mostly Europeans have hunted here.



This great rusa stag, which has main beams over 30 inches and a total score of 146%, was entered in Rowland Ward's Records of Big Game by Martin Kemp.