

**ON TEST**

**BROWNING'S ULTRA XS PRO**



# SPORTING GUN

**WIN!**

**TICKETS TO  
THE GAME FAIR**

See page 7

**THE GAME  
FAIR**

Festival OF THE GREAT  
BRITISH COUNTRYSIDE

## Shoot like a winner

- How a guncam can improve your aim
- Top clay-busting cartridges rated
- Tactics to deal with crossing targets
- All the kit you need



### Turkish delight

Kofs' new Sceptre SXE  
28-bore rated by our tester

### Stealthy rabbiting

Pest control with a .410




## Smaller, lighter, better...

As a company, we at Stalon have a very simple aim; to produce the best sound moderator possible. Situated in Lapland, northern Sweden, we have the ideal environment in which to perfect every element of our product.


The **NEW** VICTOR is the latest model in our quest.

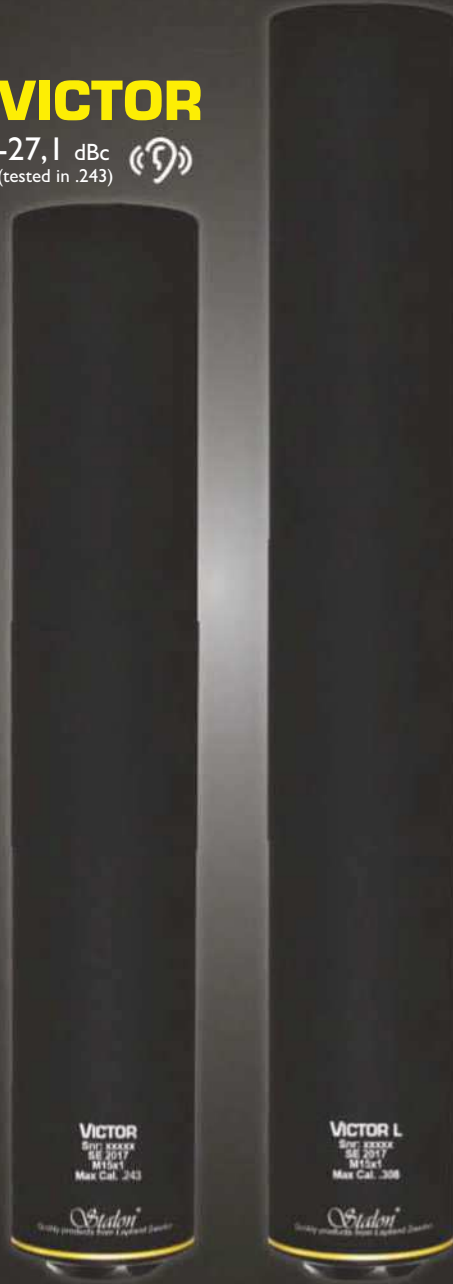


### VICTOR L

-32,5 dBc   
(tested in .308)

### VICTOR

-27,1 dBc   
(tested in .243)



Weight: 290g



Diameter: 41mm



Extension beyond muzzle: 127mm



Total length: 222mm



Max cal .243



Thread options:  
1/2" UNF, M14x1,  
M15x1, M16x1,  
5/8" UNF



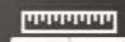
Weight: 325g



Diameter: 41mm



Extension beyond muzzle: 163mm



Total length: 258mm



Max cal .308



Thread options:  
1/2" UNF, M14x1,  
M15x1, M18x1  
5/8" UNF, 5/8" UNEF



## Perfect Shot

A line of Guns clay shooting in Wales  
PHOTOGRAPH MARK BEEDIE

## Welcome



Most of us want to shoot like a sporting god, but often end

up looking like our gun is firing blanks. We might blame the gun, cartridges or course setter, but deep down we know the fault lies with us. Well, this month we look at every aspect of shooting, from kit to technique, so there should be no more excuses!

Now, for something completely different. From next issue the magazine is changing. *Sporting Gun* is having a makeover and the logo will look different. We have a sneak preview on page 4, but the changes won't stop there. The whole magazine is being redesigned and the changes won't just be cosmetic. We are bringing in new writers, articles, more features, product reviews and "how to" stuff. Happily, one thing that won't change is the price. So make sure you look out for the new-look *Sporting Gun* next month, which will be on sale 3 July.

**Matt Clark, editor**

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# Snapshots

All the month's news, pictures, letters and more



BASC and the RSPCA will set up a working group to tackle airgun crime

## BASC and RSPCA working together on airguns

Improved enforcement of airgun laws is required to tackle increasing misuse, say BASC and the RSPCA, which plan to set up a working group to tackle the issue.

The consensus comes after the two organisations hosted a joint conference dedicated to solving the issue of airgun crime. Politicians, police firearms licensing staff, animal welfare groups, journalists and representatives of shooting groups were among the delegates at the one-day conference held in London in April.

Arguments for and against legislation were heard throughout the day, which was opened by Sir Geoffrey Clifton-Brown MP, chairman of the all-party parliamentary group (APPG) on shooting and conservation.

The RSPCA told delegates that it had received nearly 900 airgun-related complaints last year.

The charity believes that with attacks on animals still rising in England and Wales, a combination of improved enforcement,

targeted awareness programmes and licensing would be most effective.

RSPCA head of public affairs David Bowles said: "The scale of airgun misuse is immense and we believe that stricter controls are long overdue. We were pleased a consensus was reached on the need for improved enforcement of airgun legislation as well as better, more targeted education and explanation of the law for those buying one. We also feel mandatory licensing would be effective."

BASC chairman Peter Glenser added that current legislation is sufficient and success in tackling airgun crime would come through education and greater enforcement.

Mr Glenser said: "We do not believe that licensing airguns in England and Wales would provide a workable or effective solution to the problem. It is estimated that there are around seven million airguns in the UK that could become subject to licensing and this would break a system that is already struggling to cope."

## Mobile operators have "abandoned" the countryside

The CLA has called for a "tough line" on mobile phone operators, who they say have abandoned the countryside.

Freedom of Information requests have shown that no mobile operators made planning applications for new masts in areas with poor service from 2016 to 2017 — including Rutland, which has just 3.42 per cent 4G coverage.

## New-look *Sporting Gun*

Next month's *Sporting Gun* magazine may look a little different.

The old girl is having a makeover, which includes a new masthead (pictured).

Be sure to keep an eye out for it in the post or on the newsstand.

## Ravens licence granted

Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH) has granted Perthshire Strathbraan Community Collaboration for Waders a research licence to control burgeoning raven populations.

The licence will initially permit the cull of up to 69 ravens and will be adapted each year. SNH has attached conditions to ensure the licence will pose no threat to raven populations, which have risen by 134 per cent in the UK in only two decades.

### Got any news? Tell us about it...

Post: Sporting Gun, Time Inc. (UK)  
Ltd, Pinehurst 2, Pinehurst Road,  
Farnborough, Hampshire GU14 7BF.  
Email: [sportinggun@timeinc.com](mailto:sportinggun@timeinc.com)  
Call: 01252 555206

## Purdey wins inaugural Schöffel trophy

London gunmaker James Purdey & Sons claimed the top spot at the inaugural Schöffel Ptarmigan Trophy.

The event celebrated 25 years of the brand's iconic Ptarmigan coat collection.

Following five drives of simulated game and a surprise shoot-off, the winning team beat 23 other teams of three to score an impressive 457x500.

Made up of Jonathan Irby, Simon Rood and Owen Hastings, the team was delighted to take home the stunning ptarmigan sculpture made by Jason Sweeney.

Mr Irby said: "I am immensely proud to be part of the winning team of the first-ever Schöffel Ptarmigan Trophy – and very pleasantly surprised. It has been a brilliantly run shoot and it has



### Winners

The Purdey team scored an impressive 457x500 to win the ptarmigan sculpture

been lovely to be among great friends from across the industry, all of whom enjoy the same sport with the same passion. The sculpture will take pride of place in The Long Room at Purdey's shop in Mayfair."

## New policy brings affordable rural homes

A new Government policy aims to increase the number of affordable rural homes by allowing building on land next to existing settlements.

The CLA says the policy could help the countryside to thrive by

encouraging more landowners to make appropriate land available.

CLA president Tim Breitmeyer said: "Our villages will not survive if people cannot afford to live in the countryside."



A new policy will allow building on and next to existing settlements

## First hand-reared black-tailed godwit returns

A male black-tailed godwit is the first to return from a group of 26 raised at the Wildfowl & Wetlands Trust (WWT) Welney Wetland Centre, Cambridgeshire, in an effort to boost the UK breeding population. Project Godwit expert at WWT Louise Clewley

said: "It was right in front of WWT Welney main observatory.

"Migration is fraught with danger and the successful return of the first of our UK hand-reared batch gives us hope for the future of these birds."

Hannah Ward, RSPB Project Godwit manager, added: "We weren't necessarily expecting any of the hand-reared birds to return this summer so this is a wonderful and welcome surprise. We may have to wait until next summer before this young bird breeds but this is a fantastic moment for the team and great news for this magnificent but threatened species."



## Number crunching

# £567.90

Shots at the Royal Berkshire Shooting School's Easter Bunny Shoots raised £567.90 for Roald Dahl's Marvellous Children's Charity.

# 1,000

The Country Food Trust has delivered more than 1,000 meals of game meat to Glasgow-based charity, The Coming Home Centre, which feeds local war veterans.

# 1.2bn

UK recycling company Agri.cycle will

be able to process an incredible 1.2 billion spent plastic shotgun cartridges a year. The material is recycled into products such as garden furniture.

# 18

Norwich and District Wildfowlers Association has bought more than 18 acres of new land, thanks to a £30,000 loan from the Wildlife Habitat Trust (WHT).

## UPCOMING EVENTS

JUN  
13

### The Purdey Ladies Course

West London Shooting School, West End Road, Northolt,

Visit [www.shootingschool.co.uk/purdey-ladies.html](http://www.shootingschool.co.uk/purdey-ladies.html)

JUN  
21

### Holts Auction of fine modern and antique guns

Holly Hedge House, Blackheath, London

Visit [www.holtsauctioneers.com](http://www.holtsauctioneers.com)

JUN  
27-28

### Royal Norfolk Show

Royal Norfolk Showground, Norwich, Norfolk

Visit [royalnorfolkshow.rnaa.org.uk](http://royalnorfolkshow.rnaa.org.uk)

JUL  
27-29

### The Game Fair

Ragley Hall, Warwickshire

Visit [www.thegamefair.org](http://www.thegamefair.org)



Managing wildfire requires a lot of skill and knowledge

## Keepers share muirburn tips

Firefighters have been benefiting from the muirburn expertise of gamekeepers.

Iain Hepburn, headkeeper at Dunmaglass estate and a part-time firefighter with the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service (SFRS), has been engaging with firefighters to share best practice know-how.

He said: "One of the most effective methods of tackling wildfire is a technique known as 'back burning', where you control a fire by lighting another in a strategically placed position, which then burns towards the fire and, in turn, puts out both. This requires a lot of skill and knowledge and the practices

we use on the estate can be shared to the benefit of fire crews and communities."

Alex McKinley, a wildfire tactical adviser for the SFRS, visited Dunmaglass estate. He said: "We appreciate safely managed controlled burning, following the Muirburn Code, helps create fire breaks that prevent wildfires spreading.

"Managing vegetation growth is key to tackling wildfires. Uncontrolled fires are usually caused by failed land management techniques so the SFRS is working to ensure the practice of muirburn is carried out safely and responsibly."

## Rural programme gets royal approval

The Wilderness Foundation UK has been selected by Prince Harry and Meghan Markle as one of the seven charities to receive donations in place of gifts for their wedding on 19 May. The charity runs the Imbewu programme,

which helps to introduce city youths to rural life, in partnership with Scottish Land & Estates.

The Foundation's chief executive officer, Jo Roberts, said the charity was "deeply honoured" by the support.



Prince Harry visited the Wilderness Foundation last year

## Clothing brand to sponsor new shooting challenge

Country-wear brand Alan Paine will sponsor the inaugural Alan Paine Game Bird Challenge, in association with TSC TV and The Oxford Gun Company.

The competition will take place throughout July at The Oxford Gun Company's Jericho Farm shooting ground and will be open to new and intermediate shooters, who own their own gun.

The event will include a walked-up sequence and grouse butt. There will be five categories: side-by-side, over-and-under and small bore together with Ladies and Family Pair – 018/U18.

There will be plenty of prizes on offer, comprising a variety of Alan Paine products to tempt entrants, including a prize for best dressed and a number of mini prizes.

All entries must be booked in advance. Tel 01844 238308 to book or for more information.

## Dog owners urged to stay calm over Alabama rot rise

The Countryside Alliance (CA) has urged dog owners to remain "calm yet vigilant" following reports that cases of the lethal Alabama rot have doubled over the past year.

More properly known as cutaneous and renal glomerular vasculopathy, this rare disease is often fatal in dogs, with initial symptoms including skin lesions on the legs, chest and abdomen.

There were 40 recorded cases in the UK in 2017, more than twice as many as the 19 reported in 2016 and this number appears to have risen substantially, with 30 cases already reported in 2018, as of 5 March.

The CA suggests that dog owners keep up to date with confirmed outbreaks of Alabama rot and to report any abnormal symptoms, such as skin lesions, to their vet immediately.



**Vigilant**  
Owners must stay calm

## DEFRA gives £10m to restore peatlands

A £10m injection of Government money will help restore more than 10,000 football pitches-worth of England's iconic peatlands.

The Government says this vital work will also abate and store an estimated 23,000 tonnes of carbon per year, contributing to the UK's climate change goals.

Environment Minister Thérèse Coffey said: "Peatlands are an iconic aspect of the English landscape which are not only a haven for wildlife but also provide us with clean water and help reduce greenhouse gas emissions."

Countryside Alliance Director of Shooting Adrian Blackmore welcomed the announcement, she said: "Grouse moor managers have been working with DEFRA and Natural England for years to block drains, revegetate bare peat and encourage the growth of sphagnum moss. This new investment is a welcome contribution to the cause of peatland improvement, and shows that the Government appreciates the value of this work to wildlife, water quality and the climate."

## Handicap Challenge winner announced

The winner of this year's Handicap Challenge proved that it's a competition anyone can win.

Luke Taylor has only been shooting for a year, yet walked away with the top prize after scoring 99 ex 100 with a handicap of 13. Mr Taylor, from Chinnor, Oxfordshire, said: "I was over the moon to win. My father started shooting last year, so I thought I'd join him and it began from there."

Shooting a Miroku 38 Trap gun, he beat off other hopefuls in the final held at The Royal Berkshire Shooting School (RBSS) on 8 May to win a new Browning shotgun presented to him by David Stapley from UK distributors ISB Ltd.

The Handicap Challenge is a sporting clay competition hosted by the RBSS in association with *Sporting Gun*, *Shooting Times* and *Shooting Gazette*, among other sponsors. It gives average club shots the chance to compete on a par with high-level club shots. There was a £500 prize for the top gun from each magazine, courtesy of Sunseeker, with Dan Bishop from the Isle of Wight taking the money for *Sporting Gun*.



Dan Bishop claimed top Gun for *Sporting Gun* at the Handicap Challenge

# WIN!

## A pair of tickets to The Game Fair worth £68

*Sporting Gun* has teamed up with The Game Fair to give away five pairs of adult tickets (worth £68 per pair) to one day of the event, which is being held from Friday 27 to Sunday 29 July at Ragley Hall in Warwickshire. The Game Fair, now in its 60th year, is the largest annual outdoor countryside-themed event in the world, attracting up to 120,000 visitors across three days.

To enter, simply answer this question:

Which anniversary does The Game Fair celebrate this year?

- (a) Ruby
- (b) Diamond
- (c) Gold

Go to [shootinguk.co.uk/competitions](http://shootinguk.co.uk/competitions) to enter by 30 June. Terms and conditions apply. See website for details. Good luck.



# Your shout

Send us your pictures, letters and pigeon hauls

## Letter of the month

### Great service

As someone who is generally quick to criticise poor service, I feel it's only right to commend good service, too. I recently applied for the grant of an FAC from Cleveland Police and was quite taken aback when, after all due processes/checks were carried out, my new FAC arrived through the letterbox, accompanied by my



coterminous SGC, just 19 days after posting my application. I would like to offer my sincerest thanks to Cleveland Police Firearms Licensing Unit for this excellent service and to hold it up as an example to other police forces.

**Christian Stüssi, via email**

**Ed** – It's good to hear some police authorities are doing a good job.

### Licensing woes

I have been a firearms licence holder for 15 years and thought I would take up clay-pigeon shooting as a new challenge. I applied for a shotgun certificate, and my application was received by Merseyside Police Firearms Department on 3 October 2017. They cashed my cheque for £79.50 on the 23 October, so I assumed the process was under way. How naive can one be?

After two months I was informed that my application was not even in their system yet and it could take up to six months to complete because they are short staffed. Since then I have had one visit from a firearms inspector to check out my premises and security in March this year. When he saw the date of my application

on the form he was genuinely embarrassed and apologised for the delay. He informed me my background checks were completed in January – which, in his opinion, was pointless because I was already checked out for my FAC.

It is now May 2018, more than seven months into my application and I am still waiting for my shotgun certificate. I have always supported the police for the difficult job they have to do but short staffed or not this is a disgraceful service from Merseyside Police.

**Name withheld**

**Ed** – I'm afraid your story is not unique – many people are waiting up to a year for their certificate.



### Winter's tale

My teenage son and his friends went out late on a very wintery night in his mate's car to get a burger.

Despite my warnings they got stuck in snow over the top of upper Weardale (beautiful grouse moor, by the way). My lad called me to help and I grumpily went out in my Landy to retrieve them and get them home safe. It was 1am at this point, hence grumpy and cursing.

We made his mate's car safe and as I am a bit of a softy I took them the rest of the 15-mile journey in very bad weather to get their fast food.

The driver of the abandoned car could not thank me enough and was extremely relieved to be out of the mess and tried to give me cash as a thank you – I refused, of course.

A couple of weeks later, Mathew (the driver) knocked on the door and handed me this beautiful hunting knife, hand-made by him, including the best leather sheath, as a thank you for the rescue.

For a 20-year-old to hand-craft these stunning knives, mostly self-taught, is fantastic, the knife is the best knife I have got in my hunting kit and is worth every bit of grumpy effort that night.

Mathew is trying to get his own business going and I was so wrong to judge him as a typical fast-food teenager type versus a young true craftsman.

**James Prescott, County Durham**

**Ed** – It's good to hear traditional skills are being kept alive.

### Blast from the past

While clearing out a cupboard I came across this embroidered badge, I think it is from the early 1980s.

**Colin Mitchell, via email**

**Ed** – That's a blast from the past! Thanks for sending it in.



### Letter of the month

The new Fenland Packaway Jacket delivers freedom to shoot, is fully spec'd, with features such as chest-high handwarmer pockets, and packs into its own internal pocket. It offers year-round waterproofing and breathable versatility, its low weight adding to its exceptional performance. RRP £175.

**MUSTO**







Young shot Jamie, 12, shooting clays with his father

## Proud dad

I wrote to the magazine eight years ago with a picture of my son (Jamie), who was not quite three years old at the time. I thought I'd let you know that his interest in the sport has grown and grown. By the time he was six years old he was shooting a .22 Crosman Ratcatcher and became rather good with it.

Age 11, he badgered me to move him up to shotguns. In the end I decided that a 12-bore was the way to go, so in November 2017 I let him have a shot with my Benelli. From that moment he was hooked.

As Christmas was looming I bought him a Franchi Affinity One Compact, a cracking little gun that comes with an adjustable stock, perfect for a growing lad, from John Forsey Guns. Christmas Day 2017 was one I will always remember for the look on his face as he

opened his new gun. However, I didn't want him learning any of my bad habits, so booked him in for tuition at my local club, High Harthay Shooting Ground.

After an hour or so the instructor came into the clubhouse, with Jamie following, and asked if he could have a word. I was worried, but I shouldn't have been. He said that he had done amazingly well and was a total natural at it and he wanted to sign him up. It was a total proud father moment.

I have attached another picture of him that I took last weekend, shooting clays over our family land looking all grown up now he is 12 years old. This letter is to show you his interest has grown massively. He buys *Sporting Gun* each month with his pocket money; we love the magazine so please keep up all the hard work.

**Dan Burton, via email**

## Back to paper cases and fibre wads?

Walk along any beach these days and you will see a lot of plastic waste, including cartridge cases and wads. With the world waking up to this massive problem I think we have to show that we are a responsible group who look after the environment by disposing of our spent cartridges and not dumping them. Maybe it's time for cartridge manufacturers to abandon plastic and revert to paper cases and fibre wads?

When I started shooting there were no plastic cartridges. Spending a lifetime as a gun dealer I have heard all the arguments

on this subject and, in my opinion, paper wins hands down. It is obviously easier and cheaper for manufacturers to use plastic, and plastic cartridges are not affected by damp conditions. The paper case, on the other hand, is best for the environment, and I believe it produces far more even and consistent patterns, with rarely any ejection problems, less recoil, and, as a bonus, the smell they produce is pure nostalgia. There is no need to have heavy loads, plastic wads and 3 or 4 shot to kill a 50yd pheasant, which looks a lot higher than it

really is. A 28g or 30g of No 5 or 6 shot is all that is needed. Then we can all get back to using traditional side-by-sides and see people shooting with some style, rather than looking like they are trying to win a world clay-shooting competition.

**Tony Kennedy, Kennedy Gunmakers, via email**

**Ed** – Thanks for your thoughts on this subject, Tony. It is important to mention that if you are using plastic cartridges, be sure to collect the spent ones so you can dispose of them responsibly.

## HERE TO HELP

The staff on *Sporting Gun* are a friendly bunch who welcome your letters and calls.

**Editor** Matt Clark

**Design director** Dean Usher

**Design editor** Rob Farmer

**Picture editor**  
Max Tremlett

**Staff writer/sub-editor**  
Tom Veitch

**Brand assistant**

Sarah Pratley 01252 555220

**Head of market**

Stuart Duncan 01252 555337

**Senior marketing executive** Hannah Rought

**Group managing director** Andrea Davies

**Group shooting editor**  
Jonathan Young

**Editor-in-chief, country**  
Mark Hedges



**Managing director, country and participative events** Steve Prentice

**Editorial email:**  
[sportinggun@timeinc.com](mailto:sportinggun@timeinc.com)

**Editorial Offices:**  
Sporting Gun, Time Inc. (UK) Ltd, Pinehurst 2, Pinehurst Road, Farnborough, Hampshire GU14 7BF

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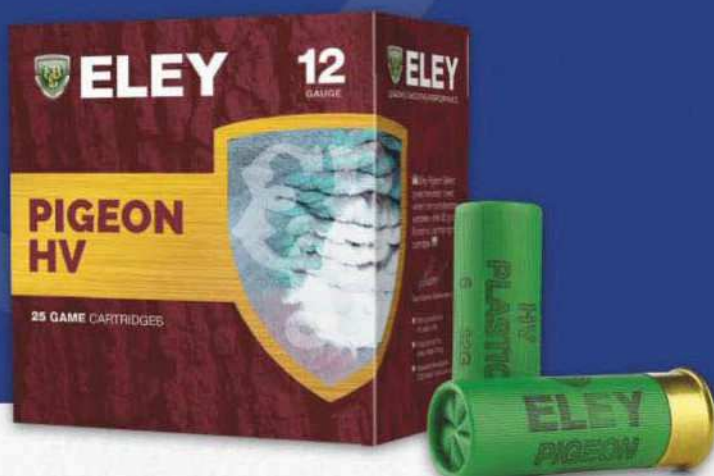
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# WHEN YOU NEED SPEED PIGEON HV

- CSB2 powder for extended range
- New 70mm case for smooth functioning in semi autos
- Available in plastic wad or Eley's exclusive fibre wad



New Eley Pigeon High Velocity now has all the speed you need. With 32 grams of 6 shot in a larger 70mm case, it gives you the edge on the far out pigeons when extended range is needed.



“I first started using Eley cartridges with my Dad when I was 8 years old. As a British cartridge, Eley Hawk are the brand to have in your shotgun.”

Geoff Garrod (Gamekeeper)



# ELEY

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# Maintained lead



After struggling to find an improvement, maintained lead helped him break the speed barrier and finally enjoy his shooting once again

WORDS ROBIN SCOTT PICTURES RICHARD FAULKS, SIMON WHITEHEAD, ANDREW SYDENHAM

came to the conclusion a while ago that shooting instructors can either be godsends or a nightmare. It all depends on which one you pick, pay and put your faith in.

Don't get me wrong, I absolutely believe that anyone new to shooting – unless they have a mentor with impeccable credentials to show them the ropes – should put themselves in the hands of a coach and book a course of lessons from the outset.

## Instruction

First, you learn how to handle a gun safely. Which is vital. Second, you're taught a method of shooting, either "follow through" or, more probably these days, "pull away".

Clay Pigeon Shooting Association (CPSA) and BASC coaches preach the latter. It's a sound shooting technique that teaches the importance of "target acquisition with the muzzles" – smooth gun mount, swing and the correct foot placement required for a

successful shot.

It's a method that works well much of the time on a sporting clay range or skeet layout where you get time to position yourself – and the gun muzzles – before calling for the target. The same, too, with driven gamebirds taking a level line over the gunline. However, what so many coaches don't tell you is that the method doesn't pass muster when kneeling in glutinous mud shooting waterfowl in nearing darkness, or under the moon.

## Compromised

Unless you hear the whistle of their wings, or call, there's precious little warning of where the ducks are coming from, or at

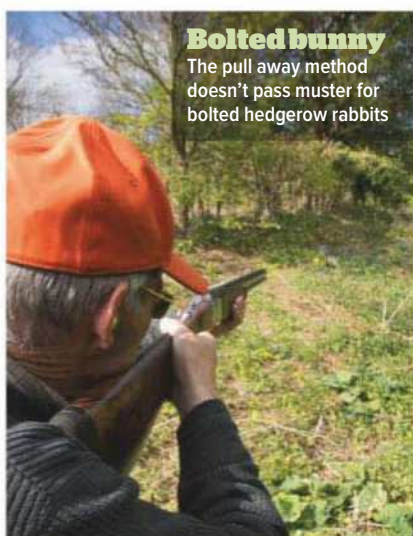
what height. Getting that all-important "line" in such circumstances is, shall we say, somewhat compromised. The same goes for hedgerow rabbits bolted by a ferret, walked-up snipe or woodcock flitting through tree branches. And what of woodpigeons that appear suddenly over the hide from unexpected angles and directions... not those setting their wings and approaching the decoy pattern as the textbook describes? What of a fast, high woodie coming from behind and quartering away from the hide? The window of opportunity for such a bird is a the blink of an eye. No way are you going to get "its line" in the time allowed by coming from behind, or pulling away from

**“To say it was a revelation would be an understatement”**



## Coach

Anyone new to shooting should book a course of lessons from the outset



**Bolted bunny**  
The pull away method doesn't pass muster for bolted hedgerow rabbits

its beak. I've tried both methods countless times and missed – invariably high. There's a knack to it, involving another shooting technique, which quite a number of instructors are often reluctant to talk about – maintained lead.

### One size doesn't fit all

In spite of what I've said, I don't have a problem with the "follow through" and "pull away" stuff espoused by so many coaches. Given a level playing field pupils do progress well – some faster than others. Unfortunately, one size doesn't fit all.

Let me say here and now that I wouldn't want to be a coach in any shape or for – trying to explain how to hit a moving target to thickos like me would drive me round the bend.

That's because both methods rely on speed of swing to break/kill the target or animal. Just how does an instructor get that message across to a pupil? After all, we're each different in terms of reaction times, and hand-to-eye skills. Which means we see lead very differently.

### Churchill method

Depending how quickly a gun is swung on, say, a 40-yard crosser, one man might say it needed 8ft of forward allowance, while someone else sees 8in.

When I started to shoot in my early teens instructors were few and far between but, as luck would have it, one of the doyens of the day was Maj. Ruffer. He wrote books on shooting, had a weekly column in *Shooting Times* and he lived in the next market town to me in what was then the North Riding of Yorkshire. A lovely man who was only too happy giving his time helping youngsters

like me get started.

The Major was an advocate of the "Churchill Method". I won't go into details. Basically you came from behind, mounted the moving gun on the target and squeezed the trigger when the stock came to the shoulder. The momentum of the gun took care of the forward allowance. In other words, it was all down to speed of swing. You weren't aware of giving, or seeing, lead. And to be fair to the Major, it worked well enough for me on overhead driven stuff, but not the rest. I stuck with it for several years, enjoying good days, and bad. But the inconsistency of it all led to deep frustration. Even despair.

So, for a 21st birthday present, I treated myself to a couple of lessons with a coach who introduced me to the world of "follow through". And for a time, what he said helped. I started to think more carefully about forward allowance, and what it actually meant.

However, the improvement in my shooting didn't last long. In fact I was soon back to square one – thrashing those gun muzzles ever faster across the sky, with diminishing success.

### The penny had dropped

Eventually, and by sheer good luck, I bumped into shooting ground owner and coach, John Bidwell, that phenomenally talent Sporting shooter who teaches an altogether different method of shooting – maintained lead.

He watched me shoot at half a dozen

longish crossers from one of his towers and shook his head in disbelief. "Robin, what on earth do you think you're doing?" he asked. "You're missing that bird miles in front – 15ft, at least." And so started the first lesson...

To say it was a revelation would be an understatement. Starting with the gun in front – not behind, or on the target – proved an eye opener in more ways than one. Biddy's method not only slowed me down and got the gun under control, the real revelation was being able to see "proper" lead for the first time. The whole meaning of forward allowance became clear in an instant. The penny had finally dropped. Targets I had struggled to hit for so many years lost their fear factor and my averages improved considerably. The more I shot and started to watch really proficient clay shooters go about their work, the more apparent it became that they, too, worked maintained lead into their repertoire on a wide range of targets. It helped give them an important edge – and still does.

I don't, or can't, do enough shooting to reach such heights as our top shots, but maintained lead helped a hopeless case like me break through the pain of "the speed barrier" and start enjoying my shooting once again.

To anyone stuck in a similar rut and struggling to improve, my advice is give Biddy's "Move, Mount, Shoot" technique a thorough trial. It can't help but bring a new dimension to your forays both in the field, and on the range. **SG**



**Revelation**  
Maintained lead allowed Robin to see proper lead for the first time



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## New gear

Here's some of the latest products on the market



### Harkila Pro Hunter softshell jacket

This jacket would provide a bit of warmth for those cooler summer days and is made from stretchy softshell material, which gives great freedom of movement. It is waterproof and windproof, so will protect you from the elements and has cordura reinforcements in areas of high wear.

Price: £169

Visit: <https://en.harkila.com>

### Percussion Skeet Vest Evo

This lightweight, practical skeet vest is made from breathable mesh, has padded shooting shoulder pads and four large front pockets for cartridges. It also has side adjustment straps to create the perfect fit. Available in black and blue.

Price: £31.99

Visit: [www.balnecroftcountry.co.uk](http://www.balnecroftcountry.co.uk)



### Bisley Active Hearing Protection

Electronic hearing protection that allows and even amplifies non-harmful sound to the ears, while offering 24dB protection at the same time. This comes in particularly useful when listening to an instructor. Other features include slimline, folding cups and independent volume controls on each ear. Complete with their own hard carry case.

Price: £85.95.

Visit: [www.bisley-uk.com](http://www.bisley-uk.com).



### Jack Pyke Moleskin Vest

Made from heavy brushed cotton this shooting vest has contrasting suedette patches which makes it look smart and practical. It also has two large front pockets, ideal for storing cartridges. The vest will look good on a walked-up day, or clayground. Comes in green or brown.

Price: £44.95

Visit: [www.jackpykeshop.co.uk](http://www.jackpykeshop.co.uk)

### Bolle Cobra Shooting Glasses

The essential all-rounder with a panoramic visual field. Wrap-around fit without any visual interference, Cobra offers 180 degree vision and perfect optical quality. Available with yellow, smoke or ESP lenses.

Price from £14.95

Visit: [www.bisley-uk.com](http://www.bisley-uk.com)



### Fausti XF4 Sporter

We saw this new sporter at the IWA show and it is coming to the UK soon. You can choose from 12, 20, 28, or .410 bore, select a semi-beaver tail or

round fore-end and opt for fixed or multi-choke.

Price: £3,870

Visit: [www.stagcountrysports.com](http://www.stagcountrysports.com)



**Jack Pyke Ashcombe Jacket**

This waterproof and breathable jacket has a full-length double zip with press stud storm placket to keep out wind and rain. Two large bellow side pockets are good for storage and there is a zipped radio pocket and two hand-warmer pockets. Available in olive brown and sizes from S to XXXL.  
 Price: £89.95  
 Visit: [www.jackpykeshop.co.uk](http://www.jackpykeshop.co.uk)



**Ligne Verney-Carron Grouse cap**

Adjustable cap cotton and polyester, stretch material for more comfort, with mesh back panels. A very lightweight cap for your summer clay shooting.  
 Price: £11  
 Visit: [www.balnecroftcountry.co.uk](http://www.balnecroftcountry.co.uk)



**Beretta Full Mesh Vest**

A new entry-level mesh vest by Beretta. It is ideal for the warmer months. It has stylish contoured cartridge pockets, ambidextrous shoulder panels, the vest is available in blue or dark olive  
 Price: £64.95  
 Visit: [www.gmk.co.uk](http://www.gmk.co.uk)



**Ridgeline Clay Buster Vest**

This vest is essential to wear for the days you are practising your moving target skills. This smart well-designed vest has large pockets for cartridges, extra fabric on the right shoulder to ensure smooth gun mount and a mesh back to assist cooling. Available in sizes from XS to 5XL  
 Price: £79.99  
 Visit: [www.ridgelineclothing.co.uk](http://www.ridgelineclothing.co.uk)



**Aigle Parcours 2 Signature Boot**

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 Price: from £84.95  
 Visit: [www.gmk.co.uk](http://www.gmk.co.uk)



**Beretta Puull eyeglasses**

Made in association with Rudy Project, this interchangeable lens set comprises; three lenses as standard with an additional five extra lenses available for every kind of light

condition, giving unparalleled fit, comfort and extraordinary optical protection.  
 RSP £249.95  
 Visit: [www.gmk.co.uk](http://www.gmk.co.uk)

# Top cartridges



Back in the 1980s the cartridge choice for the British shooter was huge, the choice may be a little narrower now, but there is still plenty to choose from – some of them are listed here...

WORDS MIKE GEORGE PICTURES PAUL QUAGLIANA

Until November 1973, Eley held a massive share of the British cartridge market. Then there was a huge explosion at their plant at Witton, Birmingham – a blast which put the factory out of production for many months. Other, smaller British companies were able to partially fill the gap by loading cartridges with Eley components, but the incident also opened fresh opportunities to importers.

Even after the Eley plant was back in full production, cartridges were being brought in from Scandinavian countries, Italy, France, the USA, and even the USSR and other Soviet Bloc countries. And British companies were working hard to claim their share of the market too – a market boosted

by the growing popularity of clay shooting.

Looking back to the 1980s, when I was testing cartridges for *Sporting Gun*, I have the impression that cartridge choice for the British shooter was huge, with so many rival companies, both British and Foreign, competing for a share in the UK market. That choice is a little narrower now, but there are still plenty to choose from.

The clay-shooting cartridges listed here are the products of just six companies. From their extensive ranges we have picked just two cartridges – a 28g general competition load, and a light load suitable for shooters who are particularly affected by recoil. Some of this latter group are subsonic, so are also suitable for use on shooting grounds which have problems with excessive noise.

## ONLINE PRICES

Note that all online prices, from Just Cartridges, were accurate at the time of writing, but rises in component prices will have an unpredictable effect. Online prices are usually cheaper than those charged by local gun shops, but you may find local sources more convenient. The choice is yours.

Also note that fibre-wadded cartridges are generally more expensive than their plastic-wadded equivalents.

## Choice

There are still plenty of cartridges to choose from in the UK







## GAMEBORE

### EVO 28GR

Gamebore advertise this medium-priced cartridge as suitable for training and competition. In other words, it seems good for club clays. It is assembled in a 70mm case with an 8mm head, and there's a choice of plastic or fibre wads. Shot sizes are 7.5 and 8. Claimed muzzle velocity is 1,420 feet per second. The cartridge is also available in 21 and 24gr loadings.

**Online price: £214 per 1,000 (plastic wad version).**

### EVO LOW NOISE

This is the lightest-recoiling cartridge in the range. The 28gr of No.8 shot is loaded in a 65mm case with a fibre wad. Muzzle velocity is subsonic, so it's suitable for slightly-built people, youngsters, or on grounds where there is a noise problem. Why's it more expensive than the supersonic load? My guess is it's due to the numbers game – the demand for subsonic cartridges is comparatively small.

**Online price: £236.50 per 1,000.**

## HULL CARTRIDGE

### SPORTING 100

This cartridge is designed specifically for the sporting disciplines. It has a 28gr load of shot with five per cent antimony – which gives lead extra hardness. Plastic and fibre wads are available, and muzzle velocity is 1,400 feet per second. Hull designed the cartridge with the help of 2014 World FITASC champion and top coach Ed Solomons.

**Online price: £232.50 per 1,000.**

### COMP X 21GR

This cartridge has received high praise in the Shooting UK forum section, and it has also been voted Clay Cartridge of the Year. With a muzzle velocity of 1,425 feet per second it is quite fast, but recoil is gentle. Shot sizes 7.5 and 9 are available. Case length is 65mm, with plastic or fibre wads.

**Online price: £182.50 (plastic wad version).**



## ELEY HAWK

### ELEY OLYMPIC BLUES 28GR

I am old enough to remember when the Olympic Blues packet featured a picture of Jackie Stewart who, at the time, was as famous as a trap shooter as he was as a Formula One driver. The standard competition load in those days was 1½oz, and in the 1980s *Sporting Gun* and Eley did much to popularise the use of 1oz (28gr) loads. It was not long before the CPSA made 28gr mandatory for domestic disciplines. "Blues" are now available in 24 and 28gr loadings, with either plastic or Fibre wads. Cases are 70mm, and the claimed muzzle velocity is 1,400 feet per second.

**Online price: £197 per 1,000 (28gr plastic wad version).**

### HUSHPOWER SUBSONIC

This is Eley's subsonic cartridge, and the clay-shooting load of 28gr is assembled in a 67mm case. Shot size is 7.5. Eley claim the muzzle velocity is 1,050 feet per second, so it's going to be quiet as well as very low in recoil.

**Online price: £251 per 1,000.**

# Products

## LYALVALE EXPRESS

### SUPER COMP 28

Lyalvale Express is a comparatively new cartridge loading company, having been formed in the 1980s, yet it has enjoyed some great competition successes and has seen success in the Shooting Industry Awards. Its Super Comp 28 comes in versions suitable for all clay disciplines, with a shot choice of 7, 7.5, 8 and 9. The cartridge is loaded in a 70mm case, and has a muzzle velocity of 1,450 feet per second.

**Online price: £247 per 1,000.**

### SUPER LIGHT 21GR

This is one of three 21gr clay loads made by Lyalvale Express. It is loaded in a 65mm case, with either plastic or fibre wads, and muzzle velocity is 1,400 feet per second. Shot size is 7.5, while 8 and 9 size shot is available in the 24gr version.

**Online price: £179.75 (plastic wad version).**



## RC

### RC2 COMPETITION 24GR

The RC company was formed in Italy in 1971, originally as Romagna Caccia. With the Italian preoccupation with the trap disciplines, it is good to see a clay-shooting cartridge which, in its shot sizes of 7.5, 8 and 9.5, is suitable for trap, sporting and skeet.

The cartridge is loaded in a 70mm case with plastic wads. Muzzle velocity is 1,400 feet per second.

**Online price: £197 per 1,000.**

### ROMAGNOLA 21GR

This is RC's lightest competition load, available in plastic or fibre-wadded versions with size 7.5 shot. Muzzle velocity is 1,425 feet per second.

**Online price: £173 per 1,000 (plastic wad version).**

## FIOCCHI

### TT1 28GR

The Fiocchi company (Fiocchi Munizioni S.p.A.) was founded in 1876, in the town of Lecco close to the spectacular Italian lakes.

It is famous for civilian and military rifle and pistol ammunition as well as for shotgun cartridges for clays and field shooting.

The TT1 28gr load is available in plastic and fibre-wadded versions loaded in 67mm cases. Shot sizes are 7.5, 8 and 9, and muzzle velocity is 1,425 feet per second.

**Online price: £189 (plastic wad version).**

### FBLACK 24GR

This is still a pretty hot load, but is worth trying if you find 28gr a bit too heavy on recoil. Case length is 70mm with 7.5 shot and plastic wads. Muzzle velocity is 1,450 feet per second.

**Online price: £202 per 1,000.**



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# Ladies' choice



Mary Bremner tests some spring/summer clothing

WORDS MARY BREMNER

## Women's Vierzon jersey-lined boot

**Price: £125**

These jersey-lined boots from Le Chameau are ideal for this time of year. Neoprene-lined wellies are often too warm during the summer so you end up with sweaty feet and prone to athlete's foot. Yes, we still need wellies in the summer — this is the UK after all and rain is guaranteed — but you don't need the extra warmth offered by neoprene linings.

The Vierzon jersey-lined boots from Le Chameau tick all the boxes. They don't have the long zip that can be annoying to pull up — how many people do you see wearing them with the zips undone? — and has sometimes proved unreliable. The adjustable waterproof gusset with snap-fastening buckle gives just enough extra width to easily put your foot in, then you just snap the buckle tight around your calf.

I found the buckle a bit fiddly at first and didn't bother doing

it up a few times, but make the effort — the boot is a much better fit, held snugly round your calf. Once you get the knack, it's incredibly quick and easy to use. The soles are thick and shock-absorbing with a great grip. The boots are made to fit the female leg but I'm not sure male and female legs are that different. The rubber is soft and pliable with none of the brittleness of some wellies. I think this will prevent them perishing, which some boots are inclined to do.

I like these boots. They are available in three different colours, including black. I've worn them a lot this spring, walking miles in them and, despite not having a warm lining, they kept my feet warm in pretty cold weather. Snug and comfortable, Le Chameau has once again come up with a winning wellie.

Visit: [www.lechameau.com](http://www.lechameau.com)



## The Rupert shirt

**Price: £80**

I like this shirt from new clothing company Mistamina, the brainchild of Lady Melissa Percy, a keen shooter and countrywoman. The shirt is loose fitting, slightly stretchy and made from a faux suede fabric. This means it's easy to shoot

in as there's no restriction to movement. What's more, the good, heavy quality of the fabric makes it hang beautifully. It is slightly longer at the back so it doesn't ride up, which is excellent. The shirt is stylish with contrasting colours on the

cuffs and elbows adding a certain something. It's not just a shirt you'd wear for shooting, as it isn't obviously a "shooting garment", so you can wear it anywhere. Best of all it doesn't need ironing!

Visit: [www.mistamina.com](http://www.mistamina.com)



### Swazi Shikari coat

**Price: £379.39 (approx)**

Swazi claims to make the world's most durable outdoor clothing. And from the look of this coat I'm not going to disagree, nor does Ray Mears who is one of the UK's stockists. This New Zealand company knows how to make waterproof clothing, but I suppose it should as the country is renowned for being rather damp.

Once you have this coat buttoned up to the extent it does, you are not going to get wet. It is designed by women for women who love to hunt. The fabric is soft to the touch, waterproof, windproof and breathable. The zip is large and completely protected by a double layer of fabric that is held together with heavy-duty press studs. Next to the zip is a large zipped internal pocket, made for a map but perfect for a phone and other essentials. The neck does up high above your chin and again is Velcroed tight by a double layer of fabric. The hood is large with a peaked baseball cap effect so the rain is kept away from your face. The only thing about this is that the stiff peak is inclined to stick in the back of your neck when the hood is down. Position it correctly and it's fine, it just took a bit of fiddling with to get it right.

This jacket is going to keep you warm and dry whatever the weather. It isn't cheap but if you are facing up to the elements, this is the jacket for you. And if it's good enough for Ray Mears, it's good enough for me.

Visit: [www.swazi.co.nz](http://www.swazi.co.nz)

### Schöffel Superlight Ghillie coat

**Price: £329.95**

It's true this jacket really is superlight, incredibly so, which is excellent. Wearing this jacket, it's almost as if you're not wearing one at all and it's really comfortable. But being lightweight doesn't mean that it's not fit for purpose. This is far from the case, the fabric is windproof, waterproof and breathable and it kept me really warm. The outer fabric appears tough and durable and won't snag easily — just what you want from a jacket. I like the deep,

fleece-lined, hand-warmer pockets. They are in just the right position and deep enough to be able to shove your hands down and keep them warm. The large pockets below allow plenty of room for cartridges and there's a press-stud retainer strap to keep them open for easy access to cartridges. Sensibly, there are drainage holes in the pockets too, so they won't fill up with water in rainy conditions.

The cut of the jacket is feminine and allows for plenty of room to swing a gun. The two zipped security pockets are useful and large enough to store keys and phones in. The hood is detachable but easy to fit, which is good. There are storm cuffs and the sleeves have three press studs to make them tighter fitting if necessary. This is a really good shooting jacket, obviously designed by someone who shoots and they've thought of everything. It's not cheap but quality never is. This jacket will last you years, so it's worth the initial investment. Practical, comfortable, machine washable and quick drying, it really is what you want from a jacket. The only thing I don't like about it — and this is probably just me as I have a bit of a thing about it — the fabric is slightly noisy, so don't wear it stalking.

Visit: [www.schoffel.co.uk](http://www.schoffel.co.uk)



### Country shirt in check

**Price: £44.95**

From the Oxford Shirt Company this is a staple for any shooting wardrobe. Made from brushed cotton, it's well cut, long enough to tuck into your breeks and to stay there when swinging a gun, and it looks good. The tailoring is particularly good, a feminine cut but with plenty of room. It washes well, irons easily and doesn't fade.

This shirt will go on for years, and I really like it. My shirt is very much a "country" one but the company makes many different styles, in a huge range of colours and designs, so worth a look for everyday wear as well.

Visit: [www.oxfordshirt.co.uk](http://www.oxfordshirt.co.uk)



# Rabbiting on



Where have all the rabbits gone? While offering an explanation, Richard relates one particularly tricky retrieve

WORDS & PICTURES RICHARD BRIGHAM

It's relatively quiet on the woodpigeon front until harvest comes along, so nearing midsummer I normally rely on other pests to provide a bit of shooting and trapping. There's certainly no shortage of winged and four-legged vermin to deal with, and with the latest crop of youngsters now well-grown, attention turns to rabbits.

The rabbit has provided sport – and part of our staple diet – since I first picked up a gun. Locally, however, there now appears to be something of a shortage. A quiet summer stroll with the .410 around the aptly named “Rabbit Hill” would easily produce a brace or two for the pot, but on a recent outing not a single animal was seen. On closer inspection, most of the old, familiar holes were barred with cobwebs and the surrounding heaps of sandy spoil are beginning to grass over.



**Myxomatosis**  
Still taking its toll

## IMMUNITY

While the varying strains of both RHD and myxomatosis are deadly to rabbits, both wild and domesticated, they are apparently harmless to humans. Other animals, including brown hares, also appear immune.

Travelling farther afield, there are odd pockets of what seem to be healthy animals here and there, but in many places where they are invariably found in late spring, there's absolutely nothing. Though myxomatosis has continued to take its periodic toll, locally I've never known rabbits so scarce, even following the aftermath of a really bad outbreak.

## Deadly virus

This recent shortage seems due to a rather more deadly virus, most commonly known as rabbit haemorrhagic disease (RHD). Although it's been around for a while, I've never seen it before, and, reading up on the facts, RHD appears highly contagious and kills up to 90 per cent of infected animals within 36 hours or so from haemorrhage of the lungs, blood clotting, and necrosis (the rapid dying off of organ

## SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS

When a dead rabbit is found, a common sign of the RHD virus is an obvious bleeding from the nostrils, but killing victims quickly, few outward signs are apparent. Of those that survive, particularly youngsters, most develop a fatal jaundice within a few weeks. The virus spreads quickly, passed on by direct contact with infected animals and their body secretions. It can be transmitted by flies and other insects and also spreads on the air.

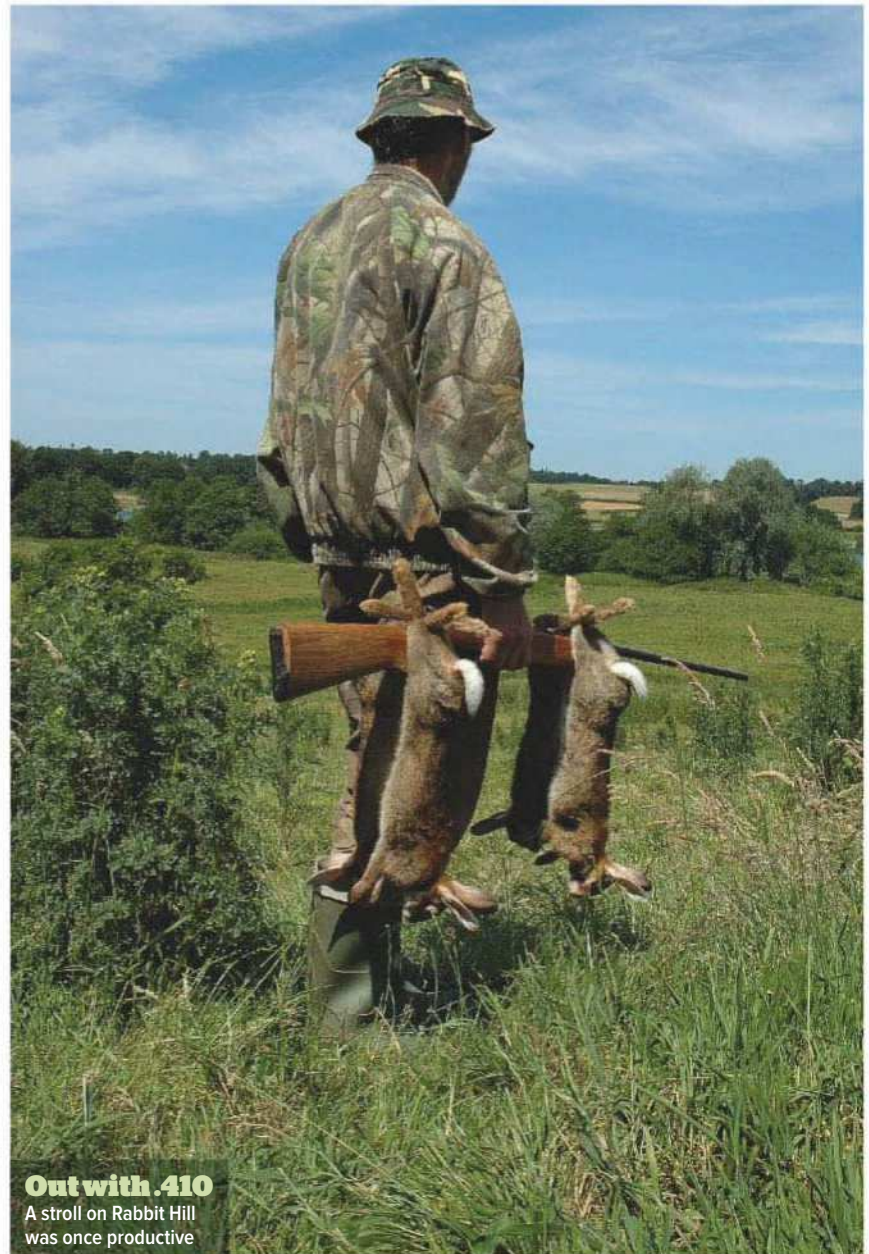
cells). This would certainly explain the sudden disappearance, and as most die underground there are few visible signs other than an obvious lack of rabbits.

Way back before the appearance of RHD – and myxomatosis – the healthy wild rabbit was a regular source of sport and featured heavily in the countryman’s diet, certainly in my younger days. There was a constant demand for them from local game dealers, and much of my spare time was spent stalking the hedgerows and pastures to earn a few bob.

## Park life

The local wildlife park where I worked part-time would take any amount to feed to the wolves, eagles, Scottish wild cats and, in particular, a family group of European lynx. One of the latter – a hand-reared female – wouldn’t eat much else. Luckily, there were plenty of healthy ones within the confines of the park, where they were always causing problems by digging holes on public walkways and nibbling off specimen shrubs planted to enhance the immaculately tended parkland.

There were a few restrictions. Shooting was only possible after the public had gone home and the rabbits emerged from many small warrens around the park to graze the neatly laundered acres. With so much resident wildlife distributed around



**Out with .410**  
A stroll on Rabbit Hill was once productive

the park, everything had to be quietly and discreetly carried out to minimise disturbance. There were also a few off-limits areas, notably near the brown bear enclosure and flamingo pen.

This was well before the moderated .410 was invented, but my bolt-action, seven-shot repeater did the job efficiently and reasonably quietly with light-load cartridges, particularly while mowing the park grass in the evenings. Largely

ignored, it was often possible to pop off several from the tractor as I drove past within range. A stroll around the park afterwards could produce several more, but, eventually, numbers fell and survivors became far more wary, despite my varying approach routes.

## Head of the herd

Eventually, few remained, apart from those living in the banks surrounding the bison enclosure. So far I hadn’t bothered with them, as anything shot inside the pen would prove rather dangerous to collect. A shade taller than its American cousin, and with slightly bigger horns, the European bison is an impressive beast, and head of this small herd was a huge old bull, »

**“Way back, the healthy wild rabbit featured heavily in the countryman’s diet”**

## “He could put on a surprising turn of speed when he wanted”

built like the proverbial brick outhouse and weighing the best part of a ton. Everything about him was impressive, including his massive head, huge mane, and the way he made the ground shake whenever he broke into anything more than a gentle trot. Retrieving dead rabbits from his domain was not to be taken lightly.

Popping them off was a doddle. The bison pen was ideal for stalking, bordered by a tall bank running along two sides, where a reassuringly sturdy fence was placed in a sunken ha-ha along the inside. The old bull was the only real drawback. Despite a ponderous appearance, he could put on a surprising turn of speed when he wanted to. I needed to be careful.

### Braving the bison pen

Deciding to give it a try, after putting the tractor away it was encouraging to see several bunnies feeding along the bottom edge of the bison field. Using the steep bank as cover, I crept within range of



**Bull alert**  
A European bison weighing in at a ton

the first, crawling up the steep bank and poking the gun over the top to line it up. It rolled over stone dead at the tiny pop of the .410, sending the rest scampering towards their holes in the bank. Luckily, one paused just long enough for me to click in another cartridge and drop it right at the mouth of its burrow.

Looking up, the bison were still feeding peacefully in the centre of the field, apart from the old bull, who raised his head to stare intently for a while before dropping it again to continue munching. Another rabbit

was feeding 50 yards farther on, seemingly unaware of the shots. Marking the spot, I slid quietly back down the bank and crept within range, climbed up the bank and slid the barrel over the top before gently raising myself into position for a shot.

It was quite a shock to find myself staring directly into the old bull's eyes. He had guessed what I was doing, crossed the pen without a sound and now stood glaring at me along the barrel from only a few feet away, the front bead positioned almost centrally between his eyes.

There was now the problem of retrieving the rabbits. Sliding quietly back down the bank, I decided to try elsewhere, giving us both time to settle down before returning later. The bison were well away by now, but climbing down the mesh on the inside and tiptoeing out to where the farthest lay, my eyes were permanently glued to the old bull in case he showed the slightest sign of charging. Grabbing it quickly, I ran back, chucked both rabbits over the fence and followed them as fast as I could. Safely on the other side, the old bull hadn't moved. He just stood quietly watching, chewing the cud, but with a knowing look.

I cleared up most of the rabbits in the bison pen over the next few weeks, always taking care to drop them close to the fence, but never lost that vulnerable feeling whenever I sneaked over the fence to retrieve them. Never before had picking-up caused such an adrenalin rush. **SG**



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# Pick a pattern



What's the best way to arrange decoys and where should Guns put them? Peter suggests how to go about attracting woodpigeons

WORDS PETER THEOBALD PICTURES RICHARD FAULKES

**T**he question I am asked most frequently is probably: "What shape of decoy pattern do you use?" The asker is often disappointed when I reply that pigeons do not feed in any kind of pattern, so it is pointless trying to create one.

As decoyers, our sole objective in putting out decoys is to get pigeons within 30 yards of our hides – the shape of any layout having no relevance as to whether we can achieve this. Far more important is whether

the pattern is in the right field – or even on the right part of the field. Admittedly, we can tweak the layout so that pigeons present themselves in a manner by which they are easy to despatch, but no amount of tweaking will overcome the necessity of the layout being in the right place.

## Wrong place

There are many reasons why woodies may be reluctant to commit to your pattern, but almost never is it because it's the wrong

shape. The most common reason is that it is simply in the wrong place.

When pigeons arrive at a field to feed they will usually head to a section where they expect to see their pals feeding. Although you may be able to persuade them to visit the part where you have chosen to set up, they will mostly ignore you and head to their chosen spot. If the birds can see your layout but are ignoring it, it can only mean one thing – you are in the wrong

## Random

Stand in one spot, throw decoys in all directions and leave them where they land





place. No amount of fiddling with the pattern will change that fact.

The next most common reason for birds not responding well is that they have been harassed too often, either by fellow decoys or a farmer's scaring regimes, such as gas guns and rockets. There is no commercial decoy that can compare to a live pigeon coming in to land with its chums, so when populations are chivvied constantly they will only respond to real birds coming in to land. Bearing in mind this could be several hundred fluttering and pecking about, we simply cannot compete with that.

## In a spin

The third reason for non-compliance to our decoys is over exposure to spinning machines, particularly if they have been shot at and missed while coming near one. While I do not believe a pigeon has a particularly long memory, there is no doubt that they will eventually associate a whirly with danger, once more reinforcing my belief that pattern shape will not overcome that problem.

So, you are now asking – how do I set my decoys for the best results? Having established the part of the field the birds would head for, even if I were not there, I try to put them out as randomly as possible. This is not as easy as it sounds because humans will subconsciously try to create a “pattern”, especially as most books on the subject insist it is essential for success. I simply stand in one spot and throw the decoys in all directions, making sure the bulk of them are no more than 25 yards from the hide. There will be some much closer and a few farther out. Some will be almost touching each other and there will be large gaps here and there to give room for incoming birds.

Wind direction is of no consequence, except that ideally you want it on your back

**“I will have a pick-up once I have 15 to 20 birds down to add them to a layout”**



to give you the best chance of scoring doubles – the quickest way of building a large bag. Having said that, most of our bumper days have been made when the wind is smack in our faces, probably because pigeons arriving downwind do not hear the shooting and assume the bird you have just shot is one of its mates joining the feast. I will change things slightly according to the time of year and the crop I am shooting over.

On winter rape, I will pack the decoys closer as the birds will just stand in one spot to eat the leaves. On drillings, however, I will spread them much wider, expecting the pigeons to be highly mobile looking for the odd spilt grain.

All being well, I can now sit back and let the day unfold. If I have done my homework correctly, arriving at the optimum time of day, the wait should be a short one. The first few birds will tell me if they are happy with the whirly, and whether I need to move it to a different location or take it in and replace it with a flapper. If it goes to plan, I will usually have a pick-up once I have 15 to 20 birds down to add them to the layout. There is a theory that pigeons can see in the ultraviolet

spectrum, but I believe this only applies to warm birds, so freshly shot birds are likely to be more effective than ones you have taken from the freezer. It can't be proven conclusively, but it makes me feel better to have fresh birds among the artificial ones. Take care not to fill the gaps you created randomly at the start of the day.

## Let the dead lie

Next, the most controversial part of our regime, leave the shot birds where they fall – upside down, back to front, whatever. You disrupt the flightline far more by constantly leaving the hide to collect dead birds than by leaving them where they fall – wounded birds are simply shot again on the ground. The only time we leave the hide now is when there are so many dead birds on the outer regions of the layout that fresh birds are not coming within range. These are collected as quickly as possible and deposited behind the hide.

Most folk do not believe me when I say we can have as many as 200 dead birds lying where they have fallen and fresh birds are still committing like lambs. Give it a try, you might be surprised at just how well it works. **SG**

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# Shooting Answers

## GOT A QUESTION?

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Sporting Gun, Time Inc (UK)  
Ltd, Pinehurst 2, Pinehurst  
Road, Farnborough,  
Hampshire GU14 7BF



### VERMIN

## Speed is the key

**Q** Any tips on how to shoot jackdaws from a large group? My friends and I tend to hit a lot of fresh air whenever a large group decoys. We shoot on the ground from the same hide for pest control and sport and really want to make the most of the situations.

**A** **Tom says:** The dreaded summer months when the young crows gang up can be a nightmare when it comes to trying to shoot a large bag. It is fair to say that the best days are when you can make the most of the opportunities and pick off right-and-lefts, or triples, out of small

groups or odd birds. This sometimes isn't possible and the only other option is to get stuck in. I try my best to avoid educating large bunches, but there are times where you can't just sit back and let them go. Speed is the key. I recently posted a video showing just how fast you can reload and re-engage when the opportunity arises. The trick is to keep your cool, have fresh ammunition handy and pick your shots carefully. I will let some birds commit and start on some of the harder targets to allow me hopefully to make the most of the situation. Have a look at the video, visit [www.sykesmedia.co.uk](http://www.sykesmedia.co.uk)

### PIGEONS

## Stick to flocked decoys

**Q** I have some old decoys, which are not flocked. They are a bit worn and I wondered if it was worth re-painting them – or do you think flocked decoys are better?

**A** **Peter says:** In the good old days, I used to touch up the paintwork on all my decoys every year, paying particular attention to the white markings on the neck and wings. But since the

introduction of flocking, this is largely unnecessary. There is no doubt that flocked decoys shine less than ordinary ones in both wet and sunny conditions, and are well worth the extra expense.

## Meet the team

### GUNDOGS

#### GRAHAM WATKINS



A professional gundog trainer for more than 35 years, he runs Gamegoer Gundogs.

### VETERINARY

#### NEIL MCINTOSH



A practising vet in Scotland.

### TUITION

#### TONY BRACCI



Bisley Shooting Ground's deputy shooting manager and master gunfitter

### LEGAL

#### DAVID FROST



Author of *Sporting Shooting and the Law*.

### TECHNICAL

#### MIKE GEORGE



Engineering author with a deep love of gunmaking.

### PIGEONS

#### PETER THEOBALD



Author of *Woodpigeon: The Ultimate Quarry*.

### ANTIQUES

#### ROBERT MORGAN



Arms and armour valuer at Holts Auctioneers.

### RABBITS

#### ED COOK



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### PEST CONTROL & WILDFOWLING

#### TOM SYKES



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## RABBITS

### Preferred pellet?

**Q** I've noticed in previous articles that you sometimes shoot rabbits with an air rifle. What's your preferred pellet calibre for rabbits and why?

**A** **Ed says:** I've never owned an airgun other than in the calibre of .22, so I can say with confidence a .22. Most of the folk I shoot with use a .22 calibre airgun as well,

though they have probably used all sorts.

I use two different airguns, my Air Arms S410, which is on my firearms certificate, and my Weihrauch HW77, which was bought for me when I was nine years old. I have despatched a lot of rabbits with both, as well as a few other species along the way.

My understanding is that a .22 has a good "smacking power"

when compared to the larger and slower .25 calibre or the fast but smaller pellet thrown by a .177 round. The .22 can thus be deemed a happy medium and is easily available for the would-be hunter.

At the end of the day, if you have a decent set-up and scope, which is backed up by skill and accuracy, you should find success with most forms of shooting.

## VETERINARY

### To neuter or not

**Q** I am considering having my springer pup neutered before her first season because I also have an adult male dog. A breeder told me she will become incontinent if I do. I am in a bit of a quandary.

**A** **Neil says:** I know the feeling! A 2013 study of more than 500 dogs found that the overall incidence of incontinence was around five per cent but there was no correlation between the age at the time of neutering and development of the disorder. Larger dogs (15kg plus) were seven times more likely to be affected. The theory is that oestrogen, the female hormone produced in the ovaries, contributes to urethral tone and the maintenance of urinary incontinence.

Once the ovaries are removed, oestrogen wanes and about one in 20 dogs will suffer from urethral sphincter mechanism incompetence (let's call it USMI). It is relatively simple to treat USMI using either estriol tablets daily (an oestrogen replacement) or phenylpropanolamine liquid (which increases urethral tone) but who really wants to have to do that.

Balanced against this, however, has to be the risk of unwanted pregnancy, driving your male dog up the wall, an increased incidence in later life of mammary tumours and pyometra, and the general inconvenience of having a working bitch in season. It is worthy of note that giant dog breeds should not be neutered early because this can be associated with a higher risk of developing osteosarcoma.

## LEGAL

### Nuisance deer

**Q** We have lots of muntjac on our shoot and they are a bit of a nuisance. Local gardeners, for example, complain that they eat their vegetables. We have a rule that permits the shooting of ground game on certain shoot days. So would it be all right to shoot

a muntjac if it comes through the line?

**A** **David says:** Certainly not! The deer legislation is most specific about which calibres can be used for shooting deer. Ordinarily, you are expected to use a rifle. In very limited

circumstances a 12-bore loaded with a solid slug of at least 350 grains (23g) or a cartridge with AAA shot may be used but only on the ground where the damage is taking place. It does not sound as if your situation meets the necessary criteria for using a shotgun.




Deer legislation is very specific about what calibres can be used

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This shot magpie had mysterious foot growths



**VETERINARY**

## Magpie mystery

**Q** I took a couple of images of the feet of a magpie I shot on my local shoot in Surrey. I presented the photos for lunchtime discussion during the Bavarian Gentlemen Sporting Club simo day. None of the members had a clue as to the cause of the growths, though much heated speculation entailed despite the soaring temperatures and red-hot barrels. I was hoping you

could clear up the mystery of the weird foot growths.

**A** Neil says: I think this is a condition we call “Bumblefoot”, which is caused by infection with a bacterium, *Staphylococcus aureus*. While it is unusual to find it in wild birds, we see it too often in caged birds that are kept in unhygienic conditions, essentially because perches become contaminated and minor wounds in the feet allow

the bugs to get in. Frequently, owners do not realise that round perches can cause sores and chaffing and need to be varied. It can be healthier to use fallen branches and change them regularly. Imagine if you wore the same socks for weeks on end. It is likely this magpie met the infection when doing his rounds and the end result is plain to see. You probably did him a favour as it is painful and he’d have been spreading bugs wherever he landed.

**LEGAL**

## Buying a new cabinet

**Q** I am currently using a two-gun breakdown cabinet due to space, but I want to purchase a semi-auto shotgun. This means purchasing a new, full-length cabinet and relocating it to a new position within the house. Do I need to inform the police before I install it and will they want to check it is installed correctly before I purchase the gun?

**A** David says: Responsibility for the security of your guns lies firmly with you and is a condition in all certificates. You do not need to inform the police if you change your security arrangements, but you must ensure that the new arrangements are at least as good as the old. *Sporting Shooting and the Law*, which is obtainable from the NGO (shop.nationalgamekeepers.org.uk) has full details of the specifications that a new gun cabinet should meet.

**TUITION**

## Stop stopping

**Q** How do I stop myself stopping the gun when I shoot?

**A** Tony says: Stopping the gun as you shoot can be down to a number of factors. Let’s assume that the gun fits, as an incorrectly fitted gun can cause all sorts of problems – especially to your swing. Check where your feet are pointing. If they are pointing to where the target is coming out rather than where you are going to shoot, your body will tighten as you twist yourself to a standstill. Make sure you are looking at the target – if you look at the gun to make sure it is in the right place it’s sure to stop as you check. Keep your eyes locked onto

the moving target and your barrels are sure to follow. Pulling the trigger is not the end of your shot – follow-through is important, too. Try this exercise at home: set up three markers in a straight line on a wall, about a foot apart (let us call them A, B and C); with a set of snap caps loaded but an otherwise safe gun, mount onto mark A; with a smooth and controlled swing move towards mark C, pulling the trigger as you pass mark B. You should see the swing continue smoothly as you release the shot – any stopping or dipping is not good. Keep doing this until you can execute it perfectly, it doesn’t cost anything and will transfer to your shooting in no time.

**TECHNICAL**

## Don’t try this at home

**Q** I understand that minor adjustments to a stock’s cast and comb height can be made by bending the wood while heated linseed oil is poured over it. Can I do this myself?

**A** Mike says: Another way is to use a heat gun, but I certainly wouldn’t try either method. It is a skilled operation, not always effective, and the wood can revert to its original shape after a while.

The best course of action would be to take the gun to a stocker. It may be the best way to achieve what you want.

**GUNDOGS**

**By my side**

**Q** Does it matter which side I teach my Labrador to walk to heel?

**A** **Graham says:** In truth, it doesn't matter, but there is a factor that may well determine which side you decide to use. Traditionally, we teach our gundogs to walk to heel on the left-hand side and this is because the majority of us are right-handed and when shooting with our dogs we carry our gun in the right hand – of course, if you are left-handed you would train the dog to walk on the right.



Traditionally we teach our dog to walk to heel on the other side to your gun

**TECHNICAL**

**Into the deep**

**Q** On the last fowling trip of the winter I waded into water deeper than I thought, and it took weeks to fully dry the boots. Is there a trick to it?

**A** **Mike says:** I can't remember how many times I have filled my waders with water while trout and salmon fishing, but it is a lot. I hang them up, upside-down, first to allow as much of the remaining water as possible to drip out. Next, I stuff them with absorbent newspaper. In this respect, any absorbent paper will do. Keep changing it until it comes out dry.

**ANTIQUES**

**What's the story?**

**Q** I have a 12-bore, double-barrelled Frederick Williams fowling shotgun (No.133356) with 30in barrels and 3in chambers. Do you know when it was made or anything about the maker?

**A** **Robert says:** The original firm of Frederick Williams was established in 1873 at 47 1/2 Whittall Street, moving in about 1877 to 34 Bath Street. The firm appears to have closed at the end of 1886. Frederick William Williams (believed to be related but relationship unknown) established his business in 1881 at 49-50 Weaman Street, Birmingham. Between 1886 and 1890 he moved to 32-33 Weaman Street, which then became known as the Birmingham Gun Works. Between about 1913 and 1917 the name of the firm changed to Frederick Williams, and then to Frederick Williams (Gunmakers) Ltd. Prior to adopting the limited liability title, the firm claimed a London address, possibly Frederick Williams of 3 Broad Street Station, Liverpool Street. The firm closed in 1947. Without pictures of the proof marks it is impossible to be more precise, but with the high serial number I would guess it is a 1930s piece. Unfortunately, to my best knowledge, accurate serial number records do not exist.

**VERMIN**

**Numbers game**

**Q** Do you think it makes a difference when choosing to buy flocked or unflocked decoys? Flocked crow decoys seem to be a lot more expensive and I have noticed that you don't seem to use them.

**A** **Tom says:** There can be a price difference between flocked and unflocked decoys. Personally, I have a set of non-flocked with a flocked one in among them, which I acquired randomly. There is a difference when they are out in the field. The one flocked decoy does appear to be jet black and stand out better than the non-flocked. Having said that, my shooting diary and films will prove that the non-flocked decoys do a pretty good job at pulling birds in range. If I was to decide between flocked or buying more decoys, I would go for a numbers game and buy more for my money. If budget wasn't an issue, then I suppose flocked are the way forward.



Tom goes for the numbers game when it comes to decoys

**TECHNICAL**

**See your true colours**

**Q** What's the best colour for clay-shooting spectacles?

**A** **Mike says:** Oh, deep embarrassment! Some years ago I spent a lot of *Sporting Gun's* money on acquiring lenses in all colours. I then hired a photographer and scrounged the use of half-a-dozen stands with different backgrounds. After the photographer had shot many rolls of film, I approached six shooters and asked them to try the specs – I got four different answers. The next day I saw the results from the lab, and they made no sense at all. I consulted an optician friend, who told me that the pigments in colour film react to colour in a different way to the human eye. He also said different people are likely to react differently to colour. So, I'm afraid, you'll have to try the different colours for yourself.



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**GUNDOGS**

# Over and out

**Q** I plan to shoot over my spaniel this coming season. Although his training is coming on well, I have been advised that it would be useful to train him to get “through” an obstacle as well as over. Is this really necessary?

**A** **Graham says:** I like to train my shooting dogs to get “over” an obstacle as well as “through” it. This is a useful skill, especially if you need to get your dog to the other side of a hedge to pick a retrieve. I start to train this by using an open hedge, so the dog can see the dummy land and I send the dog from quite close to the hedge. As the dog’s confidence grows I gradually extend the distance on my side of the hedge. Eventually, I will use a thicker section of hedge, but take this step slowly as you do not want to overface the dog and lose its confidence.



Graham trains his dogs to get over and through an obstacle

**RABBITS**

# On your travels

**Q** You seem to travel all over the country with your job. What is the most unusual place that you have had to clear rabbits from?

**A** **Ed says:** I do have to stand back sometimes and remember that I’m lucky to be doing what I do as a job. I do get to see many different parts of the UK – often places I wouldn’t get to see were it not for my choice of work. I have worked in some areas where you wouldn’t think rabbits could

be an issue. I’ve removed them from power plants, secure unit hospitals, garden centres and so on. In terms of unusual, certain tourist attractions are probably the most random and it’s always a bit surreal working at night when they are empty. I often think to myself, “I never thought I would be doing this 18 years ago.”

My favourite job is without a doubt the Isle of Canna project – a heap of rabbits, remote location and unusual logistics to resolve.



The Isle of Canna is Ed’s favourite location to work

**TUITION**

## Going away

**Q** I’m having trouble with going-away targets. Can you help?

**A** **Tony says:** This target is the mainstay of any clay shoot or rough shooter. As the target and shot are travelling in the same direction, you can shoot straight at it. This is where the issues become apparent. We find a high percentage of shots don’t realise a shotgun will shoot high. Keep the target in sight. Start under the target, push up and shoot as you connect with it then follow through. If you stop as you shoot the shot will fall behind. Another common fault is to let your head float above the gun; this will result in a miss high. Keep your head down, push positively to the target, shoot as you connect and follow through. If this does not result in a smashed clay then book a shooting lesson.

**TUITION**

## Build a picture

**Q** How can I make sure my scores get better over the summer?

**A** **Tony says:** The only way to improve is to identify issues that are letting you down. Every time you shoot make a note of things that need to improve. Carry a notebook and pen to take note while it is fresh in your mind. Although your phone will be off you can still use the camera to take a picture of the stand or your scorecard before you hand it in. Your notes don’t need to be about the targets. Did you find it hard to shoot a stand because it was bright? Did you keep dropping the last target when you were on for a straight? Did you shoot better when you didn’t have a big fry-up before hand? Build up a picture of where you could be going wrong and work your way through them or visit a good instructor.

## PIGEONS

**Q** You have written about pigeon decoy patterns being unimportant. Should I still be using the traditional horseshoe pattern with the decoys facing into the wind or do you have another recommendation?

**A** Peter says: The simple fact remains that pigeons do not feed in any kind of pattern. As decoyers, we try to bring birds as close to the hide to make the shooting as easy as possible. Pigeons do not react to the shape of a

layout, rather they are looking for their mates on a part of the field where they expect to see them. I like to set the decoys as randomly as possible. All I want is to get them within 30yd of the hide. **Peter has covered this issue on page 26.**



Peter sets his decoys as randomly as possible

## TECHNICAL

### Non-lead options

**Q** I have just acquired a 28-bore, but I cannot find any steel or other non-toxic shot for my field shooting. Can you help?

**A** Mike says: After receiving this query I spent half the morning looking for any non-toxic 28-bore game cartridges on sale in the UK and, like this gentleman, I could not find any. All I can say is that the situation is typical of the British cartridge business. Cartridge manufacturers will not make anything that isn't going to sell in millions. And even if they can be persuaded to do a small run, shops will not stock them because the demand is perceived to be too small.

That said, it does seem crazy that you can shoot a pheasant or partridge with a 28-bore lead load as long as the shot is not going to fall on wet land, but you can't shoot a duck, or a game bird, near a river, lake or bog at all.

It reminds me of a situation I was in some years ago, when I persuaded one UK cartridge company to make me an experimental batch of 12-bore 24g game cartridges loaded with No 6 lead shot. They really were good, for pheasants and pigeons. But when I asked if they were likely to be offered to the general public, I was told: "No, we have asked all of our gunshop customers and nobody wants to stock game cartridges as light as that."

Before the UK cartridge business gets cross with me, I do understand the mathematics of scale, so I suppose the only thing this shooter can do is to buy the kit and load his own.

## PIGEONS

### Worth a try

**Q** Some of my mates recommend rubbing invisible marker pens (the sort that can be read by UV light) over my unflocked decoys because it makes them look more realistic to woodies. I am told this is due to pigeons being able to see in the UV light spectrum. Is this true?

**A** Peter says: It's certainly feasible that pigeons can see in the UV spectrum, though it is difficult to prove. There is no harm in experimenting to see if your decoys are more effective. I'd be interested to hear if anyone has tried it.

## VERMIN

### Dead spread

**Q** When it comes to crow decoying, I have been told that using dead birds can be really effective in the decoy spread. Do you use dead birds? If so, do you bring in your decoys and replace them with the shot birds?

**A** Tom says: I normally start the day with artificial decoys, be it full bodies or rags. As the day goes on I will add to this pattern with dead birds. However, I don't usually bring in the existing decoys. This is because I don't like to disturb approaching birds. I find that if the crows are

committing well then there isn't a need to fix things. Dead birds do seem to add to the pattern, even if they are left where they land. I don't normally have issues with birds spooking due to dead birds being upside down or in odd positions, though I'll alter the pattern if I do have an issue. Occasionally, I have had to recreate a hole in the pattern when there are too many fallen birds in the "Kill Zone" as it prevents others from decoying well. I have also had days when I need to pick up the birds that were shot at distance as others have committed to them too far out.

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# Style or technique?



In 150 years of shotgun coaching, nothing seems to be new, but everything develops

WORDS MALCOLM PLANT

PICTURES GETTY / REX / RICHARD FAULKES

In *How to Shoot*, published in 1927, gunmaker Robert Churchill reports that he has already adopted the use of the cine camera for the diagnosis of faults in shooting technique.

Robert was a great promoter of his company's guns and he was certainly not

going to let a shooter with poor technique get away with blaming his gun-fitting ability.

Video analysis remains today an excellent tool to allow a client to see the possibilities for improvement in technique, or to demonstrate the perfect stance or gun-mount, for example.

Churchill also used the phrase "muscle memory" in the same book, when discussing the repetitive practice of foot placement, gun-mount or upper body movement, to achieve that instinctive, optimum, performance shown by Olympic Skeet medal winners. I used to think muscle memory was a modern coaching phrase but no, it is a century old.

### Gunmakers and coaching

Early shotgun coaching was frequently associated with a visit to the gunmaker's

### Muscle memory

Olympic Shots practise their technique until it becomes second nature



WOULD YOU DRIVE WITH AN UNINSURED DRIVER?

WOULD YOU SHOOT WITH AN UNINSURED SHOOTER?

# “Churchill advocated weight on the back foot; Percy Stanbury the front”

own shooting ground. The tuition was a useful commercial selling point for shotguns. It certainly puts a bit of pressure on the coach, when the client has just shelled out a load of dosh and can't hit a barn door.

Not surprisingly, the elite coaching grounds were around London. Churchill's ground was at Crayford, Purdey's at Ruislip, Boss's at Waltham Abbey, Holland & Holland's at Northwood; Westley Richards' at Barnet Gate; if the M25 had existed, you could tootle around and go to them all.

All of this competition between the top gunmakers had started well before the end of the Victorian age, in the mid to late 1800s. Charles Lancaster's company had mastered the art of the “buy the gun and get the tuition” offer and really got a promotional bonanza when Annie Oakley, from Bill Cody's Wild West Show, bought two matched pairs of side-by-sides and “had some tuition”.

But I have to wonder who was teaching whom. Annie was certainly very pleased with her gun purchases and wrote to Lancaster to say so. But perhaps she had previously been more accomplished as a rifle shot, rather than a shotgun expert.

Competitive live pigeon shooting, out of traps, was used as an arena for shotgun advertisement and promotion, with large sums of money being offered as prizes. Wagers on the outcomes were placed by the spectator enthusiasts and also the competitors themselves; gunmakers, top shooters, shooting grounds and cartridge

producers all vied with each other for publicity, very much as happens in many other modern sports today.

From the 1920s pigeon shooting from bird traps was banned in the UK.

## Variations

The shooting techniques, which were recommended by different gunmakers and shooting coaches, varied in some respects. Though the basic themes of safety, establishing eye dominance, gun-fit, handling and gun-mount were all covered, variations in stance and foot movement, and also in the explanation of forward allowance (or lead) and how to accomplish it, can be seen in books written by the great pundits of the time.



**Star pupil**  
Annie Oakley had some tuition at Charles Lancaster



## Selling shotguns with style

Pigeon shooting was used to promote shotguns. Top: weight on the back foot for overhead shots

For example, Robert Churchill always advocated weight on the back foot for overhead shots, as shown in his book *Game Shooting*, published in 1955, whereas Percy Stanbury was very much in favour of the front foot, as shown in his book *Shotgun Marksmanship*, co-authored with G. L. Carlisle and published in 1962.

These differences are probably best considered as differences in style, rather than real technique. Balancing essentially on one leg would be considered by modern coaches a rather unstable foot position, particularly on uneven or hilly ground in game shooting.

While there is no doubt that the historic coaches knew precisely what was required in the application of forward allowance, to move the gun in front of a crossing target, the terminology of exactly what to do with the gun was actually quite variable in the books that they wrote. ➤

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For example, Percy Stanbury writes “put your muzzles on the target... the muzzle moves up from behind”. The first implies pointing straight at the target, the second implies swinging through the target. As we will see shortly, more modern coaching terminology tries to communicate absolutely precisely what should happen.

## Modern coaching

Up to the 1960s, each shotgun coach and shooting ground were essentially using their own training techniques, recommendations and shooting tips. There was no unified process established for the introduction of a newcomer, for the development of a competent shooter or for remedial work for an experienced clay or game shooter.

Enter Peter Page, who had worked at cartridge manufacturer Eley, and subsequently became director of the Clay Pigeon Shooting Association (CPSA). Eley had published a booklet on the construction and layout of clay shooting ranges such as skeet and down-the-line, as a promotional aid to encourage clay shooting and to sell more cartridges into the sport.

Clay shooting enthusiasts in the CPSA, Richard van Off, John Donne and John Saint decided to conduct a survey of how current coaching experts were teaching

### **Dr Malcolm Plant is chairman of the Institute of Clay Shooting Instructors and a Clay Pigeon Shooting Association senior coach.**

The Institute of Clay Shooting Instructors was formed in the 1980s to provide qualified coaches with opportunities for further professional development, by the provision of seminars, workshops, practical activities and educational visits. ICSI coaches can be found at [www.ICSI.org.uk](http://www.ICSI.org.uk)



shotgun shooting. John Saint was despatched around the country.

Many of the famous names were contacted. Joe Wheeler, the famous Sporting clays Shot, Olympic competitor and proprietor of Grantham Shooting School; Clarrie Wilson, who coached at Little Mill Shooting Ground in the Peak District; and Percy Stanbury from West London Shooting School; and many more.

Most of the educational analysis and design work was done by a gentleman

named Eric Blackadder at Loughborough Sports College, now Loughborough University. A sailing instructor, Terry Mack, from the Sports Council was also involved. Quite a comprehensive design team for the course.

From very early in the course development, precision in what the coach should be verbally and physically communicating was emphasised, to make everything as easy as possible for the client to understand what was needed.

Clarrie Wilson and Chris Craddock, author of *A Manual of Clay Shooting*, published in 1983, were the two principal tutors on the early courses. The first course was run in 1970.

Today the CPSA runs a whole series of training courses covering shotgun shooting — nearly 50 years of the development of instructors and coaches.

## Professional development

The Institute of Clay Shooting Instructors (ICSI) offers further professional development training and activities for qualified coaches.

I have to thank our president, Mike Alldis, who was involved in the early CPSA courses, for this historic snapshot (*top*). Mike went on to help BASC in the development of its shotgun courses. **SG**





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## B525 ULTRA XS PRO ADJUSTABLE



This latest addition to Browning's Ultra XS range looks set to delight sporting shooters

WORDS DAVID TURNER PICTURES ANDREW SYDENHAM

**T**he recent addition of the Ultra XS Pro Adjustable to Browning's range is certain to delight the dedicated clay shooter, whether a devotee of Sporting, FITASC or Trap disciplines. All in all, it's a great all-round gun based on the well-proven 525 action frame. It is supplied with eight Invector Titanium extended chokes, two spacers, three Inflex recoil pads and three trigger shoes, and can be balanced due to a clever weight and counterweight system within

### BACK-BORING EXPLAINED:

This increases the internal bore diameter to its maximum ideal specification, reducing friction between the shot cup and barrel wall. This allows energy developed by the powder to propel the pellets to a higher velocity, reducing recoil and improving pattern densities.

the stock and barrel. As a result, the gun can be configured to fit Guns of varying statures and with different styles, making it extremely versatile.

The gun is also fitted with an adjustable comb and a trap-style fore-end, although perhaps not as chunky as some. The simple but elegant new engraving pattern and the Grade 4 "oiled finish" Turkish walnut give the B525 Ultra XS Pro Adjustable a quality and style that has an appealing allure. Given the engraving pattern, I would describe the gun as a Grade 3.

### First impressions

This gun is right up my street and with the 25mm Inflex recoil pad and a little lift to the comb, fitted me a treat (I'm 6ft and weigh about 14st). I found the balance to be just about right and a hair in front of the hinge pin — so negligible that I was inclined not to alter it. Weighing 8lb 2½oz (3.7kg) and using mostly 24g cartridges, it is a delight



#### Need space?

Setting up this gun to suit you is a cinch using the spacers and weights



#### Solid

The XS Pro has Browning's classic lock-up system

## “It’s balanced due to a clever weight and counterweight system”



**Less is more**  
Engraving is minimal, but the effect is stunning

to use, offering smooth, low-recoil shots that make second target acquisition a breeze. I used a few 28g but, as expected, they were a touch sharper, but nothing alarming.

I would be happy to use the B525 Ultra XS Pro Adjustable on “high bird” shoots as, indeed, I do with my own gun, which has a similar spec. I also love the tapered rib, which gives it that pointability. Using ½ and ¾ chokes, the patterns were superb with spectacular breaks.

### New recoil pad

The new Inflex II Technology recoil pad present here represents the next generation of recoil pads, offering the greatest amount of absorption available yet. It has a softer new outer material to enhance performance and is super slippery to prevent snagging on clothing during shouldering. Internal directional deflection construction guides the comb down and away from your cheek for greater comfort and faster, more accurate follow-up shots. The Inflex II pads are supplied in 25mm,



### Weights and balances

The XS Pro comes with barrel and stock weights

20mm and 12mm thicknesses, with 7mm and 12mm spacers included.

The Pro Balance System allows Guns to fine-tune the balance for perfect mount and swing. Adding weights to the stock not only helps to balance the gun but aids second shot acquisition and reduces felt recoil. The barrel’s counterweight is comprised of tungsten plates, which enable the centre of gravity to be moved up to 20mm forward.

The Triple Trigger System fine-tunes finger-to-trigger reach and includes three trigger shoes: wide chequered; narrow smooth; and wide canted smooth. **SG**

### CONCLUSIONS

A great gun and a strong contender for a serious “Sporting” shooter who’s looking for a higher quality, above-average tool for the job. There are a lot of similar guns at considerably higher prices that would not offer much more. If anything...

### Tech spec

<b>Calibre:</b>	12-bore
<b>Barrels:</b>	30in and 32in Back Bored
<b>Chokes:</b>	INV+ TITANIUM Extended: Cylinder-¼-½-¾-Light Full-Full-Full-X Full
<b>Top rib:</b>	Tapered 13mm-10mm
<b>Barrel finish:</b>	Blued
<b>Action frame:</b>	Engraved steel
<b>Wood grade:</b>	Grade 4 Turkish Walnut
<b>Wood:</b>	Oil finish
<b>Stock style:</b>	Adjustable
<b>Drop at comb:</b>	24mm-38mm
<b>Drop at heel:</b>	38mm-54mm
<b>Forearm:</b>	Trap style
<b>Weight:</b>	3.7kg-8lb 2½oz
<b>Notes:</b>	Kit Pro Fit balancer, 2 spare pads, 2 spare triggers, VCI sock, choke key, gun lock
<b>Options:</b>	Length of pull with the 3 different pads: 367mm(14 <sup>7</sup> / <sub>16</sub> in), 375mm(14 <sup>3</sup> / <sub>4</sub> in), 380mm (14 <sup>15</sup> / <sub>16</sub> in) Drop at comb: 5 <sup>5</sup> / <sub>16</sub> in to 1½in Drop at heel: 1½in
<b>Price:</b>	Recommended retail - £3,645
<b>Case:</b>	Opaline hard gun case

### MORE INFORMATION

Price: £3,645  
Visit [www.browning.eu](http://www.browning.eu)

Many thanks to all at Kibworth Shooting Ground for their help and assistance.  
Tel 0116 279 6001 Visit: [www.kibworthshootingground.co.uk](http://www.kibworthshootingground.co.uk)



# Reader test

The new Browning XS Pro comes with all the bells and whistles you'd expect to find on a modern clay buster, but what score will our testers give it?

**Y**ou don't expect Sporters to rate high on the looks front, but the wood and decoration of the Browning XS Pro caught the eye of our testers. "I love the subtle gold inlay on the brushed steel action," says Steve, as he turns the Browning over in his hands. Jon adds: "It's not over-embellished, the decoration is done in a subtle and classy way. The wood is nice and dark too."

## The right balance

When Jon shouldered the gun, he remarks how well balanced it is. "The balance is just forward of the trigger-guard, which is perfect for me."

Steve also feels the balance is right, but he'd change the height of adjustable comb which is set in a raised position. He jokes: "I've got hamster cheeks, I'd take the comb

down to give me a better sight picture."

Many of our reader testers don't like gold-plated trigger-blades because they feel that the gold can wear off with use, but Jon and Steve are happy with it. "My Browning 725 has a gold-plated trigger-blade and, like the XS Pro, it comes with spare ones of a different style, so you can pick the trigger that suits you, or replace it if the gold plate starts to wear," says Steve.

Jon is curious about the price of the XS Pro. When he hears that it is more than £3,000 he exhales loudly. "That's a lot of money for what is essentially 525," he says, but he begins to change his mind when he sees the whole package. "If you get the hard case, full set of chokes, different recoil pads and so on, all those add up to a lot of money and it puts the price in context. Also the wood is rather nice."

Steve, already a Browning owner, takes

## Testers

**Jon Bellamy**  
*Sporting Gun*  
 reader  
 Occupation:  
 Agronomist

Age: 60  
 Guns: Rottweil, Merkel, Lincoln Jeffries, three Miroku  
 Type of shooting: Game, rough, pigeons and some clays

**Steve Want**  
*Sporting Gun*  
 reader  
 Occupation:  
 Retired geologist

Age: 62  
 Guns: Miroku 7000, Browning B725 Black Edition  
 Type of shooting: Clays

less convincing about the price. "The wood is a high grade, Brownings are well made and — as you say, Jon — you get all the toys with it, so it's not bad value."

## Smashing time

It's time to slay some clays and first up is Jon on a low, slow driven target followed by a harder high and fast driven target on

## “Getting it on target is effortless. It’s very fast handling, even with 32in barrels”

report. He dusts all 10 straight away. “This is a very nice gun,” he says. “It moves with the target easily and feels well balanced.” Suddenly the price tag seems worth it!

Steve shoots the same targets with the same results and says: “That’s very nice. The fore-end seems chunkier compared with my Browning 725, which I rather like because it gives more control.” Jon agrees and says the beaver-tail fore-end feels “right” for him.

Moving on to the next target, the pair discuss how the XS Pro handles. Jon says: “Getting it on target is effortless. It’s a very fast handling gun, even with 32in barrels, which are longer than I’m used to. I’d even use this gun on high driven pheasants in Devon — on a peg, you aren’t walking anywhere, so it doesn’t matter if your gun

### CARTRIDGES

The cartridges used for this test were ELEY SELECT 7.5 shot, 21g and 24g. For more information visit: [www.eleyhawk ltd.com](http://www.eleyhawk ltd.com) or tel: 01213 523 277

weighs 8lb.” Steve adds: “The gun doesn’t feel all that heavy because it’s so well balanced. I also noticed that there is very little recoil, even with 28g cartridges.”

The next stand presented a long crosser and another driven target. Again they have great success. Steve says that apart from lowering the adjustable comb, there is nothing about the gun he’d change. “I know it comes with balance weights and various recoil pads, but the gun shoots so nicely out of the box, I’d just leave it.”

Would Jon change anything? “I find the cheekpiece is the right height for me and the balance and length of pull are all great, so I wouldn’t change anything, but it’s nice to know that you can if you want to.”

### The set-up

At this point Dan adds a cautionary note. “The trick is to find the set-up you like and then leave it. So many people keep fiddling with the set-up of a gun like this and it does more harm than good. We’re all different and having the ability to adjust the gun is a great advantage.”

### Performance

So how do our readers rate the XS Pro? Steve says: “This gun not only looks fantastic, it really performs and I love it.” Jon also rates the gun. “At first I thought it was a little pricey, but then when I saw the quality of the wood and all that came with it, I understood why it had that price tag. It shoots beautifully and should give many, many years of service.”

Would either of them buy one? “Yes,” is the emphatic answer from both our reader testers. **SG**



**DAN SAYS:**  
“This is a seriously

good-looking gun and it really performs when it comes to shooting it. Browning has a reputation for high build quality and the XS Pro is no exception. The wood to metal fit is excellent and the gun should stand up to a lot of punishment. It comes with everything you need for a competition gun”

Dan Taylor is an instructor at The Oxford Gun Company



### Impressive

Steve was not only impressed by the gun’s looks, but also by how it performed

Many thanks to The Oxford Gun Company for hosting this test. The Oxford Gun Company, Jericho Farm, Oxford Road, Oakley, Bucks HP18 9RG, Tel: 01844 238308. [www.oxfordguncompany.co.uk](http://www.oxfordguncompany.co.uk)



### We need you!

We have room for more reader testers. If you live near The Oxford Gun Company and want to get your hands on some new guns, email us at: [Sportinggun@timeinc.com](mailto:Sportinggun@timeinc.com)

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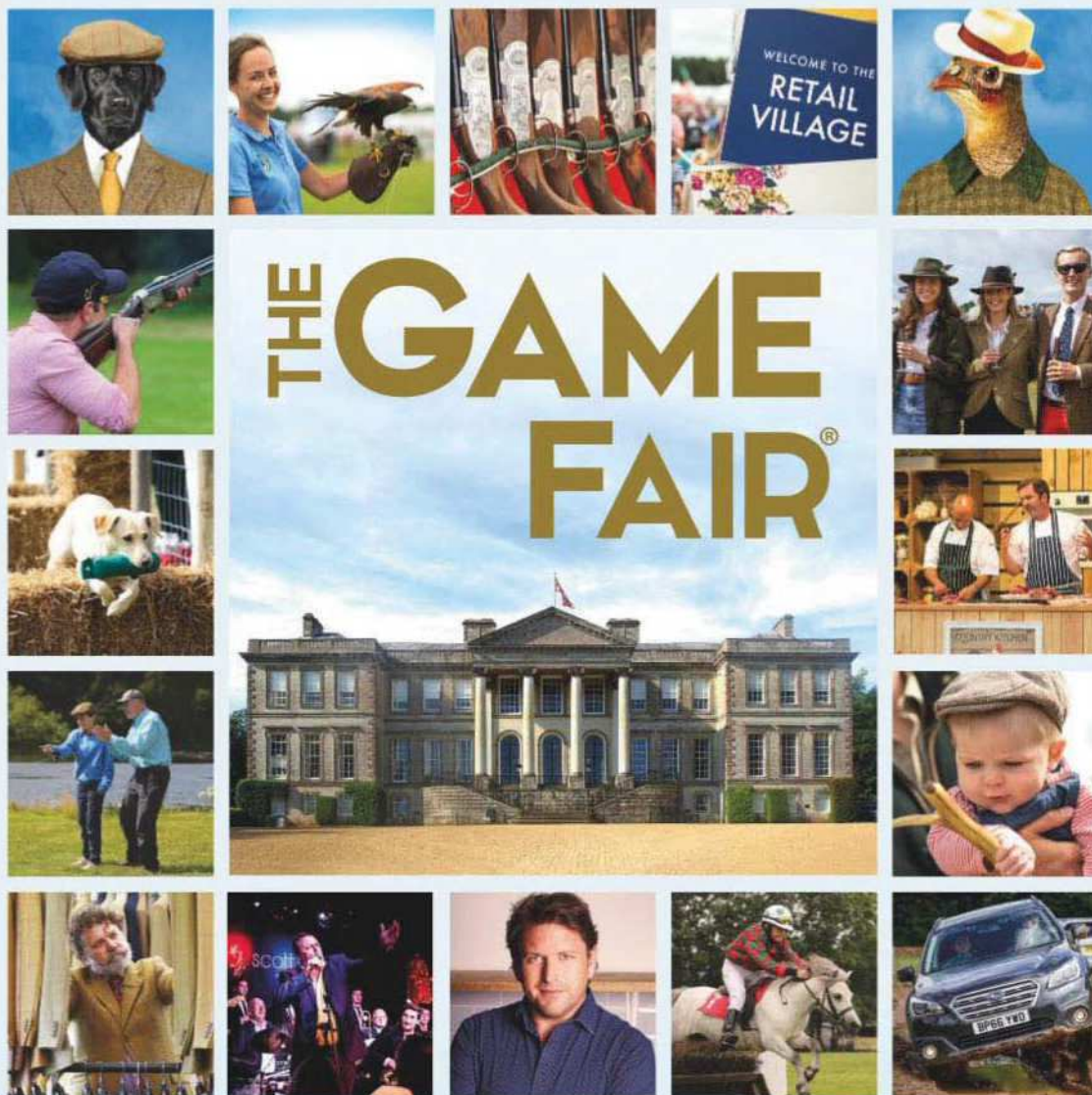
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**O**ver the last few months I have been hearing and seeing a lot of questions arising around Kofs shotguns. So, as I had only seen one or two in the flesh and not had one to dissect, I thought I would grab the opportunity to take a closer look when Sportsman Gun Centre offered me one to look over.

The market seems to be getting quite full of Turkish guns at the moment and a lot of people aren't sure where to turn when it comes to manufacturers. There's no doubt that the workmanship coming out of Turkey has improved massively over the last decade, but as with anything new coming to market sometimes people feel somethings are just too good to be true.

Kofs, as a manufacturer, makes several different models of shotguns in both O/U and side-by-side, from game and sporter models right through to coachman and cavalry guns, in a variety of calibres and barrel lengths. So far I have only seen the Sceptre model, but it looks as though there is another Turkish maker to add to the mix.

The sub-£1,000 market for new shotguns is a crowded place, but the sub-£500 isn't, so – as you can imagine – a new shotgun range from around £499 has made a few people sit up and take notice. Is it too good to be true?

## Kofs Sceptre SXE 28-bore



The market seems to be quite busy with Turkish guns at the moment, however the sub-£500 isn't so crowded and this new shotgun has woken a few people up

WORDS AND PICS SHANE ROBINSON

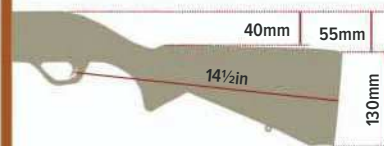
### Sporter

I was sent the Sceptre SXE 28-bore game auto-safe model, which retails for £599.99. Other guns in the range start at £499.99 and are made in 12, 20, 28 and .410. I know we are quite away from the game season, but by the time you get to read this the Glorious Twelfth won't be that far away. Also let's not forget the sporter is available in the smaller .410 and 28-bore and they're a great little starter gun to get young shooters started. I have had several calls from parents wanting to buy the junior version and from what I gather they don't hang around long on the shelf.

Putting it together out of the box, I was impressed with the external finish of the

### Tech spec

<b>Weight:</b>	5lb 6oz
<b>Overall Length:</b>	47½in
<b>Barrel:</b>	30in
<b>Length of pull:</b>	14½in
<b>Drop at comb:</b>	40mm to 55mm
<b>Rib:</b>	6mm
<b>Heel to toe:</b>	130mm



### Barrels

The barrels were well struck and finished well above Shane's expectations



### Finish

Putting it together, Shane was impressed with the external finish of the gun



### Action

Shane found the action on this gun to be simple, effective and tidy



## “It looks as though there’s another Turkish maker to add to the mix”

gun. The barrels were well struck and finished well above my expectations. The matt finish was simple and effective. All the edges were clean and well cut around the venting and the rib was well attached. The chokes were about the only pick up point in as much as there were a few rough edges and burrs – and only notches were cut in the end of the tube to identify what size choke it was, rather than writing, which can confuse some people– but in the great scheme of things, this is nothing to worry about. After all, how often do you change your chokes?

The furniture was well cut inside and out. All the internals were tidy with no rough edges. The Schnabel fore-end fitted nicely in the hand and gave good control. The stock was also well cut with no roughness, which did impress me because corners tend to be cut with some affordable entry

### SCORES ON THE DOORS

<b>Build quality:</b>	22/25
<b>Handling</b>	23/25
<b>Styling</b>	21/25
<b>Value for money</b>	25/25

TOTAL  
**91**  
/ 100

**Price:** £599.99 (£499.99 for other models without auto-safe)

**More information:**  
visit [www.sportsmanguncentre.co.uk](http://www.sportsmanguncentre.co.uk)

level guns.

The wood-to-metal fit was very tidy indeed and the fore-end release catch was nicely inlet. Silly little things like that impress me as it’s the details that matter. The rubber recoil pad was quite a chunk at

7/8in thick, but that’s not a bad thing.

The alloy action is where I think they have been able to keep the overall cost of the gun down. I’m unsure of alloy actions on bigger 12-bore guns as, historically, I have found them to loosen if they have a lot of use. But with 28-bore and .410 guns that often don’t get too much use, I’m not overly concerned. Internally, the action was very simple, effective and tidy.

The CNC machinery was top notch with everything being well finished. Barring a couple of springs that I would want to beef up a little all was pretty impressive.

The laser etching scrollwork gave just enough to liven up the action without going to over the top. I tend to find that laser etching is often better than game scenes – the details in the animals I have seen from other makers can often leave you wondering what you are actually looking at.

### Test

The Sceptre handled well. Granted, with it being little more than 5lb it was like waving a garden cane about compared to my 10-bore Greylag gun!

I have to confess I wasn’t on the ball when it came to connecting with the targets - it must have been the smaller pattern (that’s my excuse anyway) but when I pulled my finger out I didn’t disgrace myself. The gun shot well and for that sort of money it was a bargain **SG**

### OVERALL

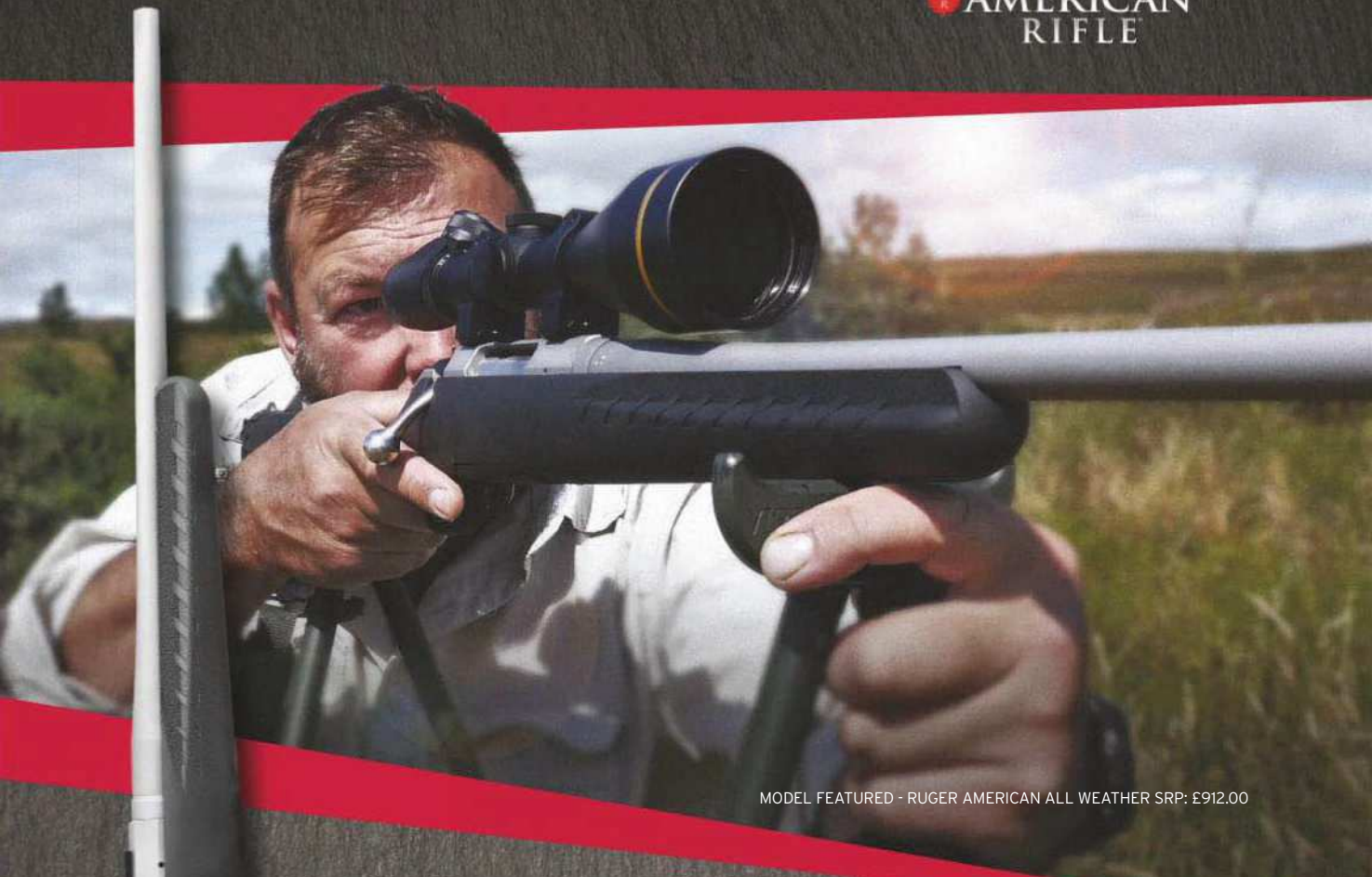
On price alone for a junior gun or smaller calibre gun, I think the Sceptre is outstanding. It handles well and I had great fun trying this one. It would make an ideal first gun for a junior. My only reservation is that I’m not sure how the alloy action on the larger calibres would stack up to a lot of hard use, such as clay-shooting, but as a field gun this shouldn’t be a problem.



#### Scrollwork

The laser etching scrollwork gave just enough to liven up the action without going over the top

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# Steve Lovatt

SG meets Steve Lovatt, Subaru shooting line manager at The Game Fair this year

INTERVIEW TOM VEITCH

PICTURES RICHARD FAULKS

### What's your role at The Game Fair?

I will be setting up, managing and looking after the clay-shooting line. So, every clay trap under the shooting line will be under my set-up and direction.

### What's on the Subaru shooting line at the Fair this year?

It'll be quite different to the past two years to ensure that there will be something for everyone. We are also bringing back the Shooting Arena, which will host several



### Steve Lovatt

Steve will be managing the Subaru Shooting Line at The Game Fair, Ragley Hall, from 27 to 29 July

exciting finals throughout the weekend, as well as trick shooting, demos by the Bath Muzzle Loaders and target coaching masterclasses by multiple World Champion clay pigeon shooter Ben Husthwaite.

I'm going to be running The Game Fair Challenge, a 60-bird Sporting competition, set up over nine stands, as well as five individual flush stands, which can be shot by individuals or as a two-man team. They're going to consist of high driven simulated pheasants, as crow, grouse, a crazy quail and a rabbit flush. We're also running a .410 calibre long-range pull shoot. There will be thousands of pounds worth of prizes to be won, including a Subaru Forester, Viking Cruise, Hull cartridges and many more.

The CPSA will be on site to give visitors the opportunity to have-a-go and BASC will be organising 30-minute shooting experiences with their coaches. So there's a lot going on over the weekend. »

### Instruction

The CPSA will have qualified instructors on site



## Clays

BASC will be running a 30-minute shooting experience



## Well catered

There is something for everyone at The Game Fair



### Have you done this before?

I've been setting up clay-pigeon shoots since 2004 and I specialise in top-end competition shoots. I ran the World Sporting Championships in 2012, the British Open for three years, the Big Major Classic for three years, numerous county selection shoots and everything else that goes with it.

### How did you get into running shoots?

I'm a farm manager by trade, so I've shot clays and wildlife around the farms since I was about 10. As the farming world got a little bit more political and there was more paperwork involved, I thought I needed a Plan B. So I bought 20 clay traps, set up a little ground at weekends and it's gone from there. I'm currently running five competition grounds, from the Midlands to the South-west, and I'm looking at another one down in the South-east.

### So what is your job role?

In addition to Shooting Line Manager at The Game Fair, I'm owner of The Clay Shooting Company, which I started in 2004. The role means planning what kit and infrastructure we need for shoots such as stands, towers, loaders and traps, and organising anything shooting related.

### Why should our readers visit the Subaru shooting line?

We've covered every aspect of clay-pigeon shooting. We're catering for a complete novice who has never picked up a gun in their life to the more professional competition shooter. We've also got something for club shooters as well as rough and game shooters. So there is literally something for everybody.

### Do visitors need to bring anything to shoot in the stands?

For the have-a-go stands run by BASC and the CPSA, visitors won't have to bring anything. However, for the competitions, I advise they bring their own equipment. If they wish to borrow a gun or cartridges for the competitions stands, they need to bring their shotgun certificates. Only fibre wad cartridges will be allowed to be used. Hull Cartridge will be available to buy from the booking-in tent and there is a secure gun store if shooters want to leave their guns to enjoy the rest of the fair. Visitors are able to pre-book their The Game Fair Challenge entries via [www.thegamefair.org](http://www.thegamefair.org) **SG**



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# Keeper's DIARY



Following the successes of last season, both of Adam's shoots will be adding days and putting more birds down this year

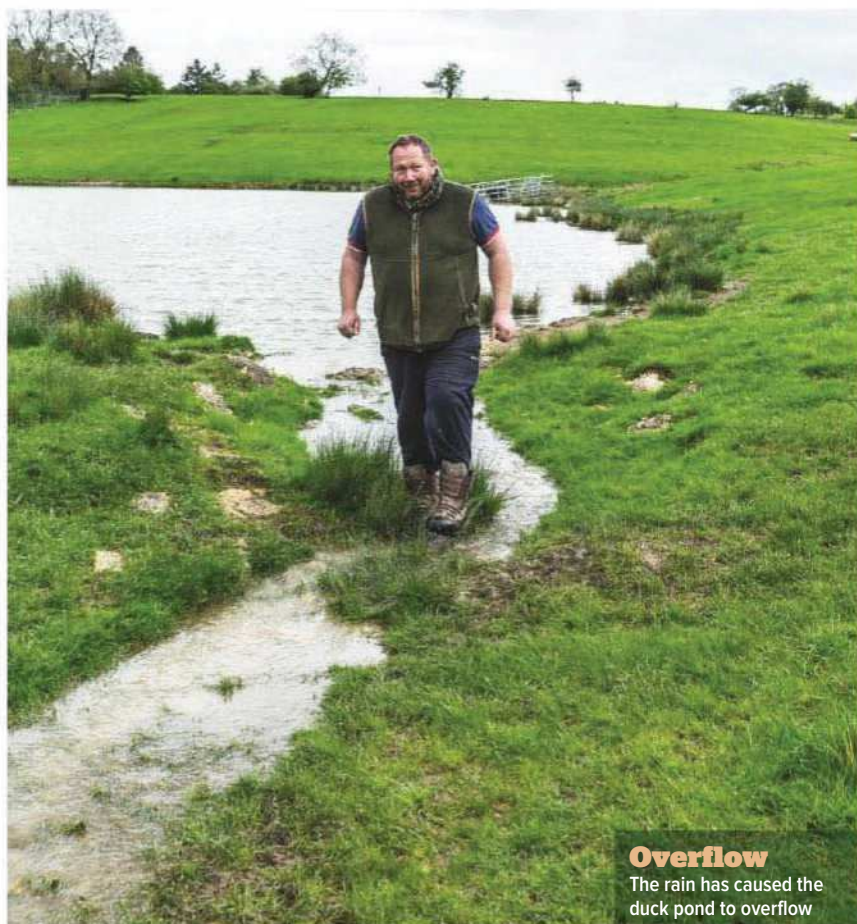
WORDS ADAM COPE PICTURES RICHARD FAULKS

It's now the beginning of May and I'm still a bit behind with work here. The rain has been appalling and it's impossible to get to certain areas of the two shoots without cutting up the grass or getting stuck in mud. The duck pond has even filled up to the top and is now overflowing, which has never happened before. To fill in the time, we've managed to move house yet again. I'm sure the firearms department will love the extra paperwork, but the move has gone well and this is a good time of year for me to sort that kind of thing out.

## Next season

Planning for next season is going well and we're hoping to be shooting more days and putting down more birds, so it'll be back-to-back days from mid-October onwards, which is up on last year. I've had to put the price of the shooting up to cover costs and to try to make a living, so each day will cost £550 for a 170-bird day – I'm glad that the increase doesn't seem to have put anybody off. In fact, through the local pub and Facebook, all the days are sold and I think I've even sold a "clear up, walk around day" on 1st February, and there is a team of Guns coming down from Yorkshire to take a day.

It's going to be full on and I'm feeling confident after the cracking previous season. My only headache is finding enough beaters and training them. With all of the shoot days being weekdays, it's difficult for many of my loyal team to commit to two days a week. If there are any people out there looking for beating next season, just look me up on Facebook and drop me a line... likewise, if there are any keen young people looking



### Overflow

The rain has caused the duck pond to overflow

to fill their summer up and learn the "ways of keeping", let me know as I've now lost Will, who managed to get an apprenticeship at the Belvoir Shoot. I couldn't be happier for Will and I'll miss his help this summer. There won't be much in the way of pay, but there will be a day's shooting if anybody's keen.

I've had a bit of a result ordering my poult through my friend, Nathan. We've agreed that I pay for the birds up-front rather than a deposit and the remainder



### Quarry extension

The extension means Adam can access the pond more stealthily, although he is losing a field of cover



# “I’m angling to get more cover plots put in - and I think I’m winning”



## Stuck in the mud

A partridge pen is left in the field because of the thick mud

on delivery and he’s given me a decent discount. Each poults will cost me £3.50 rather than the £3.75 I paid last year, and I know that the quality of the birds will be as good as ever. Every little helps in this game. My “day-old” partridge chicks are costing me the same as last year, too, at £1 per bird, which is a relief as there’s not too much that hasn’t gone up in price recently. Let’s see what wheat and chick crumbs cost this season.

## New road

The Holwell Farm has put a new road in through the shoot, which I’m grateful for. It’s made access to many of the fields easier and will help me to get around the shoot – it’ll cut my mileage, make feeding the hedgerows easier and I should be able to avoid far more mud, too.

The new access runs alongside the quarry, which is also expanding. There has been a new bund made, which will allow us to access the pond drive more stealthily. We have always had a problem with the birds seeing us coming across the field and lifting too early. The bund gives us a good route to the back of the cover with complete shelter... they won’t know what’s hit them. The bund also makes a fantastic spotting point for foxing when Chris brings his new thermal imager and night-vision over to shoot the many released foxes

## Things to do



### Repair

Adam is planning to mend and extend an unused release pen

One of my next jobs (when it has dried up a bit) is to repair and extend an unused release pen at Taylor’s Farm. The wire is in good shape, but loads of the posts have been blown over. I reckon if we get the teleporter in there, we should be able to pop new posts in next to the old ones to shore it all up, and while we’re in there we can double the size of the pen. It’s a great wood with plenty of fir trees and low box bushes for cover – the birds will

love it in there. We’re also going to try putting the “pop-holes” on the corners of the pen. I saw this at a friend’s shoot and he swears by it. At the corner, you extend a wing of wire out from the pen for a few yards. This means that you can push the young birds along the pen until they get to the external corner and find the pop-hole rather than just running along next to the pen and infuriating you. It looks like a good system.

around here. We can see about a third of the shoot from that one position. The only downside of the earthworks is that we’ll lose one field of “wild bird mix” cover, which has been great throughout the winter for the resident birds. I’m angling to get more plots put in to replace it, and I think I’m winning.

## Late covers

I fear that the covers are going to be late going in this year. We haven’t even been able to collect up all of the partridge pens yet because of the mud. I’m hoping that the soil will have been warmed up by the time we get to drill, and the extra warmth will push the crops on well – it’s

a comforting theory. We’ve left it until late June before and got away with it, but the ground hasn’t been this saturated before. We really could do with a warm westerly wind and some sun – that would also help the many hen pheasants I’ve seen around that are sitting on clutches of eggs.

We seem to be doing well on the pigeon, rabbit and corvid front at present. Their numbers are at a comfortable level, which will keep the farms happy. I have been using one Larsen trap for magpies, but that has not been productive and I’ve decided to leave it empty for now. If I see the numbers growing, I’ll reconsider, but for now it’s really not worth the effort. We must have been most efficient last year. **SG**



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## Control

Snaring is an important tool for Ed's work



# Setting snares



Snaring is an emotive subject, but, when done correctly, Ed believes it is effective and humane

WORDS ED COOK PICTURES ANDREW SYDENHAM

**S**naring is an important tool in my line of work, and, while it is a method that can't be used everywhere, it is effective when done correctly. However, this form of control can be an emotive subject, but snaring has undergone modernisation in recent years. Some may say it's a cruel way to capture an animal, but I believe, when carried out correctly, it

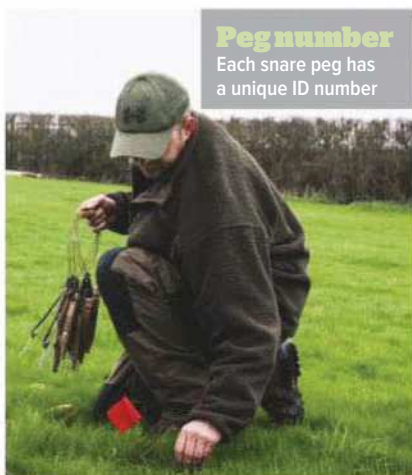
is perfectly humane – especially when you compare it to the suffering involved when an animal is poisoned.

I certainly don't condone any form of cruelty and wouldn't hesitate to report anything that I deemed to be cruel. When we use snares, we work in line with the Scottish requirements, under which we had to complete a course and gain certification for correct use. I feel such legislation was

a step in the right direction, which I work to in England although not mandatory.

## Legal use

For legal use "up north", rabbit snares have to be fitted with stops to ensure no rabbit is strangled or injured, and it also limits the capture of non-target species. Also, no snare can be set near an object that could interfere with the snare or become »



### Peg number

Each snare peg has a unique ID number



### Loop

A snare loop will be in a pear shape

snagged. Much of rabbit snaring is done in the open, so such legislation isn't too much of an issue. Snares have to be numbered and a record kept of where they are set, which is good practice for any trapping, regardless of the law.

### Setting snares

Setting snares is best in the open while short grassland is an ideal terrain in which to do it, especially if you're new to the game. Placement of a snare is important, so you need to study where you're setting it and why. Rabbits are creatures of habit, which tends to be their downfall.

They usually keep to certain pathways known as runs. Each run tells a story. A distinct path will be split into a series of "beats" or "pads", which will vary in size

**“The idea is to catch the rabbit while it is moving – the quicker the better”**

and distance between one another. If the pad is large and covered in droppings, then the rabbit is just sitting there and it is not a good place to put a snare. The idea of a rabbit snare is to catch the rabbit while it is moving – the quicker the better.

So pads that are small and spaced farther apart show the rabbit is travelling at speed. Such beats are the perfect spot for setting a snare and if the grass is short, for instance, it could be set about 4in high. If the grass is long and wet, the rabbit will be jumping higher so the snare will need to go up a bit.

A snare loop will be in a pear shape, approximately 7in wide by 6in high.

Each snare is six-strand made from brass wire and held in place by either a hazel or wire teal, which is connected via a strong line to a peg. Each peg has an identification number connected to it, which is unique to the user.

Everyone has slightly different ways of doing things, but that's how I do it and it works well for me. **SG**



### Terrain

Setting snares is best done in the open and on short grassland



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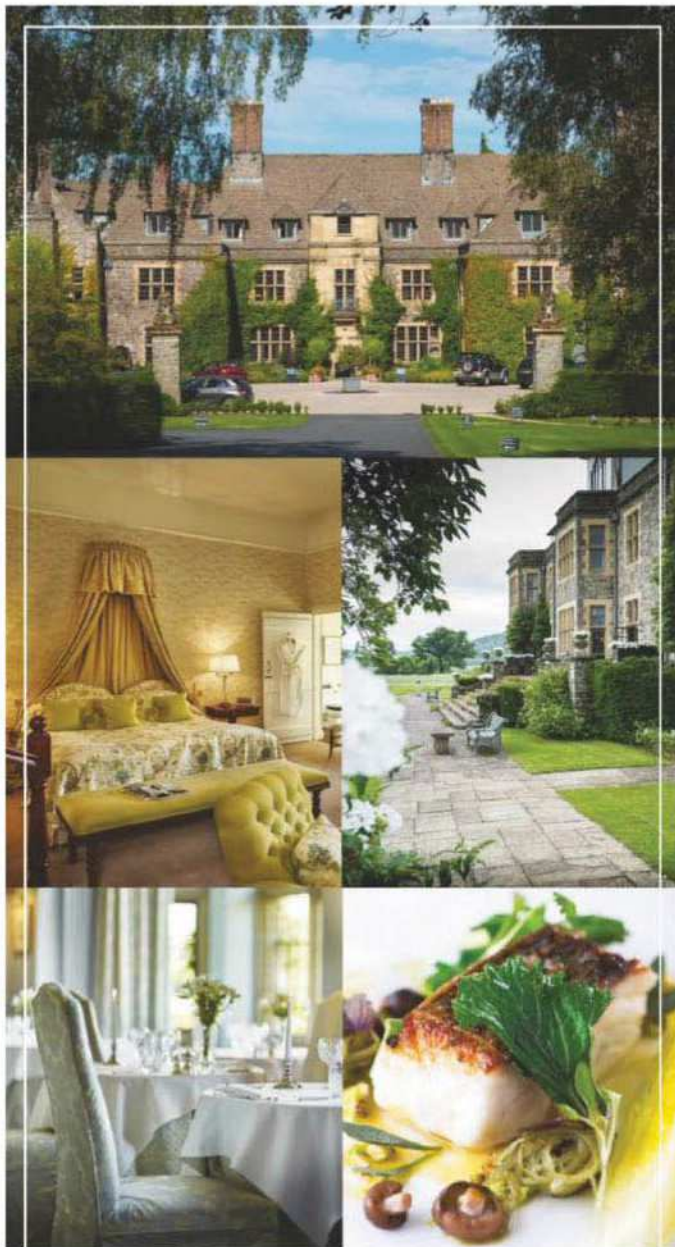
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# Lights, camera, action



Tom Sykes takes a closer look at shot cameras and explains why they are great for a variety of shooters

WORDS & PICTURES TOM SYKES

**T**his month I thought I would take a closer look at gun cameras and explain why I love having my ShotKam strapped to my musket. As many readers will be aware, I have been using ShotKams for the past few years. I started with the previous camera and, last year advanced to the new 2018 model. These cameras are extraordinary pieces of technology, and something that I would have only dreamt about using a while ago.


## How does it work?

One of the main questions I receive, is how does the camera actually work? There is an internal accelerometer within the camera

that detects when the gun's action is closed (also achieved with a gentle bump on the stock). This wakes the camera from sleep mode and it will start the recording process

**When a shot is fired, the camera responds to the recoil and saves the**

through a memory buffer (temporary storage). When a shot is fired, the camera responds to the recoil and saves the critical portion of that video, even slowing the footage down to the selected playback speed. Any follow-up shots, which occur within six seconds, will also be saved in that one MP4 clip. I know that sounds complicated and hard to get your head around, but from a user perspective this is great. It means that you can turn the camera on, leave it running, wake the camera up when you see an approaching bird and let the camera do the rest.

These cameras are designed to show you exactly what is happening down 

range. The footage allows you to observe and collect data of the numerous different aspects that have gone into a shot. You can see clearly the amount of lead and where the muzzle is in relation to the target during the crucial moments leading up to and following a shot.

These are an excellent training aid for a lot of people, not just beginners. I have used them to illustrate how much lead a certain target or type of target needs. They are great for reinforcing that desired sight picture that beginners can sometimes struggle to grasp.

## Experienced Guns

Now, don't think that a camera like this won't be useful to you if you are a competent shot. A good friend of mine used my ShotKam for a session when he was practising prior to qualifying for the England Team in DTL. The camera allowed him to analyse a lot of varied information, which enabled him to see exactly what he was doing right and wrong and correct it. Top game shots have also been keen to use it to see what they are doing when they shoot and have then used

## ADVANTAGES OF THE SHOTKAM

I have found countless benefits from using cameras over the years. They have shed valuable light on what sequence of events led me to miss a target. The built-in WiFi and the mobile app from my ShotKam allow me to access the files on the go. I have used this a lot when sat in the hide during the summer months to see exactly what went right and wrong. Unlike some shooting cameras on the market, ShotKams are compact and unobtrusive to the line of sight, allowing me to get on and shoot without having something putting me off. I know that some people have raised concerns in the past that the camera looks like it will weigh down the muzzle of the gun when shooting. To be honest, I don't notice the small additional weight to the barrel.

them to improve. Even the best of us can aim to improve our shooting and this is a useful way to do so. The other great thing about a ShotKam is that it can be used with other film cameras to produce great shooting videos that can be shared on social media with friends and like-minded people.

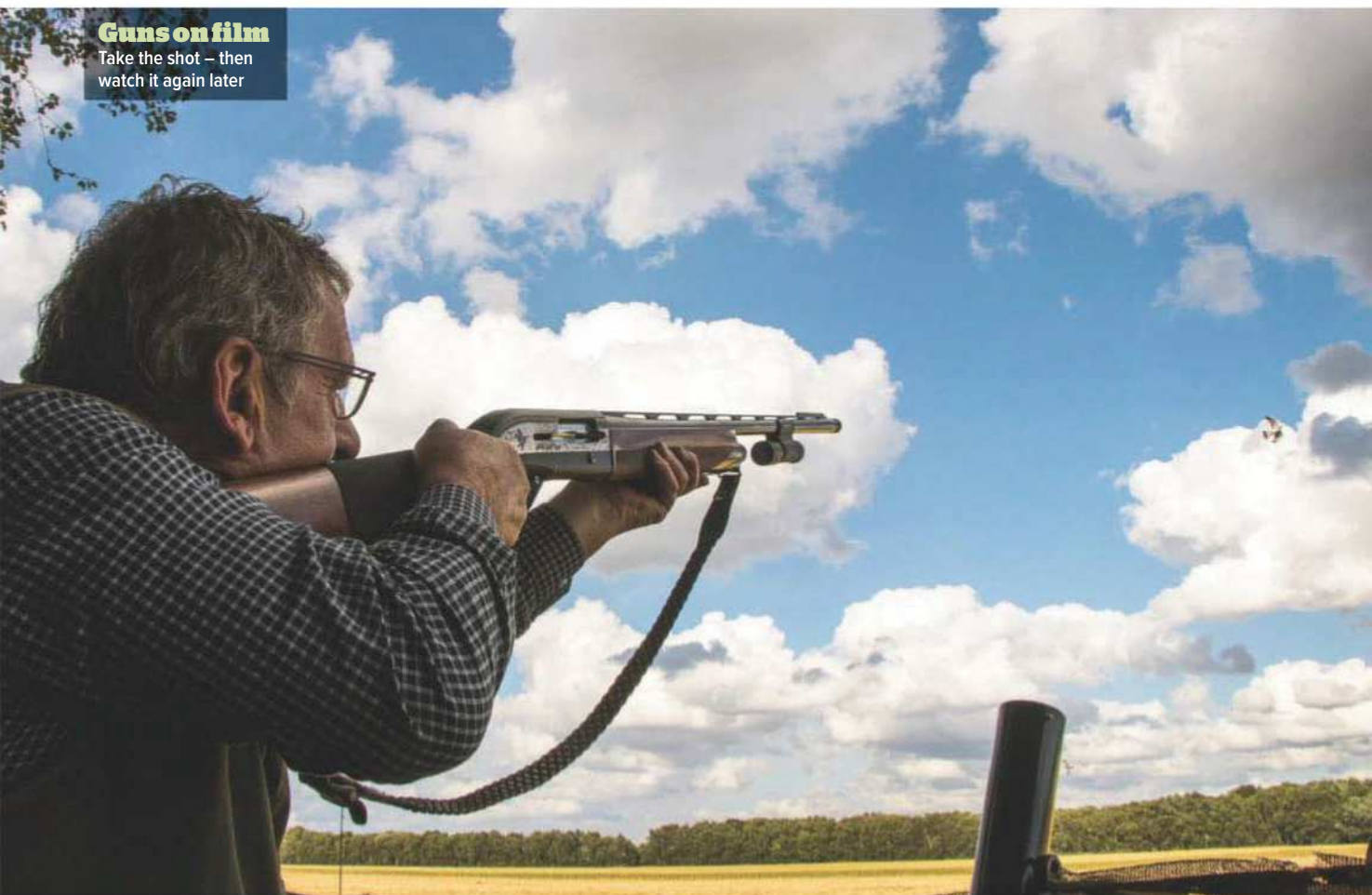
I have lots of footage that we have recorded over the years and I get a lot of pleasure rewatching it and rekindling the joys from a day out in the field. Plus, you have the proof when you pull off that cracking right-and-left that nobody believed you about! **SG**

## WHERE TO GET ONE

There are many makes and models of shotgun cameras available in the United Kingdom at most good gunshops or online. ShotKams, however, are only available direct from the United States, but the company will import to the UK. For more information, visit [www.shotkam.com](http://www.shotkam.com)

### Guns on film

Take the shot – then watch it again later





# Getting started



## Attaching to the gun

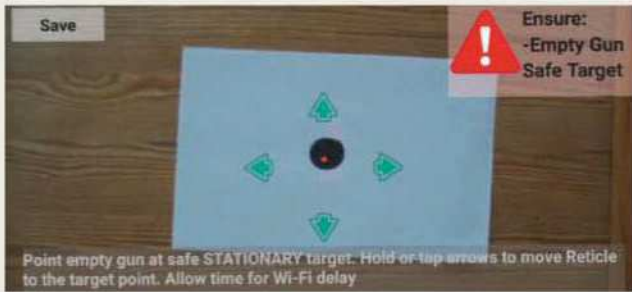
It is a pretty straightforward operation to attach the camera to the gun's barrels. The ShotKam comes with a bracket, which is secured using two Allen key bolts. The ShotKam has a variety of different brackets, to ensure that the cameras are versatile and can be used in conjunction with a variety of guns.



## Aligning the camera

Once the camera is secured, align it with the bead. This is done through the mobile phone app and built-in WiFi. The app also gives you access to a variety of settings. All the features are quick and easy

to use and there are videos online to guide you through the process. Once the camera is aligned, select the type of gun: semi-auto, pump action, etc. Then pick the shooting style: clay, flying bird, etc.



## Different settings

The ShotKam has a variety of different settings, depending on the type of shooting you are doing. The two main ones I use are clay or flying bird, which simply determines the record time of the video. You can change the reticle from the range of options on the camera. I particularly like the red dot as I find it less obtrusive, however, the orange crosshairs can be just as good.





Image © Richard Faulks

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## The problem:

# Hop, skip and jump

“My seven month old Jack Russell from working stock is showing good instinct, but when he runs he sometimes does a hop and a skip for a few strides before moving normally again. What will be causing this?”

CAROL JAMES, LANCASHIRE

## Vet's advice **Neil McIntosh** SG's gundog health expert



There are two likely possibilities and I am afraid each might require a surgical intervention, which is not what you will want to hear.

### Luxating patella

The patella, or kneecap, sits in the knuckle-like trochlear groove at the front of the thigh bone or femur. It has an important

job. In a normal dog, it is attached above to the main muscle mass at the front of the leg, called the quadriceps, and below by the patellar ligament to the middle of the top of the shin bone or tibia. When the quadriceps muscle contracts, it pulls on the patella which pulls on the tibia and so the leg is straightened. Were the patella not a firm cartilaginous structure, but just a plain ligament, it would wear through in time.

In some dogs, usually because of developmental abnormality, the patella is unstable and inclined to dislocate out of its groove to a position inside the leg. When this occurs, a skipping movement is seen, with the affected leg being held up, as the pull of the quadriceps is thwarted. This can be permanent in advanced cases, but is usually transitory in younger dogs and is dependent on the degree of abnormality. »

### Breeds

This condition more commonly affects smaller breeds



ALAMY

Vets usually grade the problem from one to four based on palpation of the position of the patella but surgical intervention is only required if the limb is badly dysfunctional or the knee painful. The condition is most common in small breeds, such as Jack Russells, Chihuahuas and Yorkshire terriers.

**It is caused by a combination of:**

- Medial bowing of the leg
- Development of a very shallow groove
- Twisting of the tibia
- Rarely by trauma

Your friendly vet should be able to diagnose it quite easily. Corrective surgery involves slackening the inside capsule, tightening the outside, sawing off the attachment of the patella at the tibia and pinning it back to a central position and deepening the groove. A dawdle!

## Legg-Calves-Perthes Disease

This sounds complicated. And it is. Technically it is an aseptic necrosis of the femoral head and neck. It sounds sore and it is! The femoral head and neck form the hip joint as they articulate with the socket or acetabulum of the pelvis. In some dogs, generally small breeds from around five months of age, a disease process occurs, which damages the bone. The process is progressive and involves:

- Infarction/blockage of the arteries supplying the bone
- Lack of blood supply to the head and neck
- Deformity of the bone
- Cracks in the articular cartilage
- Degeneration of the joint

Clinical signs of this condition differ subtly from patellar luxation. It is usually noticed earlier. (Dogs affected by patellar



**X-ray**  
The femoral neck is disintegrating

luxation rarely present before six months.)

Typically you would see:

- Progressive lameness
- Only about 10 per cent have both legs affected
- Pain on manipulation of the hip joint
- Restricted movement of the hip
- Muscle wastage around the hip
- Behaviour changes due to pain
- Crunchy feel on movement of the joint

Again your friendly vet should have a reasonable idea what is going on just by palpating the joint. Even nice dogs can bite

you when you move the hip! Certainly, it is usually obvious that it is the hip and not the knee that is the problem, though it can be impossible sometimes not to move one joint without affecting the other. And, just to complicate the issue, we occasionally see dogs who have sub-luxating patellae AND necrosis of the femoral head and neck.

The diagnosis has to be confirmed by X-ray and I always have a heavy heart when I see evidence of the destructive process. Treatment involves (relatively expensive) excision of the damaged femoral head and neck, though I have had to amputate some legs because of severe muscle loss. The prognosis for a working terrier is not great. I am afraid you need to hop down to your vets pronto! **SG**



**Young**  
A young dog's knee – the growth plates can look like fractures



**Old**  
This X-ray of an older dog shows the patella at the front of the femur

Neil is a partner in the Abbey Veterinary Group ([www.abbey-vetgroup.co.uk](http://www.abbey-vetgroup.co.uk)) and is a keen shooter, and in addition to *Sporting Gun* writes regular columns in the *Daily Record* and the *Greenock Telegraph*.

**Got a question for Neil?**

Contact him by emailing: [sportinggun@timeinc.com](mailto:sportinggun@timeinc.com)

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## The problem: Where to start?

“I recently picked up my new gundog puppy and I am totally confused as when I should start training her and in what order. I know she is still very young, but I have no idea as to what order I should start. I have read in some of the gundog training books that say, as she is a spaniel, I shouldn't use a lead on her because this could reduce her hunting drive. Please point me in the right direction!” **S THOMAS, CARDIFF**

### Expert advice **Graham Watkins** SG's gundog guru **PICTURES** NICK RIDLEY



#### The causes

First of all, if I was you, I would take a deep breath and take a step back or two.

You have a young pup that needs to get used to not only you, but also her new environment. She will need to have her inoculations before she can go out into the big wide world. Provided you have chosen your pup from good working stock you should have all the genetics in place, but you still have a blank canvas to work on. She will need to grow not only physically but mentally, and you'll need to constantly adjust your training programme depending on how she is coming along. Remember, with luck, you should have the dog as a shooting companion for many years to come, so take your time and ensure that

each lesson is fully embedded before moving on. Gundog training is like building a house... get the foundations solid and the rest will last forever.

Far too many novice trainers rush to start “training” their young dogs. One of the most common mistakes that people make is to overdo any exercise, and the main one is retrieving. If you keep throwing balls or dummies for a young puppy it will soon get bored and that can manifest itself into all sorts of issues, ranging from burying the retrieve to running off – or even refusing to pick it up at all.

Trying to get a young pup to do something that it is not physically capable of managing can also have detrimental effects on its long-term training. For example, trying to get a puppy into water

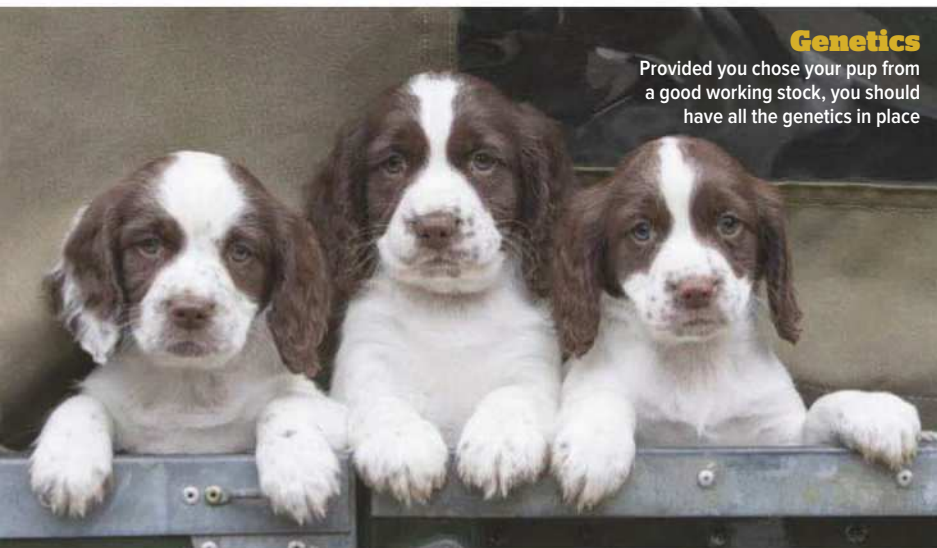
on a cold day or throwing retrieves into heavy cover, such as bramble, can quickly deter the dog from even attempting these tasks in the future.

By far the most common mistake that is made is that the early training (basic obedience) is rushed and not fully ingrained in the dog. So, when moving onto more complex exercises, problems will manifest themselves and this will then lead to the trainer having to correct these issues before moving on... it can be a case of one step forward and two steps back!

It is a good idea to have a clear idea of what you want to do with your dog right from the start, this way you can set out a training programme that suits your needs. For example, if you only plan to use your dog in the beating line, you would concentrate more on the steadiness and keeping the dog hunting close to you. On the other hand if you want to only pick-up with the dog, you would encourage its retrieving and handling skills.

#### Genetics

Provided you chose your pup from a good working stock, you should have all the genetics in place



Graham Watkins runs Gamegoer Gundogs and has been training gundogs professionally for more than 35 years. He has competed in Field Trials and working tests, with several dogs achieving Champion and Winner titles.

#### Got a problem for Graham?

Contact him by emailing:  
[sportinggun@timeinc.com](mailto:sportinggun@timeinc.com)

## The solutions

In truth, “formal” gundog training shouldn’t really start until the dog is around six months old, as with all things this is not cast in stone and you have to gauge the dog’s development both physically and mentally. However, there is plenty you can do to get the dog ready for this part of his education and rather than call it “training”, I prefer to call it “conditioning”. If done correctly, and with patience, you will be laying those all-important foundations for the dog’s future.



From the outset you have to make your new pup think you are the “centre of her world”. That is to say that, when she is with you only good things happen. That may be a stroke of the dog’s chest, a tickle or the ears or a treat. Even at this early stage you can introduce a very basic re-call by using her name or the phrase “pup-pup-pup”. Encourage the dog towards you and remember to give that all important praise.



Most professional trainers have their training facilities on their door step or can drive directly to their training ground and can therefore hold off on any lead training until the dog is a lot older. However, for most people getting a pup to walk on a lead is something they must do very early on and it can be quite challenging. Start off by putting the lead on the pup while it is in the garden. Do not start to try and get it to walk to heel, this is something that can come later. Initially you can just follow the dog until it gets used to the lead.



Retrieving is another exercise you can introduce to a pup. Be warned, do not overdo this as you could end up with an indifferent or, even worse, a non-retriever because the dog has become totally bored. Use whatever the pup seems interested in, a piece of knotted cloth can work well. It can be a good idea to use a path or a hallway as this will encourage the pup to bring the item back to you. At this stage do not hold the pup back – just let it run in. This will help build up its confidence.



When the pup is a bit older you can begin to encourage it to start hunting. To do this, find an area of light rough grass, pick up the pup and throw out a tennis or fur covered ball. Hide the pup’s eyes so he knows it has been thrown out but doesn’t see where it has landed, put the dog down and encourage it to hunt side-to-side with your hand. Hopefully it will find the ball and get the reward for following your hand signal. You are laying the foundations for later lessons. **SG**

# Grassroots gundog training



Fran Ardley, one of the small number of professional female trainers, is gaining a countrywide reputation for producing high-level dogs

WORDS & PICTURES NICK RIDLEY

A few months ago, I wrote an article about the upsurge of lady gundog handlers and how they had brought a fresh outlook to some of the training methods used for gundogs. Nowadays, you would be hard pushed to visit any shoot in the country and not see a woman with either a spaniel or a retriever by her side – even the world of competitive gundog trials and tests regularly has a good number of lady competitors. However, there is still a relatively small number of “professional” female gundog trainers, women who make their sole living from training clients’ dogs.

## Fran Ardley

Twenty-seven-year-old Fran Ardley, of Tarncrag Gundogs, in Penrith, Cumbria, has recently realised a lifelong dream to train gundogs as a profession. She is already getting a countrywide reputation for producing a high level of trained gundogs for her clients. Fran has undergone a long apprenticeship in the shooting field and this has given her a practical perspective on what is needed in a beating, picking-up or shooting dog. At 13 years old she was helping the gamekeeper on the Lowther Estate and it was during this time that she first became interested in gundogs. However, it was the following season, while beating on a grouse moor and noticing one of the pickers-up with six golden cockers walking to heel, that she decided she wanted that breed and colour.

## Maggie

In the intervening years she read and watched everything she could about gundogs and their training. She got involved with helping on training days



## Evie

Fran is hoping Evie will make her trialling debut this season

and watched not only the competitors and their dogs but how the judges worked and marked. You could say she became obsessed with the dogs and also their breeding and could regularly be found pouring over pedigrees and bloodlines. She eventually settled on the line and type

of cocker she wanted and was fortunate enough to get a golden bitch puppy called Golden Nectar, “Maddie”, through well-known cocker spaniel trainers and breeders Whaupley Gundogs. Fran set about training Maddie to be an all-round gundog. She needed a dog to beat on



the grouse moors, dog in and pick-up on pheasant shoots, rough shoot over and sit quietly by a flightpond. By the time Maddie was three years old it was suggested by some very respected spaniel judges that Fran should compete with the dog in field trials, so she took the plunge and entered her first novice trial. They gained a second place and the Guns Choice Award – Fran had been well and truly bitten by the competition bug.

Over the next couple of seasons, Fran and Maddie won out of novice and were placed in numerous Open Trials, winning Guns Choice on several occasions. Sadly, the dog's trialling career was cut short when she was diagnosed with cancer. Fortunately, Fran has some offspring from Maddie, Evie and Ziggie, and they are proving to be every bit as good as their mother and, with luck, they will be making their trialling debut this coming season.

## Business is booming

Word of mouth had started to get around and it wasn't long before Fran was being asked to train or help train other people's dogs. Over the past 12 months business has boomed with recommendations coming in from other gundog trainers. Fran has a simple philosophy to her training and that is to be consistent and concise and not to expect every dog to learn at the same rate... a good dose of patience is also very important. She readily admits that "training gundogs for a living is very different to training your own. Not only do you have to channel the dog's ability, but also the client's expectations. Customers' dogs may have been brought up in an environment totally different to the structured regime of a training kennel. They may also arrive with 'issues' that need correcting before they can move on to more formal training."

Honesty is also a key aspect of Fran's business attitude. "If there is a problem or a training issue that is proving challenging to overcome I will always discuss this with the owner so they are aware of how their dog is getting on and quite often they may be able to shed light on how this has developed."

She has some excellent contacts in the gundog world and is not afraid to ask for advice if she encounters a problem that is proving difficult to overcome. She acknowledges the help and support that Paul Dixon of Thornship Gundogs, Ian English, and Andrew and Fiona Robinson of Whaupley Gundogs have given her.



### Word of mouth

It wasn't long before Fran was asked to train other people's dogs

## “Fran has a simple philosophy to her training - to be consistent”

### Training land

There is no doubt that to make your living as a gundog trainer you will need access to some good training ground and facilities. Through years of hard work picking-up, beating and flanking on grouse moors, dogging in and helping out on pheasant shoots, Fran has secured some fantastic gundog training land. She has access to moorland, fellside, heather, bracken and rough grassland, woodland plantations and various stretches of water so she can accommodate both spaniels and retrievers. She is also an experienced shot. This not only means that she has the facility to give her trainees practical shooting experience,

but she also has a well-developed ability to read a dog when it is hunting or on a retrieve. She is currently able to take in around four dogs at a time, depending on the time of the year and what level the dog is at when coming in from its home. She has been developing her one-to-one gundog training sessions, too. Fran is keen for any potential residential clients to not only attend a few lessons before their dog goes in for training, but also afterwards so they can learn how to handle their dogs with some expert guidance.

Fran wants to point out to the owners of a newly "trained" gundog that the dog's education has only just begun, and it may need two or even three shooting seasons' experience before it can be considered fully trained. She said to look at it the same way as a new car – it will need running in before you can drive it at full speed. **SG**

### Contact details:

Fran Ardley  
Tel 07964 422256  
Visit [www.tarncrag-gundog-training.com](http://www.tarncrag-gundog-training.com)  
(website coming soon)



# Adventures of **Nick & Ted**

• Age 27 months

## With dining-room bragging rights up for grabs, Nick and Ted needed to do well in their first working test of the season

WORDS & PICTURES NICK RIDLEY

**S**ome months I struggle to find something interesting and exciting to write about, but fortunately this month isn't one of them. A few weeks back, me and Ted entered our first working test of the season and I was as nervous as could be. Last summer, we had moderate success and, to be quite honest, at that time I had no great expectations. However, this year was going to be different.

To cut a long story short, a few months ago Mrs R had entered her first dressage test on Bertie, her Irish Cob, and she had won her class and got a coveted red rosette. I wasn't jealous in the least... the

best Ted and I had managed was a second place, but I am constantly reminded of her victory every time I walk into our dining room as the rosette and certificate have pride of place on our sideboard. So, as you can see, I wanted... no, I needed, to do well in this working test.

### Retriever test

Despite having a spaniel, I like retrieving-based tests. I know these are not for the spaniel purists, but I enjoy the challenge of competing against retrievers and I find this kind of competition more interesting in terms of dog work. I know Ted can hunt in a controlled pattern, he has proved this repeatedly during the shooting season, so I like to test his handling and retrieving skills, which, as a "versatile gundog", are just as important as his ability to hunt and find game. This particular working test consisted of five novice exercises and there were 50 dogs entered, so there was plenty of competition. I must admit I was feeling rather apprehensive, but Ted was pretty chilled out and didn't seem the least bit fazed by the comings and goings of the bigger dogs.

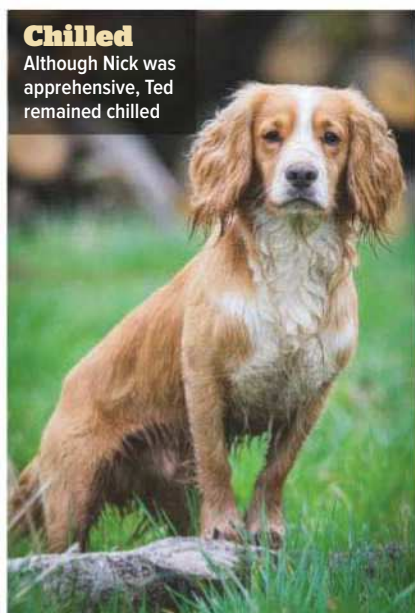


**Test**  
Ted retrieving the dummy to Nick

We were split into five groups of 10 and my running order number meant that I was always first to go in my group, which made things slightly more difficult. In most cases the waiting competitors could see the test and have some idea of what was going on – Ted and I didn't have that advantage. The ground consisted of a lot of rough grass areas with undulating terrain and each test was either a seen or blind retrieve – or a mixture of both – all of which were at a distance. The one thing you realise quickly when you are competing with a spaniel against the bigger retrievers is that the smaller dog's eyeline is obviously significantly lower and therefore long marked retrieves are harder for them to get a good mark on.

### Good start

However, all the practice and training paid dividends and after the first three tests we



### Chilled

Although Nick was apprehensive, Ted remained chilled

**“All the practice and training paid dividends on the first three tests”**



## Hunt

Ted got a good mark on the run-off dummy and hunted it like a spaniel

put Ted away in the truck and was enjoying a nice warm cuppa when Mrs R nudged me and asked what number I was... I couldn't believe it, I had been called out for a run-off. It was like *déjà vu*, the same thing happened to me last year. We had scored 96/100, which was a great achievement for the little dog and now we were once again up against an older, more experienced Labrador for first place.

The run-off test was a long seen retrieve into an area of rough grass with lots of scrubby hillocks. As had been the case all day, we were first to go and although Ted got a good mark on the fall he hit the area and hunted it like a spaniel. In fact, he did a good job and picked the retrieve really quickly and delivered it to my waiting hand. The Labrador, however, took a straighter line and hit the mark straight away and did the job in a "retriever" way and we got pushed down into second place. I really wasn't that disappointed, Ted hadn't put a

foot wrong all day and when I watched the video back later that evening

I was able to see where we could have picked up that winning point. We have a few more tests booked for the summer and hopefully at some point we will be able to display a red rosette next to Mrs R's. If not, I think I **may** take up horse riding! **SG**



## Well trained

Ted is competent at going through an obstacle to find a dropped bird

had only dropped two points. Test number five was by far the most challenging, consisting of a split retrieve with shot. The first dummy was thrown into a rough grass area around 75m away, which was made more difficult as it was the other side of an open hedge line. The second dummy was thrown the other side of a wide ditch about 50m away and it was this one that was retrieved first. Ted over-shot his mark but stopped really sharply on the whistle and a couple of pips bought him back onto the

dummy. I lined him up for the second one and he took a lovely straight line through the hedge and out to the dummy. I watched the other dogs and nearly every one of them hunted up the line of the hedge and then their handlers had to try and handle them back out to the right area, which consequently lost them points. I train Ted on a regular basis for just this kind of scenario. I have lost count of how many times when out shooting over the dogs I have dropped a bird the other side of a hedge or even a strip of game cover and I have been able to handle them through the obstacle. Most of us train our dogs to go "over" obstacles, but not many people train their dogs to go "through" them; it is a useful skill to have in your tool box.

## Run-off

The weather had not been good all day and as we waited for the results the heavens opened and the temperature plummeted. I had



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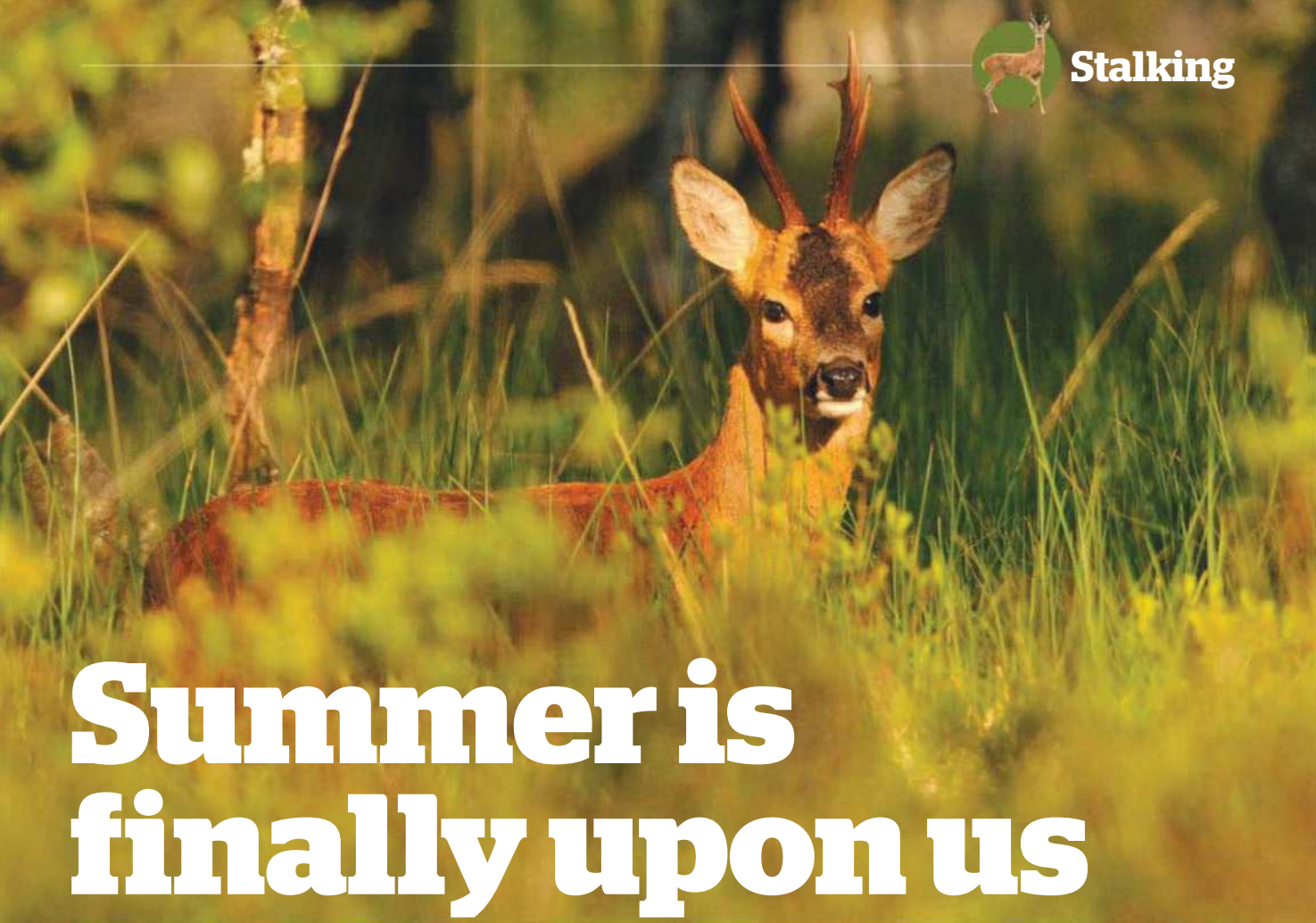
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The screenshot shows the homepage of Shootinguk.co.uk. At the top, there is a banner for 'Don't let your right to use lead shot...' with a 'COUNTRYFISH ALLIANCE' logo. Below this is a navigation menu with links for Shooting, News, Offers, Clubs, Accessories, Advice, Gear, Community, Classifieds, Forums, and Shop. The main content area features a 'Shootinguk' logo, a search bar, and several featured articles and advertisements. One article is titled 'The Fastest, Safest & Most Versatile Loader & Cartridge Carrier' with an image of a loader. Another article is titled 'Welcome to Start of the Month!' with a sub-headline 'Start of the month! Each month Shootinguk will bring you a brand new online Calendar for your club...'. There are also sections for 'Latest Features' and 'Twitter Updates'.



# Summer is finally upon us



This is Jon's favourite time of the year, when he puts his rifle aside and spends some peaceful hours in the woods

WORDS JON SNOWDON PICTURES ALAMY, JON SNOWDON

**T**his is the time of year when you are walking through the woods very early on a summer's morning, enjoying the ambience of the forest, to be greeted by the provocative sound of the roe buck. That one single bark that reverberates around the woodland never fails to put a smile on my face. Its challenge is a wake up call that I need to sharpen »

## Tasks in hand

New high seats should be arriving shortly. They have to be erected as soon as they get here, as before long the cover will be up and we will need them. Time on the ground is also needed to see who has gained territory, so we are prepared for the rut. Exciting times just around the corner.



**Slot into the environment**  
You'll be surprised by the wildlife you come across

## What's it all about Alfie?

A comment was made by a passer-by the other day. Alfie was with me and greeted them enthusiastically, as he does with everyone. I have to be honest, It can be a bit off-putting having a very friendly large dog looking you in the eye, with huge paws resting on your shoulder – but he is a softie. The remark was that he was looking



a bit scruffy. Scruffy? How dare they say that, this is Alfie dog they are talking about! It made me take a closer look and, to be fair, he did look a shade on the dishevelled side. So I have a surprise for him. He is booked in to have his first professional grooming session. That is going to be interesting. Watch this space, as they say!

up and am in someone else's territory. It doesn't mean that all is lost, but that I will certainly have to take extra care because the buck is ahead of the game and already suspects something; if not me then perhaps another buck.

The single bark of a roe buck is more of a challenge, and not the full repetitive bark of the alarm call disappearing into the depths of the wood.

### Focus on your senses

On a few precious occasions I have barked back and entered a conversation that only

**“The single bark of a roe buck is more of a challenge”**

one of us is ever likely to understand, and eventually been greeted by a buck stomping in to see just who the upstart thinks he is to attempt a takeover from him!

It is also the perfect time of year to head into the woods, find a comfortable spot and just slot into the environment around you. Forget about the rifle and focus all of your senses on what is happening. Wrens will often appear, giving their distinctive, piercing alarm call at your audacity. I have had foxes and badgers walk within a few yards, oblivious of my presence.

Red squirrels have often sat on a branch above me, grunting and twitching their tails in annoyance at my intrusion. While there is a battle going on to help preserve these iconic native animals in the north, in most parts of the country they have sadly vanished.

One has to wonder why the warnings, given decades ago by people who live and work in the countryside, were ignored until, I fear, too late for this species and many others. **SG**

### Threatened

Red squirrels are no longer a common sight



### Wren's call

Their distinctive call marks your presence



## Master of stealth

The fox is confident in the woodland

## Scope eye relief

There can be many reasons for an inaccurate shot, but there is one error I see so often during courses and training on our range.

Eye relief is the distance you must position your eye in front of the rear lens of the scope (ocular lens).

Too close and you will not get a full, clear round sight picture, but you may also get a belt in the eye from the scope on recoil – not recommended!

Too far away and the same picture occurs, without the belt in the eye.

Correct eye relief is critical to achieve accurate, tight groups. It will also adjust depending on the magnification you use if you have a variable magnification scope. The eye relief on higher magnification is even more critical.

What should be seen through the scope is a clear inner black ring and a clear, circular picture without any shadowing. With that correct view, your eye is sighting through the centre of the scope every time.



### Incorrect eye relief view

Any sight picture that is elliptical simply means that you are not sighting through the centre of the scope. With every shot your eye is probably going to be in a different position, usually due to a poor rifle mount resulting in

each shot going anywhere but where you intend it to be. There is certainly no chance of producing a tight group. If you do not have the perfect circular, shadow-free sight picture, do not squeeze the trigger – especially on live quarry!

### Correct, consistent eye relief view

Correct and consistent eye relief is only achieved with the correct and consistent mount of the rifle, but that is another story for another issue. Jaw and cheek spot welded to the butt, butt cupped into the shoulder and firm hand-hold on the pistol grip and forestock.



## ANDREA'S RECIPE

### Venison and watercress soup

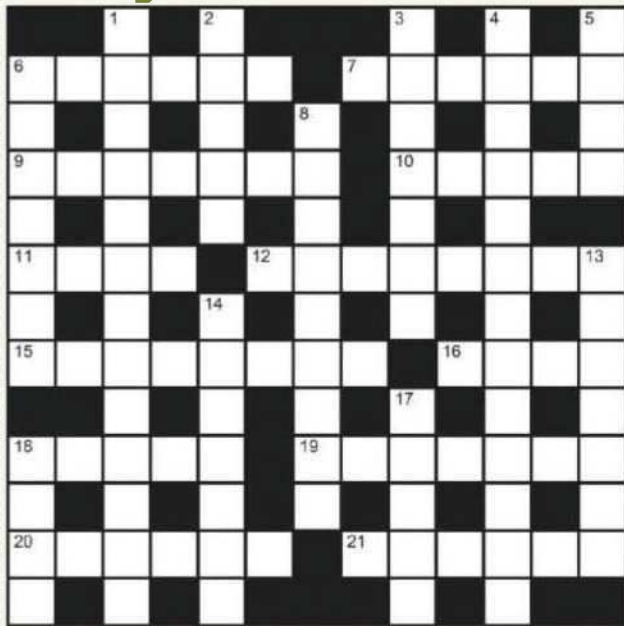
A traditional light, summer soup with the happy addition of venison

- 2 packs watercress
- 1 venison loin steak
- 1 tbsp soy sauce
- 1 tsp cooking oil
- 1 tsp salt
- 2 pints chicken broth
- ½ tsp sesame seed oil

Wash the watercress and discard the hard stems. Tear it into spoon-size pieces. Dice the venison finely, put into a bowl and mix well with the soy sauce, oil and salt, then leave for about 30 minutes. Put the broth in a pan and bring to the boil. Then add the watercress, stir well and, when the soup comes to the boil again, add the sesame oil and the meat. Simmer until the meat is cooked, about 15 minutes, and serve hot.

# WIN terrific prizes!

## July crossword



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 \_\_\_\_\_  
 Postcode \_\_\_\_\_ Tregging size \_\_\_\_\_  
 Email address \_\_\_\_\_

### CLUES ACROSS

- 6 Waistcoat-style sporting garments (6)
- 7 The season traditionally associated with cubbing (6)
- 9 Shotgun maker Ugartechea (7)
- 10 Hunts at night-time (5)
- 11 & 5 down Schnabel is a style relating to these gun sections (4-4)
- 12 Italian guns like the Vinci and 828 U (8)
- 15 \_ Shooting Centre, Bisley venue (8)
- 16 Manage heather in combustible fashion! (4)
- 18 Field event for gundogs (5)
- 19 Relating to scopes - a kind of illusion? (7)
- 20 Like a shooting syndicate with wandering tendencies (6)
- 21 Drains the carcass of a shot deer (6)

### CLUES DOWN

- 1 A test of the gundog is out of sight (5,8)
- 2 Gun section, possibly laminated (5)

### JUNE'S ANSWERS

- ACROSS** 1. Sighted 5. Eyes 7. Gordon Setters  
 8. Strap 9. Estates 11. Clearings 15. Six-star  
 17. Union 19. Shoot captains 20. Isle 21. Sitters
- DOWN** 1. Stoats 2. Gadwall 3. Tine 4. Deerskin  
 5. Extra 6. Eyries 10. Damascus 12. Gun safe  
 13. Lights 14. Rounds 16. Scope 18. Spot

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## WIN!



Easy access Seeland Crieff Waterproof Treggings worth £59.99. With Seetex 2 layer lining, adjustable canvas belt. Sizes S/M, L/XL, XXL/3XL.

- 3 Padded like a warm country jacket (7)
- 4 Propulsion device used in gundog training (5,8)
- 5 See 11 across
- 6 Korthals gundog breed (7)
- 8 A 'sound' rifle attachment (9)
- 13 Individual clay targets (7)
- 14 The dirtying of gun barrels (7)
- 17 Hunt a trophy, perhaps (5)
- 18 \_ bolt, type of gun action (4)

## Do you know?

### WIN!

Napier Pro 9 ear defenders. Effective noise-cancelling headgear that works without batteries, electronics or any moving parts! Folds in half to fit in your pocket and incredibly comfortable to wear.



Name \_\_\_\_\_  
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### Just tick the box of your choice:

- |  |  |  |
|--|--|--|
| <p><b>1</b> Blaser shotguns are made in which country?</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Germany</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Belgium</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> USA</p> | <p><b>2</b> Where is this year's the game fair what taking place?</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Hatfield House</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Cornbury Park</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Ragley Hall</p> | <p><b>3</b> What do you call a female ferret?</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Jill</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Bitch</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Hob</p> |
|--|--|--|



# Countryside quiz

How well do you know the birds, beasties and plants of the United Kingdom? Take a look at these three pictures, then tick your choice of answer.

Name \_\_\_\_\_  
 Address \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 Postcode \_\_\_\_\_  
 Email address \_\_\_\_\_

**WIN!**

This fabulous fast-load leather cartridge bag from Garlands that holds 100 cartridges.



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JUNE'S ANSWERS: 1) SNIPE; 2) MEADOW PIPIIT; 3) REDWING



RED ADMIRAL  PEACOCK  HAWKSHED MOTH



BUZZARD  GOLDEN EAGLE  MARSH HARRIER



EGYPTIAN GOOSE  SHELDUCK  EIDER DUCK

PHOTOGRAPHY: REX SHUTTERSTOCK

# This month's wordsearch

**WIN!**

Designed for the field, the Howard Leight Impact®



Sport electronic ear defenders provide optimum protection, while allowing low-level noise to filter through – making sure you're always in the loop!

**WORTH £119.98!**

To get this must-have headlamp you need to find 12 words in the grid.

**WOODIE  
DECOYS  
HIDE  
RABBITS  
TRIALS  
KEEPER**

**STUBBLE  
GAUGE  
LEAD  
SUMMER  
BERETTA  
TRAINING**



G	N	I	N	I	A	R	T	A	T	E	V	J	K
M	C	N	D	S	I	Q	T	B	R	L	N	T	L
M	V	A	K	X	T	T	I	Z	I	B	E	G	N
E	E	U	V	H	E	I	P	F	A	B	X	O	U
L	G	E	T	R	X	D	B	Y	L	U	B	M	H
K	J	U	E	P	X	W	C	B	S	T	F	Z	A
N	L	B	A	A	C	H	K	J	A	S	H	B	J
D	H	P	G	G	V	U	K	E	O	R	K	M	V
R	E	J	R	B	U	E	C	D	T	J	Q	L	F
Z	C	C	H	I	E	V	C	I	A	D	V	H	C
E	W	P	O	P	Z	F	H	H	I	N	K	B	E
U	L	P	E	Y	R	E	M	M	U	S	U	H	Y
G	O	R	D	L	S	Y	Y	U	G	K	B	A	X
R	G	W	O	O	D	I	E	Z	W	Q	X	J	S

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Name \_\_\_\_\_  
 Address \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 Postcode \_\_\_\_\_  
 Email address \_\_\_\_\_

## Last month's prize winners:

**COUNTRYSIDE QUIZ:** Andrew Brady, Hampshire **CROSSWORD:** J Lock, Norfolk  
**DO YOU KNOW:** Tony Atkinson, Hampshire **WORDSEARCH:** Steve Want Oxon



## Tom's easy recipe



# Pheasant, leek and mushroom pie

### Ingredients

- Butter
- Leeks
- Plain flour
- Milk
- Chicken stock
- Mushrooms
- Cooked pheasant breasts (sliced)
- Mature cheddar cheese (grated)
- Ready rolled puff pastry
- Egg

### Method

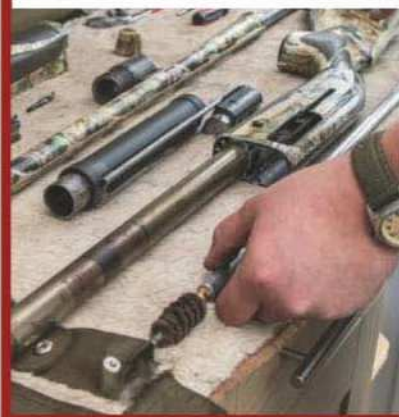
Fry the sliced leeks in melted butter in a large pan. Mix flour with a little milk in a bowl to create a smooth paste.

Once the leeks have softened, add the paste to the pan with some more milk and hot chicken stock. Keep stirring until the sauce has thickened. Add sliced mushrooms with salt and pepper. Remove the pan from the heat and add the pheasant breasts along with the cheese. Pour the pie mixture into a pie dish and leave to one side. Ready rolled puff pastry makes this easier. Roll the pastry over the top of the pie dish, trim the edges and crimp to seal. Use the pastry trimming to create a design on the top of the pie. Brush the top with a beaten egg. Create a steam hole in the centre and bake in the oven until golden.

## Tom's top tips

### Gun cleaning tips

When it comes to gun cleaning, there are many different ways to store your bits and bobs. I must admit that I am a big fan in the roll mats that you can get. These are a great bit of kit because they are perfect for carrying all the cleaning equipment and become a protective surface to clean your gun on. These are particularly handy when it comes to loading, as I can take all my gear and set up my own little work station at the end of the day. Another quick cleaning tip is to stuff the end of the barrel with kitchen or toilet paper to prevent the oil from dripping out of the end when you spray it down. I will leave the oil to work its magic on the spent powder before using a ram rod with a bronze brush, with a piece of kitchen roll wrapped round it to force the plug out on the first pass. Having the paper around the brush prevents the brush becoming full of oil and grime.



## Ned & Ted

By Keith Reynolds



# WEB-TAC



## TACTICAL SEMI-AUTOMATIC SHOTGUNS

### FEATURES

<b>GAUGE:</b>	12G, 20G, 410
<b>FINISH:</b>	Black or Brown Cerekote ( .410 Black Cerekote only )
<b>STYLE:</b>	AR Style Gas Operated
<b>ACTION:</b>	Aluminium
<b>STOCK:</b>	Std AR Style
<b>SIGHT:</b>	Detachable, full length Picatinny rail
<b>SAFETY:</b>	Ambidextrous
<b>MAGAZINES:</b>	2 X Detachable
<b>CHOKES:</b>	3 x Chokes
<b>CHAMBER:</b>	3" Chamber (12G)
<b>BARREL:</b>	24"



DETACHABLE MAGAZINE



DETACHABLE SIGHTS



BLACK CEREKOTE | .410G

BROWN CEREKOTE | 12G or 20G

BLACK CEREKOTE | 12G

# Beretta – but better



An ill-educated lowly apprentice rose to be Beretta's top designer in just 10 years and his legacy lives on in the brand

WORDS MIKE GEORGE PICTURES BERETTA

**A**ll branches of engineering have their heroes. Depending on your interests, you might think of Isambard Kingdom Brunel, Ettore Bugatti or perhaps Barnes Wallis. And if you are a shooter, John Moses Browning may well be your man. So what about Tullio Marengoni?

"Tullio who?" I hear you ask, because the Italian engineer is probably the most famous gun designer most British shooters have never heard of. And that's surprising, considering he was a genius.

It was more than genius because he just had a natural flair for the subject, in much the same that some people are natural linguists or mathematicians. The proof of this lays in historical fact: he had a poor education, joined Beretta as a lowly apprentice in 1894 and in only 10 years was the prestigious company's chief designer — a position he held until his death in 1965.

During that time he developed the first practical sub-machine gun and numerous other pistols and long guns for military and law enforcement use. One of his pistols, the M1934, remained in production for 40 years. But the guns he will be best remembered for in sporting circles are

those in the Beretta SO series of over-and-under sidelock shotguns.

The story goes that Marengoni took a look at Browning's famous B25 soon after it came out and wasn't impressed. With its tall action, he found it to be an inelegant engineering solution to shotgun design, and I tend to agree with him. I like Brownings and shoot well with them, but in the looks department the SO model

Marengoni was to develop had, and still has, most elegant lines and mechanical features that handle recoil well.

To make the action shallower than that of the Browning, the Beretta designer disposed of the deep lump and the bolt running along the action floor and, instead of hinging the barrels on a full-width cross pin, he utilised stub pins similar to those found on most Italian shotguns today. The gun was locked by a cross-bolt the tip of which emerged from the left side of the action when the gun was to be opened. It was the elegant solution he was seeking, and the basis of that used on modern SO sidelocks.

Another innovation was the use of monobloc barrel construction rather than the chopper-lump system employed on other quality guns.



**“The SO model still has the mechanical features that handle recoil well”**



**Tullio Marengoni**  
(pictured inset left) joined Beretta in 1894 and in 10 years became its chief designer

Beretta first advertised the SO gun in 1935, nine years after the first Browning B25s became generally available. The gun has been available in various versions ever since — with an obvious break during the unpleasantness caused by Adolf Hitler and Benito Mussolini.

Post-war production, and the guns you may find in the second-hand racks, include the SO2 and competition models of the SO3, introduced during the 1960s, while the SO4 made its debut in 1968. The SO4 Trap and Skeet models came out in the very early 1970s.



With the Italian traditional concentration of trap shooting, no guns specifically for the Sporting disciplines were available until the 1980s, and it was 1989 before the SO5 made its appearance in Skeet, Trap and Sporting variants. The SO6 was a de luxe version. Most SO guns I have seen do not have internally chromed barrels. Instead, the tubes are cold-forged from a grade of steel called Boehler Antinit, which has a very high resistance to corrosion.

Guns with multichoke tubes seem to be pretty rare, too. The SO9 came along in 1990, and was the first to be offered in

small gauges, while the SO10 which was introduced in 2004, features a different locking system to previous models.

### Reasonably priced

The Beretta SO models have always been reasonably priced. That doesn't mean they are cheap and the current recommended retail price of an SO5 is £26,275. When I checked on prices for the SO6 and the SO10 EELL a few years ago, they cost £44,825 and more than £52,000 respectively. Now I note that the importer, GMK, says "prices on request" for both.

One thing to watch when buying second-hand is that many SO guns are built to customer specifications, so what fitted and pleased the eye of the first owner may not suit you, and a special engraving job will push up the price.

I have only ever shot SO-series guns twice, and the elegance and quality is exceptionally good. They handle well and when you close one, the sound is a solid but subdued "clonk", like when you close a Rolls-Royce door. That's true excellence, fine engineering design — and a tribute to the memory of Tullio Marengoni. **SG**

# German precision

**Buyer's brief:** After spending most of my adult life in Germany, firstly in HM Forces, then as a civilian engineer with a German company, I have now taken early retirement and returned to the UK. I fancy a German shotgun, because I admire the country's commitment to precision engineering. What do you recommend? **PETER SMITHSON, KENT.**

• **Max price:** £5,000 • **Type:** O/U general-purpose gun • **Main purpose:** Game and clays • **Preferred make:** anything German



## Mike George's buying advice

To my mind there are three German-made shotguns worth buying: Merkel, Krieghoff and Blaser. All three are good examples of German precision engineering, so it really is just a matter of your personal preferences in design and handling.

Interestingly, Merkel and Krieghoff were originally based in the German city of Suhl, which, following World War II, had the ill fortune to find itself located in East Germany. Krieghoff got out during a brief

spell when the area was under American administration, and relocated in the south-German city of Ulm, the birthplace of Albert Einstein, but Merkel remained in its home city, which is one of Europe's traditional firearms manufacturing areas.

It always surprises me that, during the Cold War years, the politicians of Western Europe and the Soviet Bloc just couldn't get on with each other, but the traders somehow found ways around things, and in Britain you could buy Merkel guns as well as

Soviet-made Baikal guns and ammunition.

The new kid on the block is Blaser, whose guns are made by Blaser Jagdwaffen GmbH, on the outskirts of Isny im Allgäu in the south of Germany. But "new" is a comparative term, and the company was founded in 1957 by Horst Blaser. The company now employs 350 people, making shotguns, rifles (both doubles and bolt-action), and drillings – that rifle/shotgun combination which has never been popular in Britain.

## OPTION 1

# Mike's top choice



## Krieghoff K80 Sporter

I have made this gun my first choice because of its sheer German-ness, and I think that quality will appeal to Peter. It isn't unique in design, because a pair of break-action Remingtons made pre and post-World War II shared Krieghoff's unusual bolting system, which is formed by a sliding hood which encloses the breech end of the barrels when the gun is closed. In fact, the Krieghoff design engineers looked at the Remington, and sought ways in which to improve it.

Another interesting feature in the K80's design is that it has no side ribs, and the



### No side ribs

The K80's lower barrel is free to slide in a loop suspended from the upper barrel

## OPTION 2

### Merkel 202C

Some sidelock Merkels are well outside Peter's budget, but the 202C is a side-plated boxlock, and there are a few examples about that he can definitely afford, and hopefully have some cartridge money left over. If he can't find a 202C, there are plenty of other affordable Merkels to be had.

This gun is not of the usual European design with the barrels hinged on stub pins. Rather, a full-width cross pin engages with a bite on a shallow lump. So, all things considered, the designers have done a good job in preserving some nicely flowing lines. The side plates seem to help in the overall picture, as well as giving the engraver space to show off his or her art.

The obvious difference with this gun is its locking system, which consists of two rearward-projecting extensions on the breech end of the upper barrel locating with a high-mounted cross bolt. I've heard it said that these projections hamper the swift loading of the upper barrel. However, I've tried it and found this not to be true.

Merkel call this the Kersten locking system, and it's not unlike one used by Greener many years ago.

Another unusual feature is the gun's three-piece fore end, which consists of two wooden cheek-pieces permanently attached to the barrels, and a shallower-than-usual removeable piece attached to the fore-end iron.



## OPTION 3

### Blaser F3

Like the other two guns reviewed, the Blaser F3 has an unusual feature, but you would have to remove the stock to find it. The F3 has no pivoting hammers to strike the firing pins; rather, it has in-line hammers that one SG reviewer described as "nail-shaped", giving straight blows to the back of the firing pins. This results in extremely fast lock times, backed up by a crisp single trigger with a pull of about 3¼lb.

The only shotgun hammers vaguely like this I have ever seen are on the Flodman from Sweden, and these are no longer imported into the UK.

Sixteen years ago, Sporting ace John Bidwell helped in the design of the gun, and he used it to win the FITASC World Championship for two successive years. Go to the Blaser website ([www.blaser.de](http://www.blaser.de)) and you will see that he is still associated with the company, together with shooting champions from all over Europe.

One of Blaser's boasts is that parts of the gun are finished with such precision that spare parts fit straight off the shelf, with no fettling by gunsmiths. It also means that a shooter can order a set of barrels of different length or bore, and not only will they fit, but the gun will balance just the same. The company also makes some fine sporting rifles tailored to the British market, some of them with straight-pull bolts. **SG**



### In the market for a second-hand gun?

Send us your buyer's brief by emailing [sportinggun@timeinc.com](mailto:sportinggun@timeinc.com)

lower barrel is free to slide in a loop suspended from the upper barrel at the muzzle end. There is some logic here, in that if the shooter is taking a lot of single shots, one barrel gets very much hotter than the other. The hotter barrel expands more and, in most guns from other manufacturers, causes the whole barrel set to warp a tiny fraction of an inch and therefore the point of aim changes. The K80, with its floating lower barrel, does not suffer from this problem – although it would take a marksman of amazing skill to recognise it as such.

In other respects, the design of the K80 is reasonably conventional, with a shallow but rather long action body, and barrels hinged on stub pins. The barrels have an internal diameter of 0.732 inches. The gun comes with five multichoke tubes. The only snag to some people may be the gun's weight – about 9lb.

Like all quality shotguns, the K80 can be built to a customer's specification, so

guns in the second-hand racks may differ in small details. It's also possible to have 20-bore, 28-bore and .410 barrel sets fitted to the same action frame, but guns other than the standard specification may fall outside Peter's budget.

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**Beretta SS687 EELL Diamond Pigeon, 20-bore, O/U, 19½in barrels, long pistol grip stock 15in including extension butt, choked ¼ and ½, ex con, beautiful example of exhibition grade wood engraved with pheasant and woodcock by master engraver Bottega C Giovanelli, little use, £4,500. Tel 07774 824707 (Surrey).**

**Nikko Golden Eagle, O/U, 12-bore, 26in barrels, skeet gun, full choke, good condition, bought in 1989, used for lays and game, really good gun, nice wood, all black, £1,100. Tel 01787 281605 (Suffolk).**

**Brownings, small private collection for sale, all 12-bore O/Us, Belgium and Miroku-made guns, game and clay models. Tel 07710 153594 (Dumfries).**

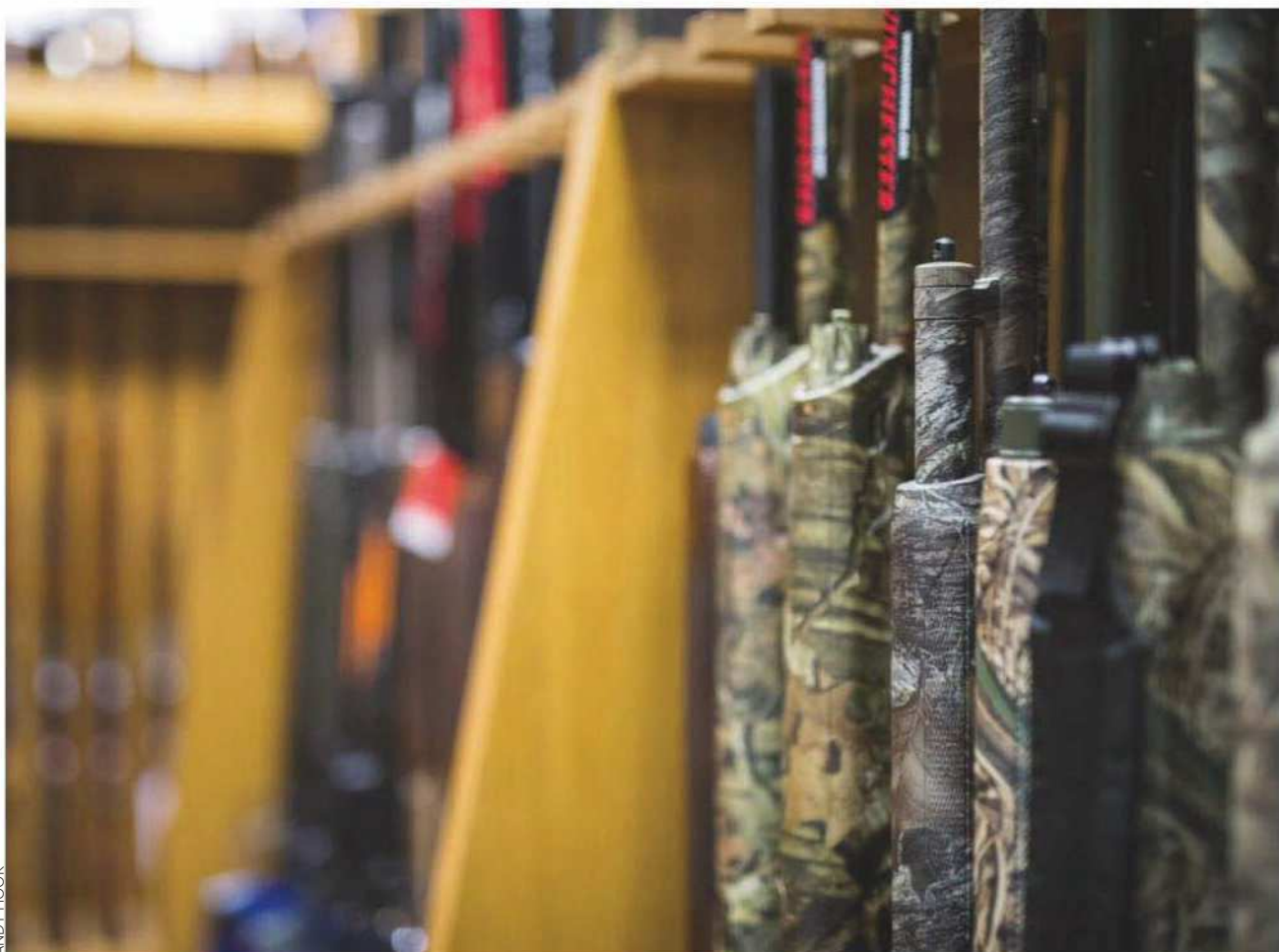
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**Side-by-side, black powder hammer 12-bore, Damascus barrels by Frampton Nottingham, circa 1890, Dolls head locking, No 24461, buyer collects, £85. Tel 07891 136093 (Nottinghamshire).**

**Beretta 391 Urika, 12-bore, s/a, in case with tools, c/w five chokes, three butt plates and recoil pad, two chokes, tec pad, 28in barrels, vgc, £625 ono. Tel 07973 720997 (West Midlands).**

**Armsan A612 red sporter, bought March 2017, new in original box, only fired about 100 shots, not been used, offers. Tel 07789 723643 (Glasgow).**

**Browning B525 trap advance, 30in extended chokes, set of five in original Browning case with tools and manuals; in unfired condition, as new, bought in 2012, same gun as the current 2018/525 trap model except extended inventor plus chokes were fitted as opposed to flush fitting. Huge saving on the current new price, offers. Tel 07789 723643 (Glasgow).**



ANDY HOOK



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**AYA Coral, 12-bore, O/U**, 28in ¼ and ½ barrels, Merkel Style,

dt, ej, scroll engraved action retaining much colour hardening, Made 1950/51, but in VGC, attractive gun both useable and collectable, £650. 07513 534102 (Warwickshire).

**Antique gun collection for sale**, guns by Joseph Lang, Charles Roswell. Cased dragoon holsters pistols Blunderbus Brown Bess and lots more, photos available. Tel 07724 198388 (Cardiff).

**BSA Spitfire**, .22 cal,

high fill air rifle, designed by Mr John Bowket for BSA, based on a break barrel lightning, vgc, cw original scope, silencer, gun light and mount, sling and gun slip, original owner's workshop manual, no air leaks, scrapes or scratches, c/w high pressure divers air bottle and the fill pipe – bottle is full but out of test, also approx 1,000 pellets, Super Field and Eley Wasp, rifle is recoil less and super accurate, £300. Tel 07972 501794

or 0191 4897293 (South Tyneside).

**Beretta 12-bore A400**, Xplor Light 3-shot, 26in barrel, 3in chamber, cased with accessories (stock adjusters, oil and paperwork), c/w three chokes and key - cyl, ½ and full, a very light weight gun with little recoil, hardly been used, and is in mint condition, £895. Tel 07500 362544 (Denbighshire).

**Yildiz SP2-M O/U .410**, non ejector, multi-choke (five chokes) in

## Jargon buster

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**ble** — boxlock ejector  
**blne** — boxlock non ejector  
**brls** — barrels  
**c/w** — complete with  
**cyl** — cylinder  
**db** — double barrel  
**dt** — double trigger  
**ej** — ejector  
**ex con** — excellent condition  
**fac** — firearms certificate  
**fc** — fixed choke  
**gc** — good condition  
**grd** — grade  
**hg** — hammer gun  
**imp** — improved  
**ltwt** — lightweight  
**m/c** — multi-choke  
**mod** — modified  
**o/u** — over and under  
**ono** — or near offer  
**ovno** — or very near offer  
**p/x** — part exchange  
**pa** — pump action  
**rf** — rimfire  
**rnds** — rounds (ammunition)  
**sa** — semi-automatic  
**sb** — single barrel  
**sbs** — side by side  
**sle** — side lock ejector  
**sline** — sidelock no ejector  
**sst** — single selective trigger  
**tge** — teague chokes  
**u/l** — underlever  
**vgc** — very good condition

### DOGS

**b/w** — black and white  
**ess** — English springer spaniel  
**ftaw** — field trial award winner  
**ftch** — field trial champion  
**ftw** — field trial winner  
**hpr** — hunt, point and retrieve  
**kc** — kennel club  
**l/w** — liver & white  
**lab** — labrador  
**labradoodle** — labrador/poodle cross  
**spanador** — spaniel/labrador cross  
**sprocker** — springer/cocker cross

mint condition, £425.  
Tel 07500 362544  
(Denbighshire).

**Yildiz TK 36 single barrel folding .410, a very light and handy gun**, in mint condition, £160. Tel 07500 362544 (Denbighshire).

**Parker Hale bolt action rifle 308/7.62**, threaded ½UNF, clean bore, good condition, nice stalking rifle, shoots very well, c/w scope, bipod, sling, rifle slip, £225.00. Tel 07935 937821 (Essex).

**Parker Hale O/U shotgun**, F/C and full, 30in barrels, good clean gun, £450 ono. Tel 07843 967077 (Essex).

**Anshutz .22LR target rifle**, model 1811, c/w two stocks prone and full adjustable, all sights, sling jacket and cleaning rod, £500. Tel 01275 392649 (Bristol).

**Miroku MK38 Teague sport**, 32in barrels, boxed, mint condition, £1,000. Tel 07515 682280 (West Midlands).

**Smith and Wesson 12 bore**, pump action, six-shot FAC, old but functional, good gamekeepers firearm, £150. Tel 01756 749573 (North Yorkshire).

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# Step back in time



This shotgun could be termed the gun equivalent of a time capsule, and it's a fine example of what original finish actually looks like

WORDS ROBERT MORGAN PICTURES ANDREW ORR/HOLT'S

**T**hey don't turn up like this very often! Many of us buried "time capsules" to be opened in 25 or 50 years. Anyone who has witnessed the opening of such

capsules often find themselves smiling at the seemingly archaic contents, almost disbelieving that we could have dressed that way or used such primitive items. This shotgun could be termed the "gun equivalent" of one of those time capsules. It was bought by an Edinburgh paper mill owner called Charles Cowan from the gun maker Joseph Harkom, also of Edinburgh, in 1858. Remarkably it remained unfired.

## Rare survivor

Collectors should take note of these rare survivors whenever they get the opportunity to do so. They show the student of such things as what original finish actually looks like. In this instance, the wonderful collection

## "Collectors should take note of these rare survivors"

of original accessories also serves to show what these guns were equipped with when new. The barrels are a lovely even dark brown colour with colour case hardened breech-blocks. Often refinished barrels fail to achieve the correct colour, looking "coppery" and generally just too pale. Also refinishing and the ravages of time tarnish the breech-blocks almost to the same colour and the sharp edges and engraved detail gets rubbed and worn. The same applies to the locks; the colour hardening when applied is bright and actually very colourful, containing shades of blue, purple and brown. It also often has a glossy sheen to the surface, which is more often than not a lacquer applied by the

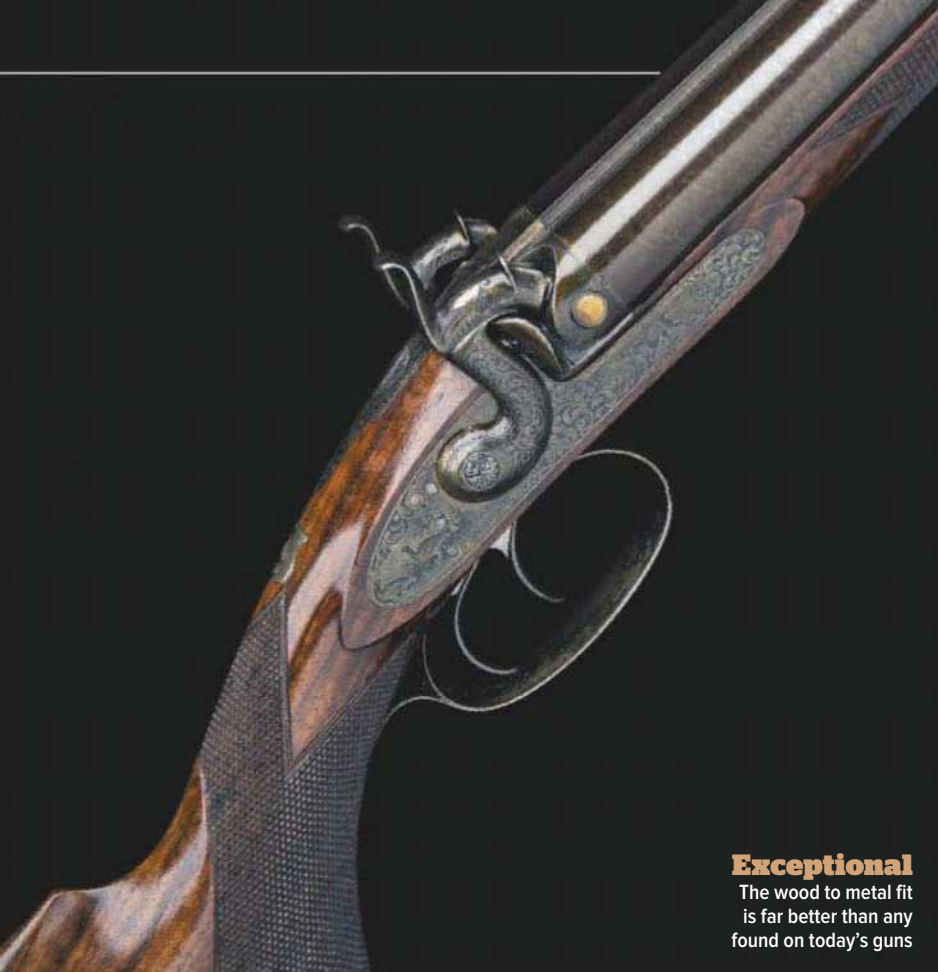
gunsmith for preservation, though some hardening processes can cause a similar effect. The wood to metal fit is exceptional, far better than any found today except perhaps on the finest guns produced by the top makers; contrary to popular belief the wood was not left proud to allow for shrinkage, well-seasoned wood does not shrink! The chequering is perfect with contrasting borders and no over-runs. The butt is oil finished giving a semi-gloss effect (although some gun makers, especially the continental ones did favour French polishing). The figure on a best gun such

## Accessorised

This shows the wonderful collection of original accessories these guns were equipped with



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as this was always chosen for strength first and foremost; knots are unheard of and the grain always runs at the correct contour through the wrist. Cheaper guns may not exhibit this refinement! Trigger-guards and heel-plates were invariably blued and the other iron furniture parts colour case hardened to match the locks.

## Cased

The storage case this gun is housed in also remains in remarkable condition thanks mostly to the leather outer sleeve it was equipped with. This are often lost causing subsequent aging and damage to the finish of the case. This sleeve has suffered storage wear over the 160 years,



but has served its purpose and preserved the finish of the oak case, which remains as it would have looked when purchased new. Note the pale colour and how all the screws, perfectly countersunk and flush, all line up on the brass reinforcing pieces. The case is lined in an embossed early type of leatherette, common to many Scottish guns, and retains its original parchment trade-label inside the lid. Unfortunately two items are missing from the incredible complement of accessories. Usually it is turnscrews that go missing as these have uses around the home, but in this case it is the leather bodied shot flask that would have matched the remaining powder flask and a small tool or possibly a pair of mainsprings from the compartment at the bottom right hand side. If it was a tool it would have been for removing the barrel wedge. The two large boxwood pots were for top wads, the box with the sliding lid at the right for over-powder wads (it now contains period Eley Bros. wire cartridges). A nickel "snail" capper is stored on its edge below the toe of the butt. Four double ended shot-chargers are stored between the two larger pots, note that these are also colour case hardened to match the locks. The two tools housed below the fore-end are for cleaning the threads and around the nipples. The small item with the ring on the top next to the left hand large pot is a nipple primer and pricker. The rest of the items should be self-explanatory, but there are also further items concealed below some of the accessory trays, most notably a spring cramp for changing the mainsprings. The only item perhaps not supplied from new and added later is the pigskin leather tool-roll containing a take-down nipple-key and pricker. This now sits in the compartment originally occupied by the now absent shot-flask. Even on these accessories, the quality, polish and materials used are of the highest order. Reproductions, when compared to these originals, are always easy to spot.

This remarkable survivor is consigned to Holts' June auction and will probably have a new owner by the time this article reaches the shelves. With the soaring interest in shooting muzzle-loading guns, it will be interesting to see whether he or she can resist the urge to "give it a go"! **SG**



## Muntjac leg

This simple recipe is a great way to use your muntjac, it's served with creamy leeks, potatoes and red wine sauce

PICTURES BASC/RICHARD FAULKS



### INGREDIENTS

Serves 1 to 2

- 1 leg of muntjac
- 2 large potatoes
- 1 leek
- Salt and pepper
- 2 tbsp honey
- 1 tbsp of balsamic vinegar
- 2 gloves of garlic
- 4 sprigs of thyme
- The juice of one orange
- 20fl oz whipping cream
- 150ml of red wine
- 250ml of beef stock

## Cooking method



**1** Bone and roll the leg of muntjac or ask your butcher to bone and roll it. Heat a pan to a high heat with a drizzle of vegetable oil. Seal the leg until golden brown and then drizzle with honey and balsamic with orange juice. Add a clove of garlic to the pan and foursprigs of thyme.



**2** Roast the leg at 180 or gas mark 4 for 20 to 25 minutes. Once cooked remove the meat and use the juices to make the red wine sauce. Add a tablespoon of flour to the pan and cook for for minutes, then add the red wine and beef stock and cook until thick.



**3** Peel and cut the potatoes. Part boil them in water for about five minutes and then roast them until they are crispy.



**4** Cut and wash strips of leek, making sure the leek are thinly chopped. Cook them in a pan with the whipping cream and seasoning on a low heat until soft.



**5** Slice the muntjac using a knife and then serve with the potatoes, leeks and red wine sauce. **SG**

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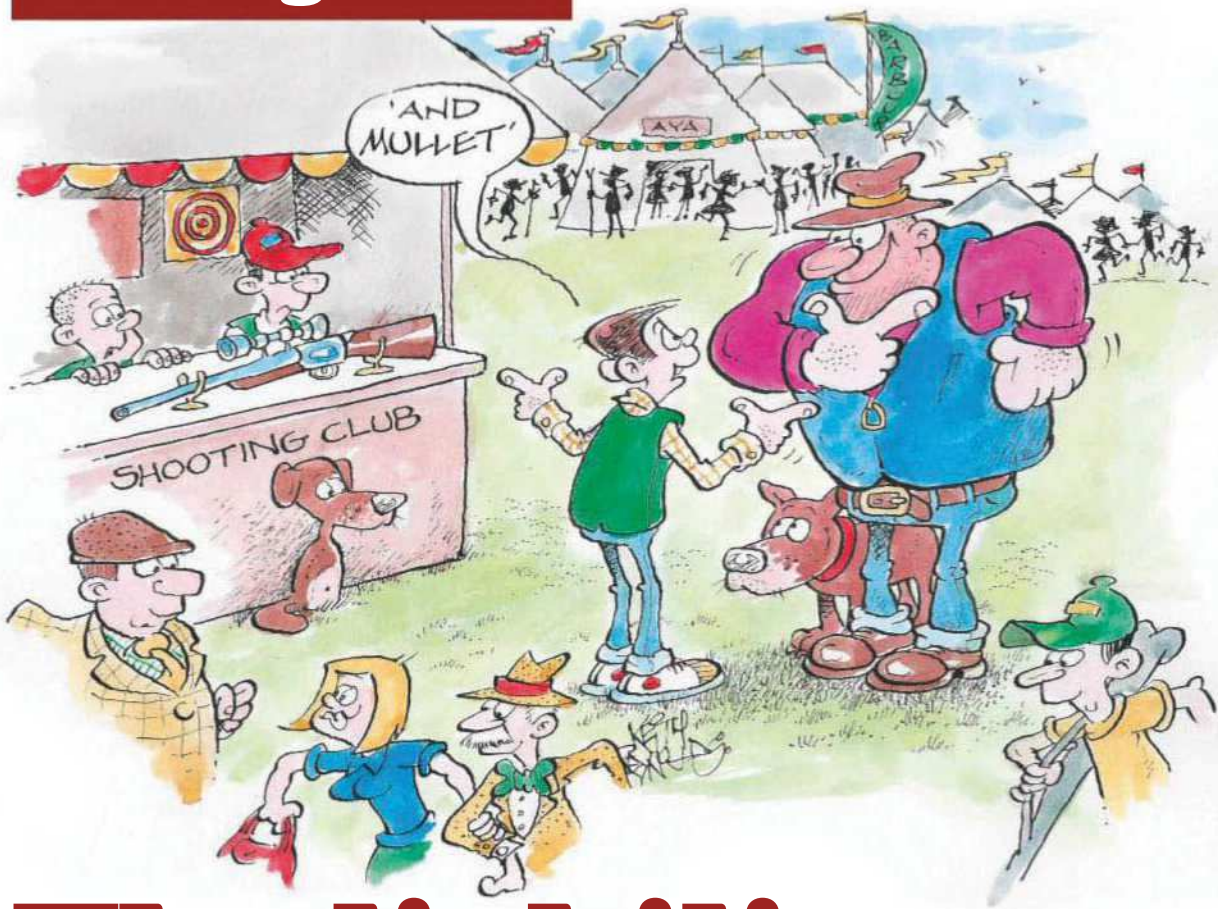
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## The liability

As the angry visitor called on the shooting club stand, new volunteer, Pete, had a plan to deal with him

WORDS CHARLES SMITH-JONES CARTOON KEITH REYNOLDS

**T**he volunteers didn't meet up much during the rest of the year, but came together at the summer country shows to set up and help at the shooting club marquee. Days were long, the catering outlets cost a fortune, and more often than not the showground would turn into a mud bath when the weather turned. Nobody complained though; the "craic" was good and they were doing the club a good turn. Above all, everyone enjoyed meeting show visitors to chat and offer help and advice when it was needed.

Pete was the new boy while the others were all old hands who knew the form. The three of them – Pete, Big Dave and Angus – were talking together during a quiet spell when a visitor approached asking to speak to someone "what knew guns". Large, red faced and loud, he was clearly a man

angry with the world, and especially the boat owners who complained about him shooting mullet in the local harbour with a .22 rimfire rifle. "It's no business of theirs, so what do you bloody experts suggest, eh?" His face got redder, his voice louder.

Big Dave and Angus exchanged glances. Awkward visitors were rare but this one

**"Awkward visitors were rare, but this one was spoiling for trouble"**

was clearly spoiling for trouble as well as having no notion of gun safety. How, though, to deal with him? Pete spoke first, tactfully deciding not to raise the ricochet issue, and instead asked about the man's firearm certificate. In particular, what were the conditions on it, and what was he allowed to use the .22 for?

"Vermin, you know, rabbits and crows and stuff" came the angry reply. "Fish are bloody vermin, eh, so I've got every right... besides, it's a laugh, innit?" He glared at Pete, defying him to disagree. Big Dave and Angus, from a safe distance, watched Pete speak quietly to the visitor. The big man's face cleared, then – incredibly – he smiled, shook Pete's hand and left cheerfully.

"What the hell...?" said Angus eventually. "Easy." Pete replied. "I simply told him to ask for 'and mullet' to be added to the conditions for use on his certificate so no one can complain about him shooting fish."

His friends looked at him admiringly. Not only had he sent the man off happy, he'd also persuaded him to personally inform the Firearms Department that he was a raving liability as well... **SG**

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