

FREE 2018 SPORTING CALENDAR WITH THIS ISSUE

SHOOTING[®]

GAZETTE

DRIVEN SHOOTING'S
FINEST JOURNAL

DECEMBER 2017

CHRISTMAS ISSUE

Celebrating a
special time
of year for
our sport

STOCKING SURPRISES

Fantastic
gifts for game
shooters

HOW WAS 2017 FOR YOU?

Industry experts give
us their opinions

PLUS

GENTLY DOES IT

How to introduce your
novice dog to picking-up





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FROM THE EDITOR

Ah, December. It's that time of year when the birds are getting stronger and wilier, the days are getting shorter and you're colder than the ice cubes in your lunchtime G&T if you don't wrap up warm. We love it, though, don't we?

First things first, an early Christmas present from us to you: a free 2018 calendar we've created in association with Hull Cartridge. I have no doubt it will be full of important dates in no time at all and we hope the wonderful selection of images whets your appetite for another sporting year.

December is a special month for game shooting, with so much going on, and a festive vibe runs right throughout this issue, from Giles Catchpole's humorous take on the array of colourful characters who come together on Boxing Day to Robin Scott's memories of Christmases past, both of which make for heat-

warming reading. We've also managed to shoehorn in some gift ideas for the game shooter in your life, and thanks to Uncle Giles there are even tips for buying for those who have 'everything'.

I saw a piece of street art recently which included the line, "collect memories, not things" and it really struck a cord with me when thinking about this time of year. Call me sentimental, but is there anything better than getting the whole team together after a December day in the field and toasting to the year past, to those who are no longer with us and pouring over the collection of memories we have all made? I'm sure you'll be collecting many more memories over the festive period, and whatever you're doing, wherever and with whomever, a very Happy Christmas from everyone here at *Shooting Gazette*.

Martin Puddifer, Editor

Don't miss this month

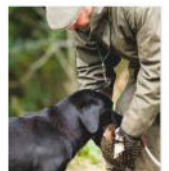
Twenty-seventeen was another eventful year in game shooting and Helena Venables has been speaking to some of the key figures in our sport to get their thoughts on the past 365-odd days. While there is no doubting it's been a good year for many, both in the field and at the till, all know that you won't get anywhere by being complacent, so there is still plenty to do – and look forward to – when 2018 rolls around in a few weeks time.



A year in review

42

December is a great time of year to introduce a novice gundog to the picking-up line, thanks in part to the number of family and friends days that take place around now. Wendy Bardsley examines the best way to make sure your youngster has an enjoyable and productive day in the field without stepping on anyone's toes, and while preparation is everything 'gently does it' is the overriding theme.



Novice gundogs

84



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YOUNG SHOTS MORNINGS

19th & 21st December

We are holding our next Young Shots mornings on 19th and 21st December for young guns (aged 9-16) at our shooting school in Northwood. The aim is to have an educational and fun day with a strong emphasis on safety. Participants are welcome to bring their own guns but 12G, 20G, 28G & 410G will be available.

Numbers will be limited and places are reserved on a 'first come, first served' basis. The cost per head will be £90.00 inc. VAT, which includes all tuition, use of a suitable gun (if required), cartridges, clays and safety equipment.

For more information or to book a session please call us or email.



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Image from the field



Image from the field

In Focus

IS THERE A BETTER TIME THAN CHRISTMAS FOR OLD FRIENDS AND FAMILY TO GET TOGETHER FOR A DAY'S SHOOTING? THERE MIGHT BE SNOW, THERE MIGHT NOT, BUT ONE THING IS FOR SURE, THE LAUGHTER AND KNOWLEDGE THIS TIME OF YEAR BRINGS OUT THE BEST IN OUR COMMUNITY WILL WARM EVERYONE UP RIGHT THROUGH UNTIL THE NEW YEAR.

PHOTOGRAPH: BOB ATKINS



OPENING SHOTS

Anger following LMC plans to charge for licensing checks

Shooting organisations have hit back after Lincolnshire's police and local medical committee (LMC) made plans to charge for licensing checks.

The Lincolnshire LMC has come under fire after GPs in the county were instructed to begin charging for initial medical checks for shotgun and firearm certificate applicants – contrary to Home Office guidance.

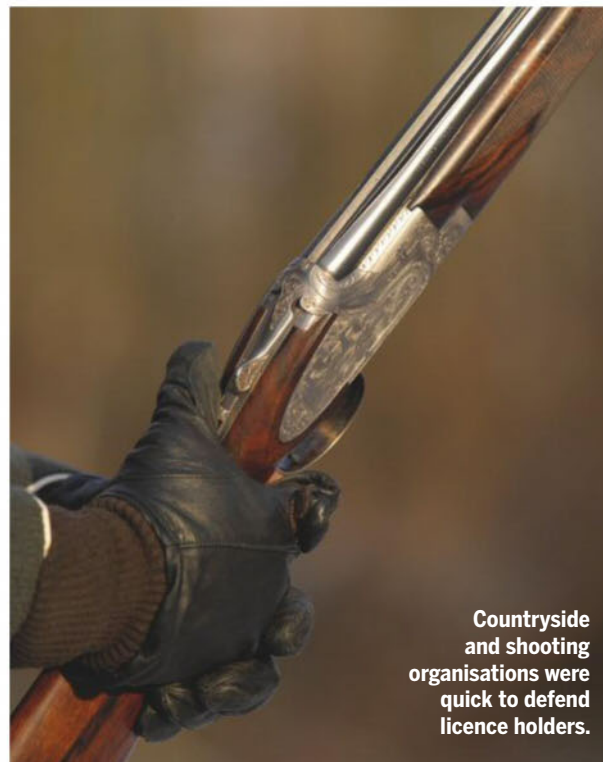
The Lincolnshire GPs were acting under instruction from the LMC, which had supplied a template letter stating: "If we [the GP] do not receive your consent, and the fee, within seven days of this letter, we will write to the police to inform them that we are unable to examine your medical records for the purposes of providing information in relation to firearm licensing. We will state in this letter that they should assume that you have a condition which would prevent you from holding a licence."

The Countryside Alliance immediately threatened legal action on the grounds that

the GP appeared to intend to mislead the police by insinuating the existence of a medical condition. The existing Home Office guidance actually states that licensing authorities are to assume there are no concerns if GPs do not provide the initial medical check within 21 days.

Following the Countryside Alliance's complaint, the Lincolnshire LMC changed its advice to GPs, accepting that non-payment would not stop application of renewal progressing. But it also released a statement that Lincolnshire Police intends to implement a policy where no licences are granted or renewed without a medical report being made available. On the LMC's advice, a fee of £40 to £50 + VAT is being considered for early 2018 implementation.

The Countryside Alliance has contacted the Lincolnshire Chief Constable and Police and Crime Commissioner, as well as officials in the Home Office, to seek clarification on these plans



Countryside and shooting organisations were quick to defend licence holders.

while BASC dubbed the medical fees "illegal" and has also contacted police officials.

Paul Dale, manager of BASC's firearms team, said: "We understand the LMC has now advised practices not to issue the letters. But it appears the

LMC and Lincolnshire Police are determined to continue operating outside the Home Office guidance on firearms licensing, which provides a national framework for processing applications and renewals." ■

Clarification on the price of the William Evans St. James

Further to our review of the Wm Evans St. James we received the following from general manager Alastair Philips: "The price point was chosen based on Perazzi's own RRP's in the UK. We didn't want to add £2,000 on top of the price for having our name on the side. The uplift from the actual SC3 is the extra time in the more

perfuse engraving and wood quality. Also, as the majority of our clients are game shooters this comes with an auto safety as standard in the price which would otherwise be an optional extra. We have deliberately not wanted to be greedy on the margin, and offer a high build quality, custom over-under sub £20,000". ■



Further to her obituary of Graham Cox in our November issue, Joan Hayes continues her tribute to our late colleague...

I last saw Graham on November 28 last year at the Home Nations Field Trial for retrievers, held at Windsor Great Park to celebrate HM The Queen's 90th birthday. Graham walked all day, as always taking a great interest in the excellent dog work. It was obvious, however, to his friends that all was not well, and earlier this year we received the news that he had been diagnosed with motor neurone disease. Since then some £15,000 has been raised in Graham's name, a great deal of it coming from the Gundog fraternity.

Graham was a senior lecturer in social and policy at Bath University from 1973 (Ed. Not 1978 as was stated in the November issue) until his retirement. His particular interest was rural sociology. He also contributed to the first issue of *Shooting Gazette* back in 1989 and featured in over 300 subsequent issues, even contributing to the magazine during his illness.

I hope you will forgive me for a personal note: in the January 2015 issue of *Shooting Gazette*

Graham made reference to the 2009 CLA Game Fair at Belvoir Castle when my father and I, the late Edgar Winter, along with our kennel name 'Staindrop' were honoured at two Gundog events.

As was mentioned last month, Graham, together with co-author Dr Gareth Davies, collated and wrote the book *The Best of the Best*, which celebrated 100 years of the IGL Retriever Championship. Graham was a member of the Retriever Championship judging team in 2012. He had a remarkable memory for statistics, as well as occasions and events.

Graham so often referred to the 'little' book *The Idea Retriever and How to Handle Him*, written by Vincent Routledge in 1929. He was also very proud of his own book *The Gun's Dog*, published in 2014. The title explains it all.

Marilyn Cox, Graham's wife of 47 years, has been overwhelmed by the innumerable messages of condolence since Graham's passing, for which she is truly grateful. ■



The late Graham Cox contributed to over 300 issues of *Shooting Gazette*.



ARE YOU READY TO ENTER THE RBSS HANDICAP CHALLENGE 2018?

Shooting Gazette, together with its sister titles *Sporting Gun* and *Shooting Times* are delighted to be the media partners for the Royal Berkshire Shooting School's (RBSS) Handicap Challenge in 2018.

We are excited to announce that with our kind sponsors, Sunseeker London, we will be offering a fantastic prize of £500 in cash for each magazine's Top Gun.

Participants can shoot the Handicap Challenge course at the Royal Berkshire Shooting School from March 5 to April 25, 2018, for an entry fee of £49.

Readers can use the vouchers printed in the magazines in the New Year and enter the magazine challenge alongside the main competition to be in with the chance of bagging £500 and to win the title of *Shooting Gazette* Top Gun.

The Handicap Challenge is renowned for its unique handicapping system, which gives average club shooters the chance to compete on a par with high-level competition shots and have a genuine chance of winning.

Dylan Williams, owner of the Royal Berkshire, said: "With extensive developments at the Royal Berkshire over the last year, we will be able to give competitors exciting new challenges and with the benefit

of the unique handicap system, literally anyone can win!"

"Browning have yet again been incredibly generous in sponsoring the top prize of a Heritage and with continued support from Gamebore, we are able to offer superb weekly prizes. Now that Sunseeker are also on board, readers will also have a chance to win £500, which is a marvellous addition for 2018."

The culmination of the Handicap Challenge will see 60 finalists meet at RBSS for the final on May 8, where the top 40 CPSA handicapped scores and the top 20 RBSS handicapped scores will be invited to go head to head over a new 100 target layout for the title.

Hannah Rought, marketing executive for the shooting titles at Time Inc UK, said: "Once the shooting season is over, readers of *Shooting Gazette*, *Sporting Gun* and *Shooting Times* have the opportunity to showcase their clay shooting prowess and, with thanks to Sunseeker London, we can reward our talented readers with a huge cash prize."

Be sure to keep an eye out in the upcoming issues of *Shooting Gazette* for the coupons to redeem your place to shoot for the Top Gun prize and mark the dates in your diary. ■

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Shots from the shires by **John Walker**

Whilst trying not to revisit issues covered recently there are exceptions that are irresistible, especially as the season of goodwill draws ever nearer. The National Trust's AGM, held in that leafy backwater, Swindon, was riven by dissent as attempts by a small clique driven by outside influences to persuade the 5m members to outlaw trail hunting on trust land failed. It would probably have been unenforceable had it succeeded, but true to form the group behind the failed motion are crying foul and demanding a replay. Should we question how, in today's world of social media and social conscience, democratic decisions are routinely challenged in law and elsewhere by the

snowflakes whose views have been outvoted.

At a conference organised by the GWCT and Natural England (NE) recently delegates were told that 'we are all rewilding now'. This might have come at a tricky moment for the bods from NE who are still wrestling with the application to re-introduce Eurasian Lynx, but would have come as manna from heaven to those beacons of common sense, a group called Rewilding Britain. Led by Helen Meech, this bunch want to bring about the mass restoration of ecosystems in over 1m hectares of land and sea, pushing for the reintroduction of 'key species' such as lynx, wolf and bear. Supporters include George Monbiot and Bill Oddie, though probably not Brian May, as lynx and wolves will predate badgers. And hedgehogs.

The message of the rewilders is we owe it to our children to let them see what we once had running about the place and indeed, still do in Mid Wales, after a lynx escaped from captivity. Talk to the Swedes, who have just had to issue licences to shoot lynx as, reintroduced, they have become intrusively prolific, or the French shepherd who watched bruin chase 200 of his finest over a cliff to their deaths, or people in Oxfordshire who had to shoot an escaped wolf to stop it eating dogs. We haven't seen a lynx here since the 7th century, bears since the 10th or wolves since the 17th, so by my reckoning, it will be Arctic lemmings next, but they are already the things that have been stuffed and mounted. ■

*Under the coverts with...***Lady Melissa Percy**

Founder of country clothing label Mistamina

**How did fieldsports shape your childhood?**

They've been a huge part of my life. All of my favourite memories are of things like playing with fish Dad would catch when we were too small to cast the rod...we got to do the exciting part! All six of us in my family shoot, so it's special family bonding time for us and the only time nowadays when we spend the whole day together.

How does fieldsports inspire your collections for Mistamina and how do you balance fashion with function?

I've always known what I wanted and needed for both style and comfort out in the field, which is why I started Mistamina. I wanted to create a fresh take on countrywear that's practical

too. There's room to move around in my clothes, patches for both comfort and style and I've chosen warm materials so you can last the day without having too much of the wrong thing on.

I've always loved a bit of colour too that isn't pink or purple and I particularly like wearing my shirts out in the country.

What are your Christmas shoot days like and who are you with?

Christmas time shoots are spent with immediate family, uncles, cousins and friends.

They are definitely my favourite days.... lots of Percy dogs, delicious food and lots of laughs and teasing while shooting some sporting birds. ■

My dream team

By Louise Gray

Countryside journalist and author

It would be women only, but men are welcome as loaders. I've been to ladies' shoots before and there is just such a great atmosphere. I think women tend to be very supportive and there is a greater emphasis on having a go and taking an accurate shot, rather than shooting as many birds as possible. Also it's an opportunity for some girlfriends who have never shot live quarry before to have a go.

I'd invite friends I've met at shooting clubs. **Mhairi Morris** from Gladrags and Cartridge Bags and **Victoria Knowles-Lacks** from the Shotgun & Chelsea Bun Club. My Goddaughter **Tosca Tindall** is another competent shot. I'd also ask *The Field's* recipe writer **Philippa Davis**. Also my sister-in-law **Claudia Gray** so she too can be relieved of the shoot lunch and try shooting birds for the first time with good teachers around. As loaders I would invite **Chris Douneen** from the West London Shooting School to keep beginners on the right track. My Dad **Duncan Gray** would be my loader and I would borrow his single barrel Boswell

shotgun. We would bicker constantly, but it's nice father-daughter bonding.

The shoot would be at Little Haugh Hall near Bury St. Edmunds, which was a runner up in the 2016 Purdey Awards and is an excellent conservation driven shoot. I'd invite the owner **Kelly Partridge Hicks** to be one of the guns and to bring along her husband **Stephen Partridge Hicks** as a loader. The emphasis would be on cock pheasants only and we wouldn't expect a massive bag, as I know the farm does not stock too heavily.

My younger nephews and nieces would be invited along to be beaters as small people are more able to get under the canopy and it's fun day out for them. Well trained dogs would also be invited.

The lunch would be a mix of beaters and guns gathered around in a working barn with plenty of chat about the wildlife and conservation work on the farm. It would be hot soup and a pie, and perhaps a tot of sloe gin. We would have a couple more drives in the afternoon to work up an appetite for cake by the fire.



After tea we would all have a lesson from chef **Tim Maddams** on how to pluck, gut and prepare pheasants for the pot. There would also be a demonstration by one of the guns, **Liz Phillips**, an artist based in Aberdeenshire, who makes jewellery and accessories out of pheasant feathers.

We would all dress for dinner and enjoy a glass of English sparkling wine produced by **Pod Crowther**, another participating female gun, from Tuffon Hall Vineyard in Essex. Tim would cook us roast pheasant with game chips. The boys can do the washing up. ■

The Ethical Carnivore: My Year Killing to Eat by Louise Gray is now available in paperback

TALK OF THE TRADE

Sage advice from those in the know about how to get in and get on in the shooting world...

Michael Louca owner of Watson Bros.

New blood needs to be

hungry: I have always said I don't want the most talented, I want the person, regardless of background, who will try their hardest. We reject around 70 per cent of applicants because I feel they will be a bad fit for Watson Bros. I like them to have tried hard at school

and achieved good grades in Maths and English. If they belong to something like Army Cadets that is a bonus as they have already got good discipline.

Motivated staff will thrive:

Keep them interested in new things going on in the company, whatever that may be. It is always good

for staff to see the advantages of working for you. I always show everyone any shotguns I have purchased, especially any unique features. I enjoy the development of new models like our new over-under ejector system; my staff always find this of great interest and enjoy the chance of shooting the guns we make. Everything we do also gets discussed at our end of month lunch where we take a whole hour to sit together.

Don't lose sight of the past when moving forward: My innovation comes from my passion for different kinds of shooting and knowledge of

how a shotgun works. Our lightweight 12 bore over-under (6lb 8oz) keeps with tradition for those shooters who enjoy the pattern of a 12 bore gun and like to shoot light loads without dropping to a 20 bore over-under.

We are also just finishing our first hammer ejector; this has no safety and doesn't automatically cock the hammers which is more difficult. To complement the 30" steel barrels we are fitting extra 30" Damascus made from original Damascus forgings of which we have a large supply. ■



Game recipe of the month

Wild duck confit croquettes and gremolata

Lee Maycock is the development chef for Game to Eat (gametoat.co.uk)

Ingredients

- 8 confit duck legs
- Flour, eggs and panko breadcrumbs
- 10g chopped chives
- 1 lemon zest
- 1 small bunch flat leaf parsley
- 2 garlic cloves
- Olive oil
- Cornish sea salt
- Milled black pepper

SERVES FOUR PEOPLE

aside. Flake the duck meat from the bone, and form into small balls. Refrigerate and reform if needed. Season the flour and pass the duck through the flour to dust them.

Break the eggs and whisk together, pass the duck through the egg mix until covered. Add the chopped chives to the panko breadcrumbs. Pass the duck through the panko breadcrumbs until covered. Deep fry in hot oil until golden and place onto kitchen paper. Serve the croquettes with the gremolata. ■



Method

Chop the parsley and garlic and add the lemon zest to a little olive oil and season to make the gremolata and set



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BROWNING

Dear Uncle Giles...

Putting your mind at rest concerning issues in the field and beyond.



Dear Uncle Giles,

What do you give, for Christmas, to the shooting man or woman who has everything? My recently acquired in-laws, for example, are keen shots and appear to have absolutely everything they need. I want to make a good impression as a dutiful son-in-law, obviously, but they could also be the source of some cracking days out if my limited hand is played cleverly.

PMJ, via email

Uncle Giles writes

The key to presents for those who have it all is to give them something they didn't realise they needed. Old things tend to fit the bill; from a vintage silk scarf to an antique ebony and brass cleaning kit. Ivory-handled boot pulls to get their boots on or a fine mahogany jack for

getting them off again. Similarly, hip flasks. They may, indeed they doubtless will, already have a personalised version; but is it silver and covered in real crocodile? Does it come with a matching set of exquisitely engineered cups? These are the things that make the difference. A cartridge belt holding a dozen or more individual silver and glass cartridge drams? A cartridge magazine that doubles as an elevenes hamper?

Customised sticks are a good option. An elegant stag-horn version with a discreetly engraved silver band, perhaps? Or a weighted wading stick with a comfortable fallow buck section that moulds to the hand when braced in some noble river as the fly comes round, with their favourite lure embedded in resin, for good measure?



BOB ATKINS

A gift whereby the hospitality is taken care of on a shoot day would surely be a real treat for those with everything.

No one can have too many pairs of shooting stockings and I am talking stockings here, the full four-needle, reinforced heels and toes self-supporting version in mixed Sussex Down and baby alpaca hand-spun yarns, not the mere socks that everyone can buy in any West End gunshop.

But the thing, in my experience, which such people lack is time. So why not give them a voucher for one of the many sporting chauffeur

services which abound these days so that they can enjoy their next outing to the full and be decanted back to the old homestead in drowsy comfort? Or rent them a caterer for the weekend so that they can entertain at home without lifting a finger except to sample another delicious morsel. Time is the ultimate luxury. And stress-free time exceeds even that. You never know, you might even be asked to tag along. ■

Points of law

Peter Glenser, firearms barrister and BASC chairman, answers your questions on shooting and the law.

Q What does the law say about disposing of firearms one no longer wishes to possess? Is it just a straightforward trip to the police station to hand them over?

A There are a number of ways to dispose of an unwanted firearm – what you must not do is simply dispose

of it or deactivate it yourself. As you say, the easiest way is to simply take it to the police station. The police will have it destroyed unless it is of sufficient historical interest to warrant being held in a museum or by other official party (assuming such historical interest is recorded by the police).

Not all police stations have the facilities to accept firearms

and you should check on the website of your local force to see if they have any special arrangements.

It would be wise to speak to your FEO and tell them what you are doing in advance and seek their advice. Be sensible and keep your gun slipped at all times. Not all police officers will be overjoyed to see you arrive in the station with an unslipped gun, and it could lead to an awkward and potentially dangerous (for you) misunderstanding of the sort that you really don't want to have. Some forces will even

come and pick up the item from you if you are unhappy about transporting it.

There are of course alternatives. Your local RFD may well take it off your hands, as may one of the specialist auctioneers. The latter will certainly be happy to advise you as to the item's worth and there is a market for practically anything. You could, of course, have it deactivated and simply hang it on the wall. Whatever you do, make sure your licensing department know what's happened to it. ■

Peter's advice here is intended as a guideline only and all readers are advised to seek further advice. If you have any legal questions for Peter Glenser, email them to Martin Puddifer: martin.puddifer@timeinc.com

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Shooting gallery

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PICTURE OF THE MONTH



Adam John Neale has been in touch with this image of his shooting-themed wedding cake. Adam said: "We met on a shoot day through mutual friends in which I was a gun and my now wife was picking-up for me." Congratulations, Adam, we'll send you some bubbly to help continue the celebrations!



The team from the walked-up day's shooting over Braque St. Germain, featured on pages 88-89 of this issue. Georgina Hudson (left), Ian Hendy, Annette Kastner, Winni Kaufer, Stefan Hoppe, Jez Thornton, Sebastian Schreiber, Karola Richards & Doug Virtue.



Pictured are the guns from the shoot day at Stainton Estate, Lincolnshire, which is featured on pages 24 -29 of this issue.



The guns at the Rectory Farm shoot, Essex. John Offord (left), Peter Sturla, Brian Sewell, Will Shipton, Christopher Cole (shoot captain), Chris Attle, Malcolm Reid, Joe Imrie, Duncan Canney & Steve Knight. Back row: Simon Garnier (helper).



Eskdale Shooting Services' partridge shoot, Scottish Borders. Wilson Young (left), Jackie Clarke, Mary Walker-Smith, Richard Clarke, David Walker-Smith, Dick White, Wilson Young Snr, Jon Kean, Simon Clarke, Wendy Westlake, Stuart Clarke & Richard Westlake.

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RICHARD CORRIGAN

The Irish chef on new ventures, the challenges of cooking game, and giving something back to the countryside.

So what have you been up to, Richard?

"I've been flat out...at our hunting lodge in Ireland, busy putting down the foundations of an amazing future horticultural operation. We've been at it for the last three years. It's called Virginia Park Lodge and it has taken over my life a little bit. We've had lots of fishing parties there, fly fishing on Lough Sheelin for the wild trout. Lough Sheelin has had huge issues with pollution over the last 50 years, but the lake looks like it's beginning to come good now.

"And of course grouse started the season off at Corrigan's and Bentley's. I also had my first mallards of the season on the menu at Corrigan's last night. It's such a great time of year."

Have you managed to shoot yet this season?

"This is the first year I haven't been shooting. I normally go up to Northumberland as a guest of someone who has an estate up there. I didn't go this year because the lodge has pulled me away from what is normally a quiet month of my cooking life. Of course, the lodge is flying now in Ireland; we've had a lot of things going on, from weddings to shooting parties and get-togethers. We are just laying out the plans for the next part of the evolution.

"So, no, I haven't been out shooting yet, which feels really odd. I'm usually out every year and have been across the Pennines and of course over to Northumberland. I like woodcock. I'm not a great duck shooter but I love a bit of snipe. I'm keen to get out, but it won't be until late in the year."

Where do you usually try for your woodcock?

"The Midlands of Ireland on the Meath and Cavan borders. I know the general feedback is that woodcock numbers have been low,

INTERVIEW: ROBERT CUTHBERT

but I can tell you right now that simply isn't the case in this area. There's a really decent stock on the ground. We just take a couple of them, it's all we need. A rough shoot with a couple of really, really good, friendly shots is such great fun."

Is that what is in your heart, rather than driven pheasants or partridge?

"Ah yes, I enjoy walking-up a ditch in a wet, boggy field! I have to tell you, that is more fun to me than anything. Shooting for the

"People try to tell me that a piece of organic farmed fish is as good as a bit of wild salmon. There's not a chance it's as good – not in a million years."

table, using up everything that we bag is really my home."

How did you discover shooting?

"We used to breed Jack Russell terriers for fox hunting as kids. Our Jacks were very special. We were brought up on foxing, hunting and rough shooting for rabbits. We fished and shot for our dinner. That is how we were brought up and that is how we ate. We ate bloody well too. Once you have been brought up like that there is no going back. People try to tell me that a piece of organic farmed fish is as good as a bit of wild salmon.

In my opinion there's not a chance it's as good – not in a million years."

Your first shot would have been taken at your father's shoulder?

"I must have been about 10 when I took my first shot: a rabbit with a .22 rifle. A gorgeous little spring rabbit, which was dispatched and on a cast iron pan before you knew it. The whole tapas thing was very big in our house. I still think that a little bit of young rabbit, dissected, and salted in the pan and then eaten with your fingers has to be one of the tastiest things you could possibly eat. Especially when you get a bit of crisp on it. They can really take a beautiful colouration in the pan. Once you cook it, you just have to bite it and chew it and use your jowls. God almighty, that flavour is just magic! When do you ever see wild rabbit on the menus in London restaurants? You have to really go out looking for them."

In fairness, really good game cookery is not that easy though, is it?

"I was in Corrigan's in Mayfair last night and we've got a really good team in there. We had some amazing mallard that had just come in; absolutely brilliantly shot.

"I had a look at our old chef and he said "Yes we just use the crown of the duck". I said, "You bloody won't. Make sure you take those legs off and give them a quick salting for an hour, rub them with a bit of thyme, wash them off and then put them into a little bit of duck fat and poach them very gently for a couple of hours".

"I'll be honest with you, there is enough meat on the leg to keep them, there really is. You serve that mallard medium rare, it doesn't need a lot, make sure that there is a lot of butter in the pan. Rest it well and then serve it with some beetroot from the garden. Put the beetroot in some tin foil with a dash ►





of Cabernet Sauvignon vinegar, a touch of sugar, a pinch of salt, some thyme, a smidge of garlic – and bang. I served those with mallard last night. I have to say, they were bloody stunning. You don't need jus, sauces or any of that nonsense. You just don't. You need soft vegetables with a sharpness in them...a bit of acidity. Use a bit of fruit if you are feeling flash. Its not hard, it's just taste that we are looking for."

Who would you choose as regular shooting buddies?

"I've shot in the north of England with Mark Edwards from Nobu who is a big-time shooter. When I'm shooting in Ireland I tend to shoot with a chap who makes boats: Declan Sheridan.

"Sometimes he just gives me a little tap on the shoulder and says, "it's time to go home now, Richard. Calm yourself down. We can come out here again". I also shoot with a chap who has his own abattoir, a butcher. They come from a place called Old Castle in West Meath. These people fought for Lough Sheelin as children, in the Sheelin Campaign in the 1970s and 1980s. It's a community that stands out from the rest. Sometimes

"You don't need to go out and shoot yourself sore to enjoy yourself. It's about truly appreciating the beauty of the countryside."

I think we are all doing good, then I think... maybe not. We have never put our arses on the line. These people did and I have huge respect for them.

"One thing about buying the lodge in Ireland is that I have got to know these people again. I knew their names and I kind of knew them a bit, but you know...I didn't knock on their door and say "I want to be your buddy".

"Declan came to see me about making boats for the lake at the hunting lodge, and he has been an incredible help with other things as well. I showed him a picture of an Adams-style garden chair from the south

of England. And he said, "There's an old oak on the estate, why don't we get that pulled down and milled and then put away for a couple of years. I'll get one of my lads who builds the boats to make that chair over the winter".

"It's that country, that craft, that time to enjoy the wilds, to enjoy the moody darkness, the leaves falling. It is very special. You don't need to go out and shoot yourself sore to enjoy yourself. It's about truly appreciating the beauty of the countryside. You take a little bit and you give a lot back."

Now, a bucket list...is there anything you absolutely long to do?

"I would love to go stalking in Scotland. I have a deep, deep appreciation just for the environment. I would love that. The sport part, I get, I understand.

"I'd like to go with an environmentalist as well as a good shot. I really love learning about the environment. I've actually been on a massive planting campaign in Ireland recently with some great people helping me out. I am really humbled by the amount of help people want to give in order to make a difference to the countryside." ■

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*A trip to the Lincolnshire Wolds underlines
the true sporting variety of the county*

WORDS: MARTIN PUDDIFER | PHOTOGRAPHY: BOB ATKINS

Nimmy proved to
be an astonishing
opening drive.



It is common practice for a shoot to use its first drive as a means of gauging the quality of the guns before the captain decides where to go to next.

I often wonder how much emphasis guns put on a first drive when they are gauging the quality of a shoot that's new to them, and while both parties need to keep an open mind, there's no doubt there's as much pressure on the shoot as there is the guns to deliver. What if the drive is spectacularly, well... brilliant, and how does the shoot captain respond when asked, "are they all like that?" Of course, while there's no harm in a stellar curtain raiser like this, I suppose past experience has taught both parties the answer has to wait until the end of the day.

The reason for my pondering? It's simple. I don't think I've witnessed an opening drive like Nimmy, on the 8,500-acre Stainton Estate near Market Rasen, in an extremely long time.

It was a cloudy start with more than a little wind, and if the pencil diagrams in my little black shoot diary from the day are accurate, the birds were cannoning every which way from maize and over the line strewn across a flat strip of grassland facing a hedge-topped bank with a tall wooded area behind them.

Boy was it a challenge, at times like trying to catch fireworks when in full flow. Such was the fantastic showing I abandoned my own routine of trying to work out where I'd take the birds from my vantage point – the lefts and rights some managed were well out of my league – and so I just watched an enthralling spectacle that offered few moments to draw breath, even right up until the end.

Guns had drawn their pegs using playing cards handed out by former Roxtons man John Hatch, a softly spoken 60-something from Yorkshire who'd earlier been roaming the shoot room in a pair of blue, mud-splattered Gucci loafers. If any limbs or shotguns had been a little tight ahead of this November



Odd Hills showed some of the highest birds of the day and guns had to be on their mettle.



Stainton, kept by Tom Shaw (second right) is an estate for shooting people who prefer their commercial days to have a family feel.

day deep in the Lincolnshire Wolds then they could consider themselves stretched by the time the whistle was blown to mark the drive's end.

I joined the guns as they gathered up spent cartridges or sent their dogs to retrieve marked birds.

I wasn't sure whether to start my individual conversations with a "well shot" or a "they were tricky, weren't they?" given that everyone in the team – a blend of Nottinghamshire farmers spanning the generations – had either brought down some corks or been outwitted by the wind or the birds who clearly knew where home

"I don't think I've witnessed an opening drive like Nimmy in an extremely long time. It was enthralling."

plate was. Someone mentioned it would have been fascinating to have seen the bird's condensation trails – think dogfights during the Battle of Britain – and many offered

their own thoughts by throwing out different shapes with their hands and faces as the gunbus drove us away.

The quality of the opener – and the others on this four-drive day – was down to the focused efforts of headkeeper Tom Shaw, a local lad who returned to Lincolnshire after a spell in the top job at Charget.

If Nimmy was anything to go by, the 32-year-old wasn't lying when he said he hasn't wasted a second since taking the shoot on 18 months prior to our visit late last year.

The shoot didn't alter a great deal during Tom's very first season at the helm, but the second saw the first ►

of a number of changes, including the construction of four large pens, the introduction of 75 acres of strategically planted cover crops, and a 50/50 split between the number of pheasants and partridges released.

The decision to bring in more pheasants is seemingly paying dividends as the common ringnecks and Manchurian crosses flew like royalty across Beeches. It was a slower start than Nimmy and it probably needed to be to bring everyone back down to earth.

Tom saw to it that the beaters, while being very thorough, did not go too far into the cover on the hillside in case it caused too many

“Guns are taken to each drive in a battle-hardened gunbus, which gives everyone the chance to catch up on sporting business.”

birds to flush too early. Again, the entire line saw birds over their pegs – guns enjoying varying degrees of success, particularly on the right-hand end. “Is your second barrel working?” came the call from one gun to his neighbour as the smell of gunpowder wafted along the line. “You have to be selective with the treats too!” joked one gun as he rifled through the Quality Street as guns gathered for elevenses or to place birds on the game cart.

A bright future ahead

Game shooting has taken place at Stainton, owned by the Sutton family, for over 100 years and it would be interesting to know what past generations would make of the work Tom has carried out,

almost single-handedly, since his arrival in 2015. Nature has carved out the Lincolnshire Wolds for sport, and careful management of its valleys and woodlands has been complemented by its conservation work. We saw a number of woodcock on the day and the estate’s work on grey partridge and lapwing has also been recognised.

Though a shoot with a family coat of arms attached to it, Stainton is, under the family’s expressed wishes, no conveyor belt.

Guns are taken to each drive in the back of the battle-hardened gunbus which gives everyone the chance to catch up. It was the ideal way for guns to get to know Tom or John, the latter perching as he did near the back steps ready to be first out and on hand to direct guns to their pegs.

Living two miles from the shoot meant John, who hosted days at the shoot last season, interchanging with Bill Kirkby, never arrived flustered and late for a shoot day, and a comment he made towards our day’s end underlined his dedication. “I’ve always been interested in shooting, it’s my thing, and hosting days has been a way for me to get involved,” he explained.

He certainly did that, encouraging guns to be selective and not being afraid to make bold decisions about managing drives.

In turn, Tom has worked hard to make sure that shooting is sustainable right until the end of the season – they shoot three days a week here from October until February.

There are new drives being added, so it’ll be interesting to see how these fare. You could see work had already started on drives like West Hills – a tight, wooded valley where tree stumps are as common as saplings, guns finding that it’s to their benefit to have the gun nearly mounted to be in with a chance of bringing the soaring birds down.



The birds on Beeches were as varied as the landscape on this Lincolnshire Wolds estate.

The day closed on Oddhills, an appropriately named drive owing to a tree-covered hump, which was a real treat for guns standing 40 yards back from its base.

The wind really helped mark some of these belting pheasants out from the others, and as guns gathered back at the gunbus there was a clear indication of satisfaction on their faces. I think you’d like it here too. 🦌

For more information on the shooting opportunities at Stainton, visit sutton-estates.co.uk.



The area guide

How to get there, where to stay, and what you'll eat.



TRAVEL

Stainton Estate lies to the north east of Market Rasen. The nearest motorway is the M180. Sitting as it does in an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, the shoot is reached via tight country lanes and B roads, so be sure to make plenty of time for your journey, if only to take in the views. Market Rasen railway station is on the Newark to Grimsby line if you fancy getting the train.

STAY

With Market Rasen racecourse close by, there are numerous options. Our selection includes The Grange, a beautiful, award-winning Georgian Farmhouse, well versed in catering for shoot parties (thegrangelincolnshire.co.uk); Thorganby Hall, which nestles in the Lincolnshire Wolds (thorganbyhall.co.uk); and Papermill Cottages (papermillcottages.co.uk), self-catering in nearby Tealby.

CATERING

A fully-hosted day on the Stainton Estate includes coffee on arrival, drinks throughout the day, elevenses, a hearty lunch followed by local cheeses in the shoot room (provided by local cook, Becky Miller) and tea and homemade cake at the end of the day. A hosted day would see you and your guns (and additional guests) looked after from start to finish as well as transported between drives on the gunbus.

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Readers' letters

SHARE YOUR VIEWS Email: martin.puddifer@timeinc.com

A walk down memory lane

I was so pleased to read the article on Miltons in the September issue, as my brother, Frank, some friends and myself were some of the first guns to shoot there when Alan Milton started selling days.

Some years ago, Steve Potter, who lived in our village, had been helping us build up a partridge shoot on our farm. He and his friend Tim Farr decided to move to Exmoor and start a game farm, which was a great success. In the early 1980s he became involved with Alan, and he was astonished when he saw the quality of the birds. He called me and told me I must come and see it for myself.

We booked in to the Royal Oak ready for the next day, and what a day it was. Frank and I had never seen anything like it, as most of our game shooting had been at farm shoots. This was something different and the birds really tested us.

Alan and Steve ran a day for the then GCT and I was asked to shoot with the party. All the guns would be given a feast in Brian Mitchell's kitchen at midday, all prepared by his lady wife. We really enjoyed that period of our shooting lives.

So Miltons started a transformation on Exmoor. The hotels could now do business all winter as more shoots started up instead of closing after the summer holidays. And Frank and I are now 86 and 89 years old and are still enjoying ourselves with a shotgun.

Wilf Harris
Gravesend

LETTER OF THE MONTH

Friends for life thanks to fieldsports

How very true the editor was in the November issue when he observed, "Think of all the friends we have made over the years through shooting". It was pertinent to this octogenarian since I had just been enjoying a gift one such friend had sent me.

The way I came to meet Simon was pure serendipity. Though we weren't actually shooting together at the time, this was something that was soon to follow. I had recently spent time in a spinal unit following an accident and foolishly or otherwise had booked an English Channel wreck fishing trip. After being delivered to the quayside by my carer, the skipper assured him he would see me safely aboard. Wrong! I found myself spinning rapidly towards the deck until suddenly I was scooped into the arms of a young giant. Simon had leapt

across the deck to arrest my plummet and grinned broadly when I gasped, "I owe you one".

We had never met but both lived in Lancashire and whilst fishing was high on both our agendas, shooting was our shared ultimate passion. There is a 35-year age gap between us but the years don't count when we have one particular goal: goose shooting. Whilst my tally was well past 100, Simon's, in spite of several sorties, was zero.

The boating incident was 25 years ago and by the next season Simon had shot his first migratory pinkfoot on my favourite Scottish goose ground in the Lothians. Since then my injuries have forced me into reluctant retirement from shooting but Simon became a worthy successor to my rights on the estate. He gave me regular detailed telephone reports on the shooting and I felt I could never ask for more until the other day when he emailed me a recording of his last visit.

Dusk was gathering over the moor top flightline when goose talk announced the first parry of five pinks battling against a near gale. How Simon didn't drop his camera and reach for the magnum I know not. Instead he filmed his companion Andy taking a neat right and left. I learned later the pair finished with six geese between them. There was more filming at dawn the next day as around 2,000 pinks dropped in to feed untouched as the sun rose.

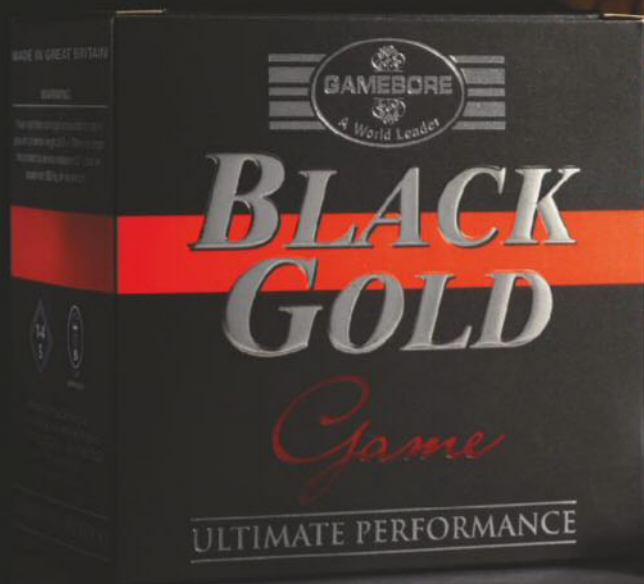
Edward Miller
By email

Ed. Thank you for this letter, Edward, what a fantastic story. It just goes to show that shooting is a broad church and that age should never be a barrier when enjoying a day in the field. I owe my sporting education to older people too numerous to mention. Here's to many more years of friendship for you and Simon.



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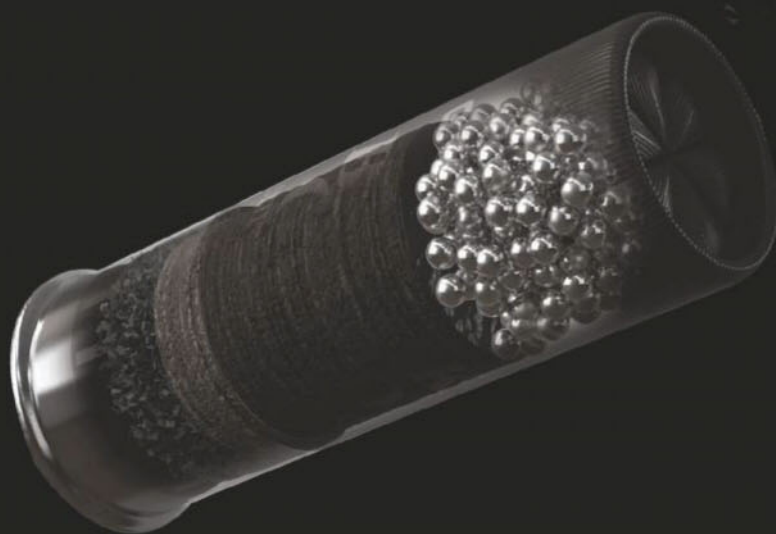
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THE second best day in DECEMBER

*When Christmas Day is done and dusted shooting folk can then concentrate on what always promises to be a fun day out with family and friends, as **Giles Catchpole** explains.*

The Boxing Day shoot is – or should be – the occasion when the youngsters become involved. When I was a lad it was the day when the junior members of the big house got to have a go at the pheasants and the rest of us would be dragged away from the new Scalextric to join the beating line. My mother prescribed fresh air and exercise on Boxing Day, while my father nursed

his port and mince pie hangover in the relative calm of Bracken Beds, until he was allowed a hair of the dog for elevenses.

There was always a degree of informality, if only in the sense that lunch was taken en masse in the fragrant surroundings of the hay store. The size of the bag at the end of the day was less important than the fact it included somebody's first ever pheasant. Hurrah!

It has been a while since I attended a Boxing Day shoot, but I dare say they haven't changed too much. Hosts tend to come in a limited variety of flavours. Father Christmas himself on the one hand and Ebenezer Scrooge on the other, with a limited palette of versions in between, all of which depend on the degree of dyspepsia occasioned by a massive consumption of food and drink the day before.

Boxing Day shooting



Those who have done the sensible thing and eaten and drunk only a little – but of the finest quality – tend towards the Jollity Hall end of the spectrum and will be wearing not only the wittily emblazoned “Bang! Bang! Bugger!” shooting stockings but the full reindeer antler earmuffs and Santa hat, complete with tinkly bell. Those who have overdone it completely, meanwhile, will be wearing a motley collection

of gardening clothes, purple Aviator Ray-Bans and the remains of the flowing white beard which the children decided to dress him in after he passed out on the sofa after lunch but which, rather unfortunately, they chose to attach with waterproof Bostik. The former will run the day with the unrelenting vigorous enthusiasm of a *Blue Peter* presenter while the latter will give the impression of a

silver-backed gorilla defending his territory and hand the reins over formally to the first person he claps eyes on over the age of 12, while he staggers off behind a tree to be ill.

The keeper, however, will be wondering whether it will be better to attempt to manage the beating line in order to keep some shred of organisation in that department so that at least a few pheasants might be seen to make stately progress ►

Boxing Day shooting

towards the serried ranks of 20 bores in the distance. He'll also be wondering whether to take over the administration of the guns in order to not only avoid being shot at by over-excited teenagers, but also to avoid the embarrassing scenario of finding himself repeatedly diving behind trees or under bushes on top of his employer's lady wife in order to avoid being enfiladed by the next generation of shooting enthusiasts.

Or indeed his employer's mother, or mother-in-law for heavens' sake, because it is often the case that it is Grandmama who insists on taking the youngsters out for a jolly good yomp to blow away some cobwebs and to give the children's eyes a rest from looking at a screen all day.

And grannies come, of course, universally equipped with perfectly trained small dogs – be they dachshunds, terriers, miniature poodles or indoor spaniels, which they insist on letting off the lead, obviously, because otherwise the little darling will pull like a tugboat on nitrous, and we can't have Granny falling about the place all day, now can we? Not at her age.

It's fair to say that the Boxing Day shoot is not the keeper's easiest day of the year, by any means. The rest of the beaters are, of course, the very young who are dressed up to the nines in as much thermal gear as can be laid hands on in the time between breakfast and assembly on the gravel before the first drive. Since the weather is unseasonably warm, however, and because rummaging through the undergrowth in pursuit of pheasants is quite hard work, especially if you are seven-and-a-quarter, and because when you are seven-and-a-quarter you give it everything you've got from the off and thrash every bush and bramble into submission regardless, you do tend to emerge at the end of the first drive looking quite red in the face and complaining loudly about

being too hot. If Granny is quick enough on her pins she might be able to collect the trail of discarded scarves, gloves and earmuffs that will otherwise decorate the environment for the foreseeable; and, indeed, be ready to reapply them after lunch when the temperature drops like a stone and the under-10s finally understand the meaning of "feeling the benefit!"

Keeping order both inside and outside

The remainder are those who are either still too young to shoot or those who have no inclination to do so. The former will be burning with a wholly understandable resentment that they have to wait another year

“My mother prescribed fresh air on Boxing Day, while my father nursed his port and mince pie hangover.”

or two before they can have a go, while their elder siblings are getting all the fun they can handle. The older ones would rather be doing almost anything else but don't expect anyone to understand that because no one ever listens to a word they say, after all, which is why their New Year's resolution is to become a vegan Goth.

Meanwhile, back at the house, Mum is on her third mug of double espresso and her second batch of sausage rolls because, of course, the Aga was turned up to maximum yesterday to cope with Christmas lunch and since no one thought to return it to normal levels before going to bed last night after charades, the thing is now hotter than the blast furnace down the ironworks and the first batch were

incinerated before you could say, "Partridge in a pear tree!" Still, there is always a Plan B, and if this lot go the way of all things, she will just have to improvise with the canapés, which were meant for the neighbours coming in for drinks this evening but they will just have to manage with the end of the smoked salmon – if the dog hasn't had it again – as well as some crisps and a couple of bowls of peanuts.

It's Christmas, for crying out loud, what do people expect?

Where do we fit into this seething maelstrom of tensions and emotion? Well, as an uncle and a roving gun of several years' experience and fairly questionable expertise, and depending no less than anyone else on the degree of self control which I managed to exert yesterday, I guess I can probably lend a hand here or there. I can manage one end of the beating line at a push, and I can carry a wide collection of discarded clothing as well as anyone. I can rub cold fingers and pull prickles and thorns out of sore hands with the best of them and I can jolly along a Granny like you wouldn't believe and remind her that kids, like some dogs, for example, don't have to behave perfectly all the time because it is Christmas after all.

I can stand with a teenager and explain the difference between a hen pheasant and an owl betimes, and suggest they put plenty of sky round their targets and that a bit more lead might be the answer if they want to hit them cleanly. I'll also tell them not to worry or fret about it too much because there is more to Boxing Day than just potting things and I'm absolutely positive they will get the hang of it in due course. Just like I did, because, yes, I was a teenager, contrary to popular belief. Once. As I expect you were. Once. Happy Christmas! 🦉

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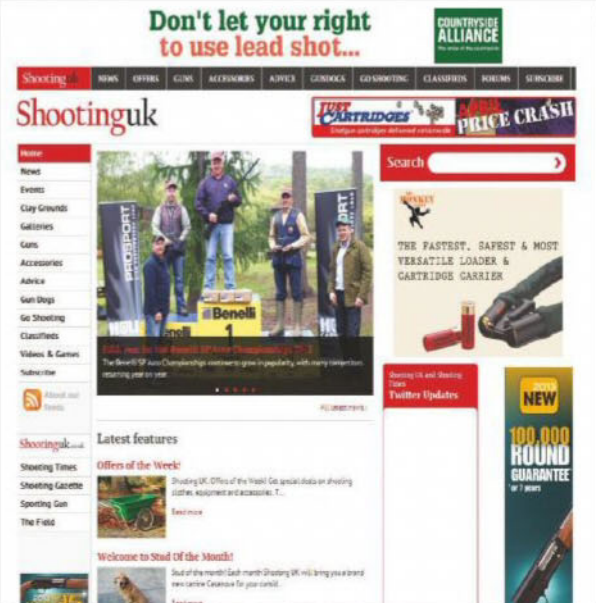
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THAT WAS THE YEAR THAT WAS...

Despite the shadow of Brexit and uncertainty about what the future will bring it's been a positive year for the UK's shooting industry. Helena Venables canvasses the opinions of figures from across the sport to find out their thoughts on 2017 and their hopes for 2018.

PHOTOGRAPHY: BOB ATKINS, CHRIS WARREN

Peter Glenser

Chairman, BASC

BASC's membership is at record levels because we are fiercely committed to representing the interests of our members. For the future wellbeing of shooting sports it's essential we connect with our members and deal with the challenges ahead in 2018 and beyond. Shooting must be sustainable to survive, and conservation and sustainability are key to what we do.

Another area we must continue to support is placing high standards at the forefront of what we do. Bad practice must not be tolerated, and we look forward to working with other organisations on this.

We're excited about the arrival of our new chief executive, Ian Bell, in February 2018. Ian has a passion for shooting and a clear vision of where he wants to take BASC.

Amanda Anderson

Director, The Moorland Association

There has been some great sport during 2017, which will keep everyone enthused about investing in year-round grouse moor management with its benefits to local communities, businesses and biodiversity.

Estates have been marketing their own grouse from moor to plate with a proliferation of pubs and restaurants selling the local dish. Twenty-four thousand hectares of grouse moors have now undergone peatland restoration work to improve the functioning of blanket bog and reverse impacts such as drainage, air pollution and historic wildfires. It is disappointing no hen harriers successfully nested on grouse moors in 2017 but we're delighted to see excellent collaboration with Natural England

over hen harrier sightings and nesting attempts. In 2018 we hope a ground-breaking licence to trial brood management of hen harriers will be forthcoming, and that the work gamekeepers do to manage unique moorland habitats and protect ground-nesting moorland birds is recognised in the government's environment plans for a post-EU environment.

Teresa Dent

Chief executive, GWCT

Twenty-seventeen has been characterised by what post-Brexit agri-environment policies should look like, and whether farmers and land managers will receive more support for the delivery of environmental goods and services and what form that should take.

We've been working with DEFRA and other conservation and farming organisations to try and answer that question. Our research has been used for many existing agri-environment prescriptions in schemes, and a few years ago we invented the concept of Farmer Clusters – groups of farmers working together, voluntarily at landscape-scale to improve wildlife and biodiversity on their farms: there are now 61 Farmer Clusters in England, involving 1,350 farmers over 277,000ha.

This summer we helped write and launch the new *Code of Good Shooting Practice* and in the autumn re-published our *Sportsman's Guide to Woodcock* with updated guidelines for shooting and conservation. Looking ahead to 2018 we will work for sensible, enhanced outcomes for game and wildlife, alongside economically viable farming. Our fantastic Scottish Game Fair will also be celebrating its 30th anniversary. ▶



The number of women participating in game shooting continued to grow in 2017.

Far right: Campaigns to encourage more people to consume game will seek to strengthen their positions in 2018.

Helen Benson

*Chief executive,
Gamekeepers' Welfare Trust (GWT)*

The GWT celebrated 25 years in 2017, which gave us the chance to hold a number of Gamekeeping for Life conferences to raise our profile. We were also supported through the Sandringham charity clay shoot organised by Holts and held by kind permission of HM The Queen.

Examples of our work included an approach by the family of a gamekeeper who took his own life, which led to the freephone Jamie's Helpline (0300 1233088). We also helped a gamekeeper who has MS and needed a wet room, sourced a springer spaniel for a redundant keeper who was at rock bottom, and gave general support to many others. Our sincere appreciation goes to everyone who has supported us; this means we can move into 2018 with renewed vigour and the resources to make a difference to gamekeepers and their families.

Liam Bell

Chairman, NGO

It's been another successful year for the NGO. The spectre of bird flu hung over us at the start and we helped the government draw up precautionary advice. We carried the gamekeeping message to the media and foiled many spurious news stories, which could have damaged gamekeeping's reputation.

We attended several game fairs, worked closely with police forces to combat poaching, ran numerous courses, published a new edition of *Sporting Shooting and the Law*, sat on the working group looking at Fenn trap replacements, and supported members. Twenty-eighteen will be characterised by Brexit negotiations and the uncertain long-term financial support of the countryside.

My wish is that politicians, environmentalists and the public

will have their eyes opened to the role gamekeeping and game shooting play in buoying up rural communities and in conserving wildlife and landscapes.

Stephen Mawle

*Managing partner,
Coverhead Estate*

Adequate spring pair counts and a brilliant hatching and rearing period from April to June boded well for the 2017 season. Having had two very poor breeding years in 2015 and 2016 due to cold, wet conditions we were looking forward to a return to good numbers this year but it was not to be. Along with many moors in our area we experienced mysterious sudden declines in brood numbers as the season grew closer.

I'm convinced that the cause was a widespread 'bulgy eye' (cryptosporidium baileyi) infection. Little is known about the new disease and we're left with only the tools of traditional moorland management – predator control, burning, monitored grazing and shooting pressure – to try and trigger a recovery. Limited experience from other previously affected areas suggests a two- to three-year recovery period in line with the crashes caused by worm before the advent of medicated grit.

Looking forward I'm sure we can recover. Grouse can bounce back from severe lows at great speed given the right conditions. It is a reminder grouse are truly wild game birds and the large annual grouse take we've collectively got used to over the past decade cannot be relied upon indefinitely.

Mark Osborne

Managing director, William Powell
We've had a busy season to date because we do an awful lot of grouse days. This year the grouse

have been good to very good, with several moors under the management of our associated company, JM Osborne & Co., producing significant quantities and hence lots of days' shooting.

The partridges also started well: the birds were fit in August, flying strongly, fully grown weeks before the season's start and have provided excellent sport since September. We are worried about the effects of Brexit, political uncertainty and the horrendous possibilities should Jeremy Corbyn ever come to power. Hence a lack of confidence is creeping into the marketplace, but then I am a cynical old dog who has probably seen it all before.

Daryl Greatrex

*Managing director,
Holland & Holland*

Twenty-seventeen has been a solid year in terms of sales. We're excited by the new facilities at our shooting grounds, especially our underground 'Schiesskino' rifle range, which uses state-of-the-art cinema-graphic technology and supports full-bore rifle shooting with live ammunition.

We recently opened a gunroom in Dallas, Texas, as the US is an important market for us, and business has been encouraging. We're looking forward to 2018 and expect strong sales and another busy year in both gunrooms and the shooting grounds.

James Horne

Chairman, James Purdey & Sons

In the spring we attended a series of events in the UK and around the world where hundreds of shooting enthusiasts tried a Purdey shotgun for the first time.

Brexit caused a sharp intake of breath: life appeared less certain for our British customers but the fall in the Pound had a positive effect on gun sales, particularly from the US. The grouse season has always attracted many US visitors, and whilst grouse numbers have been varied, we've not experienced the same level of cancellations as 2016, with many groups enjoying magnificent shooting.

We're now busy with the pheasant season and urge all shooting people to follow the Eat Game Awards (eatgameawards.co.uk), our campaign to encourage the wider consumption of game.

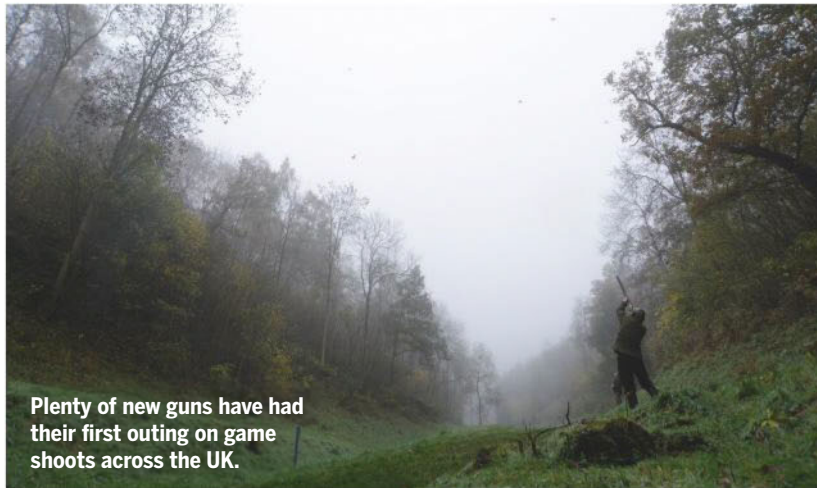
James Longthorne Stewart

*Managing director,
Longthorne Gunmakers*

We've had an amazing year at Longthorne. Sales have continued to grow, we've taken on two more apprentices (making a total of three) and continued to make significant investment in capital equipment.

We've installed three new machines in the past 12 months to ►





Plenty of new guns have had their first outing on game shoots across the UK.

enable further streamlining of our manufacturing processes, and have had more patents granted, including in China. We established our first overseas dealership in Belgium, took on our first sales manager, added Canada, Egypt, France and New Zealand to our list of export markets and sponsored young shooters Jack Halsall and Lucy Marsden.

The first Longthorne Demonstration Day at Sporting Targets was a real success and we look forward to repeating the event next year. We're currently working on our side-by-side model expected to launch before Christmas and the 'Boxlock' to launch shortly afterwards. In 2018 we're expecting further growth, more apprentices and more of the same.

Robert Sajitz

Chief executive, Blaser Sporting

We moved to new premises in Guildford, Surrey, this year, so we have more room for warehousing, stock and office space and can operate more efficiently.

We launched the first of our "try before you buy" days at Braces Shooting Ground in Bristol, which was a great success. Instead of spending our budget attending all of the game fairs and shows, I thought it would be fun and useful for current and potential customers

to come and shoot our firearms and see our products in action.

I'm looking forward to more of these days next year. Sales of our F3 and F16 shotguns were buoyant and I'm expecting to grow market penetration during 2018 as the F16 was voted best shotgun at the Shooting Industry Awards.

Richard Barnes

Sales manager, Kings Crops

This year we've seen a continuing move to greater use of wild birdseed on shoots. This has often been at the expense of maize crops as many game managers see the holding/feeding value of wild birdseed mixtures as well as the potential to spread costs by keeping kale-based mixtures for two years.

The results for the wider farmed environment are also notable, particularly for farmland birds through the winter. This is especially so when compared to the use of maize alone.

Looking ahead to 2018 we will see a further shift in government policy for farmers and landowners to deliver benefits to the farmed environment for the 'public good'. Ecological Focus Areas (EFAs) are now required for those with more than 15 hectares, where nectar flower and perennial covers can now be used.

Victoria Knowles-Lacks

Founder, The Shotgun & Chelsea Bun Club (S&CBC)

Twenty-seventeen was another stellar year for the S&CBC. We held some fantastic events, including our hugely successful National Ladies' Shooting Day in June, plus numerous clay and game days. We've seen the highest ever number of members granted their shotgun certificates and we're putting more emphasis on progression and facilitating next steps for women who have entered the sport.

We've also won more awards this year, including a prestigious one from outside the industry, and have great support from shooting grounds, our sponsors and our team of helpers and hosts. As we go in to 2018, we'll be increasing the S&CBC team and launching a new arm of the community. I look forward with enthusiasm to 2018, but right now I'm feeling proud.

Will Delamore

Sales and marketing director, Skinner's

We began the year in January sponsoring the English Springer Spaniel Championship and will finish in December by sponsoring the forthcoming IGL Retriever Championship. In between we've attended more than 40 shows and events, have continued to be the leading working dog food in the UK and Ireland, and have seen further growth in our market share as working dog owners, trainers and professional handlers use and support our brand.

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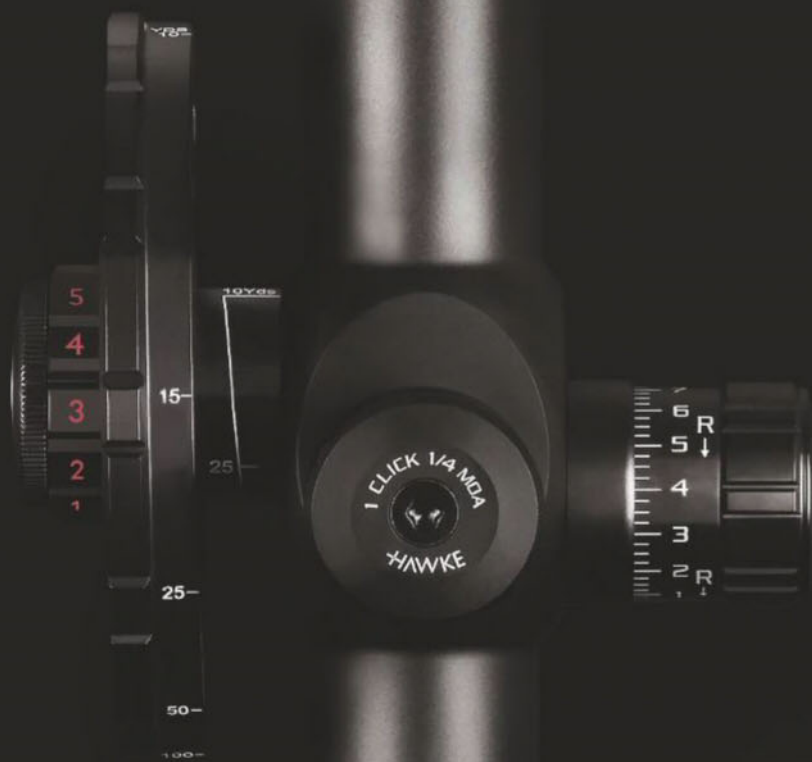
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Merry Christmas, everyone!

A time to get together with friends and family
on and off the peg. By **Martin Puddifer**.

What are you doing over the Christmas period? I know from having spoken to many readers during my tenure on *Shooting Gazette* that you are spread far and wide across our islands, so your routines and timetables at this end of the year might not always be one and the same. While we were busy putting this issue together I got to wondering about what you might be looking for to – or even dreading – about what I personally consider to be a very special time of year, and what role, if any, game shooting will play within it.

I have a picture of the ultra-organised amongst you sitting in armchairs ticking things off lists as long as your legs, warmed by the knowledge that you have catered

“I daresay your diaries are full to the brim with events occurring the evening after a day's shooting.”

for every eventuality – including announcements of marriage proposals and babies on the way – when the family comes around. No doubt the bird – whichever one you've chosen – and all the trimmings have been ordered from the local butchers or game dealer, leaving you plenty of time to buy those few remaining presents for your kith and kin (and dogs). And all that after having planned the get-together with the syndicate a few days before December 25.

There will be others, I'm sure, who will be leaving it later than others, content that they know exactly what they are going to buy, for whom, and when, so there's no need for them to dart about the market square or break their iPhone ordering online when the number of

shopping days until Christmas is still in double figures. I suppose it depends when you're reading this article. And whether or not you've finished planning the get-together with the syndicate, of course.

Christmas is all about family for many of us, but it's also the perfect time to reconnect with shooting pals past and present, and maybe even make a few new ones too. I daresay your diaries are full to the brim with events occurring the evening after a day's shooting, perhaps at the local pub or even somewhere a little more fancy. And then of course there's the coveted Boxing Day shoot for those lucky enough to get an invite.

Do you and your family/friends head out on Boxing Day? It goes without saying that it's a very relaxed affair when youngsters and dogs can have their first taste of game shooting with the pressure well and truly off their shoulders, and how many of us have gleefully taken our first ever bird on this special day? There's always one family member who will have overdone it the previous day and will need suitable inducement (or a stern look/word) to rouse them from their bed and into their shiny new shooting stockings ahead of the first drive, where of course they'll be banished to the farthest peg thanks to the draw having been made in their absence a few hours earlier. It could be a walk-one-stand-one affair, meaning they could either be surrounded by loud children for the second day in succession or have time for a sly nip of something from the flask to help them cope with all of the excitement. No matter what, it's fun, it's friendly and when it's over everyone can continue indoors in the warmth, surrounded by people they love and love being around. I hope.

Whatever you're doing and no matter where your sporting activities take you in December, I will simply say good shooting, be safe, be sensible and above all have a fantastic time while you're doing it! 🦅



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Oh, December...

Though the year grows ever older there is still so much to look forward to. By **Patrick Laurie**.

Summer now seems a long way off in Galloway. Skeins of geese have been passing to and fro over the landscape since the beginning of October, and their massed vocals reach a crescendo as we approach midwinter. The Solway is only a few miles away, and they follow the contours inland to feed on fresh grass wherever they can find it. I can almost set my watch by the distant skeins as I head out to feed my cattle, and the sounds carry for miles across the countryside. There are sometimes opportunities to intercept these birds when they fly under the moon, but this is beef and dairy country and our small patch of rough, rocky grazing is of little interest to them.

Perhaps my most memorable chance took place on a day of thick fog, when the cautious use of a wooden call managed to coax a party of two dozen geese down into the marshy ground. The fog was so thick that they had come within 20 yards before I could see them, and they back-pedalled furiously when they realised their mistake. Grey shapes blurred through the haze, and I brought down a left and right before the geese turned out of sight again and rose upwards on crackling, frenzied wings.

“There are few more chilling, spine-tingling sounds than the call of a vixen beneath an icy moon.”

On a smaller scale, wild duck arrive en masse in late November and turn the winter into a sparkling wonderland. Wigeon fall from the skies as if from nowhere, and our resident teal are boosted by an avalanche of incomers from the distant north.

The local pair of peregrines begin to sharpen their knives at this influx, and their favourite plucking posts are soon strewn with drifts of downy feathers. I always mean to set an automatic trail camera next to the best of these posts, as it would be fascinating to get a closer look at the butchery of a poor old cock wigeon.

My trail cameras are usually busy elsewhere during midwinter, keeping an eye out for patterns and movements of foxes. This is a crucial moment to hit

foxes hard, particularly when they are running together and setting up pairs. There are few more chilling, spine-tingling sounds than the call of a vixen beneath an icy Christmas moon, but the screams do not bode well for my partridges, which are also looking to establish pairs and make plans for the spring.

This is the first real year of my latest grey partridge venture, and I have some cause for optimism. We moved to this ground six months ago, and I have been impressed with the variety and diversity of habitats on offer to feathered game. Grey partridges are now so heavily associated with arable country in eastern England that it's easy to forget they can prosper in this kind of rushy, open landscape.

There is no formal record of when the partridges died out here, but it was probably around 10 or 15 years ago. Much has changed over that time, not to mention the explosion of badger numbers which now presents a considerable challenge to all ground nesters, but there is still room for hope. There is plenty of good cover and a nice mix of habitats to support a few coveys, particularly as I start to resurrect some old aspects of turnips and cereals to feed my cattle. The house is located by the best ground, and bantam-reared coveys will soon be able to walk out of the yard and into a patchwork of cover, which should grow better every year.

Trail cameras are an important part of the job because they allow me to see what is moving where, and this really helps to concentrate my efforts. Of course the real trials will come in a month or two when partridges start to display and stake out their territories, at which point they will be extremely vulnerable to sparrowhawks and buzzards. There is nothing I can do about this, but I can focus on removing the foxes and stoats which always have empty bellies and hunt this ground every day of the year.

December is a time to look ahead to the future. A huge amount of work beckons for 2018, but after a morning spent checking snares and filling feeders, it's nice to hunker down next to the woodburning stove and fantasise about a winter's day in the future when it might be possible to shoot a brace or two of our “own” partridges. 🦉

THE MOST WONDERFUL TIME OF THE YEAR?



The scale and formality of the day's shooting is immaterial, what matters is that you're amongst friends and family.

Sport around the festive period means different things to different people and here Robin Scott reflects on those special late December days in the field.

How many shopping days left before Christmas? Search me. I bought all the presents for friends and family back in July at a couple of country fairs. Job sorted. The same goes for the rolled brisket, ham, pork pie and giant rib of beef to see us through Christmas Eve to New Year. The order was placed yesterday. Nobody will go hungry. Or for that matter, go cold.

Much of my spare time last month was spent splitting logs. In fact I'm feeling pretty pleased and smug about things in the wood department – there's a pile of ash and oak in one of the sheds Sherpa Tenzing would struggle to climb. It will last until April.

I just wish my Dad, my shooting and fishing mentor since I was five, was still here to enjoy the festivities. He loved all that's Christmas. And for us kids the excitement kicked in four days or so before the event – plucking two or three brace of mallard and twice as many teal shot with his pal Bill on a flight pond outside the village. We ran a production line of sorts in that freezing cold garage of ours. They hate being reminded of it now, but my two big sisters were tasked with sorting the legs, back feathers and parsons' noses while I set about the chest and underwings. It was down to me to carefully place precious bronze mallard and barred teal feathers into plastic bags ready for fly tying in February as well. Dad took care of the rest,

PHOTOGRAPHY: BOB ATKINS

including the job of singeing away stubborn duck down with a lighted piece of newspaper. Never done it? Then you're missing out on one of the sweetest smells in shooting – second only to the heavenly scent of varnished paper-cased cartridges after being fired on a dank November day. Maybe a perfume maker will eventually bottle the essence and sell it through gunshops. It would fly off the shelves at Christmas: a whiff of either carries you back down memory lane to a host of happy memories.

Christmas Day was important to Dad because of what it meant for the family. But Boxing Day was all his. It was given over to shooting. Nothing grand, just a day with farmers and friends trimming up wild grey partridges. Oh, and hares, plus a very occasional pheasant. Whoever bagged one carried it home in triumph for a meal few others in the parish had enjoyed.

Talking of meals...the Yorkshire farmhouse feast served as Boxing Day 'tea' after all the guns had been cleaned, then propped in the corner of the kitchen, was something to behold. The scrubbed pine table groaned under the weight of ham, pies, pickles, cheese, apple pies and jugs full of cream skimmed that morning from the milking herd. Not enough? Then how about crate upon crate of foil topped bottles of William Younger's Double Century

Ale stashed a walk away in the flagged pantry? When Dad wasn't looking, I was given a glug. Nectar.

With a little help from my friends (and family)

Maybe it's because of these childhood memories that Christmas shoots, more than the rest, are the ones I still relish most. Doubtless it's the same with many other *Shooting Gazette* readers who take to the gun over the holiday period. Everyone, I'm sure, has a favourite way of celebrating in the field, even if it's just chucking up a few clays from the corner of a field for their grandkids to pop away at. The important thing is to get out there.

For me, the most memorable festive get-togethers have never been grand affairs because the success and fun of a day invariably hinges on how well the scaled down beating team performs. Keen youngsters and non-shooters out for exercise and a bit of fresh air can't be expected to perform like the usual team of pros; they need to be marshalled and kept in line by uncles and other helpers. Progress through woods and other cover is almost always a stop/start affair thanks to little ones getting tangled in brambles, or losing a Wellington boot. All you can do is suck on another toffee, and wait for the fits of giggles to die down.

The scale and formality of the day isn't important as long as it involves plenty of really good friends, family and relatives. ►

A sporting Christmas

Looking back, things were significantly easier when I lived at home. Thanks to Dad and his friends, shoot invitations were a 'given'. The question of "Where will we be going for Boxing Day?" never cropped up. The time and place had always been pencilled in the diary weeks earlier.

It was when I got a job as a cash-strapped trainee newspaper reporter that things changed. The invitations kept coming but, because I didn't have a car and lived too far away, I had to decline the offers. To make matters worse, Mum and Dad had, by then, moved 250 miles north to rural Perthshire.

The prospect of a first Christmas alone without the chance of working the dog filled me with dread. But then, Hallelujah! A few days before the break a local magistrate collared me in the Black Bull and asked if I fancied joining him and his grandson for a bit of ferreting on Boxing Day. The weather was awful, and the bag only amounted to a couple and half. Yet my word, it was so much fun. When the rains cleared, momentarily, the views down into Nidderdale were awesome.

'Normal service' resumed the following year. I received an invitation to shoot again on a farm eight miles out of town owned by my godfather, Stan. "Be here as usual for 9am, ready to go half an hour later." I agreed without a moment's hesitation, not thinking things through properly...

Have you ever spent Christmas Day alone? It's miserable. After a long lie-in listening to carols from King's College on the radio I popped a scrawny chicken into the oven then hot-footed it into the market square for a lunchtime pint. Back home, I chewed through a soulless lunch, listened to the Queen's Speech, had a nap, then ventured out for a few evening libations. Would you believe it! The

Bull was in total darkness, along with every other pub in town. The streets were empty. All I could see as I trudged back to my lonely flat were living rooms full of happy families partying and laughing. It was hideously Dickensian. But things were about to get worse.

Don't ask why, but it suddenly crossed my mind that United Coaches didn't run any services on Boxing Days. So I hung a left and went to the bus depot to check the timetable. Sure enough, the festive sign said: 'No services until December 27'. How could I have been so stupid?

No way could I phone now and tell my godfather that I couldn't make

"All I could see as I trudged back to my lonely flat were living rooms full of happy families. It was hideously Dickensian."


the shoot. So the only option was to walk. It took a smidgen over two hours with gun and cartridge bag, but I got there just as the first tea was being poured. The shoot and banter was brilliant, and the food a trencher's delight. Best of all, I didn't have to walk home: my godfather wouldn't hear of it. He drove me there. And guess what? After dropping my gun off I still had the legs to walk into town to find The Bull going hell for leather with everyone full of Christmas cheer. It was the best pint of Theakstons I've ever tasted.

Winter wildfowling

Good company is the ingredient that makes the best Christmas shoot. But shooting alone, with a dog alongside, can be lots of fun,

too. With nothing to do between Boxing Day and a walked-up day on December 31, I decided to take a look at one of my wildfowling club's flooded washes on the Wednesday. Evening flight was out of the question because there was a party to attend, and I went straight back to bed when I woke to find dense fog outside in the morning. It lifted just enough by lunchtime to drive through safely, so I decided to give it a go for a couple of hours and get back before the light went.

After parking up I edged along one of the drains for 10 minutes or so and settled in opposite a flooded field of spuds, the tops of which could just be seen poking through the white mantle. Mallard quacked and splashed way out towards the tidal river but as nothing had moved for half an hour, I decided to fire a shot and see if that might stir something up. Bingo. Birds started fighting overhead. One eventually came low enough, and I connected...with a gorgeous drake pintail. The shot put duck of every description into the air. I could hear mallard and teal overhead, but couldn't see them; the only birds that came into view were pintail, a rare prize in this part of the world and yet, here I was, surrounded by them. I popped my way through a pocketful of cartridges picking up six-and-a-half brace in all – strangely, every one a drake, not a lady among them. Next day I went back, and there wasn't a pintail in sight. Nor was there for the rest of the season.

This Christmas? Two pals are coming over to dig out the hedgerows and finish off with an evening flight, followed by steak pie and chips in the local. Dad's spirit will be there every step of the way. After all, he made sure he will never be forgotten when the gun comes out at this time of the year...slipping away as he did one Christmas Eve bang on the stroke of midnight. God bless him. 



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A LITTLE CHRISTMAS CHEER?

Celebrating a solid year's training and making a toast to the New Year. By **Roderick Emery.**

Human

It is now just over a year since the household was joined by the spaniel and, in all honesty, the puppy can scarcely be called a puppy any longer. It is perhaps appropriate therefore to consider, at this point, what progress has been made and what we, and the spanner, have learned so far. Well, the spaniel has learned to hunt and to retrieve like anything. No question there. Hunting and retrieving down pat, I reckon. Staying put and steadiness to game? Good enough, although there is always a difference, isn't there, between the closely controlled conditions of the pheasant pen or the chicken run and the unfettered excitement of the beating line or the – probably tethered – dynamics of the peg. Our ambition, of course, is to achieve the paragon status of not being nailed down on the peg and to be invited to hunt in the beating line. I'm not sure we have achieved these lofty heights quite yet but I am prepared to go out on a limb here and suggest that we are getting there.

What we have learned, of course, is that spaniels – even springer spaniels – are not scatty or mad or frenzied or any of the labels with which they are widely and commonly tagged. Bright, energetic and clever, for sure, but crazy they are not. They are thinking dogs who can size up a situation and a handler in a nanosecond and will apply their own, often startlingly innovative, solutions forthwith unless we can maintain control through the whistle and our personality. Which is exhausting, I grant you, and which is why, I suspect, a lot of spaniels tend to their own thing because their owners are too shagged out to keep up with them.

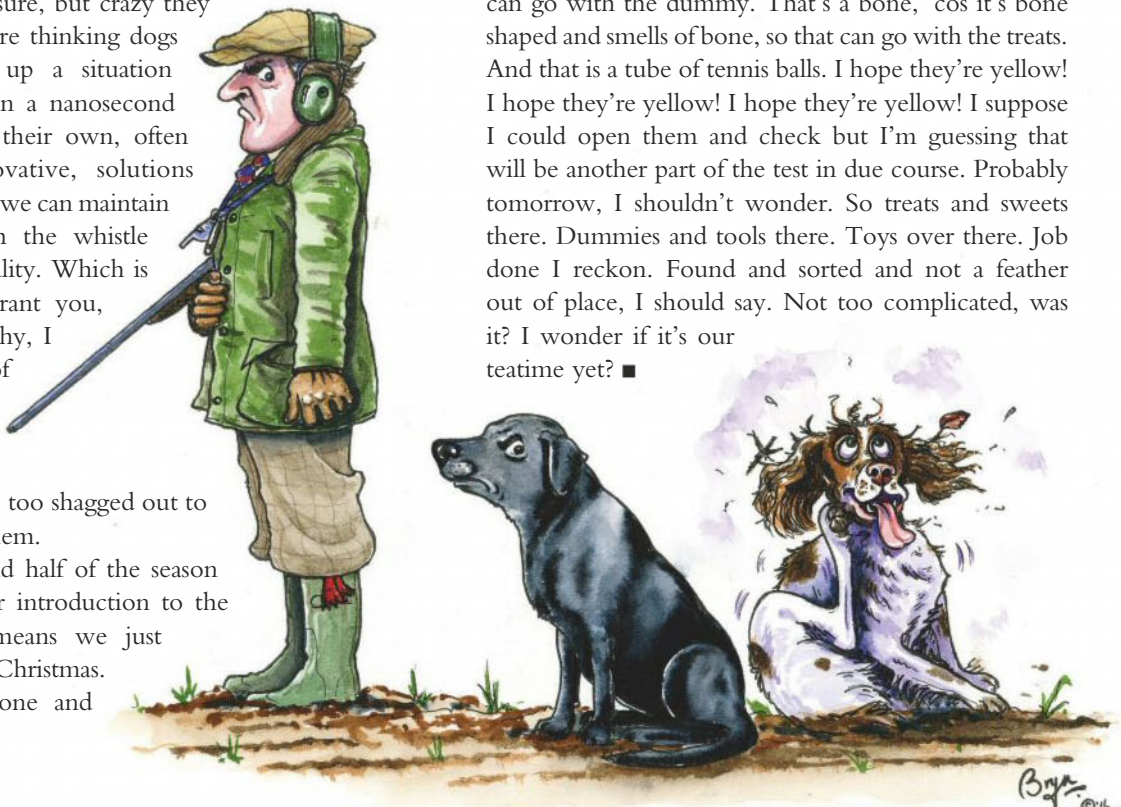
So the second half of the season beckons for our introduction to the field. Which means we just have to get past Christmas. Have a good one and fingers crossed.

Old dog

I know we are not allowed in here usually but this is a special time of year for them and so the rules are more or less suspended, you see. Now, hidden in that huge pile of glittery paper is a selection of chews, dummies, treats, toys and tennis balls. Yup, pup. You heard me right. Somewhere in that heap under the tree are all the things that keep you awake at night. All you have to do is find them. No, really. Help yourself. All bets are off. It's Christmas. Go wild, kid, go wild, why don't you? Hee! Hee! Hee! They'll be thrilled, I promise. I'll be waiting in the kitchen, OK? Knock yourself out.

Young dog

OK, if this is a test what am I being tested for? Well, I can't see what I'm looking for so this must be a scenting test. So what I need to do is to find all the good stuff by scent alone. Well, that's easy enough. That is treats. They stand out like a fish in a tree scent-wise, so I'll put them to one side over here. That's a fresh dummy, if I'm any judge, so that can go over here. I wonder if that squeaks – yes it does! So that can go with the dummy. That's a bone, 'cos it's bone shaped and smells of bone, so that can go with the treats. And that is a tube of tennis balls. I hope they're yellow! I hope they're yellow! I hope they're yellow! I suppose I could open them and check but I'm guessing that will be another part of the test in due course. Probably tomorrow, I shouldn't wonder. So treats and sweets there. Dummies and tools there. Toys over there. Job done I reckon. Found and sorted and not a feather out of place, I should say. Not too complicated, was it? I wonder if it's our teatime yet? ■





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New Krieghoff Pair

£25,700

K20 Parcours pair, 20 Gauge, 32" Barrels, Fixed choke 1/2 & 3/4, Narrow game ribs, Vienna style scroll engraved actions, Barrel selectors, Adjustable triggers, Pistol grip stocks, Superbly well figured matching wood, Very fast handling, Fantastic blend of German engineering with luxurious detailing.



New Browning Pair

£88,500

D5G Sideplate factory pair, 12 Gauge, 30" Barrels, Fixed choke 1/4 & 7/8, Narrow game ribs, Three piece forends, Numbered 1 & II in gold, Hand engraved sideplates depicting deep tightly wound scroll, Teardrops, Barrel selectors, Auto safe, 14 7/8" Pistol grip stocks with breathtaking honey Burr figured walnut, Complete in double presentation case, Exquisite balance.



Used Guerini Pair

£10,500

Forum pair, 20 Gauge, 30" Barrels, Multi choke, Narrow game ribs, Numbered 1 & 2 in gold, Sideplates with gamescene vignette surrounded with fine floral scroll, Barrel selectors, Auto safe, 14 3/4" Prince of Wales grip stocks with dark matched wood, Very fast handling, Excellent condition.



New Perazzi Pair

£28,000

MX20 SC3 Factory pair, 20 Gauge, 32" Barrels, Fixed choke 5/8 & 7/8, Narrow game ribs, Numbered 1 & 2 in gold, New style No. 100 deep scroll engraved action with detailed pheasant gamescene on the bottom plates, Barrel selectors, Auto safe, 15 3/8" Matched Purdey style grip stocks with deep figuring throughout, Double case, Very well balanced for all forms of driven quarry.



New Krieghoff Pair

£26,700

K20 Parcours pair, 20 Gauge, 32" Barrels, Fixed choke 1/2 & 3/4, Flat tapered ribs, Sovereign style scroll engraved actions with Germanic style, Barrel selectors, Adjustable triggers, Palm swell, Pistol grip stocks, Very well figured wood that matches perfectly, Both guns have stunning balance, Single guns also available.



New Perazzi Pair

£61,100

MX20 SCO Sideplate factory pair, 20 Gauge, 30" Barrels, Numbered 1 & 2 in gold, Sideplates with a deep scroll engraving carried out by hand, Barrel selectors, Auto safe, 15" Purdey style grip stocks with well matched wood, Precision balance with breathtaking looks, Complete in double presentation case.



Used Browning Pair

£19,400

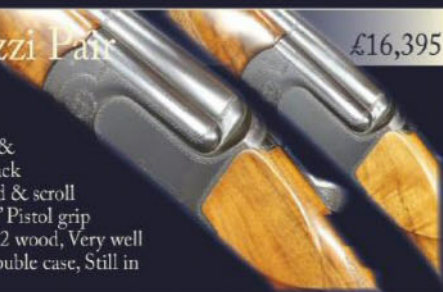
B25 B2G Game, 28 Gauge, 29 1/2" Barrels, Fixed choke, Narrow game ribs, Numbered 1 & 2 in gold, Hand engraved gamescene actions, Barrel selectors, 14 1/2" Matched rounded semi pistol grip stocks with deep figuring throughout, Breathtaking responsive feel and balance, Complete in double case, Immaculate condition.



Demo Perazzi Pair

£16,395

MX12 Black action pair, 12 Gauge, 30" Barrels, Fixed choke 5/8 & 3/4, Flat tapered ribs, Black actions with fine accented & scroll engraved borders, 15 1/8" Pistol grip stocks with upgraded SC2 wood, Very well balanced, Complete in double case, Still in immaculate condition.



New Beretta Pair

£27,600

DT11 EELL Running number pair, 12 Gauge, 30" Barrels, Multi choke, Flat tapered ribs, Sideplates finished with a deep scroll with dark accenting, Detachable & adjustable trigger, Palm swell, Pistol grip stocks with dark veining figuring throughout, Very stable feel, One of only a few pairs available in the country.



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New Rizzini



£2,675

Round body EM, 16 Gauge, 30" Barrels, Flush fitting multi chokes, Narrow game rib, Deep scroll engraved action, Blued parts, Barrel selector, Auto safe, 14 3/4" Rounded semi pistol grip stock with dark well figured wood, Traditional wooden butt plate, Well balanced gun and very versatile calibre.

Used Browning



£9,950

B15 C Grade game, 12 Gauge, 30" Barrels, Multi choke, Narrow solid game rib, Deep scroll engraved sideplates, Teardrops, Barrel selector, 15" Pistol grip stock with beautiful wood, Very refined balance, Superb condition.

New Browning



£18,795

B25 D5G Custom sideplate, 12 Gauge, 30" Barrels, Fixed choke 7/8 & 7/8, Narrow game rib, Three piece forend, Deep scroll engraved sideplates, Teardrops, Barrel selector, 15 1/8" Rounded semi pistol grip stock with dark veining figuring, Fully chequered concealed butt plate, Beautiful example of a custom.

Used Beretta



£10,250

451 EELL Side by side, 12 Gauge, 28" Barrels, Fixed choke 1/2 & full, Sidelock action engraved with tightly wound scroll, Blued parts, Pierced top lever, 14 1/8" Straight hand stock, Very rare, Immaculate condition.

New Blaser



£7,650

F3 Grand luxe, 12 Gauge, 30" Barrels, Flush fitting multi chokes, Flat tapered rib, Embossed style gamescene vignette surrounded by scroll, Barrel selector, Adjustable trigger, Pistol grip stock with deep palm swell for comfortable grip, Well figured honey coloured wood, Ready to accept balancing system.

Used Beretta



£22,100

SO6 EELL Sidelock game, 12 Gauge, 29 1/2" Barrels, Flat tapered rib, Teague choked, Gamescene vignette with surrounding deep scroll engraved sidelocks, Barrel selector, Auto safe, 14 7/8" Pistol grip stock, Beautiful honey wood with dark veining throughout, Superb balance, Complete in leather case, Exceptional condition.

New Browning



£14,999

B15 D Grade, 20 Gauge, 30" Barrels, Flush fitting multi chokes, Narrow game rib, Imitation three piece forend, Teardrops, Deeply engraved gamescene sideplates depicting Pheasant, Woodcock & Partridge, Pistol grip capped with scroll engraving, 15 1/8" Stock with capped butt plate with engraved finish giving a classic appearance, Exhibition grade wood and such a refined balance.

New Famars



£17,995

Excalibur sidelock, 12 Gauge, 31 3/4" Barrels, Fixed choke 1/2 & 7/8, Narrow game rib, Colour case hardened action, Auto safe, 16 1/8" Straight hand stock with exceptional figuring, Beautifully balanced.

Unfired Browning



£18,350

D4G Game left hand, 12 Gauge, 30" Barrels, Fixed choke 1/2 & 1/2, Narrow Game Rib, Three piece forend, Gamescene engraved action with surrounding fine floral scroll, Teardrops, Barrel selector, 15" Pistol grip stock with highly figured dark wood, As new condition, Exceptional feel & balance.

Used Beretta



£15,450

SO6 EL Game, 12 gauge, 29 1/2" Barrels, Multi choke, Flat tapered rib, Fine rose & scroll hand engraved sidelocks, Barrel selector, Palm swell, 14 7/8" Pistol grip stock with beautiful marbled figuring, Superbly balanced, Fantastic condition.

New Guerini



£4,750

Ellipse curve gold, 20 Gauge, 30" Barrels, Multi choke, Narrow game rib, Solid top & side ribs for a traditional look, Rounded action adorned with floral scroll with gold accenting, Barrel selector, Auto safe, 15" Pistol grip stock with highly figured wood, Wooden butt plate giving a easy gun mount, Very lively feel.

New Rizzini



£4,250

Round body EL, 20 Gauge, 30" Barrels, Multi choke, Narrow game rib, Gamescene engraving adorning the sides of the action with it flowing into a tight scroll on the underbelly, Barrel selector, Auto safe, 15" Rounded semi pistol grip stock with beautiful marbled figuring, Extremely lively feel.

New Perazzi



£14,100

MX20 SC3, 20 Gauge, 30" Barrels, Fixed Choke 3/4 & full, Narrow game rib, Fine scroll engraved action, Barrel selector, Auto safe, Palm swell, 15" Purdey style grip stock with beautiful dark wood, Superb balance.

New Famars



£11,995

Excalibur round action, 20 Gauge, 30" Barrels, Fixed choke 3/8 & 3/4, Narrow game rib, Action adorned with elegant scroll and detailed pheasant on the bottom plate, 15" Rounded semi pistol grip stock with honey wood and dark veined figuring, Effortless feel.

Great guns

Gunmaking historian **Donald Dallas** on the background to rifling which was inspired by an inventive and remarkable lieutenant colonel.

The curious Ball and Shot gun

One of the very rewarding things about being involved in the gun trade is the number of surprises that occur. I think I have seen it all, then something appears completely new to me I have never encountered before. This happens time and time again, very unusual guns, guns with little idiosyncrasies, guns with fascinating histories and so on and so forth.

I got a phone call from Chris Beaumont at Holts saying they had just received a firearm with the most unusual rifling they had ever seen and wondered if I knew what it was. When I examined the rifle, it looked like a fairly standard

boxlock ejector 12 bore double rifle by John Rigby & Co. My eye was immediately drawn to the engraving on the top rib "Ball And Shot Gun"; interesting, but ball and shot guns are relatively common.

However, when I opened the rifle I was completely taken aback – I had never seen rifling like this before. Both barrels had straight, shallow groove rifling until the end of the muzzle when there was a slight twist for the last five inches or so. It was obviously a variation on the Holland & Holland Paradox and at first I was at a loss to identify the rifling in question.

In the third quarter of the 19th century, the period of High Empire,

sport was available of vast variety in India and Africa. Army officers and the like would encounter everything from winged game to big game and were forced to carry a large battery of firearms to cover every eventuality. This was inconvenient, not to mention expensive, and gunmakers attempted to build a single multi-purpose gun/rifle.

At first combination or compound gun/rifles were tried, one barrel smooth, the other rifled, but they were not particularly satisfactory as often a hunter could get confused between the two barrels and a second shot was definitely an insurance when in the pursuit of big game. ►

The Holland & Holland Paradox

Lt. Col. George Vincent Fosbery V.C. was a product of his time and typified the embodiment of the hero of the British Empire. He was born in 1832 at Stert near Devizes in Wiltshire and joined the Bengal Army in 1852. He was stationed at Mereet on the North West Frontier and during the Umbeyla Campaign, on October 30, 1863, he volunteered to lead a party to recapture the fort Crag Picquet after its garrison was surrounded. Fosbery was the first to reach the top and he pursued and routed the enemy inflicting many casualties upon them. For this action he was awarded the Victoria Cross.

He was of a very inventive turn of mind and took out patent No.7568 on June 20, 1885, for a rifled choke in which the last two inches of the smooth bored barrel were rifled. Holland & Holland bought the patent and christened the new firearm

the Paradox. The Paradox was an instant success and was sold in large numbers by Holland & Holland. They were surprisingly accurate and at 100 yards, a 12 bore Paradox could put 10 bullets in a 7" square.

With the advent of smokeless powders in the 1890s, Holland & Holland created the Nitro Paradox that not only was more powerful but the recoil was less.

After the end of the First World War, demand for the Paradox decreased as the type of sport the Paradox was designed for became less available.

The last Paradox was completed in 1933 but due to a resurgence of interest in the Paradox, Holland & Holland resumed production in 2005.■

10 bore Holland & Holland Paradox No.15219 completed in 1900. Charge 8 drams black powder, weight 12lbs 14oz.



ANDREW ORR/HOLTS AUCTIONEERS



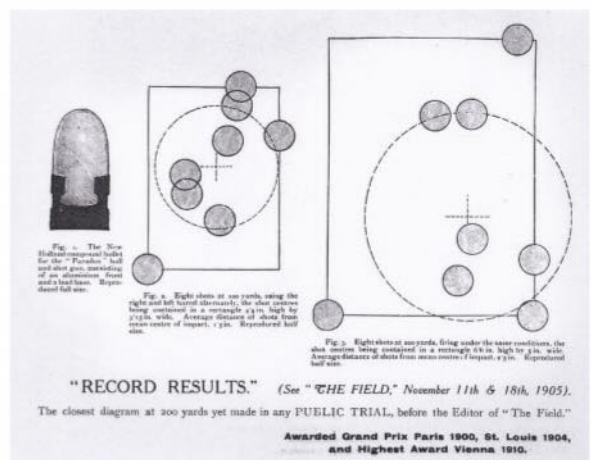
12 bore boxlock ejector "Ball And Shot gun" by John Rigby & Co. No.17492 of 1909 with very rare straight Webley rifling.

The Long Range Nitro Paradox

With the introduction of nitro powders in the 1890s, the Paradox could be turned into a far more powerful firearm. The Paradox was always intended as a short range weapon, but in the early years of the 20th century, Holland & Holland developed the Long Range Nitro Paradox.

This firearm used a new design of bullet to Henry Holland and Thomas Woodward's patent No.26362 of December 3, 1904. In this patent the Paradox bullet was redesigned to give a more conventional shape with better aerodynamic qualities. To keep this elongated bullet as light as possible, a nose made of aluminium was affixed to a lead base. By adopting a conventional bullet outline, air resistance was substantially reduced leading to a flatter trajectory and longer range.

The new bullet produced very accurate results. In a test reported on by *The Field* in 1905, eight bullets were put into a 6" x 5" rectangle at 200 yards and into a 6" x 7" rectangle at 300 yards. However, Holland & Holland were quick to point out



The results of *The Field's* test of the Long Range Nitro Paradox in 1905. The patent bullet is shown on the left.

that except under exceptional conditions, the Paradox was not suitable for shooting beyond 150 yards. ■

Great guns

Lt. Col. George V. Fosbery V.C. solved the problem by taking out patent No.7568 of June 20, 1885. The barrel was smooth bore for most of its length but the last two inches were rifled. He recommended seven grooves for the rifled portion and what he had created in essence was rifled choke.

Fosbery showed his results to Holland & Holland and a business agreement was signed between them, Hollands agreeing to pay Fosbery a royalty of £2 2s per gun. Being very fond of trade names, Holland & Holland christened its new firearm the "Paradox", a masterful choice bearing in mind the contradictory nature of the weapon.

The Paradox was similar in appearance to a normal shotgun, but it was more substantially built to withstand the heavier pressures. Although 12 bore was the most common size, the Paradox was available in 8,10,12,16,20 and 28 bore. It instantly gained great acclaim and considering the small amount of rifling, was a very accurate firearm at close range. The Paradox was available in hammer and hammerless form and in all types of quality.

The success of the Paradox was such that other makers attempted to produce versions of their own to evade the patent e.g. W.W.Greener in patent No.17746 of 1889 invented a design that was the reverse of Fosbery's patent whereby the entire barrel was rifled apart from a smooth bore recessed choke. Probably the best known alternative Paradox were the examples by Westley Richards, developed in a series of patents between 1901-1908, culminating in the Explora and Fauneta guns.

“The Paradox was similar to a normal shotgun but was built to withstand heavier pressures.”

But what of the Rigby 12 bore "Ball And Shot" gun No.17492 dating from 1909 with the odd rifling? I racked my brains as best I could but came up with nothing. Then an examination of the Rigby ledgers gave me the clue I needed. Part of the record stated "Top lever,

A&D, Ball and Shot gun, action No.11574 from W&S Ltd". The action had been bought in from Webley & Scott, supplier to many in the trade. There had to be a Webley & Scott connection with the rifling.

I then studied the *Abridgements To The Patent Specifications* (1905) and soon found the answer. Thomas Webley took out patent No.15894 on November 3, 1888, which said: "The rifling is straight for the greater part of the barrel, but becomes helical near the muzzle". This is exactly the rifling shown on the Rigby. There is no doubt this odd rifling was to circumvent the Paradox patent, but it was obviously not a success as hardly any such rifles were built to this Webley patent.

It certainly is an unusual patent and it is the first time I have encountered it. The Rigby gun/rifle No.17492 is a very rare firearm indeed with very few such Rigby ball and shot guns ever made, probably only around 20 in the period 1900-1910. It is sighted to 50 and 100 yards and weighs 7lbs 8oz. It was sold on April 7, 1909, to Capt. Hon George Henry Douglas-Pennant. 🦅

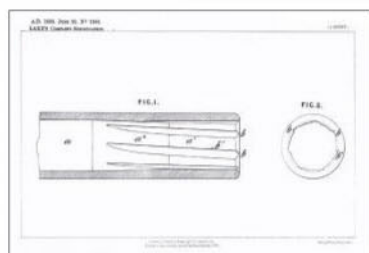
The Fosbery Patent 1885

In 1876 Fosbery was promoted to Lt. Colonel and in 1877 resigned from the Army. He devoted himself to experiments with all kinds of arms finding success with inventions like the Webley-Fosbery revolver, an automatic self-cocking gun.

His patent for the Paradox, No.7568 was taken out on June 20, 1885. The last two inches of the barrel was rifled with any number of grooves as desired although Fosbery recommended seven grooves. The rifled choke constricted the barrel by about 1mm and when the bullet reached the rifled choke, it was compressed slightly causing it to spin

Lt. Col. George Vincent Fosbery V.C. (1832-1907)

Fosbery's patent No.7568 of 1885 showing the rifled choke.



and function as a rifle bullet. The rest of the barrel was smooth bore as in a normal shotgun. When firing just shot, the rifled portion just acted as a choke and did not affect the pattern.

Holland & Holland, which had so resoundingly won all classes in *The Field* rifle trials of 1883, were now regarded as pre-eminent rifle makers. Hollands immediately realised the commercial possibilities of the new firearm and signed a business agreement with Fosbery to use his patent, christening its new invention The Paradox. The first Paradox was completed in April 1886. ■

Hidden treasures at Holts

Donald Dallas takes a deeper look at some unusual auction lots.

In previous articles I have given a broad selection of what is on offer in the Holts auction, from the £10 oil bottle to the £20,000 sidelock ejector. I thought for a change I would give you some examples from the September sale at the upper end of the scale – the lots fetching good money.

Condition is everything. Firearms in their original condition with little evidence of use will always fetch high prices. Such condition and originality was exemplified in a beautiful pair of 40 bore flintlock officers' pistols by Champion of Chichester in Lot 455. Estimated at £3,000-£5,000 they went for £4,800 and were a joy to behold; resplendent in their original case with accessories. Another pair of guns in remarkable original condition were in Lot 521, a pair of 12 bore percussion sporting guns by James Beattie of London from

c.1850. These guns sparkled in their original colours and looked almost untouched. For some reason they did not sell in the last sale, but in this one, estimated at £5,000-£7,000, they went for £8,000.

The star of the auction for me was a gun in the condition I love – a sleeper untouched for decades and not tampered with by a "restorer" with the minty complex. Lot 544 was a single percussion 10 bore live pigeon gun by Bradbury of Sheffield. It was beautifully engraved, quite quirky in design and of very high quality. Estimated at £300-£500, I managed to get a couple of bids in but it eventually went for £600. I was a bit disappointed as I had already imagined myself using it on one of our pheasant days.

There are always guns that stand out in the auction to make it memorable and the next two lots certainly did that. Holland

& Holland Paradoxes always elicit great interest and in Lot 910 there was a very nice 10 bore Paradox, No.15219. It was a hammer rifle of the highest quality made in 1894, and one of its real attractions was that being a 10 bore it was in the obsolete category. It was one of 101 10 bore Paradoxes made and weighed a whopping 12lbs 14oz. It was made for Sir Lewis Molesworth and although estimated at £7,000-£9,000, it went for an impressive £11,000.

The other star lot in the auction was Lot 920 – a magnificent pair of 8 bore sidelock non-ejector guns Nos.15061/2 by Joseph Lang and built in 1911. They were of the highest quality, every bit as good as their smaller 12 bore cousins, and they were in mint condition too. They were cased in their original velvet-lined cases and each one weighed 12lbs 15oz. They certainly had the wow factor and estimated at £40,000-£50,000, they made £45,000. They had originally been sold to the American importer Von Lengerke & Detmold in 1911, and it appears they were hardly ever fired.

A gun I found very interesting was Lot 1411, a 12 bore sidelock ejector by Charles Lancaster No. 12272, built in 1905 (pictured). Although a fine gun, it was a Grade C Lancaster, but it was in excellent original condition. What made it fascinating was the presentation plaque denoting that it had been presented by the tenants of a Devonshire estate to their squire John Gould Drew. The plaque instantly gave this gun history and estimated at £1,000-£1,500, it went for £1,400 due to this provenance.

To me, the bargain of the sale was Lot 1713, a William Horton of Glasgow 12 bore boxlock ejector No.2413. Horton is one of these underrated makers, yet made distinctive guns of the highest quality. They are very different from the majority of guns bought in Birmingham boxlocks, as Horton built many of them himself. They often have gold-washed internals. Estimated at between £400 and £600, this highly usable gun went for £700. ■

ANDREW ORRY / HOLTS





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The thoughtful farmer

Snatching a red letter day from the jaws of failure thanks to a phone call. By **Will Garfit**.

The day's pigeon shooting started in Hertfordshire where I met AC, my one-legged friend, and his friend, Mick, at 9.30am. The previous day's reconnaissance had indicated a busy shoot and the need for two hides from which to cover the field. We patiently watched the field of lightly cultivated bean stubble where many beans were still showing on top and made easy grub for hungry pigeons. However, while we had a commanding view from a rise in the ground at one end of the field there was a distinct lack of birds on the ground, in the sky or sitting in nearby woods. Apparently at this time the previous day there were a great number of pigeons around. In spite of our eternal optimism, an hour later we realised it was not going to happen.

Earlier that morning, Tim, a farmer friend from near home, had called to tell me that he had seen quite a few birds on a wheat stubble he had cultivated earlier

“I had started shooting at about 12.30pm and had 100 on my clicker within an hour and 180 after two hours.”

in the week. Why they should have been there when the stubble had disappeared below the cultivated ground was puzzling. AC and I decided to split up in search of a few pigeons elsewhere and I told him I would investigate Tim's field, though it was a 40-minute drive from where we had planned to shoot. It was 11.15am by the time I arrived to scan the rough cultivated field but sure enough there were a number of pigeons climbing about the clods of soil obviously finding food. On investigation it became apparent the cultivator had not only broken up the soil but also opened ears of wheat the combine had missed and had laid on the stubble and not germinated. Now the grains of wheat were shed and could be seen on the plates of stubble between the clods of soil.

I phoned AC and as he had found no alternative suggested he and Mick join me, if Tim agreed. A quick

phone call confirmed this and AC was on his way. The long, thin, 30-acre field had a rise of ground in the middle and the birds seemed to favour feeding each end, ideal for two positions to help each other. I set up next to a telegraph pole in the middle of its southern end and when AC and Mick arrived they disappeared over the brow to set up at its northern end.

Setting out decoys on the rough, lumpy ground was not a quick job and a twisted ankle would have soon slowed me further. It was lucky Mick was able to help AC as with one leg and a crutch it would have been impossible for him to get about.

I was no sooner in my hide than a pigeon was hovering over the decoys. With time to just pop a cartridge in my gun and make a shot the first bird was in the bag. Another was there by the time I had reloaded, then two more. This was a promising start to what developed as a hectic hour. My hide was in the epicentre of three lines coming to my end of the field.

AC and Mick were soon in action and the pigeons disturbed one end of the field then tried the other. Many of the pigeons coming to the field seemed to be young birds and possibly this was a flock building before migrating south for the winter. Certainly they were hungry and decoyed confidently.

I had started shooting at about 12.30pm and had 100 on my clicker within an hour and 180 after two hours. This was pigeon shooting at its best. From time to time I stumbled out as fast as I dare over the hard cultivated ground to gather outlying dead birds from beyond the pattern of decoys which were causing incoming pigeons to arrive at extreme range.

AC and Mick were banging away at their end but as they had set up beside a tree-lined hedge the sun and wind was awkward and created more difficult shooting. After the two hectic hours things slowed as birds either went elsewhere or had become wary of decoying. These birds, though many were young, were quick learners. By 4pm it was all over and with 234 from my hide and 103 from AC and Mick's we had salvaged a potential failure of a day to resurrect itself as a red letter one.

Later I gave a big thank you to Tim for his morning phone call. He was delighted, as those pigeons would not return to devour his rape on a field nearby. 🐦

Headkeeper **David Whitby** on the tactics employed to make sure everyone gets into the shooting during a drive.

The keeper's view

You are standing on peg No.7, waiting in anticipation...waiting...and waiting. Suddenly there is one almighty flush and birds stream over peg Nos. 2, 3, 4 and 5. Guns shoot as fast as they are able to load and for a couple of minutes the sky is black. You turn to face where you think your quarry will be, wishing a bird to come toward you, and one does, but then No. 6 kills it. Then the whistle goes and it is all over. We have all been there. Bad as it is on the peg, I can assure you it is far worse wearing the estate tweed and running the line.

Sometimes a poor drive, or even a poor day, is just unavoidable, no matter how much planning and preparation is done. That "it went well last week" or "sorry, a fox caused a flush" means little to the gun who just watched his companions fill their boots. The weather, foxes, deer and hares are all very capable of spoiling a drive, or indeed an entire day where the weather is concerned. There is little or nothing we can do about the 'unavoidable', but what about the careful planning and preparation to prevent the 'avoidable'?

Keepers have an assortment of tools in their box to try and make each drive go according to plan, but what are they? We'll start with gun placement. Are they too close to the drive that birds may still be rising, or too far away that they have started to descend by the time they pass over the guns? Occasionally on a sunny, still day, I have moved guns in; the birds rise well, but quickly

drop in height. Perhaps moving the line in either direction is topographically not an option. Make sure your flushing line is far enough back, as described later. Spacing is also important – guns pegged too close are always undesirable, too far apart and stretching shots result in unacceptable wounding rates.

“The covert requires enough breaks in the canopy to spread the shooting over as many guns as possible.”

We all seek a controlled and steady flush and no keeper is happy with guns waiting for an eternity before the first shot is fired. When blanking in is required, it may be time for a small pit stop. Radio communication makes this possible, and that snippet of conversation and a sloe gin is far better than a quiet 20 minutes on a cold peg. Shooting pigeons may help, though not advisable with partridges or later season pheasants, but it can certainly help to keep the guns alert. They all seem to love an early shot at our humble woodies.

Most importantly for a steady flush is correct cover and a quiet, steady beating line at the latter end of the drive, with all dogs on leads. With careful placing of flushing wire, birds may be put on the wing at different stages along the covert

or game crop, giving mini flushes rather than game just running through to the drive's end. Even when the flushing cover is perfect, a large number of birds bottled up may be spooked, particularly if the aforementioned fox or hare decides to run through them. Standing the beating line back with intermittent tapping and then asking for silence as birds rise will help. Often just one or two people moving gently forward of a stationary line will produce a gentle flush, but can result in some birds going back. It is important to read your birds. As soon as any start to lift, halt and silence your line of beaters, and when all calms down, keep the line stationary but still tap those sticks.

Sewelling is a godsend on many drives. It stops the birds running too close to the line of guns by putting them on the wing. Sewelling helps us to rise birds in the optimum area, perhaps a high point, or far enough back from the line of guns.

Damned if you do, damned if you don't

What of the guns on peg No.7 and No.8 who never get a shot, how can we attempt to spread the shooting more evenly? There are of course occasions when we simply cannot, with both very strong winds and bright sunshine equally capable of either spoiling a day or at least making it difficult. I am always prepared to move the gun line if the wind dictates, but sometimes the expected simply does not happen. The whole line is pushed round two pegs to the right, yet a quantity of



All a gamekeeper can do is execute their carefully laid plans to the best of their ability to try to avoid those 'avoidable' errors. The rest is in the lap of the gods (or the guns).

birds face the gale and inexplicably pour over an empty peg. Perhaps No.8 is double banked, because you are certain they will not fly into that bright sun, but they do.

This does not matter greatly with my syndicate. Not only are they well used to my 'cock ups' [no pun intended], but I always give them the option, making it their decision. I rather think they enjoy me reverting to *The Keepers Book Of Excuses* as they call it, and a great part of their enjoyment is to watch the headkeeper squirm. But sometimes with moving the line on a let day, you may be damned if you do, or damned if you don't.

It is the flushing end of the covert

that not only requires sufficient ground cover for that steady flush, but enough breaks in the overhead canopy to spread shooting over as many guns as possible. Some pegs will always be busier than others, that is why we revert to a 'game of chance' for peg selection, but there are ways of at least attempting to even things out. Birds lift through a gap in the trees, particularly early in the season, they also tend to follow each other out, often taking the same line over the same guns. This line may well be dictated by a return to the pen wood, but having a number of sky lights opened up in the canopy will help guide them over different guns, rather than

just a select few. Likewise, pushing forward either the right or left of line may alter the direction of flush, along with well-placed flagging.

There are plenty of things that can and do go wrong on a shoot day – incidents or conditions over which we have no control. This makes it more important for us to have our coverts, beating line, gun placement and avoidable errors in good order. The thing we must remember is the great quote from a friend of mine, when the sun is shining on a windless day and birds just don't want to play, or perhaps a fox puts everything on the wing in the wrong direction: "Gentlemen, we are shooting, not shopping". 🦉



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ADVICE



“This gun offers a challenging, fulfilling shooting experience...”

**ALEX FLINT REVIEWS
THE RIZZINI RIBLESS GAME**

“Although recoil is a fact of life it shouldn’t make your shooting life a misery...”

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“They ride beautifully, handle tidily and are impressively quiet...”

**BEN SAMUELSON
TEST DRIVES THE
RANGE ROVER VELAR**



GIFTS FOR GAME SHOOTERS

Will any of these make it into your family’s stockings?



Is less really more when it comes to shotguns? **Alex Flint** investigates

FROM
£4,995

Rizzini Ribless Game

Like many a Brit, I have always had a bit of a soft spot for the underdog or the outsider; who can honestly say they don't enjoy watching a giant being chopped down to size? For example, unless you happen to be South African I imagine everyone enjoyed watching the Japanese rugby union team beat the twice World Cup winners in 2015, or Jenson Button's run to the 2009 F1 Championship with Brawn GP.

Likewise with sporting shotguns, it is always a nice surprise when something from a smaller gunmaker or an unexpected source comes along to ruffle the feathers of the likes of Beretta or Browning.

One such gunmaker who has come close for me but without ever quite reaching those heights is Rizzini – admittedly no small concern themselves but at least offering something a little different to the competition. As I have written before, I am a real sucker for a round action and Rizzini's RB EM was a gun I was desperate to love but which couldn't quite capture my heart thanks to excessive wood in the fore-end and one or two slightly questionable aesthetic choices.

Enter Ian Coley, renowned Great Britain shot and six-time GB Olympic coach. The man who took both Richard Faulds and Peter Wilson to Olympic Gold medals knows a thing or two about good shooting, both of the game and clay varieties. With a thriving gunshop,

shooting school and sporting agency based just outside of Cheltenham, Coley has brought all his sporting knowledge to bear on a special ribless variant of Rizzini's RB EM in pursuit of a great new over-under game gun.

First impressions are supremely positive. The stunning 15" stock on our test gun features wonderful figuring and a deep oil finish and is a huge improvement over the standard Rizzini model. Gone is the butt plate, and gone too is the rounded semi-pistol grip to be replaced with a Prince of

Wales grip – itself a significant improvement to the lines of the gun – further enhanced thanks to an extended trigger guard tang and grip cap. Both of these items are found on the gun as standard and both feature excellent engraving, feeling an entirely natural extension of the design and looking for all the world as if they were supposed to be there from the start.

Indeed, thanks to Coley's input the gun feels more complete and unified as a whole – further touches include a change on the finishing of



The well figured wood benefits from a high standard of finishing.

View from the gun shop

The first thing to strike many buyers about this gun, I think, will be the price – it is far more attainable than you might imagine looking at the quality of finishing on display.

There is lots of fine chequering on the fore-end, a push button fore-end release and lovely figuring and finishing on the wood. Engraving is also particularly good considering it has been applied by machine. Our test gun is the No.2 of a pair, a subtle gold '2' inlaid at the breech end of the barrels, on the top lever and in a diamond on the bottom of the fore-end to good effect.

Of course, the gun is still a Rizzini, so you are guaranteed a straightforward, reliable boxlock with a single selective trigger. Our test gun has

fixed bores at $\frac{1}{4}$ and $\frac{1}{4}$, and all guns come with 3" chambers as standard. At 6lbs 4oz it is a good weight and certainly seems to handle well – though it will probably take any buyer a few shots to get used to the lack of a rib.

You will be hard pressed to find many other guns at this price offering this quality of finishing. If the 20 bore isn't for you, a 12 bore is also available and there are plans for 16 and 28 bore models in the future. A range of barrel lengths are available, with 32" barrels being a £500 premium option and factory matched pairs are also available from £10,995. A gun worth looking at. ■

Bill Elderkin

A bold engraving pattern has been well applied.





The capped Prince of Wales grip with extended trigger guard tang is a high quality addition.

the fore-end iron to match the action body, a real improvement over the standard Rizzini gun. Thankfully, retained is the rather lovely rounded push-button fore-end with fulsome chequering (here the wood being well matched indeed) and the bold foliate engraving. Though applied by machine, the engraving gives the impression of being quite deep and is very eye catching. Indeed, the appearance of the gun as a whole is really quite shockingly good considering the price being asked – one is inclined to wonder quite how they've managed it as it is really quite a fetching thing in the flesh.

Scores

Engineering: 8/10 Built on a successful, proven design to a high standard.

Handling: 9/10 At turns thrilling, satisfying and challenging.

Looks & finishing: 10/10 Lovely at any price.

Reliability & customer

With all these lovely additions on display, not to mention the shapely lines inherent in not only a round body gun but also a 20 bore, one could be forgiven for taking a while to notice the lack of a top rib. The real impact of this is, of course, felt in the hand, however visually I have to say I rather like it – though it might take a while for some to get used to it. There's almost a whiff of the double rifle about the gun, which to my eyes is no bad thing at all.

But make no mistake, the removal of the top rib really does have a significant impact on the handling characteristics of the gun. Mounting is initially quite a jarring experience

service: 9/10 You should have no problems here, and Ian Coley Sporting will be sure to look after you.

Value: 8/10 Tricky in terms of resale, but looks a bargain considering the quality of finishing.

Overall: 44/50

as what one can see is so fundamentally different to shooting a normal gun. One has no choice but to concentrate on

the target, which is of course no bad thing! The balance and handling of the gun has clearly been very carefully tuned, and the end result is a superb blend of steadiness and natural, instinctive shooting. This gun offers a challenging, fulfilling shooting experience with superb aesthetics at a very tempting price and is well worth a look if you find yourself at all tempted. ■

In the field

This gun really is a joy to shoot, though it is certainly something most will need a little time to get used to. One clear advantage to this design is one's eyes are inevitably drawn solely to the target, meaning the Rizzini is particularly comfortable with instinctive, fast shooting and would be quite at home on the moor. The gun is well balanced in spite of the lack of rib, and comes to the shoulder consistently well. The stock is a good length as standard, and the chequering on the Prince of Wales grip and fore-end is comfortable in the hand.

The gun stays on line beautifully, with none of the flighty characteristics one might expect of a light, small bore game gun. Recoil

is also very well managed, with muzzle flip particularly notable by its absence. I found most success with long driven targets and crossers, with fast driven birds being particularly exciting thanks to the natural handling the gun promotes.

Interestingly, it was always quite clear where one had missed a bird – more often than not for me it was over the top, easily rectified by ensuring you push your cheek into the stock. Our test gun was not without its foibles – when shooting with lighter loads the trigger stuck in the rear position on a couple of occasions, and I also found the edge of the trigger guard a little sharp. Both of these problems would likely be easily ironed out. ■

■ With thanks to Grange Farm Shooting School, Peterborough. grange-farm.co.uk

■ Bill Elderkin is the managing director of Elderkin & Son (Gunmakers) Ltd. of Spalding in Lincolnshire – call 01775 722919.

Cartridge corner

Tom Grange brings you a selection of fine old cartridges from his collection.



◀ The Killwell cartridge; the Waterproof cartridge; and the Grand Prix cartridge, all from W. Richards of Liverpool (1900). And the Express cartridge from W. Richards of Liverpool & Preston (1900).

▶ The Pegamoid cartridge from W. Richards of Liverpool & Preston (1922); the Express Smokeless cartridge from W. Richards of Liverpool & Preston (1927); the Brown Special from T. Stensby of Manchester (1900); and the Victory cartridge from T. Stensby & Co. of Manchester (1900).



▲ The All British cartridge (1900); the Champion cartridge (1922); the Club cartridge (1927); and the Twenty cartridge (1919); all from T. Stensby & Co. of Manchester.



10 CARTRIDGES FIT FOR A PARADOX

Had you been around in the 1880s and been fortunate enough to own a Holland & Holland Paradox this would have been the box of cartridges you'd have been using.

Dates in brackets are the first year the cartridge was manufactured. Tom would like to hear from anyone who is interested in collecting or dealing in antique cartridges. To contact him, call **01778 570226**.

Adam Calvert is a freelance shooting instructor with a global reputation, offering bespoke shooting instruction in addition to being a Fabbri ambassador.

Expert instruction

Q I've started to struggle with recoil when using my 12 bore: what can I do to reduce it? Is it time to change to a 16 bore? It's really strange as my 12 bore fits me well.

A I come across many people who suffer with this and usually it's a combination of factors which are coming together to cause this recoil. Most people's solution to this is to buy a new shotgun and in some situations this can help. You can get some good advice in the gunshop and it can cure the problem. In many cases, though, it doesn't.

I know I will attract the wrath of many 16 bore users but I am not a fan of this calibre. They remind me of 34" guns, which were all the rage at one stage but now you can't give them away except for a few die-hard users. In recoil terms, most 16 bore users shoot a similar load to a 12 bore, and as a result they often recoil more as they are lighter than a 12 bore.

If you are not big enough or strong enough to shoot a 12 bore then my advice is to move to a 20 bore. There is a reason why 12 bores and 20 bores are the most popular. In my experience then, provided it is not a weight problem, i.e. the gun is simply way too heavy or way too light, most recoil issues can be solved. Let's deal with the solutions to recoil starting in order of easiness:

1. Cartridges: visit your local gunshop with a good selection of cartridges and buy a box of each brand they have in the sort of load you want to shoot. Then quite simply shoot them and see what the difference in recoil is. Be careful not to be fooled by light recoil. Just because it doesn't recoil then don't assume it can't kill the bird equally as well as a cartridge that does recoil. For all my shooters who suffer recoil I tend to point them towards Hull Imperial Game or Three Crowns cartridges.

2. What are you wearing? It may just be a case of wearing a recoil pad. I recommend the Past ones, which are excellent.



Cartridge selection, gun mount, gunfit and a host of other issues have an effect on your shotgun's recoil, so don't be quick to change your bore size.

3. Protection: you can of course have a specialist pad fitted to the shotgun. I use two types, Kick-ez or Isis, the Isis X pad is a particular favourite of mine.

4. Gun balance: if the shotgun is well balanced then the chances are it will transfer the recoil better. It should balance around the hinge pin, you can add extra weight to a shotgun which makes it stock heavy as this can sometimes help with recoil by quite simply making the shotgun heavier. Be careful not to make the shotgun too stock heavy, though.

5. Gun mount: it's quite simple, mount the shotgun in the wrong place on your shoulder

and you will probably suffer from recoil. A session with a good instructor accompanied with some dry-mounting practice will cure this. I look at pictures usually posted on social media or in magazines and cringe at the gun mounts that are out there.

6. Gunfit: I think you are all aware of the importance I place on good gunfit. There are many things that can be done to improve recoil when gunfitting. Before going to the expense of changing your shotgun it may be well worth getting your fit checked by an expert gunfitter.

Although recoil is a fact of life it shouldn't make your shooting life a misery. If in doubt, always seek professional advice. ■

BOB ATKINS

A vehicle that will serve shooting customers well. By **Ben Samuelson**.



The Velar fits in neatly between the Evoque and the Range Rover Sport in both size and price.

SPECIFICATIONS

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Range Rover Velar

Were you horrified when Land Rover announced that it was stopping making the Defender? Do you miss being able to buy a nice understated Range Rover with small wheels and teddy bear seats? Does the idea that Land Rover's chief designer Gerry McGovern has his own range of swimming trunks (he does) fill you with horror? If so, please turn away now and concentrate on the lovely shooting estate on the page opposite.

For those of you still reading, welcome to the 21st century, where Jaguar Land Rover is owned by the Indian conglomerate Tata and employs some 40,000 people in the UK. The new Range Rover Velar (named after the original Range Rover prototype) is arguably the most modern car either brand has ever produced.

Let's start on the outside, where Mr McGovern illustrates why his bosses allow him to do daft things with swimwear. It

looks absolutely bloody brilliant – a perfectly proportioned concept car that has somehow stepped off the motor show turntable and onto the streets.

Step inside and it gets even better, with smooth lines, modern materials and five configurable screens across the dash and even on the steering wheel. Finally, Land Rover has an infotainment system that betters its German rivals.

Whether it is the base 2.0 litre diesel or the range-topping supercharged V6 petrol that I drove, any Velar is a lovely thing to drive. They ride beautifully, handle tidily (if not quite as

entertainingly as a Macan) and are very quiet in terms of wind and road noise.

If you spend the extra money on the petrol, it goes well and sounds really quite rorty, but only does 300 miles before you're thinking about where to fill up. If you go for the four pot diesel, it never feels brisk, doesn't sound terribly premium but will go to the moon and back on a single tank. The V6 diesel is probably the sweet spot of the range with most of the good qualities of both.

Off-road, the Velar is superb when compared to its rivals, but not as good as a Range Rover

Sport. It may be the first Land Rover to be based on a Jaguar, but if you tick the right option boxes, it's capable enough for most muddy-field-to-get-to-the-third-drive eventualities. A towing capacity of only 2,500kg is a less positive result of its Jaguar roots, however.

If you talk to the chaps at Land Rover, it fits in neatly between the Evoque and the Range Rover Sport in both size and price. And I suppose it does, with the Velar having plenty of room for a family of four, half-term luggage and a double bass while not being so big that you have to find four parking spaces every time you want to moor up.

From a price point of view, things are a little more complicated. The fully loaded one I borrowed cost £85,000, but a more typical price for a 3.0 litre diesel with a few options would be closer to £70,000 and you can get a 2.0 litre for less than £50,000.

The Velar may be available with vegan seat coverings (not actually made from real vegans) and green isn't even an option in the paint range, but the Velar is still a superb car. We can't pickle ourselves in aspic and I'd rather have a healthy Jaguar Land Rover exporting hundreds of thousands of cars all over the world than one struggling to survive building cars for chaps in tweed.

4/5 

Insider dealing

For those still wanting a more traditional car with a green oval on it, or even green paint, used Discovery 4s are still holding onto their values extraordinarily well. Indeed, like-for-like prices of previous generation Discoveries and Range Rover Sports have pretty much reached parity. The new Defender won't be here until 2019, but my prediction is that well before then, we'll all have grown used to the looks of the new Disco and will be valuing it for its amazing range of abilities.

Barvas Estate, Isle of Lewis

On the market for offers over £850,000, this beautiful Scottish estate could be the perfect purchase for your sporting syndicate, offering wild sporting opportunities over almost 10 months of the year.

Everywhere you go on the Barvas Estate you will be surrounded by sporting opportunities, however of particular interest will be the fishing rights. This sale offers the rare chance to own salmon and trout fishing rights over three entire river systems stretching from source to mouth, over the Barvas River, the Arnol River and Loch Urrahag. The Barvas River is where the most prolific fishing is to be found, with a 10-year average of about 170 fish.

There is an eight-bedroom principal house and two further

three-bedroom cottages, ideal for making the most of the sort of sport normally only found in dreams. Also included in the sale is a 25-year sporting lease over 34,200 acres of the beautiful landscape of the largest of the Western Isles, including walked-up grouse shooting, walked-up snipe and woodcock shooting, wildfowling and stalking for red deer.

The grouse shooting will be of particular interest since Barvas has recorded consistent bags for a considerable number of years. Typically, 15 to 20 walked-up days are shot each season over pointers, with bags usually varying between five to 10 brace. While no deer have been culled in recent years, it is thought there is potential for four to five stags and 10 to 11 hinds to be taken annually. A more convincing case for sporting ownership either



The breathtaking landscape of the estate plays host to sport over almost 10 months of the year.

individually or in a syndicate is unlikely to be made.

Contact Savills on 01312 473720

The market

Luke French

Associate Director – Savills



Many dream of owning a country estate, however the purchase price can often be beyond their grasp. With a bit of lateral thinking the dream of owning a splendid idyll could become a reality. Indeed, we are increasingly receiving enquiries from groups of friends and family who like the idea of buying an estate as a syndicate.

The advantage is affordability, with the purchase price and running costs being split between

parties. Buyers may feel a part share in something special is preferable to 100 per cent of a mediocre property – higher quality properties are more likely to hold their value, too.

Clearly such purchases come with key considerations. As a syndicate buyer you don't have complete control over the management of the property or the practical decisions. Moreover, circumstances may change and necessitate one of the parties offering their share for sale. There is limited demand for purchasing a share of, say, 25 per

cent in an estate already in joint ownership, and when it comes to selling your share it is unlikely to be worth as much as 25 per cent of the overall market value.

Perhaps the biggest challenge is finding a property that ticks the boxes for everyone. Those estates offering a variety of accommodation and a range of activities tend to appeal on the basis that different owners can enjoy time at the property throughout the year.

The key to a successful syndicate purchase is ensuring co-owners are like-minded and have similar ownership objectives and aspirations for the purchase. Buying with others of a similar generation may be practical in terms of available activities, but it also makes

sense in terms of succession planning and maintaining the longevity of the ownership structure. It is sensible to agree a structure setting out when each partner uses the estate. Common practice is to have a weekly rota changing on a yearly basis, so each owner will in turn have first choice of when they want to visit.

Depending on the scale and nature of the estate, management can be a significant responsibility. While big decisions warrant discussion by all parties, in our experience it works best when one individual is appointed as the principle point of contact. ■

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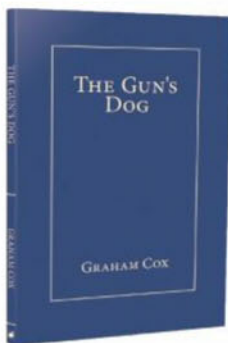
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PLUS

All the action from trials, stakes, opens and tests on Anglesey, in County Durham, Nottinghamshire and many more...





A calm delivery to hand will be the pinnacle of the first ever day in the field, but handlers shouldn't put too much pressure on their dogs (or themselves) during the outing.

GET THEM OFF TO A GOOD START

It can be a nerve-wracking experience for a picker-up when their dog enters the field for the first time, so preparation is key for both parties, as **Wendy Bardsley** explains.

The shooting season is in full swing and you are keen to introduce your novice gundog to the field. It's an exciting time and as you can expect any dog will move up a gear or two when they get into the shooting environment. Ultimately, it's a golden opportunity for you and the dog to gain experience, but it can also bring unexpected challenges so it's important to ensure your dog is prepared to face the demands of their picking-up role.

So what are the feasible behaviours that should be in place for a novice dog to work in the shooting field? There are a number of things to consider...

It might sound obvious but your dog has to be rock-steady on and off the lead, and can be trusted to stay at heel without running in. After all, you need to be hands-free to manage the birds and focus on the action around you. Your dog also needs to be totally focused on you and responsive to the recall, stop and hunt whistle. If this is not 100 per cent you will soon have problems in the field with selective hearing and a dog who thinks they know better. Gunshot can instantly increase your dog's drive so it needs to be comfortable with loud noises and sit calmly and quietly during the drive. Make sure this is in your

training programme to avoid the dog having a crisis of confidence.

Does your dog pick game cleanly and is he/she able to deliver to hand? Issues with delivery are common and need to be resolved before you start picking-up. Make sure you include several cold game training days prior to the big day to assess your dog's approach to picking game. Have you included plenty of practice with retrieves involving crossing water and retrieving from the other side of

“Introducing your dog to the field can be daunting, so take things slowly and relish support from the shooting community.”

the bank? It's important your dog is a strong swimmer. Also, can it take directions across the water onto land? You also need to install confidence with a young dog's jumping ability. Does your dog 'get over' on command? Have you included features such as ditches, streams, and non-barbed wired fences in your training?

Pre-shoot day preparation

In preparation of what to expect it's useful to join a small driven shoot day and observe the experienced pickers-up and their dogs. Taking in the shoot ambience and watching the guns, beaters and pickers-up allows you to obtain a realistic understanding of the mechanics of a shoot. It can also raise a few questions you need to be sure about before working your novice dog. It could also be your first experience, so it's an ideal exercise to obtain an insight to the picking-up role.

Being an observer for the day can be a real eye opener and a pickers-up etiquette can vary depending on the type of shoot. However, the key principle is the same and the essence of successful picking-up is the retrieval of game shot by the guns and dispatch any wounded game.

The welfare of the game is always paramount and it's essential to observe how this is done properly. If you need to get some reassurance speak to an experienced picker-up or gamekeeper in how to expedite the humane dispatch of a badly wounded bird.

As an observer you will notice that pickers-up are sometimes required to stand in line with a team of guns. This can vary depending on the type of shoot. Is your



BOB ATKINS

It's useful for handlers to observe picking-up teams ahead of their first day in the field to gain an understanding of etiquette and ask questions on issues that concern them.

dog comfortable with the sound of gunshot? Have you incorporated this into your training so the dog learns to accept and therefore treat as normal the scent of shot and the sound of gunshot?

The variety of conditions, terrain and cover can be a challenge for your dog in the field. You want them to be steady in the most challenging of weathers – a prerequisite enabling it to work in a controlled manner – but ultimately you want the dog to be an effective hunter and retrieve the shot game. Has your training got your dog used to working in all conditions in a variety of cover?

Being a picker-up can be an isolated job with long periods of waiting. Is your dog steady, able to mark and wait quietly during the drive? The last thing a gun is going to want is to have to listen to the picking-up dog behind him continuously whining. As the drive gets underway and if you find your dog is getting over-excited and not calming down it could be a sign your dog is not prepared for the field. The sensible and safest action is to withdraw from the shoot early. Go back to the training field and

reinforce what was initially taught. You may want to book in for several live game training sessions to allow your dog to obtain more experience. It may feel frustrating but each dog is different and develops at varying rates. Their readiness to absorb the shoot environment has to be determined case by case. Just remember the better trained your dog is the easier it will be to manage on the first shoot day.

Your first day in the field

So when is the right time to introduce your novice dog to the shoot? Delaying the introduction to later in the season is better for a young dog. There's less chance for the dog to upset the gamekeeper and not as many birds on the ground. A few weeks of successful selective retrieves outweighs a long season of mishaps.

For you to enjoy the day it's vitally important to arrive early. Preparation is the key to a successful shoot. Let your dog out of the car to relieve itself but be mindful of other dogs. It's a good idea to settle your dog back in the car until the

first drive starts as there is always lots of pre-shoot activity and you don't want your dog getting under the feet of the gamekeeper or any untoward happenings with other dogs. Check you have ample water for your dog, and don't forget to load yourself up with game carriers, a priest, a dog whistle and leads. Turn your phone off and once you are ready take the time to introduce yourself to the shoot captain, gamekeeper and picking-up team. Let them know you have a novice and inexperienced dog and check the protocol for the picking-up etiquette. Make sure you know the location and order of drives and your position for each one. Attend the shoot briefing and know which guns have their own dogs and what they want you to pick-up. You certainly don't want to run the risk of spoiling their day. If in doubt always ask one of the experienced pickers-up for confirmation.

Being prepared will give you confidence for the day ahead and allow you to focus on your objectives in the field. Remember a dog can run rings around you if they detect confusion or a lack of confidence in your handling.

If you get the opportunity to stand with an established picker-up, set your dog up to watch the teamwork and mark the birds. The experienced dogs are a joy to watch and their exemplary behaviour is something you should strive to replicate. Is your dog able to sit quietly and watch other dogs work?

Dealing with the first bird

It's important to be selective at the beginning and make your retrieves as simple as possible. Introducing your novice gundog to its first freshly shot bird needs to be done with as little fuss as possible. One or two easy retrieves at the end of a shoot day is ample so the dog succeeds, builds confidence



A picker-up's lot can be a lonely one, so make sure you and your dog are comfortable with long periods of waiting and are able to maintain discipline as the action unfolds.

BOB ATKINS


and learns good habits right from the outset. Refrain from retrieving runners on land or water and minimise anything that might encourage excitement or apprehension.

Don't put your dog in a new situation which could encourage swapping birds or running within the vicinity of a fellow picker-up. The temptation to rush ahead will always be there. However, you need to build mutual trust and respect with your dog and this will take time and patience. Think about

what you want to achieve on the day, set yourself an objective and stick to it. Remember you want to give your dog every opportunity to succeed and not to fail.

Depending on availability, you should start with a bird that is not too big. A hen pheasant is the ideal first target. Try to avoid pigeon as the soft feathers come out easily and fill your dog's mouth, which can be off-putting. Does your dog successfully pick the bird cleanly and want to bring it back to you directly with a delivery to hand?

Introducing your novice gundog to the field can be rewarding and daunting so take things slowly and relish the support from like-minded people in your shooting community.

Remember, your dog is learning and coming to terms with its new environment, which is why it's essential to be prepared, take your time and work through it together. On the day it's just you and the dog and as a team you can make the picking-up role a truly satisfying experience. 

French saints on a Scottish moor

Three Braque St. Germaines join an assortment of other breeds for a day's walked-up sport in the Borders.

An email from a German lady called Annette Kastner started it all. "Would you be interested in coming and photographing our Braque St. Germaines working in the Lammermuirs?" She and some friends were Braque St. Germain enthusiasts and were coming to Scotland to work them for the first time on grouse and partridge.

My first question was, "What is a Braque St. Germain?" Luckily I had a book on HPR breeds handy and I soon discovered a Braque St. Germain is a French HPR breed that looks remarkably like an orange and white English pointer – not surprising considering they supposedly originated from a cross between an English pointer and a Braque Francais.

I was very interested in Annette's offer, which was how I eventually

WORDS & PHOTOGRAPHY: DAVID HUDSON

came to be sitting in the kitchen of Doug Virtue from Lammermuirs Game Services with Annette and her friends eating scones, drinking coffee and looking forward to seeing their dogs in action.

The plan was to spend the first day on the moor after grouse and the second on the lower ground where partridge, snipe and perhaps more grouse would be found. We had an eclectic mixture of dogs with us: Winni, Weika and Wito were the BSGs, then there was a cocker and two springers, an Italian spinone plus a beagle and a doberman pinscher with non-combatant status.

The first things we saw on reaching the moor were two tall stone towers. Doug explained these were the Twinlaw Cairns.

Legend has it that Edgar, a Scottish chieftain, had twin sons, one of whom was stolen during a raid by the Saxons and raised by them. Many years later the Saxons raided again and were confronted by Edgar and his warriors on the hilltop. They decided, instead of a pitched battle, to pit the best warrior from either side against each other in single combat. The fight ended with one man dead and the other dying, at which point it was discovered the two were actually the twin brothers. A sad tale indeed.

Nevertheless, the sun was shining, the breeze was blowing freshly and the grouse were waiting. We set off across the hill with the guns – Winni Kaufer, Sebastian Schreiber and Stefan Hoppe – walking in line while one of the BSGs hunted in front under the control of Annette Kastner and Karola Richards. Headkeeper Jez Thornton kept us under a modicum of control while Ian Hendy from Castle Gunmakers supplied the guns and cartridges and had his springer and Italian spinone with him to retrieve in case the BSGs struggled with the alien conditions.

Considering that the BSGs had never seen or scented a grouse before, nor ever run on heather moorland, it was impressive to see how well they got out and hunted. Their stamina was excellent and they quartered across the wind as well as any of our native pointing breeds would have done. By mid-September though, with the wind



Winni Kaufer takes a grouse from Braque St. Germain Weika – a first for both gun and dog.



A moment's pause with storm clouds gathering in the background.

blowing freshly and the heather a bit wet, the grouse were never going to sit tightly and it was difficult for the dogs to get a steady point as the birds rose as soon as there was a dog anywhere near.

We took a short break for elevenses before we worked back across the hill to where the vehicles were waiting with lunch, adding a couple more grouse to the bag on the way. Then we took another beat across the moor and found a big pack – probably 300 plus – of grouse sheltering in the lee of the hill. They rose in a bunch and departed en masse without giving any of the guns the chance of a shot. We ended the day with two-and-a-half brace of grouse.

A slow start, but what an end...

The next morning found us on the margins of the moor where patches of heather mingled with grass, rushes and bracken. The first bird in the bag was a snipe, shot by

Sebastian and quickly retrieved by Winni to her handler Karola. Game was scarce at first, though Weika pointed a blue hare, flushed it and retrieved it with no need for any intervention from the guns. We soon got into ground where there were a few grouse and plenty of partridges plus the odd snipe. The partridge were very quick to rise and strong on the wing making for difficult shooting, but with the BSGs working hard in front of the line the guns had to stay alert.

We lunched and then dropped down the hill for a last foray. The partridge were sitting tighter in thicker cover and Stefan finally shot his first partridge.

We made our way back to Doug's house where there was an unexpected treat. Annette had expressed a desire to taste the grouse they had shot on the first day and Doug had taken off the breasts, added a few partridge breasts for contrast, marinated them overnight and then flash-fried them with slices

of black pudding. Eaten with rowan jelly and washed down with Scotch whisky and a very nice German Riesling, it made for the perfect ending to two days of fascinating dog work and a great introduction to the superb sport the Scottish Borders has to offer. 🐓



Gun and dog on full alert.

REPORTS, RESULTS, COMMENT AND NEWS

Superb game finding at two-day grouse trial for setters in County Durham

Club: The English Setter Club

Event: Grouse field trials

Venue: Eggleston Moor, County Durham

Judges: Julie Organ and Colin Adamson

Headkeeper and steward of the beat: Robert Beadle

REPORT BY: JULIE ORGAN
Robert Beadle gave us every assistance in making the trials run smoothly, which were held by kind permission of M.J.C. Stone Esq. We had two sunny days with a steady breeze and perfect conditions.

The novice stake showed much promise but the judges were disappointed to lose several dogs fairly quickly. Some dogs were a little too enthusiastic by taking on too much ground and making mistakes. However, Mr Hall's pointer dog Windhovering Alder showed us his quality of game finding in both rounds. He finished his run by locating a covey and producing his birds well. He was our eventual winner with no other awards.

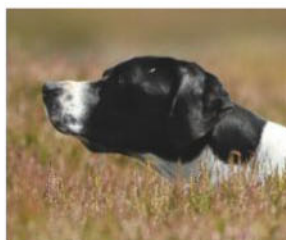
After a short break the English setters gathered for the breed stake. It was an excellent entry of top class dogs. Spectators with an interest in the breed had travelled from Norway to watch proceedings and compare notes. Scent seemed better in the afternoon and dogs took full advantage of it. We saw some lovely quartering and some clever finds on single birds, and the grouse were sitting well.

Judging becomes special when you see a brace of dogs drawn together who complement each other with their flow, pace and style whilst hunting independently. We were privileged to see this on the day. The second round consisted of six very good dogs competing at the highest level. They were impressive and didn't disappoint. It was pleasing to finish the day with a full card of awards as the English setters were on good form.

On the second day conditions were good for the open stake, and several dogs put up a great display of quartering combined with good finds. Grouse were



Robert Beadle (left) with winner of the English setter breed stake Ger Devine.



Open stake winner Mr Hild's FTCh Ardclinis Eva.

plentiful and every brace had chance of game. We lost a few

contenders through missed birds or just bad luck, and the second round saw five brace go through. We had some exciting moments as the dogs handled some tricky situations skilfully. It was a pleasure to judge these experienced dogs, and we had a good end to a thoroughly enjoyable day. Many thanks to all concerned on a good sporting occasion. ■

Results

NOVICE

- 1 Mr Hall with PD Windhovering AlderBreed stake
- 1 G. Devine with FTCh Gortinreagh Eppie
- 2 D. Goutorbe with FTCh Upperwood Clover
- 3 G. Devine with FTCh Ballyellen Cara (owned by W Connolly)
- 4 G. Devine with Ballyellen Tango
- CoM D. Goutorbe with FTCh Upperwood Hera

OPEN

- 1 R. MacNicol with PB FTCh Arddinis Eva

- (owned by Mr Hild)
- 2 S. Lound with PD FTCh Frosted Elfin of Fleetstalk (owned by Mr and Mrs Lound)
 - 3 A. Neill with PD Deeverspring Angus (owned by Mr Michel)
 - 4 J. Dalton with PB Shannaghview Gershwin De Lagopus
 - CoM J. Dalton with PD Lagopus Jester
 - CoM N. Harris with GSB Trollsteinen's Neamour of Clitters
 - CoM J. Naylor with PD Goddrib Bari of Bitterboom
 - CoM L. Westron with PB Goddrib Florence



Judges J. Organ and C. Adamson.

Kennel Club's new centre of excellence for working dogs

Gundogs and gundog clubs gathered in Northumberland for the official opening of the Kennel Club's Emblehope and Burngrange Estate, which the Kennel Club aims to develop as a centre of excellence to support a wide range of activities.

The estate was purchased as an investment in working gundogs, as fewer pieces of suitable land are becoming available to hold working dog activities such as bloodhound trials and gundog training.

The official opening saw an introduction delivered by Kennel Club chairman, Simon Luxmoore, a tour of the estate and its facilities, and the opportunity to accompany a mock field trial, held by the Scottish Field Trials Association, for attendees to fully experience what the estate can offer.

The moorland stretches to some 7,550 acres and is billed as being ideal for walked-up

trailing for retrievers, spaniels and HPR breeds. The estate offers pheasant and partridge shooting, the woodland cover provides hunting for spaniels, whilst the moorland is for challenging retrievers and for HPR and pointing breeds to show off their hunting abilities.

Caroline Kisko, Kennel Club secretary, said: "The Kennel Club aims for Emblehope to become the premier site for all working dog activities in the north of England. Working dog clubs who wish to train their dogs and carry out activities involving gundogs are finding it increasingly difficult to find suitable land to hold activities, and we want to offer Emblehope as a solution to this. Gundogs are some of the fittest and most mentally stimulated dogs, so it is important that they are able to be worked on suitable land." For details, email: emblehope@thekennelclub.org.uk. ■



Novice award winners, from left: Kelly Rogers-Davison, Huw Llyr Roberts, Victoria Waterfield & Roland Glaser.

Successful day for Arfon retrievers

Club: The Arfon Working Gundog Club

Event: A.V. retriever test

Venue: Bodhunod Farm, Burwen, Amlwch, Anglesey

Judges: Lyn Mitchell, James Murphy and Judith White

Sponsors: CSJ Specialist Canine Feeds and Gary McCarthy of Gundog Gear

REPORT BY

GWILYM WILLIAMS

The A.V. retriever test was held at Bodhunod Farm on Anglesey by kind permission of Elwyn Hughes.

We had changeable weather starting off overcast with a cold wind but the clouds cleared and we had a sunny afternoon. I would like to thank our host, the judges and competitors who all made it a successful day. ■



Open award winner and judges: Victoria Stanley, James Murphy, Lyn Mitchell & Judith White.



Winners and judges, from left: Kelly Rogers-Davison, Robert Worrall, Liz Barnes, Gary Vidler, Anne Crookes, Phil Allen, Andrew Wright, David Barnes & Sue Berman.

Superb hunting skills required for retrievers in Herts

Club: Eastern Counties Golden Retriever Club

Event: All-aged stake

Venue: Cuffley, Hertfordshire

Judges: Phil Allen, Robert Worrall, Sue Berman and Gary Vidler

Sponsors: Natures Menu

REPORT BY DIANA EWINGS

We held our all-aged stake at Cuffley with the kind permission of David Thomas.

All the dogs made it through the first test of sitting through a substantial drive. There were some long retrievers, with marking made difficult by the colour of the land. Some dogs were lost to picking two birds in one go, but the majority were still in the hunt for the second drive.

This time it was a belt of white grass that presented the obstacle, and the old adage of "trust your dog" had to be strictly adhered to as the dogs were invisible as soon as they entered cover.

The card was whittled down to five and we moved to the lake for the final drive. Partridges fell in the water, providing a nice variety of retrieves.

We would like to thank our sponsor for the generous winners' goody bags. ■

Results

- 1 (& winner of Highseas Trophy) Anne Crookes with Millgreen Opal (owned by Steve Crookes)
 - 2 Liz Barnes with Carishill Regan
 - 3 (& winner of the Ragnot Trophy for the dog with the best retrieve in the awards) Andrew Wright with Wadesmill Sacome
 - 4 Kelly Rogers-Davison with Loveloch Valentino
- CoM** David Barnes with Pepsanner Franconia at Millgreen (owned by Mr and Mrs David Barnes)

Gundog Q&A

By Mike Barnes

Q I have spent two years training my labrador and am now about to go on my first shooting day at the local farm. Any tips you can give me would be much appreciated!

A That's great. I assume you know the process of how a shoot is conducted, so I'll share a few thoughts on you and your dog.

Be sparing with the whistle. I know it's essential but you want to look like a professional handler and not someone in the park on a training routine. Keep those whistle commands to a minimum and use the slip

lead a lot. Your dog will be very much in a new environment and you need to concentrate on the job in hand and not what he/she is doing between drives.

Your dog will do all the work and make you proud, so don't keep telling everyone how new you are to all this and don't be pushed into doing something that's alien or difficult, as this could cause problems down the line. We are all proud of what our dogs can do but don't show off as you don't need the pressure.

Anything can happen, so play to your dog's strengths and don't feel nervous about suggesting things you know will be a success for you both, whether it be working a hedge,

picking-up behind the guns or working some cover. And of course enjoy it and relax – you don't want any nerves to be passed on. Local shoots are the best fun for an owner and their dog, and it's the culmination of months of training.

My main piece of advice, though, is to keep an eye on the dog: it could behave differently and may overwork itself and as a result not know when to stop. It could be the opposite and get very nervous. Whatever you experience, it's not an issue about missing some drives if you spot something and adjust training accordingly.

On a final and very important note, take your time and even



Mike has been rough and game shooting, stalking and fly fishing for over 30 years. His passion is working and training gundogs in the field, with a particular emphasis on developing the trainer as well as understanding the dog and its particular purpose. He is an instructor with the Guild of Dog Trainers and coaches with Lincolnshire Pet Gundogs. He also runs Rutland Gundogs and can be contacted on 07803 617859.

if you have used a starter pistol, if the dog is not used to gunshot, keep well back from the line of guns and give plenty of praise. ■

Breeze in the beet for URC in Notts

Club: United Retriever Club

Event: Open cold game test

Venue: Edwinstowe, Nottinghamshire

Judges: John Yarwood and Malcolm Peacock

Chief Steward: Anne Crookes

Sponsors: Alpha Feeds

REPORT BY PHIL WAGLAND

Our test was held by permission of Robert Bealby. The card of 27 included three breeds of retriever. The ground consisted of 30 acres of sugar beet, a long field with a wood to the west and a hedge on the east side.

In the morning the beet was walked-up along a gently undulating slope. Each judge had two dogs in line at a time, with retrieves orchestrated by

the signals of the chief steward.

Guns saluted pigeons thrown at a distance for marks in front or behind. In the second

round, dogs were sent for retrieves down the line or for blinds. After lunch, dogs were tested on two retrieves with a variety of diagonal marks. Long blinds towards a hedge proved easier than expected – most difficulties were caused by

blinds behind into the middle of the beet, against the breeze. The three top dogs were called for a finale.

After the final refreshments, the trophies, five awards and prizes were presented by area president Elaine Welburn. ■

Results

1 Paul Birkbeck with lab.d.

Warrenbank Fen

2 Geoff Dobb with lab.b.

Long Marsh Anna

3 Sharon Kitson with lab.d. Arkglas Tash

CoM Philip Robinson with lab.d.

Briffoaks Cerberus

CoM Will Hales with Lowsommer

Allenton



Judges and award winners, from left: Will Hales, Geoff Dobb, Paul Birkbeck, John Yarwood, Sharon Kitson, Malcolm Peacock & Phil Robinson.



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Kennel Club urges care with entry forms

The Kennel Club is issuing a reminder to competitors about the importance of filling out entry forms accurately when entering their dogs for the club's competitions.

Over the past year, the Kennel Club has seen an increase in the number of awards which have had to be disqualified through competitors providing incorrect information. Situations such as these are not only disappointing, but are completely avoidable if competitors take extra care and time when filling out entry forms.

It is especially important that competitors enter their dog only in the category or class for which it is eligible. They should always read the event schedule very carefully and,

if in any doubt at all, contact either the event organiser or the Kennel Club for guidance.

Competitors can double-check their own dogs' details, including dates of birth and parentage, by logging on to the Kennel Club's online facility at mykc.org.uk.

If there are any discrepancies between a competitor's address on the Kennel Club database and that listed in an event catalogue, for example, this could result in a delay in sending out award certificates.

Caroline Kisko, Kennel Club secretary, said: "In this fast-moving digital age, we hope that the way awards are processed at the Kennel Club will become more streamlined in the foreseeable future. But

we need competitors to do their bit and help in this process. With fewer errors in catalogues, we hope to get to the stage where award certificates are sent out within a matter of days after an event, but this will not be possible where competitors provide incorrect information.

"A simple check of information at the time of filling out the entry form, which takes only minutes, can save bitter disappointment further down the track."

Any competitor who needs to update their details with the Kennel Club, such as a change of name or address, can do so by downloading the 'change of personal details form' at thekennelclub.org.uk. ■

Field trials and tribulations by Amy Bates

Being able to commute to a trial ground is a real bonus – you sleep in your own bed and the dogs are in their own kennels. So you can imagine my delight when I got a run in the recent Three Ridings Labrador Club two-day open, only 40 minutes from home. Sadly disaster struck when the shoot couldn't accommodate the trial and the field trial secretary had to find a new ground.

Step forward Emblehope and Burngrange Estate, the Kennel Club's new ground in Northumberland. Armed with maps, flares, food and water, along with strong walking boots, we set off for the big adventure. When you finally reach the Kennel Club sign deep in the woods, it is still another 20-minute drive on track deep into the

forest. Suddenly, like an oasis, you arrive at your destination: a metal cabin. We were met by headkeeper Raymond Holt and his wife Anne who looked after us for the next two days.

Raymond is an experienced keeper who is no stranger to trials, as both he and his wife have run dogs – his cocker Fudge was testimony to that.

Raymond and Fudge led from the front. They glided over rough ground like Fred and Ginger while the rest of us wrestled with the terrain. "Man down, hold the line" was heard more often than "send your dog".

Now for the trial. Until June only a few grouse inhabited the site and there wasn't a partridge or pheasant to be seen. Now the partridges and pheasants fly like wild birds and are plentiful. A small team headed up by Anne acted as stops and beaters.

They did a fine job but at 7,500 acres the site needs more support. The Kennel Club needs to get its chequebook out as proper billets are required, plus vermin control is high on the priority list.

If you are a field trial secretary thinking of hiring the ground for a trial, be aware that you will need experienced, physically fit judges. Really good radios with ear pieces for judges (rather than have them shouting) will be vital too, as we lost precious birds, time and light owing to delays caused by the disturbance.

You will also need guns who can cope with the terrain; it was nigh on impossible for the guns to swing round because it was so dangerous underfoot. Just walking forward was difficult.

It is fantastic natural ground, perfect for dogs, but it is going



to be a colossal job to sort out the basics for trialling, like walking and shooting.

Raymond and Anne have done an amazing job, having only been there since the early summer, and they are truly welcoming, dedicated hosts. Nothing is too much trouble. Their enthusiasm to make this incredible place a centre of excellence knows no bounds and I wish them much luck for the future. Just be aware that at the moment Emblehope is not for the faint hearted. ■

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Cabbages and thistles a swine for retrievers at Fenhouses

Club: Lincolnshire Area United Retriever Club

Event: Open cold game test

Venue: Fenhouses, Swineshead

Judges: Sue Lowe and Alastair Ford

Chief Steward: Keith Parker

Sponsors: Will Hales and Sue Lowe

REPORT BY GILLY BELL

An enormous sugar beet field was at our disposal by kind permission of the Laird family, and this enabled Sue Lowe to set the dogs some challenging

retrieves. Thanks are due to Keith Parker, our sponsors and the judges who enjoyed watching and scoring 32 dogs.

In the first round, each dog had two long retrieves in front

and then a crossing retrieve in the second round. There was some excellent dog work, but a number of the less experienced dogs struggled to find the birds in large patches of tall thistles.

After lunch, the judges cut to 13 dogs. All stood steadily in line for a drive and then moved off, leaving the birds as memories for later. The judges had already organised birds and rabbits at three different locations marked

by posts. Handlers came to the judges in pairs and each dog had to pick a blind from one of three stations, plus a memory from the drive.

The memories did not pose a problem but the blinds, particularly at one station, proved difficult. Finally, the judges had a run-off between four dogs. This took the form of a 50-yard blind retrieve signalled by a shot. The dogs had to go through the beet and onto the track shielded by tall grasses. The cabbage field proved to be a pull for the dogs and the judges were able to decide their final order. ■



Judges and winners, from left: Sue Lowe, Charlotte Jeffrey, Bel Grundy, Andy Slingsby, Mike Birchall, Keith Parker & Alastair Ford.

Results

- 1** (& winner of the Ferdown Shield and the Sweep Parker Memorial Trophy for Lincs Area member) Andy Slingsby with lab.d. Arkglass Taylor
2 (& winner of the Lintran Challenge Trophy for the best retrieve of the day, and the Springflight Trophy for the best looking yellow labrador) Charlotte Jeffrey with lab.d. Derrity Thor
3 Mike Birchall with lab.b. Squareclose
CoM Bel Grundy with lab.d. Flossmill Elliott

Gundog picture of the month

Congratulations to Diane Morris for this delightful picture of her springer Charlie.

How to win

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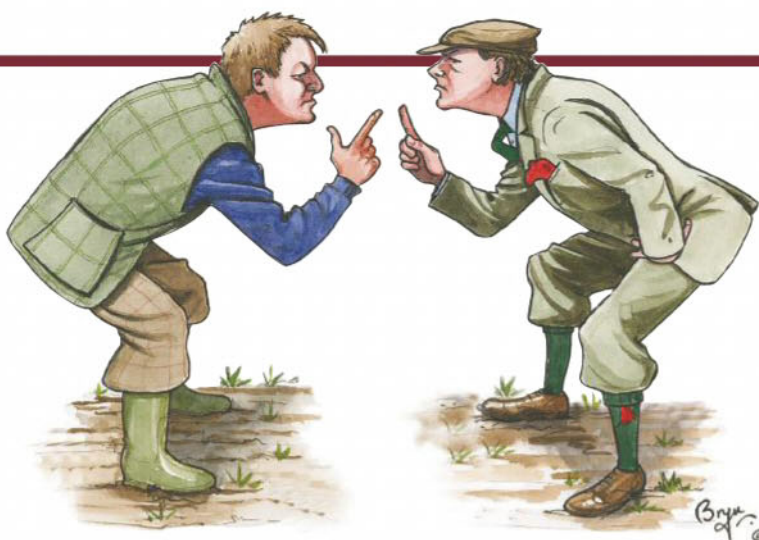


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WHICH IS THE BEST KIND OF 4X4?

I like brand spanking new ones

By Ben Samuelson

I spent many of my formative shooting years sitting in the back of old Land Rovers. They'd be described as classics nowadays and photographs of them would be social media gold among flat-white-drinking hipsters in Camden, as well as Giles, who himself is probably popular among our foolishly follicled friends. Back then they were just old wagons, and my memories of sharing a very small space with my fellow guns, their kit and dogs, was deeply unpleasant.

To start with, I remember the smell. Every ratty old shoot vehicle I travelled in as a sprog stank. I'm not sure there weren't undertones of rat urine and flatulence (human and canine), but the top notes were definitely wet waterproofs, even wetter dogs and roll ups made of the finest hand-picked, Virginia-toasted, beaters' socks.

For some reason, most of the people I shot with were large chaps and took up most of the limited space on board. What little room there was left was occupied by their dogs, one of whom would be standing on my foot with a physics-defying PSI reading while another would be attempting to do laps in a space so full it could have been a game in *The Krypton Factor*.

And then there was the ride of these vehicles. On the rutted tracks, these elderly and spectacularly-overloaded examples of Solihull's finest used the limited shock-absorbing qualities of their knackered cart springs in the first inch or so of travel, and thereafter smashed into their bump stops and exclusively used the nerves sandwiched between my vertebrae to dampen any vertical travel.

Contrast this to the joys of a smart modern 4x4. What sort of treatment would sir like? I got in a car the other day that offered a hot-stone massage. And it's not just heated seats that are on offer, but heated steering wheels, and even heated arm rests nowadays. Filaments in front windscreens mean misting up is a thing of the past, while on sunny days your air conditioning can be supplemented by cold drinks from fore- and aft-mounted fridges. One mad Icelandic/Shetlander shooting chum has such a sophisticated drinks cabinet in the back he carries a blow torch in the boot for trickier inter-drive cocktail requests.

Make mine a peach bellini please, Haraldur. We can drink it while we're waiting for Giles and his osteopath... ■

Give me the good old workhorses every time

By Giles Catchpole

Once upon a time, many years ago and, for that matter, far, far away, *Shooting Gazette* sent me on a press junket. And apart from the abundant quantities of food and drink, the sporting journos there assembled were invited to try their hand at a 4x4 assault course. There would be prizes, they said. So, obviously, I set about cheating and slipped a muddy-looking chap in oily overalls a fiver and asked which of the fleet of trucks I should choose. Anyhow, the oily chap rubbed his nose with an oily thumb and nodded to the tiny wee Jimmy Jeep sitting at the end of the row looking like Cinderella. "Tek the S'zuki, mate," he says, "s'all about power to weight, in'nit?"

So I did and I won a frightfully smart pair of Wellingtons, as I recall, while the bevy of luxury, leather-clad V8 monsters growled about in our wake, sinking up to their mighty arse-ends in the mud. If you want to scamper round the shoot without making a fuss, or, it must be admitted, much of an impression, then the tiny, tinny jeep is the way forward.

Look what the pickers-up are driving – Dacia Dusters, Mahindra jeeps and a very occasional Skoda Yeti. Ten years old and 100,000 plus miles on the clock. They cost next to nothing but they get you there and back every time and, if you do happen to side-swipe the gatepost after lunch on the beaters' day, it just adds to the patina of toil and tradition. Try telling that to the owner of a new Audi Q7 or a glossy Range Rover Sport, why don't you, and see if they agree? ■

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