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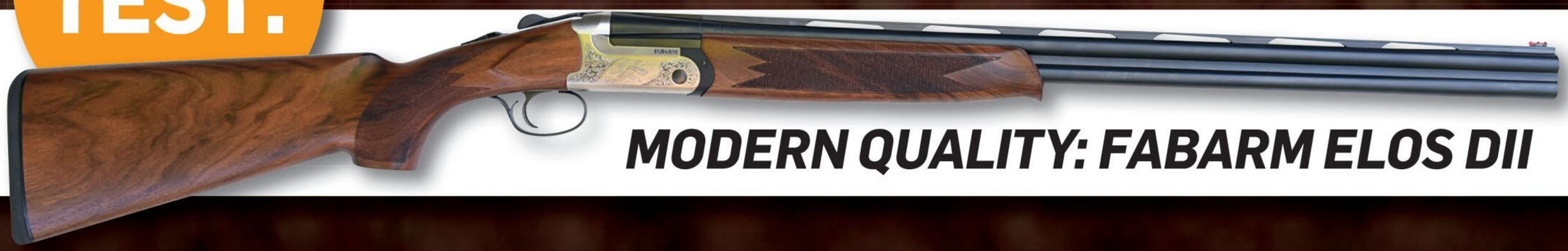
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Sporting Shooter

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42 Phoenix Ct, Hawkins Rd,
Colchester CO2 8JY

PRINTING/DISTRIBUTION

News distribution Seymour Distribution Ltd,
East Poultry Avenue, London EC1A 9PT.
Tel 020 7396 8000
kate.scofield@seymour.co.uk
Printed in England ISSN 1741-1939
Printing William Gibbons

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We welcome contributions from readers. Photos, stories and information should be sent by email to ben.palfreyman@fieldsportspress.com. By submitting unsolicited material, you agree that we may publish it without payment, in its original or edited form, without crediting the source.

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Published monthly © Fieldsports Press

First Words image: Nick Ridley
Cover image: Linda Westron



First Words

So, this evening I sit armed with my favourite tipple, contemplating life. Today at least, I have an excuse to raise a glass – for an old friend. Sadly, he passed away unexpectedly whilst walking his dog in the woods and was found with his faithful companion at his side still guarding him. From a life in the merchant navy, he retired to dabble with building 'projects' as he would refer to them. Most other people would see them as more full-scale renovations or rebuilds, but he would happily tackle them assisted only by the odd helper, his dog, and a cup of tea. He always lived the same way in which he died – with just his dog. Never a more generous man, the world is a sadder place without him.

The bond between man and dog is a strong one, especially when the two work as a team. A gundog is a prime example of this, where the two come together, each enhancing the other's enjoyment of the sport. I lost my faithful spaniel a few years ago, and I have to say a part of me died along with him. I still look back with a smile though at his amazing 'Houdini' escape antics that saw me meeting every neighbour within a half mile radius (often multiple times) to retrieve him. He would also come to work with me, and I remember on one occasion doing a job at a massive stately home, with beautiful manicured lawns and privet hedging. I let him out for a wee at lunchtime and in a flash, he was gone into the shrubbery. Seconds later and out of sight, multiple pheasants could be heard breaking cover. Hurriedly whistling him back, the image of him proudly, and seemingly in slow motion, leaping over the perfectly-pruned hedge with a dead cock pheasant in mouth is still deeply etched into my mind. My horror at what he had 'achieved' caused him to refuse to deliver it to hand and instead shy away from me around the garden in full view of all the windows in the back of the house, defiantly clutching his prize.

I also recall when that bond caused me to put myself at risk without a second thought, when on a retrieve he broke through an ice-covered boggy pond. Realising he was struggling and couldn't get out, I stupidly waded through the icy water up to my waist and pulled him out without hesitation. Soothing him (in a now rather high-pitched tone) we walked shivering back to the truck through the snow. However, his ordeal wasn't quite over, he was just beginning to regain his enthusiasm for the outing and darted after a rabbit – unfortunately on the other side of an electric fence. After that 'shocking' experience, he walked in an obvious sulk by my side all the way back to the truck without so much as a sideways glance at anything! Hopefully, your dog is a little better trained than mine was – there's always a few tips in our gundog pages to help with that if need be!

Dogs aside, this month is a grouse special with the Glorious Twelfth almost upon us! For those of you lucky enough to be visiting the moors, I hope you have some great and challenging sport! I'll be thinking of you whilst sat in my pigeon hide with my battered old semi-auto. Speaking of which, you can read about some of my pigeon exploits this month on page 38, along with a host of usual features from all our regular contributors.

So with that, until next month, I wish you good health and good sport!

Mark Ripley
Guest editor



Issue 227
SEPTEMBER 2022



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Scottish grouse moor assists eagle recovery

A grouse shooting estate in Strathbraan, Perthshire is assisting conservation of the iconic golden eagle by donating a healthy eaglet to a major population recovery project. With the help of the estate's gamekeeper, licensed climbers on ropes descended to a nest on a steep rock face in late June, safely collecting a 6.5-week-old male eagle chick. The bird has now been transported to a purpose-built aviary. After being prepared for release, it will augment the fragmented eagle population in the south of Scotland.

The work is a collaboration between the Scottish Gamekeepers Association, Tayside and Central Scotland Moorland Group and the award winning, multi-partner South of Scotland Golden Eagle Project.

While the recovery of the golden eagle to green-listed status nationwide is a success story, at one stage populations around the Borders and Dumfries and Galloway fell to just three breeding pairs.



PICTURE: HEARTLAND MEDIA

Dr Cat Barlow, SSGE Project Manager, said: "We are very grateful to the donor estate and the team who aided in the safe collection of the eagle chick. This eagle chick from Strathbraan will soon become part of a growing population in southern Scotland."

Royal patron for GWCT

HRH The Prince of Wales has become patron of the GWCT, following in the footsteps of his father HRH The Duke of Edinburgh, who was involved with the Trust for 56 years until his death in 2021. The Prince of Wales himself served as president of the Trust between 1981 and 1987. GWCT president Lord Salisbury KG KCVO PC DL said: "We are honoured and delighted that His Royal Highness has agreed to take on the role of Patron of the Game & Wildlife Conservation Trust.

"Like HRH The Duke of Edinburgh, The Prince of Wales has long taken an interest in the work of the Trust developing and promoting science-based game and wildlife management techniques for the benefit of biodiversity in the British countryside. We greatly look forward to working with him in the coming years."

The Prince of Wales's interest in the countryside and farming is well-known, with a particular focus on areas of research in which GWCT scientists are playing a key role, such as carbon capture and nature-based solutions to the climate crisis. His Royal Highness takes an active interest in several projects in which the GWCT is involved, including wild grey partridge and curlew conservation. The recently established Curlew Recovery Partnership England was born out of Curlew Recovery Summits hosted by His Royal Highness, and its partners include the RSPB, the British Trust for Ornithology, the Duchy of Cornwall and the GWCT.

In addition to wildlife monitoring and insect sampling, the Trust has been assessing the quality of wildlife habitats and evaluating the influence of organic farming on biodiversity.

GWCT chairman Sir Jim Paice DL, said: "By agreeing to be our patron, the prince has acknowledged the importance of GWCT's work. The GWCT recognises that wildlife needs management and our research shows that plenty of diversity can be provided alongside commercial farming."



PICTURE: GWCT

2022 Lyalvale Express Sporting Masters

Held at Atkin Grant & Lang in St Albans on 27 and 28 May, the latest Lyalvale Express Masters welcomed over 350 shooters, all eager to try their hand at the 120-bird, 15-stand Sporting course. The course started by the clubhouse, snaked its way out into open field, detoured momentarily up a very steep bank for one stand, and ended up coming full circle. Of the 120 targets, 20 were to be shot with cartridges provided by Lyalvale Express. These were: Stand 1, where Lyalvale's Super Bior cartridges were used; Stand 2, where Baschieri & Pellagri's Next Greencore (a revolutionary biodegradable wad cartridge) were on offer; and Stand 3, where Fiocchi's Rossa cartridges were to be tried out.

The targets definitely got more challenging as the course progressed and Stand 11 (two right-to-left midis on report) seemed to catch out even the best shooters, though the general consensus was that almost every target had a technical element to it, requiring a certain level of expertise which only made Richard Faulds' winning score of 115/120 all the more impressive. If anyone deserved to leave with the £1,000 prize money and trophy, it's him. Close behind were Mark Goddard and Sam Green on 114.



PICTURE: EMILY DAMMENT

2022 Benelli Sp'Auto

This year, the popular semi-auto competition headed back to Barbury, where entrants were greeted by a 12-stand 100-target course. As always, the competitors had a fantastic array of targets presented to them in varying combinations, from singles through to pairs, as well as on-report and simultaneous trios. It was a recipe for maximum enjoyment and the kind of fun the event has become synonymous with over the years.

Devon shooter Andy Moon has a long track record of success at the Sp'Auto, and he managed an impressive 93 which was matched by J Smith. However, Argun Ismet raised the bar with an excellent 96 to take the overall win while Annalise Evans took the Ladies win, Dan Carpenter won Juniors, and Charlie Faulds took the Colts award.



PICTURE: DON BRUNT

Life on Land awards

Three Moorland Association estates, all of which provide grouse and game shooting, have been given 'Life on Land' awards from RedList Revival. The awards are given in recognition of conservation of rare birds, and are presented to landholdings exceeding the top one per cent in the UK for abundance of a red-listed species.

Swinton Estate in North Yorkshire achieved the award for hen harriers, Egton Estate on the North York Moors National Park for lapwings (and also ranks in the top one per cent of landholdings for curlew abundance), while Coverhead Estate in the Yorkshire Dales National Park won the award for its work with black grouse. It is also in the top one per cent for curlew and lapwing abundance.

Swinton has been a key partner in the government's hen harrier action plan since 2016, undertaking a range of conservation actions to help re-establish one of the UK's most endangered birds. The estate identifies and monitors hen harrier winter roosts and nests to protect them from potential persecution, predation, and disturbance by members of the public. In 2021, 84 hen harrier chicks were fledged in the north of England, the highest number for 35 years.



PICTURE: RANCHORUNNER / SHUTTERSTOCK

Egton covers approximately 4,900 acres and is designated as a Site of Special Scientific Interest. Here, the heather moorland is carefully managed with over 300 acres already restored. This was achieved by installing peat dams and blocking drainage ditches, which has the effect of raising water levels in the surrounding land and improving the hydrology of the soil. This benefits wading birds and can help a variety of plants take root, in turn reducing carbon emmissions and improving biodiversity.

The black grouse population at Coverhead has been re-established through a pioneering relocation programme, taking specimens from their core range and placing them in other areas with suitable habitat. The estate identifies three factors crucial to helping upland birds survive and thrive, as James Mawle of Coverhead explains: "Firstly, habitat management to ensure the sward is properly maintained and allows wildflowers to bloom. Secondly, skilled keepering to ensure that predators are controlled. Finally is the insect life on the estate. Chick survival depends on a good diet of insects in the early weeks. The estate has worked hard to ensure the entomology is in place to provide an abundance of insects for chicks when they are at their most vulnerable."

England wins Four Nations International Gundog Competition

Nerves were shredded at this year's GWCT Scottish Game Fair as Team England took top spot the Four Nations International Gundog Competition.

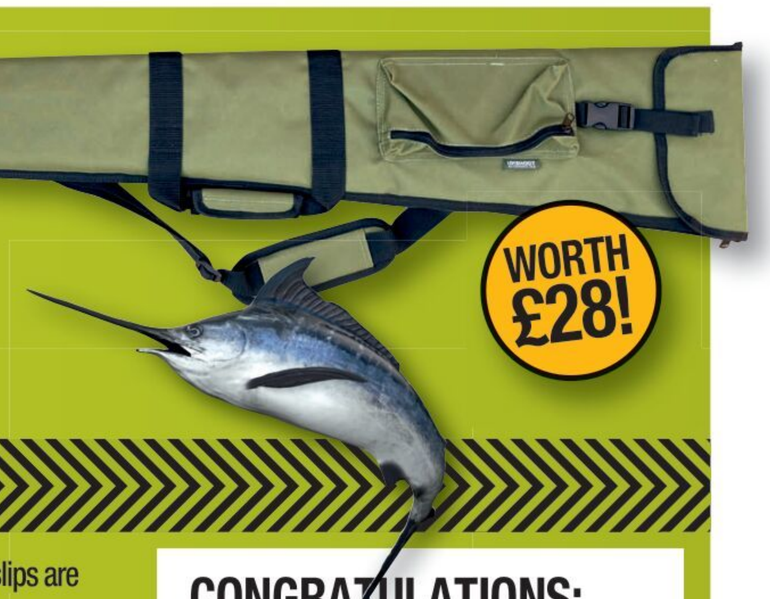
The dogs were tested on their hunting, marking and retrieving abilities, as well as their steadiness to shot. The spaniel competition took place in the morning with three dogs and handlers taking part for each team, and the format was repeated in the afternoon with the retrievers. At the final count, England topped the Spaniel Team competition and Ireland won the Retriever Team, with England narrowly claiming overall victory with 590 points over Ireland's 588. Wales were third with 545 points and Scotland fourth on 491.

England team captain David Latham commented; "This was the most challenging gundog course I've ever seen at a game fair, and it made the atmosphere so special and exciting – the best yet. It was technical and difficult, so a great recreation of working dogs in the field with all the variables that brings."



PICTURE: SANDY YOUNG

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CONGRATULATIONS:

PAUL WARBY who found MIKA MEERCAT on p33 of the July issue. See p88 for more successful creature finders.

PICTURE: BBEVREN / GETTY

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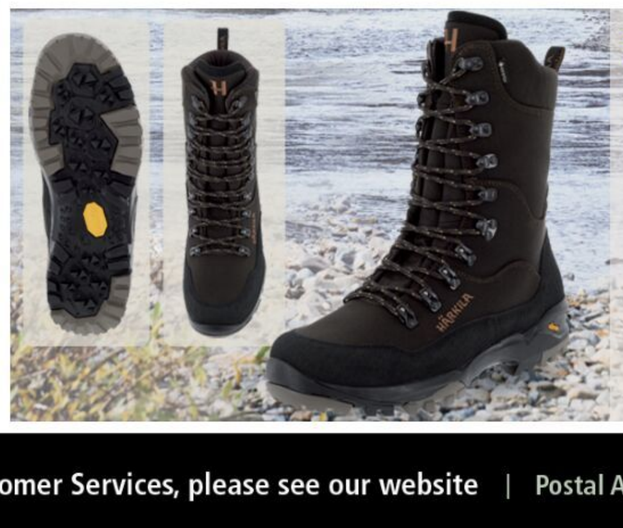


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THERMAL MONOCULARS

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- Human Recognition Range 335m
- Human Identification Range 170m
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- Human Recognition Range 425m
- Human Identification Range 210m
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- Human Recognition Range 350m
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Binox-4T 1.5-15x (640x480) - 25mm
- Human Detection Range 1050m
- Human Recognition Range 530m
- Human Identification Range 330m

RRP £4179 **£3899**

Binox-4T 2.5-25x (640x480) - 50mm
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Talion XQ38.....**£1949.95**

THERMAL TECHNOLOGY

PULSAR IMAGE.QUALITY

THERMION 2 LRF XP50 PRO

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Making the most of the harvest

Andy Crow explains how to make the most of harvest time, with tips on everything from decoy patterns to making sure your birds don't spoil in the heat!

Harvest can create a good opportunity to reduce the numbers of pigeons on your permissions. There will be a lot of birds feeding on the stubbles, as well as hammering the surrounding crops, and if you have stubbles adjacent to a field where the birds are causing serious damage to crops that have yet to be harvested – such as standing wheat or beans – then you can set up next door on the stubbles and make the most of the opportunity to reduce numbers while still being able to pick all your birds up afterwards. It's much easier retrieving shot birds from short stubbles than it is from standing crops.

Usually, oil seed rape and winter barley are the first to be cut. Following that, you get into winter beans and winter wheat which are cut around the same time. If you have these types of crops on your permissions, have a word with the farmer and find out when he plans to cut which crops, then you can make a plan.

A cloudy day with a little bit of wind is ideal for shooting pigeons, so that's what you're looking for, but it is what it is at this time of year. Sometimes, if you leave it too long, you'll lose the opportunities, so don't worry too much about waiting for the perfect day if you've got birds causing damage and a good opportunity to get onto them.

When and where?

The birds tend to be quite spread out at this time of year – the more stubbles there are, the more spread out they will be. The most important thing is flight lines – you can get under those flight lines and catch them as they go between feeding areas, so get out and watch carefully, making a note of where those are. This will be your best chance. They often tend to stick to the same flight lines, sometimes even year after year; that's why my place often produces a big bag, as there are a lot of flight lines to get under as they cross the farm to get to other feeding areas.

When it's really hot, you'll usually see them feeding from around lunchtime through to late afternoon. So, at this time of year, I don't start too early, usually turning up at around 11am so I can sit and watch for a bit and work out where to set up. It's often over and done with by around 5pm, but don't bail out too soon as I have known them to keep feeding until gone 7pm! It all depends on the day.

Hides and decoys

If you want to make a hide out in the middle of the field – a 360 degree hide – then make sure it blends into the background well. This may mean that you need a lighter coloured net at this time of year. If you're on the headland, you can take advantage of all the leafy branches that are in abundance during these months to add to your nets, creating a natural looking hide that blends seamlessly into the hedgerow behind you.

You want to build your decoy pattern quite sparsely, so they have somewhere to land. Flappers seem to work well on stubbles and often better than rotaries, maybe because by this time of year they sometimes start to associate rotaries with danger if they've come into one and been



In summer, keep dogs in the shade, and bring lots of water and a bowl – leave them at home on really hot days!

PICTURES: EMILY DAMMENT



Watch your barrels on hot days with lots of shooting – they will get hot! Consider a glove.

shot at a few times. You can give it a try, but if it looks like they're veering off away from the rotary, get it out of the pattern sharpish.

Staying cool and safe

If you are bringing a dog with you in the summer months, make sure you bring LOTS of water and a bowl and keep offering them a drink. Keep them in the shade as long as possible, and keep a close eye on them for signs of overheating or dehydration. If it's seriously hot, as it has been lately (mid-July), I leave Rosa at home. It's easy enough to retrieve the birds yourself from stubbles because you can see them a long way off, so my advice is that if it's seriously hot, don't risk bringing your dog. They overheat so quickly, it's just not worth it. If it's just warm, still make sure you've got loads of water and keep the dog in the shade.

For yourself, make sure you wear a cap to keep the sun off your head, and bring sunglasses or you'll be blinded trying to shoot anything against the sun. Try to work out in advance where the sun will move throughout the day, and set up in a way that keeps the decoys out in the sun, while the hide stays in the shade, at least making sure you're in the shade during the hottest part of the day. Bring lots of water in a cool bottle if possible, and keep hydrated. Watch out for the gun barrels as they will be scorching in this heat and it's very easy to burn your hand if you accidentally touch them – I often use a glove in summer to avoid burns.



If you are building a hide in the field, you may need a lighter coloured net to help it blend in

Challenges

The biggest challenge when shooting in the summer harvest time is keeping the shot birds cool so they do not spoil. Nobody likes waste, so you do need to take this into consideration. You can get really thin mesh camouflage nets, and I usually lay the birds under that in a shaded area, which also keeps the flies off them. Try and pick the shot birds up regularly, and don't leave them lying in the field too long being heated up by the sun. Finally, get them back to the chiller as soon as you possibly can once you've finished. ■

STAY WITHIN THE LAW

GL42 (the general licence used to prevent serious damage) states that the birds listed in it, including pigeons, can only be controlled to prevent serious damage to "livestock, foodstuffs for livestock, crops, vegetables, fruit, fisheries or inland waters".

Lethal measures may be employed by an authorised person, but only after reasonable non-lethal measures to prevent that damage have been exhausted. Ensure you know the law, and operate within it.

You can view GL42 here: bit.ly/3RMvIVW

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THE TRUTH ABOUT GROUSE SHOOTING

Managing our precious moorlands properly will ensure we protect carbon banks, prevent devestating fires and ensure the future of a myriad of wildlife species, says Dick Bartlett

Grouse shooting is facing challenges from politics, opponents on social media and climate change – and our response could determine the future for game shooting and its role in nature conservation. To understand the situation properly, we first need to review some background and history of grouse.

The red grouse, unique to the British Isles, is a sub-species of willow grouse which is found over much of the north of the northern hemisphere. Heather is an essential part of the red grouse diet, and heather moorland is designated as a rare habitat of the world by the IUCN because of its management for grouse, which also supports a special biodiversity including rare wader bird species. Heather is common on lowland heaths, but it is the cooler upland heaths which provide the sub-arctic environment where our grouse can thrive. The British Isles have about 75% of the world's heather moorland, concentrated mainly in Scotland and the north of England.

The moors may look bonny and wild, but they were very much man-made thousands of years ago when our ancestors cut down the trees for fuel and housing. This exposed the soil to weather and rain which leached away plant nutrients leaving a poor acidic soil on well-drained land and wet acidic conditions on the flats and hollows. The drier parts were ideal for heather to colonise and also suited berry plants such as bilberry, crow berry and cow berry.

The wet parts were, and still are, too moist and acidic for old vegetation to rot, and this has been preserved as peat, which varies in depth from a few inches to several feet and is known today as blanket bog. The peat-forming plants are mainly mosses, particularly sphagnum. Several grasses including cotton grass grow here, and heather too. All of these plants are eaten by grouse at specific times of the year. Humans have used and managed the moors throughout their history for grazing livestock and cutting peat for fuel. Muirburn provided nutritious re-growth for livestock and deer and little grouse hunting was done until about 1850 when the breech-loading shotgun displaced muzzle loaders and today's grouse shooting industry was born.

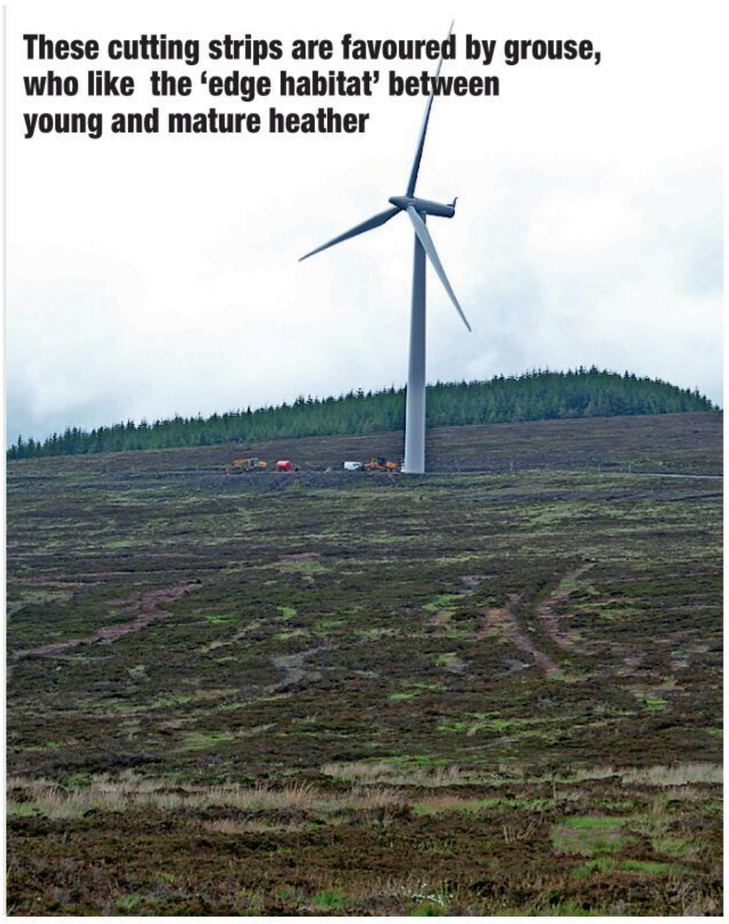
Under attack

The opponents of country sports have been campaigning against grouse shooting for decades by trying to stir up a class war against a sport enjoyed by 'wealthy toffs'. If we let them succeed, their next victim will be pheasant and partridge shooting, and then they will move on to angling, horse racing and possibly even keeping pets. Their attacks focus on vital techniques such as heather burning and predator control which, if banned or too restricted, would make grouse moor management so difficult that the sport

Shooting birds on the moor over pointers



PICTURES: **DICK BARTLETT**



These cutting strips are favoured by grouse, who like the 'edge habitat' between young and mature heather

would collapse, along with its special habitats, because our critics do not offer any viable alternative land management. Indeed, the biodiversity records of most of their own 'reserves' are appalling, despite huge funding from public funds and social media appeals. This will be revealed by environmental surveys which are now comparing land management types such as bird charity reserves, windfarms and rewilding, with land managed for grouse shooting. They are measuring population densities of birds of prey, species of wader birds and mountain hares, with peatland condition also being assessed. Results are expected to be peer reviewed and published later this year and may prompt some deeper investigations to follow.



The Radiochecker is a device British Moorlands developed for checking traps remotely and automatically, saving a huge amount of time.

Over the last 100 years, lowland farming in most places has become too intensive for nesting of red-listed curlew and waders like lapwing, oystercatcher and golden plover, so these species now rely on the managed moorlands and the adjoining low-output grazing fields. They like to nest on rather bare open ground with some vegetation of medium height for protecting chicks from weather and predators. Gamekeepers' control of predators makes an enormous difference to the survival of eggs and chicks of all ground-nesting birds. Foxes and carrion crows are the main targets, especially in the spring nesting season, but stoats, weasels, mink and feral cats are trapped all year round. This work needs to be thorough, and on nature reserves it is often half hearted or even totally absent with entirely predictable poor results. The value of legal predator control for moorland birds is well documented by GWCT's peer-reviewed research in the Otterburn Wader Project, and also the Langholm Moor Demonstration Project.

Heather is burned in winter or early spring to provide fresh new shoots for the growing chicks. It is done in narrow strips or small patches, leaving wet parts and taller heather for shelter and as a source of insects which chicks need for protein and energy in their first few days of life. Anti-shooting campaigners' favourite gripe is that muirburn burns the underlying peat, which is a precious carbon store. This deliberately ignores the fact that it is done at the time of year when the peat, and usually the moss layer above it, is too damp to ignite. The cool fire travels so quickly that a Mars bar on the moss stays intact!

By burning when only the heather is dry, grouse keepers avoid damaging the moss layer which locks up carbon via photosynthesis. This fact is ignored by authorities who have banned burning on blanket bog to protect the mosses. The ban is completely unjustified and also counterproductive, as York University's research has shown that regular rotational burning produces the best growing conditions for mosses, and that is much better than burning at 20-year intervals or not burning at all. The reason for this is that burning off the heather canopy allows more light to reach the mosses and their growth is therefore stronger. When conservationists listen to rants on social media rather than the science, they risk tremendous environmental damage because on unmanaged or rewilded moorland, the wildfire risk increases as heather gets taller and thicker stemmed. This extra fuel load means a wildfire will be hotter and probably ignite the peat as these incidents often occur in times of increased public access in spring and early summer when the peat is dry enough to burn and very difficult to extinguish.

The fires on Saddleworth Moor and the 2019 fires in north-east Scotland were good examples of what can happen when prescribed burning is banned. The Scottish Fire and Rescue Service is keen to work with moorland gamekeepers to ensure that firebreaks are made by muirburn, and fuel loads made safer. Keepers are also highly valued for their help to fire crews dealing with wildfires.

Grouse numbers this year

Climate change is producing weather of extremes: long spells of wet, heat or drought, plus bouts of unseasonal weather such as temperatures of 20°C in February which can make the breeding season too early and then it can be ruined by cold »

northerly winds and sleet showers when chicks are hatching in May.

We often have long spells of cold dry weather in early spring, and this delays the spring growth of heather and cotton grass buds which are valuable for building the reserves and stamina required for grouse to produce strong chicks and for the hard work of both parents in looking after them. However, grouse are quite tough and capable in our harsh upland climate. Their eggs even contain an ingredient which acts as a natural antifreeze!

From 2012 to 2016, we had five exceptionally good grouse years with some estates breaking 100-year records. This was followed by five very bad years up to 2021. Some experts have blamed this on weather due to climate change, while others believe we are in a cyclical pattern, such as the one we see with mountain hares and voles because in the bad years the damage was much greater than that caused by similar weather in previous years. One view is that very high densities of grouse allowed disease to be established and it takes time for disease resistance to build up. Hopefully, the latter theory is credible as early reports for 2022 are much more encouraging at last.

Climate change will certainly affect the grouse's food chain, and supplementary feeding is being investigated for the future. Releasing artificially reared grouse is not realistic; the rearing is straight forward enough but, without the guidance from natural parents, predators take nearly 100% in the first few months.

Much of the moorland I work on has only a moderate to low potential for grouse and the expense of employing full-time keepers cannot be justified. These sites are usually where a moorland landscape has been fragmented by forestry, creating islands of moor surrounded by ground with little or no predator control. Culled predators are just replaced by incomers from neighbouring land, and a good example of this was the Langholm Moor Demonstration Project which tried traditional grouse management and was abandoned after eight years with zero grouse shooting.

For these sub-prime moors, British Moorlands Ltd was established 20 years ago to develop low-cost but effective grouse moor management techniques using new technology for mechanisation of heather management and automation of labour-intensive trap checking. Instead of burning, the heather is cut in twisting and intersecting narrow strips to produce a maze pattern which is difficult and confusing for predators to hunt. This gives maximum length of the edge between feeding areas and shelter which is very important for grouse chicks. Attention to detail is needed for the habitat design and also for the siting of grit points and drinkers so that chicks can quickly evade approaching predators.

This level of management works for grouse more than for waders, but it can produce affordable walked-up shooting and falconry with some driven shooting in good grouse seasons. For the DIY operator or part-timer, the pleasure and interest comes from meeting management challenges as much as the shoot days. ■



Heather is an essential part of the red grouse's diet

PICTURE: ANNE COATESY / GETTY

CONTACT

For more information on the work Dick is doing, visit british moorlands.com



Heather in bloom on the North York Moors

PICTURE: DANIELRAO / GETTY

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WITH SIMON O'LEARY

Simulated grouse

If you aren't lucky enough to be taking a trip up to the moors this year, the grouse butts at your local shooting ground are the perfect place for some fast-paced action, says Simon O'Leary

The coming months are going to be increasingly hard for many of us. Fuel is currently at an all-time high, the Covid bug seems to be rearing its very ugly head once again and the cost of living generally, for most, is quite frankly almost unsustainable. This year's game season also has its own pressures with shoots finding a shortage or worse still a complete lack of birds. Many will have to close; some will soldier through… things need to change and quickly!! I therefore want to try and spread a little uplifting news, add a little value, and lift the spirits a tad…

This season, everyone is talking about simulated game – it's an obvious solution because, OK, it's not quite the real thing, but my goodness it comes in at a bloody good second. I wrote a piece a couple of years ago about this and it appears I was ahead of my time – now there's a first! But jokes aside, this could be the new way forward, with availability and cost implications to consider. This alternative field activity is now in its prime, it's totally current, so why not have a go. Simulated shoots, of which there are many, can simulate any bird and there is definitely no shortage of birds!

The new season is of course kicked off with the Glorious Twelfth, the day that historically would see Kings and Queens don their best attire, only to march forward, re-treading their previous steps on the annual pilgrimage, arriving in all their splendour on the mighty moors, the magnificent swathes of land that make up such a large part of the UK's rural landscape. These wonderous blankets of mother nature's carpet are testament to the work and dedication of the skilled folk that labour tirelessly throughout the year, entertaining all manner of conservation and management, only to enhance habitat for many whilst providing some of the most exhilarating game shooting our fine isle has to offer – and a landscape that can be viewed and enjoyed by all.

That said, grouse shooting is only available to the chosen few, as such a high level of management comes with a hearty outlay, and a king's ransom is duly reciprocated for such an occasion, something that will leave most only daydreaming of what could be.

So, the obvious second is simulation – I say second, but should I say alternative? The thirst for game is not for everyone, and a well-set simulated grouse session from a realistic butt can create a high-octane experience all in its own right. The positioning style and stance are all the same – you could even really 'lord it up' and double gun it if you like! Why not dress up for the part and include elevenses, creating a truly memorable experience, whilst thoroughly enjoying the sum of its parts?!

Most shooting schools across the land will have a grouse butt and related targets. Some well-established simulated shooting companies also provide a grouse drive, and en masse, recreating an almost true to life arrangement of timber butts. Like all simulated shooting, the spacing is always less compared with the real thing for the obvious reasons of clay trappers etc. Pre warning of one blowing one's own trumpet! We at Hownhall also have a grouse butt

HAVE A GO

Fancy a day at simulated grouse? Why not give the guys at Hownhall a call and book yourself in for a session on the grouse butts?



Simulated grouse in the right setting can produce a very realistic driven game experience

PICTURES: **BEN WRIGHT PHOTOGRAPHY**

HOWNHALL
SHOOTING

‘When shooting grouse, your reactions need to be pin sharp. A late pick-up will most certainly end in a failure, so early and committed should be your chosen bent’


For the full grouse experience, how about sporting a pair of guns?!

SIMON O'LEARY



Simon is the co-founder (alongside Benita Wright) and head instructor of Hownhall Shooting School. He has been coaching for over 10 years, focusing strongly on training for game shooting.

With expert tuition at Hownhall provided by Simon and a selection of highly trained professional coaches, and with access to a range of simulated game targets including grouse butts, Hownhall is a great place for game shots to tune up between seasons.

Hownhall is in association with Hull Cartridge and in partnership with Le Chameau.

Email: shoot@hownhallshooting.com
Instagram: @hownhallshooting

arrangement, with testing driven targets thrown at high speed. In addition, we also include crossing birds, as this can be missed from a simulated affair, but is more akin to a real-life experience. The targets can be unforgiving and safety wear is essential (do not judge the artistic licence of the pictures in this feature!).

How to ace it at the grouse butts!

The technique for cracking these targets is not dissimilar either, as reactions need to be pin sharp. A late pick-up will most certainly end in a failure. Early and committed is the chosen bent. Unlike partridge and pheasant, a sim grouse target requires a slightly different approach. More disconcerting is the taking of a low bird, as some shots will have the ground as a backdrop! Your bodyweight must be well on the front foot, most certainly a case of 'nose over toes'. By this I suggest nose over lead foot, ensuring the gun will be neatly placed into the cheek. Footwork will play some part in your success but a square mount, moving shoulders with the gun via your core, is paramount.

Regarding shooting style... whatever keeps you the most comfortable. Generally speaking, my own personal style when game shooting lends itself largely towards Swing-through, whilst utilising a Maintained approach on longer distance. With a grouse type target, I instinctively incorporate the Method – strange really, as I would never otherwise engage with this format; however, due to the ferocity of these targets, I find this take very comforting, and for some reason it all feels a little sharper. On immediate pick-up of the driven target, the muzzle is straight on, almost shooting at the same time the muzzle is pulled ahead. Fast crossers benefit from the Maintained, enabling full control of the shot. But, as all are different, I cannot discount swinging through, just engage as you feel will deliver the best in you!

Do not get hung up on chokes and the side-by-side versus over-and-under debate again, just use the tool that works for you. Many will favour the more traditional barrel configuration due to the ease of movement relating to quartering and crossing birds. I like to use both, but this all depends on the mood! The key is a steady forward hand, with full muzzle control, allowing the pattern to do the work – as of course, you will have previously patterned your gun (won't you!).

So, indulge in a flight of fantasy and book a simulated grouse experience, and enjoy a very cost-effective form of shooting, whether it be flushes in the shooting school, or a full-blown simulated day across estate parkland. Indulge in dressing up and take a small hamper with possibly a nip of ye old barrel straightener, many fun times lay ahead and at snip of the cost of a real day. Clay shooting is becoming the new cool, so go and hang out… and enjoy yourself! ■


Instinctive shooting technique is often the best option for grouse targets



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SEASON'S GREETINGS!

While the coming months will prove disappointing for many, with some shoots cancelling their whole season, Phil Moorsom asks what positives we can take moving forward

With 12 August only a couple of weeks away, it is time to start getting excited about the season ahead, especially considering the bird supply issues we face and the general madness that pervades around the world at the moment. Thankfully, the grouse counts around the country have been very encouraging and many moors are cautiously optimistic bearing in mind that stocks were low from last year. We are lucky enough to have secured a few walked-up grouse days for members in North Yorkshire, Cumbria and up in the Cairngorms. They are all small days and refreshingly all the moor owners have made every effort to keep them affordable, bearing in mind it is grouse we are talking about. Given the price of some pheasants this season, suddenly shooting grouse no longer seems madly expensive and I thoroughly recommend giving it a go, although as I have warned in the past it is hugely addictive.

Whilst it is important to try and remain positive, it has been hard to see the effect the current bird shortage and ever increasing costs have had on many shoots that we have visited since the start of the Rough Rovers. Back in February, when I started to put our calendar together for the 2022-23 season, bookings were incredibly strong and there was a real sense that we were over the worst and this season was going to be an epic one, pushing the last two years into the past.

There has been a huge amount of frustration amongst the modest commercial shoots and syndicates who feel that the shoot owners with the deepest pockets have been able to secure birds in good numbers at the expense of some of the less well-heeled. I have heard so many tales of promises broken, people gazumped on ordered birds, online auctions and on occasion people simply being ripped off. The prices that some shoots are charging are off the chart and my fear is that we are on a road once again to making shooting elitist and inaccessible for the majority of keen shots. We are all aware that the costs of rearing have risen significantly and quite rightly we have seen this increase reflected in the price per bird this season but there are those that simply see the uncertainty in the market as an opportunity for profiteering.

Hope for the future

In the spirit of my glass always being half full, I am hopeful that some good may well come out of the current turmoil and believe that we must all take a look at how and why we shoot and what we aim to get out of a day in the field. In the Rough Rovers, we have always welcomed people from all walks of life who share a common interest and whose principal goal is to enjoy a day out in beautiful countryside in good company. For many, the number of birds shot is secondary as long as one can go home knowing that you didn't



PICTURE: CERVUS UK

disgrace yourself with the gun and had a memorable day. There is no question we shall start paying more to shoot less birds, but perhaps we need to look to the past and condition ourselves to accept that actually we are paying for a day's entertainment rather than a number of birds.

Thankfully, as I got sucked in to booking in February, our calendar, although reduced from last year, looks pretty good and we have managed to hang on to quite a few partridge days and refreshingly most of the shoots have honoured the prices that we had agreed with some slight adjustments here and there. One significant change, for the good, is that I have seen a lot more small mini-driven days being offered, all of which have been hugely popular. So far we do not have as many walked-up days in the calendar as I would like, 24 so far, but I am confident that we will get a lot of these as the start of the season draws near and the shooting starts. There are a few who are planning to put down some late birds ready to shoot on boundary days in December and January. We have also been approached by two shoots this year who have offered us quite large areas of land that they do not shoot on driven days. The plan would be to get back to proper rough days, with four or five Guns, ideally with dogs, and we would spend the day working hard shooting hedgerows, copses, gulleys and gulches, having a laugh and hopefully take a few birds home each for the pot and keep on top of some vermin for the keeper. Obviously this works for both parties as the shoot generates some income from birds on the boundaries that might be lost and we get a cracking day out.

BEST OF DAYS!

A day's rough shooting is a great way to generate a true mixed bag and control vermin.

Another benefit I hope we shall see next year, if and when we have birds, is the reaffirming of the humble local syndicate which going forward should underpin the future of grassroots shooting. Not only can they ensure that shooting remains both affordable and accessible but, crucially, act as a vehicle to pass on the traditions, the fieldcraft, the wildlife management and the conservation knowledge to future generations. There have been quite a few syndicates that are not shooting this season and I do hope they make it back next year, but it is down to us as individuals to show our support and enthusiasm.

We have seen quite a few of our members take a more considered approach and scale back their shooting this season, with some taking the dramatic step to not shoot at all and have a fallow year. We have organised a lot more two- and three-day trips this season with people venturing a bit further afield to experience something different such as wild bird days and walked-up days in Scotland, north Wales and the south-west. If you are struggling to find days this season, trips like this are a great alternative and could maybe be combined with some fishing or stalking.


A few more rough days in the calendar are always a welcome addition

PICTURE: DOM HOLTAM

Next year will be the tenth anniversary of the Rough Rovers, which is hard to believe, but looking back to why and how it started offers us a chance for us to reflect and think about what we do in the future. It is easy to get caught up in all the negatives at the moment but it important to remember that shooting is a hobby that we all love and it is ultimately down to us to ensure it has a future that is responsible, sustainable and accessible. I hope you all have a fantastic season and savour every day you are lucky enough to be out in the field. ■


A well-trained dog is always an asset on any shoot day

PICTURE: RODIMOV PAVEL / GETTY

ONE FOR THE POT



Venison Lasagne

Fantastico classico

Make the most of the roe buck season by putting together this delicious Italian feast for your friends and family, courtesy of Chris Marney and the Game For Anything kitchen



PICTURES: GAME FOR ANYTHING

Well, we find ourselves at the start of a new season and this is a great opportunity to start planning recipes for the year ahead. As we always say in the GFA kitchen, game is for every day not just special days, and this month is a perfect pasta version of this motto.

Stalking during the summer means very early mornings or very late nights – but with roe bucks and muntjac in season, it is well worth the effort. When we get the carcass back to the GFA kitchen, we immediately start planning the meals ahead and the cuts and joints needed for those particular recipes, making sure we use all the excess from the carcass to go into the mince pile and then roasting the carcass to make some fantastic rich venison stock.

Don't forget we will be doing a demonstration at the Game Fair, which this year will be held at Ragley Hall on 29-31 July. Please do take a look at our website or follow us on Instagram for further details.

VENISON LASAGNE WITH GARLIC BREAD

Serves 4

INGREDIENTS

PASTA

- 3 eggs beaten
- 300g of 00 flour
- Pinch of salt
- 100g spinach

PASTA SAUCE

- 50ml olive oil
- 2 large onions, finely diced
- 4 cloves of garlic, finely chopped
- 300g mushrooms, roughly chopped
- 4 peppers, remove the stalk, cut in half, remove the seed, then roughly chop
- Bunch of celery, trim the top and base, then roughly chop



Recipe cards



Some of the recipes featured in this column over the past few months now form part of a new range of recipe cards that Game for Anything is offering to shoots.

If you'd like some GFA cards to hand out to the Guns at your shoot, or if you'd just like to find out more, please contact one of the guys at GFA:
Chris Marney: chris@gameforanything.co.uk
Mark Robson: mark@gameforanything.co.uk

'Stalking during the summer means very early mornings or very late nights – but with roe bucks and muntjac in season, it is well worth the effort'



- 500g cherry tomatoes, halved
- 2tbsp mixed herbs
- 1tbsp caster sugar
- 2tbsp balsamic vinegar
- 1tbsp Worcestershire sauce
- 1tbsp soy sauce
- 2 venison stock cubes
- 2 tins chopped tomatoes
- 200ml red wine
- 500ml water
- 500g passata

CONTACT

If you would like to talk to Mark and Chris about catering for an event you are planning, you can contact them via their website, www.gameforanything.co.uk, where you will find more details about what services they can offer.



CHEESE SAUCE

- 50g unsalted butter
- 50g plain flour
- 150ml milk
- 100ml double cream
- 100g grated mature cheddar cheese

LASAGNE

- 500g venison mince
- 1tbsp olive oil
- 500g pasta sauce
- 50g grated mature cheddar cheese
- 50g grated Parmesan

METHOD

PASTA

1. Place the spinach into a pan with a splash of water and put the lid on. Cook for 2 minutes.

2. Remove and drop into a bowl of ice water.
3. Remove from the water and place on kitchen towel and pat dry.
4. Finely slice the spinach, then place the flour and salt into a bowl.
5. Beat the eggs in a separate bowl.
6. Form a well in the centre of the flour and pour in the eggs and add the finely sliced spinach, gently bringing it together to form a dough.
7. Wrap in cling film and place in the fridge for 30 minutes.
8. Remove from the fridge and divide into two, using a rolling pin to flatten it out.
9. Pass through the pasta roller, gradually increasing the number on the setting until the final roll is around 7.
10. Cut into sheets to fit your baking tray.

PASTA SAUCE

1. Place the olive oil and onion into a large pot and gently fry the onion until soft, but not coloured.
2. Add the garlic and continue to gently fry for 2 minutes before adding in the mushrooms and frying for a further 5 minutes.
3. Now place all the other ingredients into the pot and bring to the boil.
4. Turn down to a simmer and gently cook for 3 to 4 hours
5. Remove from the heat and blitz up until smooth, – if you have one, a stick blender would be perfect for this as you can safely blitz it all up in the same pan.

CHEESE SAUCE

1. In a large saucepan, melt the butter, then whisk in the flour.
2. When it is all combined, add the milk.
3. Keep whisking to avoid lumps and when the sauce starts to become thick, add the cream and cheese and keep whisking.

LASAGNE

1. Heat the oven to 180°C.
2. Heat the olive oil in a large frying pan and then add the venison mince and gently fry until cooked through.
3. Add the pasta sauce and mix until well combined and sit to one side.
4. Place some the cheese sauce into the base of an ovenproof dish then place in one of the pasta sheets.
5. Add some of the venison and pasta sauce mix followed by another pasta sheet.
6. Repeat this process until the dish is full or all the ingredients are used, saving some of the cheese sauce to be placed on top of the final pasta sheet.
7. Sprinkle over the grated mature cheddar cheese and Parmesan.
8. Place into the oven and bake for 40–50 mins until the top is golden.
9. Enjoy! ■

Garlic Bread



GARLIC BREAD

Serves 4

INGREDIENTS

DOUGH
- 500g 00 flour
- 10g table salt
- 50ml olive oil
- 10g fast-acting dried yeast
- 300ml warm water

FORMING
- 50g 00 flour
- 50g fine semolina

Using a strong gluten flour such as 00 will create the air bubbles we're looking for.

MAKING
- 6 garlic cloves, crushed
- Handful of parsley, finely chopped
- 75g softened butter
- 100g grated mozzarella cheese



METHOD

1. If you have a mixer with a dough hook, place all the ingredients in a bowl, adding the salt and yeast separately, and mix for 10 minutes until the dough forms a ball and is smooth.
2. If you don't have the above, place all the ingredients into a bowl, adding the salt and yeast separately and mix together by hand. Then tip out onto the worktop and knead for 10 minutes until the dough is smooth.
3. You may need to add a little more water or flour if the mixture is too dry or wet.
4. Place into a large bowl which has been lightly greased with some olive oil, cover with cling film and place in a warm area.
5. Leave to prove for 1.5 hours or until it has doubled in size.
6. Mix the fine semolina and flour together and sprinkle on the worktop.
7. Remove the dough from the bowl, place on the floured surface and divide into four.
8. Using your fingertips, flatten out the dough then fold the edges back into the centre.
9. Flip the dough over and form into a ball.
10. Repeat this for the other balls and then place on a baking tray lined with baking paper.
11. Cover with a clean teatowel and allow to prove for 1.5 hours.
12. Heat the oven to 180°C while you combine the butter, garlic and parsley in a bowl.
13. On a floured surface, place the dough balls and, using your fingertips, flatten out the dough to form a circle about 20cm wide.
14. Repeat this for the other balls then divide the butter mix between each one and, using a spoon, spread over each bread.
15. Sprinkle some of the grated mozzarella over each one, then place on a baking tray and bake in the oven for 10–15 minutes until the cheese is golden.

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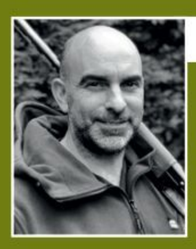
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MARK RIPLEY
SHOOTING
Avid foxer and rough shooter, Mark is currently sitting in as guest editor

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Calls of the wild

Q I'm looking to buy an electronic caller for calling in foxes and crows. What's the best one to buy?

A MARK RIPLEY replies: OK, first off be very careful. Electronic callers often come with crow and other bird calls pre-programmed into them, yet in the UK, using them for the purpose of shooting them is illegal. They can be legally used to call them in for photography purposes, for instance, but not to shoot them!

Foxes, however, are a different matter, and you can legally use an electronic caller to bring them in for the purpose of shooting.

Many of these callers are made in the US and will therefore have many calls preloaded which may or may not be appropriate for foxing in the UK. That said, there are still a good number of calls that will work, and work very well.

My favourite caller is the FoxPro Wildfire, being small enough to cram in a jacket pocket, cheap enough to not break the bank, yet still an effective little unit with the ability to download additional calls of your choice.

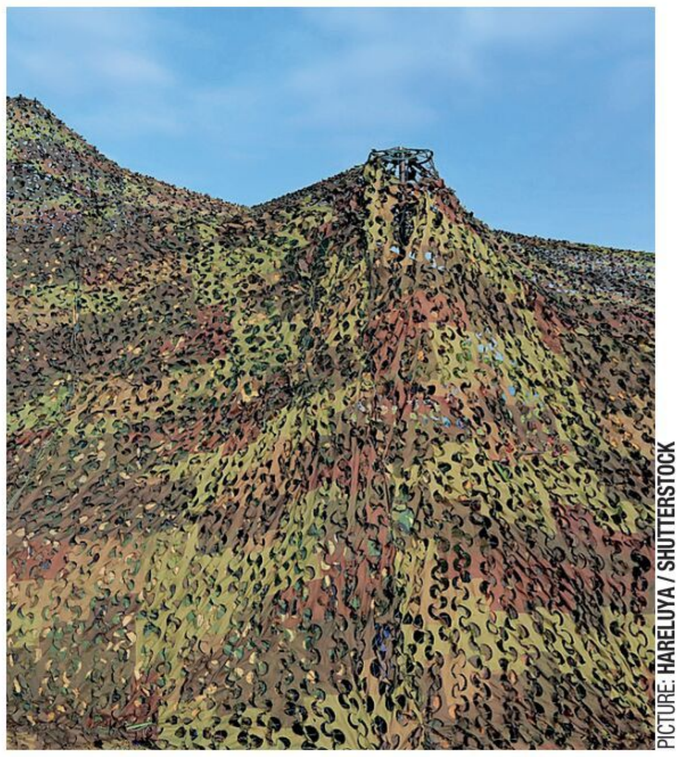
Electronic callers work well as they are remote control, so bring the quarry in whilst directing its attention towards the caller itself and not towards you.



Eco-friendly pigeon shooting

Q I enjoy bushcraft and being as sustainable as possible with my shooting. Is it possible to make a decent hide without using nets and poles?

A ANDY CROW replies: Yes – but you will be sacrificing speed and convenience. Hazel sticks are a useful alternative to hide poles but you will need foliage that looks natural – fine in late spring and summer but a challenge in colder months. Also, depending on where you are shooting, will these materials be easily accessible? I'd recommend you look at using upcycled old army issue camo nets. They come in good colours and can be layered up with grass or branches from the area you are shooting on the day – and they have the advantage of lasting well and coming from a recycled source.



PICTURE: HARELUYA / SHUTTERSTOCK

How can I walk on mud safely?

Q I have only been wildfowling for two seasons and have had great trouble walking on mud. Last season I even had to be rescued having got myself trapped. I have heard of wooden boards which can be strapped to your feet to make it possible to walk safely. Have you any details?

A TONY JACKSON replies: You are referring to wooden pattens which were often used by old-time fowlers and still sometimes still employed where mud is deep and dangerous. Chichester Harbour, which I know very well, is notorious for dangerous mud. The pattens are about 15" square and are attached to the foot with strong cords. Each cord is set under a board using a hole and then attached firmly to the ankle. Once the boards are prepared, you will find it remarkably easy to walk across sloppy mud. The simple answer is to consult a search engine where you will be able to see a variety of mud pattens used by wildfowlers.

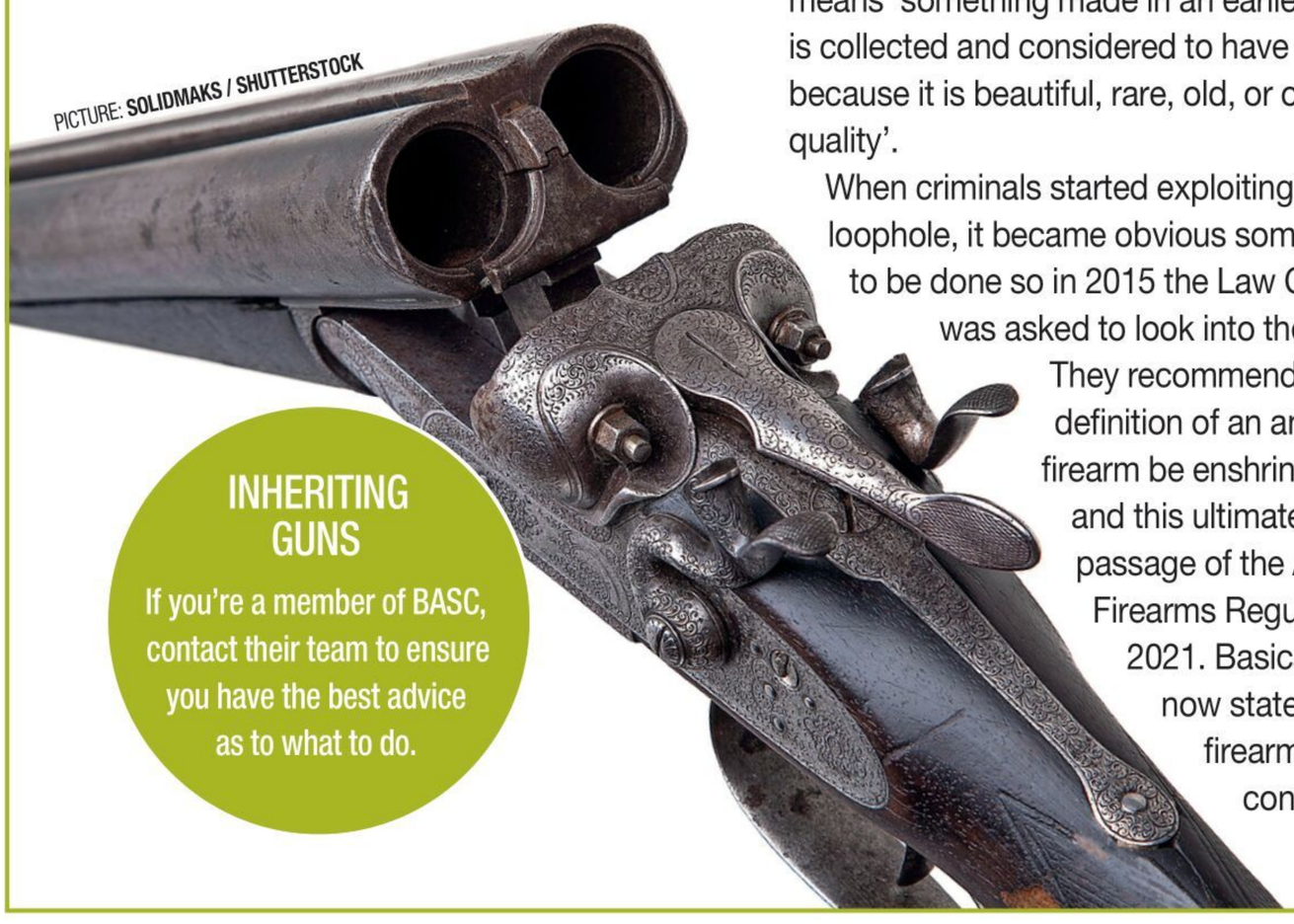
You could also obtain the excellent book *Mud Pattens in the Morning: A History of Wildfowling in Chichester Harbour* by Steven Borland, which includes references to mud pattens in this particularly dangerous area. It is published by Hunter's Moon Vintage Fieldsports (ISBN 978 1 5272 34871).



PICTURE: GEORGECLERK / ISTOCKPHOTO

Antique firearms

Q My wife's great uncle, who was a keen shooter, recently passed, and as a result my wife inherited what appears to be a very old, possibly antique, double-barrel. My question is, what are the legalities surrounding this? Does it need to be registered?



PICTURE: SOLIDMAKS / SHUTTERSTOCK

INHERITING GUNS

If you're a member of BASC, contact their team to ensure you have the best advice as to what to do.

A MARK RIPLEY replies: Interesting question. Until recently, there was no actual legal definition of 'antique' in relation to firearms, with the law relying on individual interpretation. According to the Cambridge English Dictionary, the word simply means 'something made in an earlier period that is collected and considered to have value because it is beautiful, rare, old, or of high quality'.

When criminals started exploiting this loophole, it became obvious something had to be done so in 2015 the Law Commission was asked to look into the matter. They recommended that a definition of an antique firearm be enshrined in law, and this ultimately led to the passage of the Antique Firearms Regulations 2021. Basically, the law now states that a firearm can only be considered an antique if it was made before 1 September 1939. In addition, it must also be one of the following:

- A muzzle-loader of any ignition type
- Of a transitional ignition type. For example, a pinfire, a capping-breechloader, etc.
- Chambered for a rimfire cartridge — other than the ubiquitous .22, .23, 6mm or 9mm.
- Chambered for a centrefire cartridge on the list in the schedule attached to the regulations.

Even if a firearm qualifies as antique, it is only exempt from the provisions of the Firearms Act if it is possessed solely as a curiosity or an ornament. While this wording may be ambiguous, there is near universal agreement that it does not allow for firing under any circumstances.

Ultimately, my advice to you would be to take the gun to the police, explain what has happened, and ask them where you stand legally. They should have access to the relevant experts who would be able to assess it.

Autumn cutting

Q I would like to plant some wildflowers on my shoot, but have heard conflicting advice about what to cut them. Is there a different approach to managing annuals as opposed to perennials?

A ARTHUR BARRACLOUGH from BRIGHT SEEDS replies: The short answer is 'yes'! Annuals shouldn't be cut back in spring unless the area has been subject to excessive grass growth. Ideally, annuals should be cut only in October (or once seeds have fallen out of the heads) and the cuttings removed.

Perennials on the other hand should be cut in spring and autumn. In spring, cut the grass only to the height of the wildflower head; in autumn cut back more sternly. Ensure you remove the cuttings.



PICTURE: TBRADFORD / ISTOCK

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Whistles in the wind

Having been on his bucket list for a long time, Alan Jarrett finally takes his much-anticipated trip to Argentina, where he encounters, among many others, the white-faced whistling duck

They came in wavering lines and skeins; in hundreds, and then thousands, with smaller groups and singles too. Now and then they stretched seemingly all the way to the horizon. As dusk drew in, they were all down at some distant roost. But not so distant that my shot echoing back from the water in the stillness of the marsh caused them to rise in a great black swarm across the western horizon before they settled again.

It had been a torrid journey south, taking us almost three days to reach our final destination of San Javier, Argentina. Much of that was anticipated, with a 15-hour flight to Buenos Aires via Sao Paulo, Brazil. Connecting flights did not coincide with the international incomer, which meant a planned evening stopover. This was booked via the internet at an AirB&B, which turned out to be in the back of beyond and nowhere near the city centre. Mental note to the author: in future, book a recognised brand name hotel in order to be certain what you are going to get!

The next day was spent kicking our heels in the airport waiting for our 17.20 connecting flight to Santa Fe. There was a pea-souper of a fog which saw our flight delayed to 18.00, then delayed to 18.25, until finally CANCELADO appeared in big red letters. You don't need to be fluent in Portuguese to work out what that means.

With fog forecast for the next three days, there was much back and forth with our outfitter and finally a taxi was booked to take us to the lodge. After spending nine and a half hours in the airport, we embarked on an eight-hour journey to the lodge – a bargain at $650! Duly arriving at 05.15, we were met with the option of shooting now or after lunch. It should come as no surprise that we chose the post-lunch, post-sleep option!

Sunset in San Javier

Our hide was where the boat had dropped us off in a patch of reed of which there were many dotted here and there mostly in knee-deep water. Few duck came at first, only the ibis in their uncountable thousands. It was the end of our second day, and it seemed after our initial duck-filled flights we had been given a bum steer. Such was the high standard that had been set, a single rosy-billed pochard seemed scant reward for such effort. Ever thus with wildfowling, whether at home or abroad, but things can change in an instant if vigilance is maintained.

As the sun began to slide out of the sky on its journey to bring light and life to other lands, five white-faced whistling duck came from the far side of the marsh. These are amongst the most fickle of wildfowl, but this time perhaps my luck would change.

In rising to fire, the birds seem stark and black against the gathering gloom, but it was an easy matter to track from right to left in order to ball the first bird. Then a second shot for two to collapse, with a fourth bird also succumbing. "Quatro!" shouted the bird boys in excitement. The wildfowling gods were with me, it seemed. Within a few minutes, they smiled on me again as a speeding pack of pochard lost four of their number. Three fell to the first shot, with one more as the scant survivors scattered.

Then the sun had gone, but the whole of the western sky was a glorious crimson, against which the flighting duck were perfectly

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For more information on shooting outfitters in Argentina, check out our Find Shooting page on p88.

A trio of whistling duck drop into range



PICTURE: SIMON_G / SHUTTERSTOCK

PICTURE: BIRDHUNTER591 / GETTY



A good bag taken on a very memorable morning



The boat's 50hp engine powered its way through the thick beds of floating weed

PICTURES: ALAN JARRETT

silhouetted. Seeing them was all well and good, but hitting such swift targets was another matter entirely.

But this was food and drink to an English wildfowler – duck dashing across a glowing after-sun. Some went wide to my left, but others came just right. The teal came fast and low, water-hopping as they so often tend to do, although some came so low as to be difficult to pick out. Some teal fell to my left, whilst the pochard came at great pace, the whirring dark shapes hurtling out of the gathering gloom.

A new dawn

The next morning was the coldest yet at -2°C. The boat took us through the pre-dawn darkness of the flooded marsh, its 50hp motor ramming its way through thick beds of floating weed, until we could scramble overboard into thigh-deep water. Despite that, the hide was dry this time on ground pock-marked by browsing cattle, with decoys including the perennial spinning wing Mojo nearby. The sky was inky black, and as with all such places in the absence of light pollution, there was a crisp celestial display from horizon to horizon.

Eventually, black shapes against a slightly less black sky drifted away from us, seemingly oblivious to the cacophony of whistles from our bird boys. Soon more appeared, this time less opaque in the light of a gathering dawn. It was a delight to pick out a double from a small pack of whistling ducks for them to plummet into the edge of the marsh from where they were later picked. A second double soon followed, but as the light strengthened, they became more circumspect. These whistling duck are apt to circle high above the decoys, scanning everything below. In the half-light it is possible to dupe them, but once full daylight comes they will almost inevitably spot the deception and head for other parts.

However, odd singles committed perfectly on dangling legs and cupped wings; straight-forward shots dealt with without undue fuss. These birds – called tree ducks by some of the locals – are amongst the most handsome of wildfowl with crisp white head giving way to a plumage of widely varying colour formation. A pack of almost a dozen came at moderate height over the flooded marsh; surely they would turn away as so many before them had done? But they held their line, and between the two of us we downed four as they scattered in panic. Indeed, the result may have even been better if I had not made the schoolboy error of fumbling the safety catch!

As we picked up and headed back with what was to be our best bag of whistling duck, there was time to reflect on the trip so far. Plenty of duck; good company; and large quantities of food! As always there were memories galore. The massed flighting of the ibis; the eagle plucking a wounded teal from the shallows in front of us; a mad flight of teal giving us our limit in 50 minutes! All these and more will stay with me forever, and we were only halfway through the trip! ■

> 'As the sun began to slide out of the sky, five white-faced whistling duck came from the far side of the marsh'



The white-faced whistling duck, or 'tree ducks' as the locals call them

PICTURE: JOAB SOUZA / SHUTTERSTOCK

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READERS' LETTERS

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You can but dream!

I was sorting out an overly full bookcase the other day when I came across an old edition of *Shooting Field and Covert* by Lord Walsingham, first published in 1900! I haven't even looked at it in decades, so it was very nice to have a look through it again.

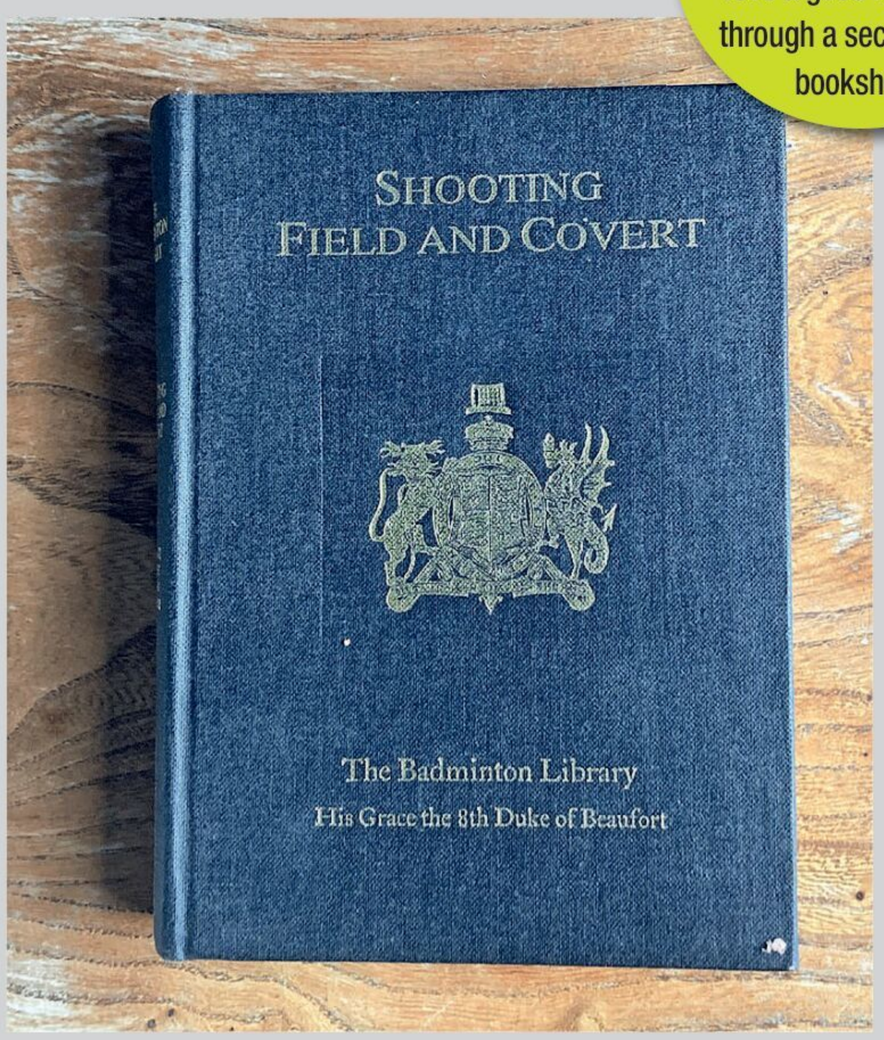
Due to the fact that we are experiencing a heatwave at the moment, I poured myself a cold beer, popped in a couple of ice cubes, and set myself down for the evening with this charming book. I must say, if anyone sees a copy in a secondhand bookshop, I'd advise you to grab it as it makes for very interesting reading. The writer's views on poachers, trap pigeon shooting (with live birds, of course, in those days) and general game shooting make for an interesting read.

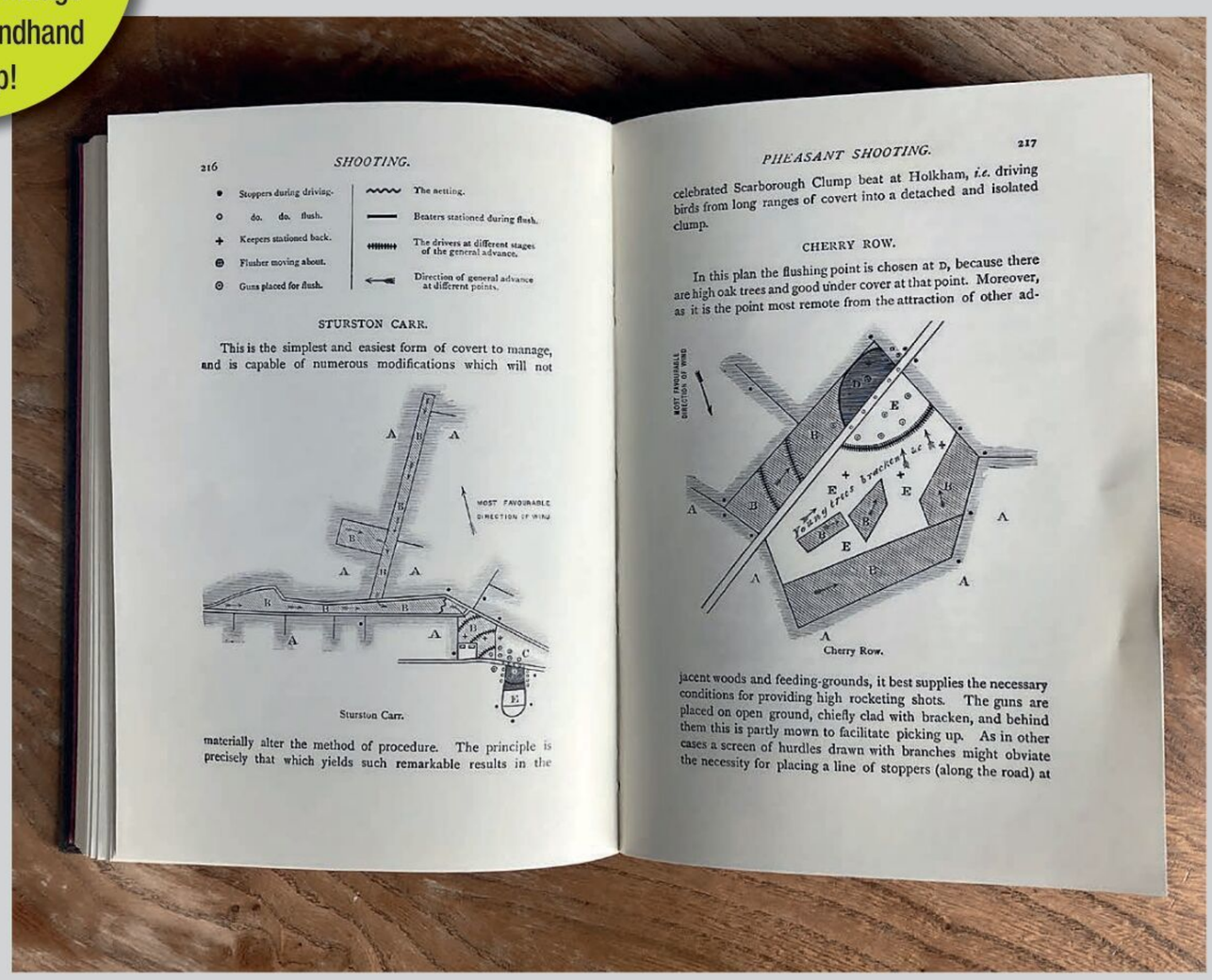
I particularly liked the drawings and diagrams of shoot set-ups and game farm layouts. Over the years, I have often dreamed of setting up a DIY syndicate shoot with friends – and looking through these descriptions set my mind racing as to all the things I'd like to do.

Sadly, I have never been lucky enough to be in a position where I've been able to follow this particular fantasy! But I do love to read about similar set-ups in your magazine and, who knows, maybe this is something my children will do in their own time. If they do, I will definitely be giving them this old book to set them on the right path!

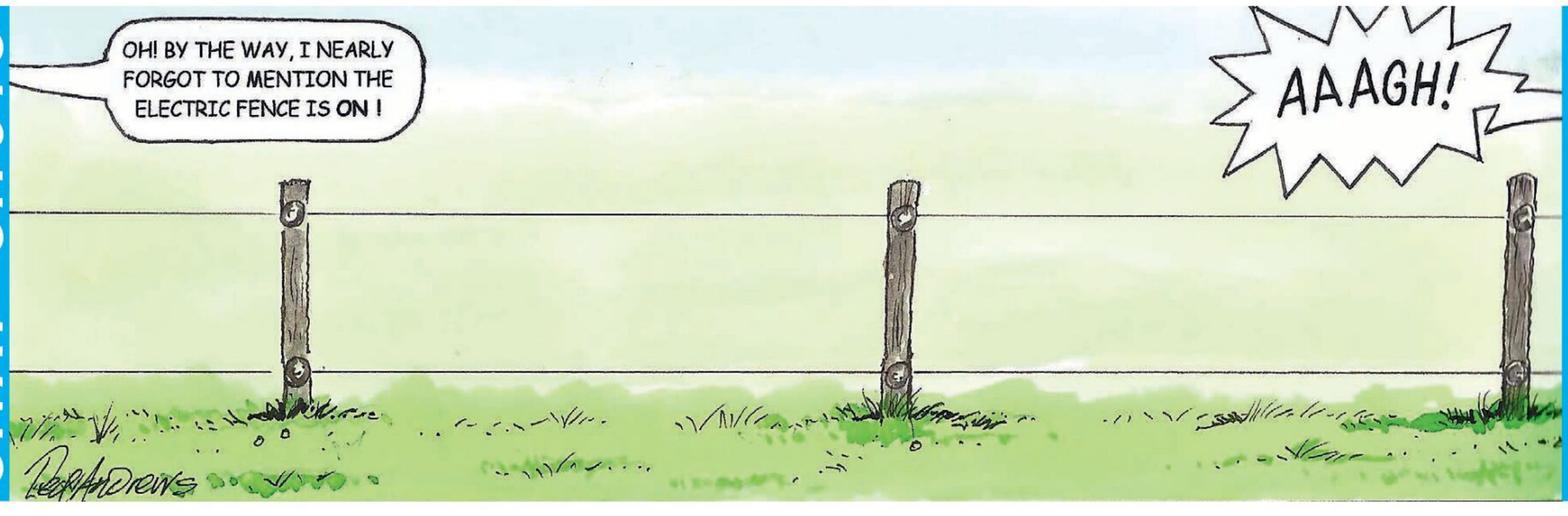
John Togarty, Sussex

The editor replies: Thanks for the recommendation – we love a good rummage through a secondhand bookshop!





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Tyre trials

Perhaps a little off the topic of shooting directly, but last summer I decided to upgrade the tyres on my Ford Ranger pickup from its road tyres which were on it when I brought it.

I don't do a lot of off-roading, except when rabbiting or foxing where I find it a lot easier to drive much of my permissions after I had a knee operation last January. I also do a lot of driving on the motorways for work, so I was in rather a dilemma as to what tyres to put on it. Ideally, I would have a set of mud tyres fitted to hopefully avoid getting stuck in a field late at night. However, such tyres tend to be very noisy on the road and sometimes handling can be compromised with some brands on tarmac.

So, I decided to go for an all-terrain tyre to try and get the best of both worlds. Initially, I looked at the BF Goodrich K2, but although they seemed to have a good reputation off-road, I also found several references to them being a little slippery in the wet, which naturally worried me.

In the end, after much internet and forum searches, I opted for a set of Maxxis Wormdrive all terrains at a reasonable cost. Having had them on the truck now for a full season, I have to say they are showing no noticeable wear and have been faultless in all conditions both on and off road. If you're looking for a decent set of shoes for your vehicle then I'd certainly give them a look as they are worth every penny in my mind.

Mark Setten



PICTURE: FIKRETOZK / SHUTTERSTOCK

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Foxy golf

I have a friend who recently bought a converted barn in Gloucestershire which came with a few acres. He keeps finding golf balls on the property, which is a bit of a mystery since the nearest golf course is some distance away, and he claims to have never seen anyone practising their swing in the immediate vicinity. He now has quite a collection! It reminded me of a piece I read in *The Times*, in which a reader outlined a similar thing happening to them. In this case, he mentioned the phenomenon to a gamekeeper acquaintance who suggested that the culprit was probably a fox. Apparently, when they find golf balls they assume they are eggs. They take them elsewhere to eat, then give up and abandon them where they lie when they can't crack open the 'shell'. I wonder if this could be what's happening – or is this just an urban myth?

Linda Crowsley, Glos



PICTURE: IMBARNEY22 /ISTOCK

Guest editor Mark Ripley replies: It is certainly feasible. Foxes are capable of all sorts of strange behaviour! Also, it is not unheard of at this time of year for foxes to pick up random objects (like golf balls!) and take them back to their earth for their cubs to play with.

WOODIES ON THE WING

From clay pigeon to wood pigeon! Mark Ripley takes some friends out to one of his farms in search of pests of the fast-moving airborn variety

I would have to say, one of the most challenging birds to shoot must be the humble wood pigeon. These birds have the ability to fly at ridiculous speed, change direction in the blink of an eye, and make the best shots look like amateurs given half the chance.

They do, however, have a habit of flying pretty much in a straight line until they spot you or you take a shot at them, which, once you have your eye in, can make them exceptionally sporting birds. They also tend to congregate in flocks and ravage crop fields, which puts them firmly into the 'pest' category.

With a large number of pigeons raiding the wheat fields on one of my farms, I realised that I had a rather busy flightline coming in, although the only way I could down a few without damaging the crop any further, while keeping away from roads and footpaths, was to get under them as they came in. With a grass field just before the wheat field on the flightline, and a maize field in front of that, this made the perfect place to both hide and to retrieve shot birds.

By hiding in the last few rows of standing maize, now some 4-5 feet high, I could drop birds into the grass field before the wheat, thus targeting the offending birds and still able to easily find them on the cut grass.

All this coincided with a work mate of mine, Matt, and his son, Calum, asking if I would take them out for a bit of shooting, so what better way to get the two going than with some fast flying woodies?!

When I say get them going, in fairness, they are both regular members at the local clay shoot and young Calum is also a keen shot with his air rifle. Calum, it seems, is a country boy at heart, being brought up in rural Sussex.

His dad, however, grew up in London, yet moved to Sussex when Calum was just two, wanting to bring him up away from the violence of the city centre. The move seems to have been for the best and Calum is now dead-set on a career in the farming industry, and I can't see him doing anything else!

Meeting up around nine, we headed down to the farm on a ridiculously hot July morning to stand amongst the maize stalks and await the arrival of the pigeons flighting back from the fields to their mid-day roost, before returning again later in the day when the temperature had dropped.

It seemed pigeons returning from the wheat flew low just over the treetops offering some quick snap shots, whereas the odd few still flighting out were little more than specks in the sky.

I brought two shotguns with me, the first being my trusty old Miroku over-and-under and the other a rather battered yet extremely reliable Al391 Beretta.

Handing the Miroku to Calum, we settled into suitable gaps on the edge of the maize with pigeons already drifting over us. It took a little while before we found the best places to stand and spot the pigeons coming in. Calum got a few slightly rushed shots before a lone woodie burst over the treetops to flare off to the right, which I was able to crumple convincingly with the first shot at a decent range putting the first bird in the bag.

Not wanting to steal any more of the action, I gave the over-and-under to Matt and handed the semi-auto Beretta to Calum, much to his delight. With the Beretta clearly more to his liking, he quickly managed to connect with another pigeon from a cluster of three that nipped low over the maize. It didn't dawn on me until we were back at

A wood pigeon can eat around 3,000 grains of wheat a day, highlighting just what damage a flock of birds can do to a crop field.



Callum with his first wood pigeon harvested with the shotgun

PICTURES: MARK RIPLEY

PICTURE: TAGPHOTO / ISTOCK

the truck later, that the gun has the spacers in the stock to give it a little cast for a left-handed shooter, yet this didn't stop him having a reasonable degree of success with it shooting from the right shoulder!

Incoming!

Despite the constant harassment from the flies, plus suffering from dehydration and sunburn, we were all throughly enjoying the sport, and with a few pointers on shooting live game rather than clays, Calum began to slow down and track his birds, before pulling ahead and taking a more focused shot, putting a couple more in the bag. For their first go at shooting anything but clays, they both shot well considering it's quite a different form of shooting. It takes a little getting used to when birds appear suddenly from different angles or distances, and often with a choice of several targets at once, compared to the pre-seen and repeated targets of the clay ground!

The first thing that always seems to catch out new shots is getting their feet in the right place. Often, they will contort themselves into a twisted off-balance stance for a rushed shot when all that was needed was a small step in the right direction!

When I was younger, I used to do a little boxing, and footwork was the first thing that was drummed into you before you ever threw a punch. Shooting is very much the same with correct footwork being key to a smooth swing and hopefully – if you put everything else in the right place – a successful shot.

Despite only firing one shot, I had just as much of an enjoyable morning with the pair as if I had been shooting myself, in fact probably more so. Seeing that smile of satisfaction on the face of a youngster connecting with his first bird is very rewarding.

It's also the future of our sport. Without the influx of the young generation coming through to take up shooting, the sport could easily diminish to such a minority it will be crushed by the anti-shooting society in which we live. The thought that youngsters like Calum would not be able to enjoy our sport within the beauty of our British countryside in years to come is a saddening one, but yet one I fear will become a reality in Calum's lifetime if not my own.

By encouraging more newcomers into the sport, we at least stand the chance to build strength in numbers carrying it forward to the next generation.

I must confess, however, that later that day, with such a good number of birds coming over, I couldn't resist heading back out alone to hide amongst the maize stalks for a few more shots at those high flying pigeons! Nineteen shots later and I added another 14 birds to the bag with some rather out-of-character fine shooting on my part, if I do say so myself!



However, my confidence crashed quicker than the fastest pigeon a few days later on another attempt at them, with only three pigeons to pick up along with a hideous amount of empty cartridges I didn't even dare to count. ■



You need to keep your eyes open when pigeon shooting as the birds rocket over the treetops

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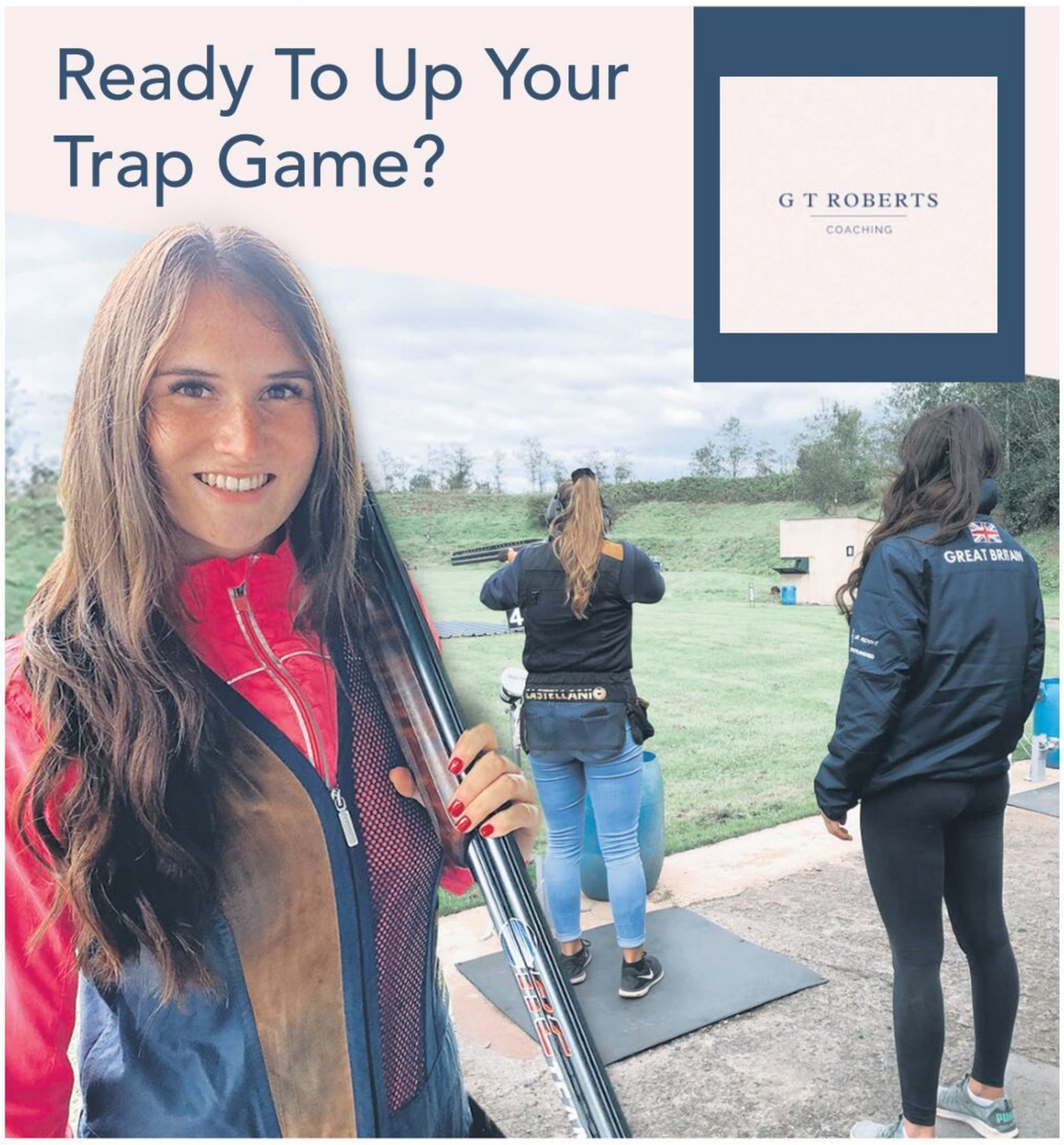
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Harvest moon

Early autumn is an especially busy time for foxing with some methods and techniques proving more effective than others, as Dean Harrison explains

We should all be looking forward to the harvest starting, if you've not already, with the winter crops and rape coming off first. I always keep in close contact with the combine driver and the guys on the corn cart as you cant beat the information you get from them. There can, however, be a fair bit of mickey taking if they start seeing foxes darting out of the crops everywhere, which can happen, even though I put a lot of work into trying to get most of the breeding foxes shot. It only takes a few litters to get through and it looks like you haven't been out at all!

Also, you will have adults moving in, filling up the empty territory as soon as you shoot one.

I have upkeepered ground on two boundaries and a railway line running right through the middle, which I am sure stops and drops the foxes off! In all seriousness, though, rail lines are a natural way of spreading them onto other areas of ground as they are often home to good numbers of rabbits and left unkept for the most part, encouraging foxes to move along them.

Obviously, at first I will be acting on information received from the farmer, and this is where my fieldcraft comes in.

Working out where home is for them is crucial. It's easy if the crop has been cut all around a wood, or just a cover strip left or any bit of cover they can use to lie up in. But at the start you will still have lots of standing crops still to be cut.

Whatever the situation, wherever the cover is, that's where they will be living. But they will want to come on to those stubbles hunting at some point, giving you a good chance of getting a shot at them. There are many ways of going about this, and at first most methods are very successful, as youngsters and foxes that have just moved in will not be as dialled in as the ones you hunted in the spring.

Calling

The first thing to think of before you start is where the foxes will come from. You need to position yourself in such a way that if they come out you will be able to get a safe shot. Also consider whether the wind is blowing towards you or the cover, which could give away your position, and are they are going to be looking where that call is coming from when they come out on to the stubble? If so, the last thing you want to be is stuck out like a sore thumb, so make sure you are not sky-lined. Even better, try to get behind a bit of cover or prone. Remember, even if you have stopped calling, the fox will have it fixed in its mind where the call came from.

The method you use is up to you and what feels right at the time. If it's younger ones you're after, I prefer the more subtle calls at first like mouse squeaks made on the back of my hand or polystyrene dragged on a piece of glass. Don't be put off by how quiet the calls sound to your ears, because you will be amazed how far away they will hear it.

For longer distances, I like the SS call. It takes a bit of time to master, but it's my all-round favourite. I don't change from one to the other on the same session as I believe it's not a natural thing to happen. What I will do is go back a different time and try a different one.

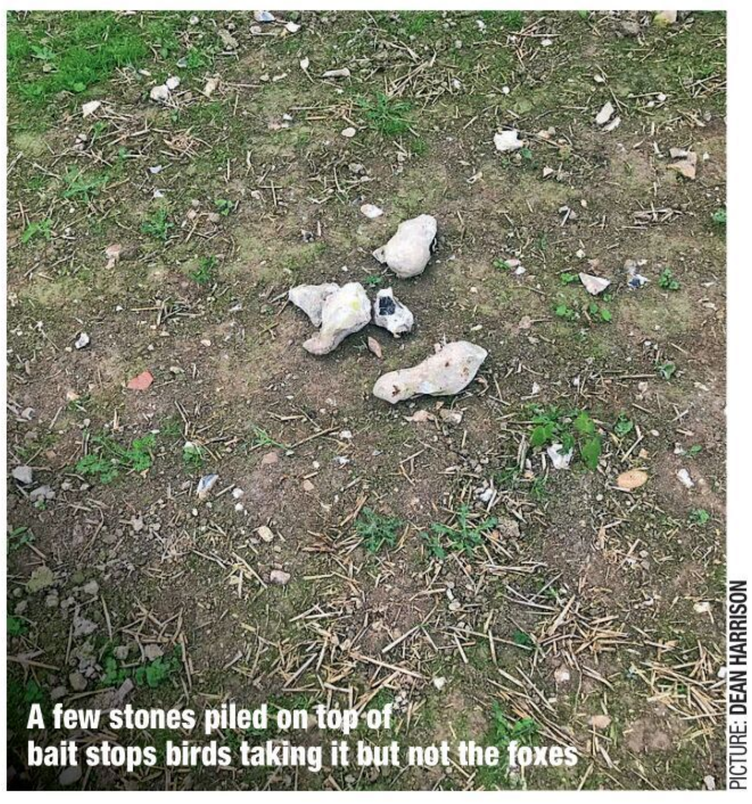
First thing in the morning, last light, or into



Calling foxes is a fine art but can be extremely effective

PICTURE: DGWILDLIFE / GETTY

'For a young fox, I prefer subtle calls like mouse squeaks made on the back of my hand – you'll be amazed at how far away they will hear it'



A few stones piled on top of bait stops birds taking it but not the foxes

PICTURE: DEAN HARRISON

darkness are the best times because this is when the foxes are most active. That said, you can call at any time of the day or night and still find some success, and more so this time of year with young ones around.

Lamping

This is a very quick way of covering your ground. Again, you will find this very productive as the foxes will not feel any danger from your vehicle or the light. Mind you, they will soon switch on to it if you start shooting at them and missing! If this is your primary way of controlling your foxes, try and make every shot count. You're better off leaving it for another evening than just 'having a go'. The end result of this will be a load of lamp-shy foxes that you won't get near in future.



A trail camera can be a useful tool when baiting foxes

PICTURE: PIXEL-PRODUCTIONS / GETTY

Baiting

Just like calling, think carefully about where you will be waiting and where the fox will be coming from. I use this method a lot, and there are many aspects to it. The bait can be just a pile of pigeons, a bait pipe, or cat food scattered around.

On the permission I'm on, there are loads of flints, so I will place the bait down then bury it under the flints. This gives me an attracter, plus it stops the kites and buzzards taking away my bait. Also, when you check it, the flints will be scattered where if you are using cat food, and it can be hard to tell what's taking it. But if you can bury it under some dirt etc, they will find it if you put some on top as well.

All of these methods can work with a daytime scope set up on your rifle. But to increase your chances, investing in night vision will take baiting and calling to a different level. There are some really good day and night-time digital scopes on the market which is what I use, along with a thermal spotter, when I'm waiting and looking at my bait station. I do shoot foxes still in daytime mode, but most come after it gets dark.

Also, if I have been sat waiting all night overlooking an area, its been dark for a long time and its almost time to go home to bed, sometimes I have tried calling and turned what would have been a blank night into roaring success.

My last tip is to be prepared and get out early. I know I have said the going is better when night falls, but you will find in the summer months foxes will be on the move much earlier in the day. Only two weeks ago, I topped up a bait station and returned an hour later, at least three hours before dark, and the fox had come and taken the bait, scattering the flints everywhere in the process. I sat there for the rest of the night and saw nothing. Not to be outdone, I went back two days later and baited before driving away and parking up about 180 yards away. 45 minutes later, I shot the fox!

I hope these few tips help, and I wish you luck on your next foxing foray. ■

S&CTV

Take a look at Deano's latest video on early summer foxing on our Shooting & Country TV channel: youtu.be/YRvdJ-xlYkY



Using a caller and night vision together can really take your shooting to a new level

PICTURE: EMILY DAMMENT



WITH TONY JACKSON

Dawn on the saltmarshes

The opening day of the wildfowling season has always been a highlight for Tony Jackson, and although he has now hung up his gunslip and waders for the last time, the memories live on

Every year on 1 September I would mark my diary with a red exclamation point. Yes, I had always enjoyed pigeon decoy shooting and deer stalking through the spring and summer months, but the opening day of the wildfowling season was, for my part, very special indeed.

For days before I had checked my waders and camo jacket, ensured I had a belt of cartridges with closed loops, including several heavy loads and a handful of spare extra cartridges in my pockets, a pair of lightweight gloves, a camouflage mask, a side-bag, a compass, binoculars and a cleaning rod unscrewed with three sections, just in case I found my gun choked with mud. Never, of course, make the mistake of trying to shoot any mud out of the barrels! Oh, and I always wore long-length waders with a short pair of over-trousers to keep my bottom dry.

There is also one other vital piece of equipment. When I worked for the famous *Shooting Times* editor, Tim Sedgwick, a keen wildfowler, he always carried a "Stool of Justice" on the foreshore! This was a wooden swivel stool literally stuck in the mud. It consisted of two pieces of wood, each about 12" by 8", joined together with a short metal rod with sockets to attach top and bottom pieces. The advantage was that the shooter could swivel for a turning movement for a sitting shot, while the stool could be taken apart and transported in one's side-bag.

As far as headgear is concerned, a balaclava is ideal. Never wear a hat with a brim as you will lose it in a wind. In addition, you need a cartridge extractor and a sharp knife, plus the most essential item, a 'fowling dog. In my opinion, no wildfowler should ever venture out without a trained dog. If you have a pale-coloured Labrador or a white marked spaniel, consider a camouflage jacket for the dog, unless you are fortunate enough to have suitable cover available such as washed-up timber or similar. If you are likely to be shooting in the late evening, a torch is essential and it is vital to bring a mobile phone.

Sadly, my final 'fowling dawn on the opening day was three seasons ago. Yet even now I can recall the heady smell of the sea-wrack draped on the shingle, the cries of distant gulls, and the thrill of hearing the distant faint muttering of mallard drifting on the slow rising tide. The only chance of a shot was a wide gutter 50 or so yards away. The mud was sticky but walkable, and the gutter offered a hide.

Safely concealed, I watched as the light grew, gulls headed inland and the cries of curlew and redshank mingled. Twice I spotted a small pack of teal, but they were out of shot. I was about to retire when I noted a Canada goose heading my

'FOWLING SEASON

The Glorious Twelfth also sees the arrival of the shooting season for the ptarmigan in Scotland and the common snipe across Great Britain.



PICTURE: JOZEF DUROK / GETTY



The common buzzard is an opportunistic predator that can take a variety of prey and carrion

PICTURE: HENK BOGAARD / GETTY

way and I quickly changed for two heavy cartridges. The bird flew towards my hide along the gutter at about 35 yards, I fired, and the bird collapsed in a spray of mud.

That was my last wildfowling dawn and I later enjoyed the roasted Canada, even though it proved elderly and rather tough. Anyway, I wish the very best to any wildfowlers contemplating an opening season on 1 September this year!

From above

On another topic, I recently encountered a curious event from the sky. I was wandering in my garden when my Labrador bitch, Breagha came up to me with something odd in her mouth. Initially I thought it was a long, broken twig, but on close inspection it appeared to be the leg bone of a young roe. Where on earth had my dog managed to find that in the well-fenced garden, I wondered

A few days later, I met a young nearby farmer who had been leaving us several bales of hay for my wife's horse. I mentioned the deer's leg, and he immediately told me the culprit must be a buzzard!

We have several local buzzards, and he was certain one of these birds had dropped the leg in the garden while flying overhead. He told me that he had encountered several similar buzzard "deliveries" in his own area.

Furthermore, a few days before while cutting dense grass for hay, to his horror, his mower had killed a young roe tucked into the grass. As he had been mowing a field not far from my home, he is certain that a buzzard had removed the unfortunate animal, only to later drop the leg bone over my garden. This was undoubtedly the same roe he had accidently killed.

Meanwhile, my Labrador has spent the summer working dummies and also dead birds, including several French partridges and a quail from my aviary which died.

Some readers may recall an incident last shooting season when this (then) very new Labrador was attacked by another dog while she was retrieving a pheasant. She had only recently come from Scotland and was still unsettled, and as a result of the other dog's interference she refused to release the dead bird. Instead, she clamped her jaws, despite having previously worked perfectly while picking-up. She later displayed the same reluctance to release a bird. It was a worry, but eventually we managed to solve the problem.

I say we managed, but the truth is that my local gundog trainer, Margaret Allen, solved the problem. Many readers will have read her first highly successful book *In the Bag* and she is now about to finished her second book, *The Trouble with Gundogs*. This book will give you all the information the owner of a gundog needs, whether novice or experienced. More information on this book will be coming very soon – so do keep an eye out in this magazine!

Suffice to say that Breagha is now picking-up over the summer and releasing dead birds with not the slightest problem, and I am sure she will now play her part on the modest local shoot in October. ■



A roe leg found in the garden, delivered by a buzzard, perhaps!

PICTURE: T JACKSON

'Even now I can recall the heady smell of the sea-wrack, the cries of gulls, and the distant muttering of mallard drifting on the rising tide'

THE MARKETPLACE

Shooting products and services

Welcome to the Marketplace. In this section, you will find everything you need to know about what's on the market right now – from the kit you need for the coming season, to behind-the-scenes looks at the shooting world's much-loved brands, gun shops and shooting schools.

Whether you train gundogs, work on the beating line or shoot a variety of quarry, we've got you covered!

INSIDE THE MARKETPLACE THIS MONTH...







MARKETPLACE

TESTED BY: RYAN KAY

Alpha Easiflo 120 ATV flail mower

Gamekeepers looking to bash a few rides out through the brambles for their beaters, or wanting to carry out maintenance of unwanted rushes, need a flail mower that's going to do the job efficiently, quickly and without fuss. The problem is that decent mowers aren't cheap! In the past we have opted for one of the many cheaper white-labelled versions that have sometimes required nursing through cover in order to keep going. And then there was the regular dull sound of the engine about to cut out as it struggled to cope with cover clearly too dense for a sub-standard machine.

This new Alpha Easiflo 120, however, is a different beast. And for not that much more cost! With this ATV mower, Alpha have beefed things up in so many ways. For a start, this 120cm cutting width version has a powerful 15bhp Loncin engine, and the 150cm version houses a 25bhp engine. I've tested this machine on various cover, from unwanted suckers and saplings to dense ground hugging brambles, and the results were the same: clear cut paths with the foliage obliterated and left mulched in the trail. The machine is so powerful that even when cutting the exceptionally thick areas, there was no change to engine noise which would indicate that it was struggling with the brash. Just a smooth unaltered flow, allowing me to maintain the same even speed no matter what I came across.

The secret is in various features that Alpha have incorporated into their design, including a triple belt patented drive system and an upgraded high-performance clutch system. But I believe the main difference compared to our last cheap mower is the helical rotor blade system, where the robust 'Y' blades are fitted in a spiral rather than in a row. This means that there are in fact only two blades at the maximum contact point at any one time, meaning that the horsepower is behind those and not a full line of blades as it would be if the blades were fitted in a horizontal row. The results are amazing as there's a constant, even flow of power.

Easy height adjustment means it can be towed by any vehicle with a 50mm tow ball. It is fitted with flotation tyres which reduce ground pressure, easily enabling cutting on boggy ground. The wheels can be fitted on the side or behind the mower, quickly and easily, without the need for any tools. I opted to move them to behind the machine, so I could cut close up to fences and boundaries. This is a low-maintenance machine to operate that really does do the job. All made easy with both an electric start or a manual start. If you want a flail mower that won't break the bank but will be reliable and make light work of heavy cover, look no further.



£2,700 + VAT
alphadeltamachinery.co.uk



PICTURES: RYAN KAY

The Rover Social

Whether you have your own fleet of classic Land Rovers or have always admired the iconic British brand from afar, you can now get up close and personal at the inaugural The Rover Social at Loseley Park. The one-day family-friendly event held at one of England's finest country estates, will feature activities that the whole family will enjoy. Try your hand at clay pigeon shooting, amble around the classic car paddock, experience some off-roading and then relax with a glass of something cold, whilst a live DJ provides an ambient soundtrack to the day.

The Rover Social is the brainchild of long-time enthusiasts Ian Higginson and Simon O'Leary who wanted to create a friendly, fun-filled day out that welcomes Land Rover fans and families alike.

"While we're classic Land Rover fans ourselves, we wanted to host an accessible event where we can celebrate the ethos of the brand with everyone – whether you have your own Land Rover or just share our admiration for them," said Ian Higginson. "The Rover Social aims to emulate the sense of camaraderie, community and adventure that the classic Land Rover represents. After such a long time spent at home during lockdown, we want to encourage people to get outside and try something new."

HAVE A GO 4X4 DRIVING

Fully trained drivers can take you and your vehicle (Land Rover or not) around 'The Rover Social Recce', a unique course designed specifically for this event. Learn new skills and realise the capability of your own vehicle whilst meandering through the beautiful Surrey hills that overlook the estate.

CLASSIC CAR PADDOCK

There will be a Classic Car Paddock where you can peruse Series 1, 2 and 3 Land Rovers from 1948 to 1988 as well as 101s and early 90 and 110 models. Owners can show their own pride and joy in the event and awards are available for best in show. There will also be later Land Rover examples such as customised Defenders on display at exhibitor stands. From total originality to customised and specific vehicles!

CLAY PIGEON SHOOTING

Learn the art of shotgun shooting. Shooting instructors from the award-winning Hownhall Shooting school will be offering you the chance to try this very addictive sport, testing hand and eye coordination in a controlled and safe environment.

PLUS MUCH MORE!

There will be plenty for all the family at the event, from live DJs and an adventure storytelling stage, to a selection of shopping stands, including Specialized Bikes and iconic safari outfitters Melvill & Moon. There will also be burgers and wood-fired pizza on offer, courtesy of The Land-Doughver.

THE ROVER SOCIAL

25 September 2022, Loseley Park, Surrey

ADVANCE TICKETS

Family (two adults and two children): £40

Adult (16+): £16

Child (4-15 years): £6

Under 4: free

theroversocial.com



PICTURE: **BEN WRIGHT**

DRESS SMART FOR THE GLORIOUS 12TH

Croots Rosedale canvas cartridge bag

We've all gone out with our pockets stuffed full of cartridges at some point, but there's no need to do that any more with this waterproof cotton canvas cartridge bag from Farlows. Subtle green in colour with a hinged speed load design allowing for easy access, it comes in a range of sizes from 75 cartridge capacity to a whopping 150. Also features leather trim, brass fittings, suede lining and an adjustable sling. Best of all, you can personalize it by adding up to four characters of your choice!



From £137.99
farlows.co.uk

Schoffel ladies breeks

An essential in ladies shooting attire, these hardwearing and practical moleskin breeks are brilliant for both formal and more casual shoots. Crafted from cotton with additional spandex stretch to allow supreme fit and comfort, they offer great flexibility in the field. Machine washable and featuring a moisture- and stain-resistant DWR finish, two large back pockets with button closures, zip fly, belt loops, two slanted front pockets and an adjustable elasticated buckle fastenings below the knee which can be adjusted to fit with boots and socks,



£119.95
schoffelcountry.com



Campbells of Beauly plus twos

Holding the Royal Warrant to HM The Queen for tailoring services, the Campbells name is synonymous with tailoring and tweed, and sporting wears are a speciality of their in-house bespoke tailoring workshop. To make it even more authentic, all the tweed they use is a robust 16oz/500g and made in Scotland.

Pattern wise, their top-of-the-range plus twos are as they should be, with a little bit of extra room around the thigh to allow freedom of movement and a two" roll below the knee. They come fully lined with green cotton, and sport a zip fly, hook and loop fasteners at the calf, button closure on the handy back pockets, and button adjustors in the waistband. The inside leg is 54cm.



£250
campbellsofbeauly.com

Jaxon & James Cairnglass cap



A good flat cap is an absolute must for the field, and they don't get much better than this. Jaxon & James have partnered with 156-year-old Magee weaving mill in Donegal Town, Ireland, home of the world's finest Donegal Tweed, to produce some of the most beautiful hats in their extensive range.

Crafted from 100% natural pure multi-coloured wool, it comes with quilted satin lining, a grosgrain sweatband, a sewn-down brim and Jaxon & James side pin.

£34.95
jaxonandjames.com

Alan Paine Ilkley shooting shirt

Designed with the active sportsman in mind, this Alan Paine Ilkley shirt is crafted from a soft, minimal iron, pure cotton fabric and and features a classic shooting silhouette allowing you unhindered movement when it matters. It builds 10" to 12" into the garment from actual chest size to allow for movement and layering while you enjoy the outdoors.

Available in a range of colours to suit every taste, it features a classic short-fused collar with built-in stiffness and a convenient chest pocket with embroidered branding. This shirt, or any one of a huge range from Alan Paine, is the perfect addition to any sporting wardrobe.

RANGE OF FEMALE EQUIVALENTS ALSO AVAILABLE!



£44.95
ruralsportsltd.co.uk

Schoffel Ketton II waterproof jacket



It might be called the 'Glorious Twelfth' but there's no guarantee that will apply to the weather, making this unisex Ketton Jacket II in Tundra an essential purchase. It uses a Venturi two-layer fabric to ensure it is both 100% waterproof and windproof and has the added benefit of packing into the internal chest pocket, meaning you can take this jacket on your travels and it won't take up space or add weight. Added rubberised poppers and two bellows pockets and fleece-lined hand-warming side pockets ensure your hands are kept warm and a detachable hood and the durable ripstop fabric make sure you stay warm and dry on the most blustery of days. Machine washable and quick drying,

£249.95
schoffelcountry.com

William Powell Glenesk tweed gilet

This classy William Powell Glenesk gilet is handsomely tailored in authentic Scottish Lovat Mill tweed and features a water and stain repellent Teflon finish. Fashioned in the popular Nehru style, making it ideal when worn over a shirt for a smart but casual look, or alternatively can be worn under a coat as an additional layer when the weather bites. Comes complete with lower jetted pockets and stylishly-trimmed throughout. A seriously smart, contemporary item certain to become an integral part of your kit.

£199
williampowell.com



Campbells of Beauly socks

One thing that truly helps you make a splash is attention to detail, and these grouse shooting socks from Campbells of Beauly are just the thing to ensure you not only look smashing but also blend into the moor. They have been exclusively designed and made in Scotland and are linked to the Scottish border town of Hawick, which is famous for their high quality yarn and knitwear, and feature a decorative top section adding a fun and quirky touch to the traditional shooting kit. Available in a range of sizes.

£55
campbellsofbeauly.com



DESIGNED AND MADE IN SCOTLAND

WITH MIKE YARDLEY



Fabarm Elos Dii

As a big fan of 28-bores, Mike Yardley was keen to test out this modern-looking gun from Fabarm - and was very pleased with the results when he took it down to the clay ground

This month's test gun is a Fabarm Elos Dii imported by Anglo Italian Arms in Warwickshire. It is presented in one of my favourite bore sizes (28-bore) weighing in at just over 6½lb with 28" barrels. First impressions are that it is quite a modern looking gun with a rounded action – 'silver' finished (I would guess nickel-plated). There's some typically Italian machine engraving – scroll and game birds. This was neatly executed on the walls of the action body, with contrasting plain matted shoulders above.

It all looks good, although my preference is for scrollwork alone (as it is so well executed by laser now). The rounded belly of the action is decorated with more scroll and the Elos logo. The barrels, meantime, are neatly satin blacked and equipped with a nice 6mm ventilated game rib. Solid ribs join the tubes together. I particularly liked the machined top surface of the top rib. The narrow width is my preference for both game and clays. There is a high-viz front sight at the muzzle end and (surprisingly long) 65mm multi-chokes offer all the usual constriction options.

We've tested a few Fabarms. It's a brand that has been underrated in the UK. They make solid and attractive guns at sensible prices – typically a bit below the best known Italian manufacturer. Yet, Fabarm have innovated in some areas – notably barrel making – where their choke profiles allow for steel shot even in full constrictions (academic with a 28 because I know of no loads yet). The factory is an impressive place – highly automated with some of the sophisticated CNC machines running 24 hours a day. There are still bench craftsmen too. Like Beretta, Browning, Miroku, and indeed, Guerini, Fabarm make a very consistent product.

The stock on the Fabarm is made from fairly dense walnut with some pleasant figuring to it. The matt oil finish and traditional chequering panels and diamonds tick the boxes. The colour on the stock wood isn't too light either. I also liked the plain black 'rubber' butt sole which had a good bump at heel – a feature missing in too many modern guns. You need a little bump at the top of the butt sole to secure the gun at the shoulder.

There is a hand-filling, medium radius, pistol grip with some subtle ambidextrous swelling to its sides. It is less bulged than many so-called 'palm swells' and certainly better for it in a game gun. The fore-end is of snabel pattern. There is nothing wrong with it. It's quite slim, but I would have preferred a lipless design which allows for the extension of the front hand as some game shots prefer (I'm not among



Thanks to Lyalvale Express for the cartridges used in this test

PICTURES: MIKE YARDLEY



them as it happens because straightening the front arm can impede the swing).

The stock measures 14¾" for length of pull with an extra ⅛" at heel and ⅜" at the toe – standard industry dimensions and absolutely fine. The drop dimensions on the butt are 1⅛" to the front and 2¼" to the rear. This is just a little lower at the back than I like, but quite useable. My own advice for shelf dimensions on an over-and-under for that mythical 'Mr Average' has been 1⅛" and 2⅛" for many years, and 1½ and 2" on a side-by-side. These are stated as shelf dimension. Many people have different requirement.

All of which brings us onto the bore size. The 28-bore used to be considered lady's gun or a gun for young people. They then acquired a growing band of followers both for game and multi-gauge clay shooting. I used a 28-bore for several seasons game shooting with good results. I didn't feel under-gunned on normal birds. John Batley used (and may still use) one for pigeons with good results. The problem now is the availability and cost of cartridges, and there is a distinct lack of non-toxic options. It's a brilliant bore size, nevertheless, and ballistically highly efficient.

Technical

This is a trigger plate design. Remove the barrels and look into what is visible of the action's 'works' and you'll note a single central cocking rod, trunnion hinging on removable studs near the knuckle, and a Browning-style full-width bolt engaging a slot bite beneath the bottom chamber. This arrangement, which can lead to a tall action in a 12-bore, especially those with a full width cross pin (which Fabarms don't have) works well. The action is well proportioned. Its mechanical design is simple and well proven. The barrels are worthy of further comment, though, because they are unusual in adopting Fabarm's three-section 'Tri-bore' taper bore. It consists of an elongated forcing cone area, the first section, then a longer over-bored area, and a conic section about 200mm long for the choke. The bore diameter on this 28-bore – which I believe refers to the central section (I don't have a 28-bore micrometer gauge) – is unusually high at 15.8mm. Small bores do well with bigger bores in my experience. ■

SHOOTING IMPRESSIONS

I've already given the game away! I like 28-bores (all mine have 30 or 32" barrels). It's a bore size which makes you smile. The test gun, happily, was no exception. Its 28" tubes suited it well. The balance was bang on the hinge pin. The gun felt solid in the hands with good dynamic qualities.

I didn't miss much although I could only find some lighter loads for testing purposes. The recoil-acted single trigger had an issue with 14g (as one might expect), but the mechanical function of the gun was fine. The barrel selector was a little stiff. I had no other criticisms.

This struck me as a well made, strongly constructed, and attractive modern gun at a reasonable price. It would certainly be worth considering in 20-bore too. With the non-toxic thing hitting us now and with supply issues on cartridges, I think that would be my choice. But, I still love my 28s. The best part of this test was hitting a bird off the high tower with 14g!

WE LIKE

- The solid build quality
- The the better than average wood
- The back-bored barrels and clever choking

WE DISLIKE

- The stock comb is a whisker low to the rear

TECH SPECS

- Make: Fabarm
- Model: Elos ii
- Bore: 28
- Chamber: 2¾" (70mm); no 3" in 28-bore
- Barrel: 28"
- Weight: 6.6lb
- RRP: £1,650 (20-bore same price)

UP CLOSE



A neat satin black finish adorns the barrels



Some blackened metalwork adds to the gun's modern looks



The walnut stock is nicely figured with traditional chequering



Laser-cut engraving add to the shotgun's quality looks

TESTED BY: DRENNAN KENDERDINE

Fiocchi Wetland Steel 32g

Drennan Kenderdine takes a look at the latest non-toxic steel offering from Fiocchi for the upcoming season

As our wetland and partridge season comes ever closer, it's time to prepare for that date that even now, all these years on, still gets me excited like a kid on Christmas Day. The 1st of September here in the UK ignites the game season, and while some take to the fields for partridge, others head for the pits, pools and lakes for ducks.

As with any quarry, cartridges will feature in the thoughts and plans of shooters. Each year, before the season starts, I get to try out different kinds of cartridges, and this year, one of those is Fiocchi's 70mm 32g Wetland Steel. There is method to using just a 70mm length shell in steel, rather than 3" or 3½"; this cartridge is not high-performance rated steel, so it ostensibly can be shot through any gun with chambers of 70mm/2¾" in length.

I don't ever think there's going to be a time when the Italians will stop presenting cartridges that I won't get excited about. Fiocchi's presentation is legendary, and the 32g Wetland says a lot just by way of its box. I shot a lot of the Fiocchi Wetland 32g through the summer on pigeons, corvids and Canada geese and using a combination of shot size No. 5, 4 and 2, and the results were very positive. The translucent green case supported by a 22mm silver ferrel combine to present a crisp, bold and lethal looking cartridge; a look matched by its performance.

I've found with most steel cartridges that open chokes seem to give better results; they certainly pattern better, and the openness of the choke removes the possibility of buckling to the pattern, especially as the shot size increases. I used Quarter choke in various guns from my trusted Ode Gal (Beretta UGB25) through to a range of makes and models of different quality and price range. Time and again, I found that a more open choke seemed to give the best results, and Quarter was king for me.

So, does the Wetland 32g stand up to its more powerful, high-performance big brother? The answer is yes and no. There's no question that Fiocchi's 32g Wetland Steel does its job, it just does it in a different way. There's certainly less recoil than you'd experience from ANY high-performance steel load (well, certainly the ones

TECH SPECS

- CASE: 70mm
- PRIMER MIXTURE: standard
- LOAD: 32g
- SHOT: steel in sizes 0, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 & 7
- WAD: plastic container (PLC)
- CRIMP: 6 petals
- COLOUR: translucent green
- SRP: £355 per 1,000



For more details visit fiocchi.com

PICTURES: DRENNAN KENDERDINE

The author used No.2 for Canada geese, and No.4 and 5 on pigeons



Whether you are looking for a steel load to take to the foreshore, or want to try steel for game birds this season, Fiocchi have you covered!

l've tested).

A very important consideration when shooting cartridges, that seems to be missed most of the time, is to keep the expectations of the ballistic capabilities of the ammo at the forefront of your mind. Conscious of that point, I never really shot anything beyond 40 yards. Certainly, the cartridge performed faultlessly within the realistic ranges of approximately 20-40 yards; even Fiocchi states that the maximum range of the shell's performance is 40m, or 44 yards. Within those ranges, the Wetland Steel did what it's designed to do... kill! Contrary to the popular belief that steel cartridges are slow, Fiocchi's Wetland Steel 32g travels at 1,400 fps, so it's not exactly hanging around! Using different shot sizes is a must for different quarry, and No.2 on Canada geese was ethical for such a large bird that has a high resistance to shot; that No.2 shot broke through the geese's natural defences.

Wood pigeons, as I have said for years, are probably the most demanding and toughest quarry to master (if that's even possible!), and they will test any manufacturer's ammo to the nth degree. I used both No.5 and No.4 on pigeons and I didn't prefer one over the other – they both did a great job if you shot them sensibly and within the ranges mentioned above. Shooting pigeons will tell you a lot about the cartridges you are using, and you can take those results and experiences and transfer them into other areas of shooting. Fiocchi's 32g Wetland Steel delivered a crisp and quick shot load to the pigeons and corvids so brilliantly that the results have given me all the confidence I need to use them on this coming season's partridge, pheasant, and ducks... because if they can kill geese, then the rest are more than within its scope. ■



Keep your ranges between 20 and 40 yards, and choose your shot size according to quarry, and the Wetland Steel will do the rest!



Back with a vengeance

Mick Garvey is invited to scope out a new permission with a difference, and makes a very productive visit to an old one

An invitation I couldn't refuse recently fell into my lap when a landowner for whom I shoot passed on my details to another, comparatively new, landowner. The land in question was a relatively small ghyll, 16 acres on the map but more like 18-20 with all the valleys taken into account.

First impressions were that it screamed 'squirrels' at me. A good variety of oak, beech and pine trees covered the land with a beautiful, winding stream cutting through the heart of the woodland basically forming two halves and providing excellent backdrops for any shot taken.

I met with the landowner, who I shall refer to as Big W, early one morning and we walked the land. He gave me a thorough explanation of his plans for this hidden gem, and none of it involved stripping it for timber or future development. It was going to be his place to wander through, taking in the sights, smells and wildlife, which in these days was a refreshing thought. Big W also relayed his hopes for the wood, which included the hopeful reappearance of red squirrels, which was why he had been introduced to me by the first landowner. I had taken over the squirrel control for him and after an absence of around five years, we had the odd red making an appearance. This was not an easy or expected occurrence for any area with a good population of grey skinnies, and it could take years but it's the job I do and a challenge I relish.

We walked the ghyll for a good few hours, checking out likely-looking areas for traps and feeders and for any signs of activity or dreys. Despite looking so 'squirrely' I only found one drey, but there were plenty of hollowed-out trees and old woodpecker haunts which undoubtedly homed the greys. At the top end of the ghyll, we disturbed a family of four roe deer, which was great for us to see but I was advised that if they became too large a group then some thinning out would be necessary.

The InfiRay thermal spotter came into its own when picking out a few hares tucked under trees along with a good head of woodcock, neither of which Big W had been previously aware of.

We ended the recce and chatted for a while. I offered to 'screw up' a gate which a few members of the public had been using although there was no public right of way, and keep an eye out for anyone in there that shouldn't be. The mission was simply to create a habitat for wildlife to thrive in, and first up was to rid the area of grey squirrels.

My chosen area to start the red squirrel conservation project was a looping stretch of the stream. Eventually, it will succumb to the powers of nature and become a small oxbow lake, but for now, it's almost island form was an ideal place to set a feeder. It could be easily overlooked from both sides of the ravine, but my chosen vantage point gave me the best all-round view for incoming skinnies.

A live trap was set up next to the feeder, but wouldn't be set just yet. Although no reds had been seen for years, I wouldn't risk setting it until I was positive there were no reds present. It can be advantageous sometimes to check out a red close up for the dreaded squirrel pox, but I would rather avoid any unnecessary stress on the already endangered reds. I will install a trail cam to monitor movement and visitation, and once I'm satisfied no reds are about, the trap will be set.

KIT UPGRADE

For more information on Mick's Wraith 4K scope, visit scottcountry.co.uk

Mick lines up on another feeding 'skinny'



PICTURES: **MICK GARVEY**


Chewed pine cones are a sure sign a hungry squirrel has been feeding in the area


With the feeders restocked, it won't be long before the squirrels find them again

Reading the signs

With everything set, I was away to another permission that had just been opened back up to me now the pheasant season had ended. It was pretty much the same approach of getting everything in place for the greys that had no doubt taken advantage of my absence. The signs were there; new dreys had been formed and every feeder that had been left filled had been completely emptied. I took one large grey skinny from the track, but the others were obviously keeping away. This will change once they realise the feed is back on offer. There is a small paddock adjacent this place, and it has had its fair share of problems with rabbits spooking the horses and burrowing, which can be deadly for the horses.

A quick scan from afar with the thermal showed half a dozen rabbits sat out, and with the horses at the far end I was happy to take a few out for the owner and to supplement my dog Zeva's diet. I had my trusty Rimfiremagic 10-22 with the Sightmark Wraith 4K mounted up top – the image through the viewfinder was crystal clear and the range of 60 to 70 yards would be a formality, as always with this set up.

First up was a youngster, and even with a clean headshot it was bouncing like crazy, causing a state of alert for the remaining rabbits. Swiftly bringing the crosshairs onto the next one, a very large adult, the dispatch was immediate and with no fuss. Another two full-sized adults were taken before calling it a day.

The effectiveness and silence of the subsonic Eley Hollows is not to be underestimated, but on this open area it is to be expected. My return to the squirrel ghyll would be a real test, as the acoustics of the ravine were very different.

My confidence in the grey squirrels turning up was so high that I returned to the new spot after just a couple of days instead of the 5 to 7 I usually give a new area. Sure enough, I could see the unmistakable heat glow of a skinny on the feeder, and using the holly bushes to mask my movement, the place lit up like a high street at Christmas with heat sources everywhere.

Wasting no time, the feeding grey was dispatched silently, which pleased me no end as the remaining squirrels stayed put. A couple were too high to take a shot at, but they would come to feed sooner or later. The feed we use really brings them to the yard, and the chew-proof feeders last for years.

I was scanning the trees and ground for heat sources when the tapping of the feeder lid grabbed my attention. There was another grey happily feeding. But not for long, as another Eley sub soon took care of the invasive grey.

They continued to steadily arrive at the feeder and one by one were humanely dispatched. I now had five and was thinking that could be it for the day. I decided to give it one last scan and sure enough, I spotted one through the branches and twigs to my left. With no possible shot through this thick cover, I had to reposition myself without alerting it. It was sitting on a smallish beech tree on a branch overhanging the stream and getting the shot was like threading cotton through the eye of a needle, but once I had a clear view and a steady rest, number six was down and in the stream, heading away from me at a rapid pace.

I was immediately on my toes trying to get in front of it. Luckily, the looping stream worked to my advantage, and after some splashing around and mud hopping I was in place to intercept the grey, which now looked like a drowned rat. Big W was over the moon with the result, and hopefully it won't be too long before we see the reds return. ■



A few rabbits were added to the bag thanks to Mick's Rimfiremagic .22 rifle and Wraith 4K rifle

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Tim is Development Officer for the National Gamekeepers' Organisation (NGO)



Wildfire management

Tim Weston takes a look at the latest research on wildfires, which shows they are increasing and threatening habitats, native species, and even human life

As our springs and summers become noticeably warmer and drier, the danger of wildfires grows ever greater. In England there are on average 39,000 wildfires each year, mostly in the uplands although some occur on moorland in the south-west and on the Downs towards the south coast. It is quite rare to have woodland wildfires in England, but they do happen and can be just as devastating to the flora and fauna as to those in the uplands and heathlands.

Wildfires are a concern because of the loss of habitat, of course, but property and human life is also put at risk, not to mention key species which can lose an entire breeding season. In the worst case scenario, we could lose an entire breeding community, putting that species at risk for its future. It all sounds a bit dramatic, and that's because it is. Wildfires are a very real risk to those who have to try and control them, and in the uplands that duty not only falls to the fire service but also to gamekeepers.

According to researchers, wildfires in 2018 in England's uplands exposed more than five million people to dangerous levels of polluted air, with levels exceeding World Health Organization limits, which can cause severe respiratory problems. People up to 50 miles from the actual wildfires have had their lives shortened, according to a report published in the Environmental Research Communications publication. It goes on to say: "Although people may not have been able to smell smoke, particulate matter was very high in areas far away from the fires".

The research also warned that climate change scenarios predict that UK summers will become both hotter and drier in the future. But what has this all got to do with shooting sports? Well, many of these wildfires start on unmanaged moorland, and sometimes spread to moorland that is managed for grouse shooting.

The difference between managed and unmanaged moorland is quite simple; moorland that is managed for grouse shooting has a burning rotation which removes old rank heather and reduces the fuel load for wildfires to take hold. Moorland that has no management on it is the exact opposite, with woody heather that is tinder dry with massive fire load. #The other problem is that heather moorland in a conservation area or run by a charity is often cut rather than burnt, which leaves debris on the floor that dries out quickly and is very combustible.

Many, if not most, of these moorland fires, are caused by the public visiting the area and lighting disposable BBQs, balloon lanterns, or in some cases deliberately setting fires, as in the infamous Saddleworth moor incident.

Leave it to the experts

Upland estates that have a burning regime will have trained gamekeepers with the correct kit to extinguish moorland fires, and if they can get to the scene quickly they can start to fight the blaze before the fire service arrives and often extinguish it in good time. This is only if it is seen and reported quickly and the fire is on an area that they are allowed to enter. Many unmanaged moors have no access because there are no man-made roads for grouse shooting, making getting to the area that is ablaze virtually impossible. The old rank heather also means that any fires will 'take' very quickly, making the job of the firefighter, be they a professional or a well-trained gamekeeper/upland farmer, that much more difficult.

Another problem with wildfires in the uplands is that fire can even burn underground. This is especially problematic on unmanaged moorland because the surface fire burns hotter with more debris on top. Firefighters struggle to tackle underground blazes and have to wait for the fire to surface. Even when they think it has been extinguished, it can reignite many hours later. Where soil survives, any remaining seeds are burnt, leaving the job of revegetating down to costly helicopters which fly in materials to hold eroding surfaces together.

Grouse moor owners and gamekeepers do what they can to mitigate the risk of wildfire, firstly by careful management of the land itself and regular burning to remove woody, rank, tall heather. Other things they do is to keep vegetation short on popular walks, and break up the large blocks of old heather with smaller burnt areas to act as a fire break, a practice often referred to as 'the mosaic effect'. They even create ponds and wet areas by blocking up drains to keep moisture in the peat.

Private moor owners also regularly have joined-up exercises to practice different scenarios of wildfires with relevant bodies such as the fire service, mountain rescue, and gamekeepers from various estates working together.

Getting the right equipment and personnel to the right areas as quickly as possible is paramount, and gamekeepers are always the first port of call. It is very frustrating for those keepers who have spent hours, if not days, fighting wildfires when the news reporters leave them out of the picture when they praise others, which is all too common. The National Gamekeepers' Organisation took ITV news to task over that just this June and will continue to try to get keepers the recognition that they deserve for risking their lives to save this valuable habitat and the often rare species that thrive on it.

Public co-operation is the one vital component in mitigating the risks of wildfire, and people are urged to help protect the places they love to visit simply by eliminating the hazards. ■



PICTURE: JAMES ELKINGTON / ISTOCK

SHOW YOUR SUPPORT

To join the NGO, go to www.nationalgamekeepers.org.uk and help defend your sport.

WITH ADAM SMITH

Level pegging!

The job of pushing sticks into the ground may seem like a simple task, but the job of pegging out a drive has to be properly planned to ensure safety and fairness, says Adam Smith

In English shoots (this said with no intended slur towards other UK shoots) keepers will often encounter the great and the good of these islands and beyond, from banking whiz kids, politicians, captains of industry and the like, relaxed and at play, enjoying their shooting.

Many are better than simply good at it, some have lots of practice – but ask what number they are and, time and again, the simple question can result in confusion and argument. Despite coping with billion-dollar share deals and company takeovers on a daily basis, peg numbers can be a total mystery to some. This sort of conversation helps make the point:

"Surely I'm three? Aren't I, Charles?"

"Oh indeed. Almost certainly, must be old chap. Yes, I'm quite sure you're right. I was two last drive so that makes me four…er, doesn't it? Anyway, you were on my immediate left, so you absolutely must have been one. And that has to make you…um…three? Absolutely."

"Then again, we are moving up two, aren't we…or is it three? And they do number from the left here, don't they? Let's ask Giles…."

There's nothing new here. Apparently arguments have simmered or raged about pegging and Gun positions since driven game shooting was first thought of, but what's far more important is not so much who stands where but where who stands. The complexities and sequence of a shoot's numbering system are best left to the Guns to sort out between themselves, but just where each Gun actually stands and how that position is decided and indicated – number ticketed hazel stick or tile batten, two-by-two, four-by-two, paving slab or whitewashed stones, whatever – is a job based on experience and a fair appreciation of what an average to good team of Guns should be expected to cope with.

One or two well-established shoots may not use pegs at all, the boss or headkeeper placing each Gun to suit, but as a rule a Gun's position is indicated by a numbered stick.

It's where the sticks are stuck that can create the real controversy. Some shoots might place their Guns too close together, others will be far too far apart, although terrain and weather conditions can affect both extremes. And some seem to ignore any remote common sense and sportsmanship altogether – so you might see pegs almost close enough for the Gun's elbows to knock against each other!

Essentially, if you accept that the effective range of a shotgun is around 40 yards, then any bird flying midway between two Guns pegged even as much as 60 yards apart will only be a maximum of 30 yards from either of them. Now factor in a bit of height, with pheasants providing the most, followed by partridge and then grouse, it's easy to see that pheasant gun stands can, if the drive requires it, be a bit closer than the other two driven game bird species without being unsporting.

That covers the space between each peg, roughly anyway, but what about the distance from the drive's flushing points? Some pegs might seem to be placed too close to the cover's edge, from where the bulk of the birds will be expected to flush – and if they are, there's no way the birds can reach a respectable height, let alone sporting, they simply won't be given enough time.

So it might seem obvious to pull the shooting position back as far as the ground allows, giving the pheasants enough time and space to achieve maximum height and speed, but it doesn't always work that way. Many game birds tend to follow the contours, so if the ground falls away behind the peg, and especially if there's more woodland

WRITE IN!

If you have a story from the peg that you would like to share with other readers, email us at ben.palfreyman@fieldsportspress.com



PICTURES: REBECCA GREEN

A distance of around 60 yards between pegs means that a bird passing between will be a maximum of 30 yards from each Gun

or cover for the birds to fly towards, they can sometimes start to dip before they even reach the Gun line.

You might think that high ground is essential to show sporting pheasants, but Lincolnshire and Norfolk are both predominantly flat counties, yet both are renowned for the quality of their birds. Then again, in other counties some slopes are so steep the ideal peg position could put the shooters at risk of overbalancing, which is not something you'd want with loaded guns around, so there has to be a sort of compromise.

The truth is there's a bit more to it than pushing a stick with a ticket on top into the ground, but at least you can begin to appreciate that good pegging is as much an art as any other aspect of good keepering. And a good team of keepers will know what sort of bird numbers they should expect from each drive, and between them provide the Guns with an ideal position from which to see the birds at their best and to take the best advantage of each chance as it arises.

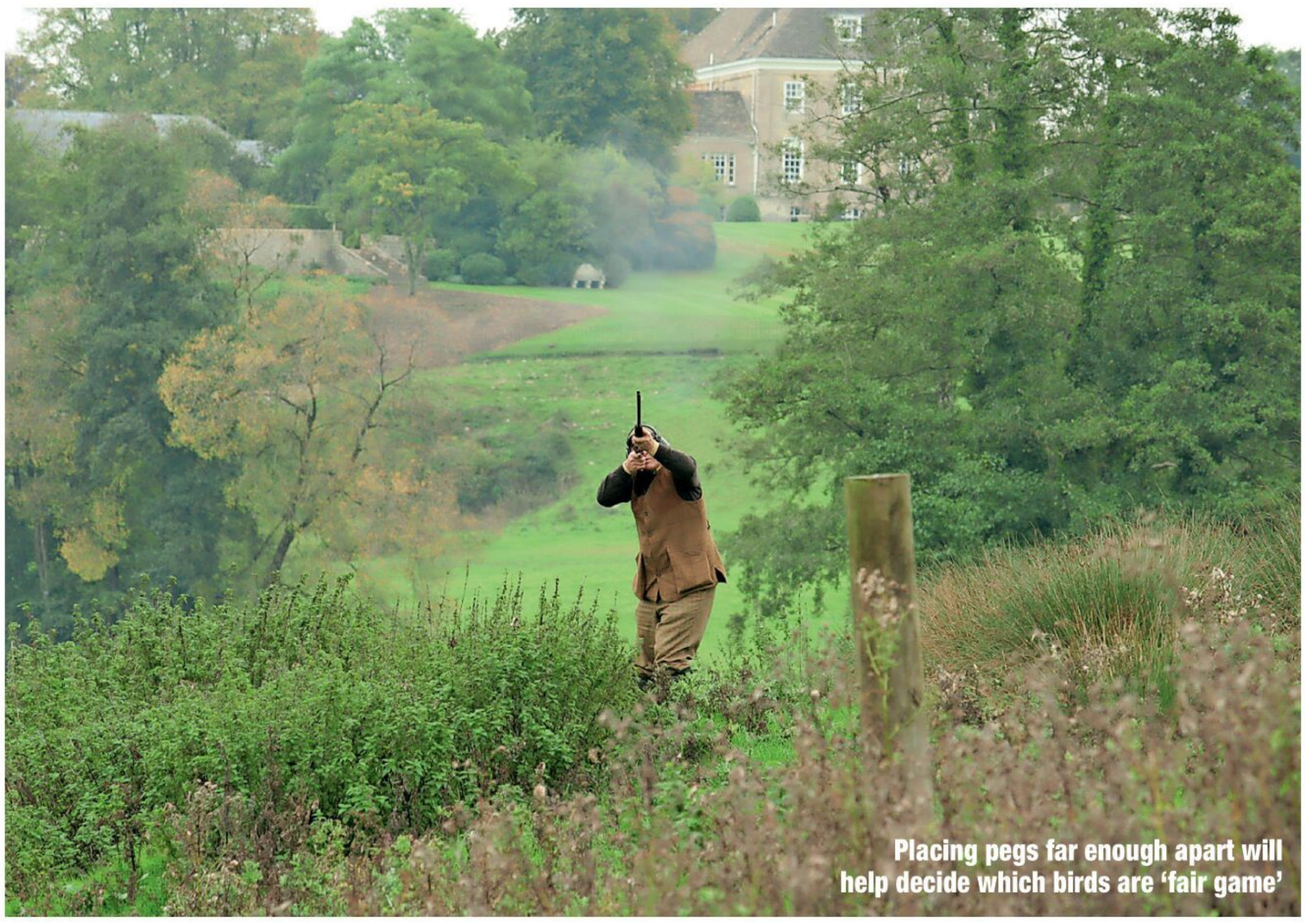
Getting it right will usually be based on a mixture of experience, knowledge of the terrain and the quality of the Guns in the team, with a good bit of luck thrown in – and luck in the context of shooting usually means weather. Unavoidable natural disasters include heavy rain and strong winds during the night, which can scatter your birds and make a nonsense of the most finely wrought plans. Strategic masterpieces and brilliant tactical manoeuvres all tend to fizzle away to end in tight lips and red faces if the elements gang up to push the birds elsewhere, so there must always be a Plan B to save your blushes. A strong wind on the day itself carries its own store of delights, too. Brilliant and subtle pincer movements from well-rehearsed and reliable teams of beaters can all too easily end in strong language and displays of less than gentlemanly behaviour if the contents of each copse and cover fly superbly, but not where the eager line of Guns await them.

And, weather wobbles apart, experiments like different flushing points, sewelling, flags and so on, although very much part of the job, also have their place and time. Trying something new on a big day when the Boss has done his bit by putting together a top team of Guns can be a recipe for large quantities of egg on face and elsewhere.

So, there are all sorts of potential slips associated with driven bird shooting but of them all, peg placement has to be the most easily adjusted. True, if the wind is pushing the bulk of your birds over stands 7 and 8, with 1 to 5 pretty much out of the sport, it doesn't take a huge amount of movement to get the line one or two spaces left or right to compensate. It's getting the move made in time, before the drive becomes a wash out, that makes all the difference – and that of course is where two-way radios have made such a dramatic improvement in a keeper's ability to snatch success from the jaws of failure.



A well-designed drive will ensure that all the Guns get some good sport



Placing pegs far enough apart will help decide which birds are 'fair game'

One major aspect of pegging that no keeper can do much about is the 'lane discipline' of the Guns themselves – and where peg distance plays such an important part. Just one greedy Gun, dropping his neighbour's birds on one or both sides, not only spoils the others' fun he will take all the sportsmanship out of a sport that ultimately must rely on being sporting for its success. If there's one simple rule, it has to be that if there is any doubt in a Gun's mind about the status of a bird, it's always better to leave it for your neighbour. If it's then missed with both barrels, that's the time for a perfect demonstration of how it should be done – but not before. True, if you should be unlucky enough to be flanked by a duo of ditherers, whose first shots are at birds already on their way past, sportsmanship can become a trifle stretched.

The closer the pegs of a drive are set, the greater the risk of confusion or the opportunities for 'poaching', so it makes obvious sense to stand the Guns a 'gunshot' apart when and wherever possible. One problem these days, with improved cartridge loads, a 'gunshot' can mean different things to different Guns.

When some Guns bring long-range wildfowling techniques – minus the mud – into game bird shooting, it can create a recipe for argument and a tense atmosphere over lunch, which is almost guaranteed to spoil the day. Just as one doesn't like to have their car driving abilities criticised, you bet your bottom dollar that the same applies to shooting – or more so.

Good pegging creates good shooting, or certainly goes a long way towards it – although as always the bloke at the other end of the gun is always the final factor. Well-spaced and placed gun stands help to make for an enjoyable, sporting and hassle-free day – they can influence bird quality, sportsmanship, marksmanship and even friendship – but it's still up to each Gun to remember what his number might be! ■

Game & Wildlife CONSERVATION TRUST

New guide for managing woodland

The GWCT's classic Woodland for Pheasants and Wildlife 'green guide' has been updated and re-released, offering a fantatstic resource which will help 21st-century gamekeepers

For a generation of gamekeepers and land managers, the GWCT'S 'green guides' have been a much-needed resource, giving them the expert guidance they require to manage the countryside well. One of the most popular of these was Woodland for Pheasants, first published in 1961 and rewritten by GWCT advisor Ian McCall in 1988. Of the book's new incarnation, Dr Roger Draycott said: "The GWCT, or Game Conservancy as we were back then, has always been proud to offer the 'green guides' and we are delighted to launch this updated version of Woodland for Pheasants and Wildlife. The new edition reflects the modern gamekeeper's role as custodian of the countryside and champion of biodiversity and offers a practical guide to maximising the benefits for other wildlife of land managed well for game.

"With tree planting high on the public agenda, the most recent addition to the GWCT Advisory team, Alex Keeble, has rewritten the guide with Joe Dimbleby, refreshing it to reflect changes in best practice and bring the guidelines up to date. The book also embraces the important role good game management can have for many other species and this is reflected in its new title.

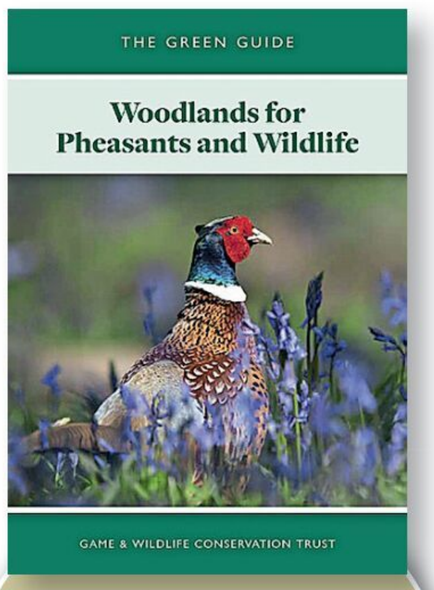
Alex Keeble describes the green guides as forming the backbone of his career. "As a gamekeeper," he said, "the first edition of this book Woodlands for Pheasants was my 'go-to' guide on how to create and manage a woodland habitat to benefit both game and wildlife."

Scientific knowledge and best practice game management continue to underpin the highly practical advice on offer in the new edition. Chapters cover the design and management of new woodland and renovation of existing woodland, as well as the financial considerations, plus advice on tree and shrub species, and sustainable game bird releasing. Making it, as Alex says, "relevant for anyone managing woodland for timber, wildlife, game or all three."

Joe Dimbleby adds: "The publication of this new edition is very timely. Shoot managers may well have fewer birds this season due to supply issues and will be looking at better ways to keep them in the covers and maximise their drives. Woodland for Pheasants and Wildlife holds many of the secrets of successful shoot management."

Tim Weston of the National Gamekeepers' Organisation said of the new publication: "The GWCT has always led the way with advice that is backed up by science and put together in a way that is easily put into practice by gamekeepers, shoot managers and other conservationists.

"With more emphasis on planting trees, it is ever more important to plant the right tree in the right place for the right reason. This guide will prove an invaluable resource to create woodland that you can practically use for game management which will benefit wildlife and the environment with outcomes that work for gamekeepers and shoot managers." ■



To purchase a copy of the new release of Woodland for Pheasants and Wildlife, visit gwctshop.org.uk/products/woodlands-for-pheasants-and-wildlife-gwct-green-guide

RESOURCES FOR CONSERVATION

Like most people involved in grassroots shooting, we at Sporting Shooter are passionate about conservation – look out for plenty more resources this season!



PICTURE: **PETER THOMPSON / GWCT**

Black Lab is a lifelong shooter and avid countryman

The (fairly) Glorious Twelfth

Black Lab remembers his own boyhood version of the Glorious Twelfth when, with a day off from the harvest due to bad weather, he snuck out to the farm in search of snipe and rabbits

I am afraid that we haven't much to get excited about on the Glorious Twelfth down here in the 'Barley Belt', although I believe that black grouse were once prevalent throughout England. I'm told that there were several of the Victorian 'Big Shots' who fancied the convenience of shooting red grouse in East Anglia. Lord Rendlesham's attempts failed, as did those of the Maharajah Duleep Singh, who tried to introduce the birds on his Elveden estate, which still hosts a famous pheasant shoot. King Edward 7th's ambitions to form a stable breeding nucleus of red grouse on a section of the Sandringham estate, however, did actually meet with marginal success. Wolferton Heath offered visually similar heathland habitat to parts of Yorkshire and it was reported that some birds had succesfully reared broods, but the project ultimately failed.

> 'With no grouse to shoot, and the ducks out of bounds, I decided to have a go at bagging a snipe on the opening day'

On paper, the heather habitat and careful predator management lavished upon the grouse by the royal keepers ought to have given the birds a head start. I have often wondered if the (slightly) warmer East Anglian conditions didn't suit the grouse after thousands of years of evolution had adapted them to life in the harsh northern climate. I suppose it also raises the question as to whether global warming will affect the highland packs, presuming that political meddling has not got there first.

GROUSE IN THE SOUTH?

Attempts were made to introduce grouse to a number of estates in East Anglia, but they all failed eventually.

Two for the pot

Until 1954, it was permissible to shoot wildfowl in August. At that time, my father farmed some common land, part of which was a marshy environment full of ponds and splashes demarcated by clumps of bramble, hips, haws, sloes and alder carr. Mallard were always attracted to the area, but my father rarely allowed us to shoot duck before late September as the adult birds would often be in eclipse.

Normally in August, even as a schoolboy, I would be gainfully employed in the harvest fields. Most farmers were still using binders and then threshing mills to thresh the corn, and an army of manual labour was required to get the harvest safely gathered in with this relatively antiquated kit.

However, if the rain set in, harvest was suspended and I

Heather in flower on the stunning coastal heathland landscape of Snape Warren in Suffolk



PICTURE: COASTALRUNNER / GETTY

would be free to properly enjoy the ‘harvest holiday’ from school. It just so happened that this was the case on an 12 August when I was in my early teens. With no grouse to shoot and the ducks out of bounds, I decided to have a go at bagging a snipe on the opening day. As the sound of drumming snipe was regularly heard in the evening during the spring months on the common, I thought it well worth a try.

It was a muggy, showery day with thunder in the air and not really the sort of conditions one would connect with snipe shooting. Nowadays, such a soporific atmosphere would see me confined to my armchair, but back then I was full of energy. There were plenty of both common and jack snipe (still then legal quarry) around; the problem was my single-barrel .410 wasn’t really up the job. But perhaps I wasn’t, either! I had a few pops at the twisting snipe before I realised Fatty the dog was disturbing some immature duck and pheasants that shared the common’s wonderful habitat – something my dad would certainly not have condoned.

I never did confess to my father about my ill-fated attempt to shoot snipe in August. Instead, I retreated to the arable part of the farm and, although plagued by itchy ‘thunder flies’, managed to stalk a few unwary half-grown bunnies on the typically long stubbles of that era. So, although I returned home in a bedraggled state, I soon had those rabbits skinned and dressed and earnt some brownie points off my mother as all the family enjoyed those tender young rabbits when fried in proper farm butter.



ROUGH SHOOTING SUCCESS!
Our columnist’s parents were very happy to recieve a few bunnies for the pot!

PICTURE: SHELLHAWKER / GETTY

My grand dream for a Glorious Twelfth hadn’t exactly gone to plan, but those ‘harvest’ bunnies went down well and the old man bought me another box of ‘fourlong’ cartridges as an incentive for me to continue contributing to the pot. As if I really needed it... ■



The jinking flight of the snipe is one that eludes many Guns – but if you hold fire, they do often take a straighter, steadier path when at full speed, which is when it’s best to take the shot

PICTURE: DRAKULIREN / GETTY

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SHOOTING & COUNTRY TV

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COMMENT

WITH ARTHUR BARRACLOUGH

The glory of wildflowers

Taking advantage of government pay-back schemes could really help this year – so Arthur explains how to ensure your wildflower strip helps your bank balance as well as your birds!

Wildflowers not only brighten the landscape of a shoot, attract insects and help sustain partridge and pheasant chicks, they can qualify for payments under Environmental Land Management Schemes (ELMS).

As well as the insects you wish to attract, the array of wildflower mixtures available also reflect the type of site on which they are to be grown; from meadowlands to hedgerows and just about everything in between. And, such is their versatility, wildflowers can be easily incorporated into almost any cover crop and stewardship mixture.

While it continues to be the case that wildflowers are attractive to shoots because land is often in short supply and they can grow where traditional cover crops cannot (for example, in semi-shaded areas, giving the gamekeeper additional habitat for chicks) the arrival of ELMS has heightened their importance by placing them firmly on the environmental agenda. The emphasis on chicks is of particular interest to wild bird shoots as they make an important contribution to bird numbers come shooting season.

Wildflowers only

Planting wildflowers can transform an unsightly scrub into a pleasing visual amenity, as well as act as a boundary or buffer between arable fields and waterways. Whatever the purpose for growing wildflowers, it is always pleasing to the eye and wins over the public far more effectively than any field of game maize can ever do.

Successfully growing wildflowers is achieved by simply spraying off the vegetation, clearing the dead foliage, raking the surface into a light tilth, and broadcasting the seed before treading it in. Wildflowers can also be implemented organically by establishing a stale seed bed through repeat cultivations prior to planting.

This relatively low-labour procedure is essentially the same for all situations, the main variable being the choice of mixture used. Matching the mixture to site and soil type is key.

It is good general practice to test the soil against high fertility to avoid grass species overwhelming the crop. If a knapsack is not available, it is acceptable to clear with a strimmer and then scrape remaining vegetation and rubbish away.

In all cases, wildflowers – perennials and annuals – must be cut in the autumn and the

TOP TIP

When considering planting wildflower mixes, people often worry about dominant species such as ox-eye daisies or poppies taking over. Species that tend to dominate can partly be controlled by limiting inclusion rates to, say, 5% of total mixture. While such species will retain a propensity for 'conquest', proper management will help contain the species balance. Remove the cuttings from the site in autumn, and consider cutting back in spring if you notice any particular species or grass is too abundant.



Wildflowers are always pleasing to the eye and win over the public far more effectively than any field of game maize ever can

PICTURES: **BRIGHT SEEDS**


Cornfield Annuals give good colour in the first year and are often mixed with other species that come into their own in subsequent years.

cuttings taken away. Perennials should also be cut in the spring, but not severely and only to the height of the wildflower heads. Overcut and you will kill the crop.

Nectar flower mixtures

The combination of wildflowers with leguminous species such as clover, lucerne and bird's-foot-trefoil qualifies for AB1 funding, is nitrogen fixing (particularly important given the price of fertiliser), can enhance soil structure, and last for three to five years. Such mixtures extend the supply of pollen and nectar from late spring through to the autumn, benefiting insects such as bees, butterflies, hoverflies and moths.

Wild bird mixtures

Incorporating wildflowers with stewardship crops is the most common option to qualify for AB9 funding.

Adding wildflowers to wild bird mixtures can be an ideal amalgamation – leading to the creation of an attractive feeding habitat for a wide range of seed-eating birds. A two-year crop may also provide seed throughout the spring of the second year, and this may help birds to attain breeding condition.

Species that will benefit include grey partridge, turtle dove, song thrush, tree sparrow, linnet, yellowhammer, reed bunting and corn bunting.

Which mixtures suit which soils?

Most soils: Standard Wildflower Mixture (includes cornfield annuals, oxeye daisy, field poppy, red campion). The cornfield annuals will give good colour in the first year – and the other species will come into their own in the second and subsequent years.

Bank/Steep Sides: Deep Rooting Mixture, designed for sandy soils, but also good for dry soils (includes ribwort plantain, sorrel, field scabious). On steeper banks, consider using an 80:20 (grass/wildflower) mixture; the rooting system of the grass is helping consolidate the bank. It takes a few years to establish, but thereafter has a really good show of species. It is also good for light loamy ground, and can help soil structure in ditches and verges.

Shaded Areas/Woodland: Woodland Clearing Mixture (includes wood sage, ramsons, bluebell, upright hedge parsley). Ideal for shaded areas on edge of woodland or clearing; takes a couple of years to establish but well worth it.

Semi-Shade Areas: Hedgerows, Margins and Shaded Areas Mixtures (includes hedge bedstraw, musk mallow, garlic mustard, teasel). Also suitable for woodland edges and shaded banks.

Heavy Soil: Heavy Clay Mixture (Contains lady's bedstraw, tufted vetch, yarrow, black knapweed). This mixture is suitable for areas of modern acidity, i.e. below pH6 or where soil is heavy, compacted, and difficult to breakup. Also, with an inclusion of yellow rattle for grass growth suspension.

Peaty Soils: Acid Soils Mixture (contains betony, common catsear, ragged robin). Good for peaty high organic matter soils commonly found on moors, heath lands, reclaimed land or woodland clearing. ■


Species such as clover, lucerne and bird's foot trefoil qualify for AB1 funding and extend supply of pollen and nectar

THE DOS AND DON'TS OF GROWING WILDFLOWERS

- ■ Do clean your seedbed as thoroughly as possible
- ■ Do select the right mixture for soil type (this will help management thereafter)
- ■ Do control the grass by cutting back
- ■ Do remove the cuttings in autumn
- ■ Don't apply fertiliser
- ■ Don't cut too short (will kill some of the species)
- ■ Don't cut mid-summer (will kill the crop)
- ■ Don't drill (too deep)
- ■ Don't graze (some species poisonous)



On the money

Diggory Hadoke takes a look at the costs attributed to the various skills involved in the gun trade in the nineteenth century and how they compare to the modern age

This interesting and rather obscure little document, pictured right, provides a fascinating insight into the charges gun trade workers made for their work in a very detailed breakdown of the jobs and costs involved in the construction of sporting guns.

The first page informs us that it is a publication of the 'Worker's Union', which had a registered office at Eversleigh, 11 Lyndhurst Gardens, Hampstead, London NW3. The Worker's Union was formed in 1898 to push for improved wages for agricultural labourers and grew over the next 20 years to become quite an important organisation before it eventually merged with the Transport & General Workers' Union in 1929. The name of the General Secretary, Charles Duncan, is printed on the booklet. Duncan was a Labour Party MP and union organiser, and was general secretary from 1900-1929. The president is Councillor John Beard who held this office (and that of councillor) from 1913 until he left Birmingham in 1920 for London.

We can, then, fairly date this publication as coming from the 1913-1920 period. It is relevant to 'Birmingham & District Sporting Gun Trades' and specifies the 'Minimum Piecework Price List For all Sections of the Trade.' Piece work was a system by which workers were paid an agreed price for one completed item (or piece) to a standard accepted by quality controllers. How long it took to make one was a matter of skill and experience. Faster, more skilled men made more money because they could make more pieces in an hour than those less skilled.

The booklet contains seven pages of prices for every kind of job in the gun trade. Prices are in shillings and pence (s.d.), with one pound being 20 shillings and one shilling being 12 pence. Some interesting benchmark figures include the following: Stocking an Anson & Deeley boxlock cost six shillings and the rate for stocking the fore-end of a hammer gun was one shilling and sixpence. Polishers prepared the gun for the engraver and the cost of polishing a 'Shell Fence Boxlock', which would have been a Greener, was three shillings. Engraving the names on guns was priced per dozen. For example, three pence per dozen if engraved guns were sent to another man for naming to be engraved on actions or locks and barrels.

'Furniture Making' refers to the provision of top-levers, trigger guards and such like. A 'Roger sidelock', which was a commonly used trade action at the time made in Birmingham and supplied to retailers all over the country, cost seven shillings to make furniture for, while a plain Anson & Deeley gun cost six shillings. Barrel filing for a standard set of barrels with under-lumps, cost four shillings and sixpence. Fitting a loop cost one shilling and letting in a top lump cost the same.

The most expensive part of the process was action filing. The difference in costs is notable. A bar action hammer gun cost 20 shillings but that could rise to 32 shillings if it required a Scott patent square top bolt.

GET IN TOUCH

Diggory Hadoke runs Vintage Guns, the specialist site for buying, selling and repairing classic British shotguns and rifles. Contact him on 01584 878485 or go to www.vintageguns.co.uk



PICTURES: DIGGORY HADOKE

Prices for guns, cartridges and gun-making sevices in the Edwardian era are demonstrative of what a different world it was

Under the hammer

Hammerless guns were much more expensive to make, with sidelocks costing from 48 to 56 shillings and Anson & Deeley actions costing from 60 to 83 shillings. Clearly, some filters specialised in certain 'section work' such as filing-up ball fences on a sidelock (four shillings) or shell fences (two shillings and sixpence extra).

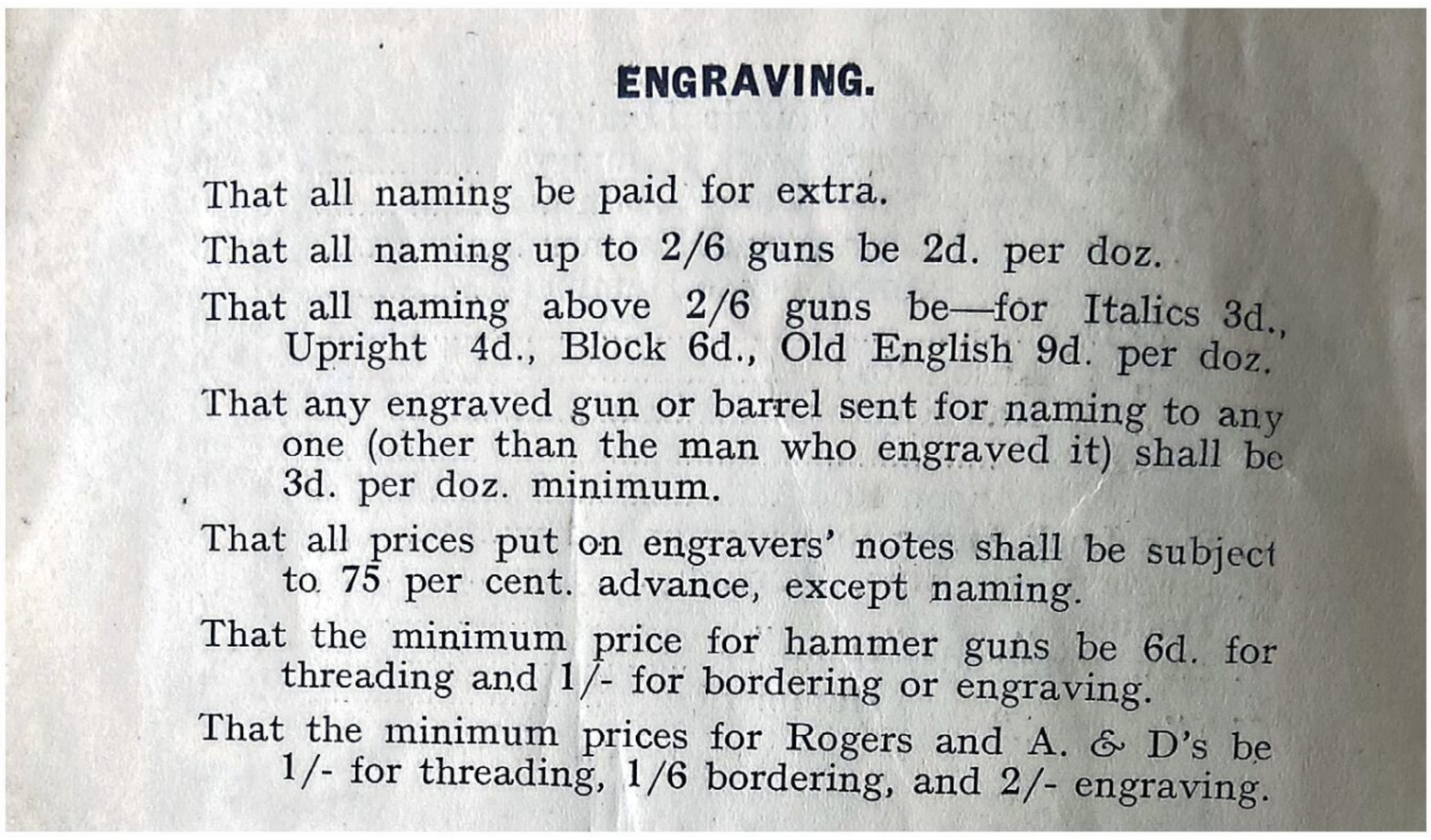
Specific tasks were clearly done in batches and priced per job, like fitting split extractors to a pair of barrels at nine shillings and sixpence and making and fitting Southgate ejector work in the fore-end, which cost a hefty 50 shillings. Fitting a Scott spindle and top lever was 11 shillings. The price for finishing a gun was 10 shillings for an Anson & Deeley and the same for a Roger's action sidelock.

What does that tell us about how much money workers were making back in the second decade of the nineteenth century? A male bookshop assistant in 1918 made 12 shillings and sixpence per week, while a female seamstress had to work a 10.5 hour day for 16 shillings. A book keeper working in a manufacturing or retail business might earn 69 shillings per week in 1920. So, a stocker in Birmingham completing three boxlocks per week and making 18 shillings was working long hours and was certainly not a wealthy man.

'This rather obscure little document provides a fascinating insight into the charges gun trade workers made for their work'

These prices charged to the trade show the rate at which work was turned out. Doug Tate in Birmingham Gunmakers reports the average wage of a Highly Skilled stocker in 1913 was 55 shillings. At a rate of six shillings per boxlock, he would have to complete nine guns per week if that were true. For comparison, in 1912, Purdey stocker Jack Apted was making three pounds, seven shillings a week, while his colleague Walter Forbes made two pounds, eight shillings and H. Dean (Senior) made two pounds 15 shillings.

It can be hard to put into perspective the true equivalence of money when making comparisons between now and long ago. A standard inflation calculator suggests a pound in 1914 would be £123 today. That being the case, someone trying to live today on less than £300 per week would have a very poor standard of living. By 1920, the value of one pound had fallen to the equivalent of £45 today!



ENGRAVING.

That all naming be paid for extra.

That all naming up to 2/6 guns be 2d. per doz.

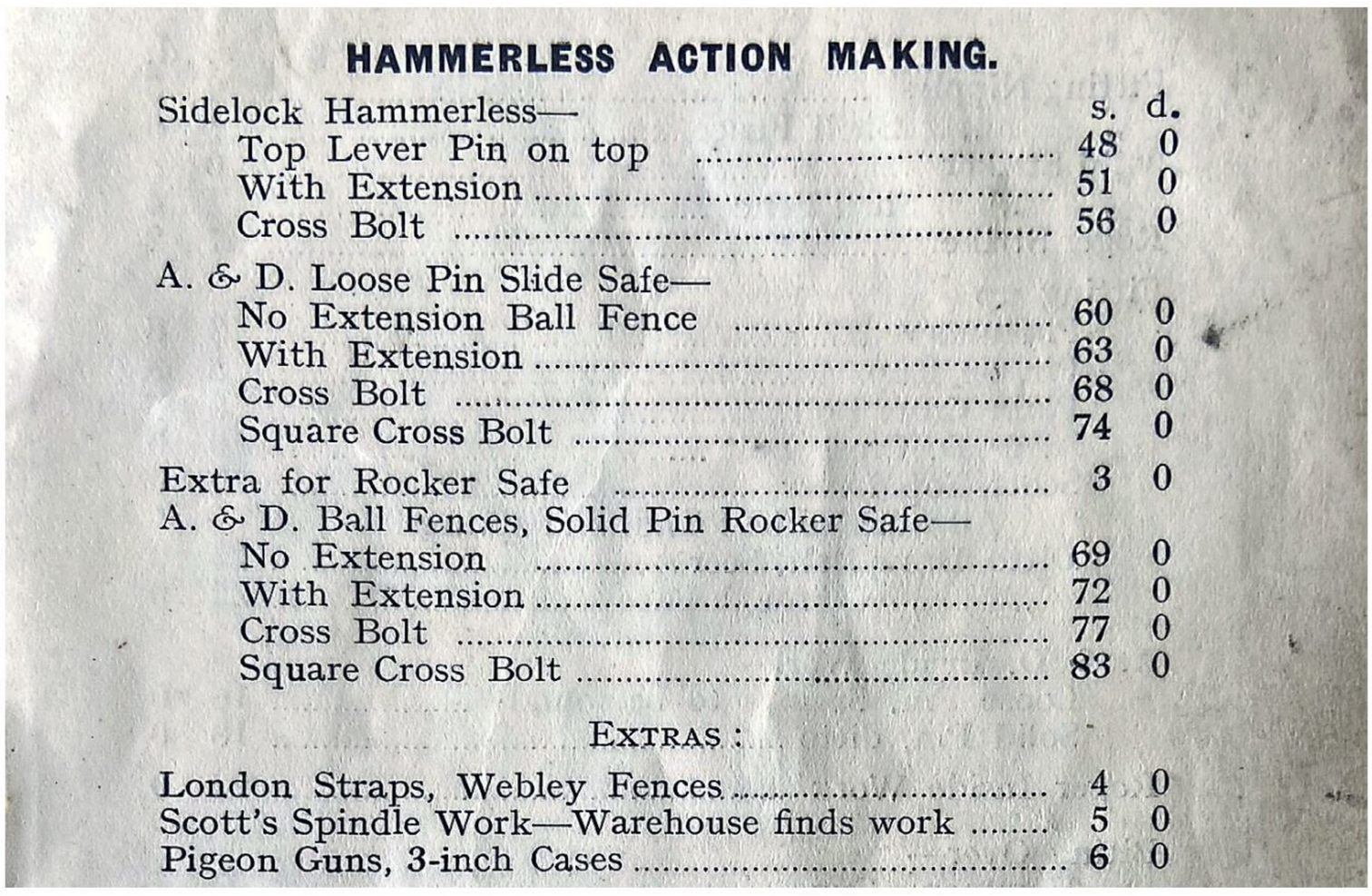
That all naming above 2/6 guns be—for Italics 3d., Upright 4d., Block 6d., Old English 9d. per doz.

That any engraved gun or barrel sent for naming to any one (other than the man who engraved it) shall be 3d. per doz. minimum.

That all prices put on engravers' notes shall be subject to 75 per cent. advance, except naming.

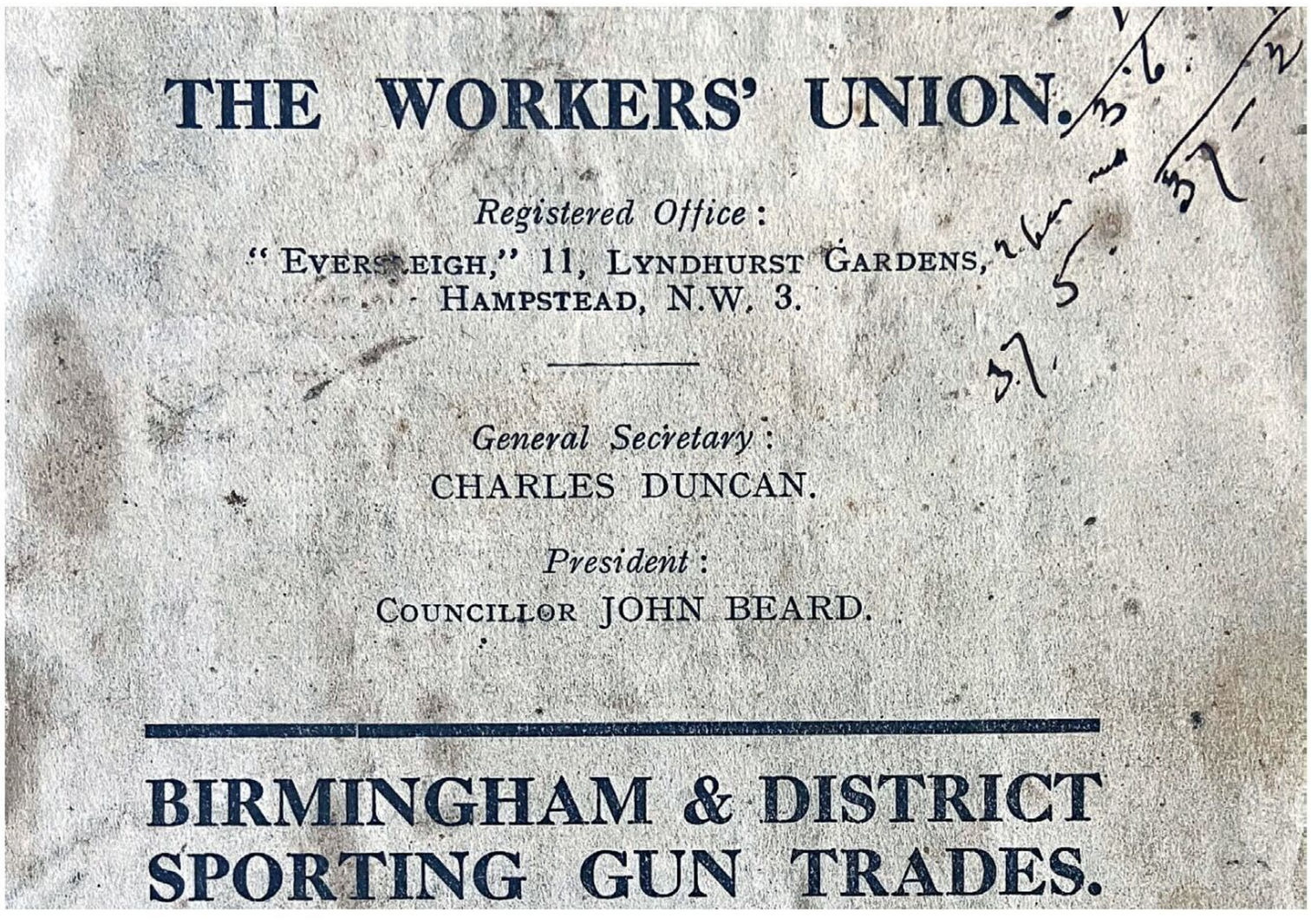
That the minimum price for hammer guns be 6d. for threading and 1/- for bordering or engraving.

That the minimum prices for Rogers and A. & D's be 1/- for threading, 1/6 bordering, and 2/- engraving.



HAMMERLESS ACTION MAKING.

	s.	d.
Sidelock Hammerless—		
Top Lever Pin on top	48	0
With Extension	51	0
Cross Bolt	56	0
A. & D. Loose Pin Slide Safe—		
No Extension Ball Fence	60	0
With Extension	63	0
Cross Bolt	68	0
Square Cross Bolt	74	0
Extra for Rocker Safe	3	0
A. & D. Ball Fences, Solid Pin Rocker Safe—		
No Extension	69	0
With Extension	72	0
Cross Bolt	77	0
Square Cross Bolt	83	0
EXTRAS :		
London Straps, Webley Fences	4	0
Scott's Spindle Work—Warehouse finds work	5	0
Pigeon Guns, 3-inch Cases	6	0



THE WORKERS' UNION.

Registered Office :
"EVERSLEIGH," 11, LYNDHURST GARDENS,
HAMPSTEAD, N.W. 3.

General Secretary :
CHARLES DUNCAN.

President :
COUNCILLOR JOHN BEARD.

BIRMINGHAM & DISTRICT SPORTING GUN TRADES.



WITH RUPERT BUTLER

Dawn adventure on opening day

Rupert Butler spends a morning in a barley field pitting his wits against a marauding army of mallard and some unexpected interlopers

For the past few weeks, I have been watching several large battalions of mallard as they travel from the comfort of a nearby sanctuary to some barley stubbles a mile or so distant. It always amazes me year after year I watch them bypass some closer fields to reach their favourites. They are creatures of habit, and why certain fields are not to their liking is anybody's guess. In many ways their eagerness to return to familiar pastures contributes to their downfall.

After what seems like an eternity, 1 September duly arrives and I'm awake long before my alarm has a chance to annoy me. From his sofa in the sitting room, Toffee has heard all the commotion and comes to investigate further. He knows what's in the offing and his excitement is palpable as he starts to dance around the hallway. A quick cup of coffee later and we are on our way.

> 'The dog, more through sheer excitement than good judgment, had followed the drake for a couple of hundred yards before he glided down'

En route to our destination, I notice a car pulled in a hundred yards or so away, much to my dismay. Thinking it may be another shooter, I drive down to investigate. Luckily enough for me, it seems like some poor misfortunate has had a puncture whilst his car is already wearing one of those spare half tyres, thus reducing him to a quick phone call or a long walk.

After a minor detour trying to negotiate a slightly irate Angus bull in one of the adjoining paddocks, we eventually reach our chosen field. Walking across a paddock patrolled by one of the above is hairy enough in the full light of day, never mind in the dark of night with a dog in tow.

The field in question is about 10 acres in size, so I gravitate towards the centre whilst looking for an area that has been neglected by the combine, or indeed an area where the stalks are slightly higher due to a dip in the ground or similar. The dew-soaked stalks are made somewhat more comfortable by the use of an old groundsheet from a long-disused tent.

As dawn inches its way across the eastern sky, I watch the world awaken once again from my position high up on the hillside. Way down below, a large rookery comes to life as thousands of crows spread their wings for the day ahead. An old cockerel in the farmhouse nearby is also welcoming in the new day, his shrill tones enough to waken those that have long since departed.

Let the game commence

I'm brought back to reality by that gurgling, quacking sound mallard make as they descend to feed. Round and round they go, but I cannot for the life of me pick them out in the gloom. I have to whisper little words of wisdom to Toffee, or else he will disappear after them.

They must have landed, for all is quiet again until suddenly a lone bird flickers past without warning. I hazard a quick barrel in his general



PICTURE: STEVE073/GETTY

Another fine drake drops into the barley stubble



Exactly what makes duck choose one feeding ground over another closer to home is anyone's guess!

PICTURE: DMBAKER/GETTY

direction but am far too slow. My shot does, however, serve to flush the birds that have landed nearby, ones who kindly fly past within feet of where I sit.

Having been in this situation on many an occasion, I have quickly reloaded in the event such an opportunity may present itself. This time I am ready, and manage two birds with my first barrel and another with my second.

Toffee, who had disappeared suddenly, returns with a fine drake in his mouth, one that is barely wing-tipped, which puzzles me slightly. I send him off again, and before long I have four fine drakes lying by my side. If anything, it shows the importance of having a dog on occasions such as this, for I was sure I had missed the first bird. Toffee, more through sheer excitement than good judgment, had followed him for probably a couple of hundred yards before he glided down.

There are ducks in the air everywhere now, all trying to descend and feed greedily before returning once again to the safety of their watery sanctuary. I do manage another single before the gathering light starts to betray my presence. I quickly dash over to a nearby hedge, but not before putting out a few decoys.

Battalion after battalion come to dine, but are all too far out of range. My decoys appear to be serving little purpose as these newcomers are drawn to the moving masses way out in front. Years ago, I would have fired a barrel in the hope that they might flush over me and offer a shot or two. But nowadays, even though I may be older and far from wiser, I also realise that by leaving the main bunch to feed in peace another outing may be in the offing.

Do you have a shooting story to share with us? Head to page 30 for details of how to get in touch!

Seven teal drop in to feed on the stubbles – an unusual event so early in the year



PICTURE: RCKELLER/GETTY

I sneak out to retrieve my decoys before bidding a hasty retreat. Just as I am leaving, seven teal rush past before settling amongst their cousins. It's highly unusual to see teal feeding in stubbles so early in the year in this locality, so I can only assume that they are some locally reared birds.

With five fat mallard bouncing from my shoulders, we make our way back to our vehicle which glistens in the distance. Once again we have to do a slight detour as Mr. Angus tracks our every move with a vigilance that is slightly unnerving.

Back up on the road, we encounter two lads trying to change their tyre with little success and I retrieve my wheel brace from my boot to lend a hand. One of them tells me that his dad loves duck so I give him a brace. Eventually and after much swearing, we manage to prise a stubborn tyre from its axle and send the lads on their way.

Back home some time later, I reflect on a lovely morning on those golden stubbles and indeed my good deeds for the day. The only downside is that I now have to go to work. But I am happy in the knowledge that some days from now, I will return to once again pit my wits against the flighting masses. ■

Sporting Gundog

with Howard Kirby
Gundog Trainer

The essential guide to owning and working a gundog

SPECIAL GUNDOG SECTION
EVERY MONTH IN SPORTING SHOOTER

INSIDE THIS MONTH...

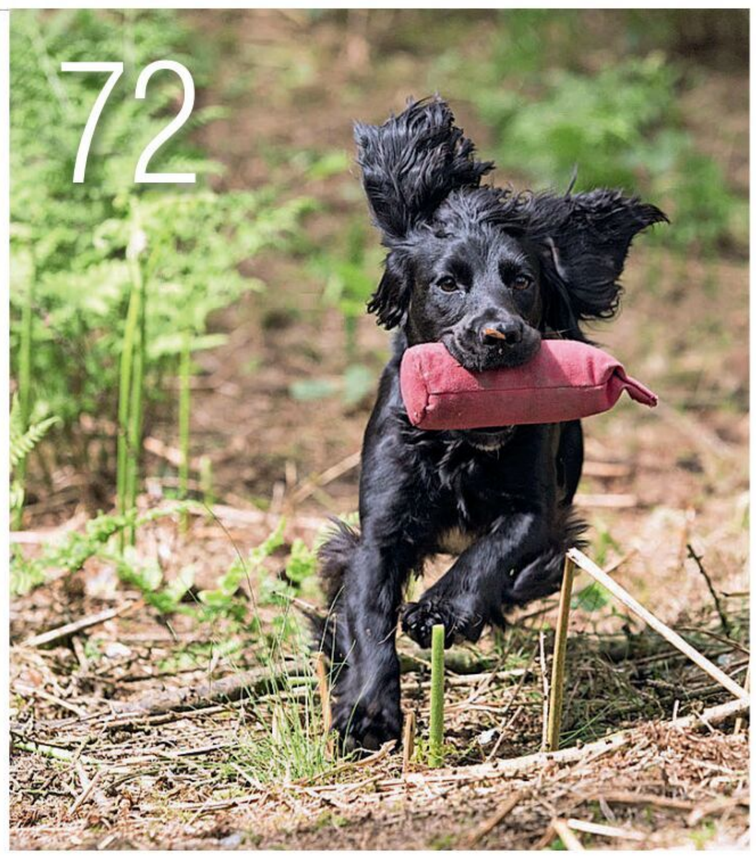
71 **Gundog Vet**
How to best manage your dog's work when they enter their twilight years.

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The art of introducing and using dummies when dogs are puppies, through adolescence, and into adulthood.

76 **Gundog Focus**
Ryan Kay outlines three different approaches he is using on three different dogs.

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When Lez is called into hospital, Emrys continues his training at a trusted kennel.

82 **Ask the Experts**
Leaving the garden, pain meds causing stomach upsets, and how to deal with a 'quarrelsome' lurcher.









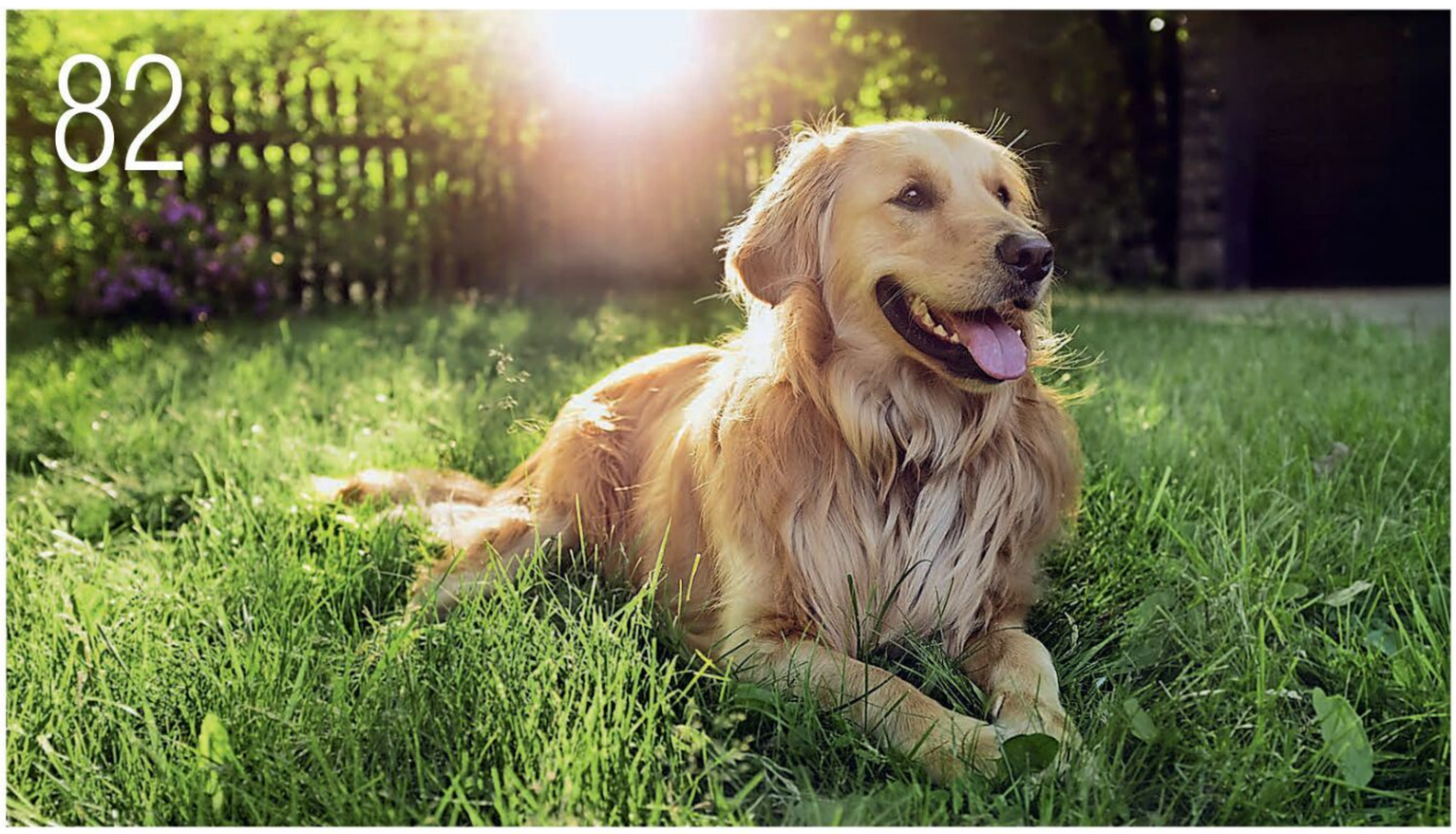


HOWARD'S TIP OF THE MONTH: *Timely advice*

Keep training sessions short and sweet. Always leave them wanting more!



PICTURE: CHRIS BLOOD / ISTOCK





Vicky is a keen shooter and qualified vet

Vicky runs first aid courses for groups. Email vicky@holisticvetsussex.co.uk for further details.

Got a dog health problem?

Email questions to news@sportingshooter.co.uk or submit questions on our website: www.sportingshooter.co.uk/ask-the-experts

Working an older dog

Getting old is something that comes to us all, gundogs included, but how old is 'too old'? Vicky Payne runs through some things to consider ahead of the coming game season

There are a lot of question marks over the forthcoming shooting season as I write this article. One of my shoots has folded, while another may not have sufficient birds until November, if at all, due to the bird flu situation. I have four dogs raring to go and a youngster who needs introducing to the field, but my biggest fear is that my top dog may be missing her last shooting season. Rumer, my Open Field Trial award-winning springer is 11, and though she is still on top form right now, I know she can't work forever.

How old is old? For most of our gundog breeds we start to consider them 'senior' at eight years old. This doesn't mean they are ancient and frail, but it does mean we would expect to see signs of ageing. Modern veterinary medicine, good diets, and a softer lifestyle, mean that many dogs are now living well past 12 years old so they spend quite a long time in the 'senior' category!

There is no hard and fast rule about when your gundog should retire from the field, and it will be an individual decision based on your dog's health and the work they are expected to do. A gamekeeper's dog who needs to dog-in daily and pick-up several times a week may need a retirement home much earlier than a dog that does light picking-up once a week, or where the shoot day allows them to come out for a few gentle drives.

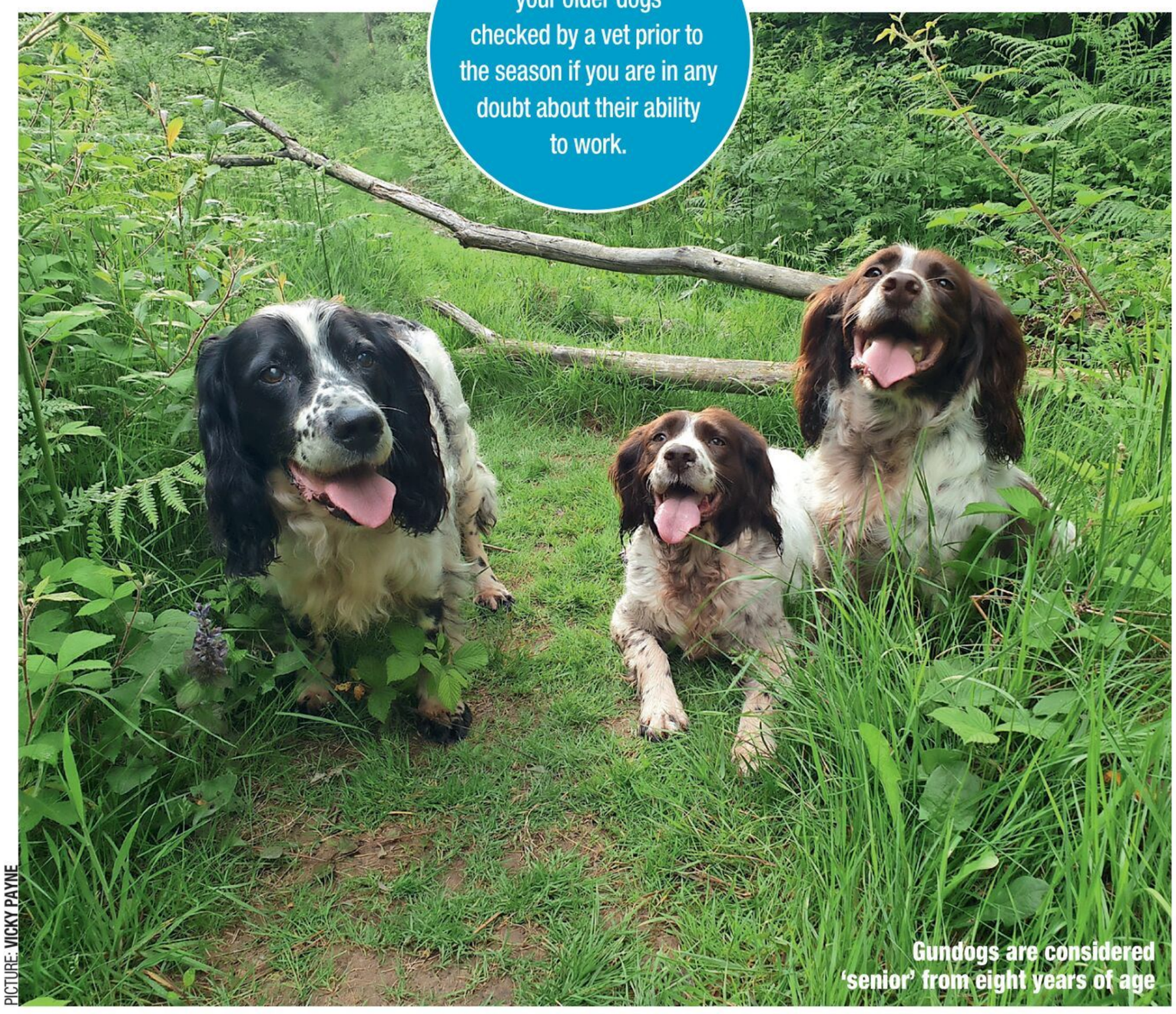
Before the season is the best time to give your senior dog a once-over to ensure they are fit to work. If their annual vaccination falls in the later summer, ask your vet to give them a thorough check.

Common issues for senior gundogs

EYES: Eyesight can diminish with age. A clouding of the lens called nuclear sclerosis is very common but often has minimal effect on vision. Cataracts are much whiter, and if they appear rapidly can indicate diabetes. Although marking ability may be reduced, dogs with sight loss will still find a lot of birds with their noses.

HEARING: I have retired two of my dogs due to hearing loss. Although both could still hear in the open, they struggled in woodland and couldn't orient themselves to my whistle especially if there was other whistling and gunshot. Both continued to dog-in where there was less to distract them. There are no treatments for age-related hearing loss, but dogs will learn to follow hand signals.

Be sure to have your older dogs checked by a vet prior to the season if you are in any doubt about their ability to work.



PICTURE: VICKY PAYNE

Gundogs are considered 'senior' from eight years of age

JOINT AND MUSCLE PAIN: Osteoarthritis becomes more common as dogs (and people) age. Not all dogs will be obviously lame, so look for subtle signs of reduced mobility such as difficulty jumping and climbing, a slower pace, stiffness on getting up, loss of muscle mass, behaviour changes, and licking. There are many medications, supplements, and complementary therapies that can keep ageing dogs comfortable so seek veterinary advice sooner rather than later and don't just accept 'slowing down' as normal.

NAILS: Check the nails regularly as senior dogs often have uneven nail wear. Long or twisted nails can be uncomfortable, and may cause lameness.

DENTAL ISSUES: Older dogs can suffer with dental abscesses, tartar, and gum recession and may have problems with teeth that were damaged earlier in life. Although an anaesthetic can be a daunting prospect in a senior dog, if we expect them to retrieve, they need a pain-free mouth. Pre-anaesthetic blood tests can alert your vet to any kidney or liver issue which would make an anaesthetic less safe.

DIET: Although it seems logical to switch your senior gundog to one of the many senior foods available, these are not always suitable for an older dog that is still working. Most senior foods have lower calories for dogs living a more sedentary life. If your dog is still active and has no kidney or liver problems, an adult or working food may remain the most suitable. Senior foods may have added joint support, but you can add a supplement instead.

Generally speaking...

Senior dogs deserve a little more TLC on a shoot day. A gentle walk before the shoot will help your dog warm up and reduce the risk of muscle injury. Choose days that are within your dog's capabilities, and put your dog away if they are starting to tire.

Avoid sending older dogs over obstacles including mud, jumps, and ditches that they may struggle with. Senior spaniels might need persuading to hunt the lighter cover and not to throw themselves into thick bramble. Take a coat for between drives, and another one to put on at the end of the day.

I think there is something very special about sharing a shoot day with a senior dog, and I am looking forward to many more days with my oldies!



Howard Kirby runs Lains Shooting School and Mullenscote Gundogs in Hampshire

Training with dummies

No gundog trainer is ever very far away from a trusty dummy, but are you using the correct dummy at the correct time? Howard Kirby shares some tips on navigating this training tool

With the ever-increasing enthusiasm for enjoying and training gundogs, our fantastic sport has responded in many ways. Some of the sports entrepreneurs have 'grabbed the dummy by the toggle' and designed and produced a massive range of gundog training aids and dummies. In shop or online, take a look at the display. You'll find every shape, colour and texture you could imagine, and I'm sure there's more to come. With that in mind, in this month's issue I want to ask the question: exactly which gundog dummy should I use and when?

General guidelines

The sport hinges around the good old 1lb canvas dummy. Made from a canvas-type material, approximately 10" in length, and the same in circumference, filled with sand or sawdust and one pound in weight. If you go to a working test or most gundog competitions, your dog will be expected to be enthusiastic and experienced enough to deal with this iconic tool.

If we take a quick overview of the retrieving journey our young gundog will be expected to travel, we can then start to plan a way forward.

Retriever training starts with a tiny puppy and finishes with a fully trained dog that is capable of gently lifting, carrying, swimming and jumping with game in its mouth that might be as big as a hare or a goose. All without damaging its prize.

So, we are going to need some small, lightweight and exciting dummies for a young puppy. A slow and gentle transition in size, shape and weight, will lead us to a 12-month-old dog that can manage the one pounder. From here, we will need to assist the youngster to manage fur and feather, rabbit and pheasant-skinned dummies.

Once the intermediate dog is happily managing these, it's time to move to cold game. A well-delivered training period on cold game should see us moving smoothly into freshly-shot birds and rabbits.

Before we go any further, I know that some of you can, and do, skip some if not most of these stages. But this is a belt and braces article, and we are doing everything possible to avoid problems.

Howard is now offering online, tutor-led gundog training courses to suit a variety of levels of experience. Go to: mullenscotegundogs.co.uk for more info.



Graduate from using a canvas dummy to using one with wings or a skin, slowly creeping towards using cold game...

PICTURES: REBECCA GREEN

Puppy dummies

With a young puppy, we are aiming to get it to go straight out and back. Small puppy dummies, mini paint rollers, a small ball or a rolled-up glove, all of which are soft, lightweight, and gentle on the pup's teeth. They're going through teething at some point, and a painful retrieve might put them off. Most will choose to toddle back to you with whatever you throw. Make the dummy too desirable, and the pup might not want to share it with you. Possession creeps in and it quickly goes south.

During this early stage of development, it's the act of 'out and back' that is important. Target, clicker, or just plain old sitting on the floor and encouraging onto your lap might be techniques you'll use to ensure that 'out and back' is established from the outset.

Sometimes, retrieving and possession issues stem from the dummy being just far too exciting. Flappy or furry bits can take an otherwise compliant pup to the edge, so ensuring you choose the correct dummy is essential. With a puppy that's showing a lack of enthusiasm, a rolling, furry rabbit ball can ignite their inner predator. As with all of my articles, I'm encouraging you to understand that no one size fits all. A dummy that usually works really nicely for youngsters is one that is bone-shaped with a small removable rabbit skin jacket on it. To be honest, it looks a bit 'cutesy' but the shape

PICTURE: RYAN KAY



CONSULT HOWARD ABOUT GUNDOG TRAINING
TELEPHONE 01264 889467
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OR VISIT www.mullenscote.co.uk



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encourages the pup to lift the dummy from its middle. This can help instill an understanding of balance, and the removable rabbit skin gives you the option to 'sex it up a bit'.

If a pup is proving to be really problematic, delay retrieving and focus on recall. Only when recall is thoroughly conditioned and obediently carried out should you return to the retrieve. It is not uncommon for beginners to misunderstand the 'don't do any retrieving with that puppy' advice. Friends and family hurling tennis balls, toys, and the antics of small children is probably why you have retrieving problems. This stuff will need to stop whilst you re-group and rebuild a nice, 'come, sit, look at me', kind of relationship.

Intermediate training

Assuming all that we've discussed earlier has gone to plan, you can now have a play with size, shape and weight. Toggles and rope throwing strings can be discovered at any point in the dog's learning program. Some, having discovered these, will delight in repeatedly grabbing the toggle and shaking it around their heads. This can be funny and delightful to watch. However, this 'kill behaviour' can lead to issues with game, so remove the toggles and strings. Having to do this is a nuisance because if, like me, you are lazy, and it means you'll now have to walk a lot further to place your dummies.

'A small hen grouse or early partridge can be perfect cold game. Place them inside a sock at first to halve the massive assault on the senses'

A really keen 'shaker' will now source the small sewn tab on the end of the dummy. To prevent this, use tape to secure both ends. This serves to hide the tab and by taping up both ends, it will sometimes encourage a dog to avoid the tape, and instead lift the dummy from the nice, grippy canvas bit in the middle.

There are a multitude of choices at this level, and it may well be time to introduce flappy bits. Soft shelled, rubber and canvas dummies that are designed with wings, neck and tail will all help a well-schooled dog to manage these inconveniences and learn to pick up a bird by its body. It's only when you observe a young dog trying to do this for the first time that you appreciate how difficult it can be for some.

If your dog is an inconsistent or sloppy retriever, then introducing all the wobbly bits might well bring trouble. Ensure you teach each stage thoroughly and maintain the understanding and obedience around the command 'Fetch' or 'Back'. This must mean, straight out and back with no messing around. Trust me, if you have any deviation from this, it's going to come back and bite you at the next stage.

Cold game

We can use cold game as we near the pinnacle of our retrieving journey. Keeping a store of game in your freezer for a young dog is really helpful. This will ensure you have *what* you need *when* you need it. Failing that, young rabbits are usually available. From the middle of August, there will be grouse, then in September partridge can be acquired. A small hen grouse or early-September partridge can be perfect for the first retrieves. Place them inside a sock the first few times. This halves the massive assault on your dog's senses and will help to prevent problems. Shy or excessively enthusiastic retrievers are the ones that might need help, both presenting different issues.

Once the retrieve is going well, I like to cut a slit in the sock and bring one wing to the outside. Use elastic bands to pin the wing tightly to the body of the dummy. We're almost there!

Now the dog is happy to retrieve this small bird without any fuss, we can progress to larger birds. Stay with cold game for now: a hen pheasant, then a smallish cock bird. Avoid wood pigeons with a fussy dog as the feathers clog their mouths and some really don't like it. With each new encounter, expect a degree of uncertainty. However, don't allow the dog time to learn to lick or pull feathers. Keep things fluid. Remember the bird in a sock trick usually overcomes any fear or over exuberance.

Once again, don't try to rush this process. If your dog is not picking its cold game cleanly and bringing it straight to hand, it would be foolish to move on to freshly-shot birds or rabbits. There are the odd exceptions here.

The environment you choose, the dummy you select, and importantly, the training you've done prior to any retrieve will determine the outcome. Fetch means Fetch. Set sessions up so that the dog can't fail. Perfect practice makes perfect. Accidentally allowing your dog to do things badly will condition it to do things badly. ■



Bobby dummies are useful for water work



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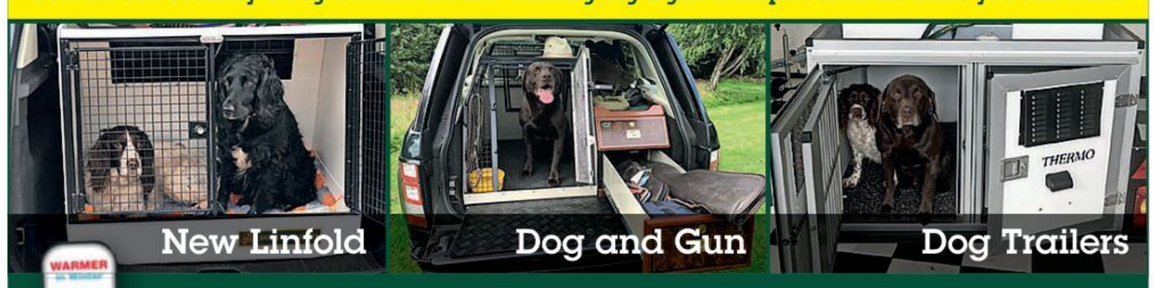
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Ryan Kay is a keen trialler and trainer and is a Kennel Club Accredited Instructor for Working Gundogs. He runs FarlaVale Gundogs in North Yorkshire. www.farlavale.co.uk

The problem at hand

Resisting the urge to push your gundog on instead of working on basic issues is so important. Here, Ryan Kay shares the very different challenges that three of his young dogs are facing

We currently have three youngsters here at Farlavale, all at different stages of their training, and each throwing up differing challenges. Problem solving is probably the bit I like the most about my job. It's the part that quite excites me. Or should I say, the end result after the problem has been fixed, is my favourite part. I suppose it's more to do with the journey along that fixing process which is a big element of the enjoyment, because to see a dog respond to something I've invented or developed is something I find hugely rewarding.

I love it when a dog arrives with a new issue or problem that I've never seen before. If the customer gets their dog out of the car and it's walking backwards whilst doing handstands and I have to figure out how to make it go forwards on all fours, then let's get started!

Pip

Pip is a very recent addition to our team, and at nine months old she's showing a lot of promise. Her original owner came for a lesson with Pip and her litter mate when the black Labs were just six months old. The lady had bred them herself and kept the duo back from the litter, but was undecided whether to keep them both or just one. Both pups really appealed to me as there was something about their disposition that I found very pleasing, prompting me to contact the lady soon after our first lesson stating that if she did decide to sell one, then we would potentially be interested. Three months later, we received an email from said lady and the rest is history.

For such a young age, Pip has progressed well, and her previous owner had most definitely put some hard work in. She's even progressed to some short blind retrieves. But before venturing any further with more advanced training, my initial assessment was to see where her basics are. Her heel needed a little polishing and her recall needed brushing up, but things like her delivery and her sit were very good.

However, there was a little undesirable habit that had just started to develop, highlighted by the lady when I went to collect her. A problem, but nothing that couldn't be sorted nor that would put me off purchasing her. She'd essentially started to stand over the dummy with some hesitancy before picking it up – occasionally lifting her head and looking back at me after a little sniff at it.

Now, I know how to sort this. But to do so efficiently needs self-discipline, because when something that is happening within a particular exercise, in this case during a retrieve, the important thing is to stop doing the main exercise and just concentrate on the problem until it's rectified. So, although I'd like to start doing more advanced retrieving with her, if I conveniently ignore the bit in the middle (in this instance her collection), and push forward with advancing retrieves, I'll be creating a bad habit with that will ultimately become more and more ingrained. This 'turning a blind-eye' approach is commonly played out by handlers in various training exercises, especially with the different elements that are involved within retrieving.

Head to www.sportingshooter.co.uk and explore the gundog section for more great articles.



Pip has progressed well, but Ryan is focusing on her collection to ensure the retrieve is successful from start to finish

PICTURES: **RYAN KAY**



Alison works with Pip, keeping her close and focused on her trainer



Biscuit is both brilliant and gung-ho – in other words, a bit of a handful at present!

To fix this, we need to have a different approach and not simply ignore the problem just because she picks it eventually. It's all too easy to have that 'she'll get there' attitude, hoping that by continuing with more lengthy and complex retrieves, it'll iron itself out and simply improve. It more than likely won't! It is much better to help her get there by stopping the main retrieves and focusing on the issue.

Firstly, we need to shorten things up a little. By this, I mean I need to do close work where my voice and encouragement will be more apparent. A dummy thrown just three or four yards away followed by some encouragement with real urgency and excitability from me will do the trick. The instant she arrives at the dummy, the encouragement starts, maybe even an urgent recall command with the whistle, starts to get her picking it swiftly and in her stride. For a new, more desirable habit to form quickly, the old undesirable one needs to never happen during the process. Or at least happen at little as possible. Basically, if a good amount of time has passed without the undesirable behaviour and all that's been inputted has been encouraging and desirable, then we're on our way to success.

Biscuit!

Biscuit could be described as both brilliant and stupid. To be fair, stupid is a bit harsh, perhaps 'youthful and gung-ho' would be a better description. I liken him to my daughter Lily, a talented and exceptionally clever young lady who starts her journey into veterinary medicine come September, yet on occasion will make putting a pizza in the oven look as difficult as flying a helicopter blindfolded!

At 18 months, Biscuit is our up-and-coming stud golden cocker. A powerful, athletic, talented and good looking idiot! Bred by ourselves here at Farlavale, he's had the same training and introductions as all the other dogs, yet as a personality he's developed a little differently. And of course, as they're all unique individuals, their development stages will never be linear or parallel to one another. We ourselves expect the usual alterations and adjustments for each young dog as we bring them on through the training process, but Biscuit's progress has been a little more fragmented and stilted than most. He's so confident and cocksure that you'd expect him to struggle to walk past a mirror without stopping to admire himself! That swagger and confidence comes across with a real zest for life and although a hooligan at times, it's a personality that I absolutely love to work with.

Some time back, I exposed Biscuit to rabbit scent, quickly followed by actual rabbits. As a lover of hunting dogs, revealing scent to a spaniel for the first time is always the most exciting stage for me in a spaniel's training. We usually expose a spaniel to scent for the first time anywhere between six months and a year old, governed by how soon they've managed to grasp the Stop whistle and hunting aid whistle, i.e the steering.

Some, when shown a seat where a rabbit was crouched, will instantly brighten up and turn themselves inside out whilst hunting the immediate area, translating the scent with their nose still on the ground. This igniting of the DNA doesn't always happen first time for every dog, and in fact for most youngsters it takes quite a bit more uncovering. But to those that get it first time, it's an awesome sight!

Biscuit was a first timer. The talent was evident from the word go and so much so that I soon decided to then omit scent work from his training altogether. You see, because his focus and desire to hunt was so driven, his connection to me whilst hunting on scent was non-existent. This indicated that his head was simply not yet ready to deal with two things at once – that is, enjoying hunting on scent, yet staying linked with whoever is actually working him. »

That was some time ago, and more recently he's been getting his reveals again with a great deal more success as far as handler/dog connection goes. Basically, he just needed to grow up!

Cloudy

At five months old, little Cloudy is a black cocker pup we kept back from a litter we bred earlier in the year. Cloudy's challenge is a similar story to Pip's, an issue with an element of the retrieve. Her training has been quite straightforward, and essentially it remains just that – easy and uncomplicated. She's been more of a project for Alison than myself, as my efforts have been concentrated on the more unruly types, like Biscuit!

Alison has done a great job with Cloudy and has kept her training consistent but varied, built around fun and measured exposure to different places and early socialising. One area that she's managed really well is the encouragement for Cloudy to not drop her retrieving item upon returning with it. As a dog that responds readily to human affection, it's an easy thing to use as a reward, given that Cloudy will happily hold on to the dummy in return for some hands-on love. This has enabled Alison to get more retrieving lessons under her belt than we would perhaps usually expect for a pup of Cloudy's age, meaning that she started to progress onto slightly more complicated retrieves. However, as a result of this desire to hold onto the dummy, Cloudy has now developed a little resource guarding of the object. Now, whenever I hear the term 'resource guarding' being used, it's often described purely as a bad thing that may result in growling or even a bite! However, there are most definitely different levels of resource guarding, and it's certainly an issue which can be inadvertently encouraged, especially with cockers.

At the lowest end of the scale, your dog might initially run past you with a retrieving item, or do a little circle in front of you, or simply turn away their head whilst still looking happy and wagging their tail, before eventually giving up the item. At the other end of the scale might be a full-on bite if you were to take something high-value from them, like a bone.

> 'I love it when a dog arrives with a problem I've never seen before – to see a dog respond is something I find hugely rewarding'

The first example I've given is a very common one that I see in many dogs which come to us for training; it's also a behaviour which Cloudy has just developed. Nevertheless, it's easily rectified. Again, like the example with Pip, the fix is about concentrating solely on the issue – the delivery – until resolved, before continuing with retrieving in earnest. To break this down, we know that Cloudy runs out to get a retrieve, and we know she picks it cleanly, but her delivery needs work. If Alison was to carry on pushing forward with new and exciting retrieving scenarios, but think, 'oh I'll deal with the delivery at some point, it'll slowly get better I'm sure', the pup would be learning new retrieves but she'd more than likely cement her poor delivery and it'd become ingrained behaviour, especially as this would have been learnt in one of the most formative learning periods.

TOP TIP

As soon as you notice an undesirable behaviour creeping in, stop, and change what you do so it doesn't become a habit.

The answer is to create a new norm for Cloudy by, in the first instance, not allowing her to run past or walk around the back of Alison when returning with the item. In the short term, having her on the lead for close retrieves so that we can gently stop her trying to run past is going to help her understanding and help to correct the undesirable behaviour. We can also see if she's happy to take the dummy in her mouth when offered, rather than a little three-yard throw.

With either of these scenarios, with her holding the dummy, we can slowly and gently physically shape her into what I would call a 'default position' (sat facing in front of the handler), before praising calmly with hands and voice, then taking the item.

The next step is drop the lead (following a short throw) and to keep our hands off her (so withholding the physical reward) whilst being knelt down and leaning back, to invite her into our space with the dummy. This can be incentivised by those hands-on again, in this instance reaching past her head and stroking her body and back legs for physical praise. There are other methods, but the point is to stop all other retrieving until this is fixed. Then it's time to move on again. At least until the next issue pops up! ■



Cloudy has quickly got the hang of not dropping the retrieve – but Alison does need to work on her delivery

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You can follow Emrys's journey on his own Facebook page here: www.facebook.com/LifeandTimesofEmrys

Off to the kennels

Having needed to go into hospital for surgery, Lez Graham has had to send the dogs off for boarding this month – but Sealpin Gundogs have ensured their training hasn't had to go on ice

This month blindsided us a bit it must be said. Not long before we went into lockdown for the second time, I saw a surgeon in relation to some arthritis in my left thumb. Out of the blue I was phoned by the orthopaedics department at my local hospital to say they had two dates, one in 10 days and one in 11 days and if I didn't take either then the wait will be another two or three years.

That's those plans scuppered then!

To say I was thrown was an understatement. My plan for the early part of the summer was to help out at a couple of working tests, throwing dummies and whatever else was needed to help on the day, and then, towards the end of the summer, enter a special puppy or novice test with Emrys.

I'd been warned by the surgeon previously that I was in for six weeks of intense pain due to the complexity of the operation, so I had to decide what to do with the dogs. Although I've used kennels when we've been away without the dogs, they've always been purely boarding kennels where the dogs are safe and then allowed a hoon around with each other in a secure field. In all the years that I've had dogs, no-one, not even my husband who occasionally walks the boys, have trained them.

In the end, we decided that the dogs should go for a few weeks to get me through the worst of the post-op pain. Because it was going to be almost a month in kennels, I didn't want Emrys's training to go downhill as he was coming on so nicely. The thought of him not doing much of anything and not having mental stimulation didn't sit well with me, so I contacted Joe of Sealpin Gundogs who I've been stretching Emrys's training with (see last month's diary entry), to see if he was able to take the boys in for boarding and a bit of training despite the short notice.

Having only a week or so before handing over the boys really helped to focus the mind and made me observe the dogs to see what I wanted to focus on. I'm so happy with the way Emrys's training has been going that there was nothing in particular that I wanted to work on with him, so instead I enjoyed our pack walks and did a bit of steadiness around recall with them, leaving the dogs in a sit and recalling them one at a time – always a bit of a challenge, especially when the youngest is made to wait until last.

Nine days later and we headed across to the Scottish Borders with the three dogs in the car.



Fun training in the woods – it's never just a dog walk!

PICTURES: LEZ GRAHAM

LEZ'S TOP TIP

Regardless of whether you are sending your dog to a regular boarding kennel or away for training, always give a list of your commands with your dog – that way, their carers can provide consistency when handling them and not muddy the water.



Emrys is focused on Joe – he knows where the dummies are coming from



Individual recall: first Dante, then Spud, and finally Emrys

ABOUT LEZ GRAHAM

Lez Graham is author of The Pet Gundog series and is a canine behaviourist and gundog trainer. Training gundog trainers via the Accredited Pet Gundog Instructor programme, which is now in its sixth year, Lez also supports and mentors owners in The Pet Gundog Club.

The Pet Gundog series is available via amazon.co.uk for £19.99

Contact her via lez@thepetgundog.co.uk or visit www.thepetgundog.co.uk



We'd decided to keep Dante at home with us as he's so laid back, and arranged that Joe would have Spud and Emrys in for the duration with the emphasis on maintaining Emrys's training rather than starting anything new with him. I also thought it would be really good for the two to bond properly without Dante being around as Spud is quite possessive over Dante and at times it can cause conflict.

I have to admit being very nervous when I dropped them off at Sealpin, although Joe was very reassuring.

Three and half weeks felt like such a long time to hand the dogs over for, but we did a little bit of training with them before settling them in the kennel and heading home to a much quieter house.

A word or two from Joe

"It was a real pleasure to have Spud and Emrys in for a short spell of residential training for Lez," Joe says. "Usually dogs arrive for training with a list of bad habits to correct so it was lovely to have the boys in without any such issues and meant that I could have lots of fun training them around the farm here at home.

"They enjoyed some swimming, retrieving exercises through the woods and Spud, in particular, loved quartering along the grass verges of the fields in search of a flush on a hare.

"They are a credit to Lez and it was particularly nice to work with dogs with such a nice presentation and delivery of their retrieves, which is usually an area that would require a lot of my time when training someone else's dogs." ■

Missed the start of Emrys's diary? Head to magsdirect.co.uk for previous issues of Sporting Shooter.



Joe putting Emrys through his paces

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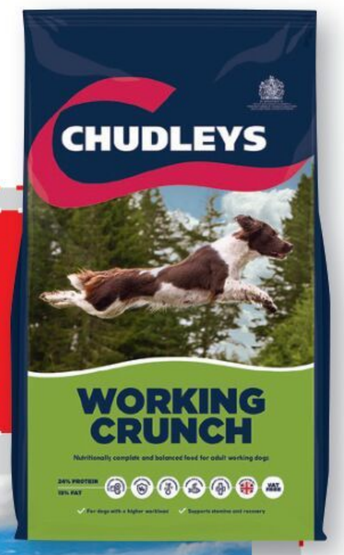
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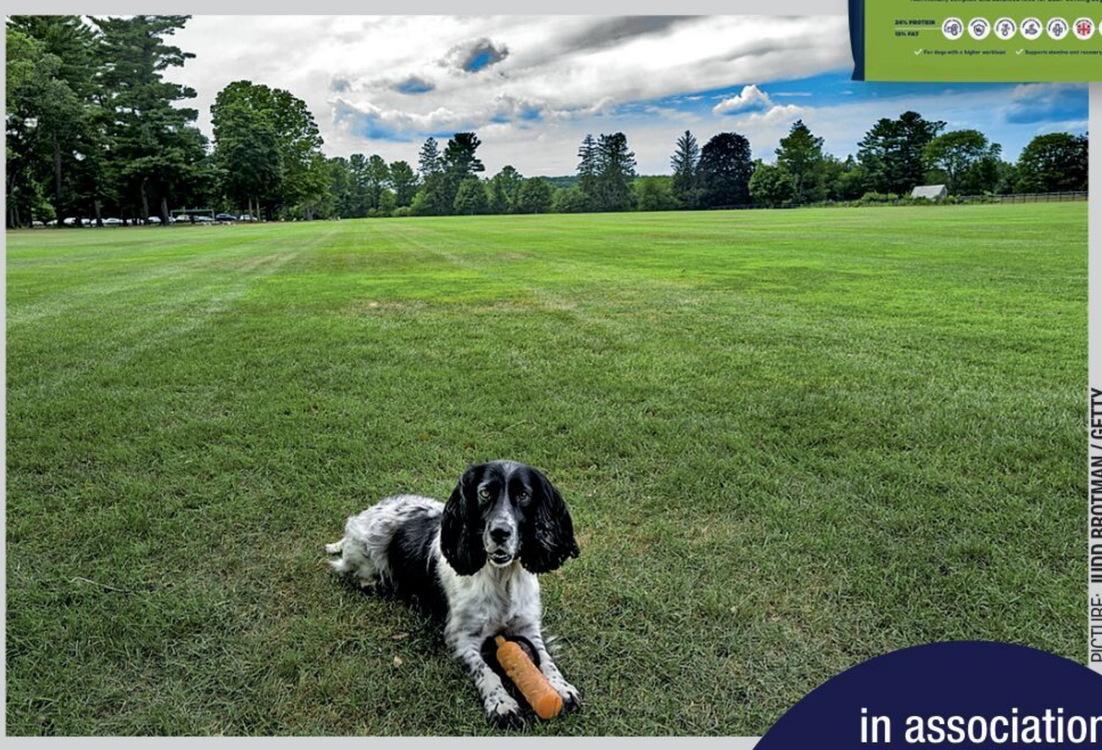


Leaving the garden

Q I'm training a six-month-old working cocker. I'm getting great results when I'm training in the garden but as soon as I go anywhere else, everything falls apart. Any suggestions?

A HOWARD KIRBY replies: OK, firstly this is to be expected. Any new environment is going to be exciting for the dog and it's more likely that training sessions will need more input than required at home. Before moving from your garden, it's important that the work you are doing has developed to a high standard. The level of focus and concentration that the pup offers you should be really high. Target training is helpful here, as I would argue that it will assist with any initial training, and has the added the benefit that, once properly established, you can take your target of choice to any new environment.

Think about that transition. Moving from a benign garden straight into a pheasant rearing field is likely to be far too large a step. Choose somewhere quiet without other dogs or people. Plan to train with lower expectations. Shorten your time frames and distances.



PICTURE: JUDD BROTMAN / GETTY

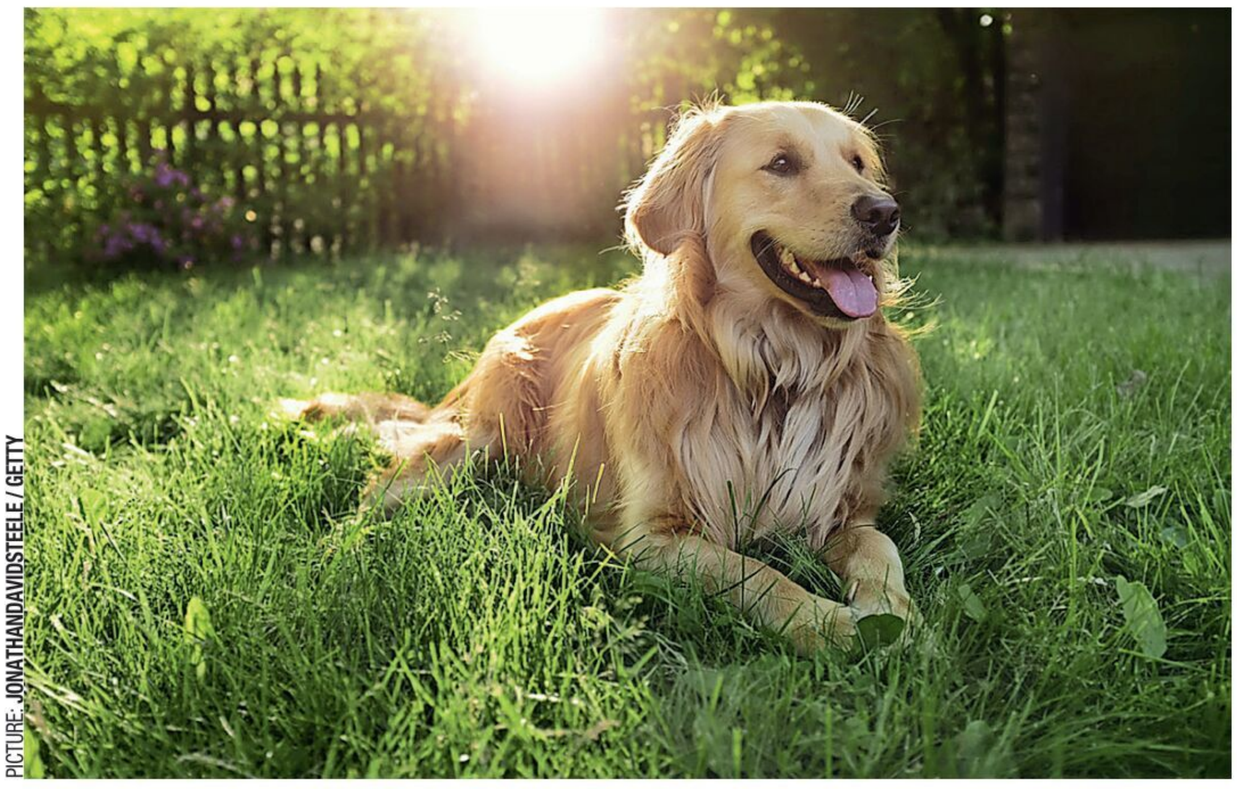
Provided you ensure you've schooled the puppy to really want to be with you, you should be able to gently develop the levels of distraction.

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Pain meds causing upset stomach

Q I have a 10-year-old golden retriever that I have had to retire from most picking-up work due to arthritis. He still enjoys a quiet day in the pigeon hide with me, but is sore for a few days afterwards. My vet prescribed some painkillers but they didn't agree with his stomach and caused vomiting so we stopped giving them. Is there anything else I could try?

A VICKY PAYNE replies: The good news is that there are a whole range of medications which could make your dog more comfortable! Traditional non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs can irritate the stomach, but more modern ones are better tolerated. There is a novel drug which targets the binding site of just one pain-causing molecule making it very safe to use, and there are injections which can modify the cartilage and joint fluid, or which use monoclonal antibodies to target pain with minimal side-effects. I highly recommend a consultation with a vet who is interested in pain management to help you choose the best medication for your dog.



PICTURE: JONATHANDAVIDSTEELE / GETTY

A 'quarrelsome' lurcher

Q My 9-year old lurcher has started to growl at other dogs when they approach him. He's never been quarrelsome before.

A JACKIE DRAKEFORD replies: Dogs are very sensitive to weakness in other dogs, and it might be that your lurcher is warning them off because he is feeling vulnerable due to illness or injury, which some other dogs will try to exploit. Sadly, it is at his time of life that old 'war wounds' accumulate to the extent of creating low-level pain that has now become a daily experience. There are plenty of nutritional supplements that are a godsend for ageing dogs, but first he needs a thorough vet check to find any problems and then you and your vet can work together to find the best treatment for his particular case. Older male dogs can suffer prostate problems too, which are very painful but easily treated. Once he is more comfortable in himself, he should not need to be so protective.



PICTURE: PHONETOGROPHY / GETTY

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Cartridges, ammunition, optics, all associated accessories, clothing & footwear.
Tel. **01723 865039**
www.**daveyandson**.co.uk
WYKEHAM, SCARBOROUGH, YORKSHIRE, YO13 9QP



Around the Grounds

CLAY SHOOTING CLUBS AROUND THE UK

1

The Star Gun Club

A premier members club now open to non-members, within easy reach of South West London and surrounding Counties. English Sporting every 2nd & 4th Sunday. 09:00 - 12:30. Parking, Catering and Toilets. Close to Leatherhead Junction M25.

Tel: 020 8979 2687 or 07836 274580
www.stargunclub.org

2

Auchterhouse Country Sports

Scotland's Favourite Shooting Ground 2020 and voted 1st in the UK and Scotland. Skeet, Olympic Skeet, DTL, ABT, Olympic Trap, Sporting High Tower. Open Wednesday - Saturday shop & café

Tel: 01382 320 476
www.auchterhousecountrysports.co.uk

3

Spitfire Shoot

Our English Sporting layout is open Wednesday through to Saturday from 9am, for practice, tuition, groups, stag & hen do's. Pre-booking recommended.

Tel: 01264 810 312
www.spitfireshoot.co.uk

7

Kibworth Shooting Ground

Whether you are a beginner looking to take your first steps and 'Have-a-go', a seasoned shooter looking for some practice or just for that something different for a special occasion.

Tel: 01162 796001
www.kibworthshootingground.co.uk

8

Eriswell Lodge

Eriswell Lodge Shooting Ground is set in the heart of Suffolk, offering high quality facilities and targets for its customers to enjoy!

Tel: 01638 534045
www.eriswell-lodge.com

9

Dovey Valley Shooting Ground

Situated high above the Dovey Valley in Central Wales, our 400 acre estate and wooded valleys provide the ideal setting for our exhilarating Simulated Game Days and Clay Ground. With up to 500 possible sporting stands, DTL and Skeet setups, there is enough to keep you entertained all weekend. Call us for info and bookings.

Tel: 01650 511252 www.doveyvalley.com
www.simulatedgame.co.uk

13

West Midlands Shooting Ground

Gun Room: Tues: 8.30am – 9.00pm. Wed–Sat: 8.30am–5.00pm. Shooting Ground: Tues: Apr–Sept 3.00pm– 9.00pm / Oct– Mar 10.00am–4.00pm. Wed–Sat: 9.00am–4.00pm. Tues is Open Practice for shotgun certificate holders. Wed–Sat all shooting is by appointment only.

Tel: 01939 200 644 | www.wmsg.co.uk

14

Sporting Clay Shooting in Surrey

With an impressive 76 Traps featured over 30 Stands along with a High Tower, Crane and 9 Grouse Butts, this is the ultimate Sporting ground for the novice or experienced shooter.

OPEN 7 DAYS A WEEK FOR LESSONS, INSTRUCTOR PRACTICE, CADDY & GROUP SHOOTS.

PRE BOOK IN ADVANCE.

WWW.BISLEYSHOOTING.COM
Tel: 01483 797017

15

North Devon Shooting Ground

Set in a beautiful valley, our sporting layout offers targets to suit all abilities. Located just 3 miles from the award winning Woolacombe Beach. Friendly and welcoming, we cater for stag, hen and corporate entertainment.

Tel: 01598 711967
www.northdevonshootingground.co.uk

18

Thimbleby Shooting Ground

Large variety of sporting stands (inc high tower) and popular sportrap. Open Tuesday – Sunday and Bank Holiday Mondays. Friendly ground set in beautiful surroundings. Lessons for all abilities and popular simulated game days.

Tel: 01609 883401
www.thimblebyshoot.com

19

Essex Shooting Ground

The biggest practice layout in Essex, 60 traps over 14 stands including 4 x 8 trap sporting stands. Skeet & DTL available to pre-book. Claymate solo delay on all layouts. No membership fees. See website for latest booking requirements.

Tel: 07768 742117
www.claypigeonshoot.co.uk

20

Lady's Wood Shooting School

Set in 55 acres of deciduous woodland, we offer clay and game shooting tuition to all levels, corporate events, simulated game days and pay and play. well stocked gun room.

Tel: 01454 294546
Email: shoot@ladyswood.co.uk
www.ladyswood.co.uk

23

Ian Coley Sporting

Award-winning Shooting Ground and Gun Shop. Pay & Play practice for licence holders and tuition for all levels of experience. Ideal venue for corporate hospitality.
Gun fitting a speciality.

Tel: 01242 870391
www.iancoley.co.uk

24

Beretta Shop-in-Shop
Clay Sporting Layout
Group & Corporate Shoots
Shooting Lessons
Guns wanted cash paid

OPEN: Tuesday to Saturday

Tel: 01603 860436
www.norfolkshooting.co.uk

25

Crabtree

spanning over 200 acres, we've been running the Crabtree Clay Shoot for over 20 years. We have over 60 automatic traps over 18 English Sporting stands, as well as undercover Compac and DTL/ABT ranges. We welcome shooters on Wednesdays and Saturdays to join us at the shoot!

07818 080841 www.crabtreeclayshoot.co.uk

To have your ground featured here, contact Sharon on **07501 226711** or e-mail: **sharon.simmill@archant.co.uk**

Find a ground near you online by visiting **www.sportingshooter.co.uk**



4

JJ's Clay Shooting Club

Opening times: Wednesday, Friday and Saturday 10:30am till 3:30pm l/e Sunday competition day 10am till 2:00 l/e Dartford in Kent (near blue water shopping centre). Lesson and corporate days.

Tel: 07771 507 851 www.jjscsc.co.uk

5

High Lodge

Open 6 days a week all year round & some Sundays, fully automatic clay traps, Instruction, Practice clays, All welcome.

Tel: +44 (0)1986 784 347
www.highlodge.co.uk

6

Westlands Country Park

Scotland's biggest and most current shooting ground, open 7 days a week.

Welcoming all parties, featuring 140ft high tower and much more. Call us today!

01461 800370
www.westlands.co.uk

10

Ashcombe Shooting Ground

Open for clay practice 5 days a week – please book through our website. Skeet and DTL, 25 Bird Compact Sporting, 100 Bird Sporting, ABT, Double Rise, Bolting Rabbit & 150ft High Tower. Advanced and novice tuition available by appointment. Wed to Sat: 10am - 5pm, Sun: 10am - 1pm.

Tel: 01626 8666766
www.ashcombeadventure.co.uk/clay-shooting-grounds

11

Chalky Hill Shooting Ground

We have two shooting grounds, shooting alternate Sundays through the year. Dates and prices can be found online. Or call Duncan.

Tel: 07909 786272
www.chalkyhill.co.uk

12

Hownhall Shooting

An award winning shooting school, nestled in woodland on the beautiful Cowdray Estate in West Sussex. We are a centre for excellence in shooting tuition, catering for the novice to the experienced gun.

Tel: 07867 422847
www.hownhallshooting.com

16

Polowood Shooting Ground

Saturdays for 50 bird sporting. Alternate Sundays 9:30 – 14:00 for Sportrap Shoots. Tuesdays from April to September 12:00 – 19:30 for Sportrap Shoots. Now open on Thursday for a 50 target sporting shoot 10.00 – 16:00. Corporate events available.

Tel: 07818 203 871
www.claypigeonshootingbrighton.co.uk

17

Anglesey Shooting School

Set within the beautiful Presaddfed Estate. We offer a wide variety of sporting clays, skeet & simulated game days, to suit all abilities.

Find us on Facebook.

Tel: 07891 669965
www.angleseyshootingschool.com

21

West Kent Shooting

Open Monday to Friday from 10am to 5pm. English Sporting, Skeet and 100ft 8 trap High Tower. Lessons and Corporate Events.

Tel: 01892 834 306
www.westkentshooting.co.uk

22

Willow Farm Shooting Ground

In the heart of the Kent countryside near Tenterden, open 6 days a week for Sporting, Skeet, Compact & DTL, Tue-Sat for practice/ lessons. Sporting Competition every Sunday.

Tel: 01233 758 703
www.willowfarmshootingground.co.uk

26

Orston Shooting Ground & Gun Shop

53 Acre Premier Plus Facility, Pay & Play Practice, 25+ Sporting Stands + ESK, DTL & STR, Professional tuition, Game Arena & High Towers for dedicated driven game practice/lessons, Gun Shop & Large Clubhouse, Corporate & Party Specialists. Open Monday-Saturday 9-5pm

01949 851181 www.orston.com

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Newdigate Shooting Ground

100 Birds Sporting. 50 Clay Sporting experience & Have-A-Go Stand. Felt Wads only. Cartridges available on site. Catering all day. Every other Saturday – see website for dates.

07943 952 009
newdigateshootingground.co.uk

CLAY GROUNDS

Find your local ground for practice, competition or instruction

LONDON & S.E.

BEDFORDSHIRE

SPORTING TARGETS
nr Riseley. 10 shooting ranges, three high towers, tuition, gun shop. Tel: (01234) 708893 www.sportingtargets.co.uk

BERKSHIRE

FOUR COUNTIES CTC
nr Newbury. Sporting, DTL, Fitasc, tuition. Tel: (01635) 201657 www.fourcountiesctc.co.uk

ROYAL BERKSHIRE SHOOTING SCHOOL
Pangbourne Tel: (07000) 410410 www.rbss.co.uk

BUCKINGHAMSHIRE

EJ CHURCHILL SHOOTING GRND
(West Wycombe SS), High Wycombe. Sporting, high tower, Skeet, DTL, tuition, gunshop. (01494) 883227 www.ejchurchill.com www.wwsg.org.uk

HORNET SHOOTING GROUND
nr Long Crendon. Sporting, Fitasc. Tel: (01494) 883715 www.adventure001.com/hornet

OXFORD GUN CO GUN CLUB
nr Oakley. Sporting, Skeet, have-a-go days, tuition, corporate. (01844) 238308

VALLEY VIEW INTERNATIONAL
Shooting Ground nr Amersham. Sporting, Skeet, tuition, corporate. Tel: 07860 575055

HAMPSHIRE

CAVENDISH SPORTING
nr Bentley Tuition. Tel: (01420) 588275 Durley Hall Farm Clay Shoot Fareham. (01489) 860292.

FAREHAM CLAY TARGET CLUB
Skeet, Sporting, ABT, tuition. (01329) 315185 www.farehamctc.org.uk

FROBURY FARM SPORTING CLUB
nr Newbury. Sporting, Skeet, tuition, gun shop. (01635) 297122 www.frobury.co.uk

LAINS SHOOTING SCHOOL
nr Andover. Skeet, practice, tuition. Tel: (01246) 889467 or 07768 632567 www.lainsshooting school.co.uk

THE SPITFIRE SHOOT
Houghton Down Farm, Stockbridge, SO20 6JR. Open Wed-Sat, 9-4.30. English Sporting Tel: 01264 810312 Email: info@spitfireshoot.co.uk www.spitfireshoot.co.uk

TEST VALLEY CLAY PIGEON CLUB
Cocksford Firs, Popham, Hants Sporting and Skeet. Every other Sunday. £35 a year membership. Tel: 01256 771055

THREE COUNTIES NR HOOK.
Sporting. Tuition. Contact Paul Beecher on 07739 556790; www.beechershooting.co.uk

WALLERS ASH GUN CLUB
Alresford Drove, WinchesterTel: 07710872875 email:travellingclays@btinternet.com Practice, tuition, sporting, all abilities catered for www.wallersash.co.uk

HERTFORDSHIRE

BROOMHILLS SHOOTING GROUND
Markyate. Tuition, gunshop. Tel: (01582) 842280 www.broomhills.co.uk

CODICOTE BOTTOM CLAY TARGET CLUB
Codicote Bottom Farm, Kimpton road, Codicote, Herts SG4 8SR. Sporting, DTL. Alternate Sundays 10-1. Tel: 07768 714774 or 01438 814749 www.codicote-bottom.org

CUPID GREEN SKEET & ABT CLUB
Hemel Hempstead, Skeet & ABT Every Weds & 1st & 3rd Sat of month. Felt/fibre wads only Tel: 01582 849382

LEA VALLEY SHOOTING ASSN
nr Hertford. Tuition, practice, have a go days. Tel: 08707 605057. www.lvsa.org.uk

NUTHAMPSTEAD SG
Sporting DTL, OTr, tuition, shop. Tel: (01763) 848172 www.nuthampsteadshootingground.co.uk

PARK STREET & DISTRICT GC
Tel: (01923) 677 294

ISLE OF WIGHT

ISLE OF WIGHT GUN CLUB
near Godshill. Sporting, Skeet, DTL, ABT. Tel: (01983) 567330

KENT

ABBEY SHOOTING DETLING SG
Skeet, Sporting. Tel: 01580 860783 / 07710 463896

GREENFIELDS SHOOTING GROUND
nr Canterbury. Practice, tuition, have-a-go days. Tel: (01227) 713222 www.greenfields shooting.co.uk

DARTFORD CLAY SHOOTING CLUB
Sporting, Skeet, OTr, Compact. Tel: (01322) 311001 www.dartfordcsc.co.uk

HIGH BROOMS GUN CLUB
Meet fortnightly. Sunday morning 60-bird shoot. Pembury and Tunbridge Wells. Visitors welcome at cost of £15. Tel: 01892 539103; Email: malbow65@gmail.com

INVICTA ZZ
Off A21 btwn Tonbridge/ Tunbridge Wells. Helice (ZZ) only. Full Eng breakfast until cook goes to shoot. Reg shoots only. Tel: (01580) 892542

KENT GUN CLUB
near Dartford. Trap, DTL, ADT, ZZ. Free tuition to beginners. Tel: (01883) 340248

KINGSFERRY GUN CLUB
Kingsferry Bridge. Skeet, Sportrap. Non-lead shot only. Tel: (01795) 877037

MARTIN GORSE WOOD CPC
nr Dover in Kent Tel: 01304 813101 www.martingorse.co.uk

WEST KENT SHOOTING SCHOOL
Paddock Wood. Sporting, Skeet and 100ft tower Tel: (01892) 834306 www.westkentshooting.co.uk

LONDON

A1 SHOOTING GROUND
near Rowley Green. OTr, DTL, Sporting, tuition. (020) 8441 9986 www.a1sg.freeserve.co.uk

WEST LONDON SHOOTING SCHOOL
Northolt. 100 traps, 8 towers, tuition, restaurant, corporate. Tel: (020) 8845 1377 www.shooting-school.co.uk

OXFORDSHIRE

GREENFIELD ENTERTAINMENT
Islip, nr Oxford. 50 Sporting, tuition. Tel: (01869) 325218 www.greenfieldentertainment.co.uk

SURREY

BISLEY GUN CLUB
Near Brookwood.DTL. CPSA competitions held 1st & 3rd Saturday of month. Tel: (01737) 242332 www.bisleygunclub.org.uk

BISLEY SHOOTING GROUND
nr Brookwood, Woking. Sporting (inc towers) tuition & practice. Open 7 days. Booking essential. Tel: (01483) 797017 www.bisleyshooting.co.uk

CATERHAM CLAYS
off Caterham bypass. Sporting. Tel: (01883) 622656

GATWICK CLAY SHOOTING SCHOOL
Skeet, SKD, DTL, Sporting Tel: 07769 701842. www.gatwickclay-shootingschool.org.uk

HORNE CLAY PIGEON CLUB
Sporting shoots, tuition, corporate at Gatton Bottom, Markedge Lane, nr Reigate and Court Farm, Chaldon, nr Caterham on the Hill. Tel: (01342) 842986 or 07711 332097 www.clayandcountry.f2s.com

NATIONAL CLAY SHOOTING CNTR
Bisley. Four OTr layouts, Skeet, OS, ABT, Double Trap. T: 01483 797666 www.nsc-clays.co.uk

THE STAR GUN CLUB CHESSINGTON
Sporting. Tel: (020) 8898 3129

SUSSEX

BLACKDOWN SHOOT
Midhurst: 50 Sporting 4th Sunday of month. Fibre wads only. Also at School House Farm, Northchapel: 50 Sporting every 2nd and 5th Sunday. Tel: (01428) 707584 Mob: 07770 777679.

NORTHALL CLAY PIGEON CLUB
Sporting, Compact, ABT, D/T, Skeet, tuition, corporate. Tel: (01825) 791783

OAKESFIELD SPORTING GUN CLUB
Compak, Sporting, tuition and corporate Rudgwick, West Sussex Tel: 01306 740537/ 01737 222998

SOUTHDOWN SPORTING GUN CLUB
nr Worthing. Sporting, Skeet, Fitasc, Sportrap, DTL, ABT, tuition. Tel: (01903) 877555 www.southdownsgc.co.uk

EAST

CAMBRIDGESHIRE

CAMBRIDGE GUN CLUB
Cottenham. Sporting, Sportrap, ABT, Skeet, DTL Tel: (01353) 648004

FENLAND GC
Washbrooke Farm, Benwick Road, Doddington. Tel: 01354 655583

GRANSDEN AIRFIELD SG
Tel: (01767) 627663 www.gransdenshootingground.co.uk

HIGH HARTHAY SG
Tel: 07956 293390, www.hhsg.co.uk

MOVING TARGETS
Gt Eversden 50 ESP practice 2nd & 4th Sundays. Contact: Tel. 07811815499 www.mobileclayshooting.co.uk

ESSEX

BUSH HILL CLAY CLUB
nr Billericay. Sporting. Tel. (01277) 220974

CLACTON GUN CLUB
Little Clacton. Esp, Skeet, DTL. Tel: (01255) 673146

COLCHESTER GARRISON
Clay Pigeon Club Sporting. Tel: 01206 576 756 (Chairman), 01206 392 357 (Secretary)

ESSEX SHOOTING GROUND
nr Harlow. Tel: 01245 283534, www.essexshooting ground.com

FENNES SHOOTING SCHOOL
Braintree CM7 5PL Tel: 01376 324599 www.fennesclays.co.uk

FOWES CLAY CLUB
Belchamp Otten. 01787 312930 www.fowesclayclub.org.uk

MAYLAND & DISTRICT GUN CLUB
ESK, DTL, compact. (01268) 470 323

ORION GUN CLUB
nr Brentwood Sporting, Skeet, DTL. 07000 486258 www.gunclub.co.uk

PARKFORD SHOOTING CENTRE
Skeet, Sporting, DTL. Tel: (01255) 820230

SOUTHEND GUN CLUB
nr Rochford Tel: (01702) 219395

THREE ACRES SPORTING CLAYS
Leaden Roding. Sporting, pool. Tel: 07768 742117

WALTHAM ABBEY SHOOTING GRND
Sporting, tuition. Tel: 07768 742117 www.claypigeonshoot.co.uk

SPELLBROOK CSC SPORTING
Tuition. Tel: (01279) 419427 www.spellbrookclays.co.uk

NORFOLK

MID NORFOLK SHOOTING GROUND
Taverham, nr Norwich. Sportig, Skeet, ABT, DTL, Airgun range 121 & Corporate. Tuition by appt. www.midnorfolkshootingschool.com

SUFFOLK

BADWELL ASH GC
nr Bury St Edmunds. Sporting, Skeet, DTL, ABT. Tel: 01359 259547

BARROW HEATH GUN CLUB
nr New- market. Sporting. Tel: (01322) 405226

HIGH LODGE SHOOTING SCHOOL
nr Saxmundham. Skeet, SkD, DTL, Sporting. Tel: (01986) 784347 www.highlodge.co.uk

LAKENHEATH CLAY TARGET CLUB
Between Mildenhall and Brandon. Skeet, DTL, Sportrap, gun room, tuition. Food. Tel: (01638) 533353 www.lctc.co.uk

NORTH WEST

CHESHIRE

SOUTH CHESHIRE CLAY CLUB
Alasger Nr Crewe, 1/2 mile from junction 16 M6, Cheshire, North West

ENGLISH SPORTING SHOOT
tuition, refreshments, Tel: 07768570132 Catton Hall Shooting Ground nr Frodsham. Practice, tuition, corporate. (01928) 788295

CLOUDSIDE SHOOTING GROUND
nr Congleton. Skeet, DTL, Compak, Sportrap, ABT, OT. Tel: 01260 226392. www.cloudside.co.uk

MIDDLE FARM CLAY SHOOT
Bredbury. Tel: 0161 4302492 North Wales Shooting School nr Chester. Sporting, Skeet, OS, Fitasc, tuition, practice. Tel: (01244) 812219 www.shootingschool.net

CUMBRIA

PENRITH & DISTRICT GUN CLUB
DTL, Sporting, ABT. 01697 342062

KENDAL & DISTRICT TARGET CLUB
Kendal, Cumbria. DTL esc b trap Tel Colin Phillips 01539 560298

ISLE OF MAN

AYRE CLAY PIGEON CLUB
Skeet, DTL, ABT, Double-Trap, UT, OT and Sporting. Tel: 01624 880744 www.bluepointshooting.co.uk

LANCASHIRE

A6 CLAY TARGET CENTRE
Westhoughton, nr Bolton. ABT, DTL, Skeet, Sportrap, tuition, restaurant. Tel: 01942 843578 www.a6ctc.co.uk

BLACKPOOL GUN CLUB
nr Kirkham Preston. Sporting. Tel: 07730 409415

KELBROOK SHOOTING SCHOOL
nr Foulridge. (01282) 861632

RUNNING HILL CLAY PIGEON CLUB
Sporting clays, Saddleworth www.running-hill-cpc.co.uk

WITHETS SHOOTING GROUND
Nr. Carnforth Lancashire M6 J35 Sporting; ABT; DTL; Skeet; Practice; Tuition by appointment Tel 07967 194120 www.withetsclayshoot.co.uk

MANCHESTER CLAY SHOOTING CLUB
Sporting, Skeet, tuition, club house. Tel: 0161 653 4438 www.manchesterclayshooting.com

SOUTH WEST

CORNWALL

CART RIDGE SHOOTING CLUB
1⁄2m east of A38 btwn Landrake & Tideford. Sporting, tuition. Tel: 01752 851262

COUNTY GUN CLUB
Tel: 01579 363301
Imerys Gun Club 01726 823895

NORTH CORNWALL GUN CLUB
nr North Petherwin. DTL, tuition. Tel: (01566) 785550

TRAX AND TRAILS ACTIVITY CNTR
Tamar Valley. Tuition. Tel: (01579) 384714 www.traxandtrails.co.uk

DEVON

ASHCOMBE SHOOTING GROUND
nr Dawlish. Sporting, Skeet, DTL, high tower, tuition. Tel: (01626) 866766 www.ashcombeadventure.co.uk

AXMINSTER GUN CLUB DTL
tuition. Tel: (01404) 881588 Bradford Shooting Ground, Skeet, Sporting, DTL, ABT. Tel: (01409) 281341

CULM VALE GUN CLUB
nr Cullompton. Sporting. Tel: (01460) 234245

CWA SHOOTING GROUND
Winnards Perch, Wadebridge, Cornwall. Skeet and Sporting clays, contact Mike Holmes 01872 864021

FOUR SEASONS GUN CLUB
East Hill Strips, nr Ottery St Mary. Skeet, Sporting, Compact. Tel: (01395) 278862

NEWNHAM PARK SG
nr Plymouth. Sporting, Skeet, ABT, DTL, Sportrap, tuition. Tel: (01752) 343456 www.newnham.co.uk

NORTH DEVON FIELD SPORTS
Southdown Adventure Centre Nr Barnstaple. DTL, Sporting, Sports Trap, Practice and tuition Tel: 01271 858791 www.devonfieldsports.co.uk

NORTH DEVON SG
nr Ilfracombe. Sporting, practice & tuition. Tel: 01271 863959 or 01271 850393 ndsg@hotmail.co.uk

SHALDEN SHOOTING SCHOOL
nr Shillingford. Sporting. Tel: (01398) 331021 www.shaldenshootingschool.co.uk

SOUTH WEST SHOOTING SCHOOL
Lynton Cross. Sporting, Compact. Tel: 01271 862545

TAMAR SHOOTING GROUND
Bradworthy. Tel (01409) 241839 www.waterland-days.co.uk

DORSET

PURBECK SHOOTING SCHOOL
nr Poole. Sporting, Skeet, OS, Fitasc, Sportrap. Tel: (01929) 405101 www.shooting.uk.com

SOUTHERN COUNTIES SHOOTING GROUND
Sporting, Skeet, OS, Fitasc, Sportrap, DTL, ABT, tower. Tel: (01935) 83625

Northern Sporting Weekend 2022

The Northern Sporting Weekend at Bywell continues to be an event attracting shooters from far and wide. The main event, as always, was the 100 English Sporting course running over two days. But running alongside were two 100 Sportrap competitions, one each day with different targets. This was a nice touch, meaning returning competitors on the Sunday had another event they could test their skills at. The English Sporting course was spread over 12 stands with much of it in a newly-developed wooded area of the ground. This gave a dynamic atmosphere and changed a lot of the target's perception. Top prize was a Browning Ultra XS Pro, decied in the Super Final, which was won by Stewart Cumming.



PICTURE: DON BRUNT

AGENTS: Send any updates to Clay Grounds, Sporting Shooter, Evolution House, 2-6 Easthampstead Road, Wokingham, Berks RG40 2EG



GLOUCESTERSHIRE

COTSWOLD CLAY PIGEON CLUB
Fosse Way, nr Stow. Sporting, pool. Tel: (01451) 821431

GLOUCESTER CLAY SHOOTING CLUB
on the A38 between Tewkesbury & Gloucester. Skeet, OS. Tel: (01452) 739472 or 07785 508238.

IAN COLEY SHOOTING SCHOOL
Nr. Cheltenham ESP & DTL Practice – Pay & Play. Tuition by Appt. Tel: 01242 870391 www.iancoley.co.uk

LONGRIDGE SHOOTING GROUND
Bromsberrow Heath, Ledbury Tel: (07971) 447138

MORK CLAY CLUB
nr St Briavels. Sporting. Tel: (01594) 530102

STROUD & DISTRICT CLAY SHOOTING CLUB
nr Bisley. Skeet, OS, DTL. Tel: (01453) 764443

WESTFIELD SHOOTING GROUND
Sporting, tuition, groups, corporate & simulated game. Tel: 0870 6091751 www.the clayshooting-company.com

SOMERSET

BROOK BANK SHOOTING GROUND
nr Cheddar. Sporting, Skeet, UT, DTL, ABT, tutition & corporate. Tel: 01749 871055. www.brookbankshooting.co.uk

IVYTHORN SPORTING
nr Street. Compact Sporting under cover. Tuition & corporate. Tel: (01458) 447120 or 07970 151321 www.ivythornsporting.co.uk

MENDIP SHOOTING GROUND
nr Wells. Sporting, Skeet, DTL, ABT, clubhouse, gunshop. Tel: (01749) 673471

PODIMORE SHOOTING GROUND
Ilchester. Sporting, Fitasc, Sportrap. Tel: (01935) 862510 www.podimore-shooting.co.uk

SHIPHAM SPORTING CLAYS
nr Clevedon. Sporting, tuition, practice. Tel: (01275) 877851

VALLEY SHOOTING GROUND
info@valleycalyshoot.co.uk

WOODSPRING CLAY SHOOT
Wick St Lawrence, nr Weston super Mare. Sporting/ 50-bird practice/ private parties. Tel: 07503 766373

WILTSHIRE

BARBURY SHOOTING SCHOOL
nr Swindon. Tuition, corporate, Sporting, FITASC, Compact, Skeet. Tel: 07872 666154 www.barburyshoot.com

BASSETT BREAKERS GUN CLUB
Flaxlands Shooting Ground, nr Swindon. Sporting. Tel: (01793) 750801

CADLEY CLAY SHOOTING GROUND
nr Marlborough. Sporting, practice, tutition, corporate.Tel: (01672) 512052 www.cadleyclays.co.uk

URCHFONT CLAY PIGEON CLUB
nr Devizes. DTL, Sporting. Tel: (01380) 721218

WOOD FARM CLAY SHOOTING CLUB
nr Warminster. Skeet, DTL, Sporting. Tel: (01747)860471

MIDLANDS

DERBYSHIRE

BAKEWELL & WIRKSWORTH CPC
nr Brassington. Sporting. Tel: (01629) 814395

DARLEY DALE CPSC
nr Brassington. Sporting. Tel: (01629) 733161

DOVERIDGE CLAY SHOOTING CLUB
nr Doveridge. Skeet, DTL, Sporting. Tel:(01889)565986

LOWES LANE SHOOTING GROUND
nr Swadlincote. Sporting, Skeet, DTL, high tower, flush, tuition. Tel: (01332) 866800

OCKBROOK SPORTING CLAYS
nr Derby. Tel: (01773) 714731

YEAVELEY ESTATE
nr Ashbourne. Sporting, Tuition. Tel: (01335) 330247

HEREFORD & WORCESTER

LONGRIDGE SHOOTING GROUND
M50 (Jn 2) Tel: 07971 447138

SOUTH WORCESTER SG
nr Upton-upon-Severn. DTL, Sporting, Practice, tuition. Tel: (01684) 310605 www.swsg.co.uk

WORCESTERSHIRE GUN CLUB
Illey, W Midlands. ABT, Sporting. Tel: 07836 225580 www.w-g-c.co.uk

WYRE FOREST GUNS
nr Button Oak. Sporting. Tel: (01299) 403730

LEICESTERSHIRE

BAGWORTH MINERS CPC
nr Coalville. DTL, Sporting, ABT. (01530) 260816

GRANGE FARM SC
nr Desford. Sporting, Skeet, OS, DTL, ABT. Tel: (01455) 822208

HOTON CLAY CLUB
Sporting. Tel: 0116 230 2311 www.hoton-clay-club.co.uk

KEGWORTH SHOOTING GROUND
(YS) Sporting Tel: 07973 111 650 Long Lane, 1 1/2 miles due north of Kegworth Village, at its junction with Ratcliffe lane. Nearest Sat nav: one mile south of the ground DE74 2GA.

KIBWORTH SHOOTING GROUND
Off A6 Kibworth-Market Harborough Rd. Sporting Skeet, DTL, Tower, Fitasc, Sportrap, flush. Tuition. Tel: 01162 796001 rose@kibworth-shootingground.co.uk

MARKET HARBOROUGH & DISTRICT SC
Sporting, Skeet, OS, DTL. Tel: (01858) 463698

NORMANTON SHOOTING GROUND
nr Thurlaston. Sporting, ABT, DT Tel: (01455) 888210

SPA VALE SHOOTING GROUND
nr Lutterworth. Tel: 0116 247 8917 www.spa-vale.co.uk

LINCOLNSHIRE

GRIMSTHORPE ESTATE SG
nr Eden-ham. Sporting. Tel: (01778) 591128

HAVEN CLAY SHOOTING CLUB
Haven Bank, New York, LN4 4XR. Enquiries to Graham Fordham 07854227175. 30-bird Sporting, DTL, family days, friendly club. Visit havencpc.webs.com for shooting dates.

LINCS CLAY CLUB
Church Lane, South Clifton, Nr Lincoln, Lincolnshire NG23 7AW, www.lincsclayclub.co.uk

LINCOLNSHIRE SHOOTING GROUND
Sutton Bridge. Sporting, Skeet, ABT, Sportrap, tower, tuition, restaurant, corporate.Tel: (01406) 359300/ (01945) 700622 www.shooting4you.co.uk

PINEWOOD SHOOTING GROUND
nr Gainsborough. Sporting, Skeet, DTL, OT, D/T, Compact. Tel: (01427) 628900. www. pinewood-sg.fsnet.co.uk

SINCLAIRS SHOOTING GROUND
Whaplode Drove, nr Holbeach. Skeet, Sporting, Compact, ABT & DTL. Open Weds-Sun, all year. Tel: (01406) 540362.

SPA VALE SHOOTING GROUND
Coventry Road (Near to Magna Park) Lutterworth, Tel No. 0116 2478917 www.spa-vale.co.uk

NOTTINGHAMSHIRE

A614 SHOOTING GROUND
Near Nottingham, tuition. Tel: (0115) 9656144

COCKETT FARM SHOOTING GRND
nr Mansfield. Sporting, Skeet, STr, White Gold, tuition. Tel: (01623) 882244 www.cockettfarm.com

NOTTINGHAM & DISTRICT GC
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OXTON SHOOTING SCHOOL
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STILEHOLLOW SHOOTING SCHOOL
nr Mansfield. Sporting, Skeet, DTL, ABT, tower, tuition. (01623) 823930 www.stilehollow.com

NORTHAMPTON

NORTHAMPTON SHOOTING GRND
Skeet, DTL, ABT, tuition. (01604) 642252 northamptonshooting-ground.co.uk

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BRIDGNORTH & DISTRICT GUN CLUB
nr Wolverhampton. DTL. Tel: (01562) 883092

WEST MIDLANDS SG
Sporting,Skeet, ABT, Compact, Fitasc, ABT, gun room. Tel: (01939) 200644 www.wmsg.co.uk

STAFFORDSHIRE

CROSS GUN CLUB
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GARLANDS SHOOTING GROUND
Tamworth. Sporting, OT, DTL, Skeet. Tel: (01827) 383300

KINGSLEY MOOR SG
nr Alton Towers. Sporting. Tel: (01782) 550371

LEEK & DGC
Sporting. Tel: (01538) 386127

QUARNFORD SHOOTING GROUND
nr Leek. Sporting. Tel: (01298) 22204

RANTON CLAY TARGET CLUB
DTL, ABT, Sporting. (01782) 611775.

RODBASTON GUN CLUB
Sporting & tuition, Weds eves. www.shotgun.me.uk

MILLRIDE COUNTRY SPORTS
Sporting, Skeet. Off junction 1 of the M54. WV11 2AZ. 01902 725165 www.millride-country-sports.co.uk

OAKEDGE SHOOTING GROUND
Sporting, Fitasc Sporting, High Skeet, DTL. (01889) 881391

WERGS GUN CLUB
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WARWICKSHIRE

BARBY SPORTING CLUB
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EDGEHILL SHOOTING GROUND
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HONESBERIE SHOOTING GROUND
Sporting, tuition, corporate.Tel: (01327) 260302 www.honesberie-shooting.co.uk

RUGBY & DISTRICT TRAP CLUB
ABT. Tel: (01788) 573257

WEDGNOCK SHOOTING GROUND
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SPENNYMOOR & DISTRICT
Clay Pigeon Club Sporting, Skeet, ABT, DTL. Tel: (0191) 3772412 www.keithbutterwick.com/spennymoor

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EAST YORKSHIRE GUN CLUB
nr Beverley. Skeet, OS, SKd, DTL, ABT, UTR, Sporting. Tel: (01964) 551134

HUMBERSIDE SHOOTING GROUND
nr Beverley. Skeet, DTL, ABT, Compact, White Gold. Tel: (01964) 544357. www.pthorn.co.uk/shootingground

MONCKTON SG
N. Newbald, Tel: 01430 827229. www. moncktonshoot.co.uk

NORTH WOLDS GUN CLUB
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PARK LODGE SHOOTING SCHOOL
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CONISTON SHOOTING GROUND
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KNARESBOROUGH & DISTRICT GC
Sporting, Skeet, DTL, ABT. Tel: (01423) 561174.

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nr Rufforth. Sporting, Skeet, OS, DTL, ABT. Tel: (01904) 738120.

NORTH YORKSHIRE SHOOTING
School nr Thirsk. 07966 387273 northyorkshireshootingschool.com

THIMBLEBY SHOOTING GROUND
nr Osmotherley. Sporting, Sportrap, tuition, corporate. Tel: (01642) 351725 Mob: 07776 223609

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nr Ripon Tel: (01765) 689232 www.warrengill.co.uk

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nr Felton. Skeet, DTL, ABT, tower, shop. Tel: (01670) 787827 www.bywellshootingground.com

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FOYMORE LODGE
off the A4 in Co Armagh (signed from Portadown & M1 j12). Sporting, instruction, club house. www.foymorelodge.com

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Port Talbot, South Wales. Sporting, Skeet, OS, DTL, ABT, tuition, corporate. Tel: 07855 828167; Email: firstcorporate2003@yahoo.co.uk

DOVEY VALLEY SHOOTING GRND
Llanwrin, Machynlleth, Powys. Sporting, Skeet, DTL, sim game, practice, tuition, corporate. (01650) 511252. www.doveyvalley.co.uk

GRIFFIN-LLOYD SHOOTING GRND
Mid-Wales, Welsh Marches. Sporting, ABT, OT, tuition. Tel: (01547) 550634 www.griffinlloyd.co.uk

FAUXDEGLA SHOOTING GROUND
North Wales. DTL, ABT, Skeet. Tel: 01978 790198

MID WALES SC
nr Llanidloes. DTL, ABT. Tel: (01686) 430654

NORTH WALES SS SEALAND
nr Chester. DTL, OT. Tel: (01244) 812219

SOUTH WALES 2000
nr Newbridge. Sporting, Skeet, OT, ABT, DTL, tuition, clubhouse. Tel: (01495) 201182 www.southwales2000.com

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Brecon. Sporting, tuition, corporate. Tel: 078111 89413 www.wpshoot.co.uk

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ARRAN GUN CLUB ISLE OF ARRAN
nr Altnaharra. Tel:(01549) 411245

BRAIDWOOD SG
nr Selkirk. Tel: (01835) 870280 www.braidwoodsc.co.uk

BURNTKETTLE SG AULDGARTH
nr Dumfries. DTL, Skeet, Sporting. Tel: 01848 331131.

BUTE CLAY TARGET CLUB
Kingarth. Tel: (01700) 500274 Cairndow Clay Target Club Argyll. DTL. Tel:(01499) 600201

CARLISLE & DISTRICT GUN CLUB
nr Wigton. Tel: (01697) 331452

CENTRAL SCOTLAND SHOOTING SCHOOL
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CLAY TARGET SHOOTING SCHOOL
Houston, Renfrewshire. Sporting. Tel: (01505) 873547 www.claytargetshootingschool.co.uk

CLUNY CLAYS
Fife. Sporting, Skeet, DTL, Compact, flush, tuition, restaurant. Tel:(01592) 720374 www.clunyclays.com

COWANS LAW MOSCOW
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CORTACHY GUN CLUB
nr Egnomoss. DTL, practice. Tel: (01307) 860239

DALVENNAN COUNTRY SPORTS
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DRUMMOND SHOOTING GROUND
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Tel: (01369) 704362

DUNS & DISTRICT GUN CLUB
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Shoots every Sunday, mainly sporting birds to simulate game. Based Ayrshire.Tel: John Noble, 01560 482162 garnockvalleygun-club.webs.com

GLENDARUEL GUN CLUB
Tel: 07845 211102

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nr Urgha. Tel: 07919 037588

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nr Carmichael. Tel: (01555) 840562

MORTON CLAY TARGETS
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SHANDON COUNTRY PURSUITS LTD
nr Helensburgh. Sporting, tuition. Tel: (01436) 820838

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STRATHYRE GUN CLUB
nr Comrie. DTL, tuition. Tel:(01764) 670013

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nr Salen. Tel: (01967) 431602

TARBERT GUN CLUB
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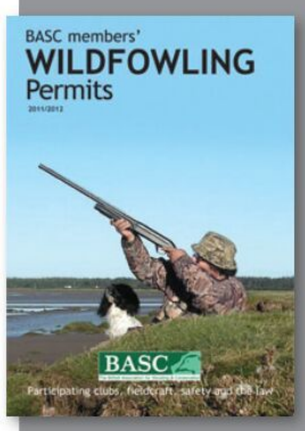
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Wildfowling clubs across the country offer day permits to BASC members.

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www.carterscountrywear.co.uk
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MC Slater, Lancs.
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TUFTON ARMS HOTEL
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www.fishing-shooting.co.uk

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THE BARTON ON HUMBER
Gundog Club Tel: 01724 734700 www.bohgc.co.uk
stephanie@bohgc.co.uk

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Lincs Tel: 01673 858387

KEADBY WILDFOWLING & CONSERVATION SOCIETY
www.kwacs.org.uk

LEICESTER WILDFOWLERS
Contact: www.leicswa.org
feedback@leicswa.org

PESTWISE
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www.pestwise.co.uk

DELTA DEER SERVICES
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WEST RIDING WILDFOWLERS
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Wildfowlers Cambridgeshire.
Tel: 01945 420359

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PETE'S AIRGUN FARM
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RIFLECRAFT LIMITED
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SPALDING WILDFOWLERS
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LONDON & S.E.

WILLIAM & PHILIP BEASLEY
Tel: 01869 277534 for Philip, Tel: 07831 572247 for William, Tel: 07831 195736. Pigeon shooting, also deer stalking.

Rugby for Heroes fundraising shoot

Ian Coley Sporting will be hosting the annual Rugby for Heroes fundraising clay shoot at their award-winning ground in Andoversford outside Cheltenham on Friday 23 September 2022 where you will have the chance to shoot alongside Rugby for Heroes patron and former England international rugby player Mike Tindall and a host of celebrity guests. The event promises a great day out whilst raising vital funds for the charity which works with the rugby community to support military personnel making the transition to civilian life.

To book a team please call 01452 308038 or, if you'd like to know more about the charity, visit rugbyforheroes.org.uk. The price for a team of four Guns is £750.



PICTURE: MILKICA R / SHUTTERSTOCK



CREATURE FINDERS

WE FOUND MARTIN MEERCAT ON PAGE 33 OF THE JULY ISSUE

Paul Warby, Emneth • Jeff Longford, Surrey • Colin Clarke, Reading • Shelley McCourt, Yorkshire • Alan Collyer, Billingshurst • Gudi Grange, Beighton • Tom Johnstone, Dunfermline • Svetlana Okladnykh, Manchester • Ernie Booth, Cheshire • Morgan Hanby, Ridlington • Jayne Hopkins, Kettering• David Moran, Kent • Miles Hall, Stainton • Ian Legg, Stockbridge • Arthur Davey, Lincoln • Martin Tiney, Finedon• Steve Webster, Cleethorpes • Philip Palmer, Keighley • Steve Armstrong, Co Durham • Eddie Finney, Staffs • Dick Gaylor, Cambridgeshire • Edna Philp, Halstead • Steven Smith, Hereford• David Rogalski, Caithness • Ann Owen, Corwen • Aneurin Owen, Corwen • Kester Warden, Bradford • Will Johnston, Bedfordshire • Brian Harper, Norwich • John Loveridge, Cambridge • Jenny Loveridge, Berwickshire • Helen Keeking, Bassett • Christopher Sansom, Taunton • Danielle Rooke, Seaton • Amy Corner, Bromyard • John Gooderson, Stamford • Nigel McNeil Smith, freshwater • Colin Ashley, Audley • Frank Holma, Suffolk • Neil Sutherland, Inverurie • Janet Brookes, Thatcham • Liz Harper, Norwich • Philip Kent, Spalding • Russell Dixon, Cumbria • • Neil Gilliland, Biggleswade • Sylvia Binovec, Hexham • John Ahearne, Westmeath •Gary Aitchison, Goole • Brian Harper, Norwich • Chris Arthur, Redditch • Ralph Stimson, Bucks • Donna Collins, Thorntonloch • Dave Lambourne, Brixworth • Richard Palmer, Chesterfield • Peter Rooney, Newry • Denise Trainor, Kilkeel • Pete Devlin, Newry • Ian Sowter, Staffordshire • Dec Birch, Paulton • William Dickson, Chepstow

AGENTS: Send any updates to Find Shooting, Sporting Shooter, Evolution House, 2-6 Easthampstead Road, Wokingham, Berks RG40 2EG



MARK BOULTON HORNDEAN
Deer stalking in south; Boar shooting in Europe and Sussex. Tel: 02392 595925/07854 985006 mark-thedeerstalker@hotmail.co.uk

CHICHESTER HARBOUR WA
www.chwa.org.uk

GEORGE DIGWEED SPORTING AGENCY
www.georgedigweed.com Duck & pheasants.

EMSWORTH & DISTRICT WILDFOWLERS
www.wildfowling.com

FROBURY FARM SPORTING CLUB
nr Newbury, Berks. Contact Paul Oldring, Tel: 01635 297122; www.frobury.co.uk

HOLBOROUGH SHOOT SOUTH (KENT)
Driven pheasant shoot. 01622 891940, 07774 839319, 07876 542579 info@holboroughestate.co.uk

KENT DEER SERVICES
Contact Andrew Tel: 07754 272214 or 01892 680327 www.kentdeerservices.co.uk

KENT WILDFOWLING & CA
Tel: 07836 771715 www.kentwildfowlers.co.uk

LANGSTONE & DISTRICT WWCA
Langstone Harbour, SE Hants. www.ladwaca.com

SHAVESGREEN SHOOTING
07706 395979. www.shavesgreen.com info@shavesgreen.com

DRIVEN & WALKED-UP DAYS
Pigeon Trevor Robinson Tel: 01273 600683 or 077499 35864.

WEST LONDON SHOOTING SCHOOL
Tel: 020 8845 1377; reception@shootingschool.co.uk

WEST SUSSEX SPORTING
Tel: 01293 851808. www.westsussexgunco.com Pheasant & partridge.

SOUTH WEST

ARUNDELL ARMS DEVON
Tel: 01566 784666 www.arundellarms.com

CORNWALL WILDFOWLERS ASSOC.
Tel: 01872 864021. Mike Holmes. Weekly shoots

COTSWOLD SHOOTING COMPANY
Tel: 01285 657527 www.go-country.co.uk

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DEVON WILDFOWLING & CA
Tel: 01395 268837 devonwildfowlers@yahoo.co.uk

DORSET WILDFOWLERS
www.dorsetwildfowlers.org.uk Gloucestershire

GLOS. WILDFOWLERS
www.gloucestershire wildfowlers.co.uk

MELCOMBE PARTNERS
Chris Kirby Tel: (01643) 831439

SPORTING AGENT
Tel: 07724 689295 www.sportingagent.com

PRESCOTT SHOOTING SCHOOL
Tel: 01242 673542 www.prescottshooting.com dan@prescottshooting.com

TAW & TORRIDGE WILDFOWLING CLUB
Barnstaple www.ttwc.org.uk

THE WARRENER
Box 36, Tavistock, Devon. Tel: 01822 832990

EDWARD WATSON SHOOTING SERVICES
Tel: 01884 254056 or 07767 338801 www.shootingservices.co.uk

WESTWARD SPORTING GUN CLUB
Devon. Don Williams Tel: 01752 564478 Rough, game

TAMAR VALLEY ASS.
for Shooting & Conservation Devon & Cornwall, Rough & Wildfowling Tel: 01752 229925 s_hooper@hotmail.co.uk

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ANGLESEY SHOOTING & FISHING
Tel: 01407 740652 www.presaddfed.co.uk rosemary@presaddfed.co.uk

CASTELL GORFOD SYNDICATE / RECTORY FARM SHOOT
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BASC ISLE OF ARRAN
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BRITISH MOORLANDS LTD
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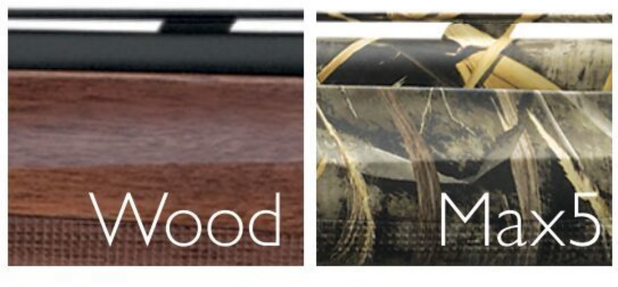
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