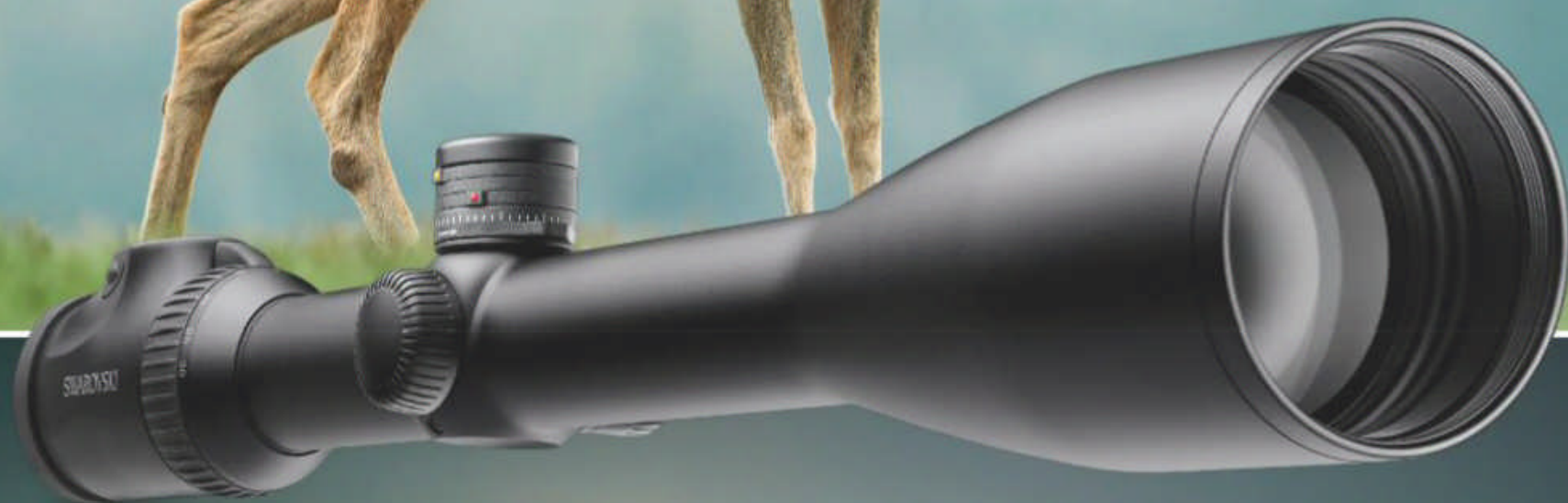




BY APPOINTMENT TO
HER MAJESTY QUEEN ELIZABETH II
SWAROVSKI OPTIK
SUPPLIER OF BINOCULARS



Z6i
WHEN
SECONDS
ARE CRUCIAL

SEE *THE UNSEEN*



SWAROVSKI
OPTIK

HEN HARRIERS: A RECORD-BREAKING BREEDING YEAR

SHOOTING TIMES[®]

9 SEPTEMBER 2020

& COUNTRY MAGAZINE

Since 1882

BANNED!

Brussels to outlaw lead shot

STYLE AND GRACE

**How to successfully
take on partridges**

FINE SHOWING

**The secret to a
perfect redleg drive**

**PARTRIDGE
SPECIAL
ISSUE**



FOWLING TRADITION

**OUT AFTER MALLARD
ON THE OPENING DAY**

GAME COOKERY

**GET THAT PARTRIDGE
ON THE BARBECUE**





FROM RIMFIRE TO RANGE

Tikka rifles are innovative and durable, designed and manufactured for ultimate accuracy and performance in any situation



T1x 2.7-3.0kg • RRP: From £645

The award winning T1x rimfire has been designed to feel and perform like it's big brother the T3x. Smooth, faultless feeding, outstanding accuracy and crisp trigger pulls combine to make this the UK's bestselling bolt action rimfire.



T3x 3.4-3.6kg • RRP: From £1145

The T3x is one of the world's favourite full bore rifle platforms. Solid, reliable, smooth feeding and great to shoot. Combined with the supremely accurate Tikka barrel, at excellent prices, it's popularity is easy to understand. Available in a wide variety of different calibres, stocks and barrel configurations.



TACT A1 4.9-5.1kg • RRP: From £2195

A Tikka rifle designed to deliver phenomenal long range accuracy. The aluminium folding stock is adjustable for length, likewise the cheek piece is also easy to adjust. The barrel is shrouded and fitted with a full length picatinny rail and M-Lok fore-end to enable the fitting of accessories.

SHOOTING TIMES[®]

& COUNTRY MAGAZINE



DOG OF THE WEEK

Shooting Times recommends *chudleys.com*

Fuelling gundogs for generations



Mabel

Mabel, a two-and-a-half-year-old cocker, is a passionate East Anglian wildfowler and rough shooter. She throws herself, with similar intensity, into crafts such as hedge-laying, pottery and coppicing – sadly with less success.

Owned by Richard Negus. Photographed by Sarah Farnsworth

SHOOTING TIMES

Pleasure in defeat



Some years ago, at Purdey in London, the editor of another fieldsports magazine told me grandly that in his magazine they don't have features in which people blank. "So what do you do when it happens?" I asked naively. "We spike them and pay a kill fee," he replied.

His words came back to me at the weekend, while I was sitting in a Norfolk pub with last week's issue and a pint after an afternoon's pigeon shooting. The piece that triggered the thought was a rainy one. In it, Patrick Laurie sets out for a Macnab and bags neither fish, fowl, nor beast. But, to my mind, chalking up such a day as a failure, not worthy of publication, would be to miss the very essence of fieldsports.

This season in *Shooting Times* there will be tales of triumph and defeat, red-letter days among the heather and days when the only chance that presents itself is fluffed due to poor footwork or cold hands and a stiff safety catch. After all, if every time a gun was raised, a bird was added to the bag, this great sport would cease to be a sport at all.

Patrick Galbraith, Editor



Follow Patrick on Twitter
@paddygalbraith

Contents

NEWS & OPINION

06 NEWS

10 LETTERS

FEATURES

13 SPORTING HISTORY

16 WILDFOWLING

20 GUNDOG TRAINING

23 PARTRIDGE SHOOTING

26 INSTRUCTION

28 GUNMAKING

32 GUNDOG TRAINING

REGULARS

12 COUNTRY DIARY

31 RURAL CRAFT

35 KENNEL DIARY

36 CATLOW

40 AFRICA

42 GUNDOGS

44 VINTAGE TIMES

46 COOKERY

48 SPORTING ANSWERS

53 CROSSWORD

54 PRODUCTS

55 GAMEKEEPER

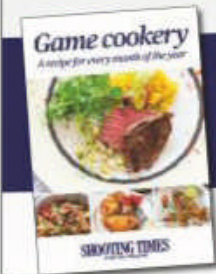
58 SHARPSHOOTER

INVEST IN YOUR SHOOTING

Subscribe for just £24.99*

For less than the cost of a driven pheasant, get the best blend of shooting, news, product reviews and keeping advice, delivered every Wednesday.

shootingtimesubs.co.uk/sep20



FREE Digital game cookery book

Cast aside that flabby chicken and get more game on your table

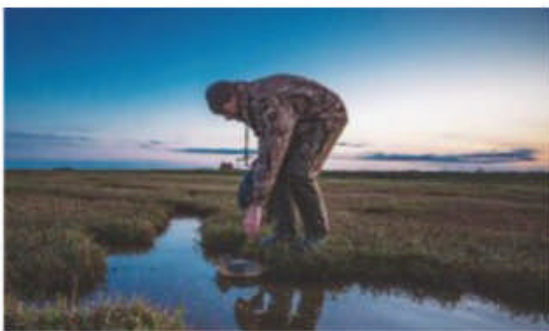
*Terms and Conditions: Offer closes 10 October 2020. Offer open to new subscribers only. ** New subscribers only. Subscription must be purchased online. For full terms and conditions, visit: magazinesdirect.com/terms. For enquiries please email: help@magazinesdirect.com



SALE



13 Grey partridge hunting
A time when the fields were full



16 A symphony for the foreshore
The glorious First of September



20 Europe's best breeds
A look at the Continent's gundogs



23 Presenting perfect birds
The secrets to driving partridges



26 Shoot partridges like a pro
Face coveys with confidence



28 The Royal treatment
Holland & Holland's coveted guns



32 Gundog training
Introducing Lizzie the flatcoat



46 Game cookery
Succulent partridge in pitta bread



Keeping the Balance™



JOIN THE NGO THIS
SEPTEMBER FOR YOUR
CHANCE TO WIN A



SNACK BOX TO FEED 24

visit www.nationalgamekeepers.org.uk for more
information.



SHOOTING NEEDS THE NGO



GET 2 MONTHS MEMBERSHIP FREE!

*New members paying by Direct Debit – and existing members switching to Direct Debit – now all receive 14 month's membership for the price of 12.***

If you rely on the future of gamekeeping, JOIN US today. Your membership will help us defend your way of life and the gamekeeping profession.

NGO Gamekeeper and Supporter membership is fantastic value for money. For just £45 a year Keepers and Supporters all receive benefits that include:

- THIRD PARTY INSURANCE NOW UP TO £10 MILLION*
- FOUR EXCELLENT MAGAZINES EACH YEAR
- INVITATIONS TO SPECIAL NGO EVENTS
- BIG DISCOUNTS AND TRADE BENEFITS

Trade membership also available. The National Gamekeepers' Organisation protects and promotes gamekeeping and deer management in the uplands and the lowlands.

JOIN US NOW

Call 01833 660869
or visit www.nationalgamekeepers.org.uk

Moorland Branch | Lowland Branch | Deer Branch

*Cover is underwritten by Builders Direct SA on behalf of MGAM Ltd, arranged through Lycett, Browne-Swinburne and Douglas Ltd. It is subject to the terms and conditions of policy number MGAM 009/18. ** First year's DD membership only



Only 6% of Guns aren't planning to shoot this year, according to the survey

Shoots press ahead as demand stays strong

While a survey reveals that the majority of shoots are on, some agents have seen bookings fall and others have limited their sporting offering

Sporting agents around the country have painted a mixed picture of how the 2020-2021 shooting season will shape up.

As the partridge season opened, shoot booking website Guns on Pegs released the results of its annual shoot survey. Overall it painted a relatively positive picture, saying: "The good news is that 85% of shoots surveyed said that they were shooting this season. This is a marked improvement on the results of a survey we carried out in April, which suggested that as many as 33% of shoots could mothball for the season ahead."

Guns on Pegs managing director Chris Horne said: "What is most interesting, though, is that though 12% of shoots won't

be going ahead this season, only 6% of Guns are taking a year out. We strongly expect demand to continue to increase after Guns on Pegs' busiest August for enquiries to shoots in five years. Though there are some great deals about,

"A lot depends on the next few months. If we can deliver what's in the diary it will be all right"

we expect most shoots will sell out in one way or another. As the saying goes, book now to avoid disappointment."

In East Anglia, Nick Elston of Anglia Sporting has chosen to step back from driven shooting this year and will instead focus on other forms of sport.

He explained: "The size of our operation requires an investment of between £200,000 and £300,000 a season, which we felt was way too much of a risk during this pandemic. We are planning more deer stalking events and will

continue our pigeon shooting into the game season. We also have some wildfowling and smaller rough days, but driven game days will not be going ahead."

In County Durham, Adam Morton of Morton Sporting has managed to hold bookings at a similar level to last year but only by

taking on more ground. Mr Morton specialises in bringing together single Guns and small groups to shoot driven birds in northern England and southern Scotland.

He said: "There is still a desire for people to get out there, so we are trying to balance between ensuring people can do something they enjoy and adhering to Government guidance."

However, he admitted bookings have suffered. "Based on what we had booked in the spring before we went into lockdown, we are significantly down. A lot depends on what happens in the next few months. If we go back into a national lockdown it will be very difficult, but if we can deliver what we have got in the diary it will be all right."

Matt Cross

Venison market needs a boost



The pandemic left restaurants unable to open, which impacted the demand for and price of venison

A Wild Venison Working Group has been brought together to try to revive the market for English and Welsh wild deer meat. The group is facilitated and chaired by the Forestry Commission and includes representatives from a range of shooting, forestry and deer interests.

A poorly developed domestic market, competitively priced imports and a crash in demand from the restaurant trade have all combined to cause a massive reduction in prices paid

to stalkers for carcasses. The loss has imperilled operations to manage England's deer population, which is at its highest level for 1,000 years.

David Hooton, Forestry Commission regional deer officer, said: "Reduced demand during 2019 and the devastating impact of coronavirus on the restaurant trade has left the venison market teetering at its lowest ever level.

"Venison is a high-quality product, so is well placed

to appeal to a wide range of consumers. Venison markets are also key to the future control and protection of both woodlands and arable crops; deer need to be managed across the country and having a stable venison supply chain is necessary to encourage and support this.

"Our new working group will help improve the supply chain so venison can reach a wider marketplace, while also protecting our landscapes and our natural environment."

BASC backs new nature exam

BASC has backed the proposed natural history GCSE (*News*, 15 January and *Exam for life*, 12 February).

The qualification was the brainchild of curlew campaigner Mary Colwell, who said: "I would like a GCSE in natural history to teach the skills of identifying, monitoring and recording the life around us. To know about migration and invasion of species. To understand how the seasons affect wildlife and how that is changing."

Curtis Mossop, BASC's head of pathways to shooting, said: "BASC is fully supportive of boosting engagement

between young people and the natural world. The proposed natural history GCSE creates the perfect portal."

He added: "BASC has offered to help develop the



Curlew conservationist Mary Colwell came up with the idea

syllabus and ensure the course is led by the available science. There are obvious emotive and sensitive topics within natural history; therefore the course must include all sides of the argument to ensure the most holistic outcome."

Retired biology teacher and rough shooter Mike Coates told *Shooting Times*: "Natural history brings together lots of disciplines and it's a great opportunity to explore some of the complex ethical and environmental debates around shooting and nature in our hard-working countryside."

Weekend Twitter poll

Which was the first bird you plucked, prepared and cooked?

18% Duck

27% Pigeon

49% Pheasant

6% Partridge

follow us @shootingtimes Respondents:180

To do this week



SHOOT

With the wildfowling

season here and a succession of areas of low pressure arriving from the Atlantic, now is a good time to be out on the foreshore. Strong winds encourage duck and geese to fly low where they are in range, so foul weather often offers the best shooting conditions.

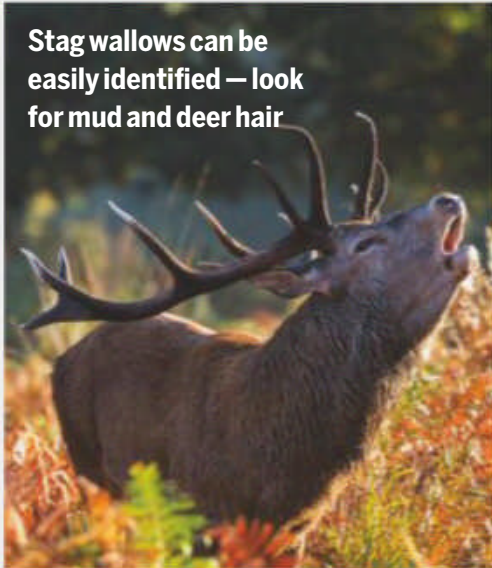


RECON

If you have access to your own

stalking ground, spend some time identifying the spots where rutting stags will soon be found. Stag wallows are easy to identify by their mix of mud and deer hair. Locating them and identifying approach routes to them may be useful in a few weeks' time.

Stag wallows can be easily identified — look for mud and deer hair



EVENTS DIARY

17-18 SEPTEMBER

**SUSTAINABLE
AMMUNITION DAY**

Paintmine Woods,
Lancashire LA5 9SA
bit.ly/sustainAmmo

19 SEPTEMBER

**PRE-SEASON
NOVICE GUNDOG DAY**

Berkshire College
of Agriculture
bit.ly/novdogBerks



25 SEPTEMBER

**ANNUAL CLAY
PIGEON SHOOT
(GWCT) EVENT
POSTPONED**

New date to be
announced shortly

25 SEPTEMBER

**CEFN TILLA
ANNUAL CLAY
PIGEON SHOOT**

Cefn Tilla Court,
Llandenny
02920 388988

8 OCTOBER

**LANCASHIRE
SPORTING SUPPER**

Inn at Whitewell,
Forest of Bowland
bit.ly/LancsSupper

9 OCTOBER

**SHOTGUN & CHELSEA
BUN CLUB (LADIES)
CLAY SHOOT**

West Kent Shooting
School, Paddock
Wood, Kent
bit.ly/LadiesClayKent

Under the new EU rule, wetlands
will be defined as any body of
water — or simply wet ground



EU lead shot ban on *all* ‘wetlands’

Shooters could face legal action unless they move to lead-free ammunition by the beginning of 2023

The EU has taken a further step towards an effective ban on the use of lead ammunition with significant implications for UK shooters.

The EU's REACH committee, which regulates chemicals, has voted for a restriction on the use and possession of lead ammunition on and around all ‘wetlands’. Crucially, wetlands are

If this regulation were included, it would force nearly all shotgun shooters to move to lead-free ammo or face legal action.

The proposed regulation will now have to be ratified before the end of 2021 and, if ratified, will come into force at the beginning of 2023. A previous attempt to introduce the rule was prevented

supportive of the legislation in the UK regarding the use of lead shot over wetlands. The new EU restrictions are utterly unenforceable and place shooters at risk of criminality if they fail to spot a puddle in the field.

“BASC will be lobbying the Government not to adopt this regulation. It is a clear sign of the EU's intent with regards to restricting the use of lead and, with a full restriction next on the agenda, the pressure has never been higher,” he added.

“All our actions are focused on ensuring that moves in Europe do not compromise the UK shooting community's plans for a five-year transition to sustainable ammunition and future.”

The move is vigorously opposed by FACE as “highly ambiguous, disproportionate and discriminatory”.

Matt Cross

“Shooters risk criminality if they fail to spot a puddle in the field”

defined as any body of water or wet ground. This would legally prevent the use of lead shot within 100m of any body of water, including drainage ditches, rivers, streams, ponds and all peatlands.

The effect on UK law remains unclear, but *Shooting Times* understands that the UK may adopt EU chemicals regulations as part of the withdrawal agreement.

by the Czech Republic (*News*, 5 August), which is not expected to be able to repeat the manoeuvre that sent the regulation back to the REACH committee.

Dr Matt Ellis, BASC's head of science and chairman of the FACE (European Federation of Associations for Hunting and Conservation) ammunition working group, said: “We are

Sixty-four hen harrier chicks is fledging record

Record numbers of hen harriers have fledged from nests across northern England, with 60 chicks from 19 nests across Northumberland, the Yorkshire Dales, Cumbria and Lancashire.

This year's success means that 141 hen harrier chicks have fledged over the past three years. Natural England's Hen Harrier Recovery Project was established in 2002 to monitor the birds and work towards improving their numbers in England. The project includes the controversial brood management programme which removes chicks from nests on grouse moors and rears them in captivity,

a practice opposed by the RSPB and by anti-shooting campaigner Mark Avery.

Dr Adam Smith of the GWCT said: "This is a very promising result for a pragmatic conservation project. Management options for bird of prey conservation rather than just legal enforcement is a very

forward-thinking approach. The GWCT has studied the very real tension between harrier conservation and grouse shooting for over 30 years. Until this managed approach was adopted — at no small risk to the reputations of all involved — there was a damaging deadlock."



With record numbers of chicks fledging, hen harrier conservation is looking good

Fowlers' 'Forth Bridge' effort

A wildfowling club has celebrated a remarkable anniversary. The Chichester Wildfowling Association has repaired a key sea wall in the local harbour for 64 years.

The club, which shoots on and around the 9,000-acre Chichester Harbour Outstanding Area of Natural Beauty, is part of a partnership that looks after the area. In its 64-year history

the CWA has won numerous conservation awards for its work in the harbour. Its haul includes two Laurent Perrier Awards, the West Sussex Award for Conservation, a *Daily Telegraph* Conservation Award and two BASC Stanley Duncan Awards.

The annual repairing of the sea wall at Fishbourne draws a pre-season working party of around 30 members,

who bring along buckets, cement mixers and hand tools to make the wall good before the bad weather arrives. Club chairman Lee Freeston said: "Cleaning up the harbour unfortunately is like painting the Forth Bridge — it is a never-ending activity. The CWA also organises regular work parties to pick up rubbish, usually on a Sunday morning."



The CWA has repaired a key sea wall in the local harbour for 64 years

NEWS IN BRIEF

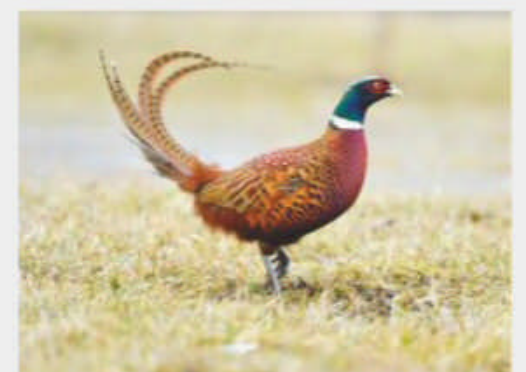
Badger cull legal claim ruled out

Wild Justice has suffered another legal defeat. The anti-shooting campaign group, led by Chris Packham, had raised funds to bring a judicial review into the use of free shooting as part of the badger cull. However, a judge has refused permission for the review to go ahead. Mr Justice Johnson said that he did not think it was arguable that Natural England had acted illegally.



Proposed changes to 'worrying' law

Pheasants could receive additional protection from 'worrying' by out-of-control dogs in Scotland in legal changes proposed by Emma Harper MSP. BASC's political and press officer in Scotland Ross Ewing said: "Following consultation with members, BASC's submission of evidence to the Scottish parliament is fully supportive of extending the offence of livestock worrying to include enclosed gamebirds. Our submission contains a raft of practitioner evidence of enclosed gamebird worrying by dogs — tougher penalties are required to tackle this unacceptable behaviour."



FOLLOW US ON INSTAGRAM
@SHOOTINGTIMESUK

SHOOTING TIMES
A COUNTRY MAGAZINE

ISSN: 0037-4164

Shooting Times, Future PLC,
Pinehurst 2, Farnborough Business Park,
Farnborough, Hampshire GU14 7BF.**For editorial enquiries:**ti.steditorials@futurenet.com
01252 555220**For picture enquiries:**

max.tremlett@futurenet.com

Subscription hotline:

0330 333 1113

help@magazinesdirect.com

Editor Patrick Galbraith**Deputy editor** Ed Wills

edward.wills@futurenet.com

Brand assistant Sarah Pratley

01252 555220

Group art director Kevin Eason**Art editor** Rob Farmer**Picture editor** Max Tremlett**Group chief sub-editor** Di Cross**Chief sub-editor** Sarah Potts

sarah.potts@futurenet.com

Deputy chief sub-editor Nicola Jane Swinney

nicola.swinney@futurenet.com

Digital editor Charlotte Peters

charlotte.peters@futurenet.com

shootinguk.co.uk

Managing director Kirsty Setchell**Group managing director** Adrian Hughes**Classified advertising**

Will McMillan 01252 555305

will.mcmillan@futurenet.com

Display advertising

Rebecca Norris 07929 369204

rebecca.norris@futurenet.com

Charlene Homewood 07815 712678

charlene.homewood@futurenet.com

Laurence Pierce 07971 605143

laurence.pierce@futurenet.com

Group advertisement manager

Stuart Duncan stuart.duncan@futurenet.com

Advertisement production

Tony Freeman tony.freeman@futurenet.com

Innovator (for loose and bound-in inserts)

020 3148 3710

Can't find ST? 020 3148 3300**Back issues** 01795 662976

support@mags-uk.com

Shooting Times is the official weekly journal
of BASC and the CPSA. BASC Marford Mill,
Rossett LL12 0HL Tel 01244 573000
CPSA PO Box 750, Woking, GU24 0YU
Tel 01483 485400We reserve the right to edit letters. No letter should exceed 250
words. Letters will not be used unless the author is prepared
to have their name and county of residence published.
Letters should be addressed to: The Editor, Shooting Times,
Future PLC, Pinehurst 2, Farnborough Business Park, Hants,
GU14 7BF, or email STletters@futurenet.com. Please include
a daytime telephone number and postal address.This week's cover image was
captured by Andy Hook**Chief executive** Zillah Byng-Thorne
Non-executive chairman Richard Huntingford
Chief financial officer Rachel AddisonFuture plc is a public
company quoted on the
London Stock Exchange
(symbol: FUTR)
www.futureplc.com Tel +44 (0)225 442 244

LETTER OF THE WEEK

Traps, the RSPB and good practice

I was amazed, and appalled, to read of the Orkney stoat trap fiasco, in which dead and decaying animals were found in the RSPB's traps (News, 8 July).

When I was employed by good old MAFF — Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, now Defra — as a coypu trapper in Norfolk, we each had about 70 traps. Every Friday, we had to rebait our traps and turn them upside down for the weekend so they could still be entered but not able to contain any animal that might be tempted.

Then on Monday we had to turn them all up the right way, bait them and were in business again, catching mainly mink but the occasional coypu. The last big catch of coypu was made at the Welney Wetland Centre in the days of good old Josh Scott, who was warden/shepherd on the Welney Washes.

I know these were cage traps, and non-lethal, but even so we weren't allowed to risk animals being caught and left over the weekend.

According to my copy of *Fair Game*, under inspection of

traps, they should be checked at reasonable intervals and at least once every day between sunrise and sunset. Failure to do so was an offence under the Protection of Animals Act.

I hope someone will haul the RSPB over the coals for what happened on Orkney. If it were a gamekeeper who had been caught for this action, the RSPB would be the first in the queue to prosecute.

Could there not be some sort of alarm that would call your mobile phone when a trap is sprung?

T E Manning, Norfolk

IN ASSOCIATION WITH ALAN PAINE

The winner of Letter of the Week will have the choice of a men's or ladies' Alan Paine Aylsham Fleece Waistcoat. Ideal to throw on over a shirt during these warmer days in the field. Available in sizes S-5XL or 8-20. For more information, visit: alanpaine.co.uk. **Please note, we are unable to send out prizes as our offices are closed.**



ORDINARY PEOPLE

Any non-shooting member of the public who picked up a recent issue and read the car review might well be forgiven for thinking that we shooters are a well-heeled bunch.

A £40,000 Toyota Land Cruiser (Vehicle test, 26 August) might look nice on my yard, and a Purdey gun would be a fine addition to my gun cabinet but, like the vast majority of shooters, I'm an ordinary working man who saves hard for his shooting, drives an old van and makes do with a Beretta Silver Pigeon.

Why not run a series of second-hand car tests on suitable shooting vehicles for us ordinary people?

There's nothing wrong with a thoroughbred, but most of us have to make do with a donkey.

M Thomas-Palmer, by email

The Editor responds: Over the past few seasons, we've reviewed Dacias and Mercedes, Suzukis and SsangYongs. One of the great

things about Shooting Times is that it is read by a wide variety of people on all sorts of different budgets and accordingly, we review a range of cars, with varying price tags. On a purely practical note, it would be very hard to get second-hand cars to review. Car manufacturers have press fleets but not of old pickups they made in the late 1990s.

NEW DAWN
FOR THE BBC?

Like, I'm sure, many of your readers I applauded the new director-general of the BBC, Tim Davie, for reinstating the traditional versions of *Land of Hope and Glory* and *Rule Britannia* on *The Last Night of the Proms*.

But that applause is nothing compared with my celebration when I read what he has to say about perceived bias.

"If you want to be an opinionated columnist or a partisan campaigner on social media then that is a valid choice,



Tim Davie, BBC director-general

but you should not be working at the BBC," he said last week in Cardiff, his first official speech. He emphasised that the BEEB needed to "urgently champion and recommit to impartiality" and added that "if you work [at the BBC], nothing should be more exciting than exploring different views, seeking evidence with curiosity and creatively presenting testimony".

Is it too much to hope that the likes of Chris Packham might be quaking — even slightly — in their biased boots?

A Cunningham, County Durham

PERFECT HOME

I am a member of BASC and a semi-retired farmer with an interest in conservation, particularly the grey partridge and the habitat required to maintain and consolidate a small population on the farm.

Your contributor Alan Edwards often writes about his efforts to help the grey partridge and recently wrote about how he created a good habitat for them to prosper. But the article was not long enough to tell the reader what he had actually done.

This is not a criticism; but I wondered if it were possible for me to write to him directly or perhaps phone

him for further advice on establishing the required habitat. Thank you for a wonderful magazine.

**P Chapman,
North Yorkshire**

*The Editor responds:
I believe you are referring to Alan's regular column (Gamekeeper, 8 July), in which he has very little scope to expand. I will pass your details on to him but we are keen on grey partridge conservation and will be running more articles on how to provide the optimum habitat and all the other attendant issues, such as predator control, that go into protecting*



Alan Edwards talked about creating habitat for wild greys

and encouraging our beloved English greys.

PUPPY PRICES

Reading the article about the ridiculous sums being asked for puppies (*The price is wrong*, 26 August), there is one dark reason David Tomlinson has probably not heard of. That is if you advertised puppies at the sensible price, unscrupulous people are buying them up and reselling them to double or treble their profit, using them as a commodity.

If you are selling puppies for £2,000 and more, hopefully people really want a puppy and there is little profit in reselling.

I am a hobby breeder, only having a litter to keep my line going. If I know the home the puppy is going to, I do not charge the inflated price — I only do so if I have to advertise to the wider public.

J Field, Hertfordshire

BADGER CULLS AND CRIMINALS

It is beyond belief that the antis have wilfully released private details of certificate holders in Wiltshire (*News*, 26 August). The apparent reason for the leaks is

that some of the holders are — or might be, how do the antis know for sure? — in the badger cull. It is believed the leak originated from a local training event for cull contractors.

I think all your readers would agree that no one wants to shoot badgers. For most of us, these enigmatic creatures are part and parcel of the countryside in the same way that foxes, hares, rabbits, hedgehogs and all other kinds of creatures are. But like foxes, badgers no longer have any natural predator.

When the population was in decline, they were protected, and rightly so. But their numbers have more than doubled since the 1980s and the most up-to-date estimate of their numbers in the UK is 562,000.

The reason for the cull is, of course, bovine tuberculosis, thought to be spread by badgers to cattle. This means that affected cattle have to be slaughtered. Here I have a slightly vested interest as some close friends farm beef cattle. They do not have huge herds — they're not a megafarm that we keep reading about — and

they know each of their cows individually by name. Every time the TB testing rolls around, they spend sleepless nights waiting to learn if their beloved herd is safe or if they have to see them go to the abattoir.

Those people who disrupt the cull and leak details maliciously of those who might or might not be involved, never spare a thought for the poor farmer. Yes, there is compensation, but you cannot compensate for a life's hard graft in building up a beautiful pedigree herd.

S Carter, Gloucestershire

UNSCIENTIFIC

The news that a report from League Against Cruel Sports fellow traveller Professor Stephen Harris has been criticised as factually inaccurate (*News*, 26 August) should surprise no rational person.

Given reports about his 'cherry-picking' from studies and 'misrepresenting science', it appears he is to scientific objectivity what Stalin was to stand-up comedy.

I Coghill, by email

NEXT WEEK IN SHOOTING TIMES

NEW RECRUITS

Is shooting now more popular than ever?



GOLDEN SHOT

Decoying golden plover in Ireland.



A WORTHY ADVERSARY

The history of capercaillie shooting in the Highlands and why the sport ended.



ROSE-TINTED BIRDS

Could coloured glasses make you shoot better?



“The wildlife of today is not ours to dispose of as we please. We have it in trust. We must account for it to those who come after.” King George VI



Country Diary

As the rain and wind signal the rapid onset of autumn, it is time to say farewell with a heavy heart to some old friends in the suckler herd

My eye is caught by a thistle head swaying and I strain my eyes to see what has stirred it. Viewed more closely, it is a small bird and, as my pupils focus, I see a whole charm of goldfinches cleverly camouflaged in the weeds.

It never ceases to amaze me how a yellow, red, black, white and brown bird sitting on a purple flower can be so hard to see against a green background. At least there are a few thistles. These are in a paddock sold to some neighbours many years ago and their *laissez-faire* attitude to grassland management helps to boost the food supply for the finches, which salves my conscience a little.

The fields and hedges are dotted with family groups of birds at the moment. Three times I have had to stop the pickup on a track to allow hen pheasants with small broods of poults to shimmy down the road before fluttering into the hedge. And the brood of wagtails whose nest we anxiously watched through the summer are now roosting along the ridge of our roof at dusk.

Down on the shore, parties of waders are out feeding on the mud, the avian equivalent of families pulling in to Tebay service station for a burger and chips on their way back to autumn term-time quarters.

Conscience

The suckler herd is weighing heavily on my conscience as I gear up to sell the last of them. There are few better sights than cows and calves in late summer. The knowledge that this is the last year I will be able to enjoy them is sad.

I have bonded with the new dairy heifers and enjoy watching them, but there is nothing quite like seeing beef calves chasing each other round in early evening when all young creatures, especially human ones, seem to get a sugar rush and a burst of energy. And dairy cows never quite seem to achieve that characterful matronly look.

Some of them are old friends who have been in the herd for 15 years. I remember when we started with 20 cows, I knew each of them intimately. As the herd grew to more than 200 cows at one stage, I regretted that I didn't know them all by



When you have had a herd for many years, you bond with the cows and learn their characteristics

sight. It was similar to my experience in the Army when I thought I knew my soldiers well as a platoon commander, less well as a company commander and struggled to know all their names when I was the adjutant.

One consolation is that dairy cattle are at least safer and quieter. Beef cattle have never reached that level of domestication and though, touch wood, we have always had quieter cattle than most, there has been the

“I’m trying not to think about the field of barley going flat”

odd one that has been a bit ‘fast’. Each year, as we have stood at the crush pregnancy testing the cows, we have commiserated with each other as some ‘pets’ have been empty and ‘put away’, and some ‘old bitches’ have been in calf and allowed to display their malevolent attitude for another year.

As I write, I am trying hard not to look out of the window at yet another ‘soft day’ when a perpetual drizzle reinforced by short, sharp showers soaks man and beast alike.

And I am trying hard not to think about the last field of barley going flat. The pigeon are having a lovely time.

The waterlogged ground and several mini-hurricanes have caused a few casualties in the woods. Wullie, the tree surgeon, is here tidying up and he has persuaded me to bite the bullet and fell some ashes that are showing severe signs of dieback close to a road. My inclination is usually to let nature take its course. I have often seen trees recover from various ailments, but these look very sick and the disease apparently ruins the timber.

One consolation is that this year’s pheasant poults, Kansas-grey crosses, seem to be standing up to it well so far. Barring some attrition from a sparrowhawk, we don’t appear to have lost too many so far. They are now just about wary and big enough for that particular threat to have receded. Roll on the shooting season. 🐦

🔗 Jamie Blackett farms in Galloway. He runs a small private shoot and was one of the founders of the Dumfriesshire & Stewartry Foxhounds.

The past is a grey area

The wild English partridge was once abundant and had a complex relationship with man that remains to this day, says Patrick Laurie

It takes a hard heart to ignore the sound of partridges in the dusk. You can hardly call it birdsong, but when greys chirrup and skirl in the gloom of an early autumn evening, the hair will stand up on your neck. Here is the eerie sound of history itself. Grey partridges have provided the soundtrack to life in rural communities for thousands of years, right across Europe from Ireland to the Russian steppe.

Greys flourished alongside early agriculture as ancient forests were cleared to make way for fields and open habitats. They've been living in our pockets ever since, booming in numbers that would have been impossible without the changes man has pressed upon the natural world.

Man has always enjoyed a two-way relationship with these birds and for every covey found pecking around a cornfield, one or two would end up roasting on a spit. Partridge bones are among the most common discoveries at archaeological sites. There are long catalogues of such findings from across Europe and the mind boggles at how some of these tiny and ambiguous fragments were ever accurately identified.

Studying a photograph of a partridge bone fragment discovered



An engraving of partridge shooting in Norfolk

in a late Bronze Age midden in Poland, it looks more like a mouldy cornflake than anything you might recognise from a living bird. Fortunately, there is a range of scientific techniques that identify these minute scraps of bone beyond any reasonable doubt.

Partridge remains are found in midden sites dating from the Roman period and in Britain they persist all the way through the Dark Ages to the time of Vikings and the early Saxon monarchs. Anybody who has eaten a nicely roasted partridge will

understand why our ancestors should have favoured the plump, abundant bird as a delicacy, but it is harder to find evidence that reveals how they were hunted and brought to the table.

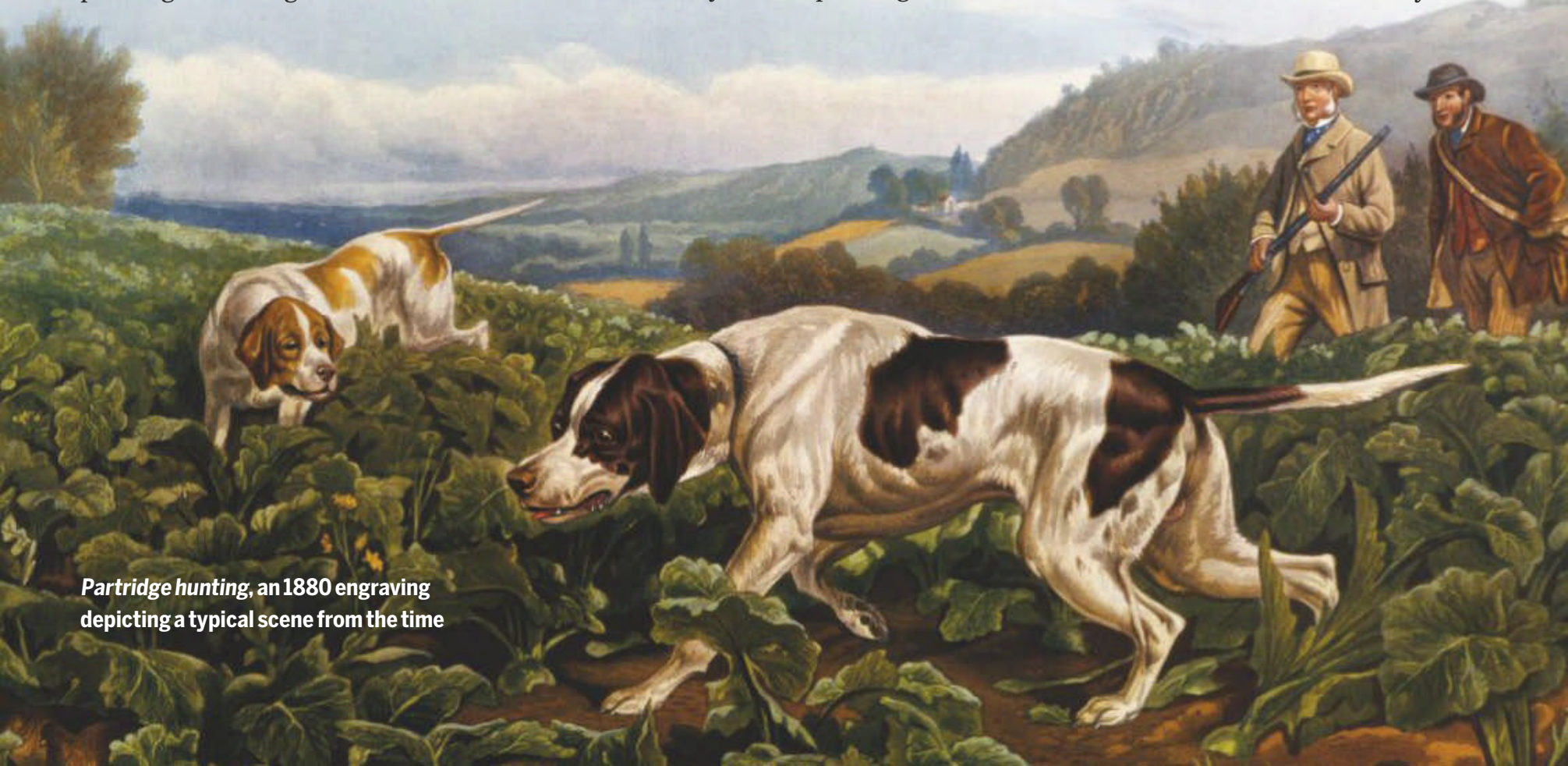
In the modern age of firearms, it is easy to forget about traditional hunting techniques. Over the past 10 years, snares have become a highly specialised tool for catching rabbits and foxes, but the original ones were some of our most ancient hunting tools. Simple, cheap and easy to make, there would have been a time when snares hung in the eaves of every hut and homestead in Britain.

Children would have been taught how and where to set snares as a matter of course and it is unlikely that much thought was given to issues of animal welfare or selectivity.

Horsehair snare

It is now illegal to set a snare for any bird species, but it's likely that thousands of partridges were snared every year in ancient times. A thin, simple plait of horsehair was usually strong enough to hold a grey partridge and it is not hard to find their runs and tracks through the long grass.

Some partridges are extremely predictable in their habits and hunters would have found it easy



Partridge hunting, an 1880 engraving depicting a typical scene from the time

Sporting history

to catch up birds when needed. The technique was still being used in the Victorian era by a variety of old-school poachers and it was often extended to catch grouse, blackgame and woodcock. Some of these snares were called springes, but specifics of style, mechanism and design varied between regions. Most would have pinned the bird so it was unable to escape, but some were spring-loaded to hang the unfortunate partridge up in the air, where it would not be snaffled by a passing fox or badger.

More intricate traps emerged towards the Middle Ages, based around baskets and funnels like lobster pots, which caught multiple birds at once. The baskets could be plaited out of straw during the harvest when birds flocked to the cornfields

Some of the punishments meted out to common people for killing partridges seem disproportionate by modern standards, but there were heavy fines in these early days of ‘poaching’; a term that had previously applied to larger and more prestigious quarry such as deer and boar.

Ponderously slow

The first guns were tricky, dangerous and ponderously slow to load. It’s no wonder that they ranked pretty low down in a fieldsports community that had not changed a great deal since Norman times. In a world of falcons, daggers and deerhounds, people who hunted with guns were considered to be crass, tub-thumping fools without finesse or proper respect for their quarry.

“In a world of falcons, daggers and deerhounds, Guns were considered crass”

to gather up the spilt seed. Most farms would have tried to catch a few wild birds as the autumn progressed.

At the same time, there was growing conflict with landowners and the nobility, who were beginning to show an interest in partridges as a worthy quarry species for falconry.

Falconry is an ancient art but as medieval noblemen and women embraced the idea of flying birds of prey, partridges were drawn into a political struggle between the classes. There was little tolerance for the traditional idea that partridges were a natural resource that could be shared by everybody and this only gathered pace with the development of the first firearms during the 17th century.

It’s certainly true that early matchlock firearms had serious practical limitations and it seems amazing in retrospect that they ever caught on. There would have been no question of tackling flying game at first, and the small number of birds that were shot in the early years would have been tackled as they stood on the ground. The quarry had to remain stock still at very short range while the musketeer organised himself and his gun and prepared it to fire. If he were lucky, the sportsman would reduce his chosen partridge to a charred ruin of feathers and mincemeat.

If he were unlucky, his gun would explode and he would be strewn across a wide area himself.

Snares were used for different species including woodcock and partridges



An engraved colour illustration of a partridge and young, in undergrowth near open fields





Estates employed the 'Euston system' of partridge rearing to multiply productivity



It was only in the late Georgian and Regency period when game shooting began to lay the foundations for our modern sport. This was at least in part due to technological improvements in firearms engineering. Early sporting pioneers such as Colonel Peter Hawker worked alongside gunsmiths to develop firearms that seemed to improve year

on year. Hawker developed a close relationship with the gunmaker Joseph Manton and the arms that emerged from this partnership enabled birds to be shot on the wing.

From there, it was only a few logical steps to the birth of walked-up partridge shooting. Setters and pointing dogs, which had been used alongside falcons and huntsmen, were reinvented for the shooting field, and the partnership between man and dog evolved into new areas.

Breechloaders

Driven partridge shooting rose to prominence in the mid-19th century, particularly when breechloading shotguns came on the market. This allowed sporting people to fire quickly and efficiently in the high-octane environment created by driven birds. As an appetite for driven shooting developed, gamekeeping effort was steadily increased in parallel – so partridges had probably never been so abundant.

Estates that deployed the 'Euston system' were able to multiply the productivity of birds on their ground. Wild chicks were brooded by domesticated chickens and hen partridges were given wooden dummy eggs to keep them sitting.

Partridges have been steadily declining across Britain. A disintegration of their traditional farmland habitats coincided with a loss of gamekeepers throughout the 20th century, and in many areas where the birds were lost, landowners simply replaced them with the mass release of red-legged partridges.

The shooting community retains a deep connection to these charming little birds. The highest densities of partridges are still found around shooting estates, and the complex relationship between man and partridge is endlessly fascinating. 🐦

Wildfowling

An everlasting call

Wildfowlers yearn for 1 September, even though they know they'll likely blank, but heading out is a fine tradition worth upholding

WRITTEN BY RICHARD NEGUS • PHOTOGRAPHY BY CALLUM MCINERNEY-RILEY





I have never shot a grouse on 12 August. Admittedly, I haven't shot a grouse on any other day of the year either. The Glorious Twelfth has become short-hand, in the British psyche, for the start of something, a beginning, but the same does not apply to 1 September.

For a small, ruddy-faced band of masochists, however, the first day of the ninth month is an occasion of the utmost import.

Suffolk, the most far-flung eastern bulge of Englishness, first glimpses the sunrise over our islands. When it does so, on this most auspicious of days, the creeks, gutters and inlets along the county's foreshore hide a band of muddy brothers and sisters. All of them stare upwards into this light with awe, wonder and near-religious fervour. For in Suffolk, and in every other county, 'the First' is the opening day of the wildfowling season. While almost every fowler who dares to describe himself as such will be out on the First, we all do so with scant expectations.



Mabel the cocker spaniel can't wait for the wildfowling season to start either

Alan Jarrett, the chairman of the Kent Wildfowling and Conservation Association, wrote a lovely book called *Wildfowling: One Winter's Tale* in 1988. He perfectly describes why this date is so important: "For the wildfowler summer ends, at long last, at midnight on the last day of August – and winter begins in that same instant. The winter is, for the wildfowler, a treasured thing. We yearn for a harsh season, endless days and nights of sleet and snow. Nor'easterly gales are welcomed like favourite uncles, skies the colour of grey seals are celebrated. ➡

The waiting is over; on 1 September Richard is in a hide on the foreshore

Wildfowling

“With weather such as this, the fowl migrate readily to our shores from the norlands. If it is indeed a ‘real winter’ these wild migrants may fly low enough so that we may take our chance and down a few.”

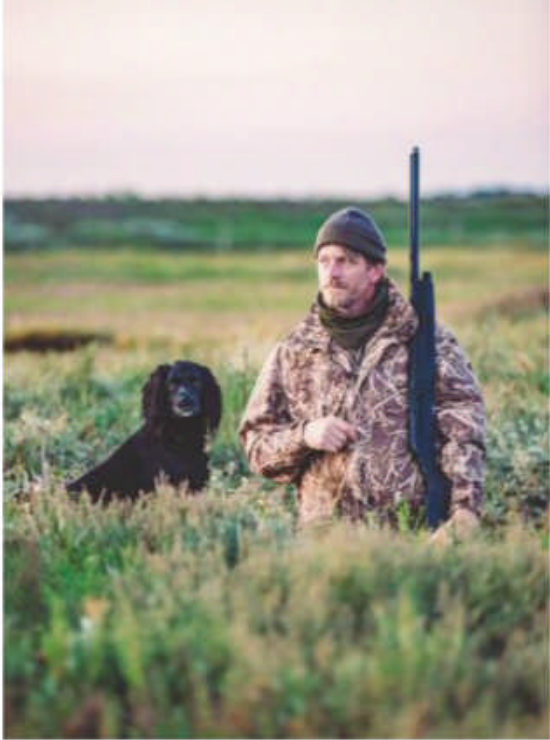
Sadly, the First isn’t really winter. It is, in reality, late summer. This year I wended my way down to the Alde on the First for an evening flight rather than welcoming in the dawn. As I set up my hide in a slimy gutter on the saltings my eye caught a movement on the river.

Drifting slowly past me from the direction of Aldeburgh came a paddle boarder. Shirtless, wearing only Bermuda shorts, he glided by, his craft making barely a ripple as he sculled his single oar. The sky was an azure blue, the sun still high in the sky to my rear. It warmed me excessively, as I watched him pass, me clad in my layers of camouflage and neoprene. The scene before me was more Thomas Cook than Sir Peter Scott.

Black line

Peter Scott writes of this early season in *Morning Flight*. He reminisces on seeing the pink-footed geese arrive en masse to his marshes in September. “Is it possible,” he writes, “that 20,000 geese made up that black line which stretched as far as the eye could reach along the high sand?”

Scott wrote this master work in the mid-1930s. Today the very idea that migratory geese would come



Man and dog survey the largely fowl-less sky

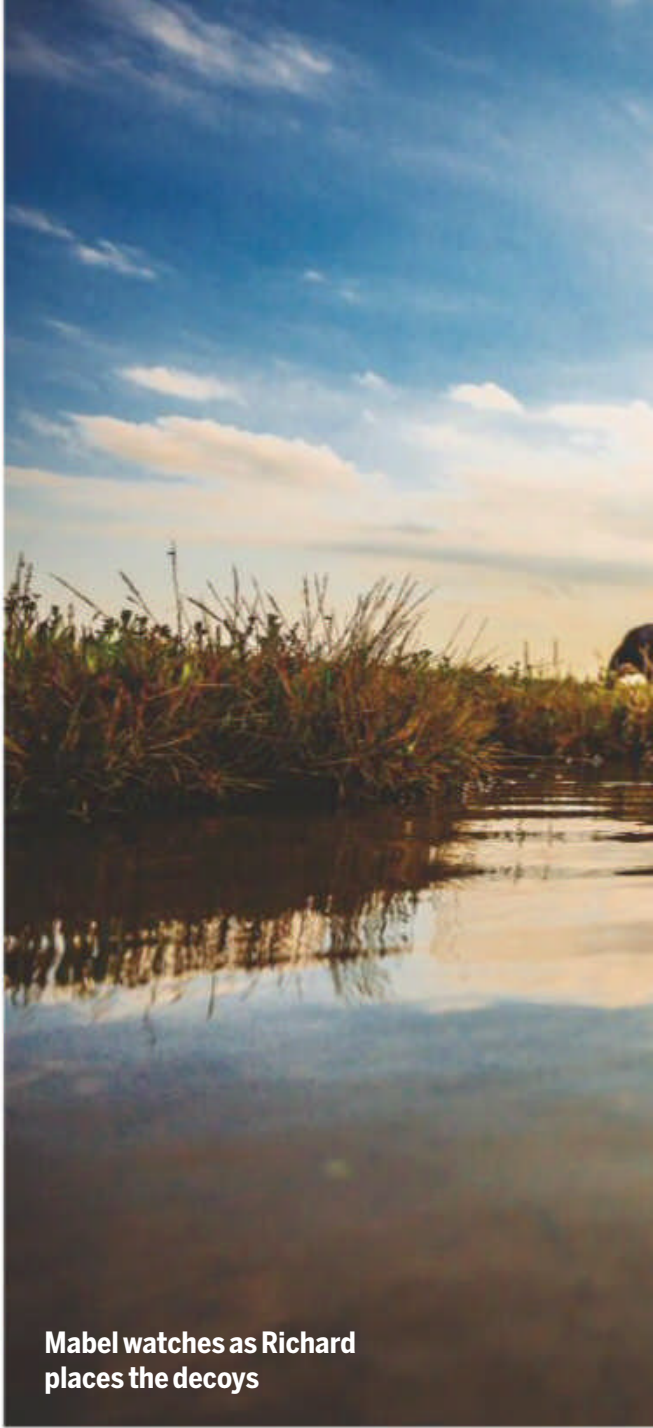
to our shores in September is the stuff of dreams. As I waited on the foreshore the sky was markedly goose-free.

A skein of local lads, eight greylags, born and bred in a reedbed behind the sea wall, did put in an appearance. They silhouetted themselves against the now finally setting sun, grumbling at one another like rusty hinges. Flying a few hundred metres inland and the same measure skywards, they headed resolutely in the direction of the masts at Bawdsey.

With nothing else better to do I looked at my phone. The fowling jungle drums were beating via Facebook and I saw that some had had success on the Norfolk stubbles bagging greylag and Canada geese, but it will be a month or possibly two before the pinkfeet and whitefronts get here in any number. Of course, while I set out on this glorious First



Hope against hope: the weather, as is so often the case on the First, is not conducive to wildfowling



Mabel watches as Richard places the decoys

– and every First I have partaken in – with low expectations of success, hope does spring eternal. I was not here merely to make a show of it, I did mean business.

I threw out a quartet of mallard decoys on a splash; I set up my hide with what I would consider to be care,

“Geese, silhouetted against the setting sun, grumbled at one another like rusty hinges”

standing back to see that my poles didn’t stand out. However, while fieldcraft is an important part of fowling, weather and tide are usually the two factors that will make or break an outing to the foreshore.

On this First, the tide was all wrong for me. Low tide fell at around 5.15pm, the mud stretched before me glistening like a cowpat. The river was so shrunk that the curlew and redshank which delved in the water’s edge stood some 60m or 70m away. A high tide may have pushed duck off the water and sent them over me to



seek inland ponds and splashes, but this shrunken and torpid flow was no ally of mine.

Marsh harrier

The weather too was against me. Not only was the sky cloudless and summer-like, but not one breath of wind rippled the water. I waited and waited; the sun dipped slowly and yet more slowly. Apart from watching a marsh harrier quarter back and forth across the river, and holding fluting conversations with the curlew, it was becoming rather tiresome. Then to whet my appetite I spied, coming from Orford, a party of 15 mallard.

Wine bottles with wings they were, scudding along way up high. A gale would have seen them hug the river, eyes half shut as they battled the gusts, but not on this day. I gave a cursory quack or two on my call, more for my benefit than theirs. They merely went on their way, heading for the Aldeburgh town ponds.

Another sporting writer – possibly my all-time favourite – Alan Savory described the First’s largely fowl-less skies in his book *Norfolk Fowler*. He holidayed at Morston in the first week of September 1927, shooting the marshes and foreshore of this

beautiful bit of the Norfolk coast: “The worst of this shore shooting is that it takes so long before there is anything to shoot,” he complains.

It seems that nearly 100 years later little has changed. I continued to wait it out. Mabel started to fidget, wanting to wander off across the saltings and look for crab shells to crunch. Another group of mallard appeared, lower this time. I crouched

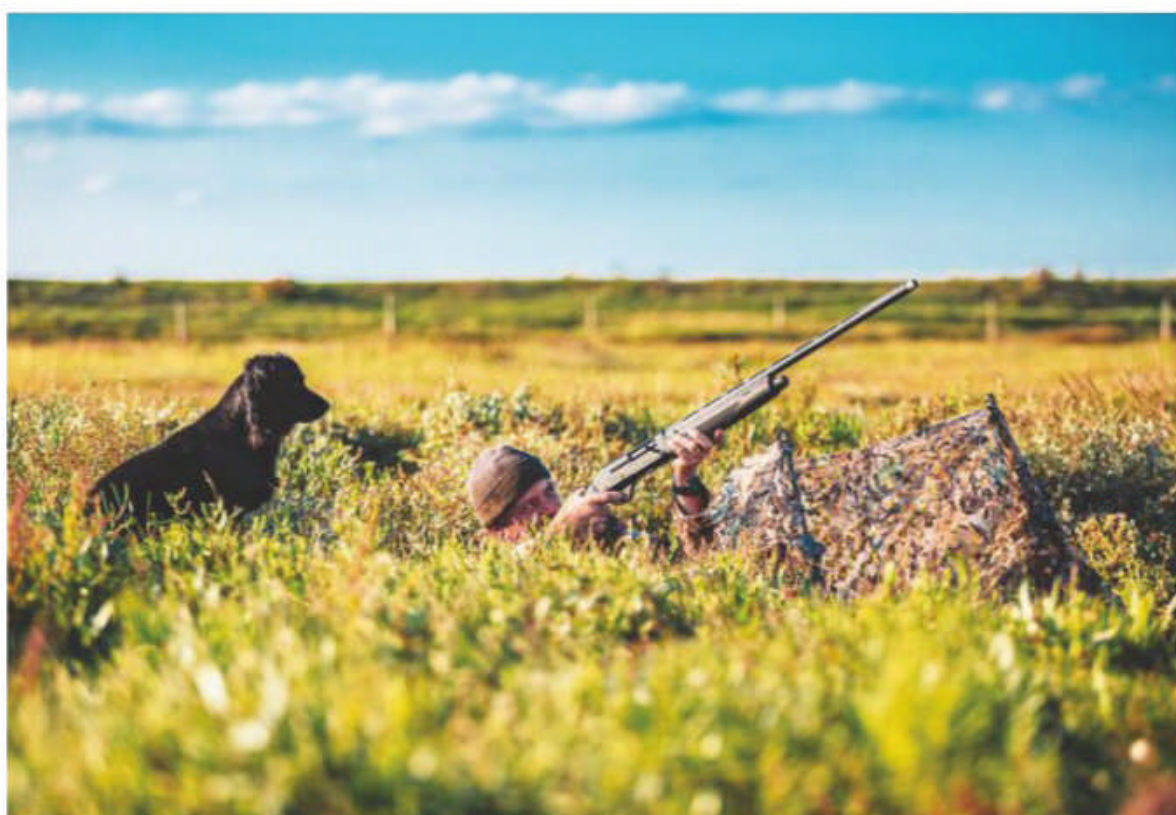
deep in my muddy hollow, peering through my eyebrows. I blew my call with purpose, imitating the repeated quacking a duck makes to let her kind know that she is lonely and would like guests for supper. One bird flew on, probably a duck, three veered towards me, probably drakes.

Glory


My decoys proved less enticing than the rapidly disappearing lady of their affections and they followed her at pace, again in the direction of the town ponds. The sun turned tangerine in a moment, receding behind a cloud. In answer to this setting glory the moon appeared due east, seemingly on fire. I stood up, knees stiff. I realised that this First, like every other, was going to be a blank. I always come to this little piece of foreshore on this date and I never shoot a thing.

I fired off a solitary shot into the air, my last chance, hoping that the report might spring up a skulking teal. No such thing happened, merely the unique booming roll of sound that quakes over the mud and sea water then reverberates back at you with a shriek as it hits the far bank.

Mabel retrieved my spent cartridge case and I packed away my kit ready for the trudge back to my truck. Crossing the sea wall, somewhere out in the gloom a gaggle of greylags creaked. Scott described goose music as “like a symphony of Beethoven, the call is everlasting and those who have once known it and loved it can never tire of hearing it”. He knew a thing or two about wildfowling, that man. 🦌



Just before he packs up Richard fires a solitary shot, hoping that it might stir up a teal or two



The French braque d'Auvergne is a tough working dog, similar in build to an English pointer

Meet the Euro stars

Europe is home to a mind-boggling number of gundog breeds. Here David Tomlinson sorts the *braque d'Auvergne* from the *pudelpointer*

Black labradors have one great advantage as gundogs: they're wonderfully anonymous. Everyone has got one, so if yours is particularly badly behaved, no one really notices. You can even pretend that it's not yours.

That's not the case if you work, for example, an *épagneul de Pont-Audemer* or a *braque d'Auvergne*. It's likely to be the only one on the shoot and probably the only one in the county, if not the country.

It may be fun owning a rare breed, but it will always be the centre of attention, with everyone waiting for it to course a hare or eat a pheasant. It behoves you to train it well to make sure that neither you nor your dog are ever laughed at.

It's quite a challenge finding out how many breeds of gundog there are in Europe and there's no point

in turning to our own Kennel Club, which doesn't recognise many of the long-established European breeds.

To get an idea of how many there are, look at the website of the Fédération Cynologique Internationale (FCI), the world canine organisation. Curiously, the UK Kennel Club is the only kennel club in Europe that isn't a member of the FCI.

The FCI divides the continental pointing dogs into three divisions:

“It may be fun owning a rare breed, but it will always be the centre of attention”

braque type, spaniel type and griffon type. There are 18 braque-type breeds, ranging from several that you will certainly have heard of (German shorthaired pointer, Weimaraner) to several that you are unlikely to recognise. These include the *gammel*

Dansk hønsehund (old Danish pointing dog) and the *perdiguero de Burgos* (a Spanish pointer from Burgos).

There are 10 dogs in the spaniel-type division, and these include both the familiar (Brittany) and the decidedly unfamiliar (*épagneul bleu de Picardie*, *Drentsche patrijshond*). The French have the most breeds in this division, five in all, followed by the Germans with three and the Dutch with two.

Lastly, there's the wirehaired griffon type, with only three breeds. Two of them – the *spinone* and the Korthals griffon – are well established here, but the third, the *Ceský Fousek* or Bohemian wirehaired pointing griffon, is virtually unknown in this country.

If you fancy taking on the challenge of a rare continental breed, there are two ways of finding your dog. The first and most challenging is tracking down a dog you like in its country of origin and importing it yourself – a process that is likely to become more difficult next year once the UK has finally left the EU, following the transition period.

Rather simpler is tracking down a breeder in this country, for there are a number of these rare breeds that have already attracted a small but dedicated following here.

Braque d’Auvergne

If you want a handsome pointing dog that catches the eye, then the French *braque d’Auvergne* is the dog for you. In build, it resembles a muscular and deep-chested English pointer. Its colouring is always black and white, with solid black ears and black on the head, but there are usually lots of *mouchetures* (speckles), giving what we would call a blue-roan appearance.

The breed’s alternative name is the *bleu d’Auvergne*, which is also the name of one of the great French blue cheeses. Though popular in Europe, the breed’s centre remains in the Auvergne in the Massif Central. This is a rural, heavily wooded and mountainous area and the breeders concentrate on producing tough working dogs, not animals for the show bench.

According to Lori Dempster, founder of the Braque d’Auvergne Club UK, the braque is an easy dog to work with and not dissimilar to the Hungarian wirehaired vizsla. “They range widely, but like to come back



The German brokencoated pointer, also known as a *Deutsch stichelhaar*, is a hugely versatile breed

to check on you and seem to want to please you,” she said. “One of the attractions of the breed is that they still have a strong working instinct that hasn’t been lost by breeding for the show ring.”

There are currently more than 100 dogs in the UK. The breed has been recognised by the Kennel Club and is on the import register.

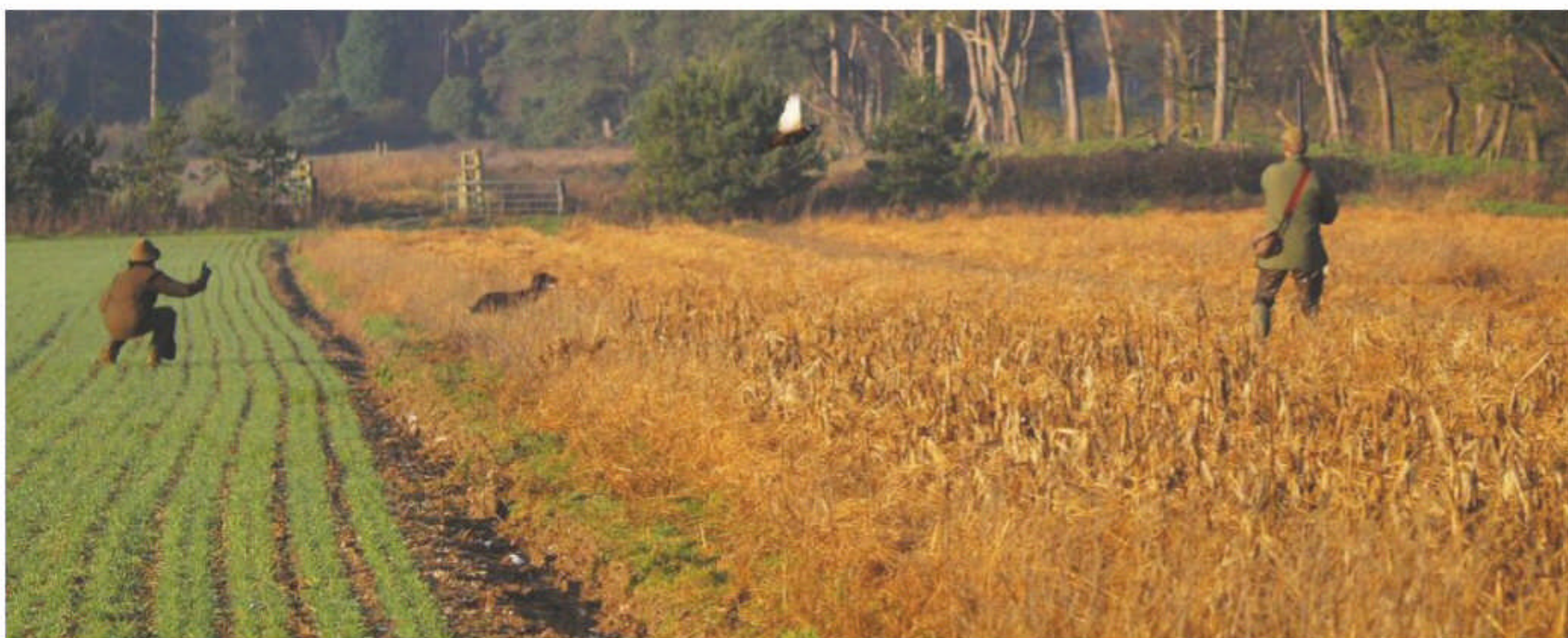
French spaniel

It’s easy to mistake a French spaniel for a large English springer. The head and ears are very similar, so too are the colour and markings, while their enthusiasm for life and hunting is identical. However, the vital difference is that the French spaniel is an ancient pointing breed.

It flourished in 16th- and 17th-century France when it was used to find game – larks, partridges or quail – that could then be netted by the hunter. Numbers declined sharply in the early years of the 19th century, when imported English setters and pointers largely replaced it, and by the end of the century it was close to dying out.

The breed’s saviour was a sporting priest, Father Fournier. In the last years of the 19th century, he gathered together the few remaining French spaniels and started a breeding programme that saved this distinctive spaniel from extinction.

Today, there are French spaniels in the US, the Netherlands and Germany. In the early 1970s, a number were ➔



The German longhaired pointer is a breed which remains rare in this country, despite having won the HPR Championship and been successful in field trials

European gundogs

imported to Canada and the Canadian *Club de Epagneul Français* was founded in Quebec in 1978.

Canada rather than France is the source of the French spaniels we now have in the UK. Nicole and Marc Brule-Walker imported their first one, a bitch called Clovissonette, from Quebec in 2009. She was the founding bitch of the small population of French spaniels now to be found working in Britain.

Barbet

Another little-known French breed, this is a large, curlycoated dog that resembles a cross between a poodle and an Irish water spaniel. There is almost certainly barbet blood in the veins of many of today's curlycoated breeds, as the breed's history goes back a long way. In 1910, Robert Leighton noted: "The barbet is yet another ancient breed of French spaniel, the dog par excellence for waterfowl."

First recognised by the Kennel Club in 2018, there is a small but active breed club here, the Barbet Club GB. Some years ago, I spoke to

"Many shoot owners and gamekeepers are wary of breeds they don't know"

Wendy Preston, one of the first people to import a barbet into the UK, who confirmed to me that the barbet really is a breed that likes to work.

However, the greatest challenge she faced was persuading shoots to let her work her barbet, as many shoot owners and gamekeepers are wary



The setter-like German longhaired pointer is one of the best-looking of all the HPR breeds

of breeds they don't know. For the wildfowler who fancies a tough water-loving dog with genuine potential, the barbet has a lot in its favour.

German longhaired pointer

Including a breed here that has not only been successful in field trials but also won the HPR Championship

the GLP is the ideal rough shooting dog, as they are the most determined of hunters and game finders, equally at home on land and water.

I've been fortunate enough to shoot over GLPs, so can confirm that it's true, these really are talented and tireless workers. The first pheasant I ever shot off a point was pointed with panache by a GLP.

Pudelpointer

As its name suggests, the *pudelpointer* is the result of a cross between a pointer and a poodle, undertaken in Germany by an aristocratic German hunter, Sigismund Freiherr von Zedlitz-Neukirch.

The first litter was born in 1881, with von Zedlitz-Neukirch aiming to combine the intelligence of the poodle with the quartering and stamina of the pointer.

Further pointer blood was introduced until the breed was perfected and today the *pudelpointer* is appreciated not only in its native Germany, but also in the US, where it was first imported in 1956.

Though a few *pudelpointers* have been imported into the UK, there has never been any serious attempt made to establish the breed here. According to an American enthusiast, its popularity is based on the fact that it will hunt and point upland game, trail wounded birds or furred game and retrieve from land or water, while always remaining an excellent companion in the field or home.

If it can do all that in the US, then why not in the UK?



The pudelpointer is popular in Germany and in the US, but has yet to really catch on in the UK



Greys' anatomy

Perdix perdix provided great sport but the redleg has taken over – it's a different quarry and should be treated as such, believes Alex Keeble

British driven partridge shooting took over from walked-up sport that occurred in the 1700s, with the biggest bags being obtained from the 1850s onwards. These were predominately English partridges because, though the redlegs were introduced around 1770 by Lord Hertford and Lord Rendlesham to Suffolk, that bird's popularity didn't take hold until the 1950s.

Most estates waited until around October before starting their English partridge shoots to allow the wild young birds to mature. Partridge shooting relied on wild birds having broods, much like grouse shooting. Though methods such as the 'Euston system' were adopted to increase productivity, they were still reliant on the weather, habitat, predator control and the abundance of insects.

During the Edwardian period, greys were the mainstay of our partridge shooting in the country; my previous employer from Suffolk recalled when they used to shoot pre-war that every field was full of English partridges. Those were the days before huge agricultural fields, having hedges removed and 20 smaller fields turned into one.

It has been suggested driven partridge shooting began on Lord Huntingfield's estate at Heveningham, Suffolk, during the 1850s. The drives on the estate changed from year to year to follow the cropping patterns, as game cover was yet to be planted for driven shooting in large acreages. Mangolds, turnips, potatoes and kale were the main crops used for driving.

Skulk

Driving English partridges relied on pushing the coveys into a root crop or cover, then standing the Guns behind a tall hedge and flushing the birds over it. If the crops were soaking wet, the birds would not favour them and, even when pushed into them, would skulk out the sides.

Grey partridges tend to starburst over a hedge in all directions, making them a very sporting quarry; the redlegs that fly over the hedge tend to follow the same line of flight. The fields were driven so each drive was supplemented with additional coveys – the best method was to have the coveys scattered in among the cover to stop large flushes occurring.

A partridge and pheasant shoot on 16 October 1910 at Stonor Park, Oxfordshire

As with pheasant driving, the beaters were told to stop when a covey flushed over the Gun line; a whistle or horn would be used to finish the drive. I have visited modern shoots that try to adopt the same method of shooting grey partridges over hedges using redlegs – with disappointing results. They are a different sporting quarry altogether and should be driven with different techniques.

Red-legged partridge releasing came into fashion with the demise of the greys. The redlegs had a greater ability to breed successfully than the English bird and were easier to drive and run. The chukar partridges were introduced for sporting purposes ➡



Partridge shooting



A fine sight: a covey of partridges take to the wing

until it became illegal in 1992. For many years pure birds and crosses with redlegs were released, the cross being called an ogridge.

Spanish stock

Crossing the birds increased productivity and flying ability but now only pure redlegs are released. Until recently, they were sourced from French stock but Spanish birds have now become popular. Whether there are huge differences in flight or holding ability is still in dispute.

I have released both and have yet to see significant difference between the two. But sourcing a different stock to supplement our current wild birds should help breeding success.

Red-legged partridge driving depends on a variety of factors, including wind direction, topography and their home base/release pen area. Once settled, redlegs find the area they wish to live in and can usually only be moved in the vicinity of where they know. Modern partridge releasing relies on creating a pen using sections in an area where the birds are needed, with poults of around 14 to 18 weeks being housed there for a few days before release.

Predation pressures can have a huge effect on where the birds live, with foxes being the worst culprit, moving coveys to different areas of the estate. High losses can be incurred after release from predation so fox control must be high on the agenda to keep a healthy stock on the ground. Farming disturbances can also move coveys, with machines working late into the night disrupting the birds and scattering them into nearby fields.

Wind is a huge factor in how to drive your partridges effectively. A strong wind into the face of a drive usually has the effect of making the

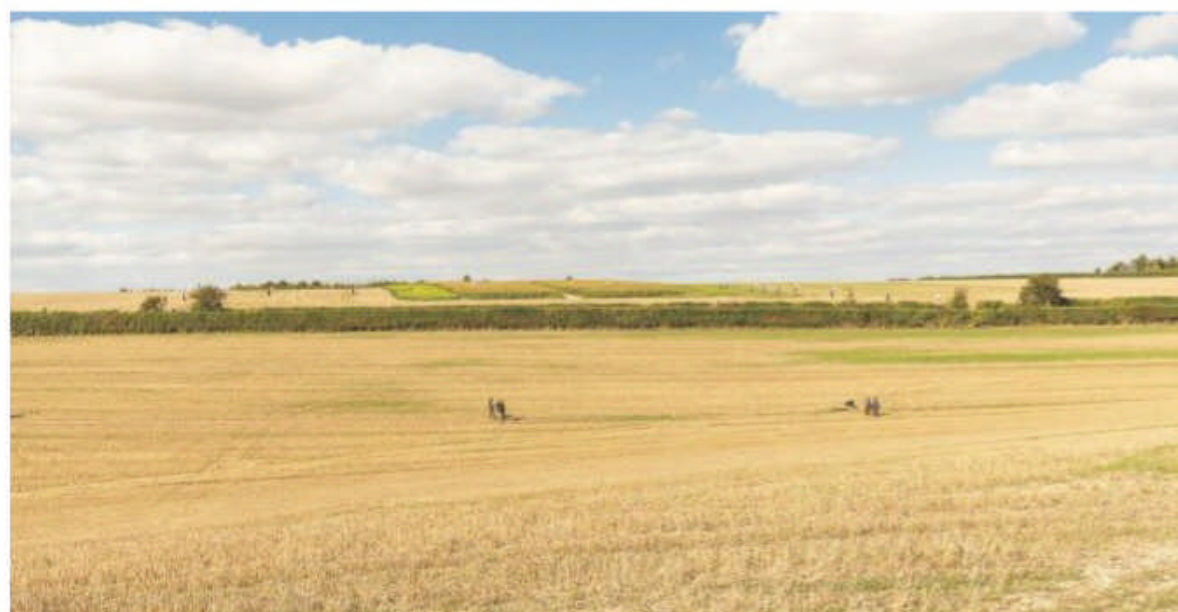
“The meat of the partridge is prized by many people as far superior to pheasant”

birds either fly very low into it, or fly up and head back downwind away from the line of Guns. The same applies to a strong crosswind; the birds will fly out of the cover and swing downwind. Guns will need to move to stop the birds heading the wrong way from the drive.

Flankers can be used where the Guns would have stood to curl the birds the correct way. If the coveys



generally tend to fly down a hedge line or tree belt, a strong wind can change their habits or make them fly low; making adjustments to where the Guns need to be placed



will therefore be needed. The wind can make a partridge drive become a real asset to a shoot, regardless of topography, if driven correctly.

A flat field can show sporting birds if the wind is up and used to full effect. Driving them into the wind to start with can help them climb and turn downwind.

The red-legged partridge has been released in various terrains across the country to create game shooting with various levels of targets. Typically, modern estates release large numbers into a well-situated game cover crop that will act as their home base; hill-released partridges utilise the bracken cover and can be shot as tall sporting birds or over butts similar to grouse.

The ideal partridge shoots may have a series of large grass-covered valleys in which a cover crop is planted either side on the top. Driving one piece of game cover towards the other, with the Guns at the bottom, then turning the birds back, can give



two drives, utilising the number of birds in the area.

A key difference between grey and red-legged partridges is that you can run redlegs a lot further than you can greys. Redlegs can be blanked from nearby covers into the main drive, the only problem being if they fly from one cover to another as they can be exhausted by the time they reach the Gun line. As with pheasants, partridges need time to regain their strength after flying so shooting them again straight after can give poor results.

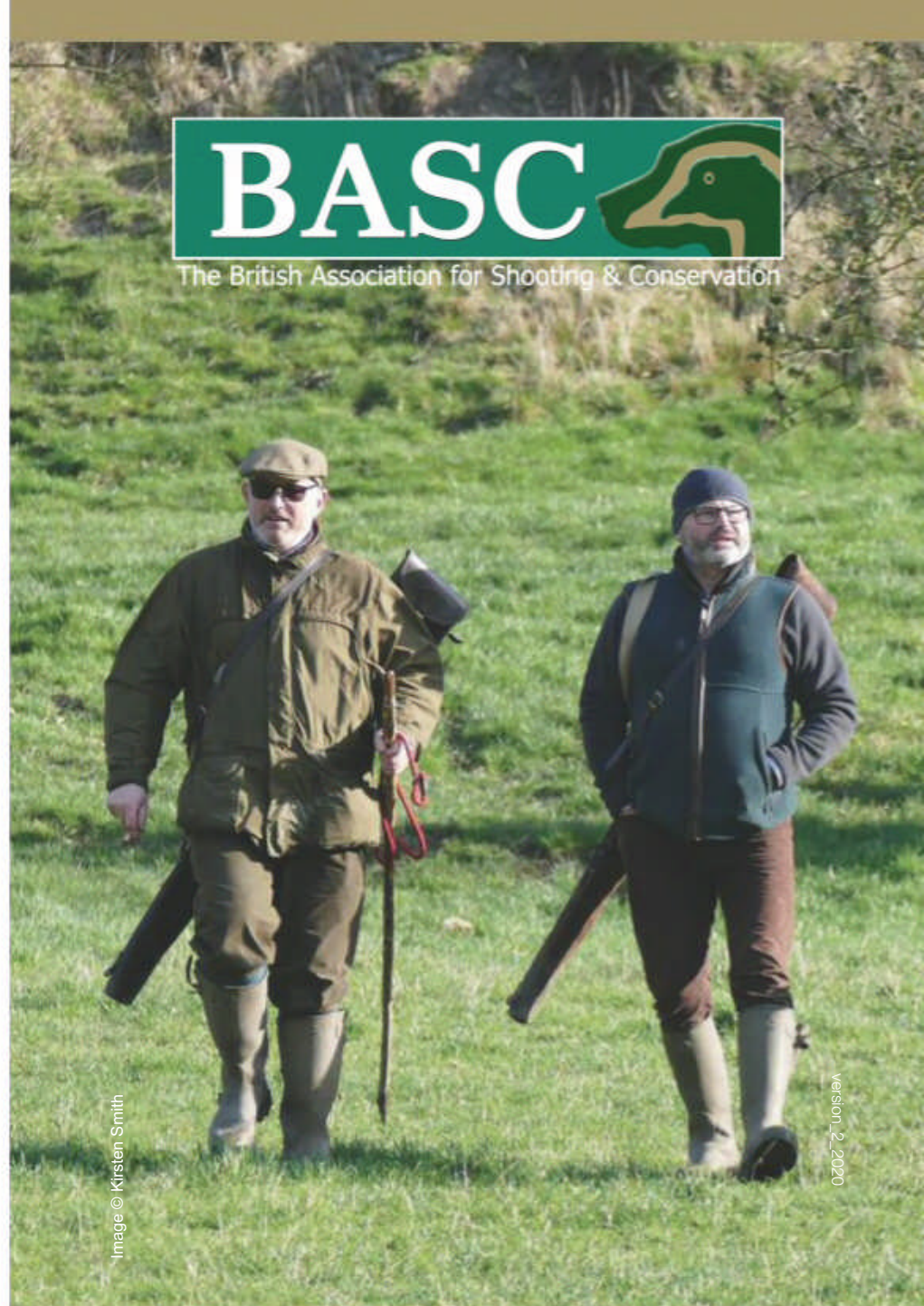
Narrow covers

Redlegs can also harbour in the woodlands later in the season, flushing out along with the pheasants creating a different quarry target. Long, narrow game covers alongside a thick hedge are a popular choice for creating a drive because large quantities of birds can hold in the crop. They can be driven consistently over the Gun line, creating a long steady stream of shooting.

Red-legged partridge shooting is a popular format of game shooting and can give the sportsman a huge variety of testing conditions to shoot the bird. The meat is also prized by many people as far superior to pheasant. The partridge is often the first bird to be taken from the chiller at the end of the shooting day. 🐦

Above: The beaters were told to stop when a covey flushed over the Gun line

Far left: A gently sloping bank leads to the Guns fairly tightly pegged to a tall hedge



BASC will deliver on:

- Ensuring a guaranteed future for sustainable shooting sports
- All party political consensus in support of sustainable shooting sports
- Promoting the conservation benefits of shooting

This will ensure everyone who wants to take part in shooting sports has:

- The legal entitlement to own and use sporting firearms
- Somewhere to go shooting
- A healthy quarry population

If you support these objectives and join BASC we will give you:

- Superb insurance to protect you
- Exclusive shooting opportunities
- Unique offers to save you money

To find out more and join BASC today visit www.basc.org.uk

The British Association for Shooting and Conservation is authorised and regulated by the Financial Conduct Authority ref 311937.

Four steps to shooting partridges like a pro

When faced with a sporting challenge that demands sound technique and the right attitude, preparation is everything, says Simon Reinhold

Good partridge shooting is about giving yourself as much time as possible. When you watch a professional athlete performing at the peak of their powers, people often comment about how much time they seem to have compared with others. What you are noticing is the extra fractions of a second they make for themselves. They find this extra time through good preparation, both mentally and technically. You can find it too through some simple adjustments.

1 Ahead of the day

Get the gun out and practise with it. Try to find a flat, fast, driven clay target, ideally with some curl. This will allow you to practise shooting on the inside wing of the curl (imaginary in this case). It will help to prepare you for shooting classically presented partridges that have been driven across the wind to make them climb and curl.

In between trips to the shooting ground, dry mounting – to deepen the neural pathways that govern the speed and accuracy of your movement and to strengthen the muscles – is free and available in your living room.

2 The day before

This may sound laughably simple, but pack the car the night before with everything you will need except dog, gun and cartridges. You can arrive at the shoot relaxed and eagerly anticipating a wonderful day or you can arrive in a muddle. Option two means you arrive flustered, unprepared and full of tension. Tension is the enemy of a good gun swing. Getting organised avoids unnecessary tension.

3 On the day

If you have done all the above, you have every reason to go in with confidence. Confidence is a mental construct that you can improve with one very simple realisation: everybody misses. You are not immune and neither is anyone else. You must be OK with this fact. Once you accept that missing is a part of game shooting, your tension reduces and your natural swing and cerebral processing power can come to the fore to pull off this incredibly complicated biomechanical action.

When you get to your peg, assess where the other players are in the landscape – fellow Guns, pickers-up

and flankers. Judge the wind and what it might mean for the flight path of the bird. Increasing your situational awareness does two things. First, it gives your mind something to focus on rather than negative thoughts. Secondly, it will aid you in good decision-making under pressure. Only when you are sure that the shot will be a safe one can you commit totally to it.

Now work from the ground up. It is not always possible to have even ground beneath your feet but it helps, so smooth the ground out with your feet in a small turning circle. Your gun swing should be grounded in good footwork. This allows your legs and backside to begin to power the core of your trunk for a crosser and, to a lesser



Dry mounting in the mirror is useful practice



Simon Reinhold's gun hold is safe and smooth, allowing him to react to birds in under a second



The gun swing should be grounded in good footwork when partridge shooting

extent, a quartering bird. Move both feet to allow yourself to unwind into a crossing shot. Where the shot is taken, your body should not be cramping for room as you come to the end of your natural turn. Your arms are there to keep you on line, the core of your abdomen should be powering the shot.

Your gun hold at this early point matters. As a right-handed Shot, I like to have my gun held up the left side of

to raise the gun. This means the barrels do not seesaw below the line of the bird and I can pick it up sooner. All this happens in under a second. This is safe, comfortable and smooth, and smooth is fast and accurate.

We are looking to take a successful early shot at a straight driven bird at around 10 o'clock to give us a good chance at a right-and-left. For a straight driven bird, the angle of incidence

preparation, to give you early signs of a potential shot. Read the signals coming from the beating line. If the flagmen are waving, it's time to switch on and get your gun hold ready. This is how the best Shots buy time, by reading early signs and anticipating.

4 Good shots can count You should know how many birds you have down at the end of the drive and communicate the information to the picking-up team. If the worst happens and you wound one and don't kill it with the second barrel, this must become your sole visual focus until you have marked it down.

If you have any desire to be a good partridge Shot you must know the difference between an English partridge and a Frenchman. If necessary, use YouTube videos to learn the different calls and wing shapes of the two species in flight.

Good early decision-making based on sound judgement is the key to good shooting when the birds are designed to beat you with speed and not height alone. Dismissed by those who know no better, traditional partridge shooting 22 yards behind a good hedge is a challenge that demands a sound technique and the right attitude to do it well. 🐦

“Once you accept that missing is a part of game shooting, your tension reduces”

my body, my right hand on the grip and my left hand under the butt, or with my arms folded across my chest and my left hand under my armpit.

This promotes several beneficial factors. It is a very comfortable way to hold the weight of the gun – more important if you are an over-and-under shooter – with little muscular effort and fatigue. Also, I do not have to bring the gun up through the line of beaters when the birds appear.

My left pectoral muscle and shoulder both flex and push the barrels forward into my waiting left hand. At the same time, the stock is brought under control under my right armpit for the left hand then to have to push forward

to the line of flight of the bird is at its widest with the bird clearly in view, therefore less visual lead is required. You can blot it out with a moving gun, squeeze the trigger and get on to the next one. Our gun hold promotes this but so does our fieldcraft.

If you widen your focus to almost panoramic vision, your peripheral vision comes into play and picks up movement far more effectively than hard focus. Though you need a more narrow, refined focus to see a clear shot when the bird breaks, it is tiring to focus hard for 30 minutes at a time and this promotes tension. This is not what we want. All your senses should be heightened in part by your



The Royal revolution

Holland & Holland is renowned for its classically elegant Royal guns, which are much coveted and much copied, reveals Diggory Hadoke

Mark Sullivan works quietly at his bench, producing the heart of many bespoke gun-building projects. An actioner by trade, he used to work at Holland & Holland. Now he works for the wider trade, happy to let someone else put their name to his work while he remains quietly anonymous to 99% of the shooting public.

Mark has little interest in guns or gun talk; he doesn't shoot. When he puts his tools down, he leaves the job in the workshop. However, if you want to build a Best-quality bespoke shotgun, Mark Sullivan is your man and the Holland & Holland 'Royal' is the action he will make for you, like he has for me, for William Evans, for William & Son, Westley Richards and numerous others over the years.

Of course, 'Royal' is a trademark. Holland & Holland began using the term to describe its Best sidelock in the early 1880s. It does not designate

was designed by John Robertson – later proprietor of Boss. It was replaced in the 1890s with a second model, more conventional looking with smooth bar-locks and stocked to the fences in what became known as the 'London pattern'.

Self-opening

This, in turn, was surpassed by the addition of the 1922 patent self-opening mechanism, powered by a coil spring under the fore-end. That system has endured to this day and is the modern Royal. Of course, Holland & Holland has always built the 'Royal' to be 'Best' quality. Lesser-

grade iterations of the same gun were generally badged 'Badminton'.

What is it that appeals to the wider trade that is embodied in the Holland & Holland? In a word, efficiency. Unlike many other ingenious mechanisms produced by British gunmakers over the years, the Holland & Holland is very simple. Simple is good. Consider the Anson & Deeley; the parts are few, the parts are robust and the connections between parts are direct.

Early Royals had an overly clever cocking mechanism; one lock cocked on opening, the other on closing. That was quickly done away with



'Royal' is only applied to best-quality guns; lesser-finished guns with the same inner workings did not get the name

a mechanism, more a reference to the highest quality offered by the firm.

Three hammerless guns have carried the Royal badge of honour (not including double rifles). The first model with dipped-edge lock-plates



and conventional cocking dogs employed, which use the weight and momentum of the falling barrels to cock both locks. It is a simple lever system, that sets the sears in the bents when the breech opens, and the gun is ready to fire as soon as it is closed.

Southgate system

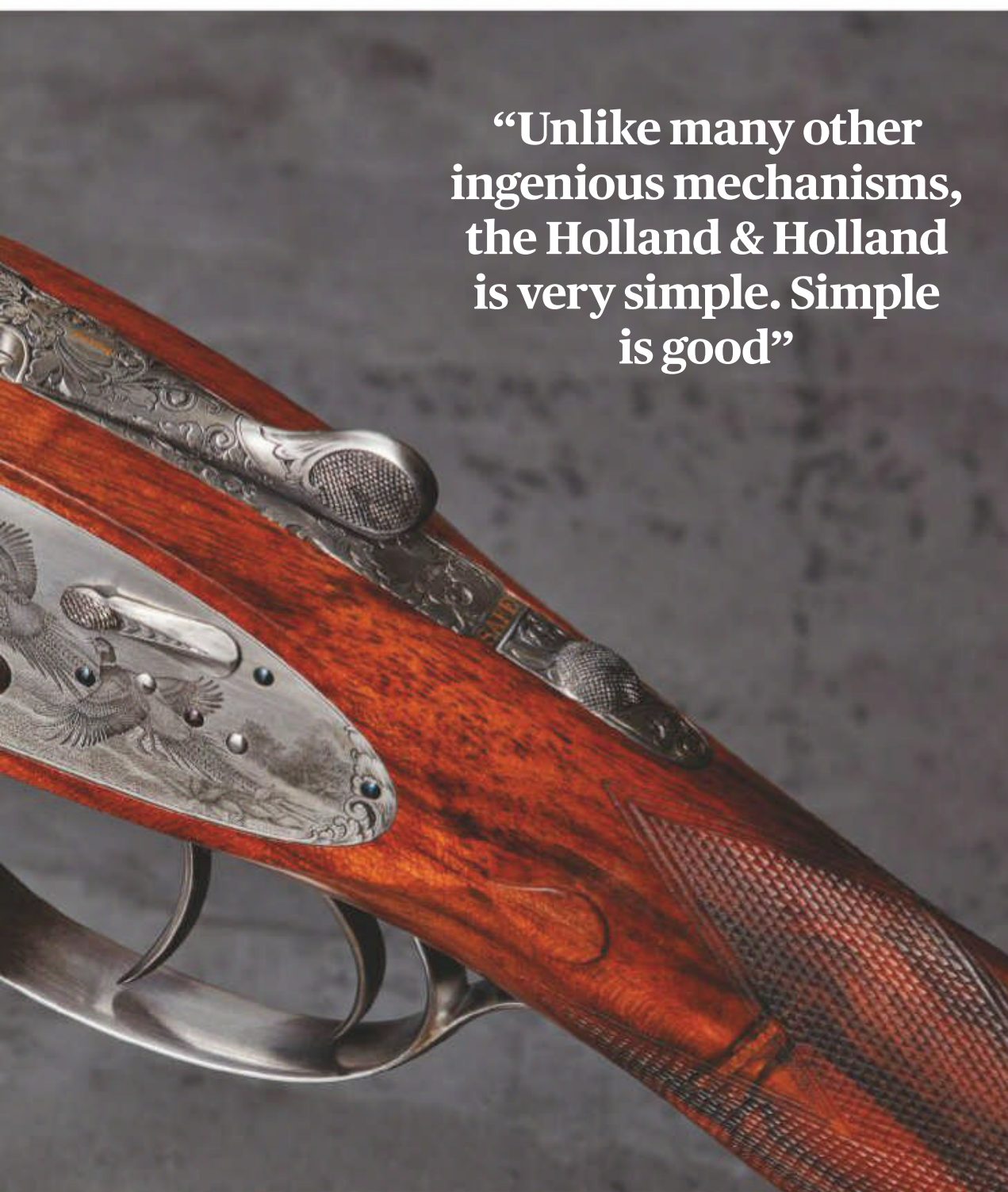
The ejector system is the best yet devised. Sometimes called the ‘Southgate’, it was referred to at Holland & Holland as the ‘AB’ ejector. It is difficult to reliably attribute the design to one particular patent. In essence it works on the over-centre principle, like the spring-backed pocket knife. A spring puts tension on a limb, which hinges on a pivot and when it goes over centre, it thrusts the extractor up and throws out the spent case.

The locks are conventional sidelocks, very much like a bar-action hammergun with the hammers on the inside. The addition of an



A Mark Sullivan actioned William & Son gun, built in the manner of a Holland & Holland Royal deluxe

“Unlike many other ingenious mechanisms, the Holland & Holland is very simple. Simple is good”



intercepting safety sear elevated it to fit the safety expectations of a Best sidelock. The self-opening system is a simple coil spring under the fore-end iron, which provides the tension required to push the breech open when the top-lever is turned.

The Holland & Holland system of production involves a whole team of men working on each gun, one completing a job and putting it down, followed by another specialist doing the next task, then going on to another, and so on. The system suits the style of the gun and the two complement one another. This system can be replicated in factories overseas when large numbers of guns are being produced.

Elegance and style

On top of simplicity and reliability, the gun looks good. It met the early 20th century ideal of a stocked-to-the-fences, London pattern bar-action sidelock ejector, which has stayed the course and become the classic silhouette of elegance and style that sportsmen aspire to own.

The Royal inspired many other firms to make their own version of it. To call these Holland & Holland Royal copies is often being too kind. If Holland & Holland reserves the name Royal for its Best guns, anything made on the same principle but to a lesser quality is not a copy of a Royal. ➡

Gunmaking

Many emerging industries take a good product and make cheap versions of it abroad to sell it for less to customers who want that product but can't, or won't, pay the price it commands. So it was with AYA in the 1950s. Gunmakers in Eibar were tasked with copying a Holland & Holland. The idea was to make a cheap version and offer it to British sportsmen at prices that rivalled the Webley & Scott boxlock ejector: a sidelock for boxlock money.

Snob value

The misplaced snob value that a cheap sidelock was superior to an equivalent boxlock aided sales and legions of Brits – and Americans – bought these ersatz H&Hs. To be fair, the AYA No2 has always been a steady, nice-handling gun that remained popular. You can buy a good 30-year-old one for under £1,000.

Today, Grulla sells a 'Holland & Holland Patent' sidelock, with self-opening and conventional variations, depending on the price point of the model. AYA offers a No1 and a No2 model based on the H&H, as well as upgraded 'deluxe' versions of these.

The hand-detachable locks – which, for many, are a distinguishing feature of a Royal – have always been optional. John Taylor, the elephant hunter, liked the idea. He wrote that the ability to remove, inspect and clean the locks in the field without tools was very useful and confidence inspiring, when he had to go in search of dangerous game the next day and wanted to be absolutely sure his locks were in perfect order.

For the British game shooter, I'm not sure they are much help. They



Adverts for Holland & Holland's much coveted AB Royal ejector and self-opener firearms

encourage the curious fiddler to mess about beyond his level of competence. When employed on copies by Spanish makers, which lack the precision and quality of the British original, the pins tend to work loose. This often results in a lock falling out into the dirt.

Lost locks

I have had Guns ask me to put their locks back together on a shoot day, and I have had customers come to me with a gun missing one lock and ask for a replacement. One memorable call came from a chap who had found a Royal when clearing out a dead relative's house. He lamented the problem of the gun having been stored in one place and the locks cleverly hidden elsewhere, for

security reasons. Nobody ever found out where. Short of a successful seance, the only – eye-wateringly expensive – option was to return the gun to the maker to have new locks made and fitted.

The Holland & Holland does everything it is supposed to do with utmost efficiency and continues to do it reliably for decades.

Equally importantly, when it does go out of order, it is easy to fix because it is easy to understand and the parts are well proportioned and simply inter-connected.

Its enduring and widespread popularity makes a strong case for the proposition that this is the best, most practical, formula on which to build a sidelock shotgun yet devised.

Today, Holland & Holland, like most other gunmakers, produces its

PRICES RIGHT

What a Holland & Holland Royal and its copies will cost you:

- H&H Royal from £86,000
- Grulla 215 standard opening version, around £6,500
- Grulla Royal H&H assisted opening version, £21,000
- William Evans, £79,000
- AYA No1 self-opener, £11,000
- AYA No1 round body, £19,000
- AYA No2 deluxe, £10,000
- AYA No2 standard, £8,700

Royal guns from a set of parts made by CNC and spark-erosion machinery.

The time required for actioning a gun there now is around half of the 290 hours it takes to do the job working from forgings, in the traditional manner that Mark Sullivan employs in his builds. Total build time for a gun made the traditional way is about 800 hours.

I built two Holland & Holland Royal-type shotguns for a customer, about three years ago. Using the very best men in the London trade to carry out each part of the build created a gun that retailed for £50,000. We put the customer's own name on it. 🐉

» Diggory Hadoke is a firearms dealer, author and journalist.



Rural craft

In the 21st century, many old skills are no longer needed; we celebrate those that remain part of our rich rural culture

The first written record of thatching in the UK dates back to 700AD. It is widely thought, though, that this date is somewhat conservative and it is likely that dwellings were roofed using straw, reeds and grasses as long ago as the Bronze Age.

While the craft of thatching is ancient, it is one that is very much alive and kicking today. I joined master thatcher Chris Dodson up on a roof to learn more. Chris is a fourth-generation thatcher, based in Sawtry, Cambridgeshire. The 17th century former pub he was working on was being rethatched for the first time in 29 years.

Chris and his team — Sam and Tom — first had to strip off layers of old thatch which had become thin, blackened and broken down through weathering. Failure to remove sufficient old thatch results in a house that resembles a mushroom.

Most of the work on this job is being done using wheat long straw. The straw is specifically grown for thatching, using older varieties that have both long and robust stalks. Once harvested, the wheat is threshed, preserving the stem. The straw is then bundled up into sheaves, with 35 sheaves making a bale.

Long straw thatching is largely an East Anglia and East Midlands preserve. Water reed is also used, as is combed wheat straw.

Once the base layer is even, the thatcher can start. Chris stands on a secure platform and works from right to left. An armful of straw called a yealm is spread out evenly, starting at the base of the roof with the heads of wheat uppermost. The yealm is held temporarily in place by two metal thatcher's pins, which look like a climber's ice axe. The yealm is permanently secured by a series of spars and a binder of straw. The right-hand pin is then removed.

Hammered home

Spars are 2ft lengths of split hazel the thickness of your thumb which are twisted in half to form a V, akin to a fencing staple. The spars and straw binder are hammered home using a wooden mallet, ensuring that the spars are placed well up the yealm.

This process is repeated laterally, moving the right-hand pin over to the left to secure the next yealm. Then the next layer of straw yealms is placed over the lower line, working once again laterally from right to left.

Once a number of layers had been secured, Chris pulled out any loose or misaligned lengths of straw. He does this to ensure water can run straight down the roof and not become caught, thus pooling and potentially causing a roof to leak. Finally, the layers are dressed up and evened out with a wonderful tool



A series of split hazel spars and straw binders are used to secure a yealm of straw in place

called a legget, which is the sort of thing that dear old Jack Hargreaves would have confounded his audience with on *Out of Town*. It resembles an outsized horseman's metal curry comb with the spikes made from slivers of copper tubing.

The whole process continues upwards to the ridge of the roof. The ridge is the crowning glory. Lateral lengths of water reed are fixed using heavy duty spars. Then, by a process that appears to the layman to be magic, straw is thatched in place and stitched in using a thatcher's needle. Frequently, a straw mascot is incorporated into the ridge — anything from gamebirds to cats, ballerinas and running hares.

Thatching has a language of its own, most of which is incomprehensible to mere mortals. No spirit levels nor tape measures are used, the process works using experience, the eye, feel and gut instinct.

The sheer skill and multiple processes required to thatch a roof are daunting. The thatcher works at height, exposed to all weathers. The preparation of the straw is back-breaking and dusty. Yet there are young people who are still prepared to endure all this and learn the trade.

Chris is fine thatcher, one of the 1,000 who ply their trade in Britain. It is a rural craft like no other and one that we as a country should be proud of.

Richard Negus



Master thatcher Chris Dodson (left) with team members Sam and Tom, rethatching a old pub

Visit the National Society of Master Thatchers website at nsmtltd.co.uk



Flat out with Lizzie

With Sika returning to her owner, Ellena Swift has a new recruit – a flatcoat retriever, a breed that takes patience but can be well worth it

We have been following Sika the cocker for a little under the first 16 months of her life. In that time she has become a balanced, all-round shooting companion. She will hunt beautifully in front, is steady to fallen game, has basic handling skills and will pick any quarry. I am very proud of her and love seeing her working for her owner. She simply needs confidence and ‘miles on the clock’.

While I will continue to work with Sika, her time with me will now become less frequent as she turns into a fantastic fully trained gundog. So I am now going to turn my attention to a new project.

I have recently taken on Lizzie, a six-month-old flatcoat retriever,

who is to become a peg dog and all-rounder. While the flatcoat was the Edwardian sportsman’s dog of choice, the breed is now something of a rarity. I have seen fewer than 10 in my entire career.

They are also rare in the trialling world. I have judged a trial with one competing and only ever run against

According to gundog trainer Daniel Higgs of Higgscroft Gundogs, the flatcoat often has a better nose than a labrador but needs more work. Dan is one of a few trainers who has had plenty of success with his own flatcoat and I have had the pleasure of competing against him many times. With a flatcoat it is important that you

“There are no shortcuts and if you try to skip a stage there will be repercussions”

them in working tests. However, this does not mean they should be overlooked when choosing a working dog. I know of a few flatcoats in the competition world and have seen what they can do. With proper training they can truly hold their own.

take every phase of training slowly. There are no shortcuts and if you attempt to skip to the next stage too soon, it will have repercussions.

With this in mind, I am looking forward to taking this lovely little bitch further in her career.

ANDREW SYDENHAM

IN DETAIL

LIZZIE: SOCIALISATION, BONDING AND PLAY



Ellena makes sure that when she is with Lizzie, she is the most exciting and fun thing for her

LIZZIE is a nicely bred flatcoat retriever bitch. She has come in to be trained and will attend residential training with me for the foreseeable future.

Those first few weeks are vital for any young dog. Too much freedom and a puppy can end up displaying unbalanced and undesirable behaviours. Lizzie has started by having lots of time to socialise with other puppies of a similar age, including labradors, spaniels and German shepherds.

She is also socialising with older dogs, which are good for teaching younger ones manners. The rest of her time is spent either with me playing and bonding or settling in her kennel. When she is out with me, I am always in a secure and safe environment where I can be the most interesting and fun



In association with Chudleys: over forty years of highly nutritious food for working dogs

IN DETAIL

LIZZIE (CONT)



Lizzie loves the ball but some dogs do not develop the drive to retrieve until a little later

thing for her. This is the garden or training arena, or a securely fenced paddock.

She has been introduced to the slip lead and is slowly doing some loose-lead walking with the use of treats as a reward. I keep these sessions short and fun and ensure she achieves each time. She needs to really want to work with me and enjoy her training. As with all young dogs I have also started to play a retrieving game.

Many dogs do not develop the drive to retrieve until a little later, which is fine. In that case I will not worry and put off those games for a few weeks. However, if they enjoy it, it is another game to play to help them bond with me. Fortunately, Lizzie loves to play with a ball and enjoys retrieving and carrying.

This is invaluable and is to be nurtured. I am not worried at all at

this stage with steadiness. I simply let her fetch the ball and encourage her back to me, allowing her to hold it in her mouth the whole time I praise her. She tends to lie down and roll on her back while holding the ball, which at this stage really isn't a problem as long as she is happy and enjoying it. As Lizzie and I get to know each other better, I will continue to document her progress.



Ellena is giving Lizzie plenty of time to settle in and is ensuring she is happy both at play and during her early training so she can gain confidence





IN DETAIL



Retrieves must be left where there is a visible landmark, like a tree, so Ellena knows where she is sending Keepa

KEEPA: COLD GAME TRAINING

KEEPA, aged four, is getting ready to start the season. He has had a much quieter summer than I had hoped thanks to COVID-19. Therefore he hasn't had nearly as much training or experience as I would have liked. However, as we creep back to more normal times, I am planning

on getting him out on some small rough days so I can focus on his training ready for trialling. Most of those days will be in September and October.

Until then I am doing some cold game training with pigeon. This gets his drive up and, when combined with a starter pistol,

and energy. It is important that I leave the retrieves somewhere with an easily visible landmark such as a tree or fence post. This means when I am guiding him, I know exactly where I am sending him.

I do not want him ranging too far when hunting, or trying to pull me about,



Practising cold game training with pigeon will prepare Keepa for the coming season

“Keepa must be handling left, right and back casts with precision and energy”

more closely resembles a shoot day and the levels of excitement he will face.

With this in mind, I have — as I did with Sika last month (*Take revision classes*, 12 August) — gone over many simple drills, ensuring all our basics are securely in place.

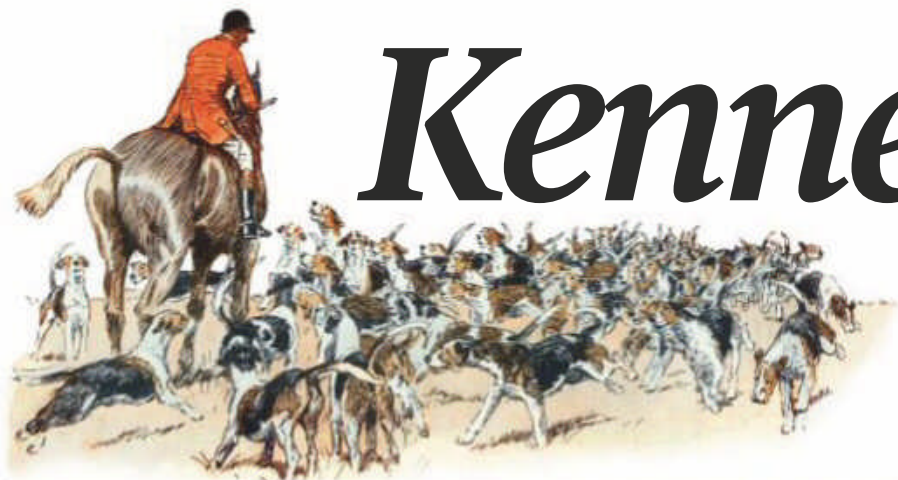
I start by simply walking around and dropping memory retrieves out in various areas. I then move to different areas to send him. I want him sharp, driven and handling left, right and back with precision

so I am keeping him tight and on track. And each time to finish the session, I am doing one long retrieve. I practise a long back cast by stopping him a third of the way out then pushing him back. Again, I want to see pace, power and determination from him.

Keepa has been doing quite a bit of stud work recently, which can mean his mind is a little distracted. So these short, sharp sessions are perfect for keeping him on track.



In association with Chudleys: over forty years of highly nutritious food for working dogs



Kennel Diary

As autumn approaches, the young hounds get their first experience of hunting a trail as part of a pack

As the autumn approaches and the combines rumble into the night, thoughts turn to early morning trail hunting. It doesn't seem long since I put my coat away in March. A lot has happened since then, but in many ways the summer seems to have flown by.

Hound exercise has gone well and the young hounds have settled nicely, going out, as they do, every morning with bicycles since mid-June. The past few weeks' mounted exercise is used to accustom the puppies to being out with the horses. Some young hounds can be a bit confused as to why, when you've been sitting on a bike for the past few months while exercising, you suddenly turn up sitting on a large thing with four legs. They need time to get used to this idea and settle to it. Being on horseback also allows us to go further off-road while we are out. I don't know if you've ever ridden a bike across a stubble field for any distance but it's not my favourite pastime.

It is of the utmost importance to enter the young hounds as well as you can. I like to take the doghound puppies one day and the bitch puppies the next. They learn by doing, so as long as their constitution allows they should go as often as possible.

Some hounds take to it straight away, others take a little longer. They are there to hunt one thing and one thing only — a laid trail — and will learn this from the older hounds. They are pack animals and once the old hounds find and are hunting, the young hounds want to be part of the action. This is how they learn what they are supposed to be doing.

All hounds have their hunting instinct but this must be channelled correctly and early-morning autumn hunting is where this happens. Sometimes on a warm morning when drawing for a trail, I find it useful to get off my horse and walk with the hounds as they draw.

Some would argue this shouldn't be done as the hounds come to rely on it but I find it helps, certainly with the young hounds, to be at the coalface with them

“All hounds have their hunting instinct but this must be channelled correctly”

rather than sitting a distance away. But do this too much and they could come to rely on it, so judgement is needed. The goal is to arrive at the opening meet in

November with the new members of the pack all singing from the same hymn sheet.


With the weather in County Durham resembling the week before Noah loaded the ark, it looks like the start of things will be delayed until well into September.

Whippers-in

Another key element is to ensure you have good whippers-in. Professional or amateur, it is important to have people who know their role on a day and are calm and capable. Our country has a good number of busy roads, so the pressure on my whippers-in can be considerable. Making sure the hounds are together and any hounds left behind are 'brought on' quickly is very important — and keeping an eye out for any potential dangers for the hounds is vital.

A whipper-in who can see a problem long before it happens and can take steps to ensure it doesn't is worth his or her weight in gold. If there is a particular part of the country hounds mustn't go due to livestock or crops, or if hounds have divided and some are hunting something other than the trail, being able to see this ahead of time and act quickly is a huge advantage and a massive help to the huntsman.

The job of a whipper-in can be hard and involves long hours, but it is also one of the most rewarding. I've heard it said that if you can sit out long into the night in the wind and rain looking for a lost hound, only to be told when you come trudging in that it turned up at kennels hours ago and is tucked up in the lodge with the rest of the pack, and you can greet this news with a smile, you will go a long way.

 Harry Beeby lives in County Durham, is a keen huntsman and a dedicated conservationist with a passion for country sports.



It can take a little time for young hounds to become accustomed to being out with the horses



LAURENCE CATLOW, A PASSIONATE SHOOTER AND ANGLER FOR MORE THAN 40 YEARS, HAS WRITTEN FIVE BOOKS ABOUT SPORT WITH ROD AND GUN



A million miles from the world of COVID-19

A wander round High Park, trout fishing at Wharfedale and high on the hill with a flanker's flag – all joyous escapes from the pandemic blues

Pheasants, grouse and trout! What more does a man need, apart from enough food – preferably consisting chiefly of trout, grouse and pheasants – to keep body and soul together, with, of course, a glass or two of sherry and a few glasses of red wine? Trout, by the way, is perfectly happy to be eaten with red wine, especially if the trout is smoked and if most of the red wine is drunk when dinner is over and the washing up done – or better still left for the morning.

Anyway, talking of pheasants, Tony Smith and I are busy with the annual business of release and for once it is

going exceptionally well. The weather seems either to have forgotten that the beginning of August brings young pheasants to High Park or to have experienced an unexpected change of heart. The arrival of our poults is usually the trigger for the sort of weather that encouraged Noah to press on urgently with the finishing touches to his ark.

This year it didn't happen. The birds came on a day of misty drizzle; there was some dampness overnight then the sun came out and the air turned warm and there was no appreciable wetness for more than a fortnight. There was rain from time

to time in Wharfedale – which meant that I could nip over the hills and catch a trout or two from my favourite river – but at High Park there were dry days and warm days and the poults loved it.

Back to normal

They were big and strong when they arrived and, now a month into release, they are much bigger and stronger and I can count our losses on the fingers of one hand. I remember telling you how I hoped that the business of August pheasant care would make these abnormal times seem almost normal again. I am glad to say that my hopes have been fulfilled.

I have spent August doing what I always do in August and I have enjoyed it more than ever because out at High Park, whistling away to the poults and absorbed in attending to their needs, I feel a million miles away from the world of COVID-19. It has been a great comfort and a great relief.

I am writing at the very end of the month and the poults are beginning to spread out and explore their surroundings. We are busy strawing more feed rides outside the pens and moving the birds on to wheat. The weather has finally pulled itself together, with frequent bouts of strong wind and heavy rain, but the birds are now big and well feathered enough to laugh at the weather.

Though I am not exactly singing in the rain, I am telling myself that tomorrow may well be a perfect day for another excursion to my favourite river in search of a few trout. I shall, of course, help to feed and water the poults before I go.

Skimming shapes

So much for pheasants and trout. Now for the third of my ingredients for a contented life – now for grouse. No, I have not been standing in a butt and shooting – or trying to shoot – those dark shapes skimming towards me over the heather. I have been up on the hill with my flanker's flag and enjoying myself just as much as the men who were standing in the butts and trying to shoot those skimming shapes and sometimes doing it pretty well.

We had to wait to see any action because the first two scheduled days



A little drop of rain from time to time meant Laurence could nip over to Wharfedale to fish



Tony points out to Laurence where the poults have been moving about in the grass

both passed without a shot being fired as the moor was shrouded in mist. I suppose there is some comfort to be drawn from getting paid for doing nothing, but I prefer to do what I have come to do. It was a relief when, early on the third morning, the mist decided to lift then disappear.

What a pleasure it was to be there in the sunshine, looking down on

he has bounced round in the heather and enjoyed himself enormously and found his share of grouse.

Anyway, even with special procedures in place to minimise the risk of infection, it has seemed to me that, high in the hills, we for a time escaped the uncertainty below. This is why, in addition to rivers and my own little shoot – and probably yours as

“It seems to me that, high in the hills, we for a time escaped the uncertainty below”

the fields of the Eden Valley, watching the unfolding drama of each drive and playing my own small part in it. There have been three subsequent days with plenty of birds on show but already massed in huge packs. It has been like November shooting except for the warm air and the blooming heather, both reminding us that these have in fact been August days and August grouse.

Reining in

Sir Tripod and Zac have been with me on the moor. Zac has been exuberant and rather full of himself, but without bringing disgrace and without threatening to disappear over the horizon as he used to. He needs reining in and tightening up and the process has already begun.

Sir Tripod is a free spirit; he would defy any attempts to tighten him up or rein him in and so, when his turn has come, I have kept him on the lead until the end of each drive and then

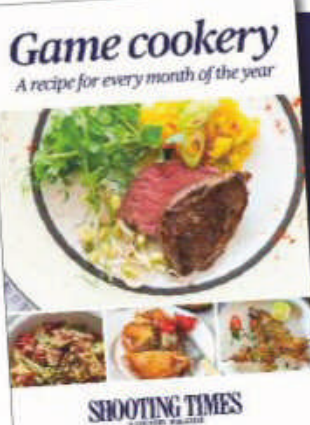
well – grouse moors have been added to the places where you can leave behind the COVID-19 blues.

With its mix of pheasants, grouse and trout, August has been good to me. I am hoping that September – my favourite month of the whole 12 – will be able to do the same.

I am hoping for still, serene and sunny days on the Wharfe with the trout in taking mood, and for still, serene and sunny days at High Park with my pheasants scratching away happily in the straw. I want sunshine for September days on the hill, but a breeze to keep the midges at bay and encourage those massed packs to behave themselves and cross the butts.

I am looking forward very much indeed to spending a day walking-up grouse as the guest of friend and fellow *Shooting Times* contributor Lindsay Waddell. It looks as though September will have lots to offer and I will tell you how it all goes. 🐦

Fieldsports action



FREE Digital game cookery book**

Cast aside that flabby chicken and get more game on your table

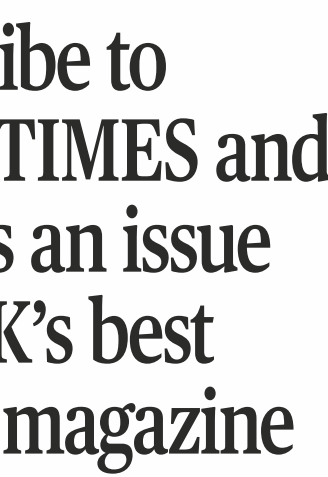
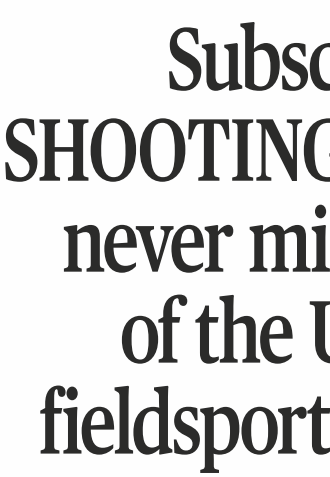
INVEST IN YOUR SHOOTING

Subscribe for just £24.99*

shootingtimesubs.co.uk/sep20

*Terms and Conditions: Offer closes 10 October 2020. Offer open to new subscribers only. **New subscribers only. Subscription must be purchased online. For full terms and conditions, visit www.magazinesdirect.com/terms. For enquiries please e-mail: help@magazinesdirect.com.

Every Wednesday



Subscribe to
SHOOTING TIMES and
never miss an issue
of the UK's best
fieldsports magazine

A sporting life in Africa

Farming a ranch is a constant tussle with wildlife – and the greatest foe is also the smallest



Wildlife has used the pandemic to move into the ranch in a big way. Two young male lions have been lying up above the farmstead and, not far away, a pride has been hunting in the valley. They took down three plains zebra – bang, bang, bang – in a single hunt right in front of the house. They were so well fed from frequently killing game on the farm that they only had enough appetite to gorge on the choice cuts before moving off to let vultures, jackals and hyenas set upon the carcasses.

Last week, we saw a large herd of elephant mothers and babies circling the plains, with a group of bulls flapping their ears nearby. And a 100-strong herd of buffalo, plus oryx, eland, buck, giraffe and two types of zebra. All this is happening on a farm of only 2,300 acres, which is quite small for this part of Africa.

Keeping most of our ranch wild means that any farming activities are going to be that much more challenging. We have never shot a lion, cheetah nor leopard in anger, but we have to work hard day and night to prevent them from eating our livestock.

We grow small fields of lucerne to supplement the fodder for our cattle, which mainly graze wild pasture. On this, they

compete with the plains game species that consume much more of our grass than the livestock. A zebra, which lacks a rumen, can eat three times as much grass as a cow.

We also attempt to grow vegetables, fruit trees and some forestry for timber. These all need to be surrounded by high electric fences to keep out the game. The elephants advance on the field with their trunks held high, sniffing the scent

“You can hear a *shush, shush, shush* as the termites eat your house to pieces”

of ripe bananas. They smash down timber like matchsticks.

As for the lucerne, you can hear determined warthogs squealing even before they charge the fence, because they know they’re going to get hit by 7,500 volts. Already inside, deep in the crop, you can hear the porcupines rattling. And you cannot imagine the damage a few tortoises can do to crops and vegetables.

Then there are the vervet monkeys and baboons. It’s hard to exaggerate how much trouble monkeys are. However hard we try to get rid of them, they keep returning. We were kept awake for much of the night listening to the vervets caterwauling in

the fever trees around the house. Perhaps the leopard that lives on the hill above us disturbed them while it paced around our flock of sheep in their night enclosure.

By dawn, the monkeys were all over the gardens, eating our pawpaws, ripening maize and mangoes. After their breakfast, they cheered up and came to check their reflections in the house windows. When satisfied with how they looked, they moved

on to the poultry house, hoping to steal chicken feed and eggs, with me chasing after them.

In the hunt for eggs and chicks, the monkeys are in competition with genet, dwarf mongooses, hawks and spitting cobras, which are capable of gulping down whole clutches of eggs at a time.

The greatest animal challenges on the farm are neither rampaging monkeys, nor herds of elephants, nor prides of lions. The most ravaging of all creatures in Africa is the termite. The farm is dotted with the mud chimneys of these white ant colonies, which extend skywards like elephant trunks.


Bare ground is criss-crossed by their raised mud capillaries and any dead tree is engulfed by a mass of the creatures that gnaw it to nothing within weeks. The biomass you see above ground – all the beasts and all the vegetation – are nothing with the insect iceberg of termites living beneath us.

This year has been the wettest since records began and this has brought waves of termites into all the houses and farm buildings. When they invade the timbers, you can hear them – a *shush, shush, shush* as they eat your house to pieces around you. I’ve seen a house collapse after termites had done their work on the timber.

To kill them off, you can put down poison in trenches around your foundations or you can hunt down the queen, who lives in an underground palace of tunnels and caves. She’s a white slug as big as your hand. Some tribes see queen termites as a delicacy, but I don’t have the courage to eat them. 🐜



The termite is one of the most destructive creatures in Africa and its huge nests dot the landscape



We all need trees

To earn extra income

Trees aren't just a pretty face • They give you an extra crop of timber, woodfuel or fodder for your livestock which you can harvest all year round

- They improve soil quality, prevent run off and shelter your livestock • Plant trees on your land and make a difference.



WOODLAND
TRUST

woodlandtrust.org.uk/plant

The Woodland Trust, Kempton Way, Grantham, Lincolnshire NG31 6LL.

The Woodland Trust is a charity registered in England and Wales no. 294344 and in Scotland no. SC038885. A non-profit making company limited by guarantee. Registered in England no. 1982873. The Woodland Trust logo is a registered trademark. 14366 02/20

Trials and tribulation

The Kennel Club has issued extensive guidance for staging field trials during the pandemic. David Tomlinson wades through the protocol



LAST MONTH, THE International Gundog League (IGL) cancelled this year's Retriever Championship. It was hardly unexpected news. If the IGL had decided to go ahead with the event, the biggest in the gundog calendar, it would certainly have been newsworthy. The last time the Championship was cancelled was in 1967, due to foot and mouth disease, while it wasn't held during the war years 1939 to 1945 and 1914 to 1919.

The logistics of trying to organise the Championship, scheduled to be held at Ampton in Suffolk at the end of November, would have been a nightmare, while there would have been the possibility that the event could have been cancelled just days before it was due to take place.

However, an equally important factor in its cancellation was the fact that insufficient qualifying trials will have been held beforehand. Though many trialling societies and clubs are still stating that they hope to run trials this season, how many will manage to do so is debatable.

I have just been reading the Kennel Club's operational plan for the resumption of field trials, which you will find on its website. Seldom have I read a more depressing document. Over-wordy, it covers every eventuality you can possibly think of, plus a few more, and is sufficient to put off all but the most determined of organisers.

It states: "The health and safety of everyone attending field trials is of paramount importance, and it is vital that events are conducted with adherence to social distancing and health and safety guidelines. To ensure that this is the case the recommended protocol must be adhered to."

The protocol extends to some 1,800 words of what you can do and what you must do. The advice starts with the initial visit to the ground to discuss the trial and make a risk assessment with the keeper, "when hand sanitising gel/wipes should be required by all attendees".

When it comes to appointing judges, locals should be appointed where possible in order to minimise travel, though "where an overseas judge was already under contract, the appointment may proceed provided it did not contravene any government regulations or restrictions".

There's a lot of advice on the schedule, entry form and draw. Competitors will be expected to

provide their own armbands, while it is forbidden for anyone to handle entry forms, cash or cheques on the day.

Prevention procedures

Clubs will also have to appoint a CSO (COVID safety officer), responsible for ensuring that COVID prevention procedures are maintained and keeping a log of any "untoward incidents". They will also have to keep a list of participants and attendees in case they have to be contacted if anyone becomes ill afterwards with COVID-19.

Presumably it will also be the CSO's job to check that judges are comfortable staying away from home and "are not shielding, either themselves or another member of their household",



Wearing a mask when handling a gundog might prove impossible

DAVID TOMLINSON



In association with Chudleys: over forty years of highly nutritious food for working dogs

DAVID'S VIEWPOINT

TIME TO GET ON WITH LIFE

Coronavirus has caused people to lose perspective

CORONAVIRUS is an extremely nasty and serious disease, but it looks increasingly likely that we shall have to learn to live with it, for the foreseeable future at least.

Wrapping ourselves in cotton wool, covering our faces and smothering everything we touch in sanitiser cannot be the way forward, and it's certainly not the way I wish to spend the rest of my life. There's no doubt in my mind, and those of everyone else I've discussed it with, that the Kennel Club protocol is an over-reaction.

When club tennis restarted after lockdown, the Lawn Tennis Association came up with a similarly long and stringent list of rules. Players were only allowed to play singles. Playing

doubles was banned unless it was with members of your own household. You could only pick up balls that belonged to you, changing ends was forbidden. Within a couple of weeks these rules were relaxed so, in most clubs, tennis is now almost back to normal, though without a handshake at the end of the game.

Similarly, shooting and field trialling are outdoor pursuits where the risk of catching COVID-19 is so remote that nobody has managed to work out what the odds are. By all means, take sensible precautions, but in a practical way.

It appears to me that it would be impossible to carry out a field trial following every one of the Kennel Club rules. Several COVID safety officers would be needed to ensure that they are adhered to, otherwise their notebooks would be full of so-called untoward incidents, such as "judge didn't have mask over nose when receiving bird", or "the trophy had only been in the plastic bag for 36 hours".



Hunting, like many activities, is full of risks

Coronavirus seems to have forced otherwise sensible people into losing all sense of perspective when it comes to risk. Life is full of risk. We take minor risks every day of our lives. To put coronavirus into perspective, during 2020 far more people will die from malaria and tuberculosis than from this virus. When so many of the activities that we enjoy doing are strangled by rules and regulations, it takes away much of the enjoyment of living.

Email: dhtomlinson@btinternet.com

while I was amused to read that "if appropriate arrange for hotel to provide packed lunch for resident judges". Can't they be asked to bring their own?

On the day of the trial, vehicles must be parked to allow social-distancing guidelines to be adhered to, something that none of my local supermarkets seem bothered about. When handling game passed from a competitor, "a face mask should be worn by the judge, judge's steward and game carrier and should be undertaken at a maximum distance possible. Hands must be sanitised between passing each bird. Gloves could be worn but would need to be changed and safely discarded following each individual run to ensure no cross contamination."

Surprisingly, I couldn't find any advice as to whether handlers have to wear masks. I've yet to try handling a dog while wearing a mask. It would

"Wearing a mask would make blowing a whistle tricky. You could always cut a hole"

make blowing a whistle tricky, though I suppose you could always cut a hole in the mask to put the whistle through. However, handlers must carry masks for use when "appropriate", along with their own hand sanitiser.



Spectators are banned from attending field trials under current Kennel Club guidelines

Anyone taking part in the trial should walk rather than ride in a vehicle, something I'm all in favour of. However, "if using transport around the shoot, you must consider social distancing between passengers, sitting side by side, not face to face, and increasing ventilation in the vehicle". Presumably that means leaving the

the latter will have been sanitised, bagged in a plastic bag and kept aside for a minimum of 72 hours before the trial. It goes without saying that "the secretary should sanitise their hands before presenting the bag".

Grading suggestion

Any field trial secretary who has waded through all these protocols and still wants to hold a trial deserves a medal.

My suggestion is that, like the A-level results, dogs should be graded according to their known ability. I'm sure that Ofqual will be pleased to help, while the Kennel Club could come up with a suitable appeal process for dogs that haven't done as well as they had hoped. 🐾

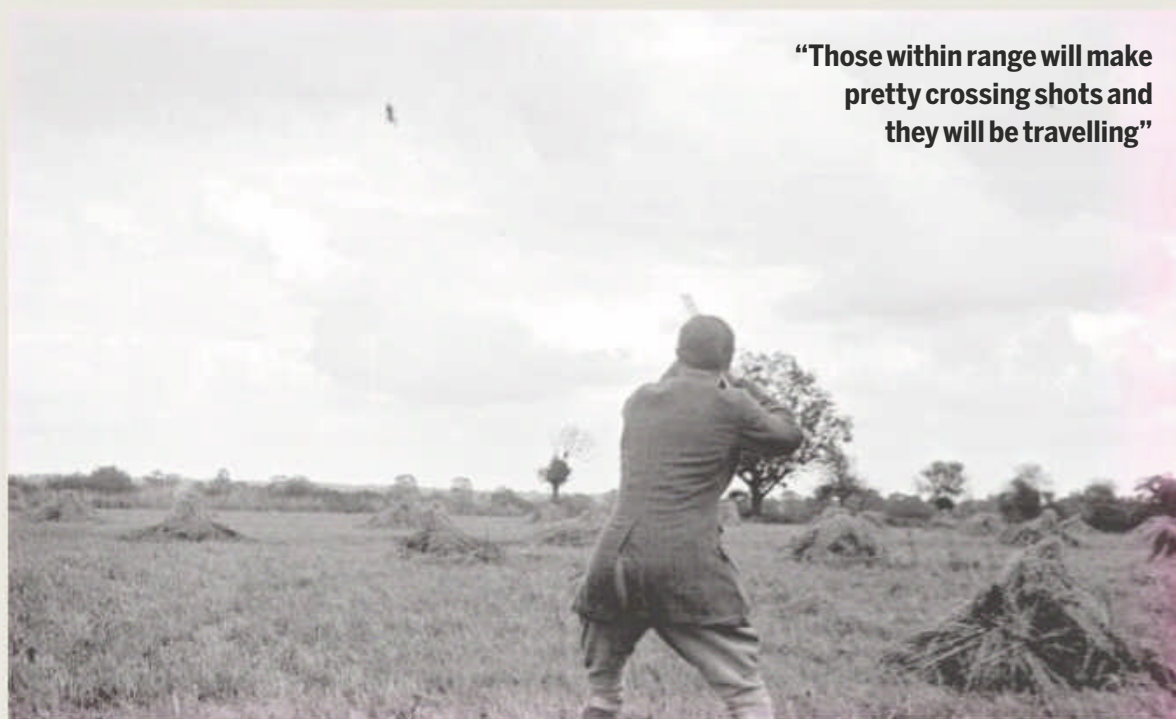
windows open, or using open-top trailers with socially distanced straw bales for seats. Spectators, you will not be surprised to learn, are banned.

Any handler lucky enough to win a trophy will be reassured to learn that



Not a walk in the park

Whether you're a young Shot or much older, for safety's sake, strict etiquette must be adhered to when walking-up partridge, says *Petrel*



"Those within range will make pretty crossing shots and they will be travelling"

The first of September, much more eagerly awaited by most of us as marking the opening of the rough shooter's game season than the Twelfth, has come and gone, and for the majority it has been the 'first' in name only. The new season fell on a Monday this year and even the young Shot home for the holidays has had to wait impatiently until today to join his elders in their opening day at partridges.

My game book reminds me that over the past two seasons we did not shoot at a partridge until well into September, due to the number of 'cheepers' – young birds that were not forward enough to offer sporting

shooting. The disadvantage, of course, is that the longer the birds are left, the wilder they become, and walking-up, which is essentially early-season tactics, becomes correspondingly less effective.

Walking-up provides the young Shot with an excellent introduction to the game, for you will have more time to concentrate and thoroughly to learn the elementary lessons before you have to face the more hectic flurry of driven birds. The shooting, too, is easier. It will be a long time before you get over that 'keyed-up' feeling as you walk, never knowing when a covey will suddenly flush, and can calmly take a right-and-left at birds that explode from under your feet. The

ability to keep calm at such a time is the secret of success. You must know instinctively what you are going to do.

The first rule of walking-up was laid down by Colonel Peter Hawker, who warned against starting before the dew was off the grass. Off you go then, somewhere about 9am; perhaps four or five Guns with a beater or two to strengthen the line and carry the game. You will hope for a warm day, but not too hot, for there will be much walking to be done and as a younger member of the party you will have to do the lion's share of it.

Your position for most of the day will be on a flank, another good reason for thankfulness that the line is not a long one.

Escape route

Do not imagine that because you are out on the fringe you will have little to do. A great responsibility rests on the shoulders of the flank Gun. You may get less shooting than those in the thick of it, but several birds are bound to try to slip out over the boundary, and it is your presence on this escape route which may well turn them back again. Those within range will offer pretty crossing shots and they will be travelling by the time they reach you, so swing well ahead of the target.

It is also the duty of the flank Gun to see that those rough patches in the corners are thoroughly beaten out. "Only a few more yards to go. There

can't be anything left," you may think, but in nine cases out of 10 you will be wrong. You become careless as your mind wanders off the job and you start to edge in towards the centre. Which is what the covey in that rough grass at the corner has been waiting for, and with a whirr of wings it is up and away over the hedge into your neighbour's root field.

Keeping the line

You will remember at all times to keep strictly in line with your fellow Guns. Progress is governed by the pace of the slowest walker. If the Guns advance too quickly, not only birds but also ground game will be walked over, to run back behind the line.

No one can hope to shoot straight when he is out of breath. Slow and steady is the rule and when a covey does flush, raise the gun unhurriedly but decisively, pick the first bird that offers a chance and fire. Do not hesitate too long in looking for an easier shot. Before you have found one, all will be out of range and your indecision will be rewarded with a double miss. Easy advice to give, but if I do not 'poke' ineffectually at least once in the heat of the moment, I shall be pleasantly surprised.

It is useless to pursue partridges round and round in circles over open country. The system usually adopted is to start on the outside of the shoot and gradually to work inwards, with

the object of driving the birds into a killing ground – an unpleasant but practical term. This takes the form of holding cover, kale, turnips, potatoes – any field of roots where coveys will sit tighter to permit a closer approach.

So far we have stressed the need for slow and steady progress, but once a number of birds have been put into the roots it is a case of best foot forward to the edge of the cover, before the coveys that by now will be scattered have time to join up again. Thus there will be a chance of flushing partridges singly, and in ones and twos, instead of causing a mass exit.

“Pick the first bird that offers a chance and fire – do not wait too long for an easier shot”

Once in the roots, the pace reverts to slow, even slower than it was before, and the Guns close up, so as to leave the minimum area unwalked. Up to now, you will have been carrying your gun at the ready, left hand well forward and right hand round the small of the butt, with forefinger, of course, off the trigger. In high cover such as kale, you may find it easier to carry it on the shoulder, trigger-guard upwards and the muzzles pointing well up in the air. In this position it will be ready for action and, above all, safe.

Watch your step in root fields, for by their nature there is more to trip

over. Potatoes are walked across and not along the drills. All being well, the birds will get up at closer quarters and you should not find a partridge going away at 25 yards too difficult a mark.

Just deserts

And what will you do if you kill your bird, or better still a right-and-left? Hurry forward and pick it up and brandish it with triumphal pride? By no means, and not at all, unless you wish to be sent straight home, which is your just deserts for such behaviour. Rather, you will carefully mark where it fell and wait for some

seasoned dog to retrieve and bear it to his handler, and the whole line will stop and stand still whenever a shot is fired, resuming the walk only when the shooting is over.

If the bird is a runner and cannot be found, mark the place where it fell with hat or handkerchief, so that a thorough search can be made at the end of the beat.

Cheepers

Hold your fire if cheepers rise in front of you, and take care not to mistake a young pheasant for a partridge. At all times remain as silent as possible during and after each beat. Talking, whistles and shouted directions will ruin the best-laid plans.

Finally, take an interest in the bag at the end of the day, for from it much may be learned. You will be able to tell the young birds from the old by their lighter colour and yellow legs, which have not yet turned grey. Look at the primary wing feathers and see how they are pointed and not round and blunt with age.

The small shoulder feathers give a better clue to the sex of the bird than the dark horseshoe on the breast. In the cock they have a buff stripe running down the shaft, while those of the hen are similar but edged with additional horizontal buff markings.

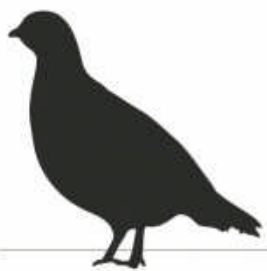
Enter these details in the game book when you get home. They may tell a significant tale next season. 🐦

➤ *This article was first published in the 6 September 1952 issue of Shooting Times.*



“Off you go — four or five Guns with a beater or two to strengthen the line and carry the game”





Partridge

Game Cookery

Flying partridge with birds of prey is challenging sport but Jose Souto's reward is succulent meat for a tasty harissa-marinated barbecue dish

For most of us who do not shoot grouse, 1 September signals the beginning of the season. This is an extra-special time of year for me, as it is the beginning of the gamebird bounty that we chefs so look forward to.

Partridge is a great entry to the world of gamebirds. The meat is succulent, white and very palatable to anyone who is discovering game for the first time.

We mainly use redlegs as they are a good size and I consider them to be more sustainable than their smaller cousins, the English partridge. At home in Cambridgeshire, I do my bit and have released between 100 and 150 grey partridges from a pen at the back of my paddock for more than 10 years.

Ingredients

- 60G HARISSA PASTE
- 2TBSP YOGHURT
- 1TSP CORIANDER
- JUICE OF HALF A LEMON
- 8 PARTRIDGE BREASTS, SKIN OFF AND CUT IN HALF

FOR THE COUSCOUS

- 200G COUSCOUS
- 100ML ORANGE JUICE
- 1TSP SUGAR
- 150ML OLIVE OIL
- 60G SULTANAS
- 40G DRIED APRICOTS, CUT INTO FOUR
- 20G PISTACHIONUTS
- 4 FOLDED PITTA BREADS

FOR THE YOGHURT DRESSING

- 2TBSP YOGHURT
- 1TSP CORIANDER
- 1½TSP HONEY

During the season, I hunt these birds with my goshawk and peregrine, but only take 30 to 40. The rest repopulate the area with these fantastic little birds that were once seen all over the country.

As I open the doors on the pen in mid-August, the sound of the greys calling and coming back to roost in the evening is still a sound I love, even after many years.

Flying English partridge with birds of prey can be challenging as they are fast and

at more than 47mph, going under the partridges and pushing them on to the wing, then turning and inverting under the game to pluck its prey out of the air.


With the falcon, the flight is more complex. Spying the covey of partridges from a distance, the falcon is released to climb high above them, clamping them in place as they watch the falcon circling. The dog is sent, quartering into the game until she finds it with a sturdy and solid point.

“Partridge is a great entry to the world of gamebirds. The meat is very palatable”

nimble in the air. In Spain, my uncles refer to them as the noble partridge because they do not run but wait until the last moment before flushing. This makes them perfect for falconry as they hold the point of a dog better than most lowland gamebirds.

For the goshawk, flying off the point is an incredible rush. As the pointer comes on point 10ft or 20ft in front of the falconer, she holds position and the falconer raises an arm, holding aloft the hawk and flushing the game. The partridges take off and speed towards the horizon. The goshawk takes off, accelerating

By this time, the falcon is at pitch; the height at which it feels confident that it can kill game. As the falconer sees her come into place above him, he flushes the game and the falcon reacts, closing her wings and stooping at speeds of more than 150mph, hitting the game and killing it instantly.

At this time of year, the weather can still be kind, so here is a great recipe for that early partridge. I am only using the breast, but freeze the legs for other uses. The barbecue gives great flavour to the harissa as it cooks around the partridge, without detracting from the game itself. 

HARISSA-MARINATED AND GRILLED PARTRIDGE

THE METHOD *Serves 4*

1 Mix the harissa paste with the yoghurt, the chopped coriander and the lemon juice.

2 Drop the halved partridge breasts into the mix and marinate for at least two hours or overnight.

3 Place the couscous in a bowl and cover with one-and-a-half times the volume of hot water. Cover and leave to stand for 10 minutes.

4 Pour the orange juice into a bowl with the sugar and whisk in the olive oil to make an orange dressing.

Taste the dressing and, if sharp, add a little more sugar. Drop the sultanas and apricots into the dressing and set to one side.

5 Once the couscous is ready, add the orange dressing, sultanas, apricots and nuts. Mix well, then allow to cool and place in fridge.

6 Put the breasts on to skewers, three pieces on each. Season and cook on the barbecue for three minutes each side, then serve with warm bread, a teaspoon of yoghurt and couscous.

The experts

THE ULTIMATE SHOOTING QUIZ TEAM



➡ BILL HARRIMAN

BASC's head of firearms and global authority on guns



➡ MAT MANNING

Airgunner and journalist from the West Country



➡ DIGGORY HADOKE

Vintage gun expert, firearms dealer, author and journalist



➡ BRUCE POTTS

Shooting Times rifle reviewer and stalker



➡ DAVID TOMLINSON

Highly regarded writer and ornithologist



➡ LIAM BELL

NGO chairman, Shropshire gamekeeper and keen wildfowler



➡ GRAHAM DOWNING

Shooting consultant and sporting author



➡ TONY BUCKWELL

Veterinary surgeon with a special interest in Gundogs



➡ TOM PAYNE

Professional shooting instructor and avid pigeon shooter



➡ JEREMY HUNT

Runs Fenway Labradors and a professional Gundog trainer



➡ TIM MADDAMS

Former head chef at River Cottage and runs a shoot in Devon



➡ SIMON WHITEHEAD

Author, professional ferreter and rabbit controller



➡ IAIN WATSON

Keen stalker and senior CIC international trophy judge

Contact the team

Email: stanswers@futurenet.com

By post: Shooting Times, Pinehurst 2, Farnborough Business Park, Hants GU14 7BF

Aside from the obvious rifle and pellets, a rangefinder and knife are vital bits of kit



Crucial airgun accessories

➡ AIRGUNNING

Q My airgun sessions seem to be getting increasingly bogged down with cumbersome equipment. How can I lighten the load and are there any really important kitbag items that I shouldn't leave at home?

A Modern airgunning certainly does seem to have been taken over by gadgets and gizmos and I often find myself in the same quandary. Many accessories are useful, but only a tiny handful of them are essential and I don't think any of them will ever be more valuable than fieldcraft.

I have tried to streamline my stalking accessories when heading out after

rabbits and, aside from the obvious airgun and pellets, I only carry a laser rangefinder and a folding penknife.

A compact rangefinder is a useful accessory when it comes to applying hold-over and hold-under to compensate for the curved trajectory of an airgun pellet as it travels downrange. It is all well knowing how high or low the pellet will strike at any given range, but you can't incorporate that into a shot unless you know exactly how far away the target is.

A sharp knife is useful for paunching rabbits at the end of a session and for numerous other little tasks. It also comes in handy for hocking rabbits, so I can hang them from a branch or fence ready for collection on the homeward journey. **MM**

WHAT IS AVAXHOME?

AVAXHOME-

the biggest Internet portal,
providing you various content:
brand new books, trending movies,
fresh magazines, hot games,
recent software, latest music releases.

Unlimited satisfaction one low price

Cheap constant access to piping hot media

Protect your downloadings from Big brother

Safer, than torrent-trackers

18 years of seamless operation and our users' satisfaction

All languages

Brand new content

One site



AVXLIVE • ICU

AvaxHome - Your End Place

We have everything for all of your needs. Just open <https://avxlive.icu>

Gun auction and the law

GUN LAW

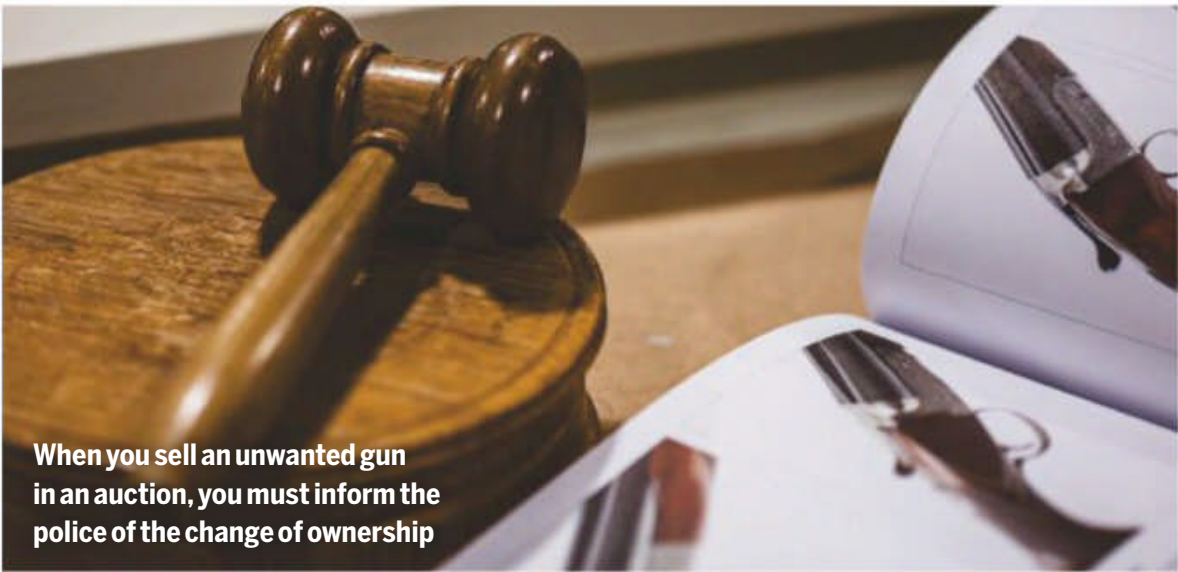
Q I have just asked an auctioneer to sell an unwanted shotgun for me. Do I have to tell the police that I have given it to him?

A There is no duty to tell the police until the shotgun is sold and the auctioneer knocks it down to a bidder. You must keep the auctioneer's property receipt with your certificate so that you can account for the gun's whereabouts.

When the gun is sold, notify the police that you have got rid of it. This can be

done by email. You will find the address on the website of your police force's firearms licensing pages. Ask for a read receipt and keep a hard copy of the notice. A hard copy is useful if it is alleged that you failed to notify them of the transfer.

You should strike out the entry for the gun on either Table 1 or 2 of your shotgun certificate. I draw a red line through it and write a note next to it, for example, 'Sold by Smith & Co auctioneers, Lot No 34 1/9/20'. Keep the copy of the notification with your certificate. When your renewal is due, remember not to list it on the application form. **BH**



When you sell an unwanted gun in an auction, you must inform the police of the change of ownership

Cartridge of the week

by Diggory Hadoke



SOLID-DRAWN BRASS

Reloading is nowhere near as popular in the UK as it is in the US. Here, mainly wildfowlers cook up special loads with non-toxic shots for long-range foreshore applications or it is shooters with odd calibres, blackpowder-proofed or pinfire guns that cannot be easily supplied by the likes of Just Cartridges.

Before World War I, however, cartridges were a lot more expensive than they are today and reloading was a way of keeping costs down. The disposable cases were mostly paper and were not robust enough for reloading, so manufacturers made solid-drawn brass cases for reloaders.

Eley claimed that its were "made of sufficient strength to reload several



times". They were advertised as 'Solid Drawn Brass Central Fire Cases' with Eley's .197 (Sensitive) primer and loaded with Best No.4 TS Powder.

They were available in all gauges from 8-bore to .410 calibre, including the unusual 14-bore, 24-bore and 32-bore. One hundred 12-bore cartridges cost 19/9, but you could also buy cases loaded with powder at 17/9 or cases only for 6/5.

This compares with 100 loaded 'Pegamoid' cartridges, a high-quality Eley product of the time, which were 12/9 loaded.

By reloading, you could make cartridges for about half the cost of buying disposable ones, each reloading reducing that figure significantly.

If you could get four reloads from a case, your ammunition costs would be about a quarter.

Native Britain

Plants, flowers and fungi of Great Britain at a glance

Latin name: *Calystegia sepium*
Common name: Hedge bindweed
Other names: Bindweed, bellbind
How to spot it and where to find it:

Every gardener will recognise those broad, trumpet-shaped white flowers that belong to two kinds of native bindweed, the hedge version and field bindweed (*Convolvulus arvensis*). Both twine around other plants, sending out tendrils, and both are hard to get rid of. Hedge bindweed has bright green, arrow-shaped leaves and white or sometimes pink flowers 3cm to 6cm in diameter, which appear between July and September.



Interesting facts: The roots of hedge bindweed — the most common kind — may penetrate to 5m (16ft) deep or more and spread rapidly, but most growth is from white, shallow, fleshy underground stems. It can spread outwards by 2m (6½ft) or more in a single season. In folk medicine, the infusion of the root was used for the treatment of gallstones, as it increases the biliary secretion, and both root and flowers have a laxative and diuretic effect. Nicholas Culpeper noted: "This is the plant which produces scammony, the gum resin used as a purgative. The best scammony is black, resinous and shining when in the lump, but of a whitish ash-colour when powdered. It has a strong smell, but not a very hot taste, turning milky when touched by the tongue." All of the bindweeds climb and twine anti-clockwise. **NJS**

Pregnant jill needs space

➡ FERRETING

Q My polecat jill is heavily pregnant, but she has become very tired and lethargic. I left my hob in with her. Should I take him out?

A Being pregnant takes a lot out of the jill, both physically and mentally. It is normally good practice to remove the hob from the breeding cage once the jill has been mated. As always, there are exceptions to the rule and I know a few people who do leave the hobs in.

During her gestation, she needs to be well fed and sleeping in warm, cosy bedding with enough material to build a nest in preparation for giving birth to her kits. She then needs to feel safe when she is raising a litter.

If she feels that a hob is a threat to her litter – or to her – she may act accordingly. There is always the risk that the hob will bully the jill, and this may be happening with your jill.

I would take him out immediately and rehouse him. **SW**



It is best to separate a jill and a hob when the jill is pregnant

Illegal worming worries

➡ GAMEKEEPING

Q I have seen people on gamekeeper chat groups discussing wormers and dosages for worming pheasants and partridges, but most appear to be using sheep or cattle wormers, which I thought was illegal? Are we allowed to use them?

A You are quite correct. Using a cattle wormer to worm gamebirds

is illegal because the licence for its use will only cover cattle, not gamebirds. Gamebirds can only be wormed with a licensed gamebird wormer.

The only legal one is Flubenvet, which can be bought through your vet or added to your pelleted feed at the mill under prescription.

What's more, cattle and sheep wormers won't kill all the worm types found in pheasants and partridges anyway, so using them would be a false economy as well as illegal. **LB**



The Flubenvet prescription wormer for pheasants can be added to pelleted feed

Best rabbit shooting scopes

➡ OPTICS

Q Can you recommend a decent scope that will fit a Browning T-Bolt for rabbit shooting?

A It's funny that people tend to buy a .22 rimfire and then put on a cheap scope and scope mounts. A .22 rimfire is probably the most used rifle you will have, so a decent scope and set of mounts are crucial.

The Browning T-Bolt is an excellent rimfire, so why not exploit its good accuracy with a nice scope? I like to have variable power on a rimfire because in the woods shots can be close, so a low power works well, whereas when shooting rabbits

on fields it helps to have higher magnification to achieve a clean shot.

Definitely try to buy a scope with a parallax adjustment, so that the image and reticle stay in focus at any range you are shooting.

An illuminated reticle is also handy when it gets dark. If the reticle is thin, then having an illuminated reticle makes it stand out against the foliage and present a clearer image for you.

I would recommend makes such as Hawke, Nikko Stirling, BSA, MTC or Leupold, which all have models that would suit your rabbit shooting needs.

For scope mounts, Sportsmatch, BKL, Warne and FX are good brands and will have tube size, height or one-piece and two-piece mounts to suit. **BP**

How to avoid tick problems

FIELDSPORTS

Q My partner and I are due to go on our annual sporting holiday for stags and salmon in Scotland this autumn. This year, we have heard so much about ticks that we are a bit worried about being bitten. Previously they have not seemed a problem for us. How likely is it that we will encounter these pests? And do you have any advice on how to stay safe while we fish and hunt?

A Ticks seem to have been much more in the news of late, but they have always been with us. Some areas are more affected than others. The main concern is that tick bites can lead to Lyme disease, which has a nasty reputation and serious long-term consequences.

One view is that climate change is responsible for the increasing tick

population, though science does not really support this. Similarly, the reduction in the hill sheep population is often blamed. While this will have had an influence, the increase in deer numbers has undoubtedly played a part.

It also needs to be remembered that it's not only large animals that are targeted by ticks, but also small ones such as mice, voles and even birds.

To protect yourself, anti-tick clothing can be helpful, but general awareness is a must. Know when and where you are likely to encounter them.

Sitting on the ground or in the heather is a likely source of a tick. Be aware that when you grass your stag and crouch down beside him, he will have a tick burden.

Make sure that you both thoroughly check each other back at your accommodation at the end of every day and invest in a pair of tick pliers before you head north. **IW**

Infection in dog's womb

VETERINARY CARE

Q We have heard how unspayed bitches can be prone to pyometra and that this can be related to their seasons. Our bitch is coming up for eight years of age now, so we are starting to become concerned. Can you please tell us how to recognise the signs?

A Pyometra (literally 'pus in the womb') is an infection following certain hormonal and structural changes in the lining of the uterus (the womb).

It can occur at any age, irrespective of whether the bitch is bred or not, and after any season, but is especially common in middle age and as the dog gets older. Though it can occur at any time, the period of greatest risk for a bitch to develop pyometra is six to eight weeks after her last heat.

At this time and under the influence of a hormone called progesterone, the lining of the uterus can become abnormal – a change known as cystic endometrial hyperplasia (CEH). Under these circumstances, bacteria can migrate into the uterus from the vagina and set up infection.

The most common symptoms are excessive drinking, excessive urinating, not eating well and generally being off-colour. If the cervix (the internal entrance to the womb) is open, there is a purulent discharge from the vulva, or you may see your dog lick and clean up her back end more than usual.

Alternatively, if the cervix is closed, the pus will collect in the womb and you might notice she has a swollen abdomen due to the distended fluid-filled uterus. Affected dogs can progress to sickness, dehydration, lethargy and collapse. If left untreated, pyometra can be fatal.

Normally vets will treat pyometra by surgically removing the diseased uterus, together with the ovaries, to prevent further seasons.

There is also non-surgical treatment available, which is ideal if the bitch is required for breeding or if she's an older dog less able to tolerate major abdominal surgery. The treatment comes in the form of a drug called aglepristone that counteracts the effects of progesterone, encouraging the CEH to resolve and the pyometra to regress. **TB**



There are options for replacing the Tikka T1X stock with a thumbhole version

Thumbhole replacement

RIFLES

Q I own a new Tikka T1X .22 rimfire rifle and would like to replace the stock for a thumbhole, but Tikka doesn't make one. Is there anything else available?

A The Tikka T1X is a cracking new rimfire. I have tested both the .22 rimfire and the .17HMR version and they are excellent value.

I, too, would like a thumbhole stock version because I favour this type of stock configuration. Fortunately, the T1X rimfire has the same action profile as its larger brother, the T3X centrefire

rifle, so any aftermarket or custom stock that fits these will fit your T1X rimfire.

Form Rifle Stocks offers some excellent laminated wood thumbhole stocks that will fit the T1X. There are several styles to choose from. Boyds Hardwood Gunstocks, available from Sportsman Gun Centre, come in a lovely lightweight or varmint-profiled thumbhole and laminate stock in various colours. Stocks are also available from Joe West, Staffordshire Synthetic Stocks, McMillan, Bell & Carlson and Robertson.

Only a small amount of sanding or fettling is required to fit the action. Usually the T1X action just slots right in. Good luck. **BP**



Sebaceous cysts on dogs are usually best left alone

Should cysts be ignored?

➡ VETERINARY CARE

Q I'm told my old dog has sebaceous cysts that are best left well alone. What causes sebaceous cysts and am I following good advice?

A A sebaceous cyst is a swelling in the skin usually caused by a blocked sebaceous gland. The blockage can be caused by dirt, or can be due to infection or local injury.

They can also be caused by sebum (the oily material that sebaceous glands secrete) being too thick so it cannot be excreted through the gland's opening on to the surface of the skin. Having nowhere to go, a sac forms, creating the cyst. Sebaceous cysts are relatively common in older dogs like yours.

Most sebaceous cysts don't cause problems, so they're usually left alone. The cysts will either resolve and disappear, or they will become 'walled off' and will neither grow nor disappear, remaining as small lumps underneath the skin.

Occasionally a cyst may burst and leak, become infected or irritate the dog. In these circumstances, ask a vet to examine your dog and, if necessary, he or she can advise on a more appropriate course of action. **TB**

Health testing is essential

➡ GUNDOGS

Q I was planning on buying a labrador puppy this spring, but then COVID-19 hit and there has been a shortage of available litters. I have been offered puppies from bitches that have not had any health tests – eyes, hips or elbows. In both cases, the owners said they had not been able to test because vets have only been dealing with emergency work and all X-rays and eye testing had been suspended. I decided not to buy a puppy from either litter, but am now faced with another similar situation and I desperately want a new puppy. Should I take a risk?

A I would strongly advise against buying a puppy from a bitch that has not been health tested. Even if the sire of the litter had been tested, it still leaves a question mark over the influence of the bitch on her progeny.

As we all know, recent months have seen a worrying demand for labrador puppies, ostensibly as pets being bought in a knee-jerk reaction to families being at home. It has created a serious shortage of puppies for genuine buyers

and a lot of working-bred labrador litters have ended up being sold as pets.

Do not be tempted to buy a puppy from litters where either of the parents have not been health tested. Buying a puppy is a long-term commitment and it is far better to wait and select a really good puppy from well-bred parents that have had all the required health checks.

It is concerning that a lot of mediocre and even quite old bitches have been mated in recent months where irresponsible owners have seen an opportunity to make some quick cash.

The best advice is to be patient and do all you can to secure the right puppy. It's far better to do your research and order a puppy from an expected litter with the breeding background that meets your criteria for a working gundog – and with all the health checks undertaken.

One route is to speak to experienced owners of stud dogs, many of whom will be standing field trial winners or field trial champions at stud. They will be able to recommend owners who have brought bitches for mating and are expecting litters. Alternatively, try looking at the websites of some of the main labrador clubs. The Kennel Club website has details of all clubs in the UK. **JH**

When buying a puppy, it is crucial to check its parents have been health tested



Roosting troubles

GAMEKEEPING

Q How do we stop our birds roosting on the ground? When we are out lamping, we see birds on the floor, and we are still finding fox kills in and around the pens. The birds are well-grown, were unclipped when they went in the pens and have held reasonably well. Other than this we haven't really had any problems.

A My guess is that you are seeing birds

'jucking' on the ground when you are out lamping and the fox kills around the pens are more related than you may think.

It may be that the birds are being disturbed by someone or something as they go up to roost or have just gone to roost and that they aren't spending the night on the stubbles out of choice.

I would sit with them as they go up to roost for a few nights until you can put your finger on it. It is often something simple that causes the biggest problems. **LB**

Find out what or who is disturbing birds if they fail to go up to roost

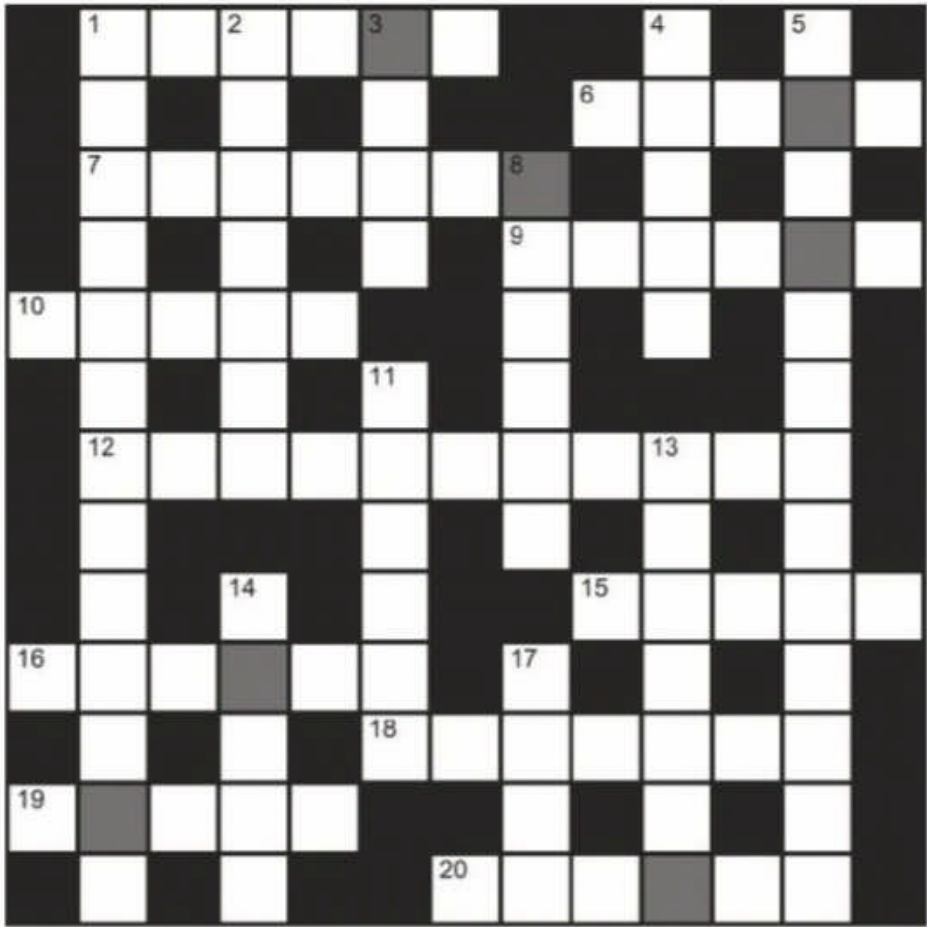


TO CATCH A FISH

Red-necked olive buzzer

This fly has become a popular mainstay for trout fishing in the late season from September onwards. It differs from the usual olive buzzer pattern with its distinctive

red neck which is designed to imitate the natural chironomid by simulating the blood-filled body of the pupa, making it irresistible to large trout round the country. **EW**



Crossword / Compiled by Eric Linden / 1473

Across

- 1 When ferrets are on the attack, winter winds are harsh (6)
- 6 Vital organ giving colour to the German shorthaired pointer (5)
- 7 Do gundog training aids make fools of us? (7)
- 9 Places confidence in organisations like the WWT (6)
- 10 Flipped animals give us O-rings (5)
- 12 Yappy stalked quarry! (7,4)
- 15 A Scottish loch is left flat (5)
- 16 A strategic verdict from both sides makes dog trainers far from easy-going (6)
- 18 An otter deposit is curious in parts (7)

- 19 Look through a bank ledger — a decent boot will give it support (5)
- 20 The hound might be agile without one (6)

Down

- 1 When the burrower is putting treats in traps, it's a crime (6,7)
- 2 One going head over heels for a gun component! (7)
- 3 Hit the target with a carpenter's gun (4)
- 4 With corona comes computer woe (5)
- 5 Warm to her insect — a moorland blighter (7,6)
- 8 Performs in a choir around the West End in spite of nettle injuries (6)
- 11 They help us aim at tourist attractions (6)

- 13 Time for a trip to the flightpond, levelling things up (7)
- 14 The rare spaniel leads us to a playing area (5)
- 17 A complimentary addition to floating barrels (4)

Solution 1471 / 26 August 2020

Across: 1. Scrub 4. Branch 7. Pegs 8. Reloader 9. Glare 10. Italian 13. Dominance 16. Courses 17. Small 19. Bluehare 21. Kits 22. Freeze 23. Marsh

Down: 1. Shells 2. Reservoir 3. Bore 4. Ball Trap 5. ATA 6. Caesar 11. Lockmaker 12. Airedale 14. Fowler 15. Clutch 18. Team 20. Eye
PRIZE WORD: SCROLL
WINNER: B. HODDY, GLOUCESTERSHIRE

How to enter

To enter our crossword competition, identify the word in the shaded squares and you could win a Fur Feather & Fin Anti-Corrosive gun sleeve (suitable for barrels up to 32in).



Due to COVID-19 we are only accepting submissions via email

Please email the solution with the crossword number in the subject line, and giving your name, address and mystery word answer to:

steditorials@futurenet.com

All prizes will be despatched as soon as possible.

Rules: Entries must be received by 16 September 2020. All usual conditions apply. Solution and winner will appear in the 23 September 2020 issue.



From the gun shop

The Editor's pick of the latest and best shooting kit to hit the market



1 Aria jacket

RRP: £279.95

gmk.co.uk

Lightweight, breathable and packable, this jacket has a large zipped pocket that it can be folded into and carried on a belt. The membrane, combined with taped seams, provides excellent protection from the elements and the outer fabric is water repellent to withstand autumn showers.

2 Musto Gore-Tex breeks

RRP: £325

musto.com

These tweed breeks feature a Gore-Tex drop liner that's fully waterproof, breathable and windproof to give you the highest protection in the field. Designed in a Balmoral tweed, they have an adjustable hem and piping on the pockets for durability.



3 Whisper biboverpants

RRP: £200

swazi.co.nz

This bit of kit is essential wet weather protection. The bib incorporates a large upper pocket and the inside pockets allow inner entry to the underlayer for hand-warming on those icy cold days. A structured knee offers freedom of movement while the back waist is elasticised, as are the adjustable shoulder straps, making these perfect for a trip to the foreshore.

4 Salomon Forces Speed

Assault boots

RRP: £134.95

edgarbrothers.com

These lightweight boots have cleat-like treads for maximum grip, a gusseted tongue that repels grit and dirt, and a soft ankle collar for ease in putting them on. All these features make them an excellent solution on boggy terrain.



5 Classic hunting shirt

RRP: £99

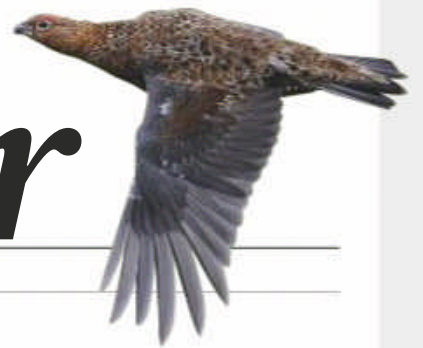
johnrigbyandco.com

This shirt is incredibly versatile and can take you from the forest to the field and mountains to the dinner table. It is smart as well as practical, making it a useful addition to your fieldsports wardrobe.



Lindsay Waddell is a former chairman of the NGO and a retired gamekeeper

Upland keeper



There's no sign of any respite on the horizon for breeding birds, with changes to farming methods in upland areas having a negative effect

I didn't need a 60mph hour wind reducing my garden to green shreds to tell me summer was coming to a close. Our lapwings have been in large flocks for a few weeks now and the last stragglers of curlew families have been winging their way over the dale heading for the coast.

Though Teesdale is, I gather, the second most prolific site for breeding waders in the British Isles, even here they are under increasing pressure. The large flocks belie the fact that they are not breeding as successfully as they did a few years ago.

Upland farming is changing, catching up with the lowlands, and it's not good for breeding birds. The quad bike has replaced the welly boot and peak breeding season for many waders is also lambing time. Countless journeys around lambing fields on four wheels spells doom for many nests and chicks.

More and more farmers are also making use of contractors to carry out a number of jobs that they would have done themselves not so long ago. Time is money to a contractor and there's precious little of it to spare looking out for nests or chicks. Many machinery operators are not country people either. They drive machines and have little interest in where they are or what's around them. They are there to spread manure, cut grass or whatever they are being paid to do and it's not to save a wader.

Quite where or when there will be some respite for these birds, I'm not sure, but if it's not up here, where will it be? This is, or was, their last refuge, relatively safe from predators because of the proximity to the grouse moors and gamekeepers. It's true the ones that breed out on the moor do

“Many moors that have had high stocks for years are having a miserable time”

not run the gauntlet of the farmer's quad quite as often, but even here there are more mouths looking for a meal.

It was really noticeable just how many of the larger gulls we had this year. A bad combination of no tourists at the coast due to COVID-19, hence no scraps of food and, even worse, the keepers could not cull them



Lapwings forming flocks at the end of the breeding season are a sign of summer drawing to a close

on the most valuable sites in the country as they did not get the required licence from Natural England. What a shambles.

I really hope the Government takes the licensing back from NE and gives it to Defra to administrate. If the body responsible cannot do it, it should not have it, it's as simple as that.

Winners and losers

On the grouse front, as always there are winners and losers. Even before medicated grit, there were moors up and down in bag sizes all over the country. Medicated grit evened that out for a few years, but with keepers utilising it in different ways, numbers have gone back to some being up and some going down again.

The real skill is to use it so you attain some sort of stability in your return year on year. Many moors that have had high stocks for many years are having a miserable time, with little or nothing to shoot. Some who are shooting reasonable numbers are shooting the greater numbers of old due to high stocks left last year.

There is, or should be, a lesson for all this year in that most of the moors that seem to have come out of it relatively well were not carrying really high stocks and have not done so for a few seasons.

More concerning is that some young grouse are not in great condition. It does not bode well if next year's breeders are not in a good state going into winter. There is a very good chance they may not make next spring and, if they do, how will they breed?

There's no doubt that the easterly moors have suffered badly from poor heather quality. For many, that is not going to improve quickly as some of it is down to heather beetle damage and that can take quite a few years to rectify itself. The dead heather on some of the higher moors will take much longer to recover than the lower altitude ones, as managers of the latter will be able to burn the dead material and instigate new growth.

On the deeper peat in the uplands, burning is banned and that means a far longer recovery cycle. If they can, they could cut it, which would help a bit. For those who have lost whole drives due to heather loss, it's going to be a long haul.

In the meantime, there are still plenty of nice days to be had out on the moor, if not standing in a butt, then walking-up the grouse and getting some exercise into the bargain. 🐦

WIN A 400 BIRD DAY FOR 8 GUNS AT VAYNOR PARK

NHS CHARITIES
TOGETHER



Bettws Hall are donating a 400 bird day, for 8 guns at Vaynor Park, to help raise money for those fighting on the frontline of Covid 19.



BETTWS HALL

**Lets show the world the shooting fraternity is here,
loud and clear!**

For every £100 donated, a ticket will be entered into the draw
justgiving.com/fundraising/bettwshalldonate
donatenhs@bettwshall.com or call +44 1686 650 628



CLASSIFIED DIRECTORY

For all classified advertising enquiries please contact:
will.mcmillan@futurenet.com or call 07976 437510

GAME BIRD & DUCK



Huge range of gamekeeping products and of course 'Birdpuller' the best pheasant feed supplement on the market

ON THE PULL

With **GAMEKEEP**
01833 630232

Visit our website
www.gamekeep.co.uk

SHOOTING AVAILABLE

Lammermuir Shoot
Walked uphill Partridges with some Grouse. Many driven Partridge days. Morning Goose Flights, Evening Duck Flights and Roe Deer stalking.
Tel: 01578 740258 - www.lammermuirshoot.co.uk

Shooting for sale
A friendly syndicate has three full guns or six half guns for sale on Beaulieu.
For more details please phone 07788753941

Please mention **SHOOTING TIMES** when replying to adverts

www.shooting.sh

DOGS FOR SALE
German Wirehaired Pointers / Springer Spaniel Mix Puppies Males and females, vaccinated, docked, wormed, and microchipped. Well socialised strong puppies. Both parents can be met.
£1500
Tel: 07765 324495

SITUATIONS VACANT

GARRIGILL & ROTHERHOPE ESTATE GROUSE BEAT KEEPER



A position has become available for a highly motivated grouse beat keeper on this renowned productive Cumbrian Estate.

The successful applicant must be driven to produce grouse to a high standard along with a passion for upland moor management, being able to work by themselves and fit into the existing team. Full driving licence, Firearm and Shotgun certificate essential. Minimum of 2 years' grouse experience. Competitive package to include accommodation and usual perks.

Apply in writing with CV and covering letter to: Davis & Bowring, Lane House, Kendal Road, Kirkby Lonsdale, Via Carnforth, Lancashire, LA6 2HH or Richard.howson@davis-bowring.co.uk (REF:RJH-GAR)

land agents
015242 74439
www.davis-bowring.co.uk

MISCELLANEOUS

**STOPS DOWNDRAFT
IMPROVES BURNING EFFICIENCY
GUARANTEED TO WORK**



FlueCube
The clever chimney cowl

WHAT THE CUSTOMERS SAY...
Just had to tell you what a great success the "Flue Cube" has been to us, we have gone from a non-drawing, smoking wood burner to a super efficient fire, we can't thank you enough for your excellent service & help we will certainly be recommending the "Flue Cube" to all. Thank you."

Edward & Diana Watson
For more testimonials go to www.fluecube.co.uk/Testimonials.asp

01580 715870 | sales@fluecube.co.uk | www.fluecube.co.uk

GUNSHOP GUIDE - DERBYSHIRE



Range Of New & Second Hand Shotguns, Air Rifles & Sporting Rifles
Range Of Shooting Equipment & Ammunition
Large Range of Outdoor, Waterproof Clothing, Wellingtons & Boots
Tel: 01332 862091
www.melbournegun.com
64 Church Street, Melbourne, Derby DE73 8EJ

Please mention **SHOOTING TIMES** when replying to adverts

Sharpshooter



Keepers and farmers couldn't miss work but others have enjoyed being furloughed – and even some ministers found a double-dip loophole

Now that most schools are back, let's look at how certain parts of the public sector have been spending their time. Farmers, gamekeepers and many others in the countryside never stopped working; they couldn't. But some of the Government institutions that monitor and control rural operations simply closed down for the duration. Even now, some of these institutions are still using COVID-19 as an excuse for poor service. Given that we may have to live with this virus for years, how much longer can this sort of evasion go on?

During lockdown, a friend of mine found he could not get hold of anybody at a certain department within Defra. He knew they couldn't be on furlough, because the public sector is not supposed to use furlough; they are funded by taxpayer's money in the first place. For a public body to furlough staff would be the equivalent of it taking a double-dip into taxpayers' funds – though there seems to be an exception north of the border, which I shall come to.

When he eventually got through to an actual person at the department in question, he asked why so few staff were available to speak to on the phone. The

answer was that a huge percentage of departmental employees had gone "on the sick". The main reason they cited was the stress of having their children at home and having to help home-school and entertain them. I am not making this up.

Some studies have shown that the UK civil service has been the most reluctant of any major employment sector to go back to work. Note I do not say "back to the office" but back to work, which could be conducted

“With schools in the UK back in business, the work-shy are running out of excuses”

from a remote location, such as home. I am a long-standing advocate of remote working wherever it is feasible. But a huge divide is opening up between most workers and parts of the civil service when it comes to returning to work, regardless of location.

Whereas much of the private sector – with some dismal exceptions, such as

high-street banks – have adapted to a new way of working, much of the mainstream civil service seems to think it can only work from monolithic office blocks, complete with receptionists and water coolers.

These offices are, of course, awkward to COVID-proof. So instead of finding new ways of working, some of these employees simply sat at home, secure in the knowledge that they were still getting paid full whack.

Earlier, I said there was an exception to the 'double-dip' rule. In Scotland, SNP ministers spotted a loophole to exploit. They stipulated that where a public body also relied to some extent on fundraising, such as from car parking or entrance fees, it should be permitted to furlough a proportion of its staff at additional cost to the UK's (mainly English) taxpayers. Several Scottish public bodies did just that, including a national park authority. How utterly typical of the SNP.

Yet this civil service gravy train cannot run for much longer. With schools across the UK back in business, the work-shy are running out of excuses. Public expenditure cannot keep on at this rate. The day of reckoning comes ever closer. 🐸

DOG BY KEITH REYNOLDS



SHOOTING TIMES & COUNTRY MAGAZINE, ISSN 0037-4164, is published weekly, incorporating Shooting Magazine, Shooting Life, British Sportsman, The Angler's News & Sea Fisher's Journal and Field Sport, by Future PLC, Quay House, The Ambury, Bath BA1 1UA, United Kingdom. © 2020 Future PLC. Printed by Walstead UK Ltd. Distributed by Marketforce, 5 Churchill Place, Canary Wharf, London, E14 5HU; tel 020 3787 9001; marketforce.co.uk. We are committed to only using magazine paper which is derived from responsibly managed, certified forestry and chlorine-free manufacture. The paper in this magazine was sourced and produced from sustainable managed forests, conforming to strict environmental and socioeconomic standards. The manufacturing paper mill holds full FSC (Forest Stewardship Council) certification and accreditation. All contents © 2020 Future Publishing Limited or published under licence. All rights reserved. No part of this magazine may be used, stored, transmitted or reproduced in any way without the prior written permission of the publisher. Future Publishing Limited (company number 2008885) is registered in England and Wales. Registered office: Quay House, The Ambury, Bath BA1 1UA. All information contained in this publication is for information only and is, as far as we are aware, correct at the time of going to press. Future cannot accept any responsibility for errors or inaccuracies in such information. You are advised to contact manufacturers and retailers directly with regard to the price of products/services referred to in this publication. Apps and websites mentioned in this publication are not under our control. We are not responsible for their contents or any other changes or updates to them. This magazine is fully independent and not affiliated in any way with the companies mentioned herein. If you submit material to us, you warrant that you own the material and/ or have the necessary rights/permissions to supply the material and you automatically grant Future and its licensees a licence to publish your submission in whole or in part in any/all issues and/or editions of publications, in any format published worldwide and on associated websites, social media channels and associated products. Any material you submit is sent at your own risk and, although every care is taken, neither Future nor its employees, agents, subcontractors or licensees shall be liable for loss or damage. We assume all unsolicited material is for publication unless otherwise stated, and reserve the right to edit, amend, adapt all submissions. Subscription rates for 52 issues: UK – £143. Priority Service (5-7 days): Europe – €234, ROW – £199. The US annual subscription price is \$305. Airfreight and mailing in the USA by agent named Worldnet Shipping Inc., 156-15, 146th Avenue, 2nd Floor, Jamaica, NY 11434, USA. Periodicals postage paid at Jamaica NY 11431. US Postmaster: Send address changes to SHOOTING TIMES & COUNTRY MAGAZINE, Worldnet Shipping Inc., 156-15, 146th Avenue, 2nd Floor, Jamaica, NY 11434, USA. Subscription records are maintained at Future PLC, Quay House, The Ambury, Bath BA1 1UA, United Kingdom. Air Business Ltd is acting as our mailing agent. All prices include postage and packing. Enquiries and subscription orders: Future PLC, PO Box 272, Haywards Heath, West Sussex RH16 3FS. Cheques payable to Future PLC. Tel: +44 (0)845 845 1231, fax +44 (0) 1444 445599.



petGuard
Serious pet insurance

**12
months for
the price of
11***

Gun dog insurance

Helping provide cover for your faithful friend should the unfortunate happen

Shooting Times proudly partnering with petGuard as the insurance provider for your working dogs.

Call **0345 450 7042** or visit our new site
for a specialist pet insurance quote

www.petguard.co.uk/shootingtimes

SHOOTING TIMES
& COUNTRY MAGAZINE

*Offer applies to new policies incepted after 23 September 2019. Pay for the first 11 months and the 12th month is included.

petGuard is a trading style of Thistle Insurance Services Limited. Thistle Insurance Services Limited is authorised and regulated by the Financial Conduct Authority. FRN 310419. Registered in England under No. 00338645. Registered office: Rossington's Business Park, West Carr Road, Retford, Nottinghamshire, DN22 7SW. Thistle Insurance Limited is part of the PIB Group.