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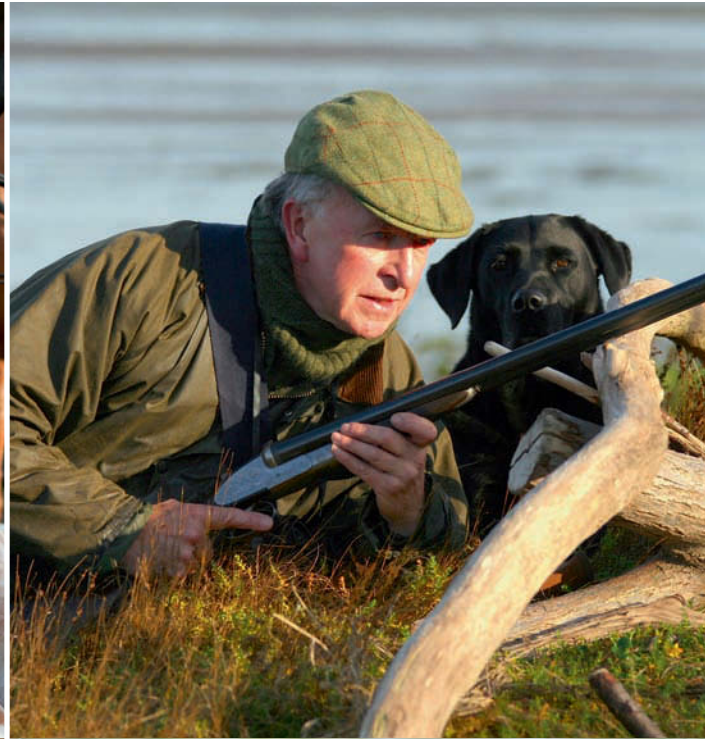
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SPRING 2016



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Conservation on the Isle of Carna

Photo: Rob Graham

EDITOR'S LETTER

Spring 2016 will be a busy one for all of us. Several elections are taking place, including for the Welsh Assembly and the Scottish Parliament and we have candidates from the main parties contesting seats in Wales and Scotland setting out their rural policies for you on p16. Alongside their views we bring the views of a Welsh gamekeeper (p20), a Scottish farmer and fisherman (p50) and news of the conservation efforts of one family on the Western Isle of Carna (p28). We also bring you a feature on the recent land reform legislation in Scotland (p22) that is sure to echo for some time to come.

Elsewhere in this diverse issue we bring you features from the European Firearms Directive (p11) and the skills involved in engraving a gun (p35) to the threats faced by our chalkstreams (p36), the perils of naming a wild animal (p9) and the range of choices faced by teenagers keen on a career in the countryside (p25).

“We have candidates from the main parties contesting seats in Wales and Scotland setting out their rural policies for you.”

Other positive work in progress includes Falconry for Schools (p46) bringing feathered friends to the classroom and my own recent trip to Italy to try to help Italian lady flyfishers develop an Italian version of our inspiring Casting for Recovery fly fishing programme for ladies with breast cancer.

The magazine also includes news, events, letters and a unique pigeon recipe from our Game to Eat campaign. I hope you enjoy this issue and that you vote where you can, buy British and continue to support our rural economy and way of life.

Jill Grieve, Editor
Follow me on Twitter @CAupdates

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Review

Round-up of the stories that matter to you



HUNTING

Hunting rides high despite extreme weather

Polling across England, Scotland and Wales give reason to be cheerful

HUNTS WENT INTO the Christmas period buoyed by the collapse of the last Hunting Act prosecution involving a registered hunt. Three days into a scheduled 10-day trial at Newton Abbot Magistrates' Court, the private prosecutors, the League Against Cruel Sports, withdrew all evidence. The court had sought confirmation from absent LACS acting Chief Executive Rachel Newman, a qualified solicitor, that she had advised expert witness Professor Stephen Harris not to disclose a close personal relationship between himself and LACS Head of Operations Paul Tillsley. Professor Harris had also been accused of embellishing his experience of hunting whilst giving evidence. Rather than answer these very serious questions LACS withdrew charges.

On the back of this, an editorial in *The Times* in early December stated: "Britain's last outstanding hunt prosecution collapsed in a £100,000 sink of ignominy. Country sports enthusiasts are justifiably calling for at least seven related convictions to be reviewed."

"83% of hunts have the same number or more subscribers."

Meanwhile our own survey of hunting in England and Wales showed that 83% of hunts have the same number or more subscribers since the Hunting Act. In December we also did some polling of Scottish voters ahead of Lord Bonyon's review of the framework surrounding the Protection of Wild Mammals (Scotland) Act 2002 (due to end in late March), and found that not a single one of the 1,041 people surveyed raised hunting as the most influential issue which will affect the way they vote. Compared to 16 other issues, hunting was the least influential with just 2% saying hunting would have the decisive impact on their vote in May's elections.

The media was filled with images of crowds supporting their local packs on Boxing Day giving the lie to dubious LACS claims that the Hunting Act is well supported.

In January, former nursery nurse Megan Thornbury was given 80 hours community service after she was convicted of three separate assaults on hunt supporters in Herefordshire, including one on a 15-year-old boy.

Welcome from our Chief Executive



2016 is an important year for the countryside with the devolved Welsh Assembly, Scottish Parliament and Police & Crime

Commissioners elections in the offing, alongside many local council elections. The Countryside Alliance, ever vocal, has created manifestos outlining our key issues for the rural communities of Wales and Scotland, as well as priorities for rural police. Please keep an eye on our website for updates on polling as well as the chance for you to lobby your candidates and ask them to back our manifestos.

"Digital engagement has swiftly become a central part of life and we have embraced it."

Digital engagement has swiftly become a central part of life and we have embraced it as surely as have all political parties, with great success. Thousands of you took part in the recent European firearms e-lobby run through the umbrella sporting organisation FACE and we hope thousands more will join us in lobbying politicians ahead of the elections.

While email and social media are a big part of our future they are a means, not an end in themselves. For the Alliance that end will always be a living, working countryside where we are all free to take part in all legitimate activities.

Tim Bonner
Chief Executive
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SHOOTING

The Law Commission's Wildlife Review



IN NOVEMBER THE Countryside Alliance welcomed The Law Commission's review of wildlife law and the publication of its recommendations to consolidate swathes of legislation in England and Wales.

There is much to be commended in the report, which has profound implications for shooting and wildlife management. However, there are areas, which far from making the law clearer for those shooters, farmers and keepers who have to operate under it, could, in

fact, make the law more complex and risk making essential management practices unlawful.

We support the need to simplify and consolidate wildlife legislation in England and Wales. However, we feel an opportunity was missed to go back to first principles and create wildlife law based on logic, science and evidence.

We also believe that some of what is being proposed could have serious consequences for shooting, and much work is needed if any resulting law is to be workable, both in conserving wildlife and supporting those who manage the countryside.

We will be looking at the detail and implications of the report, and look forward to continuing to work with the Government to develop a legislative structure that ensures the long-term future and conservation of our wildlife.

The Quarter

OUR HIGHLIGHTS OF THE PAST THREE MONTHS

DECEMBER

- **We welcomed Defra's** commitment to "rural proof" its policies, i.e. ensuring government departments' policies take into account specific issues faced by rural communities. We also agreed with Defra's announcement that it does not wish to reopen the European Birds and Habitats Directives.
- **We also reacted** to Ofcom's Connected Nations 2015 report which shows that the reach of broadband has risen across the UK over the past year. We warned that it is still clear that rural areas are still lagging behind.



JANUARY



- **Liam Stokes joined** the Countryside Alliance as Head of Shooting. Liam has taught gamekeeping and wildlife management at Wiltshire College Lackham for the past six-and-a-half years, whilst also running Lackham Shoot, overseeing grey partridge reintroduction and a brown trout recovery project amongst other things.

FEBRUARY

- **The judges hit** the road to judge the Rural Oscars, and a great celebration of Welsh business was held at Cardiff Bay. Welsh Champions now go forward to April's Winners' Reception at the House of Lords.
- **As part of FACE UK** we launched a new e-lobby of MEPs to raise concerns about firearms proposals. More on www.countryside-alliance.org.



GUNDOGS

Microchipping laws to come into force

This spring it becomes compulsory to have all dogs microchipped. This is an easy and harmless procedure providing pets and working dogs with lifetime identification. Each chip has its own code that is revealed when scanned by a vet which correlates to owner's details on a database. The British Veterinary Association has said: From 6 April in England and Wales (and in Scotland at a date to be confirmed), failure to have your dog microchipped or to not update your database details can lead to a fine of up to £500. More



Photo: Alex Morgan

information on the legislation as well as posters for veterinary reception areas can be found at www.bva.co.uk/microchipping. Useful information can also be found on Twitter using the hashtag #ChipMyDog.

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SHOOTING

The Country Sportsman's Record Book & Journal

Conceived by the late *Shooting Times* writer and countryman John Humphreys, and superbly illustrated by John Paley, the Record Book & Journal was originally published in 1988. Along with a conventional day-to-day diary, a sporting journal is unique as it is the owner who is writing the story. Every January 1 a new diary is begun. This latest edition is back by popular demand and produced to the same high standard and format. Each double page

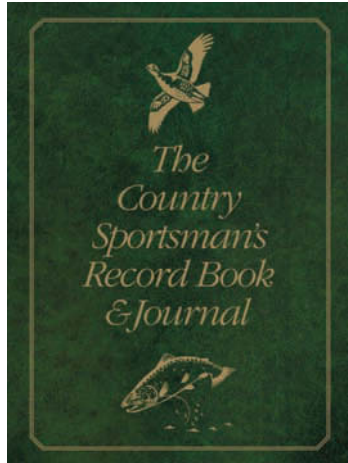
features two vignettes by John Paley, and a brief quotation from the writings of renowned sportsmen.

As a boy, John was given a game book by a kind aunt, keen to encourage him to write about his adventures. It was a traditional, estate shooting record book with the usual columns for the date, place, companions, species, etc. John came to realise that the number 2 in the 'Pheasants' column was indistinguishable from the 2 in the same column the previous November, although the story and the tactics

behind the capture of each bird would have been completely different.

So John acquired a leather-bound cash ledger, designed his own sporting diary and copied into it the entries from the discarded volume. He continued to keep a journal for the rest of his life.

John had started writing Volume Five before he died; his sons David and Peter keep their own journals and grandson Max started his own aged eight – on the day he caught his first salmon in the company of his grandfather, father and uncle. It is fitting that as this new edition is published a new granddaughter, Millie, has arrived. Hopefully in the future she will enjoy reading the sporting adventures of the grandfather she never met.



Buy the book at www.arperanglingbooks.co.uk/thecountrysportsmansrecordbook.html
 Priced at £34 + £6 p&p.

Help Fieldsports tot up rural generosity

Fieldsports Magazine has asked the question: "how much does the countryside community actually collectively raise each year for various charities in the UK?" Whether for the Air Ambulance or Forage Aid, Help for Heroes or Cancer Research, we know country people are generous fundraisers. *Fieldsports* is finding out just how generous and has created an online totaliser which will tally how much money has been raised from various events around the UK in 2016. As well as the rising totaliser, they will include a list of all the events that have occurred. Submissions can be emailed to totaliser@fieldsportsmagazine.com along with the total amount raised.

More at: www.fieldsportsmagazine.com/Cbarity/fieldsports-countryside-community-charity-support.html



GAME FAIR

Countryside Alliance members get 25% off tickets for The Game Fair

This July, the familiar and beautiful surroundings of Ragley Hall will welcome crowds to The Game Fair from 29th-31st July and members of the Countryside Alliance will benefit from the special Association Guest Pass with savings of 25%.

Tim Bonner, Chief Executive of The Countryside Alliance said: "We are pleased to work with the Game Fair to offer our members affordable

access and extra benefits. We look forward to coming to Ragley and seeing many of our members and friends in our area there."

The show will provide a fantastic day out with many interactive elements. Have-a-go stands on the shooting line with EJ Churchill, or The IM Group 4x4 experience, as well as a variety of fishing and gundog demonstrations in addition

to cookery workshops and lively debates and discussions in The Game Fair Theatre.

Camping and glamping are on offer – to book passes and camping, visit www.gamefair.org and follow instructions or call the membership hotline on 0844 776 7777. Follow on Twitter @TheGameFair

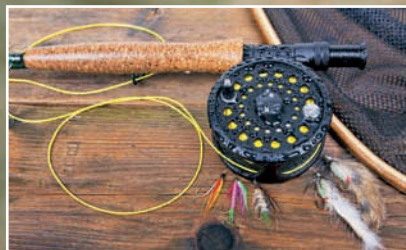




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What's in a name?

→ **TIM BONNER** examines the special sort of media hysteria reserved for wild animals who are given names.

If anthropomorphism were not enough of a threat to logical debate about wildlife management, a new and extreme version of this unhelpful trait is taking hold: naming wild animals. From the 'Exmoor Emperor', a red deer stag, to various birds of prey, to 'Cecil the lion', animals with names attract a special sort of lunacy.

I am certainly not going to argue here for the hunting of iconic big cats with a bow and arrow, an activity most of us involved in hunting and shooting in the UK would at the very least have serious doubts about, but the worldwide hysteria generated by 'Cecil's' death is out of all proportion to reason. On a day when millions of wild animals would have died because they came into conflict with man, or because man wanted to eat them, it was only one animal with a mane and a name that apparently mattered. In response, the animal rights movement's response would be to say that 'Cecil's' death highlighted the plight (it is always a 'plight') of African lions, but it would be equally valid to suggest that the focus on one named animal had much more to do with campaigning than conservation.

Another classic example of the nonsense generated by branded beasts comes from much closer to home. The 'Exmoor Emperor' was a stag that generated acres of news stories, most of which were embarrassingly ignorant. Indeed the 'Emperor' was probably not a single deer but an amalgam of big stags used to promote photographers and wildlife tour operators on the edge of Exmoor. North Devon produces plenty of very large stags with good genes supplemented by good grass and maize. When I farmed in the area there were always a few well known characters and one, which had a massive span, was admired for years before a local keeper

found him in poor condition one winter and delivered a humane end.

When one of these very large deer was shot just off the North Devon link road in 2010 it was reported as the death of the 'Exmoor Emperor' by a local tour guide who was nearby. The 'Emperor' instantly became 'Britain's largest wild animal' and a 'trophy worth £1,000s'. Culling stags during the rut was criticised, which will have been of interest to every deer manager in Scotland, and all sorts of fictions filled the newspapers and airwaves.

Pointing out that hundreds of thousands of deer are shot in the UK every year, and that we are still not killing enough to limit the damage done by the burgeoning population of cervids, could not even start to cut through the reams of nonsense caused by the death of one of their kind with a name.

Indeed it is clear that campaigners have latched on to the power of naming animals and have started to bestow names on raptors, especially hen harriers. This practice is supported by the fitting of trackers on particular animals which allows them to be identified. Without tracking technology, only animals that were particularly rare or distinctive could be regularly identified, although Peter Scott did pioneer the identification of Bewick's Swans by the unique pattern of yellow and black on their bills and those that returned annually to Slimbridge inevitably, therefore, collected names.

It is disgraceful that hen harriers are still killed, but does it make the crime



"IT IS DISGRACEFUL THAT HEN HARRIERS ARE STILL KILLED, BUT DOES IT MAKE THE CRIME WORSE, OR MORE IMPORTANTLY MAKE IT EASIER TO STOP THAT CRIME, IF THE BIRD HAS A NAME?"

worse, or more importantly make it easier to stop that crime, if the bird has a name? The annual return of an osprey to its breeding site from Africa is one of the wonders of nature but should we really appreciate them more because someone has decided to call them Odin or Millie, as RSPB staff at Loch Garten have?

Worryingly, some of us have adopted this habit and are regular visitors to the Game and Wildlife Conservation Trust's (GWCT) website where we can track the movement of no less than 28 named woodcock as they migrate from the UK to the farthest corners of Eastern Europe and back. Taking a sustainable harvest of wild bird species that we love and admire has always been a slightly contradictory activity, but one which is entirely defensible. I am not sure how I would react if one of these days a successful shot saw the dog retrieving a woodcock with a tracking device and a name, Wensum, Garth or Olwen, whose life history is mapped and recorded.

Whether you are the GWCT understandably seeking to attract funding for your research, an Exmoor tour guide looking for publicity, or an animal rights activist furthering your campaign, bestowing a name on a wild animal takes it from being an anonymous member of a population, to an individual which we immediately start to treat as if it were a pet or even a child. Whilst we should treat all animals humanely, giving wild animals the sort of rights we should reserve for humans is a very dangerous path. ●



Tim Bonner is Chief Executive of the Countryside Alliance. He is an experienced conservationist and sportsman who has long called for calm common sense in the wildlife management debate.

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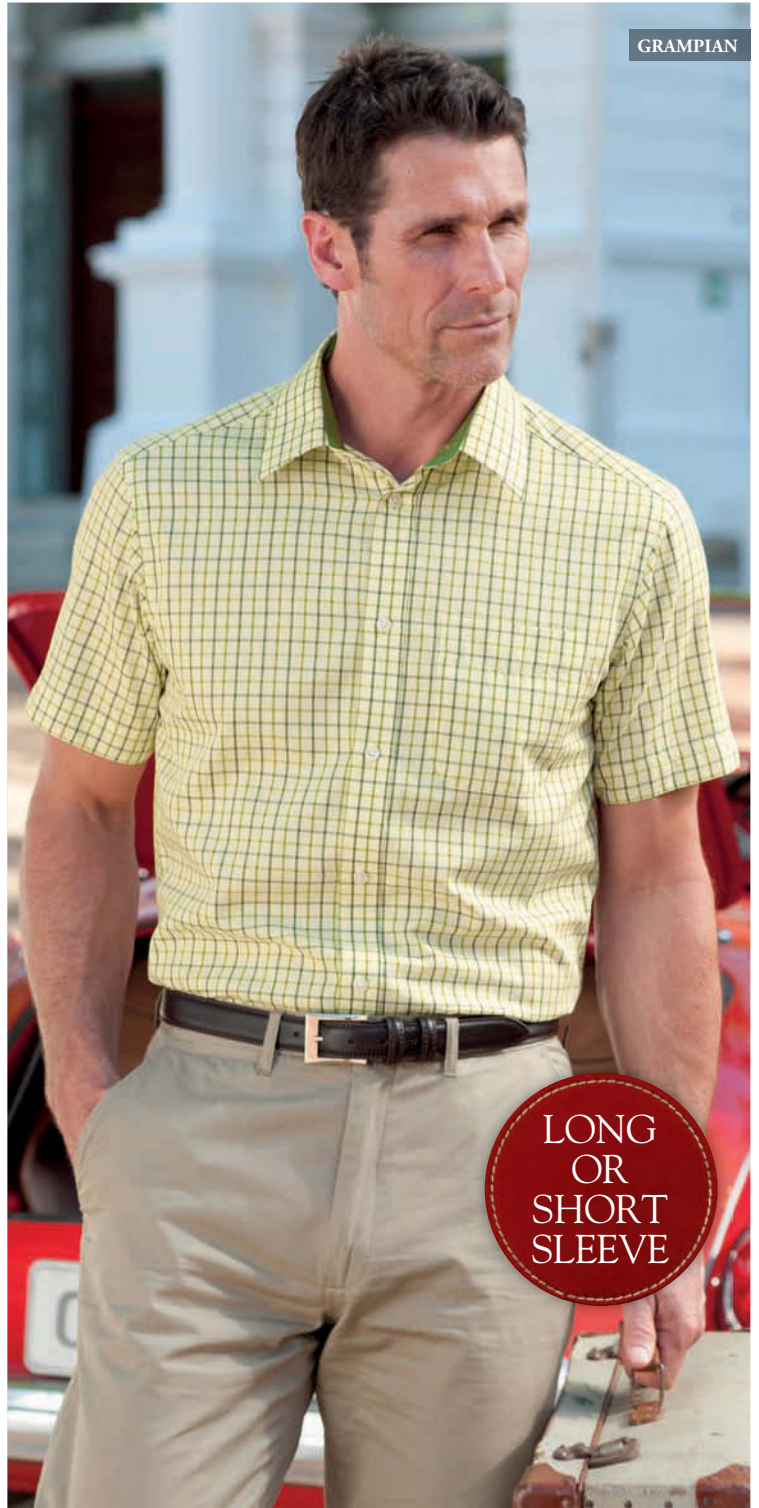
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Ensuring Europe gets it right on shooting

→ **JACK KNOTT** assesses the possible impact on shooting that an increased terror threat brings to Europe and why we must all stand together for legitimate shooting interests.



Following the horrific Paris terror attacks in November 2015, it was obvious that improvements needed to be made to increase the security and combat the growing threat of terrorism and radicalisation within the European Union. The European Commission was left with no option other than to act quickly on this threat and respond to the public's fears and questions.

In fairness the European Commission should be congratulated for proposing a number of measures that will be truly beneficial, including increased communication between member states regarding stolen firearms and the trade of legal firearms and increasing the standard of deactivation to the current UK laws. We are, of course, fully supportive of these moves and will assist where we can.

Sadly, however, there are also proposed changes to the Firearms Directive which will have absolutely no impact on the illegal activities of criminals but will mean massive restrictions for legal firearms holders in the UK, even more so thanks to the already restrictive laws in the UK.

The knee-jerk nature of this reaction can be seen in the fact that the proposals to the Firearms Directive, which were meant to be brought out in mid-2016, were actually released just five days after the November Paris attacks. It is our view that the desire to act quickly by the European Commission will, if it continues, have a massive effect on both the game and target shooting communities whilst

“THE COUNTRYSIDE ALLIANCE, ALONG WITH THE EUROPEAN FIELDSPORTS UMBRELLA BODY, FEDERATION OF ASSOCIATIONS OF HUNTING AND CONSERVATION (FACE), BELIEVES THAT A NEW DIRECTIVE SHOULD BE MADE TO COMBAT CRIMINALS AND TERRORISTS.”

having no effect on the opportunities for criminals to get hold of and use illegal firearms. The old saying ‘the easiest group to legislate against are those that are licensed’ springs to mind.

The 1991 Firearms Directive had the aim of securing the trade and increasing the market for legal firearms across the European Union. The Directive was, however, not intended to handle an escalating terror threat. The Countryside Alliance, along with the European fieldsports umbrella body Federation of Associations for Hunting and Conservation (FACE, of which we are a part), believes that a new Directive should be made to combat criminals and terrorists.

Take for example the fact the European Commission wishes to see a five-year ceiling on licence lengths. Even though both shooting organisations and the police are in agreement regarding an extension of the licence, we feel that because member states already determine whether a person is fit to possess firearms through medical and criminal checks, it should therefore also be within their competency to determine the duration of possession. This holds true with the current European set-up where licence duration varies widely.

Another example is the Commission's proposal to move the vaguely defined “semi-automatic firearms for civilian use which resemble weapons with automatic mechanisms”, which currently fall under category B7, to category A.

This measure would prohibit a whole sub category of firearms that had been obtained and registered in full compliance. In the UK this will result in the immediate ban of certain .22 rimfire rifles that ‘resemble’ weapons with automatic mechanisms. These .22 semi-automatic rifles are in widespread use in the UK for pest control (mostly rabbit shooting) and for target sports. They possess the same technical specifications as any other category B firearm, and should therefore not be classed as more dangerous than any other semi-automatic firearm. The Countryside Alliance vehemently objects to such a ban as this move is based on unclear criteria with no set definition of ‘resemble’, with the results being disproportionate and not technically justified. Finland and Lithuania have already stated that they will opt-out or seek legal judgements on this proposal, arguing that their countries’ reservists need access to this category of weapon for national defence. Austria, Germany and Slovakia have also come out strongly against the proposed move to Category A. Further proposals put forward by the Commission include standard medical tests for all renewals and grants, removing the exemption of under-18s to acquire a firearm, and the banning of Category A deactivated firearms. We have already raised all the necessary issues with MEPs, MPs, the Home Office and you, our members. We are now working alongside a number of shooting organisations in this country and around Europe to make sure that every MEP understands the potential consequences of these knee-jerk proposals. ●



Jack Knott works on the frontline of the shooting campaign, monitoring all political activity relevant to shooting, representing shooting interests in the media and also promoting the eating of game via our Game to Eat campaign.

To lobby your MEPs to safeguard legitimate shooting interests please go to the website www.countryside-alliance.org

George Adams – the Huntsman’s Huntsman

➔ As George Adams retires after 35 seasons of service to the Fitzwilliam, **GEORGE BOWYER** looks back at the career of a truly great fox hunter.

There are not a lot of professional members of hunt staff who manage to rack up 35 seasons of service with the same hunt, but this is what George Adams has achieved with the Fitzwilliam (Milton) Hunt, 32 of them as huntsman.

George, born June 8, 1951, did not, in the words of the cliché, come from ‘traditional hunting stock’. His father was a boilermith and welder and his mother worked on a local farm – although she did walk puppies in her youth. They lived in Shropshire in the village of Snailbeach, home from Roman times until the 1950s of the most productive lead mine in Europe.

George followed the South Shropshire as a schoolboy, cadging lifts with local friends and later started spending much of his free time in the kennels there, with huntsman Jack Warburton and terrierman Jim Pugh.

Snailbeach was also the home of Mike Rowson, (later huntsman of the South Shropshire) who was hunting his own bobby pack of assorted harriers (from the Montgomeryshire Harriers), beagles and a few terriers. George started whipping-in to Mike from an early age and Mike proved to be not only a life-long friend, but also one of the most important influences on George’s own hunting career.

George’s second stroke of luck was that he went to Meole Brace School in Shrewsbury, where he was taught geography by Ray Childs. Well, that was the theory, anyway. In practice, Ray was also the field master of the Border Counties Otterhounds, and George ended up spending more time in the hunting

field than he ever did in the geography classroom. When George did turn up for a lesson, Ray’s only comment was “Well, what sort of a day did you have, then?”

George’s winters were spent hunting with the United and the South Shropshire, amongst others, and his summers out with the Border Counties with Ray Childs, huntsman Ray Williams, and others, including Ian Coghill.

Following on from his earlier visits, George used to go and help out at the United kennels, working for Bob Boswell and Mrs Gurney Fry, often staying for a week at a time in the holidays. One week, when Bob went abroad for a job interview, he felt confident enough with George to leave him in charge of the

“...HE HAS SHOWN SPORT TO A LARGE NUMBER OF MOUNTED AND OTHER FOLLOWERS, AS WELL AS MAKING AND MAINTAINING MANY FRIENDSHIPS WITHIN THE WIDER HUNTING AND FARMING COMMUNITY.” SIR PHILIP NAYLOR-LEYLAND, SENIOR JOINT-MASTER



Photo: Trevor Meeks/Horse and Hound

kennels at the ripe old age of 14.

At the age of 15, George was offered a chance to go to Badminton as a groom for Sid Bird, but after some deliberation turned it down and instead took a job on a local farm breeding pedigree Hereford show bulls.

When George passed his driving test he started doing terrier work for Mike Rowson at the South Shropshire. This led to his first job in hunt service, spending a season as terrierman/fencer to the Cheshire Forest.

This was the start of George’s traditional apprenticeship in hunt service. He spent a season as terrierman to the South Shropshire; two seasons with Jack Battersby as kennelman to the Badsworth; three seasons as first whipper-in to David



George Bowyer – Master of the Fitzwilliam for 13 years, George has spent a lifetime in hunting and is a passionate campaigner in defence of the rural way of life. Singer of “Guardians of the Land” many of you will remember George in fine voice at the Hyde Park Rally and other demonstrations.

Photo: Jim Meads



Photo: Claire Wright

Above: George and wife Sue. Left: George with ‘Bretton’, Champion Unentered Dog at Peterborough Royal Foxhound Show, July 2015.

“WHEREVER, THEY HAVE GONE, THE REACTION HAS ALMOST UNIVERSALLY BEEN, “GOD, THOSE HOUNDS CAN HUNT!” THAT IS A VERDICT WHICH SUMS UP THE HUNTSMAN WHO PRODUCED THEM AS MUCH AS IT DOES THE HOUNDS THEMSELVES.”

Anker at the South Notts and then two seasons as first whipper-in to Stuart Blackburn at the Bramham Moor.

In 1981, George was appointed as first whipper-in to Tom Teanby at the Fitzwilliam (Milton) Hunt. Two and a half seasons later, Tom was tragically killed in a riding accident and George was asked to carry the horn for the Fitzwilliam – a role that he has since continued to fill with quiet professionalism for 32 seasons.

Senior joint master, Sir Philip Naylor-Leyland summed up George’s achievements very succinctly. “During this extraordinarily long and illustrious service he has shown sport to a large number of mounted and other followers, as well as making and maintaining many friendships within the wider hunting and farming community.”

For fox hunters, as we were before the ban and hope to be again, the first element of that is the most important, and George is a proper hunting huntsman, in his best season accounting for 74½ brace. When hunting people talk about “good huntsmen” there are many attributes that they rank and compare. For me, one of the most important is having “fox sense” – the ability to understand and think like your quarry. This George has in spades.

On more than one occasion whilst I was field master of the Fitzwilliam, when hounds needed a bit of help – something that George does not do too soon, unlike so many inexperienced huntsmen



Formative years with the South Notts, George as first whipper-in and huntstman David Anker on the right.

Photo: Frank Mead



Photo: Tom Reading

– I found myself watching him cast hounds in some unexpected direction, thinking ‘What on earth are you wasting your time over there for?’ only to see hounds strike the line and go screaming off in full cry. Fortunately, being wise enough to keep my thoughts to myself, I usually got to eat my humble pie by myself.

James Barclay, joint master for 12 seasons, commented on the second element. “George is one of the most popular hunt professionals of his era. Very good with both farmers and followers, full of charm with an infectious smile. And this translated down to the hounds and how they liked him and worked for him as well. I was very privileged that he looked after my own hounds when I had them at Milton, and took as good care of them as he did of his own.”

One of George’s legacies is the people whom he has helped and inspired along the way. Whippers-in who

have gone on to be huntsmen, including Glen Westmoreland, Tim Taylor, Stuart Trousdale, Bill Bishop, Ben Skilbeck and now, of course, Simon Hunter who will be taking over from George on May 1. Added to this is a list of amateur huntsmen of other packs who started their hunting careers as children with the Fitzwilliam, including Andrew Sallis (East Sussex and Romney Marsh), Ollie Dale (Ludlow) and Stephen Hill and Phillip Baker (Granta Harriers).

When comparing huntsmen, as hunters do, it is often difficult to prove that someone shows good sport because they are good at what they do and not just because they have good country in which to do it. Over the years, the Fitzwilliam hounds have been invited to hunt the countries of the Flint & Denbigh, the Quorn, the Cottesmore, the Royal Artillery, the Warwickshire, the Oakley, the Woodland Pytchley, the VWH, the Vale of Aylesbury, the Fernie, the West Norfolk, the Puckeridge & Thurlow, the Grove & Rufford and the Badsworth. Wherever they have gone, the reaction has almost universally been, “God, those hounds can hunt!” That is a verdict which sums up the huntsman who produced them as much as it does the hounds themselves. ●

The George Adams Testimonial Fund committee are coordinating the fund-raising effort for George’s fund to which any donations are welcome. Please donate either via bank transfer sort code: 20 67 40 account no: 53280861 or send cheques made payable to ‘GATF’ to Grant Hawkins, Keystone House, East Road, Oundle, Peterborough PE8 4BX



George with granddaughters Izzy and Eve Reading, who both competed at HOYS in 2015.

Photo: Tom Reading

Cancer has no borders - neither does fly fishing

→ **JILL GRIEVE** reports that Casting for Recovery UK & Ireland is all set to conquer mainland Europe as Italian fly fishers plan their first retreat.



When an invitation comes asking you to talk about one of your favourite projects to an enthusiastic new audience, it is only polite to accept. When that invitation comes from Italian fly fishers and involves a trip to Tuscany, then really the only question is when the next flight might be.

So it was that fieldsports' global appeal came into sharp relief in January, when I flew to Pisa at the invitation of the Alleanza Pescatori Ricreativi - or Recreational Angling Alliance - to attend a trade show in Carrara to tell them all about Casting for Recovery UK & Ireland (CfR), the unique form of therapy for ladies with breast cancer that blends counselling, medical advice and fly fishing.

Laura Pisano of the Alleanza Pescatori Ricreativi had spotted the programme on Facebook and, with an eye on encouraging ladies into the traditionally male dominated sport of fly fishing, she contacted us to find out more about the retreat programme, why it works and how it might work in Italy. Laura busied herself with finding support to bolster her plan and when I arrived, alongside long-term CfR supporters and casting instructors Sally and Tony Pizzi, it quickly became clear that it was "when" not "if" CfR Italia could be formed. It has always struck me while working on CfR that the kindness, generosity and goodwill of fishermen cannot be overstated, and that was also true in Italy. We were greeted



warmly by Laura, by Daniela Ferrando, a sea angling journalist who wants to play an integral part in the project, Massimo Maggiani, of the Italian National Fly Fishing Association and many of his colleagues - all equally keen to be a part of the project. We were also welcomed by oncologists from the local hospital who were intrigued to find out more about

this previously unheard of project. My presentation was delivered with simultaneous translation and while we didn't necessarily understand exactly what we were saying to each other, our photos of ladies enjoying the retreats and smiling broadly while on the bankside proved to be a universal language. The medics were particularly impressed that the project gets ladies away from the hospital where cancer support groups and activities are traditionally run. We all agreed that fresh air, light exercise and the casting motion all contribute to what can easily be described as therapy for body and mind.

"IT HAS ALWAYS STRUCK ME WHILE WORKING ON CASTING FOR RECOVERY THAT THE KINDNESS, GENEROSITY AND GOODWILL OF FISHERMEN CANNOT BE OVERSTATED, AND THAT WAS ALSO TRUE IN ITALY."

Of course, one of the therapeutic benefits of CfR is laughter, always very much in evidence despite the seriousness behind the lady participants' presence on retreat. Sally and Tony helped to convey that laughter at Carrara, when Sally whipped out a custom-built 2ft rod and line with a fluffy toy fish on the end of it and, with Tony holding the fish at the end of the line, "played" him to help explain how the instruction side of the retreats work. As Sally says, "coaching is all about

having fun. If people have fun, they learn and enjoy the process. That is what we try to promote and I hope achieve." Sally's coaching credentials were certainly put to the test when she was handed a rod and invited to show her casting style on a 30m indoor casting pool in the centre of the trade show. Clearly passing that particular test, good humoured as it was, she was then afforded the honour of helping to judge a fly tying competition. Again, the global appeal of fieldsports was very much in evidence, and Sally and Massimo scrutinised each entry and agreed completely on the winning set.

I very much hope we have started the ball rolling for the Italian fly fishing and medical community as they seek to import our beloved programme. Having reported back to the original Casting for Recovery project in the United States, all the signs are positive and we hope that CfR Italia can run its first retreat next year. As I told the assembled group: "The European Parliament confirms that breast cancer is the leading cause of death in European women aged 35 to 59, so it is sadly true that there are no shortage of ladies who could benefit from what the Casting for Recovery model can offer. Cancer has no borders, so there is no reason this project should either." Where next? ●



Jill Grieve has worked with Casting for Recovery UK & Ireland on behalf of the Countryside Alliance for 10 years and since last year has had the honour of being its Director.

For more on Casting for Recovery UK & Ireland, including how to apply to attend a retreat, visit www.castingforrecovery.org.uk

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The countryside and the ballot box

→ May's elections for the Welsh Assembly and the Scottish Parliament come at a time when several vital issues are facing our rural communities. Here, rural spokespeople for the main parties set out their visions for the countryside.

WILLIAM POWELL IS THE WELSH LIBERAL DEMOCRATS CANDIDATE FOR MID & WEST WALES @WilliamPowellAM



The Welsh Liberal Democrats are committed to safeguarding the farming industry, enabling our rural communities to thrive whilst maintaining food security. Wales has a long and proud farming heritage and we must do all we can to preserve and enhance that in order to secure the sector for future generations, thus providing a livelihood for those who are the custodians of our precious natural environment.

The case to support our young farming entrants is compelling. Farming in Wales remains an almost exclusively inherited occupation and much more needs to be done to make the industry accessible. Share farming is one way in which Welsh agriculture can foster new entrants into the industry, and local authority-owned agricultural holdings also provide valuable access to the land.

Closely linked to that is the clear need to review TAN 6 guidance on 'Planning for Sustainable Rural Communities' so that affordable rural housing is delivered across Wales, important both for younger entrants as well as providing appropriate accommodation for farmers wishing to hand over to the next generation.

Also of huge importance is the outcome of the forthcoming European Referendum, which will be more significant for Welsh agriculture than any other business sector in our country. It is vital, both for the industry and for the sake of our food security, that we see off decisively the catastrophe of a vote to leave the EU.

In this context, the key Welsh Liberal Democrat policy pledges are to:

- Maintain support to farming across Wales in an equitable manner, bearing in mind the needs of communities for a strong farming sector in all areas, as CAP funding tapers down.
- Sustain the Farming Connect network to help farmers and landowners to find the best route to both profitability and sustainability according to their situation, in particular to recognise the importance of Field Officers and the harnessing of local knowledge in building confidence and resilience in the farming sector.
- Work with local authorities and National Parks to improve the planning process for all Welsh businesses, to minimise delays and provide long term support for the sustainability of entire communities.
- Fundamentally review TAN 6 guidance on 'Planning for Sustainable Rural Communities' to achieve real progress in the delivery of affordable rural housing across Wales.
- Work intensively with the Farming Unions and Young Farmers' Clubs to support YFC activity in rural and urban areas and to take farming and food production into schools across Wales.
- Fully review existing agri-environment schemes to ensure that they achieve sustainable farming and effective environmental management, and are fully funded so that farmers are properly rewarded for the conservation work they carry out.
- Further support young farming entrants in Wales with an emphasis on the potential contribution of share farming, and the significance of local authority-owned agricultural holdings across Wales to provide access to the land.

REBECCA EVANS IS THE WELSH LABOUR CANDIDATE FOR GOWER @RebeccaEvansAM



Welsh Labour is committed to working and investing to ensure that rural communities in Wales remain vibrant places

to live, providing residents with an excellent quality of life. We want to make sure that rural communities offer access to high quality employment, affordable housing, and public services. We believe that rural communities need to be sustained by reliable and effective infrastructure – such as broadband, public transport and utilities.

We know that farming and food processing form the backbone of rural communities, and we are committed to working in partnership with the sector to achieve real, transformative change to ensure that our farming and food sector is resilient, profitable, modern and professionally managed.

Welsh Labour continues to be the party of working people wherever they live and wherever they work in Wales. When the UK Coalition Government abolished the Agricultural Wages Board (AWB), the Labour Welsh Government took urgent steps to legislate to retain the functions of the Board. As a result, I was pleased to introduce a new Wages Order for Wales which gave our lowest-paid farm workers a 6% pay rise – their first pay rise since 2012. Conversely, across the border in England, 30 per cent of farmers in a Farmers' Guardian survey said that their wage had fallen since the abolition of the AWB.

Our Rural Development Programme (RDP) represents a seven-year programme of serious investment in rural Wales, worth hundreds of millions of pounds from the Welsh Government and European Commission. As well as increasing the competitiveness of agriculture, the RDP will help deliver the sustainable management of our natural resources and help us take action on climate change. We will use the investment to support rural economies, creating and maintaining jobs and growth; and we will make strategic investments that increase social inclusion and tackle poverty.

LLYR GRUFFYDD IS THE PLAID CYMRU CANDIDATE FOR THE NORTH WALES REGION

@LlyrGruffydd



Plaid Cymru knows the importance of a thriving rural Wales, not only for the production of high quality food and the management of the environment, but also as the cornerstone of our rural economy.

That's why Plaid Cymru will lower the business rates burden on small rural businesses. We will also do more to help attract tourists to rural Wales and provide better support for communities that want to set up their own ventures, for example to run the village shop or save the local pub.

We will work closely with farmers and other rural businesses to ensure that the nearly £1bn of Rural Development Programme funding available is made more easily accessible to those who need it.

We will also provide the agriculture industry with greater support by significantly increasing the amount of Welsh food and drink purchased by public services in Wales.

Plaid Cymru will also designate 2018 as The Year of Welsh Food and Drink - a sustained and intensive year-long campaign to encourage customers to buy more Welsh produce.

We are committed to using the most effective measures available to control and eradicate bTB and will ensure that testing and movement restrictions remain proportionate to the disease status of an area.

We will introduce River Initiatives to boost fish numbers with particular attention to sewin and salmon populations.

Plaid Cymru will not introduce open access to all land in Wales.

We will support rural housing by funding new affordable homes in small-scale developments in rural Wales.

We will also ensure that all homes have a Superfast broadband connection by 2017, and are committed to significantly improving mobile phone reception in rural areas, too.

We are determined to give rural Wales the stronger voice it deserves. Plaid Cymru is the change rural Wales needs.

RUSSELL GEORGE IS THE WELSH CONSERVATIVES CANDIDATE FOR MONTGOMERYSHIRE

@russ_george



Living and working in our beautiful rural communities is both a great privilege and a great challenge. There are specific issues facing these areas, many of which have reached new, unbearable highs.

Rural areas account for a third of the Welsh population and rural communities make Wales tick. We want to give them the power they deserve and the opportunity to make their own decisions. Welsh government ministers shouldn't be making decisions for them. They should be providing the opportunity for decisions to be made at a local level, listening to views and providing all possible support for a bright and vibrant future.

The Welsh Conservatives have innovative plans to boost support for rural communities. With the right support, rural Wales could be an economic powerhouse. Through the responsible use of Wales' abundant natural resources, support for our farming industry, the roll out of distance-busting IT, and more enterprise-focused

planning regulations, much-needed jobs can be generated.

At the moment, rural communities are often seen as an afterthought. A Welsh Conservative Government would ensure that all of its policies reflect the distinct needs of our rural communities prior to implementation. We would Stand up for Rural Wales.

Welsh Conservatives would:

- Appoint a Minister for Mid & West Wales, a new position which would represent the specific needs of the region, with an emphasis on support for rural communities.
- Ensure that all policies are independently assessed to evaluate their impact on rural communities.
- Properly support our dairy and red meat industries.
- Support a mid-term review of CAP and work with UK government colleagues to generate a fairer deal for farmers.
- Implement specific proposals including rates relief extension, a commitment to cut red tape and the opportunity for communities to take over the running of community assets.
- Support measures aiming to maintain and improve Wales' high standards of animal welfare.

TAVISH SCOTT IS THE SCOTTISH LIBERAL DEMOCRATS CANDIDATE FOR SHETLAND @tavishscott



Rural communities face a unique set of challenges and it is crucial that the next Scottish government takes action.

The Scottish Government have announced a review of the Protection of Wild Mammals (Scotland) Act. If the review recommends a change in the law, Scottish Liberal Democrat MSPs will ensure that Parliament is given a proper chance to scrutinise the proposals. It will not be acceptable to force changes through.

I have been contacted by many people concerned about the future of crofting. The Crofting Commission's one-size-fits-all approach does not recognise the dramatic differences between and within crofting communities. Government must sort out the shambles

of the new Common Agriculture Policy. Having spent £178 million on a computer, we should expect it to make farm payments on time. But many agriculture businesses will vote on May 5th without receiving their full CAP payment. That is unacceptable.

It's no secret that rural areas suffer from declining populations. Our communities must offer a vibrant range of jobs to avoid losing talent to bigger towns and cities. Fast access to the internet and reliable mobile phone coverage is taken for granted across Scotland, but it is unavailable to many rural households and businesses. Further investment is needed to speed up the roll-out of affordable superfast broadband and mobile phone coverage in such areas.

Scotland's rural communities deserve to be heard at Holyrood, and need strong local MSPs who will put their constituents ahead of party politics. The Scottish Liberal Democrats have a proven track record of doing just that, and will in the next Parliament.

ALEX FERGUSON IS THE SCOTTISH CONSERVATIVE CANDIDATE FOR GALLOWAY AND UPPER NITHSDALE

@AFergusonMSP



The Scottish Conservatives understand the issues that concern rural communities and have consistently stood up for their interests. Although the 2016 Scottish Conservative Manifesto will not be formally published until April, we are clear in our vision for Scotland's rural communities.

Connectivity is essential to enable rural businesses to compete more effectively, provide jobs and ensure the sustainability of rural communities. Rolling out reliable broadband and improving mobile phone coverage to rural Scotland requires both governments and local authorities to work together. We will make it a top priority to speed the process up through a range of measures, not least by working with our UK colleagues in delivering a Universal Service Obligation for broadband.

Reliable transport links are crucial for rural Scotland. Rural communities often pay higher delivery charges, have access to less reliable transport, and local businesses suffer as a result. There are an increasing number of community

transport operators who fill in the gaps and provide services for rural communities and we have outlined plans to support them further.

We recognise that suitable and affordable housing is crucial to sustain local services. We need to bring back or convert the swathes of empty properties around rural Scotland to be used as affordable housing. In addition, we will look at how to support developers interested in rural affordable housing - be it through direct grants or reforms in the planning system.

The SNP's land reform and agricultural holdings plans have recently been changed beyond recognition and now pose a serious threat to our rural communities. While we support measures improving transparency and helping community ownership, we will advocate measures that increase the amount of land being let, not ones that will grind the tenancy sector to a halt.

Policy Pledges:

- Improve connectivity across rural Scotland.
- Support the development of local community transport.
- Increase the supply of affordable housing.
- Promote a vibrant tenancy sector and all rural businesses.
- Hold the SNP to account on their CAP management failures.

DR AILEEN MCLEOD IS THE SCOTTISH NATIONAL PARTY CANDIDATE FOR GALLOWAY AND WEST DUMFRIES

@AileenMcLeodMSP



We recognise and value the role of our rural economy and are committed to supporting its growth. That's why we're investing

£1.3 billion in the Rural Development Programme to provide the basis for growth in key sectors like tourism and food and drink. We also understand the importance of broadband to rural communities and, with our partners, we are investing over £410 million to ensure fibre broadband access to 95% of premises by 2017-18.

We continue to support both our fishing and farming industries, and have established initiatives to promote Scotland's food and drink at home and abroad. Food and drink continues to be our top export sector, accounting for £4.8

billion of exports - up from £3.7 billion in 2007.

We continue to support the fisheries sector, particularly at a European level - in the most recent negotiations the Fisheries Secretary secured increased quotas in a number of key stocks. We have also legislated to enhance our aquaculture sector and are taking forward plans for a Wild Fisheries Bill and strategy to secure a more sustainable future for the sector.

We are committed to empowering rural communities and ensuring Scotland's land is an asset that benefits the people of Scotland - and are already halfway towards our target of one million acres of land in community ownership by 2020. The Community Empowerment Act will give communities more power to take on land and buildings and to have a say on how their services are delivered. The Land Reform Bill also proposes radical changes to ensure our system of land rights promotes fairness and economic prosperity for all.

SARAH BOYACK IS THE SCOTTISH LABOUR CANDIDATE FOR LOTHIAN

@SarahBoyackMSP



The success of our land-based and agriculture sectors are key to growing a strong rural economy. They are also a key part of making Scotland attractive as a tourist destination.

While there have been some significant successes, the last year has been particularly hard with the dairy crisis, price volatility and the unacceptable delays to CAP payments. We've also seen the impact of climate change with flooding and extreme weather hitting rural businesses.

We need shorter supply chains, more co-operatives, increased organic food production and procurement of Scottish produce in the public and private sectors.

We need land use policies and investment to support resilience in our rural communities to enable land managers and rural businesses to invest with confidence. The land reform debate needs to be a catalyst for communities to develop new opportunities. We must also see improved infrastructure and public services within our rural communities.

Scottish Labour would use the powers of the Scottish Parliament to:

- Retain the Scottish Agricultural Wages Board.
- Facilitate the overhaul of the sector's supply chains to deliver fairer prices for farmers.
- Set new targets to increase the procurement of Scottish produce across the public and private sectors.
- Improve access to sustainable public services such as GP services in rural areas.
- Strengthen our transport infrastructure to allow for greater connectivity between different rural communities.
- Develop co-operatives in rural communities to generate new business opportunities and secure value from farming and crofting produce.

The elections will take place on Thursday 5th May. The deadline to register to vote is Monday 18th April. Register online at: www.gov.uk/register-to-vote

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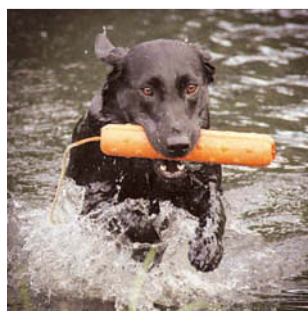


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Gamekeeping enriches the countryside of Wales

→ **DAVID POOLER**, the National Gamekeepers' Organisation (NGO) North Wales Chairman, writes that this is not just his view, but also that of the First Minister of Wales.

This is what the top man in Wales told the press about keeping: "It has been interesting to meet with the NGO and hear about the way responsible shooting organisations are contributing to rural life. Their work helps to improve habitats to support wildlife as well as significantly contributing to the wider economy, bringing much needed jobs and income to rural Wales."

The leader of Welsh Government, The Rt. Hon Carwyn Jones AM, made his comments after the National Gamekeepers' Organisation had walked him around a kept shoot in mid-Wales during the Royal Welsh Show week a few years ago.

I remember the day well. It was a good-humoured affair and, standing on the rearing field in the sunshine with a glorious patchwork of Powys countryside disappearing into the distance, we touched on all the usual keeping-related topics. We covered the lot: conservation, predator control, you name it.

This thumbs up by the head of our Government in Wales, after seeing for himself what gamekeepers can offer the countryside, was quite a feather in the cap of the NGO. More importantly, it showed me how positively politicians will react to game shooting when away from the slop fed to them by some lobby groups and the

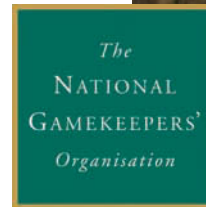
media. It also confirmed to me that the NGO is uniquely placed, being regarded as a professional body, to sell the keeping message to influential audiences.

I mention the First Minister's visit - it is one of many we've run for politicians across the political spectrum - because the opportunity to talk face-to-face with those who hold the fate of keeping in their grasp is precisely why the NGO was set up in 1997. Back then, a small group of gamekeepers, who felt that their way of life was threatened by public misunderstanding and poor representation, decided to put that right.

The NGO was born: its *raison d'être* to defend and promote keeping and gamekeepers and ensure high standards throughout the profession. The old saw is spot on: oaks do grow from little acorns. Today, the NGO has a membership of some 15,000, and stands up for keepers in England and Wales.

How keeping is perceived in Wales is of great interest to me - my "day" job is headkeeper at the Rhug Estate Shoot in Denbighshire - and I am only too well aware that rural issues are rarely out of the press. Which is why the NGO tries hard never to miss an opportunity to make the case for keeping when contemporary land management comes up for discussion. So much so, we've scribbled tens of thousands of words in the Welsh press on gamekeeping matters over the last few years, for example.

The facts - the hard currency of the rural debate - should speak for themselves. Shooting in Wales supports the equivalent of 2,500 full-time jobs, almost 500 of them are full-time active conservation roles, and generates economic activity worth around £75 million per year. By comparison, the Wales Coast Path, which is feted as a massive success, rakes in a more modest



£16 million.

Money does matter, and nowhere more so in Wales

than in the hospitality industry. It's a key sector of the Welsh economy and game shooting has its part to play in keeping a largely seasonal industry buoyant. Shooting certainly keeps the cash tills ringing in isolated pubs and hotels in deep mid-winter, when other visitors have long gone home. Much of this revenue - known jokingly hereabouts as sticky money - stays within the community, circulating among local people.

You could say that high pheasants give people high hopes of ensuring their rural communities remain vibrant. Game shooting, underpinned by keeping, is a force for good in all sorts of social and cultural ways in Wales. It even does the unexpected, playing its part in

"SHOOTING IN WALES SUPPORTS THE EQUIVALENT OF 2,500 FULL-TIME JOBS, ALMOST 500 OF THEM ARE FULL-TIME ACTIVE CONSERVATION ROLES, AND GENERATES ECONOMIC ACTIVITY WORTH AROUND £75 MILLION PER YEAR. BY COMPARISON, THE WALES COAST PATH, WHICH IS FÊTED AS A MASSIVE SUCCESS, RAKES IN A MORE MODEST £16 MILLION."



David Pooler, the NGO North Wales Regional Chairman, is headkeeper at the Rhug Estate Shoot, Corwen, Denbighshire, a driven pheasant and partridge shoot known for its testing birds. The Rhug Estate, a mix of arable, grassland and hard- and soft-timbered woodland, has an award-winning farm shop and holds a CA Welsh Rural Oscar. David, who attended Sparsholt College in Hampshire, has been at Rhug for almost three decades.



Photo: Fieldsports Magazine

“GAMEKEEPERS ARE THE REAL, UNSUNG HEROES OF WELSH CONSERVATION...” SIR GARETH EDWARDS, PATRON OF THE NGO.”

keeping the Welsh language alive, by creating jobs and sustaining livelihoods. What’s more it helps retain the housing stock in local ownership.

Game shooting also drives conservation on about a million acres of Wales. This isn’t the nonsense, pie-in-the-sky stuff spouted by the likes of George Monbiot, *The Guardian* columnist, who would have upland Wales turned into a reserve for wolves and bears. But rather real conservation work that sustains the landscape we know and love.

Indeed, the keeping community – both full-time and amateur – can justifiably lay claim to being some of the best conservationists in Wales. Keepers generally go quietly about their business, developing their shoots, and nurturing hares, songbirds, voles, barn owls and the like along the way. But it is an eye opener, for some, when our unique approach to conservation – the twin-track of habitat improvement and predator control – hits the headlines.

One of the very few environmental successes reported in the otherwise bleak environmental audit of the *State of Nature* in Wales was the product of conservation work carried out by a small



Photo: Huw Evans Agency

team of keepers. Without their inspired efforts, the black grouse, an iconic species, would have effectively become extinct in Wales. Other groups – including the RSPB and the statutory conservation agencies tried their best, but the statistics show it was as nothing compared with keeping. Fox snaring was important in turning around the fortunes of the black grouse, a technique, which some in Wales are seeking to ban. Remember without snares, the black grouse would now be history here. That’s why animal rights issues and conservation should not be confused.

Wildlife fares badly without keeping. *Birds in Wales*, the journal of the Welsh Ornithological Society, recently reported that when driven grouse shooting ceased – and with it the keeping – on the Berwyn moors, in the late 1990s, many birds declined catastrophically, among them curlew and golden plover, their

numbers slumping by 79 per cent and 90 per cent respectively, and lapwing became extinct locally. The life that keeping had breathed into upland Wales was snuffed out.

Keepers in Wales have a gripping story to tell, which our Patron, Sir Gareth Edwards, sums up nicely: “Gamekeepers are the real, unsung heroes of Welsh conservation. I know from first-hand experience that those who are involved in game shooting and fishing hold our precious countryside dear. A lifetime spent in rural Wales has shown me that the words gamekeeper and conservationist are, without doubt, one and the same. We must maintain these rural skills.” ●

To find out more about Rhug, which sells its game worldwide, visit www.rhug.co.uk

Scottish land reform & 'political point scoring'

→ **DAVID JOHNSTONE**, Chairman of Scottish Land & Estates, has concerns that new land reform law "is far too rushed for legislation of this magnitude, and has the potential to create repercussions down the line."



Like people all over Scotland, for those who live and work in rural communities, spring ushers in the arrival of a fresh new season and renewed optimism for the year ahead.

Despite the storm clouds and turbulent winds that have wreaked havoc for many land-based businesses during the winter months, our estates and farms – just like their counterparts across the UK – are known for their resilience in meeting unforeseen trials with grace and upbeat assurance.

Yet, it has been more than just the natural elements casting a shadow over rural Scotland in recent months.

As readers will know, the Scottish Government has been embarking on the latest round of land reform measures for the past two years. The topic caught mainstream attention when First Minister Nicola Sturgeon proclaimed in November 2014 that she was to pursue 'radical' reform as she announced her first programme for government since assuming office from Alex Salmond.

Over that period, members of Scottish Land & Estates have been working hard to play their part in the political debate to ensure that the final legislation produces the best outcome possible for our rural areas.

Estates are rightly proud of the contribution they make and are instrumental in helping it happen



David Johnstone is chairman of Scottish Land & Estates, the representative body for landowners in Scotland. He owns and manages Annandale Estates, near Moffat in Dumfriesshire. The estate has a mixture of farming, energy, forestry and property enterprises. David also chairs and sits on the board of a number of local community groups and trusts.

"...THE MORE THE LAND REFORM DEBATE HAS OVERHEATED, THE MORE IT HAS BECOME PRIMARILY A 'BASH THE LAIRDS' EXERCISE."

– whether that be providing affordable housing, enabling local business development, generating green energy or providing tourism and leisure facilities. The last economic survey of a sample of Scottish Land & Estates members revealed more than 8,000 people being employed directly and the estates involved generating £300 million of expenditure in mostly local economies and communities.

Sadly, the land reform agenda has developed in such a way over the last few years that estate owners, who see themselves as rural business men and women, feel that, for many, the more the land reform debate has overheated, the more it has become primarily a 'bash the lairds' exercise. Furthermore, the picture painted of rural Scotland by the most vocal land reformists does not reflect rural life accurately.

The final legislation will be enacted this spring prior to the dissolution of the Scottish Parliament ahead of the elections on May 5. The Bill will have completed its journey through parliament in just 10 months, which we have repeatedly pointed out is far too rushed for legislation of this magnitude, and has the potential to create repercussions down the line.

One of the immediate ramifications of this hurried law-making is the lack of precision which will actually be delivered by the final Act. It is expected that much of the detail will be left to secondary legislation to be passed at a later date, and thus, it will not be subject to proper parliamentary scrutiny – a point already acknowledged by the parliament's Delegated Powers committee.

In total there are 10 parts to the

Bill dealing with a wide range of topics from the creation of a Land Rights and Responsibilities statement, the establishment of a Scottish Land Commission to the procedures by which local authorities can manage common good land.

One key topic in the Bill is transparency of ownership. In September 2014, Scottish Land & Estates launched its Landowners' Commitment that pledged to ensure that the ownership of land is visible and the forthcoming legislation builds on this. It is something we firmly support.

Whilst it would be wrong to say that every aspect of the legislation will be detrimental, sadly, the policy areas on which this Bill will deliver positively for those who live and work in rural Scotland are few and far between.

For example, the legislation will provide the power for Scottish Ministers to force the sale of privately-held land, including productive or well managed land, to a community where a landowner is considered a barrier to 'sustainable development'. We support all forms of ownership – community, public and private – but can only support the sale of land to a community where there is a willing seller and a willing buyer. Not only does this interference by the state threaten the property rights of individuals, it may also bring into question the viability of land-based businesses where a community wants to purchase land that is held by that enterprise. We hope that the final legislation will bring protection to all types of rural business but we will again need to wait to see what is passed into law – and how this is then put into practice. What is being proposed at the moment certainly flies in the face of the much repeated phrase from Scottish Government Ministers that 'good landowners have nothing to fear', and the measure demonstrates this statement simply isn't true.



“WE SUPPORT ALL FORMS OF OWNERSHIP - COMMUNITY, PUBLIC AND PRIVATE - BUT CAN ONLY SUPPORT THE SALE OF LAND TO A COMMUNITY WHERE THERE IS A WILLING SELLER AND A WILLING BUYER.”

The reintroduction of non-domestic rates on sporting businesses is just as contentious, not least because there has been no thorough assessment conducted on how it will affect these companies or how much revenue it is likely to raise. This may be portrayed as a measure aimed at wealthy landowners but the reality is that rates would have to be applied to a wide variety of owners and occupiers of land and that could affect people from many different walks of life.

Originally abolished in 1995 because the cost of administering the rates was as high as the money it was generating and mass appeals were pending, there appears now to be little evidence to support a case for why the rates should now be brought back more than two decades on. This is a point that has been robustly made by the Rural Affairs committee, yet the government seems determined to plough on at any cost even when the knock-on effect on many rural communities - who are supported by the business generated by sporting estates - cannot be quantified.

The last section of the Bill addresses agricultural holdings, and the future of tenant farming in Scotland. Its inclusion within this land reform focused legislative process was baffling from the start, not least because the measures needed to



rejuvenate our tenanted sector - and the wider land reform issue - are two totally separate and often contrasting matters. And sadly, this is the portion of the Bill that perhaps has the potential to create some of the biggest concerns going forward.

Agricultural holdings legislation is hugely complex and has sadly been highly politicised for some time. Richard Lochhead MSP, as cabinet secretary for rural affairs, chaired a review group that in January 2015 published a thorough review of tenant farming legislation. Now, little more than a year on, Mr Lochhead seems determined to disregard key recommendations from that report - recommendations that were broadly accepted across the industry - in favour of measures that won't help farming, are opposed by the majority of the sector, but seem to be intended to appease some radical voices applying pressure from the side-lines.

The likely effect will be a complete loss of confidence amongst landlords to let land in the future, knowing that the

actions of the government are likely to have a severely detrimental impact on their business. We have been clear that the future of Scottish agriculture - and the aspirations of the next generation looking to enter the sector - are at stake. Sadly, there is no sign that this warning call will be heeded prior to the Bill's assent and unfortunately it is tenant farming, and new entrants in particular, who will suffer the consequences.

In some areas the land reform process is lacking a firm base of empirical evidence and is rooted firmly in ideology. How best we can use land for the good of rural Scotland plays second fiddle to how legislation can be introduced that makes life tougher for estate owners, both large and small. The Bill will be passed this spring but it may be some time before the full ramifications rain down on our rural communities in years to come. The great pity is it could all be so different if we had a government that could see beyond political point scoring. ●

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Which course?

➔ **LIAM STOKES** has some advice for youngsters interested in a career in the countryside.

Taking the decision to step out of mainstream, traditional subjects and into the diverse and often confusing world of land-based education can be very daunting. Unless you're lucky enough to be studying at a school with a farm, animal centre or gardens, you are probably not only looking at a change of course but a change of location, leaving the well-trodden paths of school for the new world of land-based colleges.

Post-16, with GCSEs in the bag (or at least attempted!), your options broaden tremendously. The entire menu of courses and programmes at land-based colleges across the country becomes accessible to you. Unfortunately, this choice can be utterly bewildering, not least because most college websites are simply not up to the task of interpreting such quantities of information. Everything is divided into levels (Entry 3, Level 1, Level 2, Level 3

“A NOTE OF CAUTION AT THIS POINT... DON'T RELY ON YOUR SCHOOL CAREERS ADVISOR, AT LEAST NOT EXCLUSIVELY. SOME ARE BRILLIANT AND KNOW THE LAND-BASED EDUCATION SYSTEM INSIDE OUT. SOME ARE LESS SO.”

etc.) and qualification size. Size at the moment is indicated by the name of the qualification – Awards, Certificates, Diplomas, Extended Diplomas and once upon a time as National Diploma, although at the time of writing land-based qualifications are in a state of flux and these names are liable to change again. In fact this is another reason land-based qualifications seem so complicated – they are rarely allowed to stay unchanged long enough for people to understand them.

Broadly speaking, Level 2 qualifications are GCSE equivalent and Level 3 are equivalent to A-levels, with the size of the qualification dictating how many GCSEs or



A-levels it equates to. Get yourself a suitable Level 3 land-based qualification and you are equipped to apply to university. But rather than go further into the rather byzantine detail here, the safest bet is to decide on what subjects you are interested in and contact the colleges you are considering, to see what courses they offer that would be suitable for you. They will look at your qualifications, tell you what you are eligible to study and explain what progression routes are available to you.

A note of caution at this point, and a controversial one – don't rely on your school careers advisor, at least not exclusively. Some are brilliant and know the land-based education system inside out. Some are less so. Some might even encourage you to stay on at school when a land-based college would be your best bet. I remember an aspiring gamekeeper who told me he had been advised to stay on at school and do A-levels while beating at the weekend, rather than seek an apprenticeship or a full-time gamekeeping course, before applying for jobs in keeping. I'm not attributing motive, but this was not good advice. ➔



Liam Stokes (centre with beard) arrived at the Countryside Alliance as Head of Shooting in January 2016, prior to which he taught gamekeeping and wildlife management at Wiltshire College Lackham, running the Lackham Shoot.

So, what land-based subjects might you consider? The first thing to understand is that if you haven't got a grade C in GCSE Maths and English you will have to work towards redoing these qualifications. Don't blame the college, they're not happy about it either, it's government policy. Embrace it as an opportunity to secure some very employable skills. Alongside these GCSEs, if you need them, you'll undertake your main qualification. The most popular subject at the majority of land-based colleges is Animal Care/Management, usually based around an animal centre of exotic and companion animals. Jobs in this area are fiercely sought-after and the courses tend to be extremely well subscribed, but they include a thorough grounding in animal science and physiology that is easily as transferable as a range of science A-levels. Just don't think this is the ideal grounding for a veterinary degree, for which traditional A-levels would be better preparation. Similarly grounded in animal science but focussing on livestock production, with some plant and soil science and a good deal of business management, are Agriculture qualifications. These are highly diverse, usually best delivered on a college farm and extremely employable. If your enthusiasms lie more with the plant science than the animals you might consider Horticulture, which also has the added benefit of being woefully undersubscribed and therefore extremely sought-after by employers. Horticulture qualifications often incorporate elements of hard landscaping, plant propagation, garden design and arboriculture, although this last subject can actually be studied as a standalone course by budding tree surgeons. Equally rare as horticulturalists, agricultural engineers are very employable but courses are not that common. If this is the area you are interested in then seek out courses in Land Based Technology and be prepared to spend a lot of time playing with engines, taking apart large farm machinery and wearing overalls. Then there is the area closest to my heart (best for last and all that). Countryside Management consists of Gamekeeping and Conservation, often but not always delivered as distinct courses in their own right. Conservation courses tend to lead to study at university with a view to working in volunteer management, rural tourism, practical site management or research and advisory, while Gamekeeping can lead to careers in land management as well as the obvious keeping and associated businesses. There are also



“SOME RURAL INDUSTRIES ARE CRYING OUT FOR NEW ENTRANTS, OTHERS ARE SUPER-COMPETITIVE TO BREAK INTO.”

courses in Floristry, Fishery Management, Equine Science and Horse Care, Farriery and Farm Mechanisation.

It is important to also note that not every college will deliver these courses in the same way. Sometimes it is worth travelling or considering staying in halls of residence to find the college that delivers your subject of choice in the way that suits you the best. You are under no obligation to attend your nearest provider.

Once you've chosen your college and your area of study, your final decision will be whether to plump for a college course or an apprenticeship. Both will probably involve some time in college, although not necessarily. An apprenticeship involves an assessor visiting you at work and helping you compile a portfolio of your skills, with either a day per week or a block of days every couple of months spent at college developing your knowledge. A full time programme rarely means literally full time these days, but rather three or four days in college with additional work to complete at home and an expectation of relevant work experience. The academic requirements of work based and college based courses are becoming increasingly similar, with end of year exams now a real likelihood for both routes in the future, so really this is a question of whether you can find an employer willing to offer you an apprenticeship and which route appeals to you. An apprenticeship might offer you more real-world experience, but a full time course offers you easier access to college support mechanisms and opportunities to

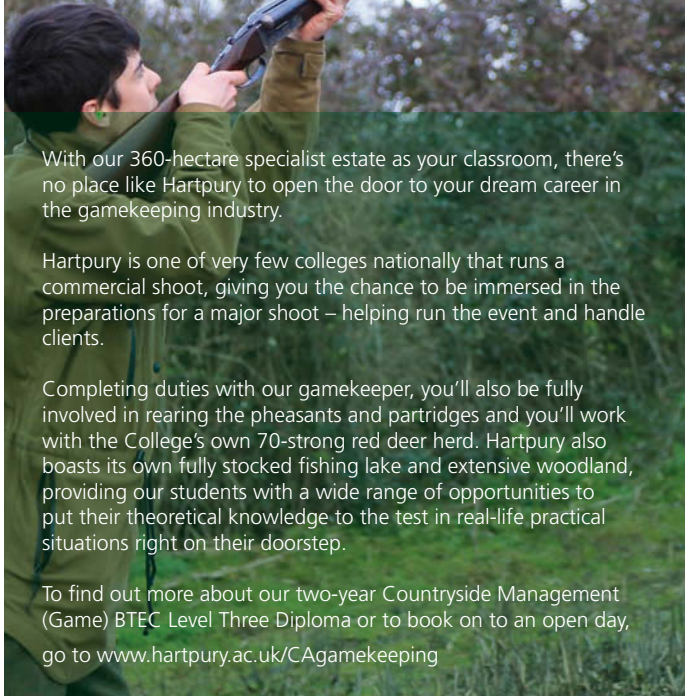


meet other people embarking on the same journey you are. Full time courses are also traditionally more suited to preparing you for university, if that is what you choose to do next.

Whichever college, subject and route you opt for, choosing land-based guarantees you an interesting and diverse period of study and some really employable skills. Some rural industries are crying out for new entrants, others are super-competitive to break into, but either way a land-based qualification will give you a great start in getting where you want to go. ●

These land-based options are increasingly available at an earlier age than ever before, with certain land-based qualifications being available from the age of 14 as an alternative to GCSEs. If these appeal, then the first port of call is a discussion with your school, because these qualifications are usually delivered in a partnership between schools and local colleges and you'll need your school's support. Also be aware that this is a constantly moving picture politically, with vocational qualifications not at all popular with the current government and liable to be dropped from your school's curriculum, so speak to them for the most up-to-date information.

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Carna custodians

→ **HARRY TOWERS'** family has been on Carna since the 1880s and they are forging its sustainable future with an eye firmly on conservation.

There are many Scottish islands, some big, some small, some well-known, some less well-known, but one you've probably never heard of is the Isle of Carna. This 600-acre uninhabited and wildlife-rich rock rises out of the scenic waters of Loch Sunart on Scotland's West Coast and sits quietly between the secluded peninsulas of Ardnamurchan and Morvern. Carna has been owned by my family since the 1880s when it formed part of a classic Victorian highland sporting estate. A lot has changed since that time: the tragedy of the First World War; embezzling lawyers and old-fashioned views on women's ability to manage property and money. But the island still survives in the family's care and now the transition has begun for a new generation to make their mark and attempt to make the place thrive once more. For a small island with no roads, internet, permanent population, telephones, mobile reception or full-time electricity, and accessible only by private boat, this certainly proves a challenge, but one we are excited to take on!

For the previous generation, led by my uncle, Tim Milward, it has been a fierce struggle to make a small island survive against a backdrop of declining economic sustainability for small and remote farms and communities, and only fledgling tourism and conservation opportunities. Carna was once inhabited by around 18 houses and farmed sustainably by the



Harry Towers works as a private chef based in Yorkshire and as Director of Carna Conservation Initiative (CIC).



“...IT HAS BEEN A FIERCE STRUGGLE TO MAKE A SMALL ISLAND SURVIVE AGAINST A BACKDROP OF DECLINING ECONOMIC SUSTAINABILITY FOR SMALL AND REMOTE FARMS AND COMMUNITIES AND ONLY FLEDGLING TOURISM AND CONSERVATION OPPORTUNITIES.”

significant population living there, but by 2003 there was no population, no livestock and thus no means to actively manage the land. Thankfully, my uncle's determination kept the island going until now when things are starting to come back round for small enterprises and the growth of alternative tourism experiences and power of the internet presents ever-changing opportunities for a unique place like Carna. Being a small but diverse island, our path to sustainability has to be paved by doing a variety of activities on a small scale and making them fit together with mutual benefits for each. For us, this will involve a carefully coordinated combination of sustainable farming, forestry, tourism, education and, vitally, conservation.

The loss of farming over the past 20-30 years has, however, given our fantastic wildlife a great opportunity to thrive with little or no disturbance and competition, and absolutely no chemicals or fertilisers. Having previously suffered from gradual deforestation and overgrazing, we now see the regeneration of rare Atlantic Oakwood habitat alongside a mosaic of heather moorland with hill and meadow



Photo: Peter Murphy

grasslands and wetland, all surrounded by the teeming waters of Loch Sunart which has recently been designated a Marine Protected Area (MPA). Most of the island is also designated a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) and a Special Area of Conservation (SAC) and acts as a haven for many species including otters, sea and golden eagles, kestrels, cuckoos, curlews, woodpeckers, pine martens and harbour seals to name just a few.

We also have the remains of an ancient meadow (97% of which have been lost in the UK since the 1930s) covering about seven ha and containing many songbirds, orchids and other wildflowers, butterflies, moths and other insect life. The search will be on this June/July to find the rare and elusive Chequered Skipper butterfly on the island, as it is found on the neighbouring mainland already. Otters are also one of our favourite residents which we see hunting and playing along our coastline almost daily from the two holiday cottages on the island. Carna is perfect for



Photo: Cain Scrimgeour

them. They are surrounded by fast-flowing tidal currents providing plenty of food, and there are many freshwater burns for them to travel around the island. They are a joy to watch at any time.

This 'opportunity' for our wildlife has, however, started to backfire with no means to control invasive species such as rhododendron and bracken and our ancient wildflower meadows, are becoming dominated by rush and other coarse grasses with little grazing, shading out light for the wildflowers. The impact of our relatively small population of deer has also taken an increasing toll

“CARNA CONSERVATION INITIATIVE WAS FORMED IN 2014 WITH NEIGHBOURING ARDNAMURCHAN MARINE CENTRE TO COORDINATE THE PROTECTION AND ENHANCEMENT OF THE LARGE VARIETY OF SPECIES AND HABITATS ON THE ISLAND.”



on new growth of the more palatable oak, rowan, holly and hazel trees. Thus, Carna Conservation Initiative was formed in 2014 with neighbouring Ardnamurchan Marine Centre to coordinate the protection and enhancement of the large variety of species and habitats on the island. We have a series of conservation projects including restoring the wildflower meadow with native rare breed cattle, establishing colonies of native 'dark' honey bees, encouraging and creating new native woodland, the removal of invasive non-native species and taking part in the monitoring and protection of the surrounding waters of Loch Sunart, along with other local stakeholders.

The success of these projects will go hand in hand with a new effort to market the island as a destination for 'escape' and wildlife tourism. We receive some donations to the projects directly but the focus is very much 'tourism-led conservation'. This way the profits of our guests help fund our conservation work, improve the economic sustainability of Carna and provide additional benefits to the local community, as well as educational and research opportunities for schools, colleges and universities.

This is certainly not the simplest or easiest idea in terms of turning a profit, but the project does make the most of a landscape that otherwise would lay barren with no use to man or wildlife. Thankfully, business in the wildlife tourism market is booming, the 'digital detox' holiday is certainly in fashion and the fact that Carna has never had the capability to be



brought into the digital age only boosts its credibility.

With the first honey bee hives planned for 2016 and hopefully the introduction of around 10 Shetland cattle this year, there are plenty of exciting times that lie ahead. Hopefully, and not before too long, we will be able to serve 100% grass and seaweed-fed beef and totally organic heather honey to our guests alongside the existing delicious local venison, langoustine, mussels and lobsters. I'll drink to that!

With love, attention and plenty of hard graft this Scottish island is becoming another of the conservation successes that Scotland has in abundance. ●

**Carna Conservation Initiative CIC,
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Livestock worrying – the facts, the law and common sense

SERGEANT MATTHEW HOWELLS of Dyfed Powys Police outlines the law and gives advice to dog owners to reduce livestock worrying.



Being the largest rural area to police in England and Wales, Dyfed Powys Police deals with similar incidents as any other rural police force. One topic that has regularly made farming media headlines over recent years has been the increase in attacks on livestock, in particular sheep, by dogs.

For a farmer, who has invested time, money and a big dose of passion into rearing quality livestock, to wake up to find just one animal mauled to death is disheartening. To find several injured, dead, ripped apart from what can only be described as a frenzied attack, not only hits the business financially but can emotionally impact upon them, their family and employees. The value of the stock, the unborn or aborted lambs and the cost of veterinary bills can run into thousands of pounds. The majority of incidents can be avoided as long as dog owners take responsible steps to ensure that their dogs are safe and secure, whether they be at home or out being taken for a walk.

We can receive up to 20 or more calls a month from livestock owners who have come across injured and dead animals in their fields with injuries that could only have been caused by a dog or dogs working together. A recent incident saw the farmer finding a dead ewe in a

“THE MAJORITY OF INCIDENTS CAN BE AVOIDED AS LONG AS DOG OWNERS TAKE RESPONSIBLE STEPS TO ENSURE THAT THEIR DOGS ARE SAFE AND SECURE WHETHER AT HOME OR ON A WALK.”

corner of a field with three others dead in a nearby stream. The ewes had no doubt been crowded into the corner and drowned in an attempt to escape from the unknown marauding dog/s.

So what can be done to try and reduce, if not stop these incidents from happening altogether? As well as dealing with the individual incidents in trying to identify the dogs responsible and where necessary, with the support of the farmer, take out prosecutions against the owners, we have also taken steps to make more people aware of the issue, the legislation and the consequences of allowing their dogs to roam unsupervised. We have produced a leaflet (available to download from the Countryside Alliance website) that explains the legislation with advice to farmers and dog owners. This leaflet is being handed to local residents where incidents are reported to us to make everyone aware of what's happened and at the same time educate dog owners to their responsibilities and highlight the consequences should their dogs be involved in such an incident.

For some playful dogs, just chasing sheep around a field may be fun and there may not be any inclination for that dog to attack the sheep, however the consequences can be just as dire with sheep suffocating each other while cramming into a corner of a field or drowning in similar circumstances when that corner of the field is in fact a water filled ditch or stream.

If you live near agricultural land and in particular farm animals, ensure your kennel and house security is at a level where your dog cannot escape

unnoticed. When walking your dogs in the countryside, do not allow them to roam free, keep them on a lead. Stick to public rights of way and footpaths when crossing private land, however, if you are chased by cattle, let your dog go as the cattle will most likely chase the dog.

If you know your dog has been involved in an incident, usually noticeable from blood on their coats, take steps to identify where and contact the farmer to arrange compensation. Also, take responsible steps to ensure that your dog is not able to do it again.

For the farmers and witnesses of any incidents of livestock worrying, please report it to the police on 101. ●

Under the **Dogs (Protection of Livestock) Act 1953** the owner and anyone else who is in control of the dog at the time will be guilty of a criminal offence if it worries livestock on agricultural land.

“Livestock” includes cattle, sheep, goats, swine, horses and poultry.

“Agricultural land” includes land used as arable, meadow or grazing land or for the purpose of pig or poultry farming, market gardens, allotments, nursery grounds and orchards.

‘Worrying’ is where a dog is:

- Attacking livestock,
- Chasing livestock in such a way that it could reasonably be expected to cause injury or suffering or, in the case of females, abortion or the loss or diminution of their produce (milk yields etc).
- Being at large (that is to say not on a lead or otherwise under close control) in a field or enclosure in which there are sheep.

Sheep dogs, police dogs, guide dogs, working gundogs or a pack of hounds are exempted if they are legally on the land.



Matthew Howells is a Sergeant with Dyfed Powys Police, based in Carmarthen. With 17 years' service one of his roles is working on Chief Constable Simon Prince's National Portfolio on Rural and Wildlife Crime. Matthew was born and raised on the family dairy farm and has strong links within the farming communities in all four counties of Dyfed Powys, having been seconded to the Countryside Council for Wales and Natural Resources Wales for over three years.

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The power of debate

→ Animal welfare consultant **JIM BARRINGTON** reports from the education frontline as he tours schools and colleges to make the case for hunting.



The Brocklesby hounds by Bryan Pye

In today's world, where access to the media and general information has never been greater, the internet opens the door to an unimaginable degree of knowledge to anyone linked to the web via their computer, tablet or phone.

It has allowed issues to be raised that, in other times, would simply not even be known, let alone discussed. Social media, such as Twitter, now gives a voice to those who, in previous times, would simply have been ignored. It has, however, also created a situation in which a serious debate on any complex or controversial matter is almost impossible and that fact is exploited to the hilt by certain pressure groups who know full well that the public tends to have a limited attention span, especially on issues that do not affect their day-to-day lives. So while some arguments are indeed complex, their campaigning slogans can be simple.

But here is an interesting irony; the more we are told, the less we appear to understand and, once again, that lack of understanding is exploited.

Certain groups with charitable status are quite prepared to flout Charity Commission guidelines that require a scientific basis to the advertisements and statements they produce. Often, such material has little or no basis in fact.

No surprise then that people sometimes have a slightly skewed view of wildlife. It would be wrong, however, to think it hardly matters. Such manipulation of the facts and the pressure social media can exert

inevitably filters through to Members of Parliament and may influence how they then vote.

It would be easy to accept what the anti-hunt groups constantly tell us, that the public is solidly opposed to hunting and repeal of the Hunting Act. When the opportunity arises to go into greater detail through a presentation or debate, however, the reaction of the audience does not follow the expected line.

The Countryside Alliance took the view that the case for hunting needed to be put in schools, colleges and universities, indeed any forum that allowed people to make their own minds up about hunting with dogs. The Veterinary Association for Wildlife Management agrees and the information supplied by both organisations combines into an unanswerable case in favour of the responsible use of hunting dogs.

Over the past few years, many talks, presentations and debates have taken place and the results have been extremely positive. Some of the talks have been at the invitation of Young Farmers Clubs (YFCs) and a cynic might say well of course their support is to be expected, but in fact it is not the case that all farmers, and certainly not all young farmers, are automatically pro-hunt. Yet in every event, and there have been a considerable number, the overwhelming view was to support repeal of the Hunting Act.

Debates have taken place at university veterinary schools and not one has been lost. That is quite a statement, given that these young people have dedicated their lives to the welfare of animals, and may have contributed to another veterinary school debate being cancelled because no speaker from any anti hunting group was willing to take part. Recently, when the students at a college voted unanimously in favour of hunting with hounds, antis on social media had to imply they must have been a bunch of 'agrics', when in fact the

“THE COUNTRYSIDE ALLIANCE TOOK THE VIEW THAT THE CASE FOR HUNTING NEEDED TO BE PUT IN SCHOOLS, COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES, INDEED ANY FORUM THAT ALLOWED PEOPLE TO MAKE THEIR OWN MINDS UP ABOUT HUNTING WITH DOGS.”

venue was a technical college.

These presentations involve a number of aspects: the lack of science supporting a hunting ban; the need for a proper understanding of wildlife management; the impractical 'alternatives' sometimes advocated; the party political opportunism and the unprincipled and illogical nature of the legislation itself. But the central point is the animal-to-animal interaction that is hunting with hounds.

Humans use the incredible qualities of the dog for a whole host of reasons, ranging from search and rescue to dogs for the disabled; from police and military use to dogs that can detect cancer. Of course, dogs are also companions to millions of people.

When the dog's abilities are described, its role in wildlife management explained and how this combines into a unique, natural and humane process, the most common response is, "I never thought of it that way before."

And that is precisely what anti-hunt groups fear. ●

If you know of a school, group or college that would welcome a talk from Jim, please get in touch with hunting@countryside-alliance.org. Jim brings a powerpoint presentation as well as supporting documents and references the Veterinary Association for Wildlife Management as well as the Countryside Alliance.



Jim Barrington is a former Director of the League Against Cruel Sports and works for the Countryside Alliance as an animal welfare consultant. Jim's calm and rational approach to wildlife management never fails to diffuse anti-hunt fury in the media and at debates. Follow Jim on Twitter @jimbarrington

Photo: Bryan Pye <http://brypyphotography.zenfolio.com>



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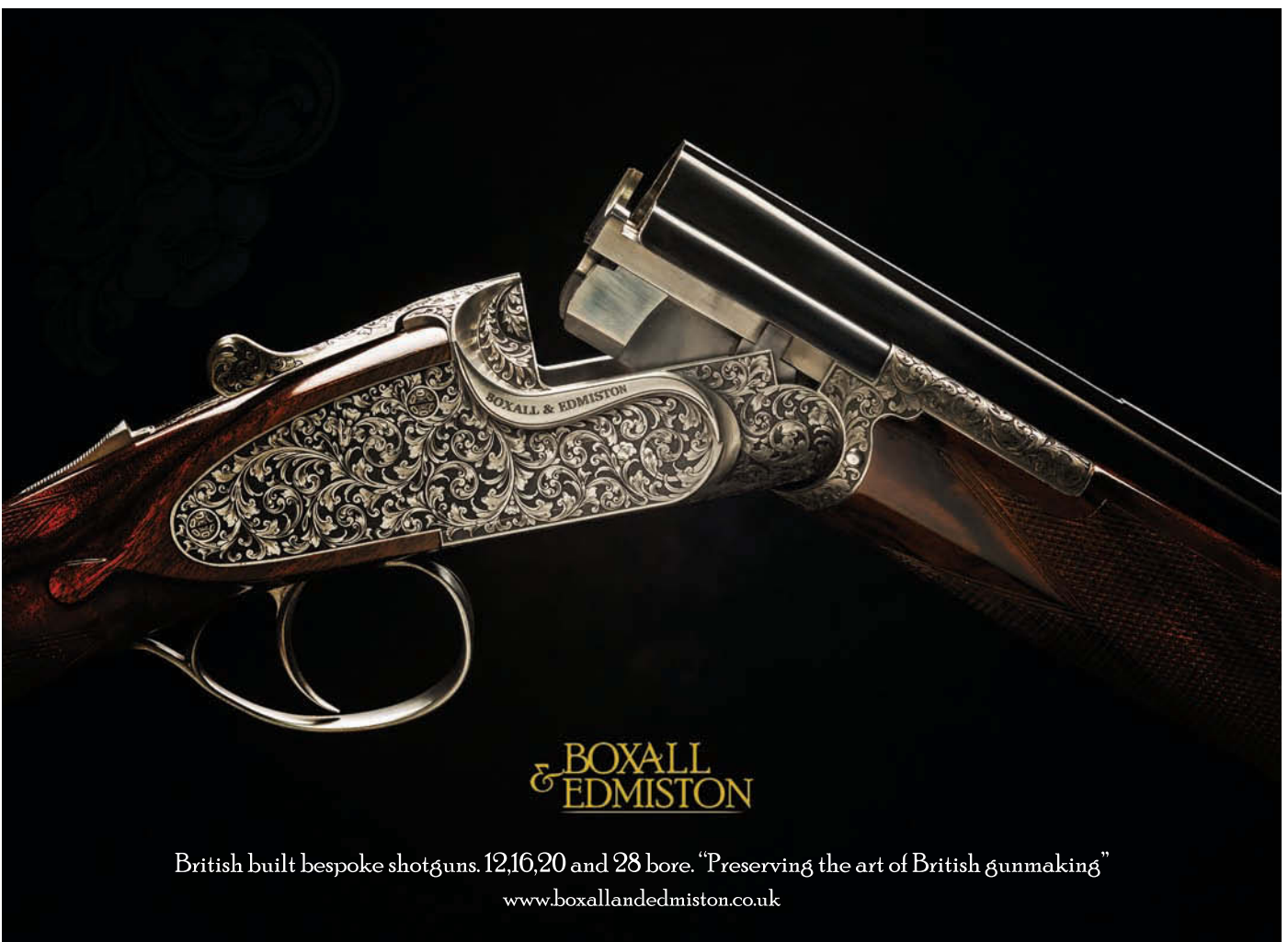
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Engraving a Boxall & Edmiston

→ **DREW BOXALL** of Shropshire-based gunmakers Boxall & Edmiston explains why artistry and technology work together in engraving to ensure your gun is a one-of-a-kind piece.

At Boxall & Edmiston, we have pioneered the use of laser engraving. It has often been said that “laser engraving is nothing like hand engraving”, which is partly true, but not in the way you might think.

We would never question the incredible ability of a hand engraver whose artistry and originality sees them able to adorn a shotgun or rifle with art and then (the bit that I find particularly staggering) mirror it across a second side and often again in its entirety onto another separate gun.

A hand engraver’s work is an original piece of art, entirely bespoke, with customers often requesting strange and beautiful scenes from named engravers who, in the world of guns, are incredibly famous. Now imagine if they could copy it perfectly, as you would with a limited edition art print, onto another gun. This would be a revolution and would open up the ownership of this beautiful engraving to a whole new audience who appreciate the beauty of the piece, the deep perfectly engraved lines, but do not want the price tag that so often comes with an original.

At Boxall & Edmiston, artists create the scrollwork that we engrave onto each gun. At present, we have two main engravers who have developed the scrollwork, game scenes and bespoke scenes. The art is created by hand and inputted into our design systems, we then use several pieces of software to create what are essentially programmes that the laser uses to engrave our products.

These programmes provide another benefit to the laser. Once the incredibly time-consuming and difficult task of creating the art and the programmes for the

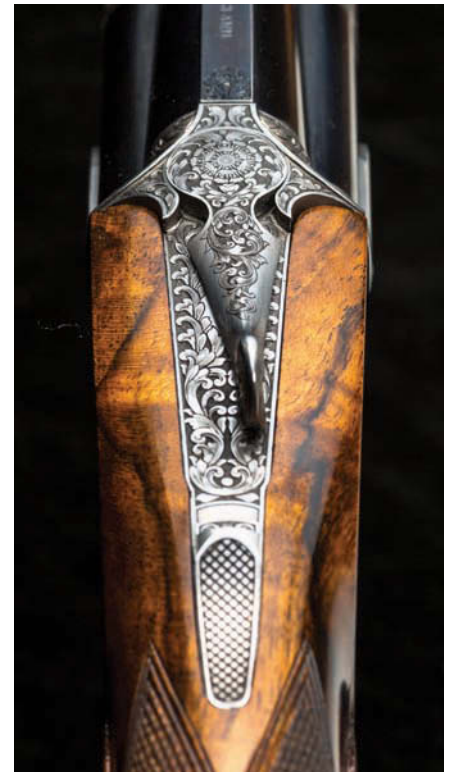


“THIS LEVEL OF CUSTOMISATION IS FAIRLY UNIQUE ON GUNS AND WITH A BOXALL & EDMISTON YOU CAN REST ASSURED THAT THE PATTERN IS NEVER GOING TO BE MASS-PRODUCED.”

laser has been completed, that artwork and the ability to adorn it becomes achievable by someone other than the artist.

The winner of the 2015 Countryside Alliance gun draw has recently had his gun engraved. The prize winner opted for a full scroll engraving on his round action 12 bore over-and-under. The scrollwork is a deeply cut, multi-layered design, which covers the entirety of the action, bar a small border around the edge.

The bespoke engraving options available on the round action offer two different bolster engravings, one with a darker background and “Boxall &



Edmiston” embossed, the other with a silver background and “Boxall & Edmiston” engraved. These are purely aesthetic changes although the silver bolster does compliment lighter walnut stocks.

Clients also have the option to have game scenes engraved onto the bottom of their round action, or something entirely bespoke such as family crests or their dogs. Many of the bespoke engraving requests have been for clients’ dogs and family crests.

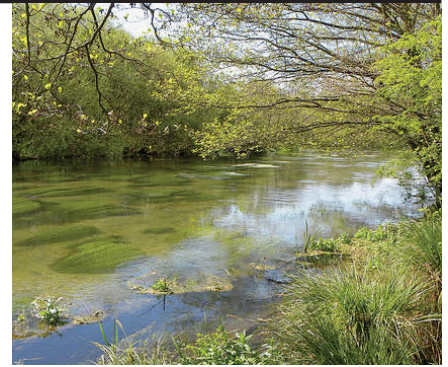
All customised engraving is either entwined or framed in a vignette within one of our artist’s engravings. This level of customisation is fairly unique on guns and with a Boxall & Edmiston you can rest assured that the pattern is never going to be mass-produced and will always be limited to the handful of guns made at Boxall & Edmiston each year. ●



Drew Boxall is the son of company co-founder Peter Boxall. An expert in the gunmaking process he has helped CA 2015 gun draw winner Dr Wilson design, build and engrave his bespoke gun.

Conserving and cherishing our chalkstreams

→ JOHN SLADER writes about his love of chalkstreams and why it is critical that we preserve them.



Often, unless you are an angler, a chalkstream is seen as just another river and very little regard is paid to its significance. In fact we are talking here about a national treasure, as approximately 85% of the World's resource of chalkstreams is to be found in England.

So not only are they of national interest but also of international importance as well. The Test, Itchen and Hampshire Avon are classic examples and perhaps the most well-known of all chalkstreams. In historic angling literature they are often mentioned in hallowed terms, and many fly fishing techniques have been developed on these rivers over the past century and a half.

With such a treasured resource on our doorstep you could be forgiven for believing that chalkstreams, together with all rivers, would be cherished and nurtured.

Although we keep hearing the rhetoric that rivers have never been cleaner, the stark reality is, by the Government's own admission, 83% of rivers in England fail the test of good ecological status under European environmental legislation. A sad indictment of the way in which we care for our natural resource and aquatic environment.

As a nation, we take water for granted, abuse it, pollute it and then go to great expense treating it for human consumption.

With a commodity that is so vital to our very existence it is perhaps surprising that successive Governments have failed to come up with a robust water strategy. Whether you believe in climate change or not, one thing is indisputable; over the past

20 years or so, we have seen a dramatic change in weather patterns and with it extremes spanning drought to flooding.

Outwardly, chalkstreams seem to be in fine fettle. Swans, ducks, moorhens etc grace the surface and for the more observant you may even be lucky enough to see the flash of blue of a kingfisher. With the return of otters, one can be forgiven into believing all is well with our local rivers.

To truly assess the health of a river the focus must be on life below the surface rather than what is above it.

This paints a very different picture – many wild fish populations are struggling for survival, as are several invertebrate species, which are food for birds and mammals as well as fish. Furthermore, weed growth, essential to the ecology of the river, is lacking on many stretches.

For years, conservationists have received assurances by Government's glossy plans and strategies, but so little has changed that many would say that the concerns written of 20 or so years ago remain valid today – all that has changed is the date!

Last year, Salmon & Trout Conservation UK (S&TC UK) embarked upon its National Riverfly Census project. This included the River Itchen, a Special Area of Conservation (SAC), which carries the highest level of environmental protection under the European Habitats Directive. Consequently you would expect it to be in good order, and yet S&TC UK's invertebrate sampling, highlights a far different picture.

Nick Measham heads up the project on behalf of S&TC UK, a registered environmental charity, and as he explains, "Initial findings from the Spring 2015 sampling give rise to a number of concerns which include a pronounced decline in Gammarus populations across most of the rivers surveyed versus their historic averages. Taking the Itchen as an example, none of the sites sampled had more than 200 Gammarus in a three-minute kick sample; in contrast, the nearby Upper Meon had 5,000 in its

"MANY FLY FISHING TECHNIQUES HAVE BEEN DEVELOPED ON THESE RIVERS OVER THE PAST CENTURY AND A HALF."

corresponding sample."

Nick goes on to say: "A second concern is declining invertebrate abundance in general, at the species and family level. The 'best' Itchen site had a total invertebrate count of 400 last spring compared with a count of over 4000 on the Derbyshire Wye."

It is a complex problem: changing weather patterns; human pressures placing ever growing demands for fresh water; run-off from roads and farmland and sewage treatment works etc are all having a negative impact on the aquatic environment. It is incumbent on all conservationists to challenge the threats rivers are experiencing e.g. over abstraction, high levels of nutrients, diffuse pollution etc to rise to the challenge and seek practical solutions.

In the words of Paul Knight, Chief Executive of S&TC UK, "Water is our lifeblood. We can do without a lot of things in life, but one commodity we cannot do without is water. We need to waste less, conserve more and continue to press UK Government to sign up to a robust strategy that protects aquatic life as well as providing water for us humans. If we don't achieve that balance, what legacy are we to leave future generations?" ●



John Slader is a lifelong all-round angler and a passionate supporter of the work of Salmon & Trout Conservation UK. In retirement he is an active qualified game and coarse angling coach and runs courses and guiding on the chalkstreams for Orvis.

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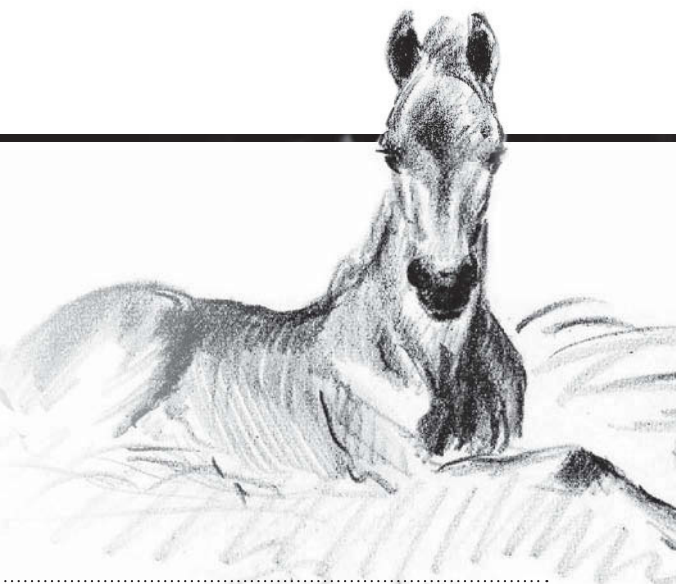


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Anne Bullen and the art of hunting

→ **LIZZIE GLENDINNING BULLEN** looks at the artistic legacy of her husband's great-grandmother, the popular equestrian artist Anne Bullen.



Prolific equestrian artist and children's pony book illustrator, Anne Bullen (1912-1963) is often celebrated for her thrilling images of hunting which she sketched and painted so evocatively throughout her short but fascinating life.

Setting up Catherston Stud in 1949 with her husband, Lt. Col Jack Bullen, on their estate near Charmouth in Dorset, Anne possessed an understanding of horses that was evident in the many top-class ponies produced there. Anne had the ability to tame and condition wild ponies such as Dartmoor, Welsh and Exmoor to sell on. Crossed with small thoroughbred stallions they produced excellent riding ponies.

Anne had studied at the Academie Julien in Paris and at the Chelsea Art School. Her appreciation of the form and power of horses was so eloquently transcribed in her many paintings and sketches. She also mastered the art of depicting the interaction between humans and these magnificent creatures in images of working ponies, war horses and, of course, in illustrating the adventures of young people and their ponies in the much loved children's books by authors such as Joanna Cannan, the Pulletin-Thompson sisters and Violet Needham.

No more fervently can we see an interaction between the human, horses, hounds, landscape, wilderness, rural society and traditions than within the artist's striking hunting archive of paintings and drawings, very much the product 'of a time'.

Anne rode in a number of Hunt team showing classes and by all accounts she hunted quite a bit with the Cattistock, Seavington and Cotley hunts all near their

"ANNE'S EVOCATIVE AND THRILLING HUNT SCENES NOT ONLY EXQUISITELY CAPTURE THE FORM AND MOVEMENT OF THE HORSES AND THE ELEGANT POISE AND RED FLASH OF THE RIDER, BUT ALSO ILLUSTRATE THE DYNAMISM OF THE HOUNDS IN CHASE."

home, Catherston Manor, the house of which provided an ideal venue for the annual Hunt Ball.

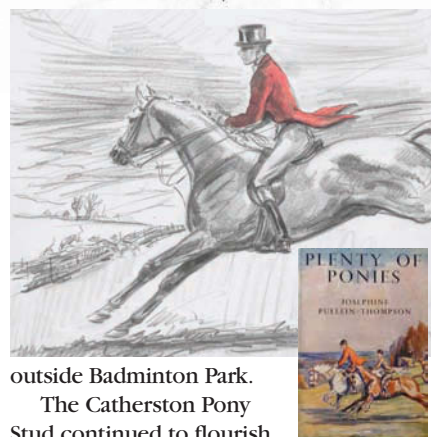
As children, the younger Bullens (Anne had six children – Anthony, Mike, Charlie, Jennie, Jane and Sarah) were chaperoned to these local hunts by their mother. If Anne was not riding, she would almost certainly be recording images of the meet in her sketch pad which she carried with her tirelessly.

Anne's evocative and thrilling hunt scenes not only exquisitely capture the form and movement of the horses and the elegant poise and red flash of the rider, but also illustrate the dynamism of the hounds in chase, jumping hedgerows; the speed and power of the galloping horses; the anticipation of the track.

Anne's many hunting images, including a series for the Cattistock hunt, which lies in the Bullen Cards archive, depict the dramatic, sweeping scenery of Dorset and North Devon and the rural life that continued as the hunt swept past. In many images we see the farmer on his tractor as the hunt stops to check; Anne's passion for all things equestrian as she shows the plough horses taking a break as their master points to the direction of the fox; the happy young terrier yapping at the hounds.

Anne's ability to evoke and contextualise a moment in time, and in the case of hunting, a time in rural history, is never more prominent than in the drama of her hunt scenes.

The family moved, horses in tow, to Didmarton, Gloucestershire in 1959, just



outside Badminton Park.

The Catherston Pony Stud continued to flourish and Anne and her family settled in to Pony Club activities with the Beaufort, also showing and hunting.

Anne continued with her art while Jack ran Bullen Cards, a business established to sell prints, tablemats and greetings cards of Anne's drawings.

Anne died in 1963 when she was just 52, but her exacting equestrian standards paid off, as her children competed for Britain in seven Olympic teams. As Badminton and Burghley winner Jane Holderness-Roddam says: "Mike rode in two Olympics, Rome in 1960 where he was 4th just missing the bronze medal and Tokyo 1964 where he was injured in a fall dislocating his shoulder, but carried on until the 27th fence on the cross country before having to retire following a second one. He received a telegram from the Queen for his bravery! I rode in Mexico 1968 and won a Team Gold Medal and Jennie rode in four Olympics from 1972 to 1988." Anne's equestrian legacy is sure and her work will continue to delight young and old for generations to come. ●



Lizzie Glendinning Bullen is an exhibition maker and art dealer. She and her husband, artist Jack Bullen, run Brocket Gallery on Kennington Road in South London, as well as Bullen Cards.

Hunting images are available through Bullen Cards, which is now run by Anne's great-grandson, Jack Bullen. For more, visit www.bullencards.co.uk or email info@bullencards.co.uk



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STANLEY AND SCOTTIE JUMPING FOR JOY!

Stanley Pennington was worried about Scottie, his 8 year old Westie. Scottie had jumped down from the quay to his boat and broken his foot. Despite months of treatment Scottie had difficulty walking and could not get up after sitting down.

Stanley bought a Bioflow magnetic dog collar and a Bioflow Elite wristband for himself. He had damaged his own foot severely by treading on a cyanide-coated spike which had pierced his foot causing long-term damage and eventual arthritis.

Stanley was thrilled by the improvements they both felt. Scottie was back to enjoying his walks and much happier in himself. Stanley's foot felt much better. He says, "My children could not believe the difference in Scottie. As for me, I had been in pain for 3 weeks but my foot feels fine. I've already recommended Bioflow collars and wristbands to many friends and I will continue to do so."



For further information contact:

Jenny Ryan 0114 2307844; 07817671259
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Recipe by Game-to-Eat
Development Chef
LEE MAYCOCK.

This recipe is taken
from the 2015-16
Game-to-Eat recipe
leaflet, developed by Lee
to support our efforts
to get game onto the
national menu.
Follow Lee on
Twitter @LeeMaycock1.



{ A Spring game treat }

Wood Pigeon, Wild Cherries & Gingerbread

Wood pigeon is plentiful, cheap and nutritious.
This simple recipe will be a Spring treat

YOU WILL NEED...

Serves 4

- 8 wood pigeon breasts
- 200g wild cherries
- 20g sugar
- 20ml red wine
- 100g gingerbread
- Cornish sea salt
- Milled black pepper

PREPARATION METHOD

- Place the cherries in a thick bottom pan with the wine and sugar
- Cook slowly until a soft and sticky compôte
- Make the gingerbread crumbs
- Season the wood pigeon and sear in a hot pan for one minute each side
- Place into a hot oven 200°C for two minutes
- Remove from the oven and allow to rest for a further two minutes
- Place the wild cherry compôte on the plate
- Cut the wood pigeon and place next to the compote
- Finish with the gingerbread crumb and serve



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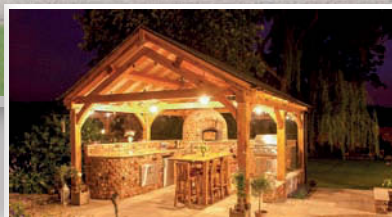
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The Hunt Staff Benefit Society: supporting a hunting life

→ **ALASTAIR JACKSON** has spent a lifetime in hunting and is now the fundraising director of the Hunt Staff Benefit Society. Here, he explains the Society's support for those who devote their life to hunting.



The National Horn Blowing Competition at the Horn and Hound Ball

How many people know what the Hunt Staff Benefit Society (HSBS) actually is? It is a pension scheme available to all those working as employees of hunts, whether as huntsmen, whippers-in, kennelmen, countrymen or hunt grooms.

Pension arrangements are usually the last thing on the minds of young hunt staff setting out on a career in hunting. However, there has been plenty of recent publicity and national debate concerning the provision of reasonable finance for everyone on retirement, and hunting has the added hazard of possible injury, which can sometimes mean the premature end to a career. The Hunting Act has made their future even more uncertain and all hunt staff operate daily under the threat of prosecutions. It is marvellous that there are still young people willing to come into this demanding profession and it is up to all of us to do what we can to help them.

The advantage of the HSBS pension scheme is that it is specifically designed for hunt staff and members to take their pensions with them from hunt to hunt, and can continue to pay contributions if they leave hunt service. All the administration and regulatory expenses are currently covered by subscriptions and donations from supporters of hunting



Alastair Jackson has been a Master and Huntsman of foxhounds, and has worked for the BFSS and the CA. Director of the Masters of Foxhounds Association for 15 years he now works on fundraising for the HSBS. He has judged hounds at all the major shows on both sides of the Atlantic and has written several books on hunting.

“AT THE END OF THE DAY EVERYONE WHO GOES HUNTING, EITHER ON A HORSE, BY CAR, OR ON FOOT SHOULD BECOME AN HONORARY MEMBER OF THE HSBS.”

and other fundraising initiatives. This gives the HSBS a great advantage over comparable pension policies available from leading assurance companies and others in this field, and boosts the funds available for retirement benefits. While the Society's pension scheme cannot be used as a qualifying scheme for the Government's new compulsory workplace pension scheme (auto-enrolment), if they wish, hunt staff can choose to opt out of the qualifying scheme and continue to pay premiums into the HSBS.

The HSBS is particularly lucky to have the Prince of Wales as its Patron and Governor, who takes a great deal of interest in the Society and has been able to provide several highly successful fundraising events, such as polo matches and garden tours of Highgrove.

There is also a charity, run in tandem with the HSBS, known as the Hunt Servants' Fund. This was originally set up for 'the relief of poverty', which seems a rather old fashioned concept now, but today is able to help hunt staff and their dependants in all sorts of ways if they find themselves in difficulties. Recent examples have included helping the widows of hunt staff, help with the care and education of three orphaned children, and buying equipment for a huntsman incapacitated following a hunting accident.

At the end of the day everyone who goes hunting, either on a horse, by car, or on foot should become an Honorary

Member of the HSBS. It only costs a minimum subscription of £30 per year (or £500 for Life Membership). Banker's orders for Honorary Membership plus details of the Horn and Hound Ball and other fundraising events can be obtained from Lizzie Dyer at the HSBS Office on hsbs2@mfbha.co.uk.

Details about the pension scheme for hunt staff can be obtained from the Secretary to the HSBS, Fiona Russell-Brown, who administers the Society and can also answer any other queries that you might have - hsbs@mfbha.co.uk.

Both Fiona and Lizzie can be contacted at the HSBS Office, c/o The Hunting Office, Overley Barn, Daglingworth, Cirencester, Gloucestershire, GL7 7HX. 01285 653001 or www.hsbs.org.uk.

The Horn and Hound Ball is now a regular feature in the hunting calendar and this year we are delighted to announce our new title sponsor, Dubarry of Ireland. To celebrate this supportive partnership we will be naming this year's event the Dubarry Horn and Hound Ball. Held at Cheltenham Racecourse, on 23rd April, it is the successor to the Horse and Hound Ball and the National Horn Blowing Competition for the original and iconic Horse and Hound Cup is now held here every year. A champagne reception and first class dinner with wine is followed by dancing to the amazing "29 Fingers" until the early hours - and all for £100 a ticket. This fundraising evening is held in aid of the Hunt Staff Benefit Society (HSBS).

For ball tickets call 01285 653001.

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The fellowship of the countryside

I WRITE AS A CLAY, GAME AND WILDFOWL SHOOTER,

I have never hunted and horses are a mystery to me. My cousin and her two teenage children who have no experience of fieldsports were visiting from Australia over the Christmas period and I persuaded them to attend the New Year's Day meeting of the Pytchley Hunt.

Whilst my visitors were not the most typically dressed

people at this meeting, they were nonetheless accepted by all there and commented on how nice and welcoming the people were. In the sudden cold snap they were grateful for the whisky, mince pies and sausages provided by the hunt. Since they all ride at home, they were able to admire the horses and hounds.

All said that whilst they would not have classed

themselves as supporters of hunting prior to attending this meeting, they would all like to attend further meets if that was possible.

I would like to thank the Pytchley hunt and all concerned with this meet for making my visitors welcome and showing such a positive image of hunting.

GORDON THOMPSON
Northampton

Editor's choice



Please note this Pytchley photo was not taken on New Year's Day. Thanks to Rose Rodgers (www.photoboxgallery.com/roserodgersphotography)



Congratulations to Gordon, winner of the £50 Chudleys voucher.

www.chudleys.com

Saving the Scottish wildcat from extinction

THREATENED BY HYBRIDISATION with domestic feral cats, the Scottish wildcat has come to the precipice of extinction with recent estimates of less than 100 "pure" wildcats still surviving in the wild, and no pure wildcats in captivity at all.



Hope has emerged through the Wildcat Haven (www.wildcathaven.com) project in the West Highlands which has neutered feral cats across

almost 500 square miles of land, creating a still-expanding safe place for them to re-populate. Unfortunately, Scottish Natural

Heritage (SNH) is now planning to take most of these last survivors into captivity, in spite of a huge failure rate when releasing captive-bred wildcats back into the wild; the future for Scotland's cat is on a knife edge.

International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) research has shown the best wildcat conservation is in-situ and the results from Haven, on truly shoestring budgets, prove that it can be done; but far more support is needed to help the project expand quickly enough.

In an effort to achieve this, Wildcat Haven has begun crowd-funding purchases of land to build a network of wildcat reserves, carefully managed to provide optimum, feral-

cat-free habitat, and anyone can support it by buying a souvenir plot for themselves or as a gift from the website (more here <https://www.wildcathaven.com/support/>.)

It's rather sad that what appears the last hope for the wildcat depends on convincing people to buy gifts of souvenir land plots, whilst hundreds of thousands of pounds of tax and Lottery money has been spent just coming up with the SNH captivity plan, but sometimes animals just slip through the net, and now it's for those individuals who care about the wildcat to try and keep it safe.

STEVE PIPER
Wildcat Haven, Roy Bridge PH31 4WA
[@WildcatHavenUK](https://twitter.com/WildcatHavenUK)

Representing shooting interests in Europe

ON 18TH NOVEMBER 2015, the European Commission proposed a draft of changes to European firearms laws, which have been in place since 1991.

Some of the weapons used in the Charlie Hebdo attack were firearms that had been converted into blank firing 'acoustic' firearms and then reconverted into live firearms. Currently these 'acoustic' weapons are exempted from EU firearms legislation and can be bought and sold without any certificate or tracing in many EU countries, though not in the UK. It is right that we address any potential loopholes and try to share best practice.

However, we need to ensure the rules

tackle real problems. There are some genuine concerns that the initial proposals are unclear and poorly worded. Unless these are changed, there could be serious consequences for museums, sporting organisations and historic re-enactments as well as the use of guns in films.

Fortunately it is possible to change the proposals before they become law. I have volunteered to lead the European Parliament's work to negotiate new language. I have met with MEPs from across the continent and they are firmly committed to finding a new proposal that does not overly restrict legal use, such as semi-automatic .22 rifles.

I met with Countryside Alliance representatives and other stakeholders as well as law and enforcement and ballistics experts

both in the UK and in Brussels. I hope to prepare new draft amendments by March which we will continue to discuss before a vote in June.

VICKY FORD
Conservative MEP for the East of England
European Parliament, Brussels
Twitter: @vickyford



Falconry for Schools swoops on a winning formula

→ The Countryside Alliance Foundation's Falconry for Schools project brings birds of prey into the classroom and shakes up traditional teaching methods with exceptional results. **CHARLOTTE COOPER** finds out more.

What child in a post-Harry Potter world would not thrill to the idea of having owls and other birds of prey in their classroom? But for some young pupils bringing birds into school is more than just a whiff of fresh air and a welcome distraction from the usual spellings and sums. It can lead to a breakthrough in concentration and good behaviour.

Falconry for Schools was set up seven years ago for The Countryside Alliance Foundation by teacher and falconer Judith Wright. It follows the success of our Fishing 4 Schools project, which ties angling activities to aspects of the National Curriculum, and comprises a two-day course in falconry that includes maths, science, history and geography.

"My love of falconry combined with my biology knowledge and teaching experience helped me assemble a comprehensive learning package," explained Judith. "Since then, I have led the



Falconry for Schools project in 24 schools."

The project now has two further leaders – Sharon Bindon, who covers the Cornwall area and Sandra Johnson, who is based in West Yorkshire. Ten two-day courses take place each year, but the instructors are very keen to do more.

Sandra's journey into falconry started on a family holiday around 15 years ago and she now runs her own business – SMJ Falconry.

Explaining the course, she said: "The Falconry for Schools course is fully funded by the Countryside Alliance Foundation and gives children an insight into falconry: how and when it started, how people of different nationalities have worked with birds of prey over the centuries to

hunt, why certain species are threatened with extinction and the world-wide diversification of birds of prey.

"We explain how our birds of prey are looked after, their welfare, their housing and how they are trained. We also look at the importance of conservation and

"IT WOULD BE FANTASTIC TO HAVE THE FUNDING TO BE ABLE TO TAKE THE COURSE INTO MORE SCHOOLS – PARTICULARLY THOSE FOR CHILDREN WITH LEARNING OR PHYSICAL DISABILITIES. I THINK THERE IS TREMENDOUS SCOPE IN THAT AREA."



Charlotte Cooper is the Countryside Alliance's Head of Media, promoting our charitable and campaigning work across a broad range of issues.

how the birds survive in the wild with their differing feeding techniques. The big thing is for our birds to be present in the classroom and, where space and weather permit, be flown to further demonstrate their natural abilities.”

Sharon has been involved in falconry since 2004 when “after a great deal of research and an intensive falconry course” she bought her first bird of prey, a female Harris hawk called Storm to hunt alongside her Springer spaniel Sophi. She now has 30 birds of prey and set up her business Ancient Art Falconry in 2008.

She said: “I love teaching in schools and if one child out of each class I teach gets involved in conservation then it means I have helped continue the work of falconry for future generations and we will have birds of prey in the countryside for many years to come.

“It would be fantastic to have the funding to be able to take the course into more schools – particularly those for children with learning

“WHEN I TOOK MY BIRDS INTO A SCHOOL FOR BOYS WHO HAVE BEHAVIOURAL, EMOTIONAL AND SOCIAL DIFFICULTIES, THE STUDENTS’ INVOLVEMENT IMPRESSED THE STAFF, WHO HAD RARELY SEEN SUCH ENGAGEMENT. THE BIRDS’ CALMING INFLUENCE WAS PLAINLY EVIDENT AND THE BOYS HANDLED THEM WITH TENDERNESS AND RESPECT.”

or physical disabilities. I think there is tremendous scope in that area.

“I remember at one school, I was told one of the boys was autistic and normally only managed a short period in the classroom so I was not to worry when he needed to be taken out. But he was interested and engaged in the session and took part in the activities, staying in the classroom for the whole lesson. He really enjoyed himself!

“I also think the birds can sense that they are interacting with someone who has a limitation.

A lady with a young man in a wheelchair came over to us when I was displaying at a fête, some years ago now. He could not speak, walk or move his arms but when I brought my barn owl over, she jumped straight onto his shoulder and snuggled up to his face. That was not something I had trained the bird to do, she just did it off her own back – it absolutely made his day! And on another occasion my tawny owl was quite happy



to allow a little girl with Downs’ Syndrome to cuddle and hug her – I’m sure she could tell she needed to be gentle.”

Judith has also experienced the special bond some children seem to form with the birds. “Animal-assisted therapy has always intrigued me, in terms of encouraging disengaged students,” she said. “When I took my birds into a school for boys who have behavioural, emotional and social difficulties, the students’ involvement impressed the staff, who had rarely seen such engagement. The birds’ calming influence was plainly evident and the boys handled them with tenderness and respect.”

In order for us to expand Falconry for Schools further we need more funding. We believe this project is an important way to help those children who lead increasingly indoor lives, learn about the countryside and nature. ●

If you would like to make a donation to or fundraise for Falconry for Schools, please contact Catrin Robinson on catrin-robinson@countryside-alliance.org or 0207 840 9212.





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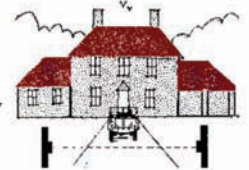
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➔ **MORE EVENTS** Below are a few of the big dates for 2016 – our website has more at www.countryside-alliance.org/competitions/

upcoming-events

Here are just some of the events and shows taking place over the coming months.

■ **15-18 March**

The Festival, Cheltenham Racecourse, Gloucestershire
More at www.thefestival2016.co.uk/
#GCTxBBCTLOXZFCYh.99
@CheltenhamRaces #TheFestival

■ **19-20 March**

The West of England Game Fair
at the Royal Bath and West Showground, Shepton Mallet. www.westcountrygamefair.co.uk @EquineSW

■ **4-8 May**

The Mitsubishi Badminton Horse Trials, Badminton, Gloucestershire
www.badminton-horse.co.uk/
@bhorsetrials #MMBHT

■ **9-11 June**

South of England Show & Hound Shows, Ardingly, West Sussex
The Countryside Alliance will be at the hound show area so come and see us to watch the hound shows, join us as a member and do some shopping. www.seas.org.uk/event/south-of-england-show-2016/ @seas_org

■ **10-12 June**

Field & Country Fair 2016, Cornbury Park, Oxfordshire
Celebrating the British countryside and field sports, it is presented by Time Inc. UK, home to a stable of iconic country and sporting titles: The Field, Shooting Gazette, Shooting Times, Sporting Gun, Country Life and Horse & Hound. www.fieldandcountryfair.com @FieldCoFair
Visit www.countryside-alliance.org for special member ticket offer.

■ **18-19 June**

The Welsh Game Fair, Pembrey Country Park, Llanelli, Carmarthenshire
<http://welshgamefair.com/>

■ **23 June**

Newmarket Countryside Race Day at the July Course, Newmarket
More information will appear in due course.

■ **30 June**

Wales and Border Counties Hound Show, Builth Wells

■ **18-21 July**

2016 Royal Welsh Show at Builth Wells. Countryside Alliance Director for Wales, Rachel Evans, and her team will be at the show to speak to you about campaigns, the political landscape following the Welsh Assembly elections in May and the benefits of membership. Follow Rachel on Twitter @CAevs.

■ **12-14 July**

Great Yorkshire Show and Hound Shows, Harrogate, North Yorkshire
The Countryside Alliance will be there to talk to supporters, sign you up as a member and outline our campaigning priorities. More here <http://greatyorkshireshow.co.uk/> @greatyorkshow

■ **22-24 July**

UK Game Fair, Stoneleigh NAEC, Stoneleigh Park, Warwickshire.
The UK Game Fair is designed to attract the core Game Fair following – both in terms of exhibitors and visitors – and put fieldsports back at the heart of rural events, with a clear focus on shooting, fishing, working dogs and rural estate management.
www.ukgamefair.com/
For CA membership offer visit our website.

■ **29-31 July**

The Game Fair, Ragley Hall, Alcester, Warwickshire. Celebrating British field sports and country life, The Game Fair boasts a comprehensive itinerary for the whole family, including gundog handling, clay shooting, archery, fishing, falconry and ferreting. See more at: www.thegamefair.org.
For CA membership offer see p7
Follow on Twitter @TheGameFair



➔ **20 JULY – THE FESTIVAL OF HUNTING**, Peterborough, East of England Showground

The Countryside Alliance will be there as the hunting world gathers at the East of England Showground for the unmissable Festival of Hunting. The greatest gathering of hounds in the country. festivalofhunting.com. Follow on Twitter @FestofHunting

■ **4 August**

The 126th Honiton Agricultural Show including Hound Show, Honiton, Devon

■ **4-7 August**

Countryfile Live, Blenheim Palace, Oxfordshire
From the website: “BBC Countryfile, Britain’s most watched factual television show will be brought to life in a major new and innovative live countryside event. The website for the event is www.countryfilelive.com/ @Countryfilelive

■ **11 August**

113th Vale of Rydal Sheepdog Trials and Hound Show at Rydal Park, Ambleside
<http://rydalshow.co.uk/>

■ **13-14 August**

Lowther Show and Hound Show at Lowther Castle, Cumbria
www.lowthershow.co.uk/

■ **2-4 September**

Chatsworth Country Fair, Chatsworth House, Derbyshire
www.chatsworthcountryfair.co.uk/

■ **11 September**

Frampton Country Fair, Frampton on Severn, Glos, GL2 7EX
<http://framptoncountryfair.co.uk>

■ **17-18 September**

Midland Game Fair, Weston Park, Shropshire
www.midlandgamefair.co.uk

➔ **23-26 JUNE**

ROYAL HIGHLAND SHOW, Ingliston, Edinburgh
The Scottish Countryside



Alliance will be at the Royal Highland Show so come and see us, join as a member and find out what we are up to. www.royalhighlandshow.org/
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Mike and Gail Forbes
pictured at
Forbes of Kingennie

I was delighted to be asked to write a few words in the spring 2016 edition of the Countryside Alliance's magazine. It's really quite hard to explain the true passion I have for the Scottish countryside. I suppose at the very stem is my deep rooted desire to farm. I don't think I would be classed as a traditional farmer as I have become so diverse, to the extent that people now regularly ask which of the various enterprises I have started and still run do I enjoy the most?

I farm around 1,000 acres in Angus, Scotland where I have a Multiplication Pig Unit for PIC and produce around 20,000 pigs a year which are fed on co-products from the brewery and food world. I grow around 150 acres of maize for my anaerobic digester, I have around 25 acres of table-top strawberries grown in tunnels producing around 350 tons of strawberries for Sainsbury. I also grow cereals, beans, potatoes (rented out), I have a 250KWh anaerobic digester, producing power via an engine back into the grid and also supplying electricity to my pig unit. This AD plant also produces hot water which heats strawberry tunnels and heats the main digester itself which runs on pig manure, pig slurry and maize.

In addition, I have a tourist business called Forbes of Kingennie with a golf course which has 280 members, 16 lodges, four lochans for sport fishing, a function room for around 200 people where we do around 100 weddings a year (www.forbesofkingennie.com), a restaurant and bar and various other attractions.

Well, I hear you say, where on earth does he get time to do anything but work? The truth of the matter is the above can only happen with great

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dedicated staff that feel valued and rewarded, plus the helpful endeavours of all my family.

Forbes of Kingennie originally started in 1995 as the stall and sow tether ban was looming and I was nervous of having all my eggs in one basket. At that time I had recently become National Fly fishing Champion of Scotland and felt that investing some time into a derelict old boathouse and silted up lochan on a corner of the farm could, potentially, start an alternative business to farming.

Kingennie Fishings, as it was known then, grew from strength to strength and from its humble beginnings, now employs 48 staff at its peak, attracts around 30,000 visitors a year and has a turnover well in excess of £1m a year. Life has not always been plain sailing and after leukaemia struck me twice, my focus was as much about “giving back” as it was about forging forward. Because of this this myself and my family

are huge supporters of Casting for Recovery where, in combination with the Countryside Alliance, we run weekends for ladies suffering from various stages of breast cancer. We are also passionate in supporting Tayside Children with Cancer and Leukaemia (TCCL), Marie Curie, and Insight Counselling.

When I do get away I love to fish in the wildest of wild places in the Outer Hebrides and on remote Scottish estates. I have recently fished at Amhuinnsuidhe Castle on North Harris, Loch Gorm on the Island of Islay, and Tulchan on Speyside. Not only do I love fishing but I really enjoy shooting and training dogs, once again travelling to some of the most magnificent areas Scotland has to offer. I try to integrate some of my sport into farming and in particular, where the new “Greening” rules have allowed the planting of 2m grass end rigs it has allowed me to start a grey partridge reintroduction programme. As I write, spring is hopefully not far away and the thought of March Browns drifting down the river Tummel and olives hatching on the Tay will take me away from those long dark winter nights and allow me to dust down my fishing gear once again. ●

Ladies who have (or have had) breast cancer are invited to apply to attend a Casting for Recovery retreat at Kingennie from 23-25 September, hosted by the Forbes family. Visit www.castingforrecovery.org.uk to apply or email cfr@ca-foundation.org for information.

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to purchase their membership.

They will need to quote your membership number for you to receive your £10 voucher in the post.

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