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Welcome



WELCOME TO MY COUNTRYSIDE, the new magazine for Countryside Alliance members. You'll have noticed a few changes from the last issue of the membership magazine that you received, and I'm sure you'll agree they are for the good. We wanted to produce a magazine that showed off the best of the British countryside.

Of course we haven't forgotten the vital work the Countryside Alliance does on your behalf, bringing you news, opinions and views on recent developments. In this issue we have an in-depth look at British moorland – be it in Ireland, Wales, Scotland or England – and the species that this remarkable and unique habitat supports, why it is so important to our landscape, and what the political outlook is for these wild places.

We've got some amazing articles that highlight the tremendous variety we enjoy in this country, from seafishing for bass (don't miss out on watching the accompanying film online) to important and historical trees, how to make the best of the bounty of nature at this time of year, as well as wine suggestions to go with those ingredients. There's practical advice on walking hound puppies, a profile of the fantastic Beretta Serpentina 490 – a one-off shotgun to celebrate Beretta's 490th anniversary – and our recommendations for all the kit you could possibly need this summer, whether it is for a country walk or a day's trout fishing.

I hope you enjoy reading the magazine as much as we have enjoyed producing it! 🐾

Kate

Kate Gatacre, Editor





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Continuing the campaign for what is right

The hunting 'debate' was never about animal welfare, it was about politics and class war

“OVERTURNING THE HUNTING BAN WOULD BE THE SINGLE GREATEST BACKWARDS STEP FOR THE ANIMAL RIGHTS MOVEMENT SINCE ITS CREATION”



You have the advantage of me because I write this during the General Election campaign, and you will read it when the results are in. Those results will be of profound importance to the countryside as the future of our trading relations with the rest of the world and the management of our countryside are decided in the next five years.

They will also decide whether the wrong that was done 13 years ago when the Hunting Act was passed can be corrected. Hunting may seem a largely irrelevant issue besides Brexit, but as we all know the hunting 'debate' was never about hounds, foxes and the other quarry species. It was about politics, and a nasty strain of vindictive, class war politics at that.

I will never forget the morning of the climactic Commons vote on the ban in September 2004. The Minister, Alun Michael, toured the broadcast studios and, devoid of any reasonable argument for the measure, repeated the line that people who did not like it would have an opportunity to respond at the ballot box.

To say that he was insensitive would suggest that he did not know what he was doing, but he quite clearly did. He was saying that principle, evidence and all the normal workings of a liberal democracy did not apply. The Labour majority would have its way. His parliamentary private secretary, Peter Bradley, repeated the message even more blatantly after the vote was passed when he wrote: "Now that hunting has been banned, we ought at last to own up to it...it was class war".

Well the pendulum has swung. The Conservative manifesto includes a commitment to a vote on the future of the Hunting Act, the Prime Minister has said that she supports hunting and there may well be a majority in the new Parliament who support overturning the ban. Having that vote, and winning it, is important, not just for those who hunt and especially those members of hunt staff who constantly face vindictive allegations, but because of the appalling precedent the hunting ban sets. If a majority of MPs can decide, in the absence of any evidence of harm, that they can ban an activity because they do not like it, then where could such legislation end? What about shooting grouse or pheasants; greyhound or horse racing; fishing even?

Overturning the hunting ban would be the single greatest backwards step for the animal rights movement since its creation. As Alun Michael was presenting his disreputable Bill to Parliament, anti-hunting groups were moving their sights on to shooting, confident that the battle over hunting was won. Neither they, nor the MPs who voted the ban through, even started to understand the determination and resilience of the rural community.

It is because of that determination that we stand here four elections later still determined to correct the injustice of the hunting ban. You will know more than me about whether that is possible, but whatever happens the Alliance will continue to campaign for what is right. ♡

TIM BONNER
CHIEF EXECUTIVE

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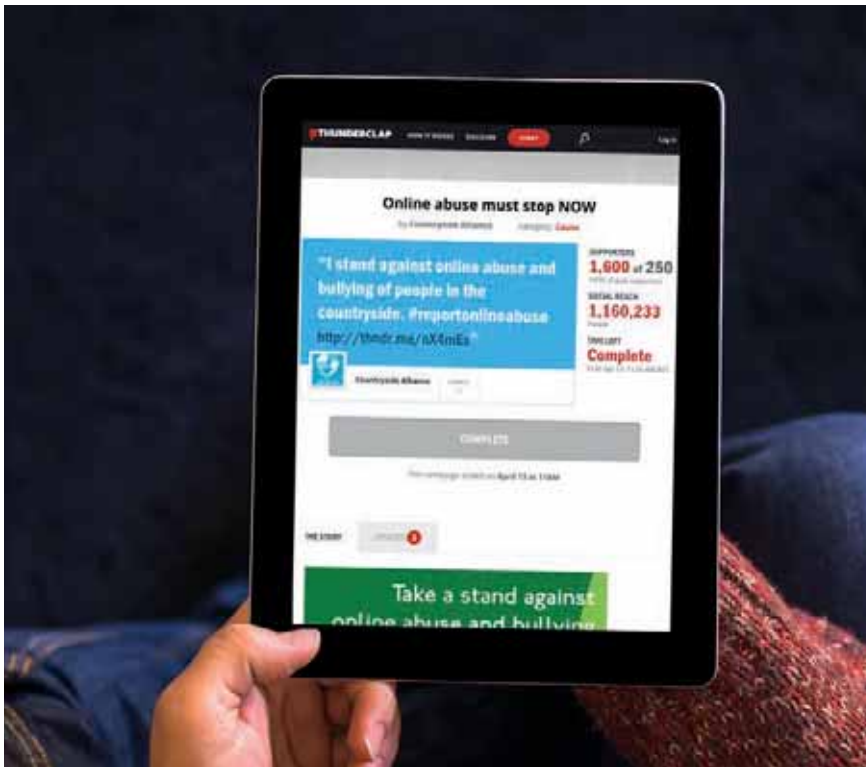
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NEWS REVIEW

ANTI-BULLYING CAMPAIGN UPDATE



THUNDERCLAP

AT THE TIME of writing, the Countryside Alliance's campaign against online abuse had reached more than 1.16million people – this, thanks to the 1,600 who signed up to support it.

The story behind the campaign to stop online bullying of those involved in fieldsports started a year and a half ago, with the tragic death of nine-year-old Bonnie Armitage in April 2016. Bonnie was riding with the Cotswold when she was kicked in the chest by a horse. The responses posted on social media accounts by hunt saboteurs and animal rights groups was shocking: delighting in the death of a child. The Countryside Alliance condemned this trolling, but, with no legal recourse to prevent it or to force these comments to be removed

from Twitter and Facebook, there was little that could be achieved in practice.

In October, however, new guidelines on social media were published by the Crown Prosecution Service aimed at tackling online abuse. In theory, those involved in inciting online harassment campaigns could face charges of encouraging an offence under the Serious Crime Act 2007. The Countryside Alliance welcomed the new guidelines, but had concerns: would these new guidelines have teeth? Would this ensure that offending social media posts would be removed and those that placed them there would face charges? The Countryside Alliance has been monitoring many of the social media sites on which these trolls were posting and, in March 2017, reported the Facebook page “Ban Hunting with Dogs” to the Commons Home Affairs Select Committee for allowing abusive

and threatening posts to be repeatedly published. These comments were not taken down for several days, including one that said of a Surrey Vicar for blessing the Chiddingfold, Leconfield and Cowdray Hunt: “Kill him”.

The Countryside Alliance decided to run a campaign to raise awareness of online abuse and bullying of people in the countryside using the Thunderclap platform. By April 13, 1,600 people had signed up, which meant that their social media accounts would send out a message to followers stating: “I stand against bullying of people in the countryside #reportonlineabuse”. The reach of this campaign was more than 1.2million.

Liam Stokes, head of shooting at the Countryside Alliance commented: “Considering any infringement of copyright is removed immediately, it's shocking that these threatening and abusive posts often stay in place for several days. The CPS and Facebook should be ensuring that the guidelines are followed, and this isn't happening.” Death threats and harassment of those in the countryside engaging in legal activities has become commonplace, and while it is promising that there are new guidelines and that the Home Affairs Select Committee is aware of the problem, more needs to be done. Facebook community guidelines should be brought into line with the CPS legal guidelines where online abuse is concerned, Facebook should respond to all complaints regarding reported comments within 24 hours and those who have set up pages on these platforms should be held accountable. The Countryside Alliance has requested a meeting with Facebook, as well as a meeting from Baroness Shields OBE, who is the Minister responsible for overseeing social media abuse. In the meantime, Liam Stokes advises members to “report online abuse to Facebook and to us. We are monitoring several sites to ensure that any abusive behaviour is reported, both to the police and to ensure that it is removed as soon as possible.”

SECOND CONSULTATION BY NRW UNDER FIRE

NATURAL RESOURCES WALES (NRW) is undertaking a consultation on whether firearms should continue to be used on publicly owned land, despite the Countryside Alliance learning that very similar work had already been completed in 2013. The Alliance also found that this second review is being undertaken after lobbying by animal rights organisation 'Animal Aid', a group that is not only opposed to wildlife management, but also to

livestock farming. The Alliance has seen evidence that the first review showed the benefits of a well-run shoot, as well as suggesting that NRW could generate £500,000 a year from gameshooting on its estate, and wants to know why NRW is spending taxpayers' money replicating that work. The Countryside Alliance has resubmitted a Freedom of Information Request after NRW denied the existence of the previous review at the first request.



UNMASKING VIOLENT PROTESTORS

ON 3 APRIL, the police were given new powers to remove face coverings from violent protestors following a Countryside Alliance led campaign. Previously, the police had to gain prior written authorisation from a senior police officer, and research by the Countryside Alliance using the Freedom of Information Act showed that the powers had only been used on one occasion in the past three years to require animal rights activists

to remove face coverings, despite the use of masks being a standard tactic by hunt saboteurs to intimidate and hide their identity. Tim Bonner commented: "For too long a small minority have hidden behind masks and disguises to intimidate people and to escape being held to account for unlawful behaviour. This change in the law will discourage unlawful activity whilst allowing lawful and peaceful protest."

BREXIT POLICIES

WHILE THE COUNTRYSIDE Alliance didn't campaign during the EU referendum, the organisation has launched a Brexit policy document setting out the issues that need to be addressed to sustain a living and working countryside outside the EU. Brexit will form one of the most important tasks of the Government (this magazine went to press before the General Election). The Countryside

Alliance will help to ensure that the countryside is given a voice, and vital rural issues such as provision of affordable rural housing, universal access to high-speed broadband and mobile signal, tackling rural crime, and our agricultural industries will be represented.

To see the document, visit
bit.ly/CountrysideAllianceBrexitDocument

CONSERVATIVE LOGO TO BE REMOVED FROM ANIMAL RIGHTS OPERATION

THE CHAIRMAN OF the Conservative Party, Rt Hon Sir Patrick McLoughlin MP, has told the Conservative Animal Welfare Foundation (CAWF) to refrain from using the official Conservative Party logo and limit their operations. This comes after months of campaigning by the Countryside Alliance. Both the CAWF and the Conservatives Against Foxhunting are run by Ms Lorraine Platt, a Trustee of the League Against Cruel Sports, a group that has twice been censured by the Charity Commission for campaigning against the Conservative Party. Former Shadow Animal Welfare Minister Andrew Rosindell MP stated: "I am a passionate believer in improving welfare standards, as is this Conservative Government. However, the language and aims promoted by both of these groups appears to be more in keeping with the animal rights agenda promoted by the Labour Party."



DINNER HOOKS BIG DONATIONS

ON WEDNESDAY MAY 3 150 guests gathered at The Royal Hospital, Chelsea for the Fishing for Our Future Dinner. Chaired by George Stephenson, the evening raised money for The Countryside Alliance's charities Fishing for Schools and Casting for Recovery and the Angling Trust's brainchild Save our Salmon. The evening started in spectacular style with a champagne reception accompanied by a casting demonstration to music by Charles Jardine. A delicious dinner followed from By Word of Mouth, finished with a Godminster cheese donated for every table. Tempting auction lots offered included fishing at Ata Lodge in Alaska and heli skiing in British Columbia, which helped to raise the £90,000 total for the evening.

Fishing for Schools reaches out to less privileged young people, giving them an opportunity to learn life and academic skills through fishing. It is aimed at students in secondary education, especially those with learning or physical disabilities. Working alongside teachers,

Fishing for Schools explores core curricular subjects through the medium of angling. Casting for Recovery is an inspirational programme for women who have breast cancer. Residential retreats at idyllic locations offer ladies who have been profoundly affected by breast cancer counselling and medical support combined with tuition in fly fishing. The action of casting is medically proven to help heal women who have had a mastectomy. Save our Salmon is part of the Angling Trust and is a campaign to restore healthy stocks of wild Atlantic salmon throughout the UK. Each charity will benefit hugely from the fantastic amount raised on the night.



GET IN TOUCH TO TELL US WHAT YOU THINK ABOUT THE STORIES COVERED IN THIS NEW LOOK ISSUE OF MY COUNTRYSIDE



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Write to: My Countryside Magazine, 1 Spring Mews, Tinworth Street, London, SE11 5AN

Send in stories, letters and photos that encapsulate everything that matters to you about our countryside and rural life. Each issue we will be looking to print the best, so look out for your contribution in the next issue of *My Countryside*.

Countryside Alliance



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Published on behalf of

the Countryside Alliance by:



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Printed by William Gibbons & Sons Ltd

Pictures used from Alamy and Thinkstock unless credited otherwise.

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BERETTA



TRADITION MEETS INNOVATION

The Beretta Serpentina 490 is a true masterpiece of craftsmanship and, prior to its auction for charity, Camilla Swift spoke to Franco Beretta to discover the story behind this unique collector's item



PAST MEETS FUTURE

What does a company like Beretta do to celebrate its 490th birthday? After some thought, the current president, Franco, decided to create a gun that combined Beretta's highly technical components with the traditional artistry and advanced design work that they are famous for. The result of his work is the Serpentina 490 – a commemorative side-by-side shotgun with a Colour Case Hardened receiver, a 'serpentina' opening mechanism, and an innovative 'wood bridge' that allows the tail of the receiver to be housed beneath the wood, leaving a seamless area between the receiver and the safety mechanism. Beretta are obviously excellent at filing their most important paperwork, and still own the original bill of sale between Bartolomeo Beretta and the Arsenal of Venice from 1526. This document has been engraved in gold inlay on the left side of the receiver; a beautiful touch which epitomises Beretta's attention to detail when it comes to design work. "Every time we talk about a new product," says Franco, "we talk about what is good from the past, and what is good from the future. The Serpentina is a great example of this combination; the side-by-side is a typical, traditional gun. But as far as we know, Beretta had never really made a gun with a Serpentina-style locking system; so this was traditional, but also innovative for Beretta."

**“A ‘QUALITY’ SHOTGUN
IS DEFINED BY TWO
THINGS: ITS AESTHETIC,
AND ITS RELIABILITY”**

UPHOLDING TRADITION

Even though the company makes over a million firearms a year, Franco Beretta is determined that the company maintains the traditional gun-making skills that many other firearms manufacturers might think of as old-fashioned or defunct. He tells the story of how, when he joined the company in his early twenties, one of the first assignments his great-uncle gave him involved working in the premium gun department. His uncle warned him that he'd never again have the opportunity to work in a similar environment, as the skilled staff who made Beretta's Custom Grade guns were ready to retire, and no one expected that younger generations would want to learn how to do things with their hands. When Franco's father took over the company however, he and his son decided to continue the hand-making traditions that are part of Beretta's DNA, and started up a training programme that could teach young Italians the skills needed for things such as the hand-engraving, wood parts and metal fittings that can be seen on the Serpentina 490. This is something that he is very proud of, and without people like him to encourage them, these skills could easily disappear entirely. It's perhaps the long family line that makes the traditional ways so important for Beretta: "I need to pay respect to what has been past," he says, "part of the DNA of Beretta is to respect the traditions themselves."



At the same time, these guns are made to be used. For Franco Beretta, a 'quality' shotgun is defined by two things: its aesthetic, and its reliability. "It has to be a nice product, but it also has to be really reliable – whether we are talking about a hunter in the field, or a competition shooter," he says.

LIMITED EDITION

When it came to creating the anniversary Serpentina shotgun, Franco made the decision to restrict production to just four pieces. "We wanted to have exclusivity," he explains. "We thought that was much more interesting and appealing, to have a gun which was made in such small quantities...

"IF THIS IS WHAT HAPPENS WHEN BERETTA TURNS 490, IT'S HARD TO IMAGINE WHAT THEY MIGHT HAVE UP THEIR SLEEVE FOR THEIR 500TH BIRTHDAY"

we are so proud of this product that we wanted to make just a few of them, both to demonstrate our capabilities, and to celebrate the 490 years." From start to finish, the production process took about a year as since there are just four of them in existence – each of which is unique – the prototype and the finished product are one and the same.

The Countryside Alliance were lucky enough to get their hands on one these four guns; of the other three, one was auctioned off in New York, while two will stay within the Beretta family. The Countryside

Alliance gun, the only Beretta 490 Serpentina Colour Case Hardened shotgun in existence, was entered into a prize draw of just 490 tickets. Being such a unique product – and one that would be hugely in-demand on the open market – this was a fantastic opportunity for keen shots. Beretta were keen to use their anniversary gun as a means of supporting a shooting charity, and the Countryside Alliance's Campaign for Shooting fitted the bill perfectly.

If this is what happens when Beretta turns 490, it's hard to imagine what they might have up their sleeve for their 500th birthday. ❤️

AND THE WINNER IS...

The draw for the one-of-a-kind Beretta Serpentina 490 took place on May 3 at Royal Hospital, Chelsea. It was won by Mr Kit O'Grady who shoots in Northamptonshire.



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THE GREAT OUTDOORS

Each issue we will celebrate some of the most beautiful imagery from our countryside. A perfect example is this iconic photo of the millstones at Stanage Edge, Derbyshire which epitomise the natural beauty and cultural heritage of Britain's Peak District.

We would like to invite you to send us photographs of your countryside – a landscape that you love or an inspirational image you'd like to share. Email your photos to us at mycountryside@countryside-alliance.org



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Hostage to fortune: THE GROUSE MOORS OF THE BRITISH ISLES

We take a look at the challenges facing the uplands, both practical and political, and consider how we can safeguard these incredibly important habitats for future generations



LIAM STOKES, HEAD OF SHOOTING AT THE COUNTRYSIDE ALLIANCE ON HOW WE CAN ENSURE A BRIGHT FUTURE FOR GROUSE MOORS ACROSS THE BRITISH ISLES

GROUSE MOOR MANAGEMENT is facing diverse challenges across the British Isles. In England and Scotland campaigners are trying to stop it while in Wales and Ireland conservationists are trying to get it going again. Not since the events leading to the Hunting Act have we seen one of our land management strategies so singularly targeted with propaganda and activism, and for the sake of the wildlife, communities and economies that grouse moors support we have to respond appropriately.

Firstly, it is vital grouse shooting does not allow itself to be portrayed as elitist and remote. We know its opponents seek to deploy the rhetoric of class war, just as they did against hunting. We are responding by taking the pro-shooting argument to where the general public are,

events such as Countryfile Live, and delivering them in an engaging manner. We are bringing the public onto grouse moors, introducing them to gamekeepers, showing them the conservation successes and explaining the relevance of shooting to the whole community. By breaking down any barriers between moorland managers and the public, we can stop our opponents from exploiting a 'them and us' narrative.

While welcoming the public, we are challenging the opposition to moorland management both scientifically and politically. We have huge amounts of evidence pointing to the ecological and economic benefits of grouse shooting, and it is vital this evidence continues to be gathered. This is, however, first and foremost a political battle, and we are

always working to place that evidence in the hands of policy makers and the media. We also work with politicians to help them understand the new online campaign strategies being deployed by animal rights activists to generate the appearance of public outcry while actually representing no real electoral threat.

Finally, it is crucial that grouse moor managers recognise that where bad practice does occur, or where science shows there is a better way of doing things, change has to happen. There can be no tolerance of criminality, and the sector is coming together with government and conservation charities to stamp the last vestiges out altogether. As long as these steps are followed, grouse moor management has a bright future in every corner of the British Isles.



**“SHOOTING COULD BECOME
A POLITICAL FOOTBALL. WE
MUST NOT LET IT BECOME SO”**

JAMES LEGGE, HEAD OF THE COUNTRYSIDE ALLIANCE'S POLITICAL DEPARTMENT, TAKES A LOOK AT THE SITUATION FOR GROUSE MOORS IN WESTMINSTER

AS THE RESULT of a public petition last year, opponents of grouse shooting were able to engineer the first parliamentary debate in living memory on whether or not grouse shooting should be banned. All sorts of allegations were made trying to link the moorland management associated with grouse shooting with flooding events such as at Hebden Bridge in Cumbria. There were claims that grouse shooting was taxpayer subsidised, not to mention the ongoing and false assumption that a failure of hen harriers to breed in some upland areas is the result of grouse shooting, when breeding failure is just as observable where no grouse shooting takes place. Indeed, contrary to the claims of the antis there is a strong case for grouse shooting in economic, environmental and wildlife management terms. What was remarkable about the debate in the end was the limited nature of the opposition and the large turnout of MPs willing to make the case for grouse shooting. The Government was equally robust.

What is perhaps more interesting politically is how activists are able to manipulate the political process by creating a false impression of overwhelming public interest. All the evidence suggests the opposite. Indeed of 2,046 people asked in an ORB poll what were the most important issues facing the country, not a single person mentioned the grouse word.

Yet, for a lie to become accepted as a truth it only needs to be repeated often enough and in sufficiently emotive terms; and fact, principle and evidence go out of the window. Add to this a dose of prejudice against those involved and you have a dangerous mix. Indeed, Mark Avery, former Director of Conservation at the RSPB, who initiated the petition has referred to grouse shooting as 'the Tory party at play', which rather betrays his motivation. Think back to the way in which the hunting ban came about and you will know all you need to know about the tactics our opponents will deploy. We may have won this round, but politically

the threat to grouse shooting is not going to go away. We will not always have a Government, or Ministers, so supportive of shooting, and grouse shooting in particular.

Lastly, with the advent of Brexit and the repatriation of powers to the UK institutions, many of the laws which affect shooting and the uplands, particularly the Birds and Habitats Directives, will now be made here. We are likely to see changes to the existing law over time and the politics will be played out at home and not in Europe. For all its faults, Europe entrenched certain principles which provided a degree of 'protection' for game shooting, including grouse. This will go, and the future of shooting will be decided in Westminster, Edinburgh, Cardiff and Belfast where changing the law is far easier than having to reach consensus across many sovereign states. Shooting could become a political football. We must not let it become so. The lesson of the hunts must be learnt.



DIRECTOR OF SHOOTING AT THE COUNTRYSIDE ALLIANCE, ADRIAN BLACKMORE, OFFERS HIS OPINION ON THE CHALLENGES FACING ENGLISH GROUSE MOORS

ENGLISH GROUSE MOORS provide an upland landscape that is rich both in wildlife and biodiversity. They are a habitat of international importance supporting a rich variety of flora and fauna, and thanks to their management for grouse shooting this unique heather landscape has been conserved or restored, where elsewhere it has been lost. It is no coincidence that more than 70% of England's upland Sites of Special Scientific Interest are managed for grouse shooting, and over 40% are also designated as Special Protection Areas for rare birds and Special Areas of Conservation for rare vegetation under European wildlife directives.

Our grouse moors are sustainably managed, predominantly through the private investment of their owners, and they offer the most cost-effective model of upland management to the tax payer. With the right conditions and

management, grouse populations can flourish, and produce a surplus which enables shooting to take place, the sale of which helps fund the essential work that is undertaken by those protecting this unique upland habitat. Whilst the benefits to conservation are beyond

“THE BENEFITS TO CONSERVATION ARE BEYOND DOUBT”

doubt, so too are those that it brings to numerous upland communities, where it really can be the main economic driver.

Although the science and evidence are on our side, there are those that are working hard towards seeing an end of grouse shooting and its associated management, on the grounds that

it supports a sport, and those that participate in it, that they instinctively hate. Despite claims made to the contrary, there is no proven link between grouse moor management and flooding. The work being undertaken to re-vegetate bare peat and block moorland grips to raise water tables actually helps slow the flow of water through catchment areas, and in doing so both reduces sediment run-off, and encourages the growth of mosses to filter out discoloration. Calls for further legislation made by the RSPB, based on data that can be both misleading and unsubstantiated, also appear to be more about ideology and politics than the conservation of species. There can therefore be no room for complacency. The online petition to ban driven grouse shooting, promoted by a vocal minority using the power of social media, which triggered last autumn's debate in parliament, should be a wake-up call to us all.

“THE GROUSE SEASON IS ONE OF THE MAJOR CATALYSTS BEHIND THE CREATION OF RURAL EMPLOYMENT”



DIRECTOR OF THE SCOTTISH COUNTRYSIDE ALLIANCE, JAMIE STEWART, EXPLAINS WHAT THE FUTURE LOOKS LIKE FOR GROUSE IN SCOTLAND

I CANNOT THINK of any other species that has been at the centre of such a vitriolic campaign where those defined by their own operational protocols to promote the protection and, wherever possible, the expansion of our native and migratory avian species campaign to the detriment of such a target species, the iconic red grouse.

Scotland's upland moorlands form much of the imagery used to market the country at home and wider afield. Those blessed with the stewardship of much of this romantically wild and windswept landscape are equally cursed in that it has little productive value in relation to agricultural enterprise and is often too far from infrastructure to make rotational forestry a viable alternative; but it is the preferred habitat of red grouse. Red grouse are an important part of our natural environment, and they are viewed by the public as one of our most iconic species, thus having significant cultural value; and when managed sustainably offer employment opportunity and a financial return.

It would seem, however, that red grouse, or rather those managing land for red grouse shooting, are fair game to those who would demonise the annual harvest of surplus birds. In recent times the RSPB, the League Against Cruel Sports and other politically motivated organisations have mobilised campaigns to have the sport further restricted through additional unwarranted licencing, publically smeared by pressure groups – and celebrity figureheads in relation to Raptor persecution – and

subject to the reinstatement of sporting rates taxation.

But it's not all bad news... Scotland's gamekeepers and sporting estate owners have been at the forefront of driving progress in our rural economy through the provision of sustainable country sports. Independent research has qualified that country sports in Scotland supports over 8,800 FTE jobs (PACEC) – many of which are gamekeepers looking after the nation's moorlands. There can be little doubt that the grouse season is one of the major catalysts behind the creation of rural employment opportunities across Scotland.

A greater commitment to the scientific understanding and practical management of the habitat and species has achieved the wider recognition that our moorlands are considered to be of high conservation value for their habitats and associated biodiversity, whilst they are also important stores of soil carbon.

It is clear that we still have much to achieve, but it is widely recognised that the gifts that grouse provide to Scotland are many. The presence of grouse on the nation's moorland is unrivalled internationally and the subsequent benefits that flow to our rural areas are unsurpassed.

DIRECTOR OF THE COUNTRYSIDE ALLIANCE IN WALES, RACHEL EVANS, IS HOPEFUL FOR MOOR MANAGEMENT IN WALES

IT IS WELL documented that grouse moors produce flourishing levels of biodiversity; rich in wildlife where ground nesting birds such as the curlew and lapwing stand better chances of successfully raising their chicks. They are also funded mainly through private investment

making them very attractive to tax payers. Yet over the past 100 years with the considerable loss of heather – habitat for the grouse – through forest planting and bracken encroachment many uplands have been abandoned and feel more eerie than inviting.

Welsh Government introduced the Nature Fund in 2013 as a response to the State of Nature report, which in that year – written by 25 different conservationists – warned that the demise of many upland iconic birds, all of which thrive under the umbrella of grouse management, are in crisis.

The Nature Fund was unique in that it asked farmers and landowners for their views on how to stop the serious decline. And they responded.

Today there are two clusters in mid and north Wales covering a landscape scale area of 50,000 acres where active management is being supported working alongside graziers to determine optimum grazing densities.

“It won't happen overnight and it will take years before a surplus of grouse can be shot,” says David Thomas, Gamekeeper at Llangunllo in Mid Wales. He believes that moorland management is an immediate benefit for the health of the moor and its people who will be able to engage with these uplands now that they are being cleared and made much more accessible.

The Future's Generation Act want more people outside to get fitter, to learn and care by connecting with nature. We completely agree, but must not forget these areas are also where 70% of our drinking water comes from and where the flow of water is determined as well as where carbon is stored in the undergrowth peat. These uplands have a much bigger story to tell. The grouse is just the beginning and work is at last under way. ❤️

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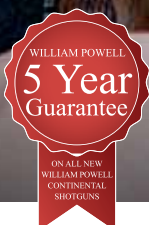
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AND THE OSCAR GOES TO...

Finalists from rural businesses across England and Wales travelled to London's House of Lords in March for the annual Countryside Alliance Awards

THE RURAL OSCARS, as they have become known, are the Countryside Alliance's annual celebration of rural produce, skills, enterprise and heritage through small hard-working businesses. They are now in their 12th year and have become the definitive rural business award to win. In 2016 over 7,500 public nominations were received, which were whittled down and judged across five categories.

The national judging panel is chaired by Countryside Alliance CEO Tim Bonner and also includes Philip Johnston of the Daily Telegraph, Emma Penny of Farmers Guardian, Borough Market founder and farmer, Peter Gott, and also Sally Merison, a former CA board member and long-standing friend of Clarissa Dickson Wright, who was on the judging panel for several years before her death in 2014.

People from across England and Wales, who had already won their regional title, came to Westminster to find out if they had taken the national title.

The Awards were handed out by Environment Secretary Andrea Leadsom MP, who told the assembled rural businessmen and women: "Rural businesses are not just the beating heart of our countryside – they are also a vital part of the UK's economy, generating almost £230 billion every year. I'm really pleased the Countryside Alliance is honouring some of these hard working businesses and ensuring they get the recognition they deserve. Today's winners and nominees represent the very best of rural Britain and I'm delighted to celebrate the crucial role our post offices, farm shops and food start-ups play in connecting communities across the country." 🍷

Look out for in-depth stories on the category winners in future issues of *My Countryside*



THE 2016 BRITISH CHAMPIONS

LOCAL FOOD/DRINK

BRITISH CHAMPION
**Lawns Farm Shop
and Morthen Milk**

nr Rotherham, South Yorkshire
shop.lawnsfarm.com

The judges said: "One fan put it well, saying, 'Farm shops do not get better than this!'"

HIGHLY COMMENDED
**Foxholes Farm Shop, Butchery
and Tea Room, Hertford**
foxholesfarm.com

VILLAGE SHOP/ POST OFFICE

(sponsored by the Daily Telegraph)

BRITISH CHAMPION
Ponsanooth Village Stores
Cornwall.

ponsanoothvillagestores.co.uk

The judges said: "For many village residents in this remote community, this store and Post Office is a lifeline."

HIGHLY COMMENDED
Napton Village Shop
Warwickshire,
naptonvillagestores.co.uk

TOURISM ENTERPRISE

BRITISH CHAMPION
Bluebell Dairy

Derby bluebelldairy.co.uk

The judges said: "This family have embraced tourism to great effect to keep their dairy farm alive."

HIGHLY COMMENDED
Beverley Food Festival

FARM ENTERPRISE

BRITISH CHAMPION
Hayley Hanson Hide
Brecon

hayleyhansonhide.co.uk

The judges said: "Our Champion is an energetic one-woman enterprise."

HIGHLY COMMENDED
Brinkworth Dairy
Chippenham, Wiltshire,
brinkworthdairy.co.uk

BUTCHER

BRITISH CHAMPION
Pete the Meat

Evesham Road, Astwood Bank,
Redditch, Worcestershire
petethemeat.co.uk

The judges said: "Pete is a force of nature who has been a butcher for 40 years."

HIGHLY COMMENDED
Lavenham Butchers
Lavenham, Suffolk
lavenhambutchers.com

CLARISSA DICKSON WRIGHT AWARD

Bridlesford Lodge Farm
Ryde, Isle of Wight

The judges presented this award "for its work to keep its Guernsey Herd going, to promote food and farming, to educate the next generation and to ensure farming's future."

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A SENSE OF PURPOSE: 20 YEARS OF THE Countryside Alliance



As the Countryside Alliance approaches a milestone anniversary in July, Camilla Swift looks at the foundation and future for the organisation through the eyes of three supporters

TWENTY YEARS AGO this summer, an event took place that marked the official start of the Countryside Alliance (CA) – the Countryside Rally in Hyde Park. The scale of the protest wasn't on a par with the marches that were to come, such as the 2002 Liberty and Livelihood March which, at the time, was one of the biggest protests London had ever seen. But 10 July 1997 was the first time that the rural community united to stand up for their way of life and to make their voices heard.

Formed from an amalgamation of the British Field Sports Association, the Countryside Business Group and the Countryside Movement, the impetus behind the CA's set-up was Tony Blair's New Labour landslide victory in the 1997 General Election. The manifesto included a promise of "a free vote in Parliament on whether hunting with hounds should be banned". But the CA was, and is, far from a single-issue group. The people who came to that Rally, and to subsequent marches, weren't there just because they

wanted to stop a ban on foxhunting from being passed. They were there because they were concerned that their way of life was being threatened, and that their 'Liberty and Livelihood', as the later march put it, were at risk.

AN END TO ISOLATION

Eventer Alice Dunsdon, now Senior Master of the Surrey Union Hunt, remembers coming up to London as a youngster to take part in that first rally, and describes it as a life-changing

“THE STRIKING THING ABOUT THE LAST TWENTY YEARS IS HOW FAR THE RURAL MOVEMENT HAS COME”

experience. “The energy was spine tingling,” she says. “It was so brilliant because for the first time in history the entire countryside was united. Hunting, fishing, shooting, coursing, you name it, we were there, baring our souls.”

Tim Bonner, CEO of the CA, had a similar experience. “I remember coming up on the bus from Devon with the staghounds. What was this thing called the Countryside Alliance? No one really knew. But coming from a little village in Devon, you saw yourself in isolation. You walked into Hyde Park, where there was this vast crowd, and you realised there was something far bigger than this little village or pack of hounds. That was the momentum behind it all.”

Less than a year later, in March 1998, the CA organised the first of its protest marches through London, which saw around a quarter of a million people demonstrating for



Westminster to pay more attention to rural affairs. Charlotte Heath-Bullock, managing director of a public relations firm, remembers travelling down to London on a coach from Durham, where she was studying. “Yes, the march did ultimately come about as a result of the threat to hunting, but it was more than that. It was about the threat to, and erosion of, rural communities... but hunting seemed the final straw. The grossly simplistic claim that it was cruel to chase a fox with a pack of hounds missed the point. Hunting was a way of life that the country just wasn’t prepared to sacrifice because of all that went with it.”

“One other random memory sticks in my mind”, she adds. A media report that claimed it took just 30 minutes to clear up any litter dropped that day. 300,000 people and no mess. “That made me feel really proud. All those people who truly cared for their environment.”

The breadth of what the CA stands for and does is something that the organisation is keen to highlight; it is far from being ‘just’ about hunting and fieldsports. The “battle we fought with the RSPCA”, as Tim Bonner describes it, is the perfect illustration of what the CA is for. The charity had been developing a far more political agenda – bringing private prosecutions against hunts, most famously the Heythrop. The CA “stood up to” the charity’s then-chief Gavin Grant, believes Bonner, and “put the RSPCA back on the road to sanity”. Then there are the numerous other campaigns; Fishing for Schools, Game to Eat and many others.

NEW LOOK, SAME PRINCIPLES

Two decades after the CA was founded, it was decided that it was time for a re-brand which encapsulates everything the group does – not just hunting. The multi-talented Steve Edge: branding guru, keen outdoors man and talented fisherman, helped to come up with a new brand identity for the organisation. Edge might have grown up in the East End of London, but far from this being a set-back to enjoying rural pastimes, it

was quite the opposite. “I grew up fishing in the Grand Union Canal at the back of King’s Cross, catching Perch, Bleak, and Gudgeon, going out for a day’s rough shooting pigeon. And actually, getting a great understanding, and enjoying it just as much as I do now.” Having been lucky enough to learn to love the outdoors while living in the city, Edge is keen that as many people as possible have the opportunities that he had, and believes this is something that the CA can help to achieve. “We want to educate as many people as we can, preferably in inner cities – people who don’t get the opportunity to enjoy nature – and get them to go and find something that they can be passionate about. For me, fishing has always done that. I’ve found my passion. When I go fishing, I forget all my worries, regardless of whether I’m fishing in a fantastic fishing location, or in some little pond.”

We might have a Conservative Government and a Prime Minister who has said she will offer a free vote on hunting. But that doesn’t mean that the issues that were at the forefront of peoples’ minds back in 1997 have gone away. “We really need to keep the countryside alive, not just for this generation and the next, but for all the generations to come”, says Edge. “Obviously it’s going to get tougher. The world has become a more difficult place in which to live, but because of that we really need to work with our countryside, our country sports, our local farmers and producers to help them keep it alive.”

So what about the next 20 years? What might they hold for the CA? “We are now looking, potentially, at an opportunity to repeal the ban on hunting in the next few years. It’s difficult to explain how rare a campaign like that is,” says Tim Bonner. “I would say it’s unique. Lots of people make noise when legislation is going through, and then people move on. We’ve not moved on, and we won’t. No one is going away.”



Steve Edge



STILL CAMPAIGNING ON RURAL ISSUES

Baroness Ann Mallalieu, who for many became the face of the Countryside Alliance when it first started, shares her thoughts 20 years on

“Hunting is often described as a sport. But to those of us who have heard the music of the hounds and have loved it, it is far more than that. Hunting is our music, it is our poetry, it is our art, it is our pleasure. It is where many of our best friendships are made, it is our community. It is our whole way of life. And we will fight for these things with all the strength and dedication we possess because we love them.”

I thought it appropriate to start this article with that quote from my speech to the Hyde Park rally on 10th July 1997 because it is as true now as it ever was, and in celebrating 20 years of the Countryside Alliance we should all remember how the organisation began and why. The striking thing about the passing of the last 20 years – aside from how quickly it has flashed past – is how far the rural movement has come but also how much remains the same. Certainly those feelings about hunting, deliberately evocative, can still swell the hearts of so many of us as they now do so many of a new generation who were too young to stand with us then but who love hunting, as we do, now.

The Hyde Park Rally and the many demonstrations, marches, vigils and speeches that came after it saw the bedding down of a modern rural movement that remains strong and united. That courage shown in adversity during the Hunting Bill’s passage was never more necessary, and despite the eventual passing of the Hunting Act, its immediate failure and the constant threat of prosecution under which our hardworking hunt staff continue to operate, we remain strong. While our campaign for the

repeal of the vindictive Hunting Act remains at our core, the Countryside Alliance has always made it clear that hunting is a symbolic rural issue, and our movement is about much more than that. In 1997 I told Hyde Park: “We cannot and will not stand by in silence and watch our countryside, our communities and our way of life destroyed forever by misguided urban political correctness. This rally is not just about hunting. Many people, perhaps most of those here today, don’t hunt. It is about freedom, the freedom of people to choose how they live their own lives.”

That is still the case, and the Countryside Alliance’s remit has grown and evolved to represent the things that are important to our membership base. While our sports will always be the organisation’s backbone we have also campaigned strongly on broadband and mobile phone coverage, small businesses through our Rural Oscars and the threats posed by rural crime. There is another dimension to life now that we didn’t have in 1997, and that is the trolling and online abuse that has mushroomed in recent years. As the traditional saboteurs dwindle in support sadly it remains true that keyboard warriors feel they are winning a battle via threats posted from the safety of their home computer. They are not, and the law will have its say over this form of bullying.

We have achieved much in 20 years, and have a very exciting and dynamic political phase ahead of us where much will be possible. Thank you for your support and please continue to support the voice of rural Britain.”

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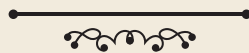
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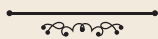
EXTRAORDINARY TREES



*Twenty-five years ago historian Thomas Pakenham began work on **Meetings with Remarkable Trees**, a book devoted to dendrology in Britain and Ireland. Now, he has returned to some of the specimens he documented to retell their stories*



Bicton Monkey
Puzzle



TREES ARE EXTRAORDINARY creatures: the biggest living things in these islands, heavier than any land animal, taller than most buildings, older than many ancient monuments. And nowhere are they found in greater profusion than close to where millions live. Yet these are the wonders we take for granted, and only notice when disaster strikes, like the elm plague which destroyed most of the elm trees in Britain.

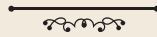
Today a host of alarming new diseases, introduced from the East, are affecting many of our common trees. When I recently revisited many of the 60 trees from my book to see how they were coping, it turned out that about half a dozen had died – skittled over by hurricanes, succumbing to disease or simply dying of old age. But the majority had survived, even if battered by storms.

Divided, somewhat whimsically, into five categories – Natives, Travellers, Shrines, Fantasies and Survivors – here are six surviving examples chosen from the original 60.

Oaks dominated the first group, the Natives. And the finest of all, thank



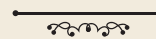
Fredville Oak



heavens, is still hale and hearty. It's the Fredville Oak, known as 'Majesty' ever since the 18th century, and tucked away in the woods of a private estate at Nonington, near Canterbury. Its prodigious girth, 40 feet round, when measured at five feet from the ground, makes it one of the champion oaks of Europe. 'Majesty' has all the masterful qualities traditionally supposed to symbolize the British nation, including super-human strength and fortitude. Yet it is elegant, too: a hollow tower rising 70 or 80 feet above the scrub. How old is this battered monarch? Its age is anybody's guess. You can date a tree with a solid trunk by drilling it with an auger and counting the annual rings. But 'Majesty' is hollow. My guess is that it's about 600 years old and was already notable before another Majesty, Elizabeth I, came to the throne.



Lorton Yew



The Shrines group is dominated by a famous yew-tree at Lorton in the Lake District. This was a tree that Wordsworth serenaded as 'the pride of Lorton's vale.' In his day it was a huge tree, one of the largest he knew. It grew by a purling beck outside the village, facing the mountains. But by the time I first saw it, in 1994, the people of Lorton seemed to have forgotten their famous tree. At any rate a local farmer fed his sheep dangerously close to its roots. Sadly it has now suffered a worse fate. Half the tree has been torn off by a storm. I don't think Wordsworth would have been surprised, but he would have written a moving elegy on the fall of this once noble tree.

By contrast, there have been mercifully few casualties in the Fantasies group. One of my favourites – the avenue of monkey puzzles at Bicton College in Devon – is still as splendidly spiky as ever. This species of *Araucaria* grows on both the Argentinean and the Chilean sides of the Andes. It was discovered in Chile by Archibald Menzies in 1795 and the story goes that Menzies was offered some strange nuts at a banquet given by the Spanish authorities



Kew Ginkgo



in Chile. He secretly pocketed the nuts and planted them in pots on board ship. By the time Menzies reached England two years later, the first monkey puzzles in Europe were ready to be presented to Kew. By the 1840s these spiky freaks had become all the rage in British gardens and I expect the Bicton avenue was planted then.

Another of my Fantasies, the 'Old Lion' ginkgo at Kew Gardens, doesn't look a day older than when I first saw him. (I say 'him' because ginkgos are dioecious, meaning they are either male or female, and the catkins now covering this tree are definitely male.) No one knows for certain when this tree was planted. But according to the great ginkgo-ologist Sir Peter Crane (a former director of Kew) it probably arrived about 1762. This was Britain's first ginkgo, the first of thousands. Was it bought from a London nurseryman who had imported the seed from Japan? Sir Peter believes so. But the



Dawn Redwoods



ginkgo is a Chinese original, extremely rare in the wild, but honoured for two millenia in the gardens of Buddhist temples, and later introduced to the temples of Korea and Japan.

The medieval oaks in Windsor Great Park are part of the Survivors group and they have somehow survived the turbulence of centuries, from the Wars of the Roses to the invasion of the motor car. Their resilience continues to amaze me. But there is one question to which there's still no clear answer. Is one of them the blasted oak, Herne's Oak, the tree on which Herne the hunter (and the official keeper of the Great Park) hanged himself, according to Shakespeare's *Merry Wives of Windsor*? Recently I went back to look at the most likely candidates. In fact there are more than 100 ancient oaks along the A332, the main road that bisects the park. Many of them are dead or dying but I counted 10 blasted oaks which could have been Herne's tree.


More survivors are a pair of Dawn Redwoods that are thriving in Cambridge. And why not? In fact they were only planted in 1948, the first examples of



Herne's Oak



Metasequoia glyptostroboides – a newly discovered genus from China. The Cambridge examples are typical of the first plants to be raised in the West. Their tawny trunks are already as fluted and gnarled as the trunks of trees three times their age. But their foliage is light and feathery, pale-green in spring and fox-pink in autumn.

In fact this 'fossil-tree' has almost every virtue. It grows twice as fast as the American swamp cypress which it superficially resembles. And you can plant it almost anywhere – wet or dry, acid or limy. Even the pavements of London are not too hard on the creature. There's an avenue of them on the A4 just beyond the Hammersmith fly-over. 

Meetings with Remarkable Trees by Thomas Pakenham is available in hardback at amazon.co.uk



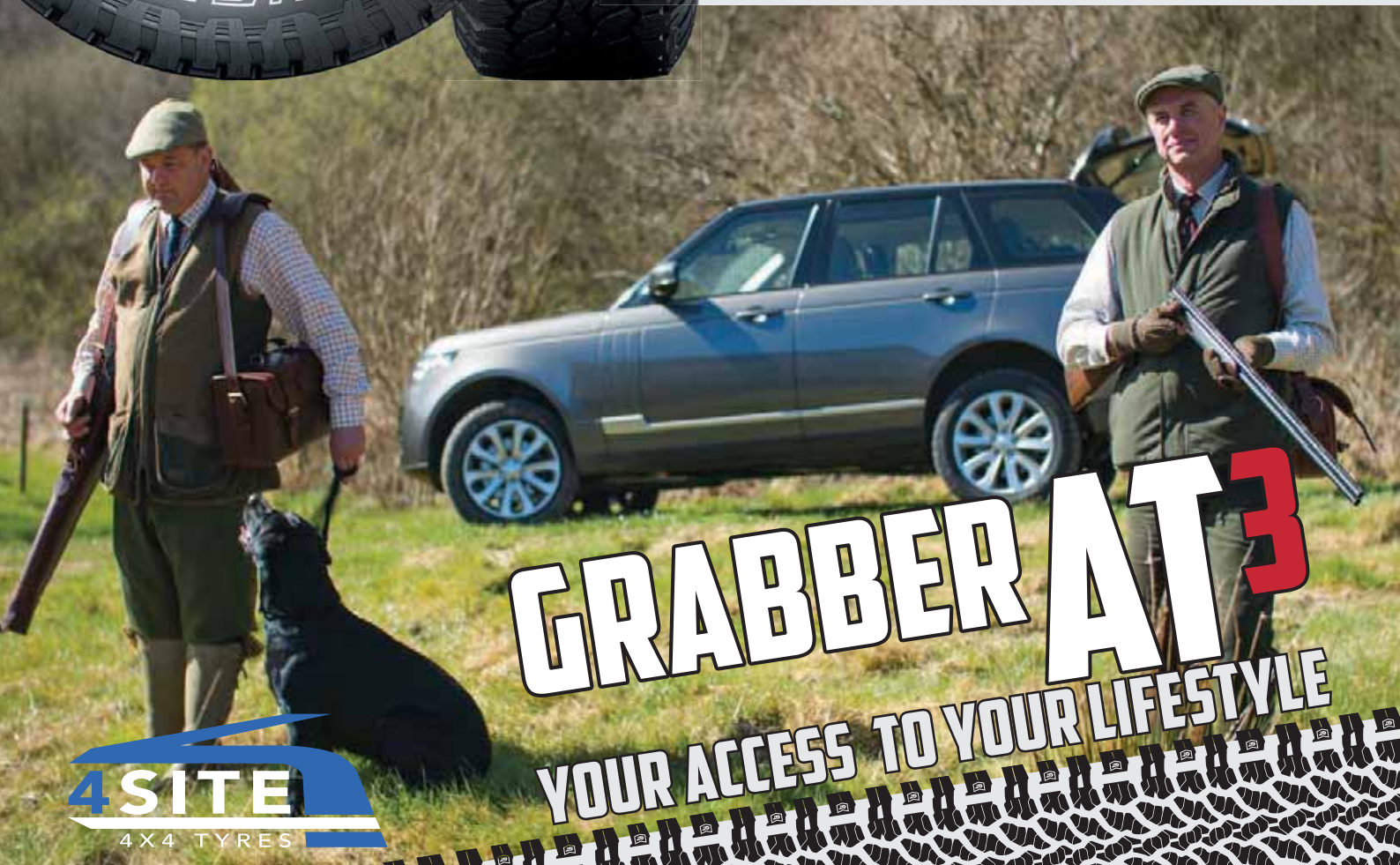
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All at Sea

Gold medal-winning sea angler Henry Randell offers an insight to the growing sport of sea fishing

PHOTOS SIMON FINLAY

T

here are a huge number of fish varieties that can be caught off our beaches, but bass is one of the most popular in the summer months as they head into shallower waters to feed on sprats and sandeels. Henry Randell, 22, has been fishing the North Norfolk waters since he was four years old and now not only fishes in competitions, but also catches crabs and lobsters for local restaurants and markets from his boat. He lives and breathes sea fishing and highlights what makes this type of sport so appealing: "I love being out in the fresh air and you never know what you're going to catch in the sea. I never got in to coarse fishing but I love being outside and on the beach – where else is better to be?"

The type of fish that can be found in the waters around Norfolk varies, but whether you're fishing for your supper or practising catch and release, there's always something of interest. "It depends on the time of year," says Henry. "In the spring you'll catch more dabs and whiting and cod if you're lucky, but in summer there is more mackerel and sea bass. Fishing in spring brings only small sea bass – and at this time of year when the fish are spawning the species is protected by law and must be returned – but in the summer, after the fish have spawned, the larger ones will come in to the coast and fishermen can keep one for the table – although the rest must still be returned."

Henry learned to fish with his grandfather and joined his local sea fishing club, working his way up to competitions until he was picked for the England team in the Home International competitions. Not everyone has the competitive bent, but for Henry, the adrenaline of fishing in competition is a real draw. "I started off fishing in the England team as a youth, at matches all over the country. I carried on from there really, and now I'm in the seniors. We've won three golds on the bounce; one in Ireland, one here in England and one in Scotland. Hopefully it'll be gold in Wales this year."

For those not inclined to competitions, sea fishing provides an excellent mix of relaxing leisure time with the skill of negotiating the coastal conditions and the reward of catching a variety of fish. "The tides and conditions really make sea fishing different from any other type of fishing," says Henry. "The tides affect where the bass is going to be and certain conditions are better for bass – for instance if it's rough you'll catch more bass than when it's calm as all the food is dislodged." Although the equipment required can look complicated, in actual fact, Henry explains, lure fishing provides an easy way in: "All you need is a rod and a reel and some bait and you're away," he says.

Lure fishing is Henry's preference and he



provides some tips to help you choose the right lure for the best result. "Different lures will do different things: surface poppers will skim along the top so the sea bass will snatch them on top of the water; you've got some that deep dive and work to the bottom and fall to different depths – you can change your lure to different conditions. You'd normally have around 20 different lures or plugs to choose from."

Perhaps one of the greatest pleasures of sea fishing is the understanding and adaptation required to make the most of the marine environment. Tides have a huge impact on fish movement and feeding patterns, as well as the angler's positioning on the beach. The weather can be entirely different on the coast compared to inland, and this can impact on your chances of catching a fish, plus gullies, groynes, dips, rocks and seaweed can all help – or hinder – your progress. Honing your knowledge of the coast, the sea and the tides is a bit of an art, but you can get a good insight by joining your local sea angling club to help you get started.

Bass fishing is more popular than ever and with measures in place to protect stock, the bass population is strengthening. The roar of the waves, the challenge of catching fish along the widely varied UK coastline and the sheer variety of fishing on offer, makes sea fishing an increasingly popular sport.



“ALL YOU NEED IS A ROD, REEL AND BAIT AND YOU’RE AWAY”

GETTING STARTED

Whether you're an experienced fly fisherman looking to try something new, or a virgin fisherman, a good place to start is in the coastal tackle shop. Packed with all the equipment you might need, and run by people passionate about their coastal regions and the sea fishing to be found, you are sure to find out everything you need to know.

The equipment does differ from that required for river and lake fishing – after all, it has to cope with rocks, tides and waves. For rods, a good all rounder is a beachcaster, a general purpose sea fishing rod that is usually around 14ft in length and rated to cast around 4-8oz. Other equipment rated for beginners includes a fixed spool reel which is easy to use, good value and simple to maintain, and a tripod which is essential when fishing from beaches as it keeps

the line clear of waves and holds the heavy rod. Hooks, weights, floats and other tackle varies widely, depending on your experience, the fish you are catching, the time of year and preference. Once again your local tackle and bait shop is a good place to begin.

There is a variety of methods used to catch fish from the shore, including bait fishing, lure fishing or spinning and fly fishing. Most common is bait fishing but there has been an increase in recent years in saltwater fly fishing, which can be tricky, but is certainly rewarding. ♥



MAKING A BASIC RIG



This is a Pulley Pennel Rig, designed to be used over ground that requires the lead to be kept off the bottom when retrieving a fish. It is ideal for targeting larger fish with bigger baits

STEP 1 Rig consists of 3ft 50lb main body Line, 15lb snood line, two hooks, two swivels, an imp bait clip and a 5oz grip lead.

STEP 2 To start your rig body attach the imp bait clip to the line using a standard fishing knot. The imp bait clip stops you losing bait when you cast. The hook will release once the weight hits the bottom.

STEP 3 Tie the swivels onto the body. One loose swivel runs up and down the line and another attaches at the end.

STEP 4 Hooklength (snood): This is the length of line that attaches the hook to the rig body. It must be strong enough to cope with the abrasive nature of the seabed. Henry is using 15lb, with two hooks and one sliding.

STEP 5 Rig with 5oz grip lead with the hook attached to the imp clip, ready to cast.



DISCOVER MORE...
 Watch our video with Henry Randell on our YouTube channel
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Highly commended: Jordan Jeffrey falling while out with the Cheshire Drag Hunt



Highly commended: Dave White hedge-surfing during a day with the Kimblewick

HIGHLY
COMMENDED

PHOTO GREG KNIGHT/RURAL SHOTS PHOTOGRAPHY



1st

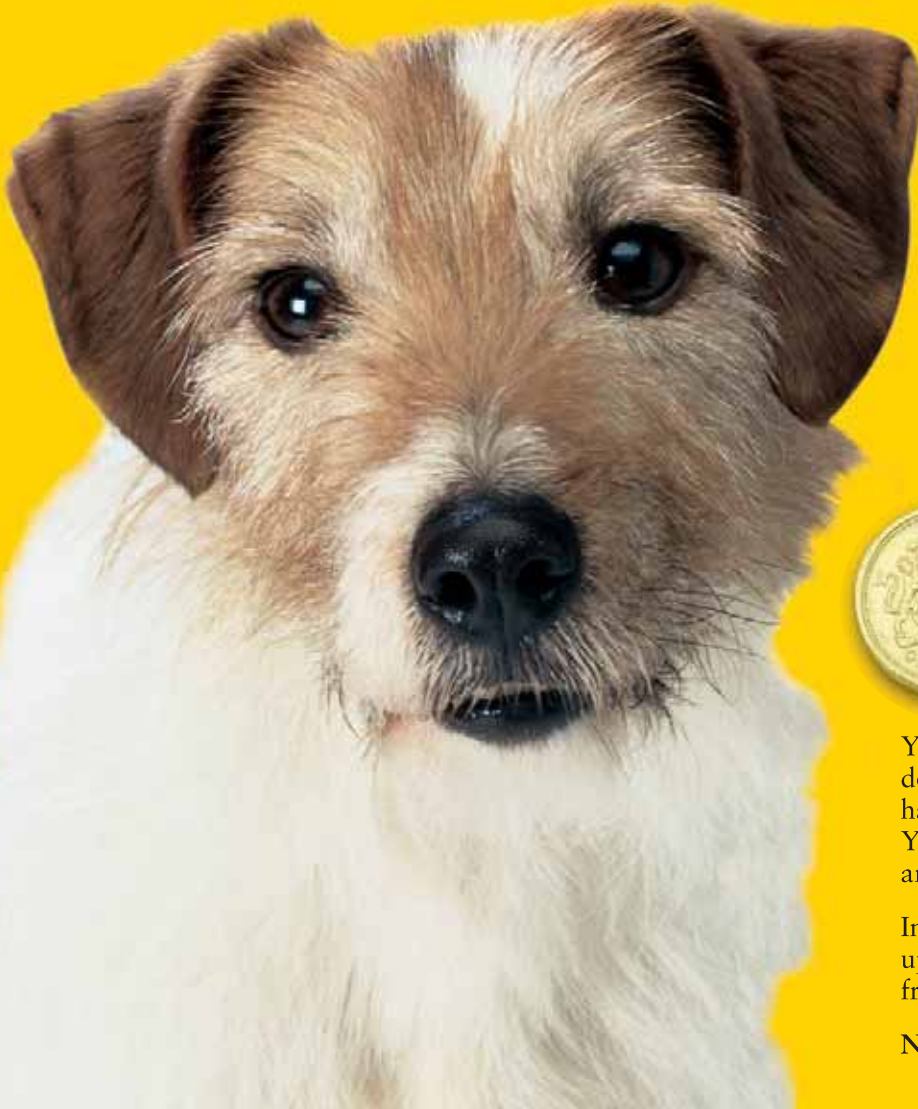
PHOTO AMY FAIR

IT'S THE PRIZE no-one wants, but the winners of the Countryside Alliance annual Hunt Tumblers' Club competition, sponsored by Pol Roger, have been revealed. The most dramatic-looking falls were showcased by photographers from around the country, with Amy Fair's image of Barry Johnson's spectacular dismount being crowned the 2016-17 season winner. Barry, chairman of the South Durham Hunt, who was visiting the Hurworth when the fall occurred, commented: "In a former life I was National Rally champion and broke my back crashing while travelling at 136mph competing in the Jim Clark Rally. So this latest 'off' was an easy one." 🍷

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WALKIES!

Puppy walkers are the mainstay of your hunt during the summer months, but what does the job entail? We spoke to two people in the know...

GARETH BOW, HUNTSMAN of the Brocklesby, explains that the point of puppy walking is to socialise hounds. "Getting them to see the world is why we do it. If they're kept in kennels all the time they're not going to see cats, chickens, or go into the village where they'll meet kids. I say to people, look after it as you would your own, let it have freedom where it can gallop about and see lots of things.

"We send them out from around 10 weeks old, mostly in couples and only to people known to the hunt. They're better off living in a kennel so when they come back its not such a culture shock. I know lots of people who have them in the house in the day or in the kitchen for an hour. I can tell if they've been spoilt, you go to pat them and they roll over to have their belly stroked.

"Ideally, they come back at around eight months old, by which time they should be bold and happy in life and have

seen enough not to be worried by anything. At some point in their life they start bugging off together and then you have the walkers calling you to take them back. At nine weeks old they're cute little hound pups and everyone loves them. It's not until they're six months old when they're taking the beef joint off the kitchen worktop that someone might think 'Jesus why did I do this?'"

THE WALKER

Jackie Howard-Jones has been walking puppies for the Kimblewick Hunt for 14 years.

"The fun we've had with them is enormous," she says. "When the children were younger they would harness them to a go-kart and drive it like a chariot round the yard. They've been dressed up and had sunglasses on, been put in the back of the trailer on the back of the lawn mower. Not one has been bad tempered or been unpleasant

DIARY DATES

Your local hunt's annual puppy show is one of the highlights of the summer and therefore not to be missed. And be sure to visit the Festival of Hunting on July 19 at the East of England Showground, Peterborough, for the greatest gathering of hounds in the country. See countryside-alliance.org for other hound show dates this summer.

in any way."

Jackie stresses that walking doesn't suit everyone. "It's a lot of work. You need to be around most of the day and have time to look after them. You need a stable or building with a run outside. A well fenced field would be good so they can't run off. Training them from very early on with a whistle and treats works well, also putting a collar on them early so that you can grab hold of the when they run past. The huntsman likes you to make sure they know their name and be trained on a lead, which is quite tricky, they don't like it all.

"You've got to be aware that it's not all roses around the door. They can cause havoc in the garden and love digging up plants, but I think it's worth it.

"I get a new set of puppies each year which is wonderful. When you pick them up they nuzzle you which is so lovely, they're so cute. And it's nice to support something that you're passionate about." 🐾

PHOTO RFM EQUINE PHOTOGRAPHY



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Designed to beat the elements and whatever the weather throws at you, the L.I.M Proof Jacket is wind-and waterproof with great breathability. The stripped-back design is sustainable, and constructed from fluorocarbon-free fabric for outstanding performance. It is also packable and lightweight enough to always have at hand. Simply put, this is the perfect sustainable jacket for unreliable weather. £130 haglofs.com



◀ BULLET FLASK

Quirky yet practical, this stainless steel bullet shaped flask from Fur Feather and Fin would make a great gift. The double wall vacuum insulation retains hot or cold temperatures for up to eight hours and the easy to use click and pour stopper means that you won't spill a drop. £15.99 furfeatherandfin.com

WHAT TO BUY NOW

What's new on the market this season

▼ BLACKDOWN SHEPHERD HUTS

These traditional huts with a modern twist are perfect as luxury glamping retreats or family outdoor space. They allow you to use your imagination and create your own cosy living, and include all the extras like kitchens and bathrooms. They are completely individual and can be luxurious or simple. Blackdown will work with customers to achieve their dream hut that will last for generations to come. blackdownshepherdhuts.co.uk



▼ SHOOTING FROM THE HIP

Young shooting brand J Boulton Designs has released a new Countryman's Belt, showcasing style and practicality. The handmade belt is designed specifically for the countryman with 4mm thick leather, a solid brass belt buckle and strong rivets with spent shotgun cartridges. Sold exclusively online only. £65 jboultondesigns.com



GOING THE DISTANCE ▶

Compact and with fully multi coated lenses, the Bushnell Legend M Series 10x42 binoculars have twist-up eyecaps and offer focus of 8m, with a field of view of 113m at 1,000m respectively. The glass is lead free and the binoculars are built on a roof prism system. £491.99 edgarbrothers.com



◀ CHIC FEET

Stride out in Imperial Explorer boots from Fairfax and Favor. Handcrafted in supple Spanish leather and fitted with a water resistant breathable membrane, this knee-high boot features the iconic scalloped boot pull and leather zip tassel. £375 fairfaxandfavor.com



▲ THE CHILGROVE DARK LEATHER GUNSLIP

Hand-finished, the Chilgrove's teal leather piping and teal stitching brings a modern twist to a traditional range. The Gunslip features a full length zip, top leather flap with buckle, block end to protect the muzzle plus leather straps and brass fittings. £189 furfeatherandfin.com



◀ ON THE RECORD

Industry leading optics brand Bushnell has launched a new collection of Trophy Cams. The HD Aggressor range features new dynamic video recording and provides stunning images with a super-fast trigger speed, hyper 0.5s recovery rate, extended night time photo range, and a 1-year battery life. edgarbrothers.com

IN THE BAG

Here's our pick of the best bags



◀ OVER THE SHOULDER

Perfect for fly fishing, the Sling Pack form allows the angler to wear it over one shoulder, while providing quick and easy access to gear. £79 orvis.co.uk



▲ IN THE BAG

Chapman fishing bags are traditionally made and the Kirkbeck 16 fishing bag is a classic. Materials used include waterproof bonded cotton canvas, military grade cotton webbing and brass hardware. RRP £175 chapmanbags.com



▲ TIME TESTED

The Brady Trout Fishing Bag is made from triple layered waterproof canvas with bridle-leather trim and brass fittings. This design has hardly changed since it was launched in 1928 and we still love it. £159 arundellarmsshop.co.uk 01566 784666

▼ LUXURY IN LEATHER

This leather holdall bag is part of the new luggage collection from Purdey. It is the ideal carry on size for the savvy traveller's weekend in the country or a short business trip abroad. purdey.com



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GUN TEST

Deer stalker Sam Thompson finds the Beretta 486 the perfect modern game gun

“THE SHOOTING IS REALLY A SECONDARY OBJECTIVE ON OUR RABBIT OUTINGS, BUT A VERY NECESSARY ONE”

I’VE NEVER SHOT an Italian side-by-side before, a friend of mine has one, which is possibly the longest gun I’ve ever held, and it never really inspired me to borrow it. The Beretta arrived from GMK in early April, which isn’t the ideal time to test a shotgun for me, as I’m very busy with deer. At this time of year the only shooting I do with a shotgun is rabbits over spaniels for dog training, so

I gathered my friends Chloe, Dan and their dogs, and headed out on a sunny Deeside afternoon to see what could be found.

The shooting is really a secondary objective on our rabbit outings, but a very necessary one. The focus of the day is to improve the dogs’ hunting ability in cover, and then use the retrieve for training a labrador. Because of the (hopeful) abundance of rabbits, this sort of hunting will steady a dog, as well as bringing out a hunting style well suited to beating or walked-up shooting. Handily, it’s also quite a good test for a 20 bore side-by-side, with shooting being fast and a heavier gun something of a hindrance.

With a decent wind we set off with a little red cocker bitch working a patch of rushes out towards the heather skyline, and Chloe elected to walk the right-hand edge of the cover, hefting the Beretta in case any rabbits broke out to the right. It wasn’t long before a particularly deep rushy hole swallowed the dog, and seconds later two shots yielded two rabbits. Winnie, a labrador nearly pure white and fast enough to be confused with a whippet soon had both of them in the game bag.

Swapping spaniels, Dan elected to run a black cocker and I took the gun, working the next patch of rushes into the wind. Nothing trains your peripheral vision like shooting over dogs, and the silence of a bolting rabbit makes it a difficult shot. The key here is to watch the dog, try and understand its movements and from that you might get not only a split second longer to make a shot, but also a better guess of the direction you’re going to shoot in.

The Beretta handles well, and for want of a more technical term is a very ‘point-able’ gun; it comes up quickly and the three of us that shot it all agreed it came to a natural point of aim very well. In 20-bore the recoil was a delight, and I don’t doubt that a big driven day would be handled with ease. I have always shot game with a side-by-side, and the 486 seems to combine the modern technology usually confined to its over-and-under cousins in a package that wouldn’t offend one’s grandfather – the perfect modern game gun. 🍷

Sam Thompson is a contract deer stalker working across Scotland from his base near Inverness. Outside the stalking season he assists estates with environmental management, and enjoys salmon fishing. ardaledeer.com

Buy the Beretta 486 Parallelo from beretta.com

The gamekeeper's diary

Moorland raiders are threatening the very existence of the curlew, says Patrick Laurie

CURLEWS HAVE ATTRACTED lots of attention over the past 18 months as national surveys reveal the extent to which they have declined. It has been interesting to follow this publicity because it has brought together people from all walks of life to unite beneath a common banner. Everybody loves the curlew's call, and the possibility of losing it altogether is a terrible prospect. My ground in the Galloway hills has been playing host to a dwindling number of curlews for the past 10 years, and I can say with some certainty that only a single youngster has been fledged during that time. This story is borne out in observations by friends and neighbours, and it's no surprise that curlew numbers are collapsing when they simply cannot produce replacement youngsters.

As soon as the gorgeous speckled eggs are laid on the moss, the nests are raided by crows or foxes. The few clutches that do hatch out rarely last long. Unlike many waders, curlew chicks have almost no instinct for self preservation in their first five days of life – they're happy to stand out in the open and squeak noisily for extended periods, and they totally ignore all warnings from their parents. It only takes a determined assault from crows or ravens to wipe out an entire brood in a matter of minutes, and, despite my best efforts, this is the

depressing status quo on marginal, fragmented moorland like mine. Frustratingly, a switch seems to flick in the young curlews' heads after five days and they become extremely cautious and thoughtful, but few of the youngsters on my ground ever reach this stage.

Visiting a keeper friend near Aberfeldy at the start of April, I was staggered by the quantity of wildlife on show. This was a showcase for gamekeeping done properly across a large area. There were three or four pairs of lapwings in every field, and the air was filled with the calls of breeding waders. Snow wreaths still hung on the highest corries, but important business was being transacted down in the bottom of the glen. Redshank and snipe stood proudly up on every fencepost, and I drove for the final two-mile approach to my friend's house with my mouth hanging open in amazement.

After several cups of coffee, I emerged from the keeper's house

beneath waves of wobbling music from the local black grouse. Blackcock had gathered in the field above the garden, and 15 little shapes bustled together in the evening sunlight. Up on the hill behind them, little gatherings of four, five and six blackcock stretched off into the distance. My keeper friend believes that the medicated grit they use for the red grouse is having a really beneficial effect on the black grouse too, and the greyhens are now often found with nine or 10 young compared to their traditional five or six.

In many ways it is so unfair that grouse moor management is criticised for creating monocultures. In a single day in Perthshire, I had seen more wildlife than I could usually find in a fortnight in Galloway. For me, the real thrill was that all this life and activity was incidental. Grouse provide the financial driver, but all the other birds and beasts prosper as a by-product in a countryside which works for agriculture, sport and local families. How much healthier this is than the 'nature reserve' mentality which wraps animals in cotton wool and treats human beings as visitors. ♡

Patrick Laurie farms pedigree Galloway cattle near Castle Douglas and is involved in the management of several upland shoots with a focus on wild game. His book *The Black Grouse* was published in 2012.



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Welcome to Scotland

Each issue we will take a look at a region within the UK, exploring its landscape, sport and some of the best properties for sale

We kick off with Scotland, a land of sweeping mountains, expansive moorland and beautiful rivers. A country with a total land mass of approximately 7.8 million hectares,

over 98% of which is classified as rural, Scotland is a hotbed for rural sports and offers superb value for money on land and property.

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FÀILTE GU ALBA...

Jamie Stewart, Director of the Scottish Countryside Alliance, puts an outstanding sporting destination under the spotlight



WELCOME TO SCOTLAND! This is the phrase most prized from those seeking a sporting destination offering visitors outstanding experiences amongst some of the world's most stunning and dramatic landscapes.

SPORTING HIGHLIGHTS

Truly a country of endless variety, Scotland remains the spiritual home to the 'Monarch of the Glen', 'King of Fish' and the 'Heather Hen', and each year hunters return from all over the world to shoot red deer, red grouse and fly fish for salmon in our wonderful salmon rivers – even to attempt the elusive 'McNab' challenge and bag a salmon, stag and brace of grouse in one day between dawn and dusk.

The Lowlands offer hills and seascapes, impressive stately homes, as well as the world famous mighty river Tweed (tweedbeats.com). Whilst the Highlands and islands of the west offer first class accommodation in Borve Lodge (borvelodge.com) and Amhuinnsuidhe Castle (amhuinnsuidhe.com), nestled in some of the last great wildernesses of Europe – endless stretches of mountains, glens and moorlands probed by the long



fingers of sea lochs. With such diversity, no wonder it is widely recognised as the birthplace of many of the world's premier country sports.

LOOKING TO THE FUTURE

I would love to tell you that the relationship between the landscape, quarry and the hunter was an organic one, prospering on word of mouth alone; but that wouldn't be the truth. Scotland's

country sports, like any other business, require marketing, promotion and quality assurance, and for over a decade this has been driven through the Scottish Country Sports and Tourism Group (SCStG).

Established in 2004 with investment from a core group of organisations including the Scottish Countryside Alliance Education Trust, the SCStG focuses on developing the country sports tourism sector, which today is worth in the region of £155m per year, and expected to increase to £185 million by 2020.

Based on key market analysis, the strengths of Scotland's country sports sector the overall vision for the industry is that by 2020 Scotland will be a country sports tourism destination of first choice. However, as exciting as the future of country sports looks, I must temper that expectation with the incomprehensible policies introduced by the current Scottish Government! But that's another story...🇬🇧

Further information on salmon fishing and sporting opportunities can be viewed here:
embracescotland.co.uk
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DUCHAL ESTATE, KILMACOLM, RENFREWSHIRE

This historic residential and agricultural estate has a beautiful 18th century house at its heart. Situated just 20 miles west of Glasgow and offering a glorious estate extending to 450 acres, Duchal has plenty of sporting opportunities, not least the 1.7 miles of River Gryfe and Green Water which flow through the estate grounds offering trout fishing. There is also an autumn run of salmon and the river frontage together with three ponds, providing an opportunity for duck flying. The mature woodland together with outlying plantations provide the

chance to create a small scale pheasant shoot and Duchal also has a good habitat for roe deer stalking and rough shooting for pheasant, woodcock, pigeon and snipe.

The elegant 18th century Georgian house at the heart of the estate was built in 1768 and is a beautiful family home, offering style and charm throughout and overlooking the land and beautifully landscaped gardens and sweeping lawns. ❤️

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Situated in just over an acre of mature gardens and overlooking the 1st and 18th fairways of Ranfurly Castle Golf Club, this distinctive, category 'C' listed, arts and crafts style house was designed by Charles Voysey and is on the open market for only the second time. The house has been carefully and sensitively preserved throughout and offers spacious family accommodation in a beautiful location. ❤️

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FLIGHT OF FANCY

Making a flightpond to entice ducks isn't complicated or expensive if you have the right spot. Kate Gatacre reports on an inspirational success story

TWENTY METRES FROM a chalkstream, near Salisbury, in Wiltshire, is not necessarily a spot you'd think was ideal for creating a flightpond, but, says Richard Hardy, "Mallards were regular visitors to the stream, flying up and down it and dropping into it during the winter, so I thought it was definitely worth trying." The site is a chalk water meadow, in effect, and Richard was confident that if he could provide shelter for ducks, they would come.

The pond itself isn't huge: 18m by nine metres, so while there isn't space for an island, Richard has created the equivalent, by putting in bales of barley straw: "They serve a dual purpose, as not only do they provide the ducks with a safe haven at night, they also help to prevent algae forming on the surface of the pond," he explains. Richard got a friend with a digger to create the pond, digging down 2m at the deepest point. "You don't need to go deeper if there is plenty of groundwater, and we find there is around 50cm of water all year round, which is perfect as it allows the ducks to feed. We dug the pond with a sloping base to ensure that there is always water in one part of it. We're lucky here: thanks to the groundwater, and the pond being on a slope, the water remains fresh."

While Richard would have preferred to dig the pond in February or March, to avoid disturbance during the breeding season, the digger couldn't come until June – however, it doesn't seem to have deterred the ducks and one brood was successfully hatched that same year.

With plenty of willow on the banks of the stream, which Richard grows commercially, he was able to take cuttings

“MALLARDS WERE REGULAR VISITORS TO THE STREAM”

and grow willow around the pond, too. "It grows incredibly fast and easily – you just stick cut willow in the ground and it'll root. We'll coppice the willow in the long run, which will offer plenty of low cover for the duck. We grow a Salix hybrid and it puts on around 4m of growth a year here." Planting is best done in February and March. Within three days of the pond being made there were ducks on it, so Richard's confidence was rewarded.

Keen to have a breeding population,

Richard also put out nesting tubes, although he says: "They didn't use them last year – they nested on the barley bales. Perhaps they will this year. We also wanted to avoid disturbing them as much as possible, so I put an autofeeder on one of the bales, which only needs refilling every 10 days, and comes on once a day for two seconds. I use a corn mix to fill it."

The surrounding field is a hay meadow, which is improved grassland, but Richard is hoping to change that. "We've planted small copses in the field, and are grazing it with sheep. Our system is like mob grazing, as we use electric fencing and we move the sheep over seven days or so. It is working, and the herb content is improving, which is exciting."

The ducks are completely wild, so in the winter, Richard puts out a few decoys to tempt them in, but has found that teal also make use of the pond during the colder months. "I find that shooting little and often works the best, rather than doing a long evening. Last year, which was the same year we made the pond, we had a few ducks from it. My method is to be there early, shoot one brace and then leave early, too. It gives the ducks time to come in after you've gone." 🍀





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EAT THE SEASONS

Beans and peas are at their peak in summer, says Kate Gatacre, and foraging is at a high



1 Samphire

There's something about the salty crunch of samphire that is very satisfying, and June is when it is at its peak. Samphire makes a pleasing combination with fish, but also with game. Preparing samphire is easy: you can steam or boil it for a few minutes, then dress with olive oil or melted butter. Smoked paprika makes a good addition, or a bit of lemon zest and chilli.

Top tip: Use samphire within a few days of picking or immediately if you've bought it, as it doesn't keep well.

2 Wild garlic

The wild garlic season starts in March, and by June the leaves are mostly rather rank. However, if you're still after that fresh wild garlic kick, use the seed heads, which can be whizzed up with some olive oil, nuts (almonds, walnuts or pine nuts all work) and parmesan to make a very punchy pesto.

Top tip: Use a fork to strip the seed pods from the stalks, much like you would with redcurrants.



3 Broad beans

You either love them or hate them, but the haters can usually be converted if they are served the finest broad beans rather than those that are larger than a thumb nail (a delicate female thumb nail, that is!). While you are podding beans, eat the very smallest raw, with a slice of salami and a glass of white wine.

Top tip: If the beans are too big, boil them in salted water for a few minutes, then pop them out of the rather dull grey-green skins to reveal the bright green and more palatable inner.

4 Peas

A true crowd pleaser – who doesn't love them? It may seem rather a lot of work to grow your own when the frozen ones are so good, but it is well worth it. An old-fashioned and rather ignored dish is to braise them with lettuce, which is exceptional with either pigeon or rabbit.

Top tip: If you are buying frozen, don't boil them in water – allow them to defrost and just warm them in a bit of butter. They retain far more flavour.



5 Artichokes

A completely different creature if grown in your own garden, as both flavour and texture change after picking. Like crustaceans, these require a bit of work at the table, but are very conducive to slow eating and much conversation. They require a fairly long cooking time (30 to 40 minutes, depending on size) and can be served with good olive oil, sea salt and pepper, or you can make a mayonnaise loaded with fresh tarragon, chives, dill and parsley.

Top tip: Make sure those uninitiated to the delights of artichokes take out the choke and eat the heart. ♥



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FUR & FEATHER

PHOTOS GLENN DEARING

Crack out the barbecue and join West Country game chef Tom Godber-Ford Moore as he makes the most of summer's wild produce with a deliciously fruity pigeon salad and bright bunny burgers with a twist

BASED ON A shoot located in the middle of Exmoor, Tom Godber-Ford Moore has always been passionate about working with game. After growing up in North Wales, where he spent his youth hunting and shooting, he attended the famous Leith's cookery school. He then travelled all over the continent, cooking and tasting his way around the Mediterranean and working for private clients. His food, which is modern and fresh, shows an eclectic approach to ingredients and flavours without being fussy.

Tom lives and works on Edgcott Farm, one of Exmoor's most well-known shoots, where he not only cooks for the Guns, but also prepares his fantastic rilletes and salamis. The game from the shoots is put to good use in these wares, for the Guns' lunches, as well as to provide Tom with the ingredients for his food at various game fairs around the country. His stall has become increasingly popular, and now there are long queues for his southern fried pheasant wraps at every event he attends.



BUNNY BURGER WITH CARROT SLAW AND TARRAGON MAYO

Serves 4

For the burgers

- The meat from 2 rabbits, finely chopped or coarsely minced in a food processor
- 400g plain sausage meat
- 1 small onion, finely chopped
- 1 tbsp fennel seeds, toasted
- 2 cloves garlic, minced
- Zest of 2 lemons
- 1 handful each of fresh flat leaf parsley, dill and tarragon, roughly chopped
- 40g freshly grated parmesan cheese
- Good pinch of salt and pepper
- Rocket, to serve
- 4 brioche burger buns, to serve

Carrot slaw

- 2 carrots, finely grated
- 1tsp black onion seeds (optional)
- 1 handful each of roughly chopped fresh dill and parsley
- 1 tbsp wholegrain mustard
- 2 tbsp runny honey
- Good pinch of salt and pepper

Lemon and tarragon mayonnaise

- 250ml good quality mayonnaise
- 1/2 clove garlic, minced
- Zest of 1 lemon and juice of half of it
- 1 handful of fresh tarragon finely chopped
- Small pinch of salt
- Good pinch of black pepper

Method:

- 1 Thoroughly mix all the burger ingredients together.
- 2 Form into four large patties.
- 3 Cook/BBQ on a medium heat for about 5 minutes each side until cooked through.
- 4 Mix all the ingredients for the slaw together.
- 5 Mix all the ingredients for the mayonnaise together.
- 6 Serve burger in a decent brioche bun with some rocket, a good dollop of the carrot slaw and tarragon mayo.



PIGEON AND PEACH SALAD WITH PISTACHIO PESTO

Serves 4

For the pigeon

- 8 pigeon breasts
- 1 tbsp ras el hanout
- Pinch of salt and pepper
- 2 tbsp olive oil

Peach salad

- 4 semi-ripe peaches
- 1 large handful of fresh parsley, roughly chopped
- 1 sprig of fresh thyme
- 1 tbsp runny honey
- 1 tbsp wholegrain mustard
- Good pinch of sea salt
- 1 handful of freshly picked wood sorrel
- Extra virgin olive oil

Pistachio pesto

- 100g shelled pistachios
- 1 tbsp pistachio puree (optional)
- 1 large handful of fresh basil
- 1 clove garlic
- Juice of half a lemon
- 20g finely grated parmesan
- 200ml extra virgin olive oil
- 1tsp caster sugar
- Good pinch of sea salt
- Pinch of black pepper

Method:

- 1 Place the pigeon in a bowl and season with the salt and pepper, add the ras el hanout and the olive oil. Rub this mixture well over all the meat.
- 2 Toast the pistachios in a dry pan on a low/medium heat until golden brown, for about five minutes.
- 3 In a pestle and mortar, pound the garlic with the salt and sugar.
- 4 Add the pistachios and basil and pound together well.
- 5 Scrape into a bowl and add the parmesan cheese, olive oil and lemon juice. Set aside.
- 6 Core and thinly slice the peaches. Add the parsley, honey, mustard and a good pinch of salt and pepper.
- 7 Pick the thyme leaves and add to the mix, along with a good glug of olive oil and 1 tbsp of the pistachio pesto. Mix all together well and set aside.
- 8 Fry/BBQ the pigeon on a medium heat for 2-2½ minutes each side, depending on size, then set aside to rest in a warm place for 4 minutes. The meat should be medium rare.
- 9 To serve, scatter a good handful of the salad onto each plate.
- 10 Slice the pigeon breasts lengthways into three, and lay atop the salad.
- 11 Spoon over a tablespoon of the pesto, and garnish with the wood sorrel, if using. 🍷



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SUNSHINE WINES

Katie Rolph, Wine Club Manager at Berry Bros. & Rudd, Britain's oldest wine and spirits merchant, considers the bottles that will complement this issue's summer menu

I HAVE A colleague who has an intense dislike of al fresco dining. Even on a pleasantly warm summer's day, with little to annoy him aside from the occasional wasp, he will stubbornly avoid the canteen garden where the rest of us are relishing the chance to soak up some lunchtime sun. I hold the opposite view: for me, come the summer, the outdoors beckons for long, lazy lunches and dinners enjoyed outside; the type that extend long into the night, fuelled by plentiful wine, good conversation among friends and, inevitably, by the waft of deliciously charred, roasted red meats.

So, at this time of year, my thoughts turn to what I can enjoy to eat and drink across the different occasions the season presents: picnics with the family; dinner parties held in the garden when the weather is set fair; and the slew of outdoor concerts, open air theatre, regattas and sporting events that fill up our social calendar across the summer months.

Champagne (or decent sparkling wine) always brings a sense of occasion to an outdoor event and kicks the party off splendidly. Fizz is also a fitting accompaniment to most of the hors d'oeuvres served at the smarter events, so it can genuinely be the best overall match (an assertion I never disagree with, being a Champagne fan).

Warmer days invariably invite lighter dishes and this often means a salad of some description. The key to successful food and wine pairing is to consider all the components of the dish and

identify the dominant flavours before you select a match that will neither overwhelm the dish, or be overwhelmed by it. It's about balance. Take the Pigeon and peach salad with pistachio pesto recipe on the previous pages; Beaujolais will generally be a good choice, as the combination of gentle tannins, bright acidity and soft summer fruits will complement the delicately gamey flavour of the pigeon, allowing both to shine. Try **Julien Sunier's 2014 Fleurie (£19.95)**.

Barbecuing, in its various incarnations, is still hugely popular in the summer months, and as a nation we are becoming more confident and adventurous outdoor cooks. Juicy steaks and herb-scented racks of lamb, with their chewy textures, can handle powerful red wines well because the tannins in the wine soften under the onslaught of the rich, fatty protein. Look to Australian Shiraz, South African Cabernet or the more robust French reds from Bordeaux or the Languedoc to accompany these meats.

Rabbit is not a strongly flavoured meat but the bunny burger recipe on page 62 contains fennel seeds as well as various herbs which will all add depth of flavour. Try matching with Pinot Noir from New Zealand or California, which will often display riper, fuller fruit than a French equivalent. Our own-label **Pinot Noir 2014 (£17.50)** is made by Greystone and with bright red cherry and a mineral edge it would be an excellent choice. ♥

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- 17** **Royal Three Counties Hound Show**, Malvern
- 25** **Blaston Hound Show** Slawston
- 29** **Wales and Border Counties Hound Show**, Builth Wells, Wales

JULY

- 2** **Stradbally Hound Show**, Co. Laois, Ireland
- 7 – 9** **Kent County Show**, Kent Showground, Detling, Maidstone. Visit this showcase event for farming, countryside and rural life which brings together the best in food, fun and excitement for all the family. kentshowground.co.uk
- 11 – 13** **Great Yorkshire Show**, Regional Agricultural Centre, Great Yorkshire Showground, Harrogate. Expected to attract over 130,000 visitors over three days, this show features the very best in British farming. It includes the Harriers and Beagles Show on July 11 and the Foxhound Show on July 12. greatyorkshireshow.co.uk
- 19** **Festival of Hunting**, Peterborough. The annual showcase for the world of hunting is not to be missed, boasting the greatest gathering of hounds in the country and including the Peterborough Royal Foxhound Show. festivalofhunting.com

- 22 – 23** **Holkham Country Fair**, Holkham. holkhamcountryfair.co.uk
- 24 – 27** **Royal Welsh Show**, Llanellwedd, Wales. There's something for everyone at this four day extravaganza with thrilling entertainment, attractions and displays. rwas.wales/royal-welsh-show
- 26** **Dunster Country Fair and Hound Show**, Somerset. dunstercountryfair.co.uk
- 28 – 30** **The Game Fair**, Hatfield House, Hertfordshire. At the heart of field sports, this annual event is a firm favourite for every country sports enthusiast. Don't miss the Countryside Alliance's fishing expert Charles Jardine on the Friday as he shares his sporting know-how and shows a film about the future of fly fishing. thegamefair.org

AUGUST

- 3** **West of England Hound Show**, Honiton. honitonshow.co.uk
- 3 – 6** **Countryfile Live**, Blenheim Palace. countryfilelive.com
- 6** **Cheshire Game and Angling Fair**, Peover Hall, Knutsford. cheshiregameandanglingfair.co.uk
- 12 – 13** **Lowther Hound Show**, Lowther, Penrith. lowthershow.co.uk
- 15 – 17** **Pembrokeshire County Show**, County Showground, Withybush, Pembrokeshire. There's something for everyone at this annual event which is jam-packed with great attractions, country pursuits and family entertainment. pembsshow.org

- 17** **Rydal Hound Show**, Rydal
- 26 – 27** **Irish Game and Country Fair**, Birr Castle, Birr. irishgameandcountryfair.com
- 27 – 28** **Edenbridge and Oxted Agricultural Show**, Ardenrun Showground, Lingfield. Spend a spectacular bank holiday family day out at Surrey's premier agricultural show, where you'll see more animals at close quarters than almost anywhere else in the south east. edenbridge-show.co.uk
- 28** **Aylsham Show**, Blickling Estate, Blickling. theyaylshamshow.co.uk

SEPTEMBER

- 16 – 17** **Royal Berkshire Show**, Newbury Showground, Thatcham. This is the farming community's much-loved end of season show, an action-packed countryside adventure set over two days. berkshireshow.co.uk



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LESSONS IN LETTERS

Two years ago, Eleanor Doughty embarked on a professional mission impossible. Now she's completed it, with a little bit of help from a Scottish hillside



I DON'T KNOW if you've ever climbed a hill with the man that owns it. Every bit of heather, every worm, every blade of grass. All his.

I have. "What do you think of the view?" he asks. "Can I improve it?" he ponders, not being quite sure of where you stand on wind farms.

Questions like this, posed on top of a hill were my reward for 18 months spent chasing around London, and, by post, the rest of the nation, a peer who will remain nameless (although if he is reading this, he will be able to identify himself, as will a few others). Not for my health, but for work. To interview him, properly, for the first time for a profile in the *Financial Times*.

We met at a party. A pal said, "there's Very Smart Gentleman One, and there's Very Smart Gentleman Two," about two men of equal standing, neither of whom I had met before. "Who would you like to meet first?" I chose the owner of said hill. I had drunk some wine. I don't think he had. I took his secretary's card and potted off home thrilled. Colleagues asked the next day why I was so cheered and I explained that I had a secret new project.

The first letter went in the post the next day, and I kept sending them until the end of last year when the one that needed to cut through, did. He apologised for his tardiness in responding, and yes he'd love to talk.

I still have no idea why he agreed, but I do know one thing. There are only a few things left in this

world that will endear people to you. Fountain pens and letter writing. If you do the two things together, you're onto a winner. As far as I can see, people seem to like people that still send letters – please send me some, I will write back. That is the only way I can explain how I came to be standing at the top of a hill in Dumfriesshire in February with a man who owned everything for miles around, and who surely had better things to be doing than answering my inane questions about what he would like for Christmas (socks).

My father taught me to always "keep your powder dry". That is, never tell anyone what you're up to. But the secret to making anything happen these days is polite, persistent letter writing. It was ever thus. The modern world has made us impatient, and you can't be, with letters.

I don't claim to have learnt much of use in my quarter century, but if there's anything it's that patience is a gift. (This will seem ironic to anyone that has ever met me, as patience is far from being my defining characteristic.) But standing at the top of that gorgeous hill in Dumfriesshire I realised that patience is the only gift worth having.

Apart from socks. ♡

Eleanor Doughty is a freelance journalist, rarely seen out of a wax jacket. She welcomes all letters in whatever format they might arrive. Tweet her at @brushingboots to get a conversation going.





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