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The punter by night drops down with the tide, or uses his paddle after the fowl
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EDITORIAL
The Field, Pinehurst II, Pinehurst Road,
Farnborough Business Park, Farnborough, Hampshire GU14 7BF.
Tel 01252 555220
field.secretary@timeinc.com
website: www.thefield.co.uk

EDITOR
Jonathan Young

EDITORIAL ENQUIRIES
01252 555220

DEPUTY EDITOR
Alexandra Henton 01252 555221

CHIEF SUB-EDITOR
Diane Cross 01252 555225

CONTENT ASSISTANT
Sarah Pratley 01252 555220

COUNTRY GROUP ART DIRECTOR
Dean Usher

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Setting an example at the table

If you shoot game, accepting a brace at the end of the day is essential, says Deputy Editor Alexandra Henton. And why would you refuse, with so many tasty ways to reduce the current surplus?

AT the start of every winter Monday the conversation in The Field office revolves around two topics: the sporting fun we had at the weekend – often jumping a decent hedge and making it to second horses in my case, returning with a bulging game bag in the Editor’s – followed by a discourse on how we prepared and cooked game, who we fed and the recipes we’ve tried. As we’re both keen cooks there’s a degree of culinary one-upmanship but the good-natured game recipe trumps has a serious, almost evangelical message at its heart.

Every moment we spend in the field is done with an understanding of the sporting and conservational benefits of what we do. When it comes to shooting, taking your brace and doing something with it – historically a given – has, somewhere along the line, become optional. It isn’t. Taking home game is essential to the sporting contract we’ve made with our quarry: we are hunters who have taken lives in order to provide food. If it’s just about technical accuracy with a gun then shoot clay pigeons.

We have both been on shoot days at which the traditional brace at the end of the day is refused by a gun “too busy” – or too bored – with the birds to take them. I used to fume silently but last season decided to harness this gamey ignorance to my own advantage, taking the extra birds and doing something with them. Conversations with the Editor had convinced me that it was our mission to encourage as many other people as we could to take up game. So while the Ed took on the Hampshire supper-party circuit I brought some gamey zeal to Leicestershire.

My husband and I whipped the first batch of extra birds into pheasant meatballs (recipe courtesy of The Field; they went down a treat at the beaters’ day the following week – and even converted some gamey naysayers on a trip to the Alps. Next, pheasants in full feather were breast and turned into goujons (another Field classic) to be snaffled by the niece and nephew. They submitted the recipe to their school cookery book in Berkshire (with a moreish mustard mayonnaise) and have now had requests for pheasants from other parents. Over the summer, a barbecue saw vast quantities of game we’d frozen the previous season transformed into coronation pheasant, eagerly consumed by all.

This season, there was a new challenge from the Editor: use as many fresh birds as possible rather than consign them to the freezer. So, bidding adieu to the possibility of coronation partridge come summer, each week has seen our brace turned into supper. Whole roast partridge; slow-cooked pheasant with chickpeas; tandoori pheasant; Thai green partridge curry; pheasant breast escalopes; pheasant pasties (trickier but in high demand); more pheasant goujons; and broths with pheasant and chillies, savoy cabbage, ginger and garlic have kept us fuelled and fulfilled.

What, though, to do with a heap of birds? The Editor keeps and prepares those in the freezer. It’s lovely like that, of course, but currently we have a huge surplus of dead game and it’s up to all of us to lead the way and show how versatile it is in the kitchen. It takes less than two minutes to breast a bird and isn’t a crime to slosh in a jar of ready-made curry sauce. The real sin is not taking your birds home in the first place.

And that’s what we need to impress upon our friends. Game is easy to cook and cheap or free. We need to clear our heads of the Victorian concept that a pheasant is a luxury food to be roasted whole and served with all the trimmings. It’s lovely like that, of course, but currently we have a huge surplus of dead game and it’s up to all of us to lead the way and show how versatile it is in the kitchen. The Field

OPENING SHOTS

COMMENT

OPENING SHOTS

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Art in the field

“Hunting has made me,” says Daniel Crane, whose passion for the sport infuses his paintings. Janet Menzies is inspired to pull her boots on

WRITING about the enthralling paintings of equestrian artist Daniel Crane is difficult. This is not because of his neo-traditionalist compositions or his experiential use of light, or any of the other twiddly bits art critics talk about. It is, quite simply, because when you look at one of Crane’s hunting paintings every fibre of mind and muscle instantly wants you to pull on your boots and go hunting. Now! This makes it extremely difficult to remain seated in front of your computer. However, after three hours solid riding out and with no hunt meeting within 50 miles, it is possible to talk about Crane’s work.

Oddly enough, the first things we talked about were, in fact, Crane’s neo-traditionalist compositions and his experiential use of light. “Lionel Edwards has been an important influence for me and his composition was special because he was first and foremost a foxhunting man and this informed his work. There’s no getting away from it, my passion is foxhunting and the environment in which you do it. I want to capture that experience – and the light is really the most important thing in doing that.

“The processes surrounding hunting may change but the end result, what you experience in a day’s hunting, stays the same and it is locked into the land and the seasons. Edwards would have gone out cubbing and on hound exercise. It is autumn trail hunting nowadays but you still see those early morning mists. You can still smell the leaves as the frost begins to thaw off them, and you can feel the warmth of your horse and hear hounds working. This is what my work is about. I paint as a participant, not an observer.”

Yet Crane’s early hunting experiences were as an observer. “My dad was a typical hunting farmer who kept a cob and hunted when hounds were within hacking distance. I loved watching him but I didn’t quite get it until one day when I was about 12 or 13 years old and hounds came through the back garden in full cry. I was transfixed. Then the cavalry came charging through and in a moment they were all gone again. But I was sat there like Mr Toad after the motor-horn, completely captivated.”

The sound of the hunting horn grabbed Crane just as surely as the car fixated Toad, but, unlike Toad, he didn’t have the resources to do anything about it immediately. The decisive encounter with hounds didn’t come until several years later, when Crane and the hunt met from different ends of the day.

“I was about 19 years old by then and wandering home from a party at dawn, as you do when you’re a teenager. Suddenly, I was surrounded by hounds. I said: ‘What is happening?’ And they explained they were out autumn hunting and I stayed and watched. They said they would be out again on Tuesday and that was it. I foot-followed for the next two seasons.”

In the meantime, Crane was grappling with a familiar problem: “How do you make a living out of drawing and painting when you’re a farmer’s son? You can’t be a painter because it makes no money so I studied commercial design and art and got into the advertising side of creative work. As a side-line I also started doing cartoons for people’s 50th and 21st birthdays and they were very popular. I was soon doing a lot of cartoons with a hunting-based humour. Gradually, though, the sport of hunting came more to the fore and the cartoon element began to disappear.”

Almost without noticing, Crane had made the transition to sporting artist. He started to take stands at equestrian and country sports events. “The first really successful outing was my first Badminton Horse Trials. I had about 14 or 15 originals and sold every single one of them. That put a rocket up my back-side. I thought, what if I pull my finger out and really take this seriously?”

Painting technique and passion about the subject came together and Crane found himself as absorbed in painting hunting as in hunting itself. He remembers: “I was hungry for the sport everywhere – in representation, between the pages – I was looking at Lionel Edwards’ illustrations. My technique came as a natural development, because every time I painted something I just wanted to work out how to paint it better.”

This is how Crane has developed the capacity to elicit a visceral wave of recognition in those looking at his work. His authenticity and credibility is absolute. He explains: “About hunting, the memory is completely accurate. No matter how many days hunting you have, there is always something in a day that pins it in your memory. In my paintings it is specific – that beech tree, that particular stretch of hedge we jumped, exactly where hounds crossed Twyford Brook. Hunting has made me and I make the painting.”

We carried on talking about hunting at this point but you can stop reading now – and go hunting.

Daniel Crane also paints a range of equestrian subjects and his most recent commission celebrates the 70th anniversary of the King’s Troop, Royal Horse Artillery. Look out for Crane at Cheltenham Races over the winter, call him on 01507 343277 or visit his website at: www.danielcrane.co.uk
‘I was hungry for the sport... My technique came as a natural development, because every time I painted something I just wanted to work out how to paint it better’
Field Notes

New national centre for the RDA

The Riding for the Disabled Association (RDA) is building a new national training centre in Warwickshire to help reduce waiting lists among its 500 groups.

Work begins on the 35-acre site at Lowlands Farm near Warwick this month. The riding school already has an indoor and outdoor arena, and four RDA groups are currently based there. The number of riders will double to 200 once the new centre is operational.

A gallery and training rooms are being built and the RDA’s national office will move here when works are completed in spring 2019, the charity’s 50th anniversary year. An all-weather perimeter track will be added to enable the centre to introduce carriage driving and increase outdoor riding.

“We hope this centre will reduce waiting lists by training coaches and volunteers throughout the UK,” said RDA chairman Sam Orde. “We believe there are four people waiting for every place at the moment so we really need to expand our riding and driving opportunities.”

The new centre is costing £1.5m, a third of which has been raised. Applications to trust funds are underway and a buy-a-brick campaign has been launched.

In summer 2017, Orde (pictured above) undertook rides or carriage drives in all 18 RDA regions, inviting RDA members and supporters to join her. Sam’s Big Ride has raised £40,000 for the project, with more than 800 RDA riders and volunteers taking part, riding and walking a total of 26,060km.

Fundraising continues this spring with RDA rider Max Stainton aiming to be the first person with cerebral palsy to get to Everest base camp on a horse. Stainton will swap his electric chair for a Nepalese horse in Katmandu this April for the 12-day ascent, climbing 8,000ft with the support of RDA volunteers. For more details, visit: www.ridingeverest.com

Traps and other grey matters

A self-setting squirrel trap developed by scientists in New Zealand will be available in the UK this summer. The Goodnature 18 Squirrel Trap has passed the Defra tests and is awaiting approval. “It could go a long way towards saving our broadleaf woodlands,” said Edward Dashwood, director of Goodnature Traps UK.

As the squirrel enters the trap it is hit on the head by a sharp plastic bolt, then dropped out and scavenged. The trap, which will reset itself 18 times per CO2 canister, needs to be set at least 20cm above the ground to avoid hedgehogs.

The importance of controlling grey squirrels, to protect native reds and reduce damage to the UK’s broadleaf woodland, was highlighted at the UK Squirrel Accord’s autumn conference. Delegates were told that oral contraceptive for greys could be on the market within six years and “could revolutionise the management of the population in future”.

On 1 February the Accord will discuss the trap and other methods of control at its annual meeting at Battleby, Perth. For details, visit: squirrelaccord.uk

In brief

SALMON CHAMPION REMEMBERED
The life and work of Orri Vigfússon, who died in July aged 74, is being celebrated at Fishmonger’s Hall in London on 23 January. Vigfusson campaigned tirelessly to save the wild Atlantic salmon and was the founder and chairman of the North Atlantic Salmon Fund (NASF). Anyone wishing to attend should contact Edwina Ord-Hume at support@frontierstrvl.co.uk

DICK POTTS LEGACY FUND
Innovative farmland ecology projects set up by farmers, keepers or young ecologists are being sought by the Dick Potts Legacy Fund. Projects should “be well thought out and address a recognised problem in conservation”, said the GWCT’s Dr Julie Ewald. Applicants for the first round of grants should send in an overview of their project, in less than 2,500 words, by 19 January to dickpottsfund@gwct.org.uk

NEW MASTER OF THE GUNMAKERS
The Field’s Editor, Jonathan Young, was installed as Master of the Worshipful Company of Gunmakers on 7 November. Incorporated by Royal Charter on 14 March 1637, the Company runs the Proof House and both promotes the gunmaker’s art and exercises statutory authority over the proving of sporting guns and military small arms.

“The Company’s dedicated team of craftsmen, under the leadership of Proof Master Richard Mabbitt, not only proves fine British shotguns and rifles but also military weapons systems, including the M230 30mm chain gun on the Apache helicopter,” said Young. “We are very much a working livery and it’s a great privilege to be the Master.”
Work begins this January on the restoration of the Burns monument in Alloway, Ayr, which was built nearly 200 years ago in the bard’s birthplace. Designed by Sir Thomas Hamilton, the neo-classical monument was paid for by public subscription and finished in 1823. The site was acquired a decade ago by the National Trust for Scotland.

The £440,000 needed for restoration is being raised through grants and donations, and includes £30,000 from the Friends of Robert Burns Birthplace Museum. Repairs will be made to the monument’s masonry to make it watertight, the internal cupola is being cleaned and its original decorative finish restored. Work is due to be completed by late autumn.

Around the country, an estimated two million people will be attending a Burns night supper on or around 25 January, the poet’s birthday. This figure peaked at nine million in 2009, the 250th anniversary of his birth.

The Robert Burns Birthplace Museum, situated a few minutes walk from the monument, will host a supper on the 25th, a haggis hooley on the 26th and a Big Birthday Bash on the 28th, including the World Haggis Hurling Competition.

And Glasgow University’s Centre for Robert Burns Studies will be holding its annual conference at the museum on 13 January, which will see the launch of Volume 2 and Volume 3 of *The Oxford Edition of The Works of Robert Burns*.

With some 400 Burns clubs around the world, it is estimated that the poet is worth £157m annually to the Scottish economy.
TOP TRADITIONAL KIT

In the October issue, we asked if kit should follow trend or tradition (the latter, Fielders agreed). Our gumboots and gilet round-ups proved controversial: “Spend your money on a good bed and good shoes, because if you’re not in one you’re in the other,” advised one Fielder. Le Chameau and Muck Boot devotees tussled and not all don Schöffel. “It takes one Jack Pyke and two Schöffels to stop a Sherman,” joked one follower.

ONE POT PHEASANT

Keep those game suppers coming. Fielders have been sharing cooking tips while we suggest the best recipes. One suggested wrapping roast pheasant in Parma ham and the Deputy Editor’s batch of pheasant “revithia” (October issue), was met with envy. We were delighted to see an old favourite back in action. “I give you Pheasant Guidewife, a triumph of one-pot cooking,” wrote one Fielder. “Well, that’s certainly stoked the appetite,” replied another.

MOTION DENIED

Fielders were delighted to see the National Trust vote to retain trail hunting on its land. It came down to just 299 votes and ultimately less than 1% of the Trust’s membership voted for a ban. Polly Portwin, Head of Hunting at the Countryside Alliance, said, “Whilst we are happy with the outcome of the vote the resolution was ill-informed, unnecessary and has wasted a huge amount of the Trust’s time and money.” “Superb news,” said one Fielder.

CROSSBREED GUNDOGS

Crossbreeds are all the rage, we argued in the November issue, but can they match the pedigrees in the field? Facebook followers are undecided. “Only if it’s a terrier. No cockapoos or labradoodles in the field, please,” argued one. “As long as it works well, what does it matter?” asked another. Sprocker Jack and springador Buddy are excellent field companions. “Buddy has such a great temperament. I would definitely have another crossbreed in future.”

FAREWELL, MDF

Rob Fenwick chose his shooting box as his best bit of kit in the October issue, a DIY effort made in his garage from MDF. But he has since been spotted with something a touch more polished. “Some kind person took pity on me after the article,” he explained. “Getting some serious stick for upgrading.”

PICTURE PERFECT

This fantastic image, taken by Scott Wicking for our Duncombe Park shoot report (October issue), has become our most “liked” Instagram post ever. Fielders were delighted by the spot-on picture of Nicholas Britten-Long and loader Mike Wilkinson double-gunning on Angels Drive. “Back trigger but still on the front foot, that’s the way to do it,” remarked one Fielder. “And side-by-sides – how it should always be,” added another.

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The impact of game management on curlew populations

The British Trust for Ornithology (BTO) is perhaps best-known for running long-term monitoring schemes, such as the BTO/JNCC/RSPB Breeding Bird Survey (BBS) – for which some 3,500 randomly located 1km squares are surveyed annually by volunteers to track long-term population trends – or our periodic atlases, which provide a comprehensive snapshot of the distribution and abundance of birdlife across the country. These schemes provide an unparalleled assessment of the countryside around us, tracking population declines in many farmland birds in the 1970s and ‘80s and, more recently, declines in some of our long-distance migrants, such as cuckoos and nightingales.

Breeding waders are also declining rapidly: the UK breeding population of the curlew has halved over the past 20 years. Given that we support an estimated quarter of the world curlew population, and that two other curlew species may have become globally extinct in recent decades, these declines have global significance.

A map of curlew population trends shows that declines in breeding curlew populations are not universal. In some parts of the UK, particularly the Pennines, eastern Scotland and some of the Scottish islands, populations have been largely stable. Whilst in other areas, such as across the lowlands, Wales and western Scotland, as well as Ireland, declines have been extensive. Readers will identify that some of these stable populations coincide with parts of the UK where grouse moors are widespread. Is this the case and what is the evidence that grouse-moor management, or game management in general, may benefit breeding waders such as curlew?

To assess this, I will describe a recently published study, led by the BTO as part of the BBS development programme in collaboration with RSPB and JNCC, and part-funded by the BTO Curlew Appeal. This study analysed BBS data to identify which features of the landscape correlate with curlew abundance in two time periods (1995-99 and 2007-11) and what changes there were between the two periods. Importantly, we used these analyses to test whether a number of hypotheses were supported by the data, to provide the first national-level assessment of likely causes of change. So what did we find?

Firstly, habitat is a key driver of curlew abundance. The highest densities of breeding curlew are found in areas of semi-natural grassland and moorland. A high proportion of our remaining curlew are found on hill farms and upland estates, which makes the appropriate management of such areas potentially critical for their long-term status. Protected areas, such as SSSIs or SPAs, also continue to support relatively high densities of curlew. More negatively, there was strong evidence that when areas of open habitat were surrounded and fragmented by woodland, these support smaller and more rapidly declining curlew populations than more open areas. This is consistent with previous studies that have associated the commercial afforestation of marginal upland areas with large-scale curlew declines, for example, across the Southern Uplands. Finally, there was consistent evidence that arable farming supports few curlews and those populations also tend to be declining. Although relatively few curlews now breed on arable farms in southern and eastern Britain, these findings are consistent with studies from continental Europe, which document the negative effects of intensive agriculture upon breeding waders due to the loss of nesting attempts to agricultural machinery, drainage and declines in invertebrate populations.

PREVALENCE OF PREDATORS

As well as habitat, there was strong evidence that generalist predators also limit curlew populations. The abundance of curlew in 2007-11 was negatively correlated with crow abundance and fox occurrence as recorded on BBS squares. The long-term trend for curlew was also negatively correlated with crow abundance. As BBS crow data are probably a better measure of predator abundance than the measures of fox occurrence recorded by our surveyors, this does not necessarily mean that crows are more important predators of curlew than foxes. Instead, these results are consistent with the hypothesis that, as they are ground-nesters, the nests and chicks of curlew are highly vulnerable to fox and crow predation, which can limit their populations when they occur at high levels.
Aside from management, curlew declines tended to be greatest in warmer, drier areas. This is consistent with potential impacts of climate warming upon the abundance of the soil invertebrates that curlew rely upon, and with previously documented upwards shifts in their distribution. However, as discussed in relation to strip burning, more detailed studies of curlew ecology are required to assess whether these relationships are causal. If, indeed, there is a strong link between soil moisture, soil invertebrate abundance and curlew breeding success, as has been found for other breeding waders, such as golden plovers, this may account for some of the relationships with habitat, management and climate that we found and would provide useful information about how management, such as blocking drainage ditches, may be used to improve habitat condition for breeding waders, as well as to increase their resilience to future climate change.

Although this article has focused on breeding curlew, this is only one element of the BTO’s programme of work on curlew, funded by our curlew appeal. Away from the breeding grounds, we are also examining population trends and survival rates during the important winter period, when many curlew flock to our shores from declining populations in continental Europe, to check that there are not additional pressures operating there. We are also tracking both breeding and non-breeding curlews to improve our essential understanding of their habitat requirements and movements, and are looking to work with local study groups who are monitoring curlew populations around the country to understand more about their populations and to start to test potential conservation interventions. For example, this summer we ran a pilot project working with local estates to monitor breeding wader populations and nesting success in the Yorkshire Dales, which we would like to continue. In combination, these studies will enable us to be sure about why curlew have declined, to understand what they require throughout the year and to provide the evidence to identify how best their populations may be sustained and supported into the future. Given where these birds are found, this is likely to involve appropriate management of shooting estates, building upon the relatively stable populations that many estates already support.

We are grateful to The Field magazine for donating to the BTO Curlew Appeal to support this work, which others can find out more about at: www.bto.org/support-us/appeals/bto-curlew-appeal

We also found strong, positive associations between curlew and gamebird abundance in both time periods that may similarly be linked to the low abundance of generalist predators associated with game management. This combination of results is in line with previously published studies linking variation in curlew abundance across particular upland areas with grouse-moor management and/or predator abundance but, importantly, is the first time this has been shown to be important at a national level. More detailed studies by the

We have found strong, positive associations between curlew and gamebird abundance.

RSPB in Northern Ireland have shown that high rates of predation, particularly by foxes, can limit curlew breeding success, while the GWCT upland predation study (the “Otterburn study”) documented increased curlew breeding success and abundance in response to experimental implementation of predator control. In combination with European studies, which suggest that curlew populations are limited by a failure to produce enough fledglings, these studies suggest that generalist predators, of which crows and foxes are most abundant, may be one of the main factors limiting curlew populations.

Our breeding birds may simply not be producing enough chicks to maintain a stable population. More detailed work in the 1990s on the ecology of curlew in the North Pennines by Glen Robson showed how curlew make use of recent areas of strip-burning for nesting, whilst broods select wet flushes for foraging. This suggests that heather management associated with grouse moors may benefit the species by providing nest sites. However, we found a weak negative association between the intensity of strip-burning and curlew abundance in 2007-11, which may hint at wider negative environmental consequences of heather burning for breeding curlew. Such an effect is possible, for example, if burning reduces key invertebrate populations but it is by no means certain, and readers will be aware that there is ongoing research to assess the impact of strip burning upon a range of environmental parameters. Through time, this work should provide the evidence to test the extent to which high-intensity burning may negatively effect some of our moorland breeding birds and, if so, whether cutting is a more sustainable alternative.
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THE FIELD HIP-FLASK CHAMPIONSHIPS

Our panel of judges, including the Editor and Foxdenton owner Nick Radclyffe, sipped all the entries, from the delicious to the lethal, before declaring the winners.

THE third Field Hip-flask Championships resulted in a generous number of concoctions arriving at HQ from our readers, excellent sorts who know the best bevvie is home brewed. Nick Radclyffe from Foxdenton joined Editor Jonathan Young to sort the luscious from the lethal, while Deputy Editor Alexandra Henton helped rank the finalists. All were slurped for scoring.

The unanimous “off-piste” winner was a traditional entrant, moved for its festive flavour. Ray Crace’s spicy greengage gin impressed with a “very beautiful colour”, however, the addition of cinnamon and clove saw the judges replace “spicy” with “Christmas” to make it eligible for off-piste. And, indeed, the 2016 brew was concocted “for the Christmas shoot hip flask”.

For the traditional category, we expected a sea of sloe gin but received more creative interpretations. “Many shoots buy in the traditional stuff from us, so why make it yourself?” said Radclyffe. “People want to experiment.” Tasting revealed a common downfall: too much sugar. “People go to old recipes and don’t realise people used to have a much sweeter tooth.”

Five hooches made the shortlist: Richard Dickson’s loganberry vodka; Dave Hewitt’s sloe Bacardi; Anne Gough’s greengage vodka; Roger Bowker’s damson gin; and Rosemary McCulloch’s blackcurrant vodka.

The popularity of vodka was a surprise. “This shows what a good medium vodka is for delivery – it’s plain,” Radclyffe explained.

After tasting, the blackcurrant vodka prevailed. “You can get earthy notes from the blackcurrant if it’s left for too long but that’s perfect,” said Radclyffe. “If someone gave me that I would be absolutely chuffed.”

The Bowkers’ damson gin was a close runner-up. “Damson gin and vodka is my favourite to make,” said the Editor, “and that’s a good one.” As was Anne Gough’s “spectacular” greengage vodka.

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The WINNERS EACH WON A CASE OF SIX BOTTLES OF FOXDENTON GIN AND A YEAR’S SUBSCRIPTION TO THE FIELD

THANK YOU TO ALL THOSE WHO ENTERED

BLACKCURRANT VODKA
ROSEMARY McCULLOCH
1lb blackcurrants 1lb sugar 1 bottle vodka
Place ingredients in a large bottle and shake every day for a month. When the resultant liquor is poured off, the remaining currants make the most wonderful crumble (see page 23).

GREENGAGE VODKA
ANNE GOUGH
Put equal weights of greengages and granulated sugar in a jar. Top up with vodka and shake every day for a week. Store in a cool, dark place for at least three months.

BOWKER’S DAMSON GIN
ROGER BOWKER
1kg damsons 800g sugar 2 litres gin
Wash and prick the damsons all over. Put the damsons in a jar, cover with sugar. Turn everyday to mix until the sugar is dissolved. Add the gin and turn to mix thoroughly. Store in a dark place for 12 months.

CHRISTMAS GREENGAGE GIN
RAY CRACE
Per 3 litre jar: 1kg greengages 500g caster sugar Modestly priced gin 3 largish sticks of cinnamon 14 cloves
Combine then shake daily for the first two weeks then leave in a cool, dark place for approximately four months.
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including 100 cartridges & clays : £199

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BEGINNERS SHOTGUN COURSE - £395
A 3 hour certificated course, including cartridges & clays.

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A 3 hour ladies beginners course plus an additional competition day, including cartridges and clays.

STALKERS RIFLE COURSE - £395
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Each participant may book three one-hour lessons with one of the renowned Holland & Holland instructors or share three two-hour lessons with a friend. Lessons are by appointment Monday to Friday and some Saturdays from February until late April. They are tailored to the individual needs of each participant, whether they have never held a shotgun before or have ‘had a go’ but never really been taught to shoot.

At the conclusion of the course, all participants will gather at the Grounds, at 9.30am for a 10.00am start, on Thursday 26th April 2018, for the Final Day of the Green Feathers. The morning is spent putting these new shooting skills to the test over a variety of clay-shooting stands. A delicious luncheon is followed by a simulated pheasant drive, plus there is a chance to try full-bore rifle shooting on our 100-yard range.

The 4 top-scoring ladies will each receive a place in the line at a Holland & Holland Game Shoot during the 2018 season.

The price of £295.00 is fully inclusive of all necessary equipment including guns if required, instruction, 50 cartridges and clays per lesson and participation in the final day.

Please contact Steve Denny, Steve Rawsthorne, Sonia Herrero or Heloise Keene
01923 825349
email: shooting.grounds@hollandandholland.com
Ducks Hill Road, Northwood, Middlesex HA6 2ST
www.hollandandholland.com
MORE VARIETY
I read a report on an exciting day’s pheasant shooting by a skilled team of experienced shots, where it was reported that, during at least one drive, the ratio was 11:1 (Adding meteors to a mixed bag at Duncombe Park, October issue). No doubt the guns had suitable equipment but even so I consider that such figures must lead to a large number of birds being “pricked”. I therefore wonder if the current fashion of ever higher birds is going too far? Hasn’t the time come for organisers to aim to produce a wider variety of birds rather than just concentrating on extra height?

George West,
Stratford-on-Avon, Warwickshire

SCOTTISH SPORT AT RISK
In the spring of 1992, the North Lochinver estate, covering 21,300 acres and running from Achmelvich to Loch Nedd, was put up for sale in lots. At a public meeting, the crofters unanimously resolved to mount a campaign to buy the land and secure it for themselves and future generations. So began the Assynt Crofters’ Trust.

To date, North Lochinver, Glencanisp and Drumrunie estates in Sutherland and Wester Ross have all been acquired by the Trust, backed by substantial donations from the public purse, including £1.6m from the Scottish Land Fund and £600,000 from Highland and Island Enterprise’s (HIE) community land unit.

Whilst a return in investment has been slow coming, the Trust understands the value of sport – fishing and shooting – to profits. These profits and the continuation of sport have now been placed in jeopardy by the reintroduction of Sporting Rates enacted by the Land Reform Act 2016.

Under the Scottish Assessors rating valuations, the Glencanisp and Drumrunie estates have been rated at £21,000 annually; stalking currently raises circa £9,000. The tax is placed on the potential for sporting activities, meaning the value is unavoidable.

In an act to become part of the social landownership movement the Trust is now subject to the same rhetoric as other land owners. Through the Scottish Government’s land reform programme, it is handing out money with one hand while taking it back through taxes with the other. The Sporting Rates are little less than a direct attack on shooting, as it currently stands; the impact will be felt by those the Government is trying to help most.

Jamie Stewart, Director,
Scottish Countryside Alliance, by email

LIMIT BAG NUMBERS
I am under no illusion that driven partridges and pheasants will soon be a thing of the past if the present situation continues. No-one is paying for game and many game dealers are refusing to take the birds. With dead birds stockpiling and more being shot every day, there will come a time when the Government will step in. If we ourselves do not do something by the end of this shooting season, I can see such regulations becoming law to bring releasing in line with that in other countries in Europe.

This is a drastic situation. There are too many commercial shoots offering birds to be processed for free distribution in the local community via a food bank/homeless shelter etc: self police, restricting how many birds are released, observing the guidance in BASC’s Code of Good Shooting Practice and don’t release past the start of the season; restrict numbers to 100-150 birds a day, split the day’s bag between the guns, load the birds straight into their cars for transport back home, do not yet have been let out. They are still in pens on every antibiotic possible before it can enter the food chain.

Too many shoots offer sport every legal day of the week, from 1 September to 1 February. Some shoots host up to four shooting parties on an estate, per day. How can that many birds be on the land, released, before the start of the season? Are they piled up a dozen high in the woods? No, the simple answer is they have not yet been let out. They are still in the rearing sheds and release pens on every antibiotic possible to keep them alive. All this so they can be “topped up” to make sure there are enough birds to shoot on a “sporting day”. Not forgetting that any bird on antibiotics has a withdrawal period of 28 days before it can enter the food chain.

There are a few options open to shooting estates: charge an extra £2-£3 per head to pay for all the day’s birds to be processed for free distribution in the local community via a food bank/homeless shelter etc: self police, restricting how many birds are released, observing the guidance in BASC’s Code of Good Shooting Practice and don’t release past the start of the season; restrict numbers to 100-150 birds a day, split the day’s bag between the guns, load the birds straight into their cars for them to deal with (they shot them, they can eat them).

I believe the responsible parties in this are the land owners. They are the ones who control what goes on on their estates. They allow the shooting so can restrict the numbers released and shot.

We, ourselves, must do something to deal with the predicament we are now in.

Rachel Paul, by email

Rachel Paul, by email
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OPENING SHOTS
LETTERS

DAISY PULLS IT OFF
We enjoyed two excellent days grouse shooting in Cumbria in September, despite 30mph winds and rain. Daisy [pictured], my 15-month-old black lab, did brilliantly on her first day this season and picked a number of birds out of deep heather, despite not always being in a position to see where they landed.

Deborah Wilson, Devon

FUMING AT FACTOR
Oliver Chamberlain’s letter (October issue) reminds me of the time a good friend invited me to fish on the Tay with his father-in-law. We arrived late to find the father-in-law revving his engine on the drive. We jumped in, full of apologies. I was introduced as, “MM; he is a factor.” There was a snort and we set off with wheelspin. “There are three things in this world I can’t stand: ministers, factors and hooded crows,” said the father-in-law. I have, since then, been known as the Hooded Crow.

Michael Milligan, Aboyne, Aberdeenshire

UNLIKELY RETRIEVER
During a recent stay at the Soval estate on the Isle of Lewis, something quite remarkable took place. I am the proud owner of a Bernese mountain dog, a large breed originating from the Swiss Alps. My hound, Mr Jenkins [pictured], is a fairly boisterous family pet and weighs in at 45kg.

Never one to miss out, we decided to take him out with our shooting party on the grouse moor. While the estate pointers worked the ground gracefully, conversation turned to whether we thought Mr Jenkins had it in him to retrieve a grouse. After the next point, I removed his lead to find out. To the amazement of the party, he executed a number of textbook retrieves as the attached pictures demonstrate.

So, I would like to ask your readers whether this is the most absurd breed of dog to successfully retrieve a grouse?

Tom Adams, by email

DAYLIGHT ROBBERY
Roost shooting in October, I shot two pigeon with one shot as they flared for landing. They fell beyond a high wire fence into a cut maize field. As I had no dog, I had to walk the length of the wood and round the fence to retrieve them. At the end of the wood, I raised my barrels to a further pigeon but saw in time that it was a female sparrowhawk, diving on fixed wings. It occurred to me that it had spotted my pigeons and, sure enough, when I reached the spot only one bird remained.

Daylight robbery by one of Britain’s boldest raptors.

John Murray, Sutton Mandeville, Wiltshire
RA RA RASPUTIN
About 10 years ago, on a January day in the Westcountry, the last drive of the day involved blanking in half of Somerset and Dorset. At the end of the drive, at the bottom of the bracken thicket, all beaters were accounted for though true to his name, Rasputin, the cairn terrier, was nowhere to be found. I was enlisted into the search party before I was even off my peg (the owner was a cousin). We called the search off after three hours, by which time it was pitch black. There were plenty of tears and even more whiskey macs.

Miraculously, Rasputin turned up two days later having climbed back up the hill, run the length of the racetrack at the top and made himself a home at the farm there. He was reunited with my cousin (more whiskey macs) and shortly after I received a thank you note on the back of a copy of Beaufoy’s A father’s advice. I still keep it in my desk. Advice: if you have a cairn terrier and take it shooting, keep it on a lead.

Harry Havelock-Allan, by email

STRANGE CATCH
Towards the end of the season I was fishing the tail of Loch Dughaill just before it runs into the River Carron. My son-in-law, Edward Player, was rowing me and, as the water was high, I was fishing a large fly. As I cast, what seemed like a missile dived over our heads and speared into the water in an attempt to take my fly. It disappeared and a large bird emerged, squawking and attached to the fly. It then swam off down the river at speed taking all my line and backing. Fortunately, it then came off and flew away unharmed, apart from the loss of a few feathers.

As Edward was trying desperately to stop the boat before it was taken down river, there was no time for a photograph or video. However, after some research we concluded that it could only have been a young gannet, a bird we would not normally have expected to see far so from the sea. This excitement made up for the lack of a salmon that day.

Edward Nicholl, by email

HIP FLASK EXTRA
The winner of the traditional category in The Field’s Hip-flask Championships advises that the fruit strained from her blackcurrant vodka makes a great crumble. Here is the recipe:

- Place 2lb currants, plus a little juice, into a lightly buttered pie dish;
- Mix together 3oz butter, 6oz plain flour and 3oz sugar until it is the consistency of fine breadcrumbs;
- Scatter over the currants, place in a moderate oven (180°C/350°F/Gas Mark 4) for 30-40 minutes.

Rosemary McCulloch, Blair Atholl, Perthshire

PACKHAM’S JACKET
I caught a bit of Autumnwatch on 26 October and was particularly taken with Chris Packham’s camouflage sports jacket. Do any readers know who his tailor is? I wouldn’t mind one for the grouse moor next season.

Matthew Mason, North Yorkshire

CHEAT’S PIMM’S
Browsing through recipes, I noticed that someone wanted to make their own Pimm’s. Here’s my recipe, from The Times about 20 years ago. This makes a litre:

- 125ml gin
- 125ml red vermouth, French or Italian
- 75ml orange curaçao
- 1000ml R Whites Lemonade or Canada Dry Ginger
- A slice each of fresh orange, lemon, apple, cucumber
- Sprigs of borage or mint

Mix together the gin, vermouth and curaçao and pour into a large jug. Chill the fruit and add the borage or mint. Just before serving, add ice-cold lemonade—or ginger ale if you prefer a drier blend.

John Morrison, by email
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A Grade II listed country house with views.
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FOR SALE
East Harptree, Somerset
An historic mini estate.
Offers in the region of: £5,000,000
Robot wars in the Green Belt

Will the industrial revolution in the housing market create a unique architectural style, wonders Rupert Bates – and just where will we put these AI-designed homes?

THERE is a whiff of nostalgia in the choice of property types this month – a few classical Georgian beauties and houses with woodland to channel your inner Christopher Robin. We all love a bit of Regency symmetry, the pediments of the Queen Anne period or timber beams groaning as if Henry VIII himself was sitting on them.

But if those talking up housing’s very own “industrial revolution” are to be believed, tomorrow’s homes will come from a factory, having been built by a robot, and these modular machines will chainsaw their way through woodland as pressure to build forces a loosening of the Green Belt.

Modern housebuilders often try to hijack heritage with their marketing. There’s nothing like calling your homes on the outskirts of Basingstoke mock-Tudor or neo-Georgian to hoodwink homebuyers into humming Greensleeves or donning powdered wigs – if Blackadder did architecture…

Queen Elizabeth II has reigned over us for 65 years but there remains a gap in her CV. She doesn’t have an architectural period named after her and given what’s gone up since 1952 I’m not sure Her Majesty would want one.

So what of our automated future? Off-site manufacturing is supposedly where it is at, with factory assembly-line environments and modules delivered to building sites – quicker and cheaper. Don’t mention pre-fab to these disciples, who say there is plenty of design diversity to satisfy the aesthete and the technician.

Throw in Artificial Intelligence, digital manufacturing, 3D printing and other wizardry and maybe we are on the cusp of an industrial revolution in the housing space.

Meanwhile, traditional housebuilders are shouting their green credentials. Kier Living, part of construction giant Kier and working with Forest Carbon, has committed to planting 45,000 new trees by 2020 to mitigate the developer’s carbon usage.

Any argument over the Green Belt usually needs a Lonsdale belt, such are the punchy exchanges between opponents. But the current policy has to be reviewed and a thorough audit of the protected acres required, for some Green Belt holds up very ropey brown trousers.

“That ‘Green Belt’ should be put back into use at prices that are sensible because it has no value today and it should help produce homes we need at prices people can afford.”

TAKE 3 – PROPERTIES WITH WOODLAND

1. ELLERON LODGE
   NEWTON-ON-RAWCLIFFE, PICKERING, NORTH YORKSHIRE
   A former Victorian shooting lodge within the North Yorks Moors National Park, it comes with about 228 acres of woodland and parkland within a ring fence. It has eight bedrooms and there are two further residential properties.
   Agent: Savills
   Tel: 01904 617831
   Guide price: £3.5 million

2. ASH MILL
   ASHREIGNY, CHULMLEIGH, DEVON
   This contemporary home is set in a wooded valley and comes with 30 acres of woodland and pasture. Built on the site of an old mill, the property is nearly 4,000 square feet, with three bedrooms. There is also a timber cabin, currently used as a holiday cottage.
   Agent: Stags
   Tel: 01769 572263
   Offers in excess of £1 million

3. LOCHYE HOUSE
   FEARN, ROSS-SHIRE
   The house dates back to the 16th century with 19th-century additions. It is located on the shores of freshwater Loch Eye and fishing rights are included. Nearly nine acres include two areas of woodland, one on the northern boundary, the other on the foreshore.
   Agent: Bell Ingram
   Tel: 01738 621121
   Guide price: £950,000
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Country estate of the month

**HENSOL ESTATE, CASTLE DOUGLAS, KIRKCUDBRIGHTSHIRE**

This is a residential, sporting and agricultural estate in a riverside setting in south-west Scotland with a colourful history of owners, including a big-game hunter who once saved President Roosevelt from a herd of elephants. Would Richard John Cuninghame have moved so fast had it been President Trump? The estate features a granite country house overlooking the River Dee, five cottages, a farmhouse and home farm, woodland, commercial forestry and a radio mast. The sporting includes an established driven pheasant shoot, duck flighting, roe deer stalking and two miles of river frontage with trout fishing. A-listed Hensol House is built in Gothic and Tudor style, with 10 bedrooms. The estate has 94 acres of grass leys, 134 acres of permanent pasture, 460 acres of rough grazing and 352 acres of commercial and amenity woodland.

Agent: Strutt & Parker
Tel: 0131 516 2886
Guide price: £4.25 million

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**STAR BUY**

This five-bedroom, detached Victorian farmhouse needs total renovation and refurbishing. It sits in about a quarter of an acre of overgrown grounds. There is a disused swimming pool and a number of barns. There is the possibility of buying a nearby field by separate negotiation. The farmhouse is built of soft red brick elevations with gables, large windows and high ceilings. The façade includes a large bay window to the sitting room with a parapet. The house is more than 3,100 square feet and features timber panelled doors, sash windows and period fireplaces.

Agent: Bedfords
Tel: 01328 730500
Guide price: £500,000

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**TAKE 3 – GEORGIAN HOUSES**

1. **BURRINGTON HOUSE**
   BURRINGTON, NORTH SOMERSET
   A Grade II-listed Georgian house 12 miles from Clifton village. It dates back to 1778 and is set in just under two acres within the Mendip Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. The house has been refurbished by the current owners and there is also a coach house in the sale.
   
   Agent: Knight Frank
   Tel: 0117 317 1999
   Guide price: £2.575 million

2. **THE OLD RECTORY**
   SIBLE HEDINGHAM, SUFFOLK
   Built in the 1700s, this Grade II-listed rectory, set in just over five acres, has been restored and updated while retaining key features: a columned entrance, pyramidal roof and stone fireplaces. It offers contemporary furnishings, a tennis court and swimming pool.
   
   Agent: Carter Jonas
   Tel: 01787 844306
   Guide price: £2 million

3. **BELTINGHAM HOUSE**
   BARDON MILL, NORTHUMBERLAND
   In the hamlet of Beltingham, this is a generously proportioned, seven-bedroom, Grade II-listed dower house with classical period façades. Original features include sash windows, fireplaces and cornicing. It has a walled garden, orchard and paddocks.
   
   Agent: Finest Properties
   Tel: 01434 622234
   Guide price: £1.35 million

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**WRECK OF THE MONTH**

**RED HOUSE FARM, LITTLE MASSINGHAM, KING’S LYNN, NORFOLK**

This five-bedroom, detached Victorian farmhouse needs total renovation and refurbishing. It sits in about a quarter of an acre of overgrown grounds. There is a disused swimming pool and a number of barns. There is the possibility of buying a nearby field by separate negotiation. The farmhouse is built of soft red brick elevations with gables, large windows and high ceilings. The façade includes a large bay window to the sitting room with a parapet. The house is more than 3,100 square feet and features timber panelled doors, sash windows and period fireplaces.

Agent: Bedfords
Tel: 01328 730500
Guide price: £500,000

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SUPERB SURREY SPORTING ESTATE
CHIDDINGFOLD, SURREY

Godalming: 8.3 miles, Guildford: 14.1 miles, Gatwick Airport: 29.7 miles, Heathrow Airport: 34.4 miles,
Central London: 44.8 miles

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Location:
NORTH PENNINES - ENGLAND
A bit of rough

With shooting acres near London devoted to driven birds, how do young guns get a go at wild game? Jonathan Young has found a solution

LIKE most of my nears and dears, I love a bit of rough. One of my happiest "grouse" days opened with a right-and-left at corvids, followed by a 15-mile yomp during which we shot 9½ brace of *Lagopus scoticus* but also hares, snipe, hill partridges and an extremely cross pheasant. Lunch was a ham bap and a Twix, eaten in the lee of a stone wall with a league of ling and peat below us.

Later in the season, when the song thrush trills his lullaby at 4.30pm, three of us hold our annual Norfolk maraud with wind and moon planning everything except the Cromer oyst-ers and sausage rolls at half time. Last time out we accounted for 15 species and 55 head, including seven types of fowl.

Being terribly spoilt by generous friends, I’m also lucky enough to have some proper driven days, when breeks are pressed, ties worn and bull shots steam at elevenses. In the country, these formal occasions glue friends together, be they beating, picking up or shooting, and I must know hundreds of people that I seldom see outside the sea-son but have been muckers for decades. “It’s rather like Christmas but better,” I explained to my son. “We all meet up once a year, a Jack Russell working through the middle of it. Sometimes a pheasant would clatter out, more often a woodcock or rabbit. As opportunities were scarce, missing one was a minor crime; miss two and you’d have to buy the first round of Hill’s farmhouse cider.

Those fortunate enough to live away from London still have access to this sort of ground but around us pretty much every available shooting acre is now devoted to driven birds. So how, then, do we teach our young men and women how to tumble at 35 yards that ancient cock skimming over the pasture four feet up?

Like all of life’s major problems, this was best discussed over a mug of coffee with the local farmer. There’d been a driven shoot on his land but it had faded away several years ago. As a result, he now possessed the shooting rights and sons who also needed shooting rights with three in the game cart. When the bag reached double figures there was a cheer and a popping of full-fat Cokes and unzipping of KitKats.

As the sun settled, we had 32 pheasants and two rather showy pigeon in the Landie and that’s been the pattern of our little shoot days. And it’s never gone “wrong”. Sometimes — often — the birds break through the gaps inevitable when there are only four guns but so what? They’ll be there for the next time. There has been errant behaviour from some guest guns’ dogs, some ropey shooting but we find it all deeply amusing.

Others might not. When the sons are absent, we sit down and sift the “possibles” for guests. Would they be happy firing per-

When the bag reached double figures there was a popping of Cokes, unzipping of KitKats

there’s a huge feast and you don’t get lumbered with irksome relatives.”

The heir could, then, have become a driven-game shot but I took him duck flighting with his godfather and introduced him to the joy of pigeon decoying. I worried, however, that his skills would not embrace rough shooting, as we knew it, in Devon. There, we’d walk up the hedgerows, usually with
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Jumpin’ hack splash

Some embrace change, others have change thrust upon them and – finding herself stood at the edge of a lake – Eve Jones wonders if now is the time, finally, to take the plunge

HAVE you ever stood at the edge of a lake trying to pluck up the courage to jump in? Looking at the inky water, toes temptingly close, knees twitching, thinking, “I want to get in. I want to flip and wiggle about in there like a slippery merperson, splashing with wild, fishy abandon. I want to, I really do, but if I jump in that lake I’m going to freeze my damn nads off and really here just on the edge of the lake looking at the lovely inky water is quite nice and dry.” So you shuffle away, put your clothes back on and tell yourself you are pleased you’re nice and dry but, inwardly, you curse yourself for being a grade A wuss.

Well, I have. The lake is a reasonable metaphor for my life. Having all the ideas and the chat but being a bit cautious, airing on the comfortable side of dry land and familiarity. It’s probably the reason I haven’t moved flats in seven years despite living an hour from my friends. And that I still wear favourite clothes that have, frankly, inappropriate holes in them. Or that it took me 18 months last time round to get a haircut, by which point it was so long and disgusting the hairdresser audibly gagged when he touched it and then I cried when he cut it too short. Because I’m not especially good with change. I find it all very well in principle but anywhere from a pain in the bum to downright terrifying in reality.

Furthermore, January is the worst time for change thrust upon me. In the industry-wide epidemic of publishing house belt-tightening, it was Tatler’s turn to escort staff to the water’s edge, leaving me to contemplate how to enter the deep blue beyond.

My first thoughts were, “Oh f**k! Time to put my money where my rather large mouth is,” having spent the previous year extolling my grand ideas for businesses I could then better to be so in hunting season – Eve Jones wonders if now is the time, finally, to take the plunge

Excellent! if you’re going to be funemployed then better to be so in hunting season

in the bum to downright terrifying in reality. Furthermore, January is the worst time for it. It’s an itching, narking time of year when people expect you to announce your plans to take over the world during the following 12 months. As though a New Year’s Eve of fireworks, champagne and Auld Lang Syne is meant to somehow fill you with a spirit of exuberance and positivity with which to thrust into the following year. much like Lord Flashheart into Queenie’s court, “Woof!” I’d rather sidle in, chuntering and complaining and finding reasons why by next January I will be ready to take over the world because right now I’m a little bit hungover.

It would appear the gods have taken note, however, because at the end of 2017 I had change thrust upon me. In the industry-wide epidemic of publishing house belt-tightening, it was Tatler’s turn to escort staff to the water’s edge, leaving me to contemplate how to enter the deep blue beyond.

My first thoughts were, “Oh f**k! Time to put my money where my rather large mouth is,” having spent the previous year extolling my grand ideas for businesses I could social media profile to develop myself as a brand. My current public social media profile consists of an Instagram account and is what I would describe as a visual brain fart. A bit like verbal diarrhoea but with pictures. It is largely quite silly and is a fair indication that I spend most of my time thinking about horses, dogs and parties. This, in itself, I don’t mind but how employable it makes me is another matter.

The idea of creating me the brand is something I struggle with, not least for the fear of being labelled a #Instabore. I confess to spending rather too much time on there already and am in constant wonder at how many vacuous, chronic bores posting thousands of selfies, dodgily filtered with ludicrous, endless hashtags it sustains. Even worse is that people actually follow these simpletons. Some make a living out of it. I think you have to have deceptively big balls to post that many pictures of yourself online looking so simple. so it’s likely I’m ruling out social influencer as my next career move.

It’s interesting, however, scrolling through the accounts on the Instagram feed that I have subconsciously curated over time. There are things I love and there are things I aspire to achieve. Predictably, there are innumerable shots of smart horses and hounds at hunt meets, breathtaking Highland landscapes and gundogs bounding from all corners of the country but I particularly like one farmer’s account. which just pictures fields after fields through the year. captioned with things like, “Lovely little day combing” It’s a delightful, unwitting document of everyday life and seasonal shifts, and though the changes in the landscape are huge they are barely perceptible day to day.

The thing, I suppose, with change is that it can be as subtle and natural as the seasons if you choose but life would be as boring as a stream of vacuous selfies if we never took the plunge at all. So, this year I am embracing it. I am growing some proverbial balls and ringing the New Year in by dive-bombing into the lake. And, no doubt, at times it will take my breath away and the cold will feel like needles. I’ll slip on a fish, narrowly avoid Well’s disease and it will be scary and uncomfortable but it might just be exhilarating and wonderful, too. Bring it on, 2018.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Model</th>
<th>Price</th>
<th>Description</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>New Beretta Pair</td>
<td>£17,150</td>
<td>687 EELL Classic Factory Pair Left handed, 12 Gauge, 30&quot; Barrels, Fixed choke, 1/4 &amp; 1/2, Narrow game ribs, Numbered 1 &amp; 2 in gold, Rounded slim beavertail forend, Game scene vignette style engraving surrounded by delicate scroll, Barrel selecters, Auto safe, 14 3/4&quot; Rounded semi pistol grip stocks with dark veined figuring throughout, Complete in double case.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Krieghoff Pair</td>
<td>£25,700</td>
<td>K20 Parcours pair, 20 Gauge, 32&quot; Barrels, Fixed choke 1/2 &amp; 3/4, Narrow game ribs, Vienna style scroll engraved actions, Barrel selecters, Adjustable triggers, Pistol grip stocks, Superbly well figured matching wood, Very fast handling, Fantastic blend of German engineering with luxurious detailing.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Used Guerini Pair</td>
<td>£10,500</td>
<td>Forum pair, 20 Gauge, 30&quot; Barrels, Multi choke, Narrow game ribs, Numbered 1 &amp; 2 in gold, Sideplates with gamescene vignette surrounded with fine floral scroll, Barrel selecters, Auto safe, 14 3/4&quot; Prince of Wales grip stocks with dark matched wood, Very fast handling, Excellent condition.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Perazzi Pair</td>
<td>£28,000</td>
<td>MX20 SC3 Factory pair, 20 Gauge, 32&quot; Barrels, Fixed choke 7/8 &amp; 7/8, Narrow game ribs, Numbered 1 &amp; 2 in gold, New style No. 100 deep scroll engraved action with detailed pheasant gamescene on the bottom plates, Barrel selecters, Auto safe, 15 3/8&quot; Matched Purdey style grip stocks with deep figuring throughout, Double case, Very well balanced for all forms of driven quarry.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Krieghoff Pair</td>
<td>£26,700</td>
<td>K20 Parcours pair, 20 Gauge, 32&quot; Barrels, Fixed choke 1/2 &amp; 3/4, Flat tapered ribs, Sovereign style scroll engraved actions with Germanic style, Barrel selecters, Adjustable triggers, Palm swell, Pistol grip stocks, Very well figured wood that matches perfectly, Both guns have stunning balance, Single guns also available.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Perazzi Pair</td>
<td>£61,100</td>
<td>MX20 SCO Sideplate factory pair, 20 Gauge, 30&quot; Barrels, Numbered 1 &amp; 2 in gold, Sideplates with a deep scroll engraving carried out by hand, Barrel selecters, Auto safe, 15&quot; Purdey style grip stocks with well matched wood, Precision balance with breathtaking looks, Complete in double presentation case.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Used Browning Pair</td>
<td>£19,400</td>
<td>B2S B/A Game, 28 Gauge, 29 1/2&quot; Barrels, Fixed choke, Narrow game ribs, Numbered 1 &amp; 2 in gold, Hand engraved gamescene actions, Barrel selecters, 14 1/2&quot; Matched rounded semi pistol grip stocks with deep figuring throughout, Breathtaking responsive feel and balance, Complete in double case, Immaculate condition.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Beretta Pair</td>
<td>£27,600</td>
<td>DT11 EELL Running number pair, 12 Gauge, 30&quot; Barrels, Multi choke, Flat tapered ribs, Sideplates finished with a deep scroll with dark accenting, Detachable &amp; adjustable trigger, Palm swell, Pistol grip stocks with dark veining figuring throughout, Very stable feel, One of only a few pairs available in the country.</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Model</th>
<th>Price</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>New Browning</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>B25 DSG Custom sideplate, 12 Gauge, 30&quot; Barrels, Fixed choke 7/8 &amp; 7/8, Narrow game rib, Three piece forend, Deep scroll engraved sideplates, Teardrops, Barrel selector, 15 1/8” Rounded semi pistol grip stock with dark veining figuring. Fully chequered concealed butt plate, Beautiful example of a custom.</td>
<td>£18,795</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Used Browning</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>B15 C Grade game, 12 Gauge, 30” Barrels, Multi choke, Narrow solid game rib, Deep scroll engraved sideplates, Teardrops, Barrel selector, 15” Pistol grip stock with beautiful wood, Very refined balance, Superb condition.</td>
<td>£9,950</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>New Blaser</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>F3 Grand luxe, 12 Gauge, 30” Barrels, Flush fitting multi chokes, Flat tapered rib, Embossed style gamescene vignette surrounded by scroll, Barrel selector, Adjustable trigger, Pistol grip stock with deep palm swell for comfortable grip, Well figured honey coloured wood, Ready to accept balancing system.</td>
<td>£7,650</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Used Beretta</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>451 EELL Side by side, 12 Gauge, 28” Barrels, Fixed choke 1/2 &amp; full, Side lock action engraved with tightly wound scroll, Blued parts, Pierced top lever, 14 1/8” Straight hand stock, Very rare, Immaculate condition.</td>
<td>£10,250</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>New Blaser</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>F3 Custom III, 12 Gauge, 32” Barrels, Multi choke, Flat tapered rib, Deep heritage style scroll engraved sideplates, Barrel selector, Adjustable trigger, Palm swell, Pistol grip stock with highly figured marbling grain, Very well balanced for the highest driven quarry, Will accept full stock &amp; barrel balancing system.</td>
<td>£16,250</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Used Beretta</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>SO6 EELL Side lock game, 12 Gauge, 29 1/2” Barrels, Flat tapered rib, Teague choked, Gamescene vignette with surrounding deep scroll engraved sidelocks, Barrel selector, Auto safe, 14 7/8” Pistol grip stock, Beautiful honey wood with dark veining throughout, Superb balance, Complete in leather case, Exceptional condition.</td>
<td>£22,100</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Unfired Browning</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>D4G Game left hand, 12 Gauge, 30” Barrels, Fixed choke 1/2 &amp; 1/2, Narrow Game Rib, Three piece forend, Gamescene engraved action with surrounding fine floral scroll, Teardrops, Barrel selector, 15” Pistol grip stock with highly figured dark wood, As new condition, Exceptional feel &amp; balance.</td>
<td>£18,350</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>New Famars</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Excalibur side lock, 12 Gauge, 31 3/4” Barrels, Fixed choke 1/2 &amp; 7/8, Narrow game rib, Colour case hardened action, Auto safe, 16 1/8” Straight hand stock with exceptional figuring, Beautifully balanced.</td>
<td>£17,995</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>New Guerini</strong></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ellipse curve gold, 20 Gauge, 30” Barrels, Multi choke, Narrow game rib, Solid top &amp; side ribs for a traditional look, Routed action adorned with floral scroll with gold accents, Barrel selector, Auto safe, 15” Pistol grip stock with highly figured wood, Wooden butt plate giving a easy gun mount, Very lively feel.</td>
<td>£4,750</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Used Beretta</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>SO6 EL Game, 12 gauge, 29 1/2” Barrels, Multi choke, Flat tapered rib, Fine rose &amp; scroll hand engraved side locks, Barrel selector, Palms swell, 14 7/8” Pistol grip stock with beautiful marbled figuring, Superbly balanced, Fantastic condition.</td>
<td>£15,450</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>New Perazzi</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>New Krieghoff</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>K80 Parcours, 12 Gauge, 32” Barrels, Flush fitting multi chokes, Narrow rib, Renaissance style engraving with very fine scroll and gold accenting, Barrel selector, Adjustable trigger, Palm swell, Adjustable comb stock allowing precise adjustments, Highly figured honey coloured wood, Superbly balanced</td>
<td>£20,500</td>
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RISK AND VARIETY AT PRESADDLED

Geese off a platform, snipe over coastal fields, pheasants, woodcock and more, this unusual shoot on Anglesey kept guns guessing

WRITTEN BY JANET MENZIES ♦ PHOTOGRAPHY BY ANDY HOOK
port should be exciting, challenging and at least a bit risky. Is your shooting offering you all of this? When you draw your peg on a Saturday morning do you know immediately that the grog stop will be the high point of the day? If your shooting isn't doing enough for you, change it.

How far you go on the quest for sporting adventure is up to you. It was the moment Presaddfed estate headkeeper Paul Graves turned to me and said, “I’m afraid we haven’t got anything to bail out with,” that I questioned briefly my decision to travel from a snow dump in the Austrian Alps to a massive winter storm on the coast of Anglesey in the space of 24 hours. The westerly gale that had been rattling the windows at Presaddfed Hall, Bodedern, the previous night was now whipping up massive, grey-maned waves on Llyn Llywenan, a 100-acre, marsh-surrounded lake known for the geese flying in from the coast.

At present, the geese were coming in like RPGs, more or less invisible against the black, rain-driven, pre-dawn sky. More waves sloshed over the gunwales of our little dinghy and the duck and goose we had retrieved so far began to float.

Graves’s enormous, old-fashioned yellow labrador, Ash, hauled himself over the bow and flung another Canada at us before shaking himself thoroughly, as he had done on every previous retrieve, off-loading another litre or so of water into the boat. This was one of the central causes of our predicament, combined with zooming through the waves of this little inland sea in enthusiastic pursuit of each new retrieve, with Graves frequently hanging over into the water to grab a “swimmer” (as opposed to a runner). We observed the now-dryer Ash with trepidation. Another retrieve like that and we were going under.

It was at this point that underkeeper Mark Coad came chugging up to us in his dinghy. Coad had an empty paint bucket in among his duck haul. We were back in business. Ash took the prow, staring out to sea like a goose-obsessed figurehead, and off we went. After a while the sky turned from gun-metal to slate and the flight was over. We collected the guns, soaked but euphoric, from their platforms in the lake. Soon the whole team of Guernsey natives, who come up to Presaddfed annually, were safely back on shore, excitedly comparing notes. “I turned into the
wind to try and shoot a goose and the rain just flew into my face.”

“You couldn’t see a thing.”

“I turned my back to the wind but it meant I was trying to shoot them going away.”

“Did you see that high one? Has it been picked? Oh, Ash got it, good old Ash.”

“I thought I was going off the platform at one point.”

Eventually, we got them all into vehicles and ploughed off back through the storm to the house for breakfast. The first new set of clothes of the day and the drying room was doing a good impression of the Amazon rain forest. Team captain Nell Cousins explained: “We all met up by chance years ago and have been shooting together ever since – but as I am the one based in England I tend to do the organising for this trip. We will take in a few shoots while the team are over here but Presaddfed is a highlight.”

The rest of the team, native Guerns, confirmed their enthusiasm. “I enjoy looking at the wildlife,” said Tony Sargent. “I am a shooter but the chance to see the wildlife here is important to me – particularly as we don’t get some of these on Guernsey.”

Everybody agreed that it was such a different shooting experience. “I was on the farthest platform and the wind was blowing full in my face,” said Mick Damarell. “But I managed to hit some and I had those birds falling in the bushes that you came to collect in the boat. It is so exciting because you’ve no idea what’s going to happen.”

John Wild related the team history: “We have all known each other since we were teenagers. We used to go out rabbiting together and get about 30 or 40 rabbits but it was really about the pub afterwards.”

The gang has stuck together, their mainland shooting tour a long-standing tradition. “We are here for a few days now and tomorrow we will be having our next shoot,” Damarell explained. “We keep coming back to Presaddfed – not because we are gluttons for punishment but because of the variety of the shooting.”

ESTATE HISTORY
The estate has been owned by the Hadcock family since just after the Second World War. “My grandfather lived in Saughton in Cheshire and started shooting here in the 1930s,” explained Mark Hadcock. “He fell in love with the place, so when it came up for sale just after the war in 1947 he really stretched himself to buy it. His two passions were spaniels and cricket – we must be one of the few shoots in the country that also has its own cricket ground. And the Saughton line of springer spaniels became one of the foundations for working spaniels in the United →
States. The shoot has been run as a commercial shoot since the mid-1970s. We always start off by doing the lake before breakfast. I think there can be a danger of ordinary driven shooting becoming a bit bland, so we make sure that what we offer is exciting and different. People who come here really seem to enjoy the change from the typical driven-pheasant-shooting day.”

**DRIVEN SNIPE**

Dry, warm, wearing a fresh set of tweeds and the right side of a filling Welsh breakfast, I was ready to experience the next element offered by the Hadcocks, which turned out to be driven snipe, something rarely done. The storm, unable to sustain its full-on tantrum, had blown itself out while we were scoffing kidneys and black pudding. So we found ourselves marching over the coastal fields in sunshine that was more June than January but the snipe were able to take advantage of the strong wind to be really challenging. The first difficulty was to get the beaters in the right place behind the various small reed beds scattered across the grassland, where the snipe were sitting, no doubt enjoying the chance to sunbathe and get dry. The collective term for snipe is a wisp—but they are also known as a “walk”, which seemed more and more appropriate as the morning progressed. Luckily, the Guerns had been revved up by the goose flight and were snap-shooting the snipe with quick-wittedness. This type of shooting really needs you to be on your toes and our team managed to combine teasing each other unceasingly with concentrating on the birds.

Once we had a respectable number of snipe in the bag and were out of breath, Graves moved us back inland for some mixed drives on the central, slightly more conventional part of the shoot. Even here, however, the beautiful, historic landscape added an extra dimension. “Line out in front of the hedge, with the first gun by the Burial Chamber,” Graves instructed us. It’s one thing to be nearly drowned before breakfast but surely being buried before lunch is going a bit far. It turned out that the massive slab structure was in fact Neolithic and hadn’t housed a body for at least 4,000 years. The historians suggest it was probably used for communal burials around 3,000BC. For those who hadn’t survived the morning goose flight?

This third, again entirely different element of our shooting day was the closest to a
conventional, low-ground driven shoot. The pheasant were unpredictable, sometimes flushing from a long way back in a strip of lovely seaside coastal conifers. Then, just when we had got used to that, they would jump up from the other side of the hedge, practically at your feet. Meanwhile, pigeon flipped their wings at us teasingly – some of them rapidly regretting it.

The terrain has a naturally mixed, wild habitat that enables the shoot to establish populations of several species. Putting down too many pheasants or large areas of cover crop would disrupt Presaddfed's natural advantages. Hadcock confirmed: "I think we are pretty happy with the shoot and the way it is going as it is. We have a loyal clientele who keep coming back each year and they tell us how much they enjoy what we offer."

By the time we returned to the house for a late lunch our bag included about 10 species. The wily Guerns had shot not just geese, mallard, pheasant and snipe but also teal, wigeon, pigeon and hare, plus the odd rook or magpie and woodcock. The woodcock are a special feature of Presaddfed and Hadcock is proud that the estate has woodcock records of scientific significance going right back to the 1970s. Over lunch he showed me the meticulous charts, logging not just overall woodcock bags but also giving a full picture of woodcock movements each season. "I have been through our records right from 1975," explained Hadcock over lunch, "and my aim is to have a useful, detailed account of how the migration patterns vary. It is dependent on the weather. For example, it's unusual to have snow on Anglesey but on years where there is snow they are coming in greater numbers – perhaps because for us to have snow, the weather must be even harder elsewhere. I think the numbers do show a trend to decline but, again, this may be down to climate." Hadcock is hoping to work with the Game and Wildlife Conservation Trust (GWCT), which has a long-term research project tracking woodcock migration between Europe and the UK.

As lunch stretched into coffee and conversation, it was time for me to leave the party and head back over the Menai Strait. Waving goodbye, I noticed the guns were once more booted and suited for shooting. "Oh, yes," confirmed Darren Le Prevost, "we're off out for the evening duck flight shortly." You can't keep these Guerns down. There are so many forms of game shooting and each has its advocates. It's a case of whatever floats your boat. I was just glad that my boat did float. For more information about shooting at Presaddfed estate, Bodedern, Anglesey, call 01407 740652 or go to www.presaddfed.co.uk
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WILD COUNTRY, WOODCOCK AND AN IRISH WELCOME

The bags won’t be big, the terrain can be tough and the birds are testing but guns were amply rewarded with a taste of an unchanged Ireland

WRITTEN BY RORY KNIGHT BRUCE • PHOTOGRAPHY BY SARAH FARNSWORTH
It was said of 20th-century Ireland that there was no greater speed than that with which an Irishman would divest himself of his inheritance. Now that ruinous trend (and I can look at three estates today that have passed out of the hands of my own Irish relations) is being reversed, with young, energetic families determined to hold on to their ancient and historic homes by whatever means.

Nowhere is this more in evidence than at Huntington Castle, the home of Alexander and Clare Durdin-Robertson in County Carlow, an hour from Rosslare ferry port and a two-hour motorway drive from Dublin. They host weddings and holiday rentals to which they have now added dinners and stays for intrepid shooting parties wishing to spend a week, which can include a Sunday, in search of the elusive Irish woodcock.

"I love my woodcock shooting, where you may only shoot a handful in a day but will enjoy the best of wild country and good company," says Alexander Durdin-Robertson. Now in his late thirties, he came home with his beautiful bride, Clare, and their young children to run the estate a decade ago. The family has lived at Huntington for more than 200 years and the Jacobean house, complete with formal gardens, courtyard and ghosts, is a time capsule of forgotten Ireland.

Durdin-Robertson has now joined up with renowned sportsman and woodcock shoot organiser Randal Gossip who, without exaggeration, is straight from the pages of Somerville and Ross. Gossip will take teams of six guns from Britain and Europe over tens of thousands of acres of woodland, including Corsican pines, which he leases from the Irish Forestry Commission.

ELEGANT ACCOMMODATION
Huntington offers a family atmosphere, old-fashioned Irish elegance with drawing-room fires, four-poster beds and a host who is both highly entertaining and, through his military background, thoroughly organised. Suppers can be in B&B accommodation, in the castle dining room or at the Sha-Roe Bistro outside the castle gates. We enjoyed traditional Irish fare in the castle with the roast lamb and gammon with parsley sauce coming from the farm on the estate. By my bedside was Archie Coats’s seminal work, Pigeon Shooting.

Nor should would-be guests think that because this is a castle there is undue formality. Both Durdin-Robertsons – Clare was brought up in Hampshire and is a graduate artist from St Martin’s and Newcastle – can talk about anything with knowledge and
At kitchen supper on the first night, fellow guests were the former Venezuelan ambassador, Giles FitzHerbert, and his part-Peruvian wife, Alexandra, and former Duke of Beaufort huntsman Tony Holdsworth, also staying for the shooting and plying us with his Silver Fox craft gin, which is his new venture having retired from the saddle.

Such conviviality did nothing to derail our eight o’clock breakfast next morning before meeting Gossip and his party of five Frenchmen and their dogs with whom we would be shooting that day. “Irish woodcock will blind themselves on a sunny day and shelter on a south-facing bank,” Alexander Durdin-Robertson explained to me on our 20-minute drive to a high ridge of forestry above the ancient mining village of Bilboa and the long afforested escarpment of Old Leighlin Ridge. “In cold weather they are more predictable but on a mild day like today they will be more dispersed.”

Immediately apparent is that this type of rough shooting is not for the faint-hearted or infirm. Over the next eight hours we would clamber over stumps of clear fell, through ferny forestry rides, across bogs and banks and bracken. Safety is paramount and all guns and the three beaters wore orange tabards, a colour that the woodcock cannot detect. I was grateful for the lightness of the 16-bore leant to me by Gossip.

The working dogs were of a variety: English setters, a bearded pointer, labradors, spaniels and Gossip’s variegated terrier, Mr Piggy, who became a mascot to proceedings. Most wore bells that tinkled as they worked, like wind chimes on a lodge porch.

“Cock! Cock! Cock!” cried out Gossip as he drew the woods, having placed the guns on metalled roads for the first drive. Attention to his voice is crucial as the guns move according to the beat within the woods. Suddenly a shout of “Bécasse” from French gun Franck Debuire, rent the air. Debuire took the first bird of the day, which was retrieved by his own dog, Bacchus, a somewhat randy 10-year-old English setter.

Debuire has been shooting with Gossip for 18 years, driving over from his home near Calais via Pembroke Docks to Rosslare (the best crossing as the boat is most likely to sail in rough weather). “For me, it is the difficulty of the quarry that keeps me coming back,” Debuire told me. “If you kill a ‘cock, the reward is immense and we have a great tradition of venerating wild woodcock shooting in France.” Another attraction, he admits, is Gossip himself who, with his long-bearded brother, John (whom Holdsworth insisted on referring to as “Captain Birdseye”), works tirelessly all day, with engaging brotherly banter between drives.

“That place is too wet for a cock,” Durdin-Robertson informed me as we struggled through watery undergrowth to a well-known flight path to take up a stationary position. Sure enough, no birds came but it is crucial to remain alert to stand a chance of success. “It is the antithesis of a driven day,” says Gossip. “It is very informal and relaxed.” All the guns wore waterproof leggings and carried bottles of water for sustenance, while just a single belt of cartridges sufficed.
“Find the 'cock! Find the 'cock!” rang out Gossip’s melodious voice on the next drive, each of which can take an hour. The Frenchmen, who walk with their guns broken over their shoulders between drives, took up their positions. Three woodcock in quick succession appeared from dense undergrowth, one of which was taken by Bernard Levaux, on his first trip to Ireland, a good, jinking bird taken behind him.

Lunch was a simple but delicious and well-earned repast of homemade soup, sandwiches and lemonade. Mr Piggy opted for egg and onion. “We are here for the sport and the silence,” French gun Bernard Lelleau, told me. Their sporting sincerity spoke volumes for their fieldcraft and purpose without ceremony. Several of the Frenchmen now put away their morning dogs and got another one out of their wagons.

The afternoon was a short walk to a drive of a shelter belt, with guns standing on felled stumps. “We had 13 woodcock rise out of here two weeks ago,” said Gossip but there was nothing doing. It was here that I noticed the French guns will offer a call to each other, a “whoop, whoop”, just so they know where they are and that no one will be left behind.

With the sun setting in the south-west on what had been a settled day, we drove 15 minutes to further open forestry. Standing outside the covert, a lone woodcock flew past me and dropped down into a ditch, sulking or playing dead. The dogs were brought but there was no scent on the bird and he remained undetected. Three birds were well taken, one by Holdsworth, but Gossip also wants to know about “hittable misses”, of which I had been guilty of one.

**KILKENNY COUNTRY**

Next day saw us in Kilkenny country at Castlecusker, three miles from Woodstock in Inistioge, one of my Irish relation’s estates now managed by the state, with beautifully restored gardens. “You might see the Woodstock white fallow deer here today at Castlecusker, as they roam these woods wild,” John Gossip, a fount of local knowledge, told me. Indeed, we saw plenty of hoof tracks during the day.

Amongst these woodlands, and with unrelenting urging from Randal Gossip to his dogs, I came upon a retired farmer walking his small dog and an old, abandoned stead ing. Unloading my gun, I talked to him and he told me he had bought a two-acre plot from my grandfather here but had never paid for it, and that it troubled him. Letting him off with a cheery wave, I took up my position behind a moss-walled bank and waited.

The small beating line was half a mile distant, so I tapped the bank gently, walking 400 yards, back and forth. On my way back, a fine, Irish woodcock got up and I shot it away, horizontally, as I had learned to do with my father. It was off a south-facing bank. The Frenchmen by now had weakened to the Irish ways. We toasted this modest achievement with Jamieson’s from their silver hip flasks, making it more memorable.

What had it been like for Tony Holdsworth? “I have loved the peace of it and not having 180 horses behind me for a change.”

This style of rough shooting is not for the high-bird guns, brimming with pegs and loaders. But I think it would make a perfect outing for fathers with teenage sons wishing to teach their offspring about fieldcraft, respect for quarry, patience and to experience a living chapter of unchanged Ireland.

In his wonderful book, *My Ireland*, published in 1937, the writer Lord Dunsany quotes Somerville and Ross as being peerless on the sporting Irish landscape. This may have had something to do with the fact that, when out shooting with them one day as a young man, Somerville’s spaniel, Maria, swallowed a snipe whole.

In his chapter, “Woodcock”, Dunsany offers a flavour of what guns can still expect at the hands and hospitality of Alexander Durdin-Robertson and the Gossips. “I am grateful to the roding woodcock for the romance of his great journeys,” wrote Dunsany. “If Ireland gave me my imagination, it also made me a sportsman. It is not consistency that we have from the ages but impulses rolling up, sometimes from remote places, which drift us this way and that.”

In my two days with the French woodcock team, we had certainly drifted this way and that, always alert and hopeful that our day would yield a handful of birds, which it did. I was allowed to bring my solitary woodcock home. With it came an abundance of warm memories. Say what you like but you also get great stories from the Gossips.

*To book a stay at Huntington Castle, call +353 539377160, or go to: [www.huntingtoncastle.com](http://www.huntingtoncastle.com)*

*To enquire about guided shooting with Randal Gossip, call +353 51561261 or email randalgossipireland@gmail.com*
are you the rustiest bit of kit on the peg? A bit of work spent on your own machinery will add grace and fluidity to your performance in the field. If we consider the physical elements required for the average shooting god or goddess, then fitness, strength and flexibility will be high on the wish list.

Of these, flexibility is an early casualty of age and work practice. Anyone who has ever tried to shoot with too many clothes on under a tight coat notices that bringing the gun up is cumbersome and that the swing range is restricted, to the detriment only of the tail feathers of the bird cruising by. Think about your own muscular coat, shrunk onto you by hours of unremitting computer work and driving miles to shooting estates sited at inconvenient ends of the country. Let’s do some benchmarking to see how shrunk this muscular coat of yours really is.

The first casualty of aging? Flexibility. However, these exercises – which take just seven minutes to do each morning – should improve suppleness in no time.

6 easy exercises: your shooting MOT

W R I T T E N  B Y  J U L I A  B R I D G E S

I nto the New Year and the birds are in fine fettle. The 4x4 is standing up to the terrain, the gun is sparkling – courtesy of the latest cleaning potion – and you are sporting a splendid new pair of socks. But wait. Your equipment is up together but are you the rustiest bit of kit on the peg? A bit of work spent on your own machinery will add grace and fluidity to your performance in the field. If we consider the physical elements required for the average shooting god or goddess, then fitness, strength and flexibility will be high on the wish list.

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Ease yourself into a routine while still in bed

BEGINNING TO REMEDY

Now for the remedy. One hesitates to use the word exercise, as this conjures up images of Lycra and the odour of muscle rubs and burning martyr. This approach is more a targeted oiling of the joints rather than using a crowbar on them. As with most things, “bull in china shop” and “good result” are mutually exclusive. What better way to ease yourself into a routine than while still in bed.

On the basis of mind/body synchronicity, or even just for fun, a quick burst of poetry on opening the eyes is an excellent way to start.

Omar Khayyam touches the spot:

“Awake, for morning in the Bowl of Night
Has cast the stone that puts the stars to flight
And Lo, the Hunter of the East has caught
The Sultan’s turret in a noose of light”.

Already you are in hunting mode. Now, while lying on your back, head supported comfortably by a pillow, point the toes down and up five times and then spell out your full name with your toes. Too bad if it’s double barrelled. Your forefathers should have been more considerate. This routine should abolish or at least mitigate the three-pace shuffle so characteristic of the over-55s on rising from their beds.

CHECKING SWING

Stand with your back against a wall and put up an imaginary gun to a 45-degree angle in front of you. Swing to your left and check your range of movement by noting which part of the room that you are pointing towards at the end of this movement. Repeat to the right. If your range is the same both sides you are probably under 12 and you’ve still got acne to look forward to. For most mortals, movement to the opposite side of the outstretched arm will be more difficult – right rotation for right handers. Translate this to a field performance and you really do not want to be slowing down as you swing through.
INCREASE YOUR SCOPE

Unless you are sticking to a horizontal line, unlikely to find much favour with your neighbour on the next peg, now is the time to increase your scope above the skyline. With the right arm by your side, raise the left arm to the ceiling. Slide the right arm down the side of the body and gently push the left arm over the head, while letting the head drop carefully to the side. Straighten up again. Do this five times. Repeat both exercises and marvel at the already improved flexibility.

AN ELEMENT OF ROTATION

Now to work on the swing. An element of rotation will be spinal. If you look at the vertebrae rather like beads spinning on a string, if you ram the beads up together, which will happen if you drive for three hours without stopping, the individual bead movement is severely limited. A general stretch will restore a little spinal mobility. Still lying on your back – you don’t want to overdo it – bring your knees to your chest and hold them there with your hands, trying to keep the shoulders relaxed. Take a deep breath in and as you breath out, encourage the knees to come a little closer to your chest. Do this five times. You now have a bit of length in the string. Next, introduce some twist. With your knees up and feet flat on the surface of the bed, roll the knees in a controlled fashion 45 degrees to the side. Hold it there briefly and then roll to the other side. Do this five times.

UPPER BODY WORK

Now for some upper body work to loosen that tight-fitting muscle coat. Here, the shoulder joint is the main player but the shoulder blade and the upper part of the spine are the unsung heroes. Standing with the feet apart, in line with your hips, take both arms out to the side and hold for three seconds. Then bring the arms down to the sides and out to the front in a smooth swing and hold for three seconds. Reverse this to end up with the arms outstretched to the sides again. Repeat five times. You can incorporate some leg work by going up on your toes as your arms go forward and dropping the heels back down as you take them back out to the sides.
Unless you stick to shooting in Norfolk and, of course, always shoot out in front, neck mobility can be a bit of an issue. Looking up at extreme range produces a phenomenon referred to by Billy Best, who provides high drives in North Wales, as “Vivod neck”. It squashes the little joints at the back of the neck, which are generally a bit tatty anyway, with age, car accidents and falls from horses.

There are better ways to achieve a backward arc than enthusiastic neck wobbling, when the ensuing grating noises give the impression of sand in the joints and the chances of straining something are high. The earlier routines will help neck movement, to a certain extent, as many of the shoulder muscles run up to the head and neck and if they are tight, they squeeze up the joints like tight guy ropes on a tent pole. If you can distribute some of the arching back through the rest of your spine, pelvis and hips, it will take the load off this much-abused region.

This really has taken only seven minutes. The time it takes to listen to *Thought for the Day* and the news headlines on BBC Radio 4. If you go back to your benchmarking a few days down the line (or even directly after the exercises), you will be surprised at how much easier the end of that swing range feels.

If any of these movements are actually painful, there are any number of musculoskeletal specialists out there who can give your machinery a little more targeted mobility. An occasional MOT, much as one gets from the dentist and the garage, is not a bad idea. If you have metal work, zips or broken bits from exposure to fast cars and horses, tailor-made exercises might be of added value.

However, in the general run of things, this simple, seven-minute way to greet the day has got to be worth it for the ease, grace and fluidity with which you dispatch the “bath bird” – the one that you remember while you are enjoying a soak at the end of the day.

**LEG SWINGS**

While standing, hold on to the back of a chair or something at waist height for support. Put the other hand on the hip – not a good look admittedly but you are unlikely to be in a public space. Swing your leg forward and backwards five times, taking care on the backward swing as this can nip some of the tedious vulnerable lower lumbar joints. Then, put feet together and raise the leg out to the side and back to the ground five times. Try to keep your abdominal muscles contracted to achieve the ever-elusive “core stability”. Turn around and repeat the exercise on the other side. Start this one over again and note how much easier it is the second time.

**This simple way to greet the day is worth it for ease, grace and fluidity**
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Mark Newton, ex-Queens Dragoon Guardsman has been awarded the Guinness World Record for "Longest Journey on an Electric Mobility Vehicle".

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From its humble origins among longshoremen, punt gunning became a hugely popular fieldsport in the 19th century and beyond. *The Field* charts the rise of this idiosyncratic institution.
o the hunters of old, the
glimpse of a huge gathering
of wigeon afloat on the
waters of a fenland mere
or resting on some tidal
mudbank, head under wing
and packed as tightly as herrings in a barrel,
must have been tantalising beyond measure.
Far beyond the reach of clap net or matchlock
and stalking horse, those hundreds of potential
dinners might as well have been on the moon.
It would require a leap of imagination for the
first wildfowler to put his gun into a small boat
in order to get within range of them.

Guns were in regular use for wildfowling
at least from the early 17th century and in
his seminal work of 1621, Hungers Prevention:
or The Whole Arte of Fowling by Water
and Land, Gervase Markham recommends
a fowling piece, "which is of the longest bar-
rell, as five foote and a half, or sixe foote, and
the boare indifferent". By the end of the En-
lish Civil War, such guns would have been
widely available and it is not unreasonable
to assume that in wetland districts such as
the Fens they were already being employed
to take flock shots at large packs of sitting or
resting wildfowl.

That large-bore guns were routinely being
mounted on small, undecked, canoe-shaped
boats by the end of the 18th century is clear.
The procedure is described in Daniel’s Rural
Sports in 1807: “The punter by night drops
down with the tide, or uses his paddles after
the fowl: he knows their haunts, and takes
every advantage of Wind, Tide, Moon &c; his
gun, which carries as much as a little can-
non, is laid with the muzzle over the stem of
the punt, in a hitch which regulates the line
of the aim; at the bottom of the punt he lies
upon his belly, and gets as near the rout of
fowl that are upon the water as possible…
and cuts a lane through their ranks.”

RISING UP THE RANKS
Punt gunning along these lines was, by
1800, recorded in the Fens, on the Blackwa-
ter estuary in Essex and on the south coast
around Southampton, and it seems obvious
that punt gunners must also have oper-
ated on several other estuaries and wetland
areas, too. The fact is, however, that they
were by and large local people – fishermen
and longshoremen who shot wildfowl for
the market or to feed their families. And it
is because of their lowly station in life that
their activities went largely unrecorded. It
took the involvement of the wealthy and
educated classes for punt gunning to burst
upon the fieldsport scene in the 19th century
and, in particular, it took the involvement of
one man, Colonel Peter Hawker.

Born in 1786, Hawker was gazetted Cor-
net to the 1st Royal Dragoons in 1801, served
under Wellington in the Peninsular War
and was wounded at Talavera in 1809. Set-
tled thereafter at Longparish in Hampshire,
he took a cottage at Keyhaven from where
he devoted his not inconsiderable energies
to wildfowling. With his “Improved New
Plan for a Gunning Punt”, Hawker estab-
lished a punt design that remains essentially
unaltered to this day. While the workaday
punts of the longshore gunners remained
to the elements, Hawker’s 1822 design
incorporated a long foredeck and a cockpit
with a coaming all the way around it, thus
enabling a craft with shallow draught and
just a few inches of freeboard to be fully sea-
worthy, whilst ensuring that its occupants,
the gentleman fowler and his puntsman,
could stalk fowl undetected.

Hawker also turned his attention to the
design of the punt gun itself. By around
1820, most punt guns had bores of around
1¼ in to 1½ in and fired up to a pound of shot.
Hawker, however, conceived a “New Plan
for firing two pounds (or two pounds AND A
HALF) of shot to the best advantage” from a
double gun in which one barrel was fired by
flint and the other by percussion, so as to
create a slight delay between the two dis-
charges that would catch the birds both →
on the water and in the air as they rose. This celebrated gun also incorporated a revolutionary spring-recoil system. Built in 1824, it was subsequently acquired by another giant of punt gunning, Sir Ralph Payne-Gallwey, and was eventually bequeathed to the Wildfowlers’ Association of Great Britain and Ireland (WAGBI/BASC). Today, it is on display at BASC HQ at Marford Mill, Rossett, Wrexham.

The construction of barrels eight feet or more in length was a substantial task at a time when sporting gun barrels were forged from twisted ribbons of wrought iron that were wound around a mandrel, heated to bright cherry red and welded into a seamless tube. The barrels of the Hawker double gun had been made by William Fullerd of Compton Street, Clerkenwell, but many more punt-gun barrels were made by a tiny number of forgemasters in the Black Country around Halesowen who had the necessary levels of skill and experience, plus the required engineering machinery. Such barrels were expensive but long-lived and even though a barrel might originally have been made for a gentleman’s punt gun, it was frequently reincarnated as the workaday possession of one of the much larger underclass of professional fowlers.

Guns that were originally built as flintlocks were converted to percussion, either by brazing a nipple to the top of the pan cover or, more often, by means of the “drum nipple” principle, whereby the touch hole was reamed out and threaded and a cylindrical drum fitted to it. After the gun was loaded, the drum was filled with a small amount of priming powder and a percussion cap placed upon the nipple.

**Prime Example**

A good example of a quality flintlock that became a professional fowler’s gun is that owned by Allen Musselwhite of Langstone Wildfowlers, one of six made to the same pattern by Clayton of Southampton but which had been converted to percussion and subsequently covered in black tar for use by a local market gunner in Poole Harbour. The lock is believed to be a replacement but the stock is original and the entire gun has now been painstakingly restored.

Though it originated as a means by which local folk might fill hungry bellies, punt gunning had, by the mid-19th century, evolved into a sporting activity for a particular breed of gentleman wildfowler who had the resources to equip himself with an expensive outfit and who was not afraid of adventure, hard living, cold, mud, salt water and the spice of danger. Such men would establish themselves in properties or take lodgings around the coast and perhaps engage the services of a local wildfowler to act as guide and puntman. In doing so, they had to pay attention to the need to get along with the local fowlers who, in some quarters, could easily ruin the sport for a visiting gentleman gunner by “firing up” or disturbing the fowl.

“These poor shooters trudge to the nearest town on Saturday to sell what birds they may happen to have killed during the week. A stranger visiting their estuary with his fowling-punt is looked upon, more or less, as a thief come to rob them of their living,” warned Payne-Gallwey in *The Fowler in Ireland*. He advised sportsmen to be generous with the spoil and to chat with the poor fowlers on the beach, giving them a couple of birds or so according to the bag. “Fowl
cartridge, was the basis for a number of patents, including those by Alfred Clayton and Henry Holland.

Then, in 1885, Holland & Holland improved upon its previous system with a new patented screw breech; in all, Holland & Holland probably made around 70 punt guns. Other makers offered their own models, among them J&W Tolley, Thomas Bland and William Moore & Grey, plus a number of provincial makers. Punt gun bores of 1¼in and greater were designated with a letter. There were 13 “letter” bores, from P (1¼in) to A (2in), while the “letter” series was punctuated by the two largest numerical bore sizes, the two-bore (1.325in) and the one-bore (1.669in). Usually, though, a gun was described by its service load – for example, a 12oz gun or a 20oz gun.

After Hawker’s double gun, perhaps the most celebrated punt gun ever built was that which was commissioned by Payne-Gallwey and built to his design by Holland & Holland in 1885. A double 1½in (K) bore with barrels nine feet in length, it had a single trigger that could be selected to fire either barrel independently or both simultaneously. With each barrel loaded with 20oz of shot, the potential firepower was mighty indeed. However, although it was used around the coasts of Britain and Ireland, Payne-Gallwey had fired only about 80 shots from the gun before he sold it to Stanley Duncan.

Duncan was as an engineer with the London & North Eastern Railway and lived in Hull. Coming from a shooting family, he was a keen wildfowler and his principal claim to fame was that in 1908 he founded WAGBI, which in 1981 changed its name to BASC. Duncan had gained experience of punt gunning on the Tees and in his later years he spent a great deal of time building and designing gunning punts or working on punt guns. The Complete Wildfowler Ashore and Afloat, which he co-authored in 1911 with Guy Thorne, is packed with detailed information about punts and punt gunning.

Duncan, though, was essentially a workaday chap and with his practical turn of mind he spent much time converting old muzzle-loading guns to breech loaders. From a practical point of view, a breech-loading punt gun had rather few advantages over the muzzle loader, since rarely would a second shot at fowl present itself immediately after the big gun had been fired. However, unlike a muzzle loader, a breech loader could be loaded without landing or slipping the breeching rope and enabled the gunner to change shot size if, say, there was a chance at geese. Furthermore, amateur gunners wanted breech loaders and converting old guns to new ones presented Duncan with a useful line of business.

Perhaps his most interesting conversion was the splitting of Payne-Gallwey’s double Holland. Duncan himself remarked that there was little use for big double guns, owing to the infrequency of really large flocks of fowl, and perhaps he felt that two practical working guns were better.
than a single piece of wildfowling ordnance that would rarely, if ever, see action. At any rate, having acquired the gun, he divided the two barrels and made two separate 1½in breech loaders.

There the story might have ended but for the curiosity, nearly 100 years later, of the late James Dorrington, a passionate Essex wildfowler who, having been offered a single punt gun, noticed that the cocking lever was on the left-hand side and that there was a flat on the opposite side of the barrel. He realised that it was the left barrel of a double gun. When the other barrel turned up in a barn in South Wales in very poor condition, Dorrington recognised it as the missing barrel of the famous 1885 Holland, and he conceived the idea of restoration. Sadly, Dorrington died before the work could be accomplished but the two guns were bequeathed to BASC and thanks to the energies of Essex wildfowlers Julian Novorol and Jack Hoy, the engineering skills of David Conway and the stock-making craftsmanship of Jim Spalding, the gun was painstakingly rebuilt over a period of two years. It was presented to BASC in 2012 and, like the Hawker gun, is now on display.

The last great flowering of punt gunning occurred in the years before the Second World War. Whilst at Cambridge, Peter Scott, son of the great polar explorer who went on to found the Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust, took to wildfowling on the Ouse Washes and was introduced to gunning punts by Christopher Dalgety, who had bought a punt at Keyhaven and installed it on the north Norfolk coast and on the Wash, and then in Scotland on the Solway and the northern firths.

In his autobiography, The Eye of the Wind, published in 1961, Scott wrote that he could still relive “the incomparable thrill of stalking a great pack of wigeon or geese lying flat and hidden in a craft which showed only a few grey inches above water, and drew even fewer below.”

Those who spoke of wildfowling to Scott in his later years confirm that, even then, he remembered punt gunning with fondness. He defended the sport against those who regarded it as wholesale slaughter: “The puntman’s bag of wildfowl was always smaller than the game-shooter’s bag of pheasants or grouse or partridges. If many birds were to be bagged at all, why many with many shots more than many with one shot?”

But it is perhaps another of Scott’s punting friends, Michael Bratby, who best explained how this curious form of waterborne wildfowling captured the hearts and minds of so many people down the years, from writers and painters to soldiers, actors and politicians; from baronets to boatbuilders and longshoremen. Bratby wrote of the friendships forged whilst sharing hardship, triumph and failure on lonely estuaries; of being out in some of the last true wilderness that remain in these islands; of the early mornings and the sheer adventure of it all; and of the satisfaction of pulling off a well-planned stalk and a successful shot. Even if they never see a punt or a punt gun in their lives, these are things that today’s deerstalkers, wildfowlers and all fieldsportsmen can connect with and appreciate.
GAME CHANGER

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In the course of a lifetime’s fishing, inevitably, there are many gloriously incidents that have contributed to one’s appreciation of the vagaries of human nature. One would need a book to relate them all but the following episodes linger especially in the memory.

**THE GRIMERSTA**

There hadn’t been any rain for weeks. My old friend, Hugh Falkus, and I had arrived at The Grimersta on the Wednesday evening and looked in horror at the river, which was a meagre trickle. However, we were lucky because that night it poured down and continued to do so for two days, during which the river was unfishable and the colour of a newly ploughed field. The salmon, in their thousands, had been waiting patiently in the estuary and at last their moment had come for the spawning run.

At that time, the chairman of the Grimersta syndicate was a bristly, pompous, stage version of an Army colonel. On our first night, Hugh and I had decided that we needed a reviving drink after the long journey and stopped for nourishing whisky in the nearest pub. Dinner in the lodge was at eight o’clock sharp and, after we had changed, we came into the dining room at five past eight to be greeted by the wrath of the colonel, who treated us like erring subalterns. He and Hugh had little in common except a love of fishing and a hatred of Germans, because they had both been prisoners of war. To my amazement, Hugh, who had a very short fuse, merely apologised politely but I knew him well enough to know that he would be plotting revenge. “Don’t worry, Daunt,” he said afterwards, “we’ll sort him out later.”

The next day, Hugh and I drove to the bridge to look at the river. It was a wonderful sight, thundering down the hillside to the sea pool with curling brown waves and flotsam from months of drought. The salmon were pouring up it and we returned several fish to the water that had stranded themselves on the bank. Suddenly, a campervan, with a German registration, stopped on the bridge and a man got out. He looked as if he could have been straight out of the Third Reich, with blond hair and blue eyes. He marched up to Hugh and almost clicked his heels.

“Iss it possible to feesh ze river?” he demanded.

“Of course,” said Hugh instantly, before I could say anything. “It’s very simple. Do you see that large house at the end of the track? Well, drive up there and ring the bell. When someone answers it request to see The Colonel. Now,” he continued, “listen carefully because this is very important. When he appears, ask his permission to fish and quickly stuff £10 into his top pocket. He may be a bit difficult at first but don’t take no for an answer. Try him with £20 if £10 doesn’t work.”

The German clicked his heels again, thanked Hugh and drove away. With much joy Hugh and I listened to the shouting from the lodge, which could be heard clearly from 500 yards away.

**THE HELMsdALE AND SOUTH UIST**

There is a pool on the Kildonan stretch of The Helmsdale that always fishes best in the twilight, the witching hour. It had been a sunny day in July 1975 and I had had not even a sniff of a salmon. After dinner I waited by this pool for the dusk and then, starting at the head, cast my fly upon its darkling waters. At the third attempt the line went tight and I lifted the rod tip. A grilse of about 6lb leapt out of the water and then tore across the pool before throwing itself in a frenzy into the air again and landing on the top of the far bank from where it slid slowly down into the ditch below.

‘When he appears, ask his permission to fish and quickly stuff £10 into his top pocket’
I was, of course, stymied. There wasn’t a bridge for several miles and I could see no way of retrieving my fish. I was just considering swimming the pool when I saw a man walking his dog along the opposite bank. I knew he couldn’t hear me above the noise of the river and so I waved and held my rod up with my line running tight to the far side. He signalled that he understood and then disappeared into the ditch below and soon emerged holding my salmon in his hands. I made “put it back in the river” signs, which he pretended not to understand as he carefully extracted the hook, put the grilse under his coat, politely raised his hat to me and continued on his way.

I lost another salmon to an outside influence, but a far more worthy one, on the beautiful island of South Uist. I had been fishing Loch Bharp and I knew that, after there had been plenty of rain, the entrance to the burn that feeds the loch is often a good place for a salmon. I therefore took the boat ashore and walked to the burn mouth. It was in full spate, pouring into the loch in a peaty torrent. As I watched I saw a salmon “head and tail” and then another. This is nearly always a good sign of a taking fish and, as I tied a small Stoats Tail Tube onto the tail and a Kate McLaren onto the bob, my hands were shaking with excitement. I cast across the current and let the flies swing, lengthening my line with every cast. When I was almost at my extreme limit there was a frantic tug and a fish was on. It tore out into the loch and leapt and I could see that it was a small grilse. I played it hard and, feeling it tiring, found a good sandy beach on which to land it. Suddenly, for reasons that I didn’t understand, the fish felt much heavier and ceased its usual kicking. It was almost as if it were dead in the water. I thought that it must have become wrapped around a log and gave it much more pressure. Suddenly a silky, brown head appeared on the surface and there, holding my fish, was an otter. We stared at each other, both laying claim to the prize. Then the otter dived and the fly came out. He immediately surfaced again and stared at me with “my” grilse in his mouth. “Boo sucks to you,” he said, and swam away.

THE TEST

In 1962, I was 20 and by far the youngest member of the party. I was on one of the most famous beats of the pellucid River Test in June, just after the mayfly, when the river is in the fishing doldrums. I had been lucky enough to be sent by my uncle who had ‘flu and who had arranged for me to take his rod. There was a large, overweight, florid man with a big moustache who was also a guest. He was complaining bitterly to his host that he knew nothing about fishing but was there for the fun and the laughter.

“Jer know,” he said loudly, in an affected voice, “me wife offered me a grope in the grass if I caught a trout. And a special bit of naughtiness if I caught two.” He winked

“Me wife offered me a grope in the grass if I caught a trout. And a special bit of naughtiness if I caught two’
obscenely and laughed heartily. "Well, that sort of thing is few and far between these days, more's the pity. I'd rather sit here with a large gin and have a few laughs than try and catch a fish. But I suppose I'd better try. She's brilliant in the sack, yer know, but only dishes it out very rarely."

Looking at him, I was amazed that any woman could dream of being married to this revolting specimen, unless he was very rich. Seeing the latest Rolls-Royce in the car park, I supposed that he must be. His friend looked at me and said: "Why don't you ask young Mike here to try and catch you a trout. I'll be surprised if he can't."

The Bore turned to me and narrowed his eyes. I could see his nasty little mind working overtime. This spotty youth could, after all, make himself useful and it would give him a chance to show off his wealth. He put his arm around my shoulders in a grotesque, man-to-man manner. "Well, young feller," he said, "tell yer what I'll do. You catch me six trout," and here he winked at his host, knowing that this was almost impossible in June, "and I'll give yer a thousand smackers. One thousand pounds for six fish. That's not a bad offer, is it?" and he guffawed heartily.

I knew immediately what to do but first I needed to butter up this awful man, which I found hard but it was well worth it for a thousand pounds — a huge amount then.

"I'll do my best, sir," I said smiling in a forlorn and sycophantic manner.

I jumped into my old mini van and quickly drove to the Houghton Club hatchery in Stockbridge. I had worked here briefly during the holidays and so I was known. I asked if I could buy six trout. We went to the stew ponds and carefully netted out the fish in varying sizes from 1lb to 2lb. I certainly didn't want them to be uniform.

"There you are then," said the manager. "What do you want them for?"

"I'll tell you in the pub this evening," I said. "How much do I owe you?" I asked.

"Go and put a pound in a charity box," he replied kindly.

I returned to the river and, avoiding the hut, did a little fishing. Much to my amazement I caught a grayling. Then I saw the keeper and felt that I had to tell him the truth. When he had stopped laughing he said: "You owe me a pint to keep my mouth shut."

At five o'clock I fished near the hut, attached one of the trout to my fly and pretended to play it, net it and bang it on the head. This was seen from the hut window by several people, who had caught just three trout between them. This included The Bore. I carefully stowed it with the other fish in my bag. Then I went in search of my benefactor who was, by now, very drunk.

"I saw yer catch one," he slurred, "but that's not enough to earn yer the grand."

Silently, I emptied my bag onto the floor. "Good God!" he said and, with a flourish and a lot of show, wrote out a cheque for £1,000. It bounced.
HILLS AND SPILLS WITH THE MEYNELL

It’s 30 years since the writer first spent a day in Derbyshire with the hunt but, despite the changes, he found it no less exhilarating.

WRITTEN BY WILL CURSHAM • PHOTOGRAPHY BY SARAH FARNSWORTH

A quintessentially English winter scene: the Meynell & South Staffordshire head out from Osmaston in Derbyshire.
A gossamer-thin cloak of snow lay across the Derbyshire countryside as I hacked into the village of Osmaston for the Meynell and Staffordshire’s meet at the Shoulder of Mutton pub. With huntsman and hounds in front of me and the thatched roofs of the cottages topped with snow, it was a quintessentially English winter’s scene.

As delightfully picturesque as the surroundings were, I was not there to admire the view. Osmaston lies in the north of the Meynell’s vast country, which stretches from Ashbourne in the north right down to the outskirts of Birmingham in the south. It offers great variety, ranging from dramatic hill country in the north to the lowlands of South Staffordshire. In between, around the villages of Brailsford and Longford, lies the cream of the Meynell’s country. Here is the nearest thing to an old-fashioned, grass-and-hedge country that you will find nowadays. It is not the well-manicured, delectable landscape of the Shires but an untamed country where the hedges remain untrimmed and you have to jump whatever nature, or the local farmer, puts in your way.

Osmaston is one of the prime meets within this area and I can still remember my first visit there. It was nearly 30 years ago to the day and I was a hunting-mad 12-year-old riding a 14.2hh skewbald pony called Henry. Although Henry was an absolute devil in the stable, he was a hell of a jumper and we needed every ounce of his ability that day. We jumped countless hedges, most of which Henry couldn’t see over, and, despite falling at two of them, I had one of the best days of my hunting life.

I have been back to the Meynell several times since then and arriving at the meet at the Shoulder of Mutton felt like returning to a favourite haunt. The surrounding country looked familiar and amongst the field of 40 who had gathered, there were some who would have been out 30 years ago, including former Joint Master Nick Hutchinson, his wife, Anne-Marie, and secretary Rachael Morley. Morley is one of those gems that every hunt needs; efficient but friendly, she makes visitors feel like long-lost friends.

Morley’s friendliness seems to permeate the whole hunt and I soon found myself chatting to fellow members of the field, including sisters Charlotte and Lucy D’Angibau, step-granddaughters of the late Phil Arthers, a former Joint Master of the Meynell. Arthers was one of the best fieldmasters I have ever followed and he crossed the formidable →
A DELECTABLE COUNTRY:
SIX OF THE MEYNELL’S
BEST AREAS

MARSTON/ROSTON
“The biggest part of the Meynell
country, renowned for its hedges
and ditches,” according to honorary
secretary Rachael Morley.

RADBOURNE
The area where the Meynell has its
Opening Meet, this is typical Meynell
grass-and-hedge country.

SUTTON-ON-THE-HILL/TRUSLEY
“This area attracts smaller fields but
it is old-fashioned farming country,
which is rough and challenging to
cross,” says Will Tatler MFH.

BLOOR
Right up in the north, this is the hill
country where you will be greeted by
breathtaking views and stone walls.

HOAR CROSS
The best of the old South Staffordshire
country to the south of the A50. Mostly
Duchy land, it is big and challenging.

WOOTTON HALL
Another meet in the hill country and
home of former Master and huntsman
the Hon Johnny Greenall. Stunning
views and countless stone walls.

THE MEYNELL AND SOUTH
STAFFORDSHIRE:
A POTTED HISTORY

The Meynell and South Staffordshire
country has been hunted since 1793, first
by the Sudbury Hunt (under the Vernon
family) and then, from 1813, by the Hoar
Cross Hunt. The latter was founded by
Hugo Meynell, grandson of the legendary
Quorn Master of the same name.
Meynell’s son took on the mastership on
his father’s death, running the hunt until
his death in 1871. A year later, the hunt
took his family name. In the same year,
kennels were built at Sudbury.
In 1970, the Meynell took on its
present form when it amalgamated
with the South Staffordshire. Hounds
are still kennelled at Sudbury, and the
magnificent red brick buildings are
some of the finest in the country.
Meynell country with such effortless grace that others were inspired to follow him.

Indeed, it was fitting that our fieldmaster for today, Will Tatler MFH, is something of an Arthers protégé. A Meynell man born and bred, he is now in his second season as Joint Master and fieldmaster. He used to keep his horses at Arthers’ yard. “Phil tried to teach me to ride the various horses I kept with him,” he remembers. “I picked up a lot from him about mastering as well. In particular, he always used to say that you should fit the day to the field behind you and that you shouldn’t try and be a hero and leave everyone behind.”

Tatler is part of a strong mastership that includes Nick Alexander, Mike Jones and Peter Southwell. Alexander and Southwell were both out today, although the latter was on his feet having undergone an operation just 10 days before. This mastership has had to face its fair share of challenges. Aside from having to organise sport within the confines of the Hunting Act, its popular and very capable huntsman, Jamie Nicklin, was sidelined for a season and a half after he smashed his pelvis in a schooling accident. He has only recently returned to hunting hounds.

To start with, we crossed a rough country with trappy rails and hairy hedges. Both Nick Alexander and Jamie Nicklin took unaccustomed tumbles as their horses misjudged ugly-looking obstacles, although both got back to their feet like bouncing balls, with Nicklin declaring: “I’m glad I had a fall, I wanted to see how I would bear up.”

Walker-Okeovers, are very accommodating and they have us throughout the season on their Okeover estate, which is in the north of our country,” said Tatler as we watched hounds working across the parkland. Hounds spoke in fits and starts as we moved across the estate and although it didn’t make for an exciting ride, it did allow me to watch Nicklin at close quarters. “Jamie is a Meynell lad and it was always his ambition to hunt these hounds,” his wife, Georgina, told me.

A consummate horseman who is always impeccably turned out, he has a lovely, quiet way with his hounds, letting them work out the trail for themselves, only nudging them on gently when they really need it.

As pleasant as this was, it was just a prelude to some real Meynell action. After leaving the park, hounds picked up their trail just off Quilow Lane. Off they raced, with Nicklin and his whippers-in, Sam Staniland and Josh Worthington-Hayes, in close attendance. Tatler gave them a few moments, and then he led us off, straight over a stream followed immediately by a wire fence. I was glad that my horse, a smart chestnut called Cody, hired from Cheshire farmer Andrew Callwood, was a careful jumper.

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I saw Alex Moore pull out and take his own line, I decided to use him as my pilot. Moore lives in Osmaston and is the son of Charlie Moore, a Meynell stalwart and clerk of the course at nearby Uttoxeter Racecourse.

After jumping a line of hedges parallel to the Wyaston Lane, we swung right-handed, jumping a set of rails onto the lane and then a hedge off it again. This caused a fair amount of grief but not for former Joint Master Mary Hingley and her son, Alfred, who sailed over it. Hounds had been screaming up until now but they seemed to lose the trail here and the pace slackened. This gave me the chance to catch up with Tatler, who explained just what goes into organising this delectable jumping country. “The country is becoming increasingly fragmented and I have had to see more than 60 farmers today,” he told me. “When I started this job people thought that this bit was the bit I wouldn’t be very good at but it is actually my favourite part. It is all about respect and you have to know which farmers to push and which not to.”

Shortly afterwards, Tatler was leading us into action again. Hounds picked up their trail near Stydd Hall and we followed them at a scorching pace to Boothay Farm (where the Meynell has its team chase), jumping all manner of obstacles: hedges uphill, hedges with ditches, post-and-rails, broken-down gates, intact gates, brooks and streams. I just about had time to change on to my second horse before we did another circuit of Boothay, taking in yet more fences.

It was like being on a hunting rollercoaster; unpredictable, terrifying but thrilling. When we finally paused an hour and a half later, I felt exhausted but exhilarated. In fact, it was something of a relief that the rest of the afternoon was relatively quiet.

As the afternoon merged into early evening, Nicklin blew for home. “Well, that was a good Meynell day,” declared Nick Hutchinson as we hacked back across country to Osmaston Park. It was certainly the type of day I had hoped for and it struck me that I felt the same feeling of exhilaration that I had felt when I first visited 30 years ago. Despite all the changes in the intervening years, it was good to know that a day with the Meynell is as thrilling as ever.

To visit, call honorary secretary Rachael Morley on 01332 824230/07889 083194 or email morley274@btinternet.com
Leaders of the pack

Those 52 playing cards tossed in your top drawer have a long, distinguished and surprising history

Written by Ettie Neil-Gallacher

From a demure round of patience to the intellectual rigour of bridge via the diabolical mysticism of the tarot, the humble playing card has had myriad roles since its invention in China more than a millennium ago. This has been recognised in music, literature and art for centuries, with cards serving variously as a metaphor for sexual conquest for Lady Gaga; lighting the touchpaper for the eponymous denouement in The Sting; and as a symptom of Pip’s social inadequacies as he is taunted by Estella in Great Expectations.

Early history is opaque but experts agree that playing cards originated in China before spreading to India and Persia. Card playing in the Arabian peninsula reached its apotheosis in the Mamluk dynasty of modern-day Egypt. Each suit consisted of 12 cards, the top two being court cards, a king and a vizier, with the remaining cards “pip” or number cards featuring motifs such as coins, clubs, goblets, polo sticks, swords and jugs.

Dr David Parlett, games historian, consultant and visiting professor at the University of Suffolk, acknowledges that while such symbols suggest “an aristocratic milieu, it is likely that all social classes played. We only know about literate society as that’s where the references come from.” Moreover, rules were fluid and would have meant little to the players of ancient and medieval “folk games”.

When exactly cards entered Europe, via Italy and the Iberian Peninsula, is a matter of dispute. Adam Wintle, writing for the World of Playing Cards website, notes that there is no reference to them in the writings of Petrarch or Chaucer, and so infers that they hadn’t spread before the time of the Black Death. But from the 1370s, we have references to playing – and indeed ensuing restrictions – as far north as Belgium. Paul Bostock infers that “the quick uptake and proclamations banning cards point to gambling”. Though as Parlett points out, at least for some sectors of society, “the idea of not playing for money is a peculiarly modern one. If you don’t play with coins or counters, you play for a written score and that requires a degree of numeracy and literacy”, and that even as early as this the games “included the direct ancestors of nearly all modern card games”.

Among the earliest surviving packs is the Stuttgart deck, which dates from circa 1430. Depicting suit symbols and the court hierarchy in relation to the courtly hunt, these were composed of gilded pasteboard. Hunting cards reflected the centrality of the pursuit to daily life in a Europe that was still agricultural, and further packs in existence have been found from Innsbruck (circa 1445) and the Burgundian Territories in what is now the Netherlands (circa 1475-80).

ARRIVAL IN ENGLAND
It was in the second quarter of the 15th century that playing cards arrived in England, probably from Rouen, which was the hub of card making and export, and where we had strong trade links, as pointed out by Roddy Sullivan, the Hon Curator at the Worshipful Company of Makers of Playing Cards. Little is known about their usage at that time as
Wintle observes, “cards are by their nature flimsy”, so only a handful survive. However, we can infer from the fact that King Edward IV banned the import of cards that there was sufficient supply and demand here already.

Around the turn of the 16th century, the differing suit systems emerged: Latin (chalices, swords, coins and batons), German (hearts, acorns, handbells and leaves) and French (clubs, spades, hearts and diamonds). It is the last of these three that was adopted by the English. Wintle summarises, “We can speculate that different cultural, artistic and iconographic traditions, contrasting feudal, aristocratic or imperial court hierarchies, conservative or liberal tendencies, the migration of craftsmen as well as the exportation of artisanal goods and crafts to other markets, even linguistic influences and fashions in clothing, all played a part.”

Court cards originated in France slightly earlier than this, in the second quarter of the 15th century. The French were keen to identify them as specific figures, though two different sets emerged from Paris and Rouen. Speculation as to who exactly was featured still abounds, as poor craftsmanship soon undermined the verisimilitude of the likenesses, but figures for the kings and queens included Charlemagne, Caesar, David, Pallas and Judith. For the knave or jack, the identities were more consistent and included Hector the Trojan prince and Lancelot of Arthurian legend.

However, errors on the part of copyists and woodcutters meant that the symbolism got lost; indeed, the practice was dropped in the 18th century. Despite the influence of French practice on the English, there is little to suggest manufacturers here felt the need to identify their courtly figures, despite adopting the nomenclature. Just as the king and queen in chess are not making any historical references, so too with playing cards.

While few physical cards survive from this time, we do have literary references →
to cards during the times of the Tudors and early Stuarts. Shakespeare alluded to them in *King Lear* and *Coriolanus*. Melita Thomas, the editor of *Tudor Times*, has said that “cards were perennially popular at all levels of Tudor society”, with games including laugh and lie down (a pairing game), imperial (a trick-taking game for two), primero (similar to poker) and Pope Joan (which was particularly popular at court during the reign of Henry VIII – indeed, there is a no doubt apocryphal tale about Catherine of Aragon playing it with Anne Boleyn). Other games that proliferated in the 16th century include those with such fantastic names as gleek, trump, ruff, whisk and losing lodam.

An indication of the popularity of cards, as well as the desire to protect the English manufacturers, was the establishment of the Worshipful Company of Makers of Playing Cards in 1628, which, in return for import restrictions, provided the king with revenue from taxation to fund wars. The Company currently has around 50 members, while its 2,000-strong collection of cards is housed at the London Metropolitan Archives.

But as soon as Oliver Cromwell realised that cards were such a source of enjoyment, they too went the way of the Crown Jewels and Christmas pudding. But as with so many things that make life bearable, cards enjoyed a great resurgence during the Restoration. Indeed, as Wintle notes, it was only from this period onwards that we find any sort of order in this history of the publication of playing cards, examples of full packs in this country, as well as the emergence of manuals. Foremost amongst these was Charles Cotton’s *The Compleat Gamester* of 1674, which was the contemporary bible on the subject of game playing – a position it held until it was superseded just over a century later by Edmond Hoyle’s *Mr Hoyle’s Games*, although this latter work focuses solely on cards.

The John Johnson Collection of printed ephemera at the Bodleian Library in Oxford is particularly rich in examples of 17th- and 18th-century playing cards displaying social, political and historical commentary, and then the classical nostalgia of the Victorians.

Sullivan notes that card playing and production peaked during the middle of the 19th century, as manufacturers such as Goodall and de la Rue were able to produce cards cheaply and plentifully but that the games enjoyed were determined by social boundaries. “Up and pontoon were played by the workers, while the upper echelons had more time to devote to longer games such as whist and bridge.” Queen Victoria herself

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**The secondary use of cards is an investigation in itself, but here are our top five:**

- Voltaire penned a furious note on the back of a card in the 18th century, having called upon someone four times.
- The John Johnson Collection has a fascinating supply of playing cards used as calling cards in 18th and 19th century France and England.
- Emergency money as desperately used by the French in Canada when they were caught short.
- Card halves left by mothers as they deposited their children at orphanages and the like in the hope of reuniting them in the future.
- In wartime, cards were used to smuggle maps to the Front Line.
- Rendezvous cards and declarations of love nothing says romance like a playing card.

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Above: the Cloisters playing cards are the only complete deck to survive from the 15th century

Below: this British pack from 1688 features the coats of arms of various distinguished peers.
didn’t play but her family enjoyed bezique and Prince Albert was fond of patience. Her wayward and indulgent son and heir was extremely keen on baccarat – indeed, he got swept up in the Royal Baccarat Scandal, when soldier and womaniser Sir William Gordon-Cumming, Fourth Baronet, was accused of cheating. Despite the Prince’s best efforts, he was called as a witness – the first time the heir to the throne had been compelled to appear in court since 1411.

Sullivan cites three “major 19th-century developments”. The introduction of numbers in the corners of the cards allowed them to be fanned and held in one hand. Cards became double-ended and, finally, manufacturers took to rounding the corners of the cards to avoid scuffing. Such modifications only served to broaden the appeal of the game and troops often played quick and easy games in the trenches during the First World War, such as nab and pontoon.

**MODERN CHALLENGES**

The 20th century posed many challenges to playing cards. Popular entertainment changed beyond recognition, with the growth of board games and moving pictures. Goodall and de la Rue merged, just as Waddingtons was shifting from printing to card production; it duly took over the merged firms after the Second World War, before itself being taken over by Hasbro.

John McLeod, editor of www.pagat.com, notes three main trends in modern cards: the growth of bridge following Vanderbilt’s new rules for contract bridge in 1925, which “made the game much more alive”; according to Bostock, and which McLeod notes is particularly enjoyed “by expert card players, almost to the exclusion of other card games”; the predominance of rummy-type, draw and discard games, unheard of at the turn of the century but played by a third of the population by 1981 when Waddingtons conducted a survey, and the increasing popularity of poker.

It is pertinent to think about the impact that online gaming is having in the 21st century. Interestingly, both Bostock and McLeod are quite positive. The latter says it is “a very poor substitute for a face-to-face game” but that it can be convenient for people who might otherwise find it difficult to meet others to play. Bostock points to how online enjoyment is spilling over into the real world and adds, “Card manufacture is changing. With laser printing it is now more economical to make a short run of, say, 200 to 500 packs. Put that together with crowdfunding and we now see artists/designers leading the way to produce new and very high quality card sets.” So while the big manufacturers are now to be found in the US, China and Belgium, where Cartamundi thrives, other smaller operators, such as Bradford-based Elaine Lewis, are able to design their own small batches.

As Sullivan laments, the British are not the card players we once were, nor can we compete with Central Europe, where up to 87% play weekly, but we still have a trick or two up our national sleeve.

Left: jokers wild – this 19th-century card was produced by Brepols, in Turnhout, Belgium, where the country’s playing card museum is now based

Above: a republican deck celebrating the French Revolution
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Rolls-Royce Silver Shadow as affordable luxury? Impossible in the 20th century, a reality today...

WRITTEN BY DANIEL PEMBREY

In 1965, you could have purchased a Rolls-Royce Silver Shadow for its introductory price of £6,557. Also available that year was an Aston Martin DB5 Saloon for £4,175 or a Jaguar E-Type Fixed Head Coupe for £1,896. It should come as no surprise that the Rolls-Royce cost most. It was widely regarded as the finest motor car in the world.

Fast forward more than half a century and a very different picture emerges. An excellent, original Aston Martin DB5 will now set you back approaching £1 million, due to its starring role in the Bond films. A factory restored 1965 E-Type Jaguar Coupe was recently offered by the Jaguar Reborn initiative for £285,000. An excellent, original Rolls-Royce Silver Shadow or the Bentley T-Series version (the...}

Rolls-Royce Silver Shadows offer elegance, luxury and surprising value for money
same car save for the front grille) should be yours for under £20,000. Does this make the Silver Shadow or the T-Series a steal?

To answer this question, it is worth looking closer at the forces driving these valuations. The comparison between the marques is instructive. More Silver Shadows were made than any other model of Rolls-Royce. It was in production from 1965 to 1980 (a period that witnessed the company’s bankruptcy and state-led bailout): some 30,000 Silver Shadows rolled off the Crewe production line. Rolls-Royce cars tended to be kept on the road. By comparison, just 1,000 Aston Martin DB5s were produced and, as 007’s armourer “Q” might attest, not all of them were so well looked after; hence the remaining pool of DB5s became ever smaller.

**SILVER STATEMENT**

The DB5 is arguably the best example of a phenomenon known to classic car dealers and auctioneers: the model lusted after by clients who, in later life, have the spending power to back a purchase. Posters on bedroom walls in the ’60s and ’70s are a reliable guide to the cars chased at auction houses today. This phenomenon applies equally to E-Types, driven by Beatles and similar role models back in the day.

In a Silver Shadow you are transported to another world.

The Silver Shadow occupies a more ambiguous place in popular culture. The combination of the status conferred and the large numbers produced meant that it came to be owned by the suave and raffish alike; it could equally have been driven by The Avengers’ John Steed or Minder’s Arthur Daley. Jimmy Tarbuck and Kate Moss have owned one. It remains a statement car, often getting a different kind of reaction from other road users.

All of these vehicles were drivers’ cars but in different ways (note that none are convertibles, which tend to command even greater premiums). The Aston Martin DB5 Saloon was the quintessential refined touring car; small wonder the Alpine driving scenes in Goldfinger became so iconic. At the same time, the car boasted a rich racing heritage. Similarly, the E-Type offered a race-bred design, plus a more immediate “sports car” feel with its low lines, speed and spartan cabin.

The Silver Shadow marked the Rolls-Royce company’s return to its own driver-led days. Charles Rolls co-founded the company in 1904. He was the youngest son of the First Baron Llangattock, keen on flying as well as fast cars, and was killed in a plane crash in 1910. In the intervening years, Rolls-Royce developed vehicles mostly driven by chauffeurs. The Phantom and Silver Cloud put owners and their guests in the plush rear seats. The Silver Shadow put the owner’s hands back on the steering wheel. In this sense, the car was as much an expression of changing times as the starry DB5 or E-Type. Its design reflects – in its own glossy yet graceful way – the loosening social barriers of the 1960s.
The Silver Shadow was also an engineering breakthrough for the company. It was the first Rolls-Royce to be built around a unitary body and chassis. This made it roomier, sturdier and – along with newly introduced independent rear suspension and disc brakes – gave it better road holding. It was both a drivers’ car and a luxury family experience. With the owner at the wheel, there was yet more room in the back.

**ROYCE THE PERFECTIONIST**

The engineering behind these developments can be attributed to the company’s other founder, Henry Royce. Rolls-Royce connoisseurs dislike abbreviating the marque but if pushed to do so they tend to opt for “Royce” (never “Roller”). Surely they are not picking between the two founders; however, Royce’s indefatigable, perfectionist approach to engineering gives him a special place in their hearts.

When Royce died in 1933, land speed record-breaker Sir Malcolm Campbell wrote in *The Field*, “Not only was he far in front of others in his conception of design, but he had a positive mania for the best in everything…”

Novelist Sir Max Pemberton recalls an occasion when Royce was dining at a smart London restaurant and a wheeled wagon, used to serve hors d’oeuvres, collapsed. The maître d’hôtel berated the waiter in charge of it. Royce calmly took the maître d’hôtel aside and sketched out the defects of the wagon. Pemberton chronicles other details of Royce’s life that reveal his down-to-earth, workaholic tendencies, such as the prized fruit trees and roses that Royce tended in his garden after dark, such was the length of his working days. He used the light of an electric bulb attached to a bamboo cane, pitched where needed – planting an appropriate image in our minds.

Encountering a fine example of a Silver Shadow today, you can’t help marvel at the build quality. Jaguars were known for ill-fitting panels when leaving the factory; there is none of that with a Silver Shadow. It houses a 6.2-litre engine (the 1965 E-Type’s engine was 4.2 litres, the DB5’s four litres) but you’d never know it from the noise levels. Affixed to the underside of the bonnet is noise-dampening quilting. Other thoughtful details include windscreen wipers that perform an extra sweep upon being switched off, letting them come to rest perfectly parallel to the bottom of the windscreen so as to avoid any needless distraction to the driver’s view.

When you enter the car, you begin to see why the Rolls-Royce cost so much more than the Aston Martin or Jaguar originally. Really, there is no comparison. With the DB5 or the E-Type, you sit in a car that smells of old wool. The Smiths instrumentation remains evocative; however, in a Silver Shadow you are transported to another world. The leather upholstery is sumptuous; the walnut dashboard a visual treat. Step back outside – enjoying that thunk of the door closing snugly once more – and other details become apparent. The line that extends the length of the body marks the company’s first “single bow” model (as opposed to the “double bow” shapes with separate, curved rear sections that were a holdover from horse-drawn carriage days).

The vehicle’s stylist was John Polwhele Blatchley, who was bedridden in his youth and used the time to sketch and build models of fantasy cars. He studied at Chelsea School of Engineering and got a job in 1935 with a local coachbuilder, Gurney Nutting – creator of bespoke bodies renowned for their elegance and balance. Blatchley soon became head designer there. He joined Rolls-Royce during the Second World War, worked on the Merlin aero engine used in Spitfires and Hurricanes, and was promoted to become the company’s car stylist with a focus on developing standardised body shapes. He described styling the Silver Shadow as “very much an architectural exercise” – a reference to the many competing technical demands placed...
on the vehicle. Life for him at Rolls-Royce became a series of committee meetings to review safety and other regulations and he took early retirement in 1969. However, when the company was eventually taken over by BMW, he returned to review the designs of the new Phantoms — testimony to his reputation. The shape of the Silver Shadow showed restraint, simplicity and yet a stately quality, too, from the front grille to the gentle fall of the boot lid. It outsold all other models.

**TIMELESS CLASSIC**

Today, Silver Shadows are not only affordable to buy, they are affordable to maintain — provided that they have been looked after. Peter Eatenton, a partner at London’s Chelsea Workshop, a Rolls-Royce and Bentley specialist, recommends a budget of £2,000 a year to keep one on the road — less than an E-Type Jaguar and certainly less than an Aston Martin DB5. Major repair work can become expensive (for any of these vehicles) but parts for Rolls-Royce cars are readily available from suppliers such as Flying Spares. The “serviceability” of old Rolls-Royce vehicles means they can be driven far from home; Eatenton has a number of clients who take their cars to the South of France each summer.

Nick Wells is a specialist in these vehicles at Coys of Kensington, the auctioneer. A nice example of a Silver Shadow with three owners and 35,000 original miles recently sold there for £14,000. It was an early model with the chrome bumpers (the Series II Silver Shadow, introduced in 1977, added alloy and rubber bumpers) and it had a full Rolls-Royce service history.

“It is important that previous owners have looked after the vehicle and have not cut corners on maintenance,” remarks Wells. “Hire a specialist to examine the car thoroughly before you buy it, and keep in mind that the cost of any overhaul or restoration work can quickly exceed the purchase price.”

Wells adds that the successor Silver Spirit model, introduced in 1980, costs even less to buy. The shape is very different: modern, more boxy and spacious inside. Designed for the American market, these later models brought more creature comforts — not to mention more performance in the case of the Bentley “Turbo R” version, introduced in 1985 and nicknamed the “Crewe missile.”

Charles Buckley is a farmer and property developer who recently bought a 1997 Turbo R for £17,500. One of the last cars of its kind, made soon before Volkswagen took over the company, it is a rare “RT” (long wheelbase) model in dark blue with a cream interior. “It feels like sitting in a sitting room,” Buckley reports. His purchase was informed both by forward and rear views of the market. “I suspect prices are only going one way but I bought mine mainly for reasons of nostalgia. This car represents 1980s capitalism — a vehicle originally owned by those who ‘made it’ in that era. There’s a brashness and an optimism about it that you can’t help enjoy.” He sounds a note of caution, however. “Whilst it has a 6.8-litre turbo engine to propel it, the brakes struggle to harness its two-and-a-half-ton heft. There have been a few times when I’ve nearly overshotted the end of the driveway.”

Nick Wells at Coys recommends: “Buy the car you want to own and drive, and buy the best example you can afford.” Returning to Silver Shadows, Wells points out that the Bentley T-Series is a good alternative for those seeking a lower key presence on the road. The T-Series cars sell for 10% more than the Silver Shadows for this reason and because fewer were made (just over 2,000) — though, again, it is the same car save for the radiator grille.

Before opting for a T-Series, it is worth considering that Rolls-Royce grille. Like a masterful illusion, it contains not a single straight line. A flat shiny surface tends to look concave to the naked eye, so skilled Rolls-Royce workers hand-shaped the shell over their knees to give the appearance of straight lines when in reality each one was imperceptibly convex. No wonder the grille is so famous the world over and Rolls-Royce cars of that era retain such presence on the road. No other car is quite like it.
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Westminster Abbey reveals its treasures

Westminster Abbey is the great “parish church of the nation” and next year the Dean and Chapter will unveil new exhibition galleries – The Queen’s Diamond Jubilee Galleries – in the ancient eastern “triforium”, a sequence of spaces 70 feet above ground level. The five-year project will have cost just under £23 million and represents one of the most ambitious transformations of a building of such iconic status in modern times. The last such major intervention to the mostly 13th-century Abbey was finished in 1745, when Nicholas Hawksmoor completed the two western towers, so subtly handled that many people think they are medieval.

The generous Gothic volumes of the triforium – dramatically spliced through with stout timbers introduced by Christopher Wren to support his reworking of the old Gothic pitched roofs of the radial chapels into pragmatic lead flats – may have originally been intended as a place for royal chapels. The triforium was evidently also designed to have a significant aesthetic role, bringing light across into the Abbey church from a high level, enhancing the lace-like, perforated character of the interior’s structure.

Historically, the only access to the triforium was via two narrow spiral staircases, so it gradually became used as a store and workshop space. The current Dean of Westminster, the Very Reverend Dr John Hall, wondered if better use could be made of these extraordinary spaces in a great national shrine, which receives around 1.3 million visitors every year. Thus the idea of the new exhibition galleries was developed.

Dr Hall especially celebrates the extended welcome and experience of the Abbey that will be achieved with these spaces and says that the “opening up of the eastern triforium as The Queen’s Diamond Jubilee Galleries is the largest change to the Abbey building since the completion of the west towers in 1745. We look forward to affording visitors not only exceptional views within the Abbey and beyond it but also a sight of many historic Abbey treasures hitherto not exhibited.”

The Dean was lucky in his appointment of the Surveyor to the Fabric, the aptly named Ptolemy Dean, who has responded to the challenge with a brilliant combination of original thinking and sensitivity – although, in his own words, it has been “a daunting and humbling experience”. The biggest hurdle was always going to be getting visitors up to this level. Dean’s response has been to design a splendid, Gothic-inspired, star-shaped tower, which houses a staircase wrapped around a lift shaft.

The plan section of the tower is ingeniously based on a motif seen throughout the cathedral’s medieval decoration. As Dean says: “It is essentially the pattern of a rotated square, which is a motif seen on the early retable at Westminster and elsewhere in the Abbey, and suited the geometry of a lift shaft with a rotating stair wrapped around it.”

The lift-and-stair tower is ribbed and articulated in a clever homage to the Gothic spirit, rising to a bold, lead-covered mini-spire of →
its own. "The roof pitch was dictated by the context; it needed to feel harmonious and to feel Gothic. A flat roof would have jarred, nor would it have given the space for the lift over-run," says Dean.

Rather than reach for an unsympathetic steel-and-glass solution for the walling of the tower, Dean has specified large panels of leaded glass on the late 17th-century pattern. The effect of the 12,000 small glass panes will be jewel-like. Furthermore, this is also a clever linking-in with the glazing pattern of the triforium itself, which dates to the Wren interventions, and at the same time the form and the articulated, ribbed character echoes the glorious Henry VII Lady Chapel, which was completed in 1516.

Dean observes: "The structure just couldn’t be all stone, as this would have required large buttresses and taken up too much space. So we looked at Ely Cathedral and the great crossing tower there, which is in lead-covered timber, and took that lantern tradition as our inspiration, while using steel to achieve the height required. As at Ely, we also used lead-clad buttresses to enclose the rainwater downpipes."

A new stone door frame was created at the access point, executed in Reigate stone, from a long disused quarry especially re-opened for the purpose. The new Queen’s Diamond Jubilee Galleries occupy the section of the triforium that wraps, in horseshoe formation, around the choir and high altar of the Abbey. This now provides some 9,600 square footage (892 square metres) of exhibition space. Specialist contractor Daedalus Conservation has carried out a restrained intervention, with the minimum of visible alteration – beyond a strengthening of the floor and the addition of a handsome oak finishing.

**TREASURES IN THEMES**

The experience of moving through and inside the very architecture of the Abbey itself will certainly be one of the over-riding wonders of any visit to the new galleries. The great treasures to be shown are to be arranged in themes and the exhibition installation itself is designed by MUMA, the architectural company that designed the new gallery for Manchester’s Whitworth and the re-presentation of the Medieval and Renaissance Galleries at the Victoria and Albert Museum in South Kensington.

The exhibition is to be arranged in themes around the “horseshoe”: the Abbey and the monarchy; worship and daily life; the buildings; and “the Abbey and national memory”. Treasures to be shown include many rare medieval wonders, such as the Liber Regalis, the handbook for medieval coronations, as well as later curiosities of the collection, which have been assembled over centuries. Memorable among these are the richly clothed funeral effigies of royalty, which formed part of funeral processions, and Henry V’s funerary saddle.

For those visitors looking down into the nave and choir, and sanctuary, something →

Above: the rotated square inspired Ptolemy. Dean. Right: stunning views of the Palace of Westminster. Below: the Liber Regalis, one of the Abbey’s most precious illuminated manuscripts.
had to be done for safety, as the full-height arcading at this level was designed to be fully open to the nave and chancel, so a railing and screening has been introduced. Again, Dean has eschewed the glazed panels that have become so ubiquitous in ancient interiors and has specially designed ironwork of a sensitive, cinquefoil pattern that echoes the medieval pattern and detail of the Abbey, “sufficiently ornate to blend in”. These screens, already installed, echo the long tradition of artistic Gothic-inspired decoration that has been part of the story of the Abbey for so many centuries.

**STAR OF THE SHOW**
The planning of the tower entrance and the new galleries has required deft and surgical planning, streamlining several of the existing arrangements: the Song School and loos have all been relocated to make the entrance and approach to the site practical. This has all made possible the subtle and sensitive drama of a new tower, which will bring visitors up to galleries filled with the Abbey’s treasures. They tell the story of the nation, the monarchy and this remarkable place. Some will no doubt find the thrill of looking down from the triforium galleries into the great Abbey church is the best exhibit of all. “Westminster Abbey itself is the real star of the show,” says Dean.

After a long consultation process, there was no formal opposition to the new proposals, from Westminster City Council or other bodies. This is testimony to the design skill of Ptolemy Dean and the dedication of the Dean and Chapter to finding a fitting solution. The skilled craftsmen and project managers of Daedalus Conservation have already worked on many major national projects, including the stabilisation of the remains of Clandon Park, Surrey, after the fire of 2015, and work on Hampton Court Palace. The international reputation of MUMA also invites high expectations of the displays that are now being installed.

**GENEROUS SUPPORT**
David Stanton, the Canon Treasurer and Almoner at the Abbey, says: “The Dean and Chapter are immensely grateful to all who are giving so generously to this project and to the unstinting work given by our fundraising director and members of our Development Board, both here and in the United States. The generosity of support given from trusts and individuals has been quite amazing and we are fast approaching the total cost of £22.9 million.” The appeal is still running: one way to donate is through sponsoring one of the 12,000 window panes in the new tower.

Stanton continues: “I have no doubt in saying that the new galleries will greatly enhance the mission and work of the Abbey, enabling us to further promote faith at the heart of the nation and maintaining Westminster Abbey as a living church where worship is offered to almighty God daily, as it has been ever since the year AD960. Many people are surprised to hear that there are 28 services every week and the Abbey’s world-famous choir sings at eight of these services each week during term time.

“The Dean and Chapter are also particularly committed to working with the other public service institutions in and around Parliament Square to revitalise moral and spiritual values in public life.”

The Queen’s Diamond Jubilee Galleries are clearly set to be one of the great new experiences of the capital. Few visitors will fail to enjoy the ingenious way in which Ptolemy Dean has knitted his new tower into the historic ensemble, with, I would say, much the same sympathy, knowledge and courage that Nicholas Hawksmoor showed in his west towers.

If you would like to support The Queen’s Diamond Jubilee Galleries you can donate via the Abbey Galleries website, where you can also sponsor a pane of glass in the new tower. Go to: www.westminster-abbey-galleries.org

**The galleries are set to be one of the great new experiences of the capital**

Above: the triforium galleries are now being fitted out as exhibition galleries. Below: Henry V’s helmet and funerary saddle will be on display.
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It’s time to toast the Seville orange

These bitter–sweet citrus fruits, the traditional ingredient of marmalade, are arriving in the UK now – however, oranges are not the only fruit...

At this time of year, cooks around the country are buying up bitter Seville oranges during their short season in our stores and reaching for family recipes to make marmalade. How did this iconic British food come to be part of our national life, whether for breakfast toast or in childhood stories of Paddington Bear with his marmalade sandwiches? And what is its future as well as its past?

Like tea, this traditional preserve reveals us to be a trading nation that has long imported ideas and ingredients from around the globe to brighten diets and cheer the soul. Seville oranges, the most famous ingredient of marmalade, are still grown today in Southern Spain specifically for the British market. The fragrant waft of the orange blossom fills the streets and fields of Andalucia and the ripened fruit is shipped to the UK or turned into frozen shredded peel and juice for our marmalade industry.

But oranges are not the only fruit, when it comes to marmalade, and this fact reveals the origin of these glowing pots. The name comes from the Portuguese word for quince, marmelo. This hard fruit was boiled down to be made into a thick fruit paste, a bit like today's membrillo. Other fruits, including oranges, were also preserved in this way and given the generic name “marmalade”.

**PASTE AND PEEL**
The oranges used for this thick, early form of marmalade were the bitter kind. Sweeter types of orange travelled to the West from China some 500 years afterwards and took over in popularity. But an embedded taste for bitter oranges continued in the form of marmalade. In the 18th century, as sugar became cheaper, the thick paste turned into a jelly with “chips” of peel suspended within. This modern form of marmalade was popularised by the company Frank Cooper’s, after the wife of the Oxford shopkeeper made a batch in the family kitchen in 1874. This was the marmalade taken by Scott’s team on their fatal trip to the South Pole; a pot was found many years later buried in the ice.

But marmalade dipped in popularity in the 20th century, seen by some as fuddy-duddy and bitter. Younger Brits – if they ate breakfast at all – took to eating peanut butter and chocolate spreads such as Nutella. Almost 60% of sales are currently to the over-65s and just 1% to the under-28s, according to a recent household survey by researchers Kantar Worldpanel.

How fortunate that marmalade has a great champion in the form of Jane Hasell-McCosh, who set up The World’s Original Marmalade Awards and Festival in 2005. The festival, complete with accompanying peal of bells that went around the world, from Melbourne Cathedral to the Great Bell of Bow. Gardeners can enter...
with marmalades that include home-grown produce, such as apple varieties.

Readers of The Field might like to enter a Macnab Challenge, marmalade-style: a recipe that with will work with fur, fish or fowl – or buttered toast. This sporting challenge has an extra link to the festival because the author John Buchan’s granddaughter, Laura Crackenthorpe, is a member of a local WI and acts as a judge. Last year’s winner was a blackcurrant-spiked marmalade to partner grouse.

“The bottom line is that citrus must be dominant but you can play with other flavours, too, just without them taking over,” says Hasell-McCosh. “People have got locked into this idea that marmalade has to be eaten on toast but you can use it in so many ways and the idea of eating it with savoury food has really taken off.”

The good-natured individuality of the Marmalade Festival is infectious and you go away wanting to make your own. Over the years, it has fostered skills and enthusiasm to such an extent that it has really put marmalade back on the map – and a map of the globe, at that.

THE MARMALASHES
The marmalade habit spread, like sports, during the days of the British Empire and took root in countries that have fresh citrus on their doorstep. The Awards holds a fiercely competitive “Marmalashes”, with a British First XI competing against an Australian team. There are plans afoot for India to field a team, too.

There’s such a strong showing from Japan that there are hopes that the country will launch its own marmalade awards. The winner of this year’s Commonwealth category will be made commercially and sold in the Royal Palace’s online shop, just as Fortnum & Mason sells the homemade champion marmalade each year.

One of the many high-calibre judges and fans of the Marmalade Festival is Jeremy Lee, chef-patron of Quo Vadis, a Soho bastion of good British foods. What delights him about the event is how every single pot is slightly different: it is a handmade craft par excellence.

Lee’s Scottish childhood near Dundee was full of his mother’s marmalade and her recipe – soft-set, with a little grapefruit and lemon peel to lighten the Seville – graces breakfast at Quo Vadis and is included in some of the restaurant’s famous puddings (which are always served with custard, thick cream, pouring cream and ice-cream).

At home, the chef has his mother’s collection of antique Dundee marmalade pots, white ceramic with distinctive black lettering.
“The smell of marmalade on hot, buttery toast means you’re home; it’s great,” he says in summary.

If you’re buying marmalade, there are now a number of good pots made by small producers. The key is to find people who make it as you would at home, in small batches that retain the freshness and flavour of the citrus fruit.

Mary Ann Stuart of Ollands Farm Foods in Norfolk is a former head teacher and consultant who has turned her passion for preserving from a hobby into a living. Two of her three golds at the 2017 Marmalade Awards were for products intended to accompany savoury foods. “People do lemon and limoncello. Randell believes marmalade is much easier to make than jam, especially if you use the Seville oranges because their thick pith, along with the pips, have enough pectin to set the jelly.

TWO BASIC METHODS
There are two basic ways to make marmalade: the whole fruit method, which is easier, for which you simmer the whole fruit then cut the peel and cook it with sugar; and the more elegant jelly method, which involves first cutting off the peel and simmering it with the juice and water before boiling with sugar. Randell’s key tip, apart from following a good recipe to get the proportions right, is to make sure the cooked peel is soft enough to squish between your fingers before adding the sugar. “You can’t go backwards once you’ve add the sugar,” she advises. “If it’s too hard, it’ll stay like that.”

As for the crucial question of when your marmalade is ready to pour into the pots to set, Randell largely rejects digital thermometers, preferring the low-tech but more reliable wrinkle test. Put some saucers in the freezer and pour on a little marmalade. “If the marmalade is set, it will move slowly when you tilt the saucer and the surface will wrinkle when you push your finger into it. You will find that your finger will leave a little channel, which will then refill,” she writes.

In terms of the rest of your kit, a good jam pan, ideally with a pouring lip, is helpful and a wide-necked funnel to make a slightly less sticky task of filling the jars. Randell recommends gauze from the chemist as cheaper and easier to find than muslin.

After writing the book, Randell set up her own small marmalade-making business. “A lot of the marmalade was very traditional ‘old man’s tawny,’” she says. “There wasn’t much that was more feminine to put on the table. There’s a whole world of citrus out there but a lot of the non-Seville orange marmalades were very sweet and not so interesting.”

However much we might love marmalade, there can be pots that hang around in the cupboard, especially if you are given plenty as presents by family and friends. Fortunately, Randell’s cookbook has an excellent collection of recipes that suggest how to use them up. Some of the book’s most popular recipes include: Jaffa Brownies, with three tablespoons of marmalade included in the gooey cake; a citrus-spiked bread-and-butter pudding; and a marmalade-glazed bacon sandwich.

One of the most delicious aspects of the new trends for marmalade is its use in drinks. Another of Sarah Randell’s most popular recipes is her Marmalade Fizz, a great cocktail of Cava, Prosecco or Champagne with Cointreau and marmalade, each glass garnished with orange peel. For those who want their marmalade kick ready-made, the Marmalade Vodka by Chase is a winner.

The 2018 Marmalade Awards will take place on 17 and 18 March. For details, call 017684 86450 or go to dalemain.com www.potofmarmalade.uk ollands-farm-foods.co.uk

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eat meat with fruit – duck with orange, for example – so I was thinking of combinations that would work,” she says.

Just as she likes to place a cut lemon inside a chicken and sprinkles herbs on the skin, Stuart developed a Lemon and Herb Marmalade that goes with chicken. Her Chilli and Lime Marmalade is designed to go with fish, either as a glaze or in a sauce, or dolloped on a canape with smoked salmon or prawns.

How to make marmalade at home? The best step-by-step advice and recipes can be found in Marmalade: a bittersweet cookbook by Sarah Randell. From sparkling Seville to dark-and-moody treacly concoctions, this well-illustrated book includes the classics and also updated versions with different flavours, such as Blood Orange & Vanilla Marmalade and one made with the trick of using gauze from the chemist as cheaper and easier to find than muslin.

As for the crucial question of when your marmalade is ready to pour into the pots to set, Randell largely rejects digital thermometers, preferring the low-tech but more reliable wrinkle test. Put some saucers in the freezer and pour on a little marmalade. “If the marmalade is set, it will move slowly when you tilt the saucer and the surface will wrinkle when you push your finger into it. You will find that your finger will leave a little channel, which will then refill,” she writes.

In terms of the rest of your kit, a good jam pan, ideally with a pouring lip, is helpful and a wide-necked funnel to make a slightly less sticky task of filling the jars. Randell recommends gauze from the chemist as cheaper and easier to find than muslin.

After writing the book, Randell set up her own small marmalade-making business. “A lot of the marmalade was very traditional ‘old man’s tawny,’” she says. “There wasn’t much that was more feminine to put on the table. There’s a whole world of citrus out there but a lot of the non-Seville orange marmalades were very sweet and not so interesting.”

However much we might love marmalade, there can be pots that hang around in the cupboard, especially if you are given plenty as presents by family and friends. Fortunately, Randell’s cookbook has an excellent collection of recipes that suggest how to use them up. Some of the book’s most popular recipes include: Jaffa Brownies, with three tablespoons of marmalade included in the gooey cake; a citrus-spiked bread-and-butter pudding; and a marmalade-glazed bacon sandwich.

One of the most delicious aspects of the new trends for marmalade is its use in drinks. Another of Sarah Randell’s most popular recipes is her Marmalade Fizz, a great cocktail of Cava, Prosecco or Champagne with Cointreau and marmalade, each glass garnished with orange peel. For those who want their marmalade kick ready-made, the Marmalade Vodka by Chase is a winner.

The 2018 Marmalade Awards will take place on 17 and 18 March. For details, call 017684 86450 or go to dalemain.com www.potofmarmalade.uk ollands-farm-foods.co.uk
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ANIMAL: A BEASTLY COMPENDIUM

SNOWY OWLS BY JOHN JAMES AUDUBON

This pair of snowy owls by John James Audubon, painted in the far north of America, displays his customary minute attention to detail. Trained by the painter Jacques-Louis David and already passionately interested in natural history, Audubon fled conscription into Napoleon's armies and settled in the United States. There he led a wandering life as a hunter, ornithologist and painter.

Edited extract from Animal: A Beastly Compendium by Rémi Mathis and Valérie Sueur-Hermel. Published by Bloomsbury Visual Arts. RRP: £30.

Treasures from the prints and photographs department at the Bibliotheque Nationale de France.
Country queries

Send queries to Rosie Macdonald, Country Queries Editor, The Field, Pinehurst II, Pinehurst Road, Farnborough Business Park, Farnborough, Hampshire GU14 7BF. Email: country-queries@hectareshouse.co.uk For more, go to: www.thefield.co.uk

HOT FOOD BETWEEN DRIVES

Q In the November issue, a reader asked for advice on keeping pies hot for guns and guests on shoot days. Here are a couple of suggestions from fellow readers.

MA/CW, by email

A How about investing in Army style hot boxes, which were used by quartermasters to deliver hot food to recruits while in remote parts of the training area on exercise? The food always remained hot, apparently something of a miracle in Army catering circles. Type “Army hot boxes” into a browser online to find suppliers. Alternatively, The Wonderbag is a highly insulated slow cooker that works with the heat of the food and will cook or keep food hot for up to 12 hours. One reader has used this for various stews which are prepared early in the morning before the shoot. One needs to bring the meal to full temperature and then put the casserole dish directly into the bag, where it will continue to slow cook until required. The Wonderbag (pictured below) is non-electric and portable. It is priced £35 for a small Wonderbag, which holds a two-litre dish, or £45 for a large Wonderbag, which is suitable for a 1.5-litre to 11.5-litre pot.

For further details, go to: www.thewonderbagshop.co.uk

PRESERVED FOR POSTERITY

Q My son shot his first pheasant this season, having been invited on a shoot by a school friend. This was an exceptional feat, in my opinion, as we are not a shooting or country sports sort of family. The pheasant has the most beautiful feathers and is, so I have been told, a Kansas pheasant. The host suggested we have it stuffed, so I put it in the freezer. What should I do next?

PPW, Norfolk

A Taxidermist Gary Knight would be able to prepare the pheasant. The whole process takes approximately six months. The bird can be prepared and left uncased with basic ground work for £200 or fully mounted on soil with grass, leaves, bracken and a branch of twigs for £300. You can view examples of his work on Facebook (search for “GJ Knight Taxidermy”) or contact him directly on 07920 421733 to arrange delivery.

A TERRIER REMEMBERED

Q Earlier this year I lost my beloved terrier and, at my age, I won’t be replacing her. I remember years ago reading a prayer or perhaps a poem about a terrier. It went something like, “I know my master will come for me.” It was somewhat melancholy but I would dearly like to find it. I have had terriers all my life. Can you help?

WFF, Gloucester

A I hope this is the poem you are referring to, A Little Dog Angel by Norah M Holland. If not, I am happy to continue searching.

With other angels he will not play
But he sits alone at the gates.
“For I know my master will come,” thinks he
“And when he comes he will call for me.”
And his master on earth, far down, below
As he sits on his fireside chair,
Forgets sometimes, and whistles low
For his Scottie that is not there.
And the little dog angel cocks his ears
And dreams that his master’s voice he hears.
And I know when at length his master waits
Outside in the dark and cold.
For the hound of death to open the gates
That lead to the Courts of Gold.
His little terrier’s welcoming bark
Will comfort his soul in the shivering dark.
GRAVY FOR PHEASANT

Q I am looking for a river depth-gauge board to replace a wooden one fixed on a bridge. Ideally, it'll be made of fibreglass and shaped to prevent it being broken by strong currents. They are readily available in the USA but does anyone make them in the UK?

BB, Aberdeen

A Shelley Signs based in Shropshire sells inland and tidal river depth gauge boards in reinforced plastic using approved gelcoats and resins, making them resistant to impact and abrasion and ensuring they have a low moisture absorption rate. Boards can also be made to order.

For a price list, contact Shelley Signs on 01743 460996 or go to: www.shelleysigns.co.uk

THE FIELD

GUNDOG AWARDS 2018

Entrants for Gundog Photograph of the Year, capturing the best of our companions in the field

PHOTOGRAPHS OF THE MONTH

HUGGY SHOT BY DANNY MOORE: a nine-year-old German wirehaired pointer x labrador that still goes like a pup; at the Riddell estate in the Borders.

VESPA SHOT BY LETTICE BELL: this wirehaired Hungarian vizsla is the first dog her owner (pictured) has trained and this has become a real passion of his.

If you have a photograph you would like to enter, please email field.secretary@timeinc.com

Full terms and conditions apply

www.thefield.co.uk/gundog-awards

THE RIVER RUNS DEEP

Q I am looking for a river depth-gauge board to replace a wooden one fixed on a bridge. Ideally, it'll be made of fibreglass and shaped to prevent it being broken by strong

A

I went away with my lovely copy determined to make the most of it, so here I am. I have cooked my first roast pheasant, very tasty, but we are a gravy family and there wasn’t any. I have looked it up on the internet but the recipes are all quite long-winded. Can you help?

WF, near Newark

A Some people prefer dark, rich gravy while others prefer it pale and watery. This recipe sits between the two and can be thinned if necessary. While the pheasants are resting, drain off any fat into a tin. Place the tin on two rings of a hob on a highish heat. Add a tablespoon of flour, stirring well.

Now add a tablespoon of tomato ketchup, stir, then add 200ml red wine. Using a wooden spoon scrape the bits off the bottom of the pan, mixing well. Add 250ml vegetable stock or cooking water from the vegetables and a spring of rosemary, stir well and simmer for a few minutes. Check seasoning and serve.

WHEEZE OF THE MONTH

A wonderful little tip I have discovered is to place mothballs around areas in the shed, garden and even parts of the house where you want to stop mice from coming in. They hate the smell. FT, by email
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Mon chéri – armour!

The auction of a collection of Samurai art proved too tempting for Roger Field. But just how does one go about concealing a suit of Japanese armour from one’s beloved?

RIGHT, I’m going to come clean, hold my hands up; on 26 October I had a sudden rush of blood to the head – and, given that’s three clichés in one sentence, you can begin to imagine the guilt levels I am experiencing – and came home with a complete suit of Japanese Edo 17th/18th-century armour, as one does on a dreary Thursday in late October when no one has thought to ask you shooting and you are itching for a bit of sport – a sugar rush of living dangerously – especially on returning home. Ever tried hiding a full suit of gold-lacquered armour from your beloved? Even in your office? Take it from me, don’t even try. Oh, and while I am in a confessional mood, also packed in the car was a 15th-century Japanese sword to “go with” said armour, plus a second 18th/19th-century cuirass that was, I reckoned, just too good not to bring home. Furthermore, to add insult to cliche, I ignored every bit
of sage advice about the importance of prior research before sticking your mitt in the air, which I hector you about on a monthly basis. In retrospect, it would have been far cheaper to buy a really good day’s shooting and get my adrenalin fix that way but then I would not now boast an office fit for a samurai strike commander.

What happened was this. Mallams was selling a collection of 60 samurai swords and daggers (dated from the 13th to the 19th century) plus sundry armour and polearms. In Cheltenham. A picturesque spot more usually associated with radio interception than kitting out a ninja uprising. Sixty swords at once and there had to be, I reasoned, a chance of an oversupply of goodies on offer. Yes, the internet was a threat, as ever. I noted that in November one regional auction house recorded 717 registered “online bidders” for a sale. Imagine those as bums on seats and that is a lot of people in the virtual auction room. However, arms and armour collectors and dealers tend to be a pretty specialist lot and usually follow my adage: always look at what you intend buying as it can (not always, but often) be very different in the flesh to the photo. Unless, of course, an item can be bought so cheaply that it is worth a punt regardless. This is why London and major regional auctioneers tend to all coincide their specialist auctions in the same few weeks every year. That way buyers can travel over from Europe, the US, wherever, and view all the important sales in one hit. They then bid in person, or online: *au choix*. For guns, arms and armour this is twice a year: late November/early December and again in June/July and those specialist auctions are always well attended by foreigners (sorry, but...) and I was hoping that said foreigners (sorry, again) would not make the long pilgrimage just for this one-off event. And so it seemed. There was a handful of obvious collectors in the room and one Japanese dealer who sniffed many of the best swords. Without him we room bidders might have bought more, a bit more cheaply. The internet was hardly dominating proceedings and my impression was that online bidders tended to stop at around low/mid estimate, perhaps not having inspected the items for themselves, especially as there are enough subtleties and complexities with this Japanese kit to leave the layman gasping. However, Mallams had stated broad dates to the items and that gave me the confidence to bid not least as, earlier, the auctioneer and I had discussed a 16½-inch high, reddish, unglazed, Chinese “Tang” horse (circa AD600-900) in the same sale. I have seen these steeds in other people’s houses and, well displayed, they look magnificent. I asked the auctioneer how he knew this one was real. The answer was that he did not, although he had a Sotheby’s letter from the 1980s stating it to be Tang. The only way of authenticating ancient pottery is to have it tested in a laboratory. There are so many excellent fakes around that it is, today, almost impossible to sell such pieces for their proper value without an authentication certificate. He had stuck his neck out and catalogued it as Tang – meaning the purchaser can recover his or her money if it is provably not – and put an estimate on

This unglazed, possibly Tang-era pottery horse fetched £300 at Mallams while the camel proved less popular and failed to sell

The only way of authenticating ancient pottery is to have it tested in a laboratory
it of £300-£400; £200-£300 would have been the going rate without that Sotheby’s letter. With an authentication certificate from a laboratory, which costs about £400, then that horse would be worth about £800. Glazed examples, depending on how decorative, £1,000-£2,000 and upwards. All of which represents a huge loss for those who bought these statues in the 1980s when they fetched about 10 times these sums. The horse duly sold for £300. A similar Tang camel (same estimate) failed to find a paddock; horses, of course, being far more desirable than camels in Gloucestershire.

With that money-back “guarantee” in mind, I readied to raise my hand. First up: the “golden” armour with a £4,000-£6,000 estimate. The internet kicked in at £3,400. Hand up, not believing I would get such a magnificent, decorative bit of fighting kit for £3,600. Silence. Bang! Gavel down. Mine. Before I could say “oops!” it was those swords. The ones I rated and wanted were scooped by the dealer, who was willing to go above high estimate for the best. My favourite was a late katana (a samurai long sword) signed and dated 1867 on the tang, with a muscular, sharp blade of fabulous quality, set in an imposing red and black lacquered scabbard; it really looked as if it meant business. It was estimated at a yummy sounding £500-£800. No chance. I gave up at £1,200. It sold for £1,700. As for what happened next, next month it is...

Before leaving sharp edges, and of distinctly Rupert Campbell-Black interest (think Jilly Cooper’s Riders, et al), on 1 November C&T Auctions offered the lothario’s solution for anyone afeared of being caught doing what they ought not to be doing in a horse trailer: a woven leather riding crop with a concealed stiletto. Made circa 1900 – when such behaviour was perhaps de rigueur on the hunting field and “other halves” were also liable to react rather more violently than is permitted today – this vicious little number had an 11-inch blade: long and lethal enough to kebab a rival. Little surprise it jumped its £80 top estimate to sell for £150.

From sharp to esoteric: I had my eyes (and wallet) fixed on a gold Crusader coin at Morton & Eden on 25 October. There is something rather amazing about handling a coin that once belonged to one of these guys and the fact it is pure, high-grade gold just adds to the allure. This one is a Christian copy of an Arabic “dinar” – they needed to trade with their Arab neighbours and minted coins the Arabs were happy to use – dated 514 (that is AD1120). Intriguingly, in front of the name “Muhammed” on the inscription there is a Christian cross. Imagine the outrage were someone to do that today. I left a cheeky £240 bid at just under the bottom £250 estimate – I have noticed that these coins can sometimes sell at just under estimate. It, of course, went for £260. Usually I would be fulminating but now, with my new armours, I am like a python trying to digest a pig and am mildly relieved. Anyway, with metal detectors buzzing all over the Near East, there is no shortage of these coins, but one with that juxtaposition? I wonder.

In November, I lamented the collapse in “brown furniture” prices and gave a list of exceptions to that rule. However, I failed →
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to mention “huge” brown furniture. On 14 September, Cheffins sold a mahogany, 1830s dining-room table – 20ft long by 5½ft wide – that would seat well over 20 people. The auctioneer said it was the largest table he had sold in 30 years and, he suspected, was competed for by a couple of castle owners for whom such an item would be a necessity. The successful overseas buyer had to dig deep to get to pass the port around this monster as it munched through its £10,000 top estimate to sell for £55,000.

Charles Miller’s maritime sales can be relied on to stiffen the spine of even the most Europhile of us and he did not disappoint on 7 November. A large (16ft x 8ft) Union flag “probably” from HMS Temeraire – “probably” deducting at least one zero from the value – and by family tradition flown at Trafalgar. It was most probably from that ship (given the provenance) but probably not at Trafalgar. Nevertheless, dated circa 1810, it was a decorative reminder of our naval past and it sold for just under high estimate at £2,800. There were no such reservations about the room’s enthusiasm for a 5ft 8in by 3ft Union flag with a brass plate that confirmed that Sir Alan Dalton and his mates had carried this rather battered but magnificent survivor as they went to meet the forebears of Mrs Merkel and her cabinet, making it a magnificent survivor as they went to meet the forebears of Mrs Merkel and her cabinet – that would seat well over 20 people. The auctioneer said it was the largest table he had sold in 30 years and, he suspected, was competed for by a couple of castle owners for whom such an item would be a necessity. The successful overseas buyer had to dig deep to get to pass the port around this monster as it munched through its £10,000 top estimate to sell for £55,000.

These Union flags were both sold at Charles Miller’s maritime sale, the top one, “probably” from HMS Temeraire, fetched £2,800 while the one below, carried on Juno Beach on 6 June 1944, made £30,000.

**AN ARCHAEOLOGIST’S REVOLVER**

**BY JONATHAN FERGUSON**

It might surprise readers to know that archaeologists travelling abroad in the late 19th and early 20th centuries really did pack a gun along with their trowel and pith helmet. Howard Carter once fended off some would-be robbers with his revolver and Sir William Flinders Petrie wrote of the “Nehemiah-like feeling produced by working with a revolver always at hand and scanning the country every few minutes to see if anyone is about”. Like Carter, he had to brandish and even fire his revolver, although neither man reported actually shooting anyone. The Royal Armouries is fortunate to possess one of Petrie’s revolvers (accession number XII.28024): a Smith & Wesson “New Model” No.3 break-open revolver in the standard chambering of S&W .44 “Russian”, a cartridge created for a contract with the Russian government.

Using company records, Smith & Wesson historian Roy Jinks has dated it to December 1888 or January 1889. However, it was not delivered until some years later and not to Flinders Petrie. New Model No. 3 +28024 was shipped to Walter Winans on 5 January, 1893. Winans was an important and interesting figure in the sporting world, being a renowned horse rider and Olympic-standard pistol shot. He authored *The Art of Revolver Shooting* in 1911. This large and heavy revolver, one of four purchased by him that year, sports a long, 6½in barrel – a target piece without doubt. The revolver is cased and the case labelled for the Parisian gunmaker and retailer Gastinne Renette, whose shooting gallery Winans frequented. Winans seems to have had this example specially cased there. The revolver, which bears Winans’ initials, was certainly used in competition, being engraved on the backstrap: “20 Yds, 1893”.

It is not clear how the gun passed from Winans to Flinders Petrie. It has been suggested that Flinders Petrie was gifted the revolver by Smith & Wesson as part sponsorship for an excavation project but, if so, Winans must have first returned the piece to S&W. It is hoped that further research will shed light on the history of this fascinating piece. In any case, some time before Petrie’s death in 1920 the revolver was gifted to his photographer and fellow Egyptologist, Carl Pape, today the subject of ongoing research led by the University of Liverpool. In 1938, Pape photographed himself with it (as well as a more modern Mk. VI Webley) wearing full adventurer’s garb. By this time, the single-action No.3 was obsolete, production having ceased in 1912. However, Pape’s own sketches of armed and mounted cowboys suggest a fascination with the American Old West and it seems likely that he favoured the Webley for actual self-defence purposes. Even if it was never fired in anger, this piece remains an intriguing historical artefact.

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Going for the Burns

Although Christmas is behind us and New Year out of the way, there’s still one big celebration to brighten the dark days, says Philippa Davis, whose Scottish-flavoured recipes are inspired by Burns Night.

I ALWAYS think Burns night, on 25 January, is a perfectly timed celebration. It is far enough away from Christmas and New Year to have given us time to recover but still in what feels like the depths of winter, so we are glad of an excuse to party. With Scotland’s most famous poet, Robert “Rabbie” Burns – whose oeuvre included *Auld Lang Syne* and *Address to a Haggis* – to thank, this issue’s recipes are all inspired by his glorious native land.

Not only can Scotland boast of supporting some of the finest fin, feather and fur but its impressive larder includes other bounty from the wild, the sea and farmed land, too. It has many products and recipes that are now world renowned, including cheeses, baked goods and, of course, whisky. Indeed, many would agree that no Scottish celebration is complete without a wee dram or two or, at the very least, a healthy splash in the cooking. The whisky tart featured here is a lovely way to end a feast and the perfect energy boost for a ceilidh.

### HAGGIS PARCELS WITH MARMALADE, SPINACH AND GOAT’S CHEESE

**MAKES 2**

This impressive-looking dish combines two ingredients very much associated with Scotland’s culinary history.

There are some who have been led to believe that the haggis is a small animal with two longer legs on one side to stop it rolling down the Scottish hills. In reality, of course, it is a savoury pudding that was likely to have been made first by the Romans but is now very much considered Scottish.

Made from the pluck, heart, liver and lungs of sheep and a mix of spices, oatmeal, suet and onion, it is the perfect winter food.

We have the Scots to thank for making orange marmalade into a spreadable breakfast treat, too. The story goes that an industrious merchant and his wife made the most out of a cargo of Seville oranges from a Spanish ship stranded in Dundee harbour back in 1700. (*Turn to page 92 to read more about marmalade.*)

**MA**

- 1 small yellow onion
- 1 tbsp olive oil
- 200g spinach
- 2 heaped tsp marmalade
- 50g soft goat’s cheese
- 150g cooked cooled haggis
- 2 tbsp melted butter
- 6 sheets filo pastry

### TO ASSEMBLE

- Preheat oven to 160°C/320°F/Gas Mark 2½.
- Slice the onion and sauté in the olive oil on a medium heat until soft (about 5 minutes). Allow to cool.
- Wilt the spinach with a splash of water, season then place in a colander and allow to drip drain whilst it cools.
- Spoon your marmalade onto a chopping board and finely mince before mixing with the goat’s cheese.
- Mix the cooked haggis, spinach and onions and pat into two small round cakes.

- Take three sheets of filo. Lightly brush the first with melted butter, place another sheet on top and again brush with butter. Repeat until you have a stack of three.
- Smear half the goat’s cheese and marmalade mix in the middle in a small circle, place one of the haggis cakes on top then fold up the edges of the filo creating a parcel with a frilly top. Brush all over and underneath with butter then place on a baking sheet lined with baking paper. Repeat to make the other parcel.
- Once both parcels are made bake for 40 minutes; if the tops look like they are browning too fast you can cover them loosely with foil. Serve hot.
**BAKED SCALLOPS WITH SAUTEED LEEKS, CROWDIE AND GARLIC BREADCRUMBS**

**SERVES 4**

The scallops harvested from the Scottish coast are widely considered more succulent and delicious than those from anywhere else in the world. This is partly due to the warm North Atlantic drift providing an abundance of plankton for them to feed on. Crowdie is a Scottish fresh cheese that dates back to the Viking era. It is said to cushion the effects of whisky drinking and so is often eaten with oatcakes before a ceilidh. However, my experience suggests that this is not entirely true. It is creamy and fresh with a subtle sour twang.

- In a small saucepan, season the leeks and sauté in the olive oil until soft (about 10 minutes) then stir in the thyme and crowdie and allow to cool.
- In a bowl, mix the breadcrumbs with the garlic, parsley and then rub in the butter.
- Divide the leek mix between the shells, place two scallops on each then scatter on the breadcrumb mix.
- You can cook them straight away or keep then in the fridge for up to 12 hours until required.
- Allow to cool and turn the oven down to 160°C/320°F/Gas Mark 2½.
- In a saucepan, gently heat the butter, honey, vanilla and sugar until melted. Take off the heat and allow to cool for a couple of minutes.
- In a bowl, mix the eggs with the whisky then stir into the butter mix along with the 150g of finely chopped walnuts.
- Pour into the pastry case and scatter on top the roughly chopped walnuts.
- Bake on the middle shelf for about 50 minutes; the centre should still have a slight wobble.
- Take out and cool completely to firm up.
- Delicious with whipped cream and, of course, a wee dram.

**STARTER**

- 1 tbsp olive oil
- 1 leek, weighing approximately 200g
- 1 heaped tsp chopped thyme
- 2 tbsp crowdie
- 30g white breadcrumbs
- 3 garlic cloves, finely chopped
- 1 tbsp parsley
- 1½ tbsp butter
- 8 scallops

**YOU WILL NEED**

- 4 scallop shell tops or 4 small ovenproof dishes

**HONEY, WHISKY AND WALNUT TART**

**PUDDING**

- 300g short crust pastry

**FILLING**

- 250g walnuts
- 110g butter
- 100g honey
- 1 tsp vanilla extract
- 200 demerara sugar
- 3 eggs lightly beaten
- 4 tbsp whisky

**SERVES 8**

What better way to end the meal than with an ingredient very much associated with Scotland’s culinary history: whisky.

- Preheat the oven to 180°C/350°F/Gas Mark 4.
- Line your pie dish with the pastry, prick it with a fork and chill for 30 minutes.
- Brush with a little of the beaten egg for the filling and bake for 25 minutes until light golden in colour.
- Finely chop 150g of the walnuts and roughly chop the other 100g.
- In a saucepan, gently heat the butter, honey, vanilla and sugar until melted.
- Take off the heat and allow to cool for a couple of minutes.
- In a bowl, mix the eggs with the whisky and pour into the pastry case.
- Finally chop the last 100g and scatter on top.

**YOU WILL NEED**

- 25cm pie dish

**TO COOK**

- Preheat the oven to 190°C/375°F/Gas Mark 5.
- Place the scallop shells on a tray and roast for 15–20 minutes. They should be cooked through and piping hot.
Country Excellence in London

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Country allegiance

You can only drink the wines of one country, so which one would it be? Jonathan Ray poses the question – and is quite surprised by the answers

WHAT if you were forced to drink the wines of just one country?

There I was, sharing a glass or so of scrumptious Franciacorta with my chum Laura Taylor of Private Cellar, the independent wine merchant. I adore Franciacorta, a traditional-method sparkler produced along the southern banks of Lake Iseo in Lombardy, between Bergamo and Brescia. As we hoobered up the bubbles, we agreed that if there’s one sparkling wine snapping at the heels of champagne, then this is it. Well, this and English fizz, the best examples of which are world beaters these days and no mistake.

The key is that it’s warmer in Franciacorta than Champagne, which means riper grapes. Cooling breezes off Lake Iseo and the surrounding mountains give freshness and perfume and the grapes boast higher natural sugar and lower acidity. They use a gloriously concentrated, soft, smooth ‘n’ silky red from Italy’s Piedmont.

Good grief, this was turning into a white-wash. Even Toby Peirce, the former Sussex CCC opening batsman who now owns the excellent Quaff wine shops in Brighton & Hove, opted for Italy, applauding the “bewildering diversity” of its wines. It’s only because I revealed that everybody else had chosen Italy and slipped him a tenner that he switched to South Africa and then only because he played so much cricket there.

I then openly massaged the figures by asking my old mucker Jason Yapp. Given that Yapp Bros specialise in regional French wines the answer was a dead cert: “Nowhere else can beat France,” he declared. “Just to have Bordeaux and Burgundy is amazing but a chuck in Champagne, the Rhône, Loire, Languedoc not to mention Provence, Jura,Alsace and so on, it’s definitely number one.”

France would have always been my choice although I could happily survive on the wines of New Zealand. I clearly need to make more effort with Italy. The trouble is that with more than 300 grape varieties, it’s a confusing place. Even well-known wines such as Montepulciano d’Abruzzo and Vino Nobile di Montepulciano can be baffling, the one named after Montepulciano the grape, the other after Montepulciano the town.

I hereby vow to drink more Italian wine and I start tonight. Mrs Ray has prepared an Italian feast (pasta alla vongole and fegato alla Veneziana, since you ask) and we’ve a Franciacorta and then a Falanghina from Campagnia lined up and an Amarone Valpolicella from the Veneto. Oh and some Vin Santo to go with the tiramisu.

I encourage you to get stuck in, too. After all, not for nothing is Italy known as Oenotria: the land of wine.

‘While my heart is in France, my choice would be Italy. The wines are joyous’

and food-friendly wines. “I simply never tire of them,” she said. “I love Arneis from Roche Costamagna, say, a truculent grape but in the right hands rich and citrusy and I never discount Soave from a great producer such as Antonio Fattori and am I allowed to count the saline-infused Vermentinos from Sardinia? And as for the reds...”

Oh crikey, she was off. I had no choice but to order another bottle of Franciacorta.

The following day, with something of a hangover, I did a brief straw poll of mates in the trade. “The obvious choice would be France,” said Charles Lea of Lea & Sandeman reassuringly. “Just look at the wealth of different regions and grape varieties. The trouble is, I’d just miss Italian wine too much. When we get a delivery at home it’s mostly

\[
\text{SIX OF THE “WHAT IF...” WINES}
\]

| 2014 NEROFINO ROSSO VIGNETI DELLE DOLOMITI (£9.50, Wine Society) From the Italian Dolomites: structured, with zip and dark fruit juiciness. |
| 2016 LANZERAC SAUVIGNON BLANC (£12, Quaff) Toby’s choice: Saffa Sauvignon that walks the tightrope between Old World and New. |
| 2015 ROCCHE COSTAMAGNA BARBERA D’ALBA (£13.75, Private Cellar) A gloriously concentrated, soft, smooth ‘n’ silky red from Italy’s Piedmont. |
| 2014 DOMAINE RICHEAUME “CUVÉE TRADITION” (£19.50, Yapp Bros) Jason Yapp’s sun-kissed, black-fruited, organic, herbal, Provençal favourite. |
| 100% Sangiovese from the Sest family in Brunello. |
| Good stuff, the Provençal favourite. |

2013 MONTELECCIO IGT CASTELLO DI ARGIANO SESTI (£34, Goedhuis & Co) A ridiculously drinkable, 100% Sangiovese from the Sest family in Brunello. |
| 100% Montepulciano that you could drink for a lifetime and never get bored of. |

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Guerini Invictus High Pheasant

With relatively light barrels and good pointing qualities, Michael Yardley finds this gun an attractive proposition for rangy work – with, perhaps, a slight tweak to the stock.

THE Guerini Invictus High Pheasant is a new gun from Anglo Italian Arms, created with high birds and heavy use in mind. It has been developed from the Invictus competition gun (introduced in 2014), itself interesting because it has an action – a genuine innovation – that dispenses with a conventional hinge pin or trunnion studs. Instead, the barrels pivot on the action by means of detachable cams fitted to the front of the monobloc where there are normally recesses. These engage into the action (effectively the opposite of the usual plan, where load-bearing studs mate with recesses in the monobloc, or, where barrels pivot by means of a “hook” on a full-width pin). The advantage of this system is that the bearing surfaces are easily replaceable when or if the gun comes “off the face”. Guerini claims it’s good for a million shots and backs this up with a limited lifetime warranty.

We will return to the intriguing mechanics in the technical section, meantime, first visual impressions of the Guerini are strong. It is typical of the marque and boldly styled. Finish and detailing impress. The coin-finished action shows off the extensive engraving well. The tight scroll and game engraving is quite elaborate with a chiselled pheasant to the centre of the side-plates (my preference would be for the attractive, finely formed scroll alone). The barrel blacking is good, deep and lustrous with sound jointing between barrels and monobloc. The engine turning to the sides of the monobloc is a nice touch and the wood-to-metal fit and oil finish are all competent. The well-cut chequering is set out in traditional panels, the wood itself (Turkish walnut) is well figured.

Handling the Invictus, one becomes immediately aware of good dynamics. The action is wider than average by a couple of millimetres at 42mm than others in the range (which are usually 40mm). The wider receiver puts more weight between the hands. The test gun with 32in, fixed choke barrels (there is also a 30in option) weighs in at 8lb 1oz – substantial but lighter than many 32s, which are often 8½lb or more these days. The three-inch chambered, fixed choke (three-quarters and full) barrels are not too heavy at the muzzle and feel noticeably lively for a big, long gun. The 10mm to 6mm tapered sighting rib (which has a shallow central channel and small mid-bead) presents a near-ideal picture to the eye (although the small mid-bead might be removed). I also liked the full length joining ribs, which contribute to the good balance and bring a little more weight to the mid-section compared to guns that dispense with ribbing under the fore-end (as many now do to save weight).

As the Invictus comes to the shoulder it feels very pointable – better in this respect than some larger guns – and noticeably better than many fitted with multichokes, which usually necessitates excessive tromboning of the muzzles and extra mass to accommodate them. The well-finished stock, however, quite full in its shapes, might be improved in my opinion. Measuring 1¾in at the front of the comb and a smidgeon over 2in at rear, it was high in the comb – a bit too high for most of us of average stature and build. The grip felt very full, too, and there was a palm-swell, which is an unnecessary addition to a field gun.

The comb might have been more tapered forward and the thumb flutes are rather deep (more of an aesthetic than ergonomic issue). The length of pull was good at about 14¼in and the wooden butt plate well suited to a game gun (and allowing for easy fitting of a recoil pad should one be required). The fore-end was one of my favourite patterns, rounded, not too thick and fitted with an Anson push rod release latch. I also liked the shape and positive function of the barrel-selector-cum (auto) safety.
TECHNICAL
As well as the radical plan of having the “cams” the male half of the Invictus hinging system on the barrel monobloc rather than projecting at the action knuckle, the gun has a replaceable, gold coloured bearing/locking block mid action that supplements the rear bolt (itself redesigned to increase bearing surface). This “Invictus Block” adds strength and reduces the effects of mechanical stress on closing and firing the gun. It locks with the barrels lumps opposite a conventional Browning style sliding bolt emerging from the action face. The action of the Invictus is thus double locked in the manner of a Boss or Woodward over and under but by different (and clever) means. Guerini has also reworked its trigger with improved sear geometry and industrial hard chrome plating to reduce friction. The function is better than previously with a sub 3lb pull and less creep. The single selective mechanism is inertia operated.

SHOOTING IMPRESSIONS
The new Invictus has one of my favourite qualities in a gun intended for serious, rangy work: the barrels are relatively light for length. It is no lightweight at 8lb 1oz but, by 32in standards, it is not especially heavy, either. Its handling dynamics are excellent: plenty of weight between the hands with the wide, side plated action but not too much at the muzzles. The gun feels great and the good pointing qualities are enhanced by a splendid rib and fore end. I was less keen on the way the stock was set up. It would be too high for most and the front of the comb was too thick (both might easily be rectified). Guerini would be well advised to change the stock specification, especially as everything else is so sound. Once I adapted to shooting a little underneath birds, the Invictus shot well, decisively powdering clays and showing very low felt recoil. With a few tweaks, this is a winner potentially, one of the best high bird guns on the market and a real contender against MK60s and Kemens.

GUERINI INVICTUS HIGH PHEASANT
• Price: RRP £5,200
• Anglo Italian Arms, Unit 10, Birchy Cross Business Centre, Broad Lane, Tamworth, Warwickshire B94 5DN.
• 01564 742477
• caesargueriniuk.com

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More than just hot air?

Today’s field triallers rely on their whistles but go back a century and gundog owners had only pipes between their lips. Are we over-reliant on the devices, wonders David Tomlinson

I RECENTLY looked through a fascinating series of photographs of field trials, taken in the early years of the past century. Though old and faded, most were remarkably sharp. They revealed the favoured dress of the time: for the men, tweed shooting suits with baggy plus-fours, always topped by a hat. On wet days a long raincoat, no doubt called a mackintosh, was clearly acceptable. For women, who are much outnumbered by the men, extravagant hats and ankle-length skirts were the norm, sometimes with a fox-fur stole draped around the shoulders.

What, however, is missing is any sign of a whistle. Lots of the male handlers have a pipe clamped between their teeth but definitely not a whistle. In contrast, go to any field trial this season and I guarantee you will not see a single handler without at least one whistle hung round his or her neck while your chances of spotting a puffing pipe are remote.

The absence of whistles raises a number of questions. How did those handlers communicate with their dogs? Did they whistle through their teeth or shout commands? It seems more likely that they allowed their dog much more freedom than we see today, expecting the dog to use its natural instinct and ability rather than rely on its handler. I’m sure that there are many handlers today who simply couldn’t work their dog, or dogs, without the aid of a whistle, so much is it relied upon.

The next pertinent question is when did the whistle make its first entry into the gundog world and how quickly was it before everyone had one? If you know the answer, I’d love to hear from you. Joseph Hudson invented the silent dog whistle in 1935 and this may well have been the moment when the whistle started to make its mark. The silent whistle is still manufactured today by Acme, the company Hudson founded. Whistles, silent or otherwise, were certainly in widespread use by 1952, when the first edition of Peter Moxon’s classic, Gundogs: Training and Field Trials, was published.

Moxon noted that there were many types of whistle to choose from but warned his readers not to fall into the common error of using the loudest available. “Dogs have very sensitive ears. They can hear sounds which are inaudible to us, and a loud whistle is neither necessary or desirable.” Moxon used an Acme silent whistle. “I usually tune this whistle to the loudest pitch, not because it will help the dog but because I like to have the satisfaction of hearing the whistle I am blowing.” I used a silent whistle with my first spaniel but eventually abandoned it because the dog ignored it and I couldn’t hear it.

I now use what has become for many the standard dog whistle, an Acme No 210.5 (the number indicates the pitch; you can also buy a 210 or a 211.5, but not a 211). Mine is rather boringly black but today Acme sells its whistle in a great variety of cheerful colours, from baby blue to lime green, while the cost is still less than a tenner. I used to buy a 210 or a 211.5, but not a 211. Mine is the same, though there is a natural tendency to blow a whistle harder if the dog continues to ignore you. The best handlers are sparing in their use of the whistle but they do still depend on it.

Watching at the retriever championships last year, it was apparent that the technique of most top handlers is to send their dog out in a straight line, then whistle it to stop and seek directions, which are usually given with hand signals.

An old friend of mine has abandoned his whistle altogether. Instead, both his spaniels are equipped with electric collars. No, they’ve never had a shock in their lives but my pal communicates with them remotely by buzzing them – most electric collars have a buzzing facility. He has found this works effectively, while it is also worth noting that he is a sympathetic handler who loves his dogs. The downside, of course, is that he always has to explain why his dogs wear electric collars, and not everyone believes him.

Perhaps there’s a case for a collar carrying a recording of instructions, with a button for each. You could, for example, press the "Stop!" button or the button to get the dog to turn right, or left, though training it to respond correctly might be beyond most of us, let alone our dogs. Moxon only recommended using the whistle for two commands: stop or drop, and return. I am sure that is the secret of success with a whistle: keep it simple and let the dog use its initiative.
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Lucie Boedts-Kuehnle

A lawyer and keen ecologist, the founder of the Ladies Macnab Club explains how a Macnab became her obsession – and The Field her bible.

LIVING on a rough and remote deerstalking estate in Scotland can make you feel desper- ate. Every time I returned to this Scottish isolation I would dream of my more sophis- ticated, stimulating life working as a lawyer in large, cosmopolitan cities such as Dubai, London or Singapore. I shot my first stag in Scotland during the rut in 2008 after an easy stalk. A clean shot. “That’s it?” I thought, wondering at the fuss surrounding deer- stalking in Scotland. I hung the magnificent stag trophy above my desk in Brussels and wondered if I would ever try again.

But this was before I read John Buchan’s novel John Macnab. It was a revelation to me, providing inspiration for all kinds of sporting adventures in Scotland with my lady friends. We could not only devise and attempt a Macnab and endless variations of the chal- lenge but also follow other sporting pursuits. We talked about chasing grouse or trying our own flies with the fur and feather of what you shoot in the season. For the grouse, don’t be afraid to try a 28-bore; it is light to carry and gives minimal felt recoil with the right load.

Success requires sporting skill, stamina, finesse and adrenalin but I found that the pursuit of it brought a more holistic purpose to my life. We live in polluted cities with over consumerism and materialism but the Macnab Challenge is based on a mini- malistic lifestyle. Being non-reared and purely wild, the grouse, stag and salmon are the ultimate wild harvest and symbols of purity and sustainability.

I got together a group of like-minded, adventurous ladies – who are also passionate about wild food and field-to-fork gastronomy – to go to Scotland and attempt the chal- lenge. The Ladies Macnab Challenge, a new Ladies Club, was born. The club is based on and inspired by the famous quote from John Macnab, “you’ve got to rediscover the com- forts of your life by losing them for a little”, which I think perfectly encapsulates the phi- losophy of the Macnab Challenge. The pursuit requires you to fight with the elements, you will feel hungry and cold and will probably find yourself lost in breathtaking surroun- dings. It is a lesson in letting go, living in the moment and of humility, which shows that the main message of John Buchan’s novel is still both relevant and universal. Espe- cially as, despite all of your preparation and skills, a Macnab may remain elusive. It is a reminder of our humble and limited condi- tion when faced with the infinite strength and mystery of the natural elements.

It has been said that the changing weather and climate brings the brightest ideas, as the brain has to adapt constantly. Brainstorm- ing takes on a literal meaning when you are admiring the endless wild open spaces in pursuit of a Macnab in Scotland. The Ladies Macnab Club believes that an affinity with nature creates unrivalled artistic inspiration and creative energy, so we launched a pro- ject to empower and assist contemporary artists, such as Eric Poitevin. They work in Scotland as an artist in residence, sponsored by the Ladies Macnab Challenge. The Field re- mains a source of inspiration for the Mac- nab girls, fieldsports enthusiasts interested in the cultural roots and long history and tradition of our sport.

Lucie Boedts-Kuehnle is the founder of the Ladies Macnab Challenge, which has taken place every year since 2012. A Belgian-born lawyer, ecology enthusiast and mother of three, she divides her time between Luxembourg, Scotland, Germany and Brussels. The granddaughter of a Belgian sculptor and hunting adventurer, the artist in residence project – which invites contemporary artists to work in Scotland and reflect on nature and ecology while the women pursue a Macnab – became an obvious addition to the main event.

TOP TIPS FOR THE MACNAB

For deerstalking, take good boots and start on the fitness work early. Some rifles, such as the Sauer 404 Artemis, are made specially for ladies.

For fly-fishing, learn to tie your own flies with the fur and feather of what you shoot in the season. For the grouse, don’t be afraid to try a 28-bore; it is light to carry and gives minimal felt recoil with the right load.

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The best of muck

As well as providing a giant breakfast bowl to sustain birds during winter, the muck heap is a valuable tool in the battle against soil depletion, as Tim Field explains.

IN the quiet of a crisp winter’s morning a gentle plume rises from a field edge. The remnants of a bonfire? No, it is steam rising off a mighty muck heap. A community of billions of fungi, bacteria and invertebrates are industriously composting away, letting off steam in the process. The larger beasties wriggle back and forth, aerating and mixing the outer layers, exposing a few weed seeds and husks on the surface. The combination of warmth, bugs and worms, with a side order of seeds and grains, make this a bird feeder of gargantuan proportions. Every rough shoot should cherish a good muck heap – a giant breakfast bowl to sustain birds through a cold snap.

Cow muck is a familiar scent around stock farms on windless winter days, particularly when it’s being shunted around. The beeping of a reversing Loadall is reminiscent of yard scraping, mucking out and turning. In an ideal world, muck is manoeuvred into a covered store before being carted to field when a suitable weather window appears. In well-endowed farmyards a large, concrete pad and silos will allow regular turning without damaging soil structure. Otherwise, it is in-field composting, heaped on a firm piece of ground far from ditches, drains and water-courses. It is turned every six weeks to aerate.

Patiently waiting a year to compost, the spreader kicks into gear when the ground firms up or a hard, frosty day enables muck mobilisation. The valuable crops most in need of nitrogen will be prioritised, such as winter cereals. Giving a dose of nitrogen from well-rotted manure will help the crop get away in spring. Otherwise it could be stubbles ready for the spring drillings or pastures in line for a hay or silage cut at the start of summer. Once the first cut of silage is taken, the muck spreader follows closely behind to give a boost to regrowth before another cut or grazing.

Nutrient cycling with manure is one of the great values of mixed farming. Muck spreading is the means of shifting nitrogen from feed, via livestock to the next crops. It is often forgotten that an animal by itself doesn’t generate fertility, it merely recycles it. A cow grazing a grass pasture is quietly stripping fertility and over time the field will be less productive; unless, that is, feed, muck or fertiliser is brought in to replenish the nitrogen removed by the grazing cow.

However, the miraculous biology of nitrogen-fixation in leguminous plants (such as clover) and other soil microbiology replenish soil fertility. Therefore, an optimal system will fix fertility in leguminous leaves, harvest of a reversing Loadall is reminiscent of yard scraping, mucking out and turning. In an ideal world, muck is manoeuvred into a covered store before being carted to field when a suitable weather window appears. In well-endowed farmyards a large, concrete pad and silos will allow regular turning without damaging soil structure. Otherwise, it is in-field composting, heaped on a firm piece of ground far from ditches, drains and water-courses. It is turned every six weeks to aerate.

Patiently waiting a year to compost, the spreader kicks into gear when the ground doesn’t generate fertility, it merely recycles it. A cow grazing a grass pasture is quietly stripping fertility and over time the field will be less productive; unless, that is, feed, muck or fertiliser is brought in to replenish the nitrogen removed by the grazing cow.

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The farm will present areas less suited to intensive efforts and biodiversity will benefit

While these areas might still be grazed, hay taken or weeds managed, more intensive treatments of subsoiling, muck spreading or reseeding are directed towards the farm’s soils that make up the bread basket.

The Sustainable Soils Alliance was launched at Westminster in October and we heard Michael Gove rolling out facts and figures on our soil’s capacity to yield only 60 more harvests before we lose them beyond repair. He went on to quote Jared Diamond’s book Collapse, which describes how the fall of civilisation on Easter Island coincided with the destruction of the environment – trees, in that case. Drawing comparisons between us now and the Easter Islander community 60 years before the last tree was felled, we got an encouraging message that our Secretary of State wants to arrest the depletion of soils or face civil disaster.

Soil nutrient recycling of mixed farming systems is, without a doubt, part of the solution and there is a reassuring appetite to value the magnificence of manure. As part of the annual Oxford Farming Conferences in January, Agricology will be hosting a fringe event at Daylesford Farm with six farmers representing their different scenarios of integrating livestock to build soil fertility. On that day and all winter, may steaming beacons of muck symbolise enlightened perspectives on soil husbandry. Follow Tim and Agricology @agricology.
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Peugeot 3008 GT

Neither estate nor hot-hatch, the French manufacture’s small SUV offers crossover appeal, says Charlie Flindt – for those at home in an i-Cabin

Peugeot has never really recreated its glory days of the 1970s and ’80s, when huge estate cars ferried vast families around the country. Those magnificent 504/5 estates could soak up massive punishment in the harshest of environments – everything from the terror and mayhem of a primary school taxi run to the relative civility of rutted tracks in central Africa. And the French manufacturer never matched its reign as hot-hatch champion, when the 205 GTi ruled the boy-racer roost. God knows, it’s tried, with “worthy successors” being launched every few years but none has recreated that 205 magic.

Perhaps Peugeot will make its mark with the new 3008, one of the company’s new “crossovers”. But the crossover car market is a mighty busy one and getting more crowded by the week. So Peugeot has decided – rightly or wrongly – that the best way to stand out in that market is to go full wacky gadget and gizmo.

Mind you, you wouldn’t guess it from the outside. Yes, the front looks as though it has been designed by committee but the rest is pleasant on the eye, especially the rear with its clever light arrangement and snazzy exhaust pipes.

Inside is where the surfeit of gizmos begins. The traditional dashboard has gone and an LCD screen sits cleverly above the top rim of the scaled-down and not particularly round steering wheel. The whole driving environment has gone “cockpit”, with the central tunnel wrapping around you. To ensure its appeal to Millennials, Peugeot has called it (probably after much research and focus groups) the i-Cockpit.

We shouldn’t mock the Millennials; for all the stick we give them, they’re the only ones qualified to break into the options menu and somehow restore something normal to the LCD dashboard.

Having road speed and rpm displayed on fancy rotating virtual reels is all very well (and perhaps a nod back to the early Citroën GS) but I still like a nice dial and a needle – especially an anticlockwise tacho that can be found on the 3008 screen, if, of course, you find the right settings. Which I didn’t.

The 3008’s best tricks are hidden away under the bonnet. If you were to jump straight in and drive it without any homework, you wouldn’t believe that the 3008 has only a 1.2 litre, three-cylinder engine. It feels lively and quite powerful enough for what is not a small car; it even makes fantastic rorty noises at about 4,000rpm. Performance isn’t stunning and economy is fine but the fun factor is certainly there. It rides and corners with great confidence.

In fact, the whole 3008 package is rather clever. There’s an inner car, almost like a go-cart – or (dare one say it) a GTi – with a fantastic buzzy engine and tiny steering wheel, fun and satisfying to drive. The outer car is a roomy and versatile people carrier – not as roomy as the legendary 504/5 estates of old, but spacious nonetheless.

The 3008 will undoubtedly do very well for Peugeot over here but I’d hate to see that fancy i-Cockpit once Saharan sand has blown into it.
The write stuff
Alexandra Henton reads about calligraphy, monster pike, fantasy buildings and Churchill the rider

INKSPIRED
Now is the time to write thank-you notes for Christmas presents, house parties and Boxing Day shoots, so when better to divert oneself with the fascinating, ink-stained world of calligraphy?

As someone who buys specific ink for festive missives, changes ink colour throughout the year depending on the season and carries a fountain pen at all times, I can’t expect the biro-wielding masses to be thrilled by Betty Soldi’s elaborate and instructive book. However, for those who relish writing a well-penned note, Soldi’s vibrant, how-to manual will offer an insight into your own writing and encourage creativity with the pen, too.

Nine chapters introduce Soldi and her skills, teach the budding calligrapher and nurture the more creative. Anything that puts pen in hand is to be seized upon in the age of smartphone and keyboard. Writing is a joyful pleasure, a practical skill and an important aspect of a real, rather than virtual, individual. Through it we can leave our mark.

By Betty Soldi
Kyle Books, £17

PHANTOM ARCHITECTURE
When I was a small, I would spend merry hours scrawling pictures of extravagant houses and buildings with a plethora of stairs, rooms and fantastic fittings. There is something alluring about the promise of what might be. Philip Wilkinson’s new book presents that intriguing notion: the greatest buildings never built.

Wilkinson examines these architectural masterpieces, works of genius, vision and fantasy, in a well-illustrated volume. Over six chapters, arranged historically, the ideas, and the exquisite drawings of them, offer wide-eyed diversion. From the mile-high skyscraper and a dome covering downtown Manhattan to a monumental elephant as a triumphal arch and an aerial restaurant, these phantoms often cast the architectural future.

After upheaval – war, plague, fire – architecture can often provide an answer to how we live. Although the robotic walking city might not have become a reality (yet), these ghostly architectural echoes still entrance the reader.

By Philip Wilkinson
Simon & Schuster, £25

HOW TO CATCH BIG PIKE
Although the question begged in the title may not have been on the tip of one’s tongue, the art of luring the biggest of pike is surprisingly addictive. Any fisherman wants to catch a big fish and January is the perfect month to set your sights (rod, reels and line) on Esoc lucius.

Paul Gustafson has mastered catching specimen pike on rivers, lakes, gravel pits and lochs, and his book is the ultimate guide to landing the big one. With chapters written by Fred Buller OBE (on a world record pike) and other expert fishermen, including Mick Wills and Pete Climo, Gustafson has compiled a most useful volume. His own contribution on what pike see, smell and feel will be of much interest to the angler.

By Paul Gustafson
Little, Brown, £35

CHURCHILL AT THE GALLOP
Brough Scott’s book on Churchill sets out to discover the man, “from the only vantage point where I can claim any authority: a view from the saddle”. This he does remarkably well. Sixteen chapters, ordered chronologically, hack through Churchill’s riding career and a vast array of equine episodes.

A passion for riding was bred into Churchill. His maternal grandfather was the first man to drive a coach four-in-hand on the streets of New York and founded the New York Jockey Club. His mother (and her sisters) “rode like Amazons” and hunting was an unquenchable passion for both of his parents. Churchill went on to hunt boar with Coco Chanel, foxes in Leicestershire and jackals in South Africa.

From riding his pony at Blenheim Castle, taking the plate in the riding class at Sandhurst, charging into the mêlée at Omdurman in the Sudan, to polo, hunting and breeding racehorses, Churchill’s life began before the motor car and remained wedded to the horse. This book takes us on a winning gallop through his life in the saddle, accompanied by fascinating photographs.

By Brough Scott
Racing Post, £25
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The sound of the Baskervilles

With the Spotties, in disgrace, having moved to pastures new, there’s been no need to count sheep. Though Philip Howard is perturbed by the large crate that’s appeared

THERE has been a change of tone for 2018 in the Howard household. Just before Christmas we had an existential crisis, which culminated in the Media Queen having to give away her beloved Spotty dogs. The cause of this calamity was that one of her neighbour’s sheep perished at the hands, or, to be more specific, the teeth of the Spots. A great shame, as despite their murderous tendencies they were attractive and loving, albeit psychotic, dogs.

This led to a considerable amount of soul searching, recrimination and angst, particularly in my direction. My life at Naworth, she insisted, though full of sheep, was currently soulless and devoid of warmth without dogs and music. What I needed was, ideally, a couple of wolfhounds or lurchers or some intimate knowledge of his private life, which she agreed would not find its way onto page nine of The Mail on Sunday.

As I write, various killer labradors reside in Deal and other southern coastal resorts, while a Jack Russell that had famously driven an entire flock of sheep over a cliff on Coll now happily kills cats in a flat near Sauchiehall Street.

In short, the children had noticed that a pattern had developed involving too many dogs, increasingly large dogs and lack of time spent with said dogs partly due to a wild and exotic lifestyle.

I had an inkling that trouble could be brewing when the Media Queen arrived just before our rude boys’ black powder shoot with a cage the size of an elephant enclosure. She announced that rather than accompany us on a Friday maraud she was travelling up north over the Scottish border to view a couple of Great Dane puppies and, worse still, she was taking my daughter, who is a complete sucker for that kind of thing.

Remarkably, they returned empty-handed but it was deemed a successful trip despite the breeder insisting that only one dog be bought to avoid the pack tendency. But the next week there was to be a family gathering. Uncharacteristically, she advised that she was going to take her children up to view the new Baskerville beast and would abide by the general consensus. The omens were not auspicious.

I knew that some secret planning was afoot when I left the house. For a start, I was told to enjoy my day’s grouse shooting and not to return too early. House fairies, builders and my secretary were all smirking as I left. So it was with a certain amount of resignation that I returned to a text telling me to meet the others in the Great Hall, expecting to wade through puddles of Danegeld before being drooled over by two large puppies. But, instead, as I entered the courtyard I heard the most beautiful and magical sound. Waves of rich tinkling music washed around me. I had been given a Bechstein baby grand piano.

The installation had not been without interest. The entire staff had been co-opted into carrying it up the great hall steps. The painter had a hernia. Mickey the builder had questioned the wisdom of giving a nine-fingered man a piano and halfway up added, “Couldn’t you have got him a violin? It would be easier to carry down again.”

And there were no dogs. Her son, traumatised by the size of the parents of the Baskerville beast, had fainted with terror and when revived had questioned the need of his mother for a house horse. The cage still remains in the kitchen. But, for now, as the Bard of Stratford told us, “If music be the food of love, play on.”

66 The Media Queen insisted that my life, though full of sheep, was soulless and devoid of warmth without dogs and music
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