# RURAL & SPORTING
## NEWSLETTER

SUMMER 2026

*Keeping you up to date with Rural and Sporting matters*

JM Osborne
*Rural · Professional · Sporting*

jmosborne.co.uk

WILLIAM POWELL
The Ultimate **Sporting Agency**

williampowellsporting.co.uk

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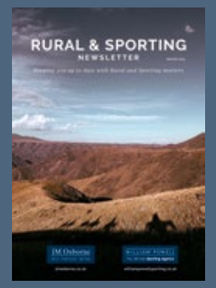



This newsletter has been put together by JM Osborne Rural & Sporting and William Powell Sporting, with the aim to focus on current Rural and Sporting matters. If you would like to discuss any of the topics featured in this publication or find out more about the services provided by either company, please contact us on any of the following details.

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A 500 acre Arable Farm in the 2027 harvest year, would probably lose £70,000

# RURAL OVERVIEW

**At the time of writing this, a great deal is up in the air, from how Grouse broods have fared after hatching, what devastation Heather Beetle will decide to wreak this year, whether the rains will come (obviously not over Moorland!) to give a much needed soaking to arable crops in the Eastern counties and on perhaps a lesser level, who will be Prime Minister. We do indeed live in interesting times and the rural world, which one used to think was a pretty sleepy place by comparison with our urban counterparts, seems to have a great deal happening currently.**

Kevin Stewart elsewhere in this publication, comments on farming north and south of the border, but it was chilling to recently read in a National newspaper, that the Central Association of Agricultural Valuers (under the incredibly knowledgeable Jeremy Moody), forecast that a 500 acre Arable Farm in the 2027 harvest year, would probably lose £70,000. Difficult to see how many Farmers might pay their IHT bill out of that.

The Renter's Rights Act is now in place and not surprisingly, the number of residential properties to rent has continued to reduce significantly. However, rents have as a consequence, increased. All pretty predictable, but not to politicians on both right and left (bearing in mind that Michael Gove started this ridiculous repeal of Mrs Thatcher's 1980 Housing Act Legislation).

Forestry, which until a couple of years ago was a very hot investment, has certainly got a lot cooler, with a very significant reduction in demand and as a consequence value for planting land; these are probably 33% off their peak 2021/2022 levels. Timber prices have also declined, but interestingly, we think that now is probably the time to look at buying established woodland, when the herd seems to be rejecting it.

Despite what National Agents are saying, overall agricultural land is now well off its peak (but with some exceptions due to location/neighbours etc), and we see that decline likely to continue throughout 2026 and very probably throughout 2027 as well. Many potential buyers are sitting on their hands, waiting to see what happens. This includes both UK and overseas purchasers. Sporting properties in the main have followed this trend (again with a few exceptions), and there is obviously concern with both what the Scottish Government might do next (given its track record with regard to legislation on Country Sports and also its fixation on large Estates), but worryingly, England and Wales seem to be following suit. We are relatively relaxed about Grouse Licencing North of the Border and indeed, NatureScot seems to be much more sensible in terms of granting Licences for the control of predators than their cousins, Natural England in England. However, the Hunting with Dogs Legislation and the protection that affords to foxes in Scotland, is a veritable minefield for Keepers wanting to flush foxes out of Forestry or large bracken beds.

We clearly have more in store from the UK National Government, whether it is the proposed ban on Trail Hunting (perhaps the importance of that in a world of chaos, tells you all you need to know about the current Parliamentary Labour Party) and 'consultation' on Game Bird Releasing and Game Shooting generally – a very unappealing prospect.

**We certainly do live in interesting times and the often perceived sleepy rural world, does not seem very sleepy now!**

**WRITTEN BY MARK OSBORNE**

"On the Moors that had a reasonably good stock in the spring, prospects look really encouraging"

# GROUSE PROSPECTS...

WRITTEN BY
MARK OSBORNE

**I absolutely hate holding myself out as a hostage to fortune by trying to predict what the forthcoming Grouse Season might look like, when there were still some late broods to hatch. Also, when Grouse chicks are very small, it is difficult for Keepers to see them in dense Moorland vegetation and even harder, to get a reasonably accurate count on the number of chicks in the brood.**

However, our projections are that the 2026 Grouse season will overall be quite well up on 2025. In the main production will be good (but obviously dependent on the stock of Grouse which were on the Moor in the spring) and in places it could be very good. There are however, large areas of the country and particularly in the Highlands of Scotland, but also in parts of Northern England, where the stocks in the spring were just too low, to enable a very significant recovery to occur, and so as to provide a suitable surplus this season. However, in the main and even on these Moors, they are generally looking better than this time last year.

On Moors that had a reasonably good stock in the spring, prospects look really encouraging. The cold and occasionally quite wet weather in the third week of May and running into early June has not helped (quite deep snow in parts of the Highlands, minus temperatures on some high hills in northern England, with too much cold and wetting rain to be at all ideal). As a result, some broods have lost some chicks, perhaps when they were too big for the hens to cover whilst it was heavily raining. However, overall these sub-Arctic birds seem in the main to have been able to cope.

We were all very worried with the very large and widespread incidents of Heather Beetle in the early spring (incredibly early), these being the residue from last year. Sadly, our much warmer winters (the last really cold winters were 2010 and 2011), have undoubtedly allowed the Heather Beetle to thrive and multiply and multiply and multiply! This does not portend well for next season either, and I suspect that where beetle has already done real damage to large areas of heather this year, Moor Owners and Managers should be wary of leaving too big an overwintering stock of Grouse, given that there could be a real shortage of high quality food to feed these birds over the lean winter months.

There will be a good deal of variation in how prolific Grouse are, even in localised Moorland areas. We know of one Moor in the Highlands which shot last season, where even shooting that one day on the best drives (and none of them were very good!), has meant that this year's spring stock was even lower than last; that puts into context how important it is not to shoot when the stock is too low. By contrast, a Moor in the south of Scotland did not shoot in 2024 and last year had its record season. Getting the balance right is difficult, but with current levels of overwinter predation and the problems of Heather Beetle in many Moorland areas, north and south of the border, only shooting when there is a proper shootable surplus is the key.

**We are hopeful that over much of the Grouse 'country', 2026 will be a season to look forward to, but as usual there will be lots of variation; the joys or otherwise of running a Grouse Moor!**

# CARTRIDGES OF THE FUTURE

**The shooting world is undergoing one of the most significant transitions in its history. With the UK moving towards a full ban on lead ammunition by April 2029, the need to adapt has never been clearer. For sportsmen and women who want to stay ahead of the curve while maintaining performance in the field, William Powell is proud to offer a range of guns engineered and proofed for the future – steel shot.**

**Whether you like it or not, steel shot is for most going to be the future!**

**The Sovereign**
Side by Side

**The Princeps**
Over & Under

## A CHANGING LANDSCAPE

For generations, lead shot has dominated game shooting, valued for its density, consistency, and proven effectiveness. However, environmental concerns leading to legislation, mean that non-toxic alternatives are going to be necessary. Steel shot more accurately described as 'soft iron' is leading this transition, mainly because of its consistency, availability and cost (as compared to the alternatives).

Modern steel cartridges have improved dramatically over the past two decades. Advances in powder technology, wad design, and manufacturing have transformed steel into a viable and effective choice for the vast majority of UK shooting scenarios. Whilst differences remain, particularly in recoil, noise, and long-range performance - steel is now more than capable for the type of Game shooting that we know and enjoy.

## WHY STEEL PROOF MATTERS

Not all guns are created equally when it comes to shooting steel safely and effectively. Steel shot is harder than lead and requires barrels, chambers, and choke configurations designed to withstand modern steel loads. This is where steel shot proofed guns come into their own.

High Performance steel cartridges in particular, offer shooters increased range and striking power - but only when paired with guns specifically designed and proofed for their use.
**This is really important to understand.**

Most but not all High Performance Steel Shot Proofed guns should have:

- **Enhanced pressure tested barrels**
  For higher pressure cartridges using 'double base' gun powders
- **Optimised barrel design**
  Long choke tubes and forcing cones
- **Compatible choke systems**
  Designed for safe and efficient shot patterns

## BUILT FOR THE FUTURE

As more shooting estates transition to non-toxic ammunition ahead of the legal deadline, having a gun that is already steel shot proofed is no longer just an advantage, it's becoming essential.

William Powell has been closely monitoring industry developments and investing in solutions that allow shooters to adapt reasonably easily. Our modern guns are built with the future in mind - robust actions, sufficient barrel wall thickness, and proofing that ensures compatibility with both 'Standard' and 'High Performance' steel cartridges. Our guns are designed not only to meet regulatory requirements, but to deliver the reliability and performance expected by all Game Shots.

## IN FIELD PERFORMANCE

Whilst traditionalists will more than likely notice some differences when moving from lead to steel, with increased recoil being felt as well as greater noise output, our Sovereign and Viscount Side by Sides are more than capable of handling the largest of steel loads. For most UK game shooting, standard steel cartridges will perform exceptionally well on mid-height birds. For those seeking extended range or greater striking energy, High Performance steel provides an effective solution.

> It is massively important to point out that this transition is not the end of shooting, far from it!

To compensate for the additional recoil, many of our customers are choosing to fit their guns with a leather covered recoil pad for comfort and aesthetics. These will help to take the edge off the extra recoil particularly from High Performance steel shot cartridges. Similarly, some customers have gone one step further again, opting to fit an 'Isis' recoil reduction system. This works as a shock absorber, similar to that found on a car. Despite this, we believe that heavier guns will become the 'norm' and replace many traditional and much lighter game guns. From our own in-field research, High Performance steel loads can become uncomfortable over the duration of a shoot day with guns weighing less than 7lbs and are much more tolerable in a gun weighing 8lbs plus. This ideally suits Over and Unders.

## PROTECTING THE SPORT WE LOVE

It is massively important to point out that this transition is not the end of shooting, far from it! It is simply the next evolution of our sport's story. As with previous changes throughout history (think hammer guns, non ejectors, paper cased cartridges, Black Powder before Nitro and then Over and Unders!), the sport will adapt and no doubt continue to thrive.

Many shooters will choose to reserve their classic English guns for special occasions, using alternatives such as Bismuth where appropriate. For day-to-day shooting however, modern steel shot proofed guns represent the practical and forward-thinking choice.

## THE WILLIAM POWELL APPROACH

At William Powell, we are committed to guiding our customers through this transition with expertise, honesty, and practical solutions. Our range of High Performance steel proof guns ensures that you are fully equipped for the future, without compromising on quality or enjoyment.

Now is the time to prepare, adapt, and invest in equipment that will serve you for years to come. Explore the next generation of shooting with William Powell - built for performance, proofed for the future.

If you would like to discuss any of the points listed further or to come and browse our range of High Performance steel shot proofed guns, please call our **Banbury Gunroom** on **01295 661035.**

**SCAN TO VISIT THE WILLIAM POWELL GUNROOM WEBSITE**

## Get your FREE copy!




## LEAD SHOT ALTERNATIVES, EXPLAINED!

Our new guide breaks down the alternatives - exactly which cartridges your gun can shoot, how to tell and the possible changes that can be made going forwards.

Scan the QR code or call **01295 661035** to request a hard copy.

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GUEST ARTICLE

# Resilience is...

## A farming outlook from Kevin Stewart, Stewart Rural Ltd

**Resilience, it turns out, is boarding a train in Dundee with a four-year-old, a bag full of snacks and an optimistic rail timetable — only for a breakdown and a missed connection to extend what should have been a straightforward journey south into something approaching an endurance event. By the time Shropshire came into view 8 hours later... the thermometer was nudging 34 degrees and my son had consumed his body weight in ice cream. He, for the record, thought the whole thing was brilliant.**

The farming industry could learn something from a four-year-old's attitude to adversity. Enjoy the journey, find the ice cream, and don't catastrophise the delays.

That journey south — Dundee through the fertile arable lands of Angus and Fife, across the livestock country of Lanarkshire, down through the English borders and on into Shropshire — is a mere 350 miles. It is also, increasingly, a journey between two different farming worlds. The political pressures, the support frameworks, the market conditions and frankly the climate are all

WRITTEN BY KEVIN STEWART

diverging, and the gap is widening. Scotland sits mid-transition towards its new Rural Support Plan (2026–2031), with Basic Payments broadly maintained for now. England, south of the border, is further into the painful process of agricultural transition — SFI closed abruptly in spring 2025, Higher Tier Countryside Stewardship is by invitation only, and many farm businesses that built their forward plans around new scheme income are now recalibrating fast.

### Farming businesses run on cashflow, not vision statements

We now have thick heavy reports to tell us where both countries are headed and what they want from their farmers and farms— Defra's Farming Roadmap to 2050, Scotland's Rural Support Plan. The direction of travel is largely right (profitable, productive, sustainable and resilient, and notably the roadmap is clear that food production remains the primary purpose of farming, while acknowledging that farmers must balance environmental outcomes, nature recovery and climate resilience alongside it) – who won't want all those things… But farming businesses run on cashflow, not vision statements, and right now it is the next twelve months, not the next twenty-five years, that is keeping people awake at night.

Nothing illustrates that gap between aspiration and reality more sharply than the Scotch whisky and malting barley story. The industry has spoken for years of sustainable 'grain to glass' ambitions and ambitious long-term growth. The here and now is a different story: UK barley usage by brewers, maltsters and distillers fell 17% in the first half of 2025–26 — the largest six-month decline since records began in 1990. Scottish spring barley area is down 10% this season as growers vote with their drilling decisions. The cause is a combination of US tariffs on Scotch whisky, changing consumer habits, and warehouses full of spirit that nobody is in a rush to buy. Recovery will come — probably 2028 or 2029 — but farming is not a game you can simply pause.

Rotations are set, seed is bought, and decades of agronomy don't adapt overnight to a distillery's production spreadsheet.

The old sayings — don't put all your eggs in one basket, never test the depth of a river with both feet — have been quietly drowned out by the industry's drive (and necessity) towards scale and specialisation. The UK dairy herd is a striking example as it was recently reported that there are now fewer than 7,000 dairy farms today against around 36,000 in 1995, yet total milk output has risen as yields have climbed from around 5,000 litres per cow to over 8,300. The technical achievement and professionalism of these businesses is genuinely impressive. But when one market sneezes, a highly specialised business catches pneumonia. Building a resilient food system on ever-narrower foundations is a question worth asking, even if nobody has a simple answer.

For now, however, the combines are rolling. The harvest is the harvest — you take what the season gives you and get on with it. That, in the end, is what resilience actually looks like which my four-year-old of course knew already…

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# MOORLAND MANAGEMENT IN THE ANGUS GLENS:

## A BASELINE FOR BALANCED DEBATE

WRITTEN BY
ROSS EWING

By Ross Ewing, Director of Moorland & Strategic Projects, Scottish Land & Estates

GUEST ARTICLE

From mechanics and groundworkers to hospitality providers and fuel suppliers, estate activity supports a wide network of businesses

**As the 2026 Grouse shooting season approaches, Scottish Land & Estates (SLE) and the Angus Glens Moorland Group (AGMG) are preparing to publish a significant new report: 'Moorland Management in the Angus Glens – Economic, Environmental and Social Impacts from 2025.'**

While the report itself has not yet been formally released, it is timely to reflect on its key themes and findings, which together provide one of the most comprehensive snapshots yet assembled of modern Moorland management in a major Scottish upland landscape.

This article offers an overview of that forthcoming work – highlighting its importance, summarising its evidence base, and considering what it tells us about the future of integrated land management in Scotland's uplands.

### A First-of-its-Kind Baseline

At its core, the report represents a collaborative effort across seven estates in the Angus Glens, collectively managing around **54,715 hectares—approximately 60% of the total glen area**.

What makes this work particularly valuable is its consistency. For the first time, comparable data has been gathered across multiple estates to create a shared, transparent baseline of activity and outcomes. As the report itself notes, this is not the final word – it is a starting point for better understanding a complex and often contested landscape.

The Angus Glens are emblematic of Scotland's uplands: a place where heather Moorland, peatland, rough grazing, woodland and river systems intersect with communities, businesses and visitors. They are also a landscape shaped by generations of active management.

### A Multi-Functional Landscape

One of the report's clearest messages is that the Angus Glens cannot be defined by a single land use. Across all seven estates, **sporting, agriculture, conservation, forestry, property and emerging natural capital activities are interwoven**.

Every participating estate combines sporting management - principally Grouse shooting – with agricultural activity. Conservation is a core feature across the majority, while woodland creation and natural capital projects are beginning to play an increasing role.

The key takeaway is clear: the Angus Glens are a working landscape where food production, habitat management, employment and recreation coexist – and depend on one another.

### Employment and Community: The Human Dimension

The economic and social contribution of Moorland management is often discussed in abstract terms. This report grounds that discussion in data.

Across the seven estates, Moorland management supports **86.5 full-time equivalent roles**, including **43 gamekeepers** who provide essential on-the-ground management. These roles go far beyond sporting functions, covering habitat work, predator control, monitoring and infrastructure maintenance.

In addition, **768 seasonal workers** were engaged during 2025, particularly around shoot days, reflecting the importance of flexible employment in rural economies.

Perhaps most striking is the connection between employment and community sustainability. Estates provide **68 homes, including 23 housing families with school-age children,** helping to maintain population levels, schools and local services in remote areas.

Taken together, this paints a picture of estates as local anchors – supporting not just jobs, but the continuity of rural life.

### Economic Impact: Retaining Value Locally

The report estimates over **£6.6 million in annual expenditure** linked to these landholdings, combining direct employment and supply chain spending.

Of particular importance is where that money goes. Approximately **82.5% of contractor and supplier spend remains within the local economy**. This reflects both necessity - given the remoteness of the glens - and a longstanding reliance on local skills and services.

From mechanics and groundworkers to hospitality providers and fuel suppliers, estate activity supports a wide network of businesses. These relationships help sustain rural trades, maintain skills and ensure year-round economic activity.

Shoot days themselves represent concentrated bursts of economic activity. In 2025, **84 shoot days were delivered**, each requiring substantial logistical support and creating seasonal employment opportunities.

In short, the report demonstrates that the value generated by Moorland management does not remain within estate boundaries – it circulates through the wider rural economy.

### Nature and Biodiversity

The environmental dimension is central to the report, with detailed monitoring undertaken in partnership with organisations such as the Game & Wildlife Conservation Trust and universities.

The data highlights significant species richness, including over **100 bird species recorded on a single estate**, along with mammals, plants and invertebrates.

Of particular note is the presence of key upland bird species – such as curlew, lapwing and golden plover – many of which are of conservation concern.

Raptors and owls were also widely recorded, with **six raptor species present on every surveyed estate**, indicating a complex and functioning ecosystem.

The report does not claim that all environmental challenges have been solved. Rather, it presents evidence that active management - combined with monitoring and collaboration - plays a role in maintaining these habitats and species.

### Challenges and the Road Ahead

Alongside its findings, the report is candid about the challenges facing upland management.

Contributors highlight increasing regulatory complexity, economic pressures and expectations to deliver across multiple policy goals - from biodiversity and climate mitigation to public access and rural employment.

A consistent message emerges: '**delivery depends on viability.**'

**The report calls for:**

- Clear and stable regulation
- Recognition of active land management
- Support for integrated land use
- Investment in rural skills and employment
- Better alignment between policy ambitions and practical delivery

These are not new themes, but the report strengthens them with data and real-world examples from the ground.

### Conclusion

***'Moorland Management in the Angus Glens – Economic, Environmental and Social Impacts from 2025'*** is a timely contribution to an ongoing debate.

As it moves towards publication ahead of the 2026 Grouse season, it offers something that has often been lacking in discussions about the uplands: a shared evidence base.

It shows that the Angus Glens are not defined by a single narrative, but by a balance of activities, interests and outcomes. And it reinforces a simple but important point – these landscapes are not static. They are lived in, worked on and carefully managed.

For those involved in rural and sporting Scotland, this report is likely to become a key reference point – not because it settles debates, but because it helps to inform them.

In a sector where perspectives can be strongly held, that in itself is a valuable step forward.

To find out more about Scottish Land & Estates go to **scottishlandandestates.co.uk**

WRITTEN BY
OLLIE SEVERN

# AMERICA,

## *is WPS the best agency for those considering crossing the pond?*

**Over the decades, William Powell Sporting has been incredibly fortunate to build lasting friendships with a remarkable number of American clients. We believe this is a direct result of our deep understanding of what truly matters to those wishing to experience shooting in the UK and Europe.**

Through our sister company and its management of a number of prestigious Sporting Estates, both Grouse Moors and significant Pheasant and Partridge Estates, we have had the privilege of working on behalf of several American owners for many years. This has given us invaluable insight into the priorities and expectations of some of the world's most discerning sportsmen and women. In turn, this understanding has shaped our Sporting Agency, enabling us to host and support a significant number of American shooting parties, whom we often find to be among the most enthusiastic and passionate, but with a real appreciation and requirement for detail. Over the years, we have identified several areas of particular importance and have built our business around delivering excellence in each of them.

### *Authentic Shooting*

For those travelling thousands of miles to shoot in the UK, access to exceptional Sporting Estates is paramount. At WPS, we have worked tirelessly to secure access to some of the finest Estates in the country.

Whether your interest lies in traditional high Pheasants and Partridges, challenging Grouse days, or more extreme sporting experiences, our focus remains the same: providing access to some of the most beautiful, authentic, and historically significant Shooting Estates in Britain. We understand that a shooting trip to the UK is often a once-in-a-lifetime experience, and we believe it should be exactly that.

### *Lodges, Hotels & Country Houses*

While the shooting may be the centrepiece of the trip, exceptional accommodation plays an equally important role. A wonderful day in the field deserves to be complemented by a comfortable and welcoming place to return to. Over many years, we have established relationships with some of the finest Sporting Lodges, Country Houses, and luxury hotels throughout the UK. Whenever possible, we favour accommodation located on the Estates themselves, allowing guests to immerse themselves fully. Where this is not available, we carefully match accommodation to both the shooting programme and the preferences of the party.

We have developed a strong understanding of what many American guests value most and strive to ensure every stay delivers the comfort, service, and atmosphere they expect.

### *Non-Shooting Guests*

Many of our American clients travel with family members, or friends who do not shoot. We quickly learned that the enjoyment of these guests is every bit as important as that of the Guns themselves. After all, even the finest day in the field can be diminished if your guests have not enjoyed their own experience. Our concierge team can curate bespoke itineraries for non-shooting guests, including visits to historic landmarks, private tours, shopping, spa experiences, cultural attractions, and much more. Whether their interests lie in history, countryside pursuits, food and wine, or relaxation, we are able to create a programme tailored specifically to them.

### *Concierge Service*

For overseas visitors, the shooting itself is only one element of a successful trip. The logistics surrounding it are equally important. Recognising this many years ago, we created a dedicated concierge division focused on delivering a seamless experience for both shooting and non-shooting guests. Our team handles every aspect of your visit, from gun hire and cartridge provision to accommodation bookings, transport logistics, dining reservations, and, where required, private aviation through our sister company, William Powell Aviation. We pride ourselves on meticulous attention to detail. It is often the small touches that define a truly memorable experience, and we are uncompromising in ensuring every element is delivered to the highest standard. We have after all been doing just this for over 30 years now!

### *Genuine Old-School Principles*

Our business is built upon traditional values, and they remain at the heart of everything we do. The shooting world is a remarkably small community, and our reputation is something we value immensely. We strive to be among the most trusted, genuine, and professional operators in the industry, delivering every trip with integrity, dedication, and passion. Our commitment is simple: to look after our clients as we would wish to be looked after ourselves.

Whether you are considering visiting the UK as an individual Gun, a small group of friends, or a full shooting team, we would be delighted to discuss how William Powell Sporting can assist.

Please do not hesitate to get in touch. We would be delighted to provide further details and help create an unforgettable trip.

**Contact Ollie Severn**
**01295 661033**
**info@williampowellsporting.co.uk**

TO FIND OUT MORE ABOUT THE SERVICES WE PROVIDE, PLEASE SCAN THE QR CODE OR VISIT WILLIAMPOWELLSPORTING.CO.UK

# Grouse Shooting Syndicate opportunity in North West Yorkshire

William Powell Sporting is delighted to present an exciting and rather unusual opportunity to join a driven Grouse Syndicate in North West Yorkshire.

This represents a rare chance to become part of a Syndicate of like-minded sporting Guns, enjoying well-managed shooting across two small Moors, over a five year term.

The Moors are now starting to look very promising for going forwards under a well known and capable management and keepering team.

Should you like to be considered, please email
**info@williampowellsporting.co.uk**

# VALUATION
## *– an art or a science?*

**It is not uncommon to hear the phrase, 'it is worth what someone will pay'. This is inherently true, but valuation means different things to different people. One needs to consider the reason for the valuation to understand how to value.**

As a Fellow and Registered Valuer of the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors, one must consider the 'Red Book'. This is the Professional Standards Manual which provides different definitions for different types of valuation, whether that be plant and machinery, property or goods and chattels. Phrases such as 'market value', 'estimated realisation price', 'estimated restricted realisation price', are all in there and have different definitions, with different assumptions and distinctions.

In a rising strong financial market, whatever the valuation purpose, one can easily argue that valuation is irrelevant as by the time a transaction has been agreed and the purchase or conveyance has taken place (in the case of property), the market has moved on and the valuation may be out of date. In a difficult market where finances and tax implications play a huge part, again the valuation may be out of date due to the length of time of a transaction or financial events taking place. One therefore, must ask why is a valuation relevant or necessary? Even as a professional valuer, we sometimes advise clients that they are not in fact needed.

There are a number of ways to value, the most common being the comparable method – cars, Grouse Moors, houses, antiques, or whatever it is. The valuer needs to look at the market to see what has sold and when, what the market conditions were at the time, consider matters such as scarcity, condition, location – and then one interpolates. The difficulty here is that in most circumstances, one cannot take account of a 'special purchaser' or indeed two special purchasers who can, by their desire to purchase, push up the price, as is often seen at auction. Therefore, whilst there is an element of science in a valuation, there also must be an art.

If one were to take a simple one bedroom flat in the heart of Banbury, one would be able to look at the size, style and location of that flat – see other transactions recently on the market of similar size and style properties, add or subtract weight against the value of the subject property for location, size, repair and condition – and one would expect three valuers looking at the same building to come up with similar figures. If one were to take a Country Estate with a large Country House, a number of cottages, parkland and farmland or perhaps a Grouse Moor, three valuers may arrive at very different figures. On top of looking at the physical part to be valued, one must look at the effect of other matters such as the type of occupier or extant tenancies (implied or express), profitability, rights and obligations, personnel, etc., all of which may have a significant impact on the actual value.

> The competent valuer has a duty to ensure that they understand their brief

Whether one values for a private client, a bank, for Expert Witness or any other matter, the competent valuer has a duty to ensure that they understand their brief, and whilst the valuer will arrive at a value (MV, ERP, ERRP etc) – that may in some cases, that value may be disregarded (in whole or part) according to the client's personal circumstances.

Ultimately, if you have the funds and a property is in the market and you want it, you must have it. Therefore, if you want it enough, you will pay whatever you need to pay to acquire it – in some cases you would be deemed 'a special purchaser', whether that be buying an estate, a gun, a buy-to-let investment or commercial property for your pension – but one must remember that the figure is not always the market value.

At Bray Estates/JM Osborne Rural & Sporting we believe in giving the client the right information, a full understanding of market value and then expressing our opinion as to strategy to enhance that value or bring forward the dangers of diminution – ultimately allowing the client to decide their parameters for sale or purchase and then act accordingly. It is not our place to make the decisions; it is only our place to advise.

If you need assistance with valuation, strategy, acquisition, disposal, whether it be the purchase of a Country Estate, Shooting Rights, Residential or Commercial Investment, we are well placed and experienced to advise you.

**WRITTEN BY MICHAEL BRAY**

# SPAIN 2026/27

## Excitement is building for another exceptional Season

**Spain continues to hold its place as one of the most sought-after sporting destinations in the world and, having been fortunate enough to host shooting parties there for many years, it is easy to understand why.**

WRITTEN BY
OLLIE SEVERN

**For many sportsmen and women, Spanish Partridge Shooting remains firmly on the bucket list. The combination of authentic red-legged Partridge, exceptional food and wine, genuine hospitality and some of the finest Sporting Lodges anywhere in the world, creates an experience that is difficult to rival. It is a country that has an uncanny ability to exceed expectations, regardless of how many times one may have visited before.**

Over the years, we have been fortunate to spend a great deal of time travelling throughout Spain, visiting a significant number of Sporting Estates and in doing so, building some wonderful friendships with many of the owners and their families. These relationships are hugely important to us and allow us to remain closely connected to developments ahead of each season.

As is often the case at this time of year, we have recently been speaking with several of our closest Estates to understand how preparations are progressing for the forthcoming season. Pleasingly, there appears to be a real sense of optimism and excitement building across many of the properties, with early indications suggesting that the 2026/27 season is shaping up extremely well.

We have already been fortunate to secure a number of team bookings across some of our favourite Estates and are very much looking forward to welcoming clients back to Spain over the coming season.

One particular trip that we are especially excited about this season is our Syndicate visit to the exceptional El Crespo. For those familiar with Spanish Partridge Shooting, El Crespo requires little introduction. It is a beautifully authentic estate, exceptionally well hosted and offering a wonderful variety of drives across stunning countryside. Everything about the property reflects the very best of traditional Spanish shooting and it remains one of our favourite destinations. We currently have a small amount of availability for individuals or smaller groups wishing to join this trip.

Equally as exciting, for those considering a private team next season, we have something rather special available in October. Combining two of Spain's most iconic traditions, this unique itinerary begins in Madrid, with a day at one of the country's most renowned bullrings, before heading into the countryside the following day to enjoy outstanding Partridge Shooting on an exceptional Estate less than an hour from the city.

It is a wonderful opportunity to experience two deeply rooted aspects of Spanish culture within a single trip and one that we believe will prove particularly popular.

Should either of these options be of interest, please do not hesitate to get in touch, on **01295 661033** we would be delighted to share further details with you.

SCAN TO FIND OUT MORE ABOUT THE SPANISH PARTRIDGE SHOOTING WE HAVE TO OFFER

# GROUSE...

## *Is there a ceiling to their value?*

**It is an interesting question, and one that many people involved in Grouse shooting have likely asked themselves over recent seasons.**

When I first started in the Sporting Agency World in 2019, Grouse days were being let at an average price of around £170 plus VAT per brace. Seven years later, that figure has risen to c£260 plus VAT per brace. During that time, the world has experienced significant economic and political change, much of which has influenced the cost of shooting across the board. While many of these factors have undoubtedly contributed to rising Pheasant and Partridge prices, the Grouse market has largely been driven by a more fundamental principle: supply and demand.

The value of Grouse has always reflected the balance between the two. In lean years, when Grouse numbers are scarce and demand remains strong, prices inevitably rise. Conversely, in bumper seasons with abundant stock, late-season Grouse have occasionally been available at prices comparable to a brace of Pheasant or Partridge.

What we have witnessed over the last few years is a sustained reduction in supply. There are several reasons for this. A run of poorer breeding seasons has certainly played its part, but perhaps more significant has been the changing ownership of some of the country's most productive and highly regarded Moors. Historically, many owners would retain a handful of days for private use and make the remainder available to the market. Increasingly, however, we are seeing syndicates and new ownership structures taking on Moors and shooting the majority, if not all, of the available Grouse themselves.



For those who are passionate about Grouse shooting, the desire to shoot Grouse remains remarkably resilient, even in the face of increasingly eye-watering prices.

WRITTEN BY
OLLIE SEVERN

The result is simple: fewer days are reaching the open market. With demand remaining exceptionally strong and availability becoming increasingly limited, it is only natural that prices have continued to rise.

Most readers will appreciate that very few Grouse Moors are operated with the expectation of generating a profit or even breaking even. While successful seasons provide an opportunity to offset some of the substantial costs associated with Moorland management, the income generated from let days comes nowhere close to the true expense of maintaining a productive Grouse Moor.

For those who are passionate about Grouse shooting, the desire to shoot Grouse remains remarkably resilient, even in the face of increasingly eye-watering prices. This brings us back to the original question: is there a ceiling to Grouse prices?

Undoubtedly there is. Every market has its limit. However, Grouse shooting appears considerably less price-sensitive than much of the Low Ground market, where demand can fluctuate more noticeably as costs rise and supply is abundant.

Looking ahead, do we expect prices to increase significantly again for the 2027/2028 season? At this stage, probably not. Assuming this season performs broadly as anticipated and Estates shoot their Grouse stocks appropriately; there is every reason to be optimistic about stock for next spring and hopefully a correlation come the July 2027 brood counts. An increase in available days could well see prices stabilise, at least in the short term.

If you are considering any Grouse shooting this season, please do not hesitate to get in touch with the team. As always, we would be delighted to discuss the options available.

# Pakistan – Paradise Found?

**In our Winter Newsletter I posed the question: 'Is Pakistan a wild wing-shooting paradise?' Having now spent ten extraordinary days there, I can confirm. Yes, yes, it absolutely is. While admittedly not for everyone, for the adventure-focused, wild game nuts, Pakistan is not simply good, it is exceptional.**

**The invitation first came whilst hosting at El Koudia in Morocco with a wonderful group of predominantly Pakistani sportsmen. Over dinner, stories began to emerge of driven wild boar, duck from punts, francolin in mustard fields and snipe in numbers that sounded, quite frankly, highly suspicious. Naturally, I listened politely, nodded enthusiastically and assumed there may have been a little artistic licence involved. I was wrong. Very wrong.**

Before long, Morocco was behind me and the wheels of a rather large aeroplane were touching down in Karachi. I was met from the aircraft by protocol officers, swept through immigration with impressive efficiency and deposited into the warm chaos of Pakistan, where my host, Unver, was waiting.

Unver is a true Shikari. For those unfamiliar with the term, a Shikari is not merely someone who shoots. It describes a proper sportsman; a fanatic in the very best sense of the word. Despite the charming chaos of Pak', Unver had everything very much under control. His enthusiasm, organisation — or bundobust, as I was soon taught — and generosity were going to define the trip.

After a brief stop at his beautiful home in Karachi, there was no time for unnecessary luxuries such as sleep. We were soon heading north on a six-hour drive into upper Sindh, through a landscape that to a first-time visitor, is utterly captivating. Pakistan happens at full volume. Highways, villages, tractors, camels, motorbikes, colour, noise and life all seem to move together in a way that should not work, but somehow does.

Our first camp was a delightful bush camp set within ancestral farmland. Rifles were checked, bags unpacked and as a gentle introduction to Pakistan, we headed out that evening and accounted for a handful of boar and a jackal. Not a bad start. The following morning brought driven wild boar, and with it one of the most fascinating sporting experiences I have enjoyed anywhere in the world.

The system is wonderfully traditional. Over a period of weeks, boar are encouraged to feed from the jungle into surrounding farmland. A temporary cloth barrier is then erected, and on the evening before the hunt the area is enclosed, fires line the boundary and the perimeter is watched through the night. At dawn, with the Guns placed in handmade hides, the cloth is removed and the drive begins.

> It is wild. It is exciting. It is utterly unique. And it is, without question, a wild wing-shooting paradise for those seeking raw sport

What followed was exhilarating. Three hides covered a great open corridor through which the boar had to pass to regain the jungle. I have been fortunate enough to shoot driven boar in Europe, but this was quite different. Faster, wilder, more chaotic and, at times, involving some fairly ambitious rifle work.

By the end of the drive, 35 boar had been accounted for across the line. The gathering of the game was almost as memorable as the shooting itself: ox carts, motorcycles, half the local village, great excitement and no shortage of laughter. It was sporting theatre of the very best kind.

From there we travelled further north in pursuit of duck. Now, I thought I understood duck shooting. Pakistan quickly demonstrated that I did not. Standing in traditional punts, gliding quietly through the wetlands of Sindh, surrounded by reeds, open water and birdlife in every direction, was nothing short of magical. The variety was remarkable: teal, pintail, gadwall, wigeon, pochard and more. My shooting regrettably, took slightly longer to become remarkable, but as the evening wore on, I found the mark and some memorable birds were taken.

WRITTEN BY
OLLIE SEVERN

Between duck flights we enjoyed driven and walked-up 'Partridge', although locally this refers to black and grey francolin. They are wonderful birds. A black francolin bursting hard from a crop of yellow mustard flowers is as exciting and attractive a gamebird as one could hope to see. The shooting was fast, old school and enormous fun.

The trip continued to surprise at every turn. One particularly memorable morning was spent stalking hog deer through carefully managed jungle habitat. Historically, these deer were often taken at night from vehicles, but through considerable land management and foresight, one of our hosts has created a true stalking environment with tracks, clearings and cover. The result was a hugely special experience, ending with a hog deer taken freehand at little more than twenty yards.

Then came the snipe; the famous Pakistani driven snipe. Of all the stories I had heard in Morocco, these were the ones I found hardest to believe. I had been told of rice paddies holding snipe in biblical numbers, of beat after beat, of barrels becoming too hot to touch and cartridge bags emptying alarmingly quickly.

For once, the stories had not been exaggerated. The cut rice paddies, left with a few inches of water, create perfect conditions. When the snipe arrive, they do so in extraordinary volume. Drive followed drive, with common and jack snipe lifting hard and fast from the water as the beaters came forward. It was frantic, testing, hugely entertaining shooting and quite unlike anything I had previously experienced.

By the end of the day, three Guns had accounted for 166 picked snipe. One hundred and sixty-six!

Had someone told me that beforehand, I would have smiled politely and not believed a word of it. Yet as impressive as the shooting was, it was only part of what made Pakistan so special.

The hospitality was extraordinary. The food was superb. The generosity of everyone we met was humbling. Everywhere we travelled, we were welcomed with warmth, curiosity and kindness. It is impossible to spend time with people who care so deeply about their country, their sporting traditions and their guests without leaving with enormous admiration.

It is difficult to fit ten days of travel, culture, cuisine, camaraderie and exceptional sport into one article. The photographs will I hope, do some of the work. What I can say with complete confidence is that Pakistan exceeded every expectation I had before I left.

It is wild. It is exciting. It is utterly unique. And it is, without question, a wild wing-shooting paradise for those seeking raw sport.

A huge thank you must go to Unver and to everyone who looked after me so generously throughout my stay. I very much hope to introduce many of our clients and friends to Pakistan over the coming seasons.

If driven wild boar, exceptional duck shooting, francolin, hog deer, driven snipe and a truly offbeat sporting adventure might be of interest, please do get in touch. I suspect Pakistan may not remain one of shooting's best-kept secrets for much longer.

WRITTEN BY
WILL SOUTHALL

# HEATHER BEETLE

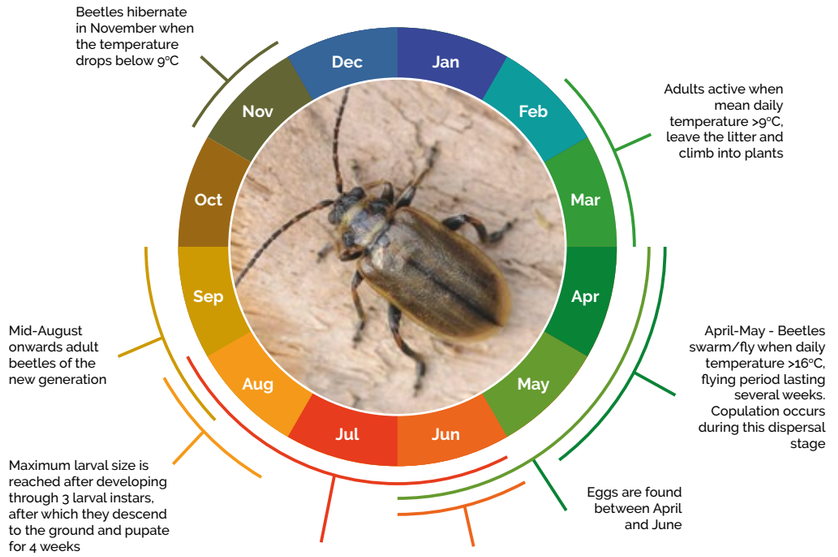
**For many years, Heather Beetle [Lochmaea suturalis] was something of a minor irritation. Most Moor Managers and Keepers would occasionally come across the odd patch of damaged heather, perhaps an acre or two here and there, but it was rarely regarded as a major management issue.**

**Over the last 10-15 years however, the scale and frequency of attacks appear to have changed dramatically.**

Large-scale Heather Beetle attacks are now being reported with increasing regularity across many upland areas. Entire stands of heather can be affected, leaving large areas brown, dead-looking and entirely unsuitable for Grouse or for sheep grazing. Whilst we still know surprisingly little about Heather Beetle and exactly what drives population explosions, we are absolutely certain that our recent warm winters, with little snow and seldom deep frosts, have been the major cause of the massive rise in heather beetle numbers. This may well have been helped by recent changes to Vegetation Management on the Moor.

Rotational burning created a mosaic of younger and older heather, potentially interrupting the beetle's life cycle and perhaps reducing the scale of outbreaks. Today, with milder winters and many Moors carrying larger quantities of older vegetation, conditions may be proving much more favourable for the beetle; perhaps with the lack of burning on many Moors, also playing its part in this explosion in beetle numbers.

There is a predatory wasp [Asecodes mento] which attacks Heather Beetle larvae and used to be regarded as a natural control mechanism. Unfortunately, it appears to have made little impact on recent outbreaks. Beyond this, there is no practical predator or management tool, capable of controlling beetle populations once an infestation is underway.



*The life cycle of a Heather Beetle*

The good news is that healthy, vigorous heather often recovers after a beetle attack. In many cases, the beetle only temporarily kills the above-ground growth, and the plant can regenerate during the following season. However, where heather is already under pressure, be that through its age, overgrazing or being situated on wetter ground, the outcome can be very different. In such circumstances, attacks can finish off plants altogether, leaving large areas permanently lost to heather. Therefore, the repeated drive by Natural England, NatureScot and others for grip blocking and creating wetter Moorland, almost certainly helps the beetle do its deadly work!

> The challenge is to act early enough and at sufficient scale, to maintain healthy, resilient heather

Grouse will not thrive in extensive areas of dead or dying heather. Even where the damage is only temporary, Grouse tend to avoid areas heavily affected by the beetle. Furthermore, once heather dies, grasses and other species of vegetation often move in quickly and can dominate the site before the heather plants have had an opportunity to recover.

Management responses therefore need to reflect the severity of the damage. Where heather is likely to recover naturally, intervention can and often should be limited. However, where the heather 'mortality' is significant, active vegetation management becomes increasingly important.

There have been substantial Heather Beetle outbreaks in recent years throughout Northern England and Scotland. Significant numbers of larvae are still present, which may result in further attacks during this summer and into 2027. Predicting exactly where and when outbreaks will occur remains difficult, but the risk is undoubtedly there.

In our view, the best available response is a proactive programme of vegetation management, ideally through controlled burning, where allowed. Burning licences must therefore be sought by Moors seeking to undertake this regenerative control, and applications need to be submitted well in advance of the start of the burning season. JM Osborne Rural & Sporting can assist with this if required.

Heather Beetle is unlikely to disappear, and we suspect will become an increasingly important challenge for Moor Managers in the years ahead. As with so many upland management issues, doing nothing is rarely a sensible strategy. The challenge is to act early enough and at sufficient scale, to maintain healthy, resilient heather before the beetle gains the upper hand.

# Shooting with my Son *- in Africa*

As most fathers will know, doing things with your children provides enormous enjoyment for all parties. I had the opportunity this spring, to take my eldest son to South Africa to shoot Plains Game. For anyone not in the know, these are essentially the deer type mammals being antelope and the like, which live either on open veldt or in the more scrubby countryside, which dominates much of South Africa and particularly in the Eastern Cape.

GUEST ARTICLE

**My son is a keen rifle shot and does some stalking in the UK, mostly at Roe Deer. However, I thought that it would be very different if we could do something similar abroad and my good friends at William Powell Sporting recommended a relatively inexpensive 'cull' shooting trip, with the purpose of reducing the number of such Plains Game going into the winter months. As I am a hopeless rifle shot, I was very happy for him to do the shooting and for me to do the watching, including the stalking, but generally enjoying what camp life has to offer. As it turned out, it was an awesome trip for both of us, with some very successful hunts and fascinating for myself, who did not feel that I had missed out at all by not actually shooting.**

I think the key to all such trips is to ensure that you go to a proper operator, rather than find one of the many cowboys who undoubtedly exist in this, as in most other sectors. This is pretty obvious, but far too many times I hear people saying that they succumbed to the advertising or just the sales pitch (perhaps the price?) and ended up bitterly disappointed. I was very keen that our trip should be memorable for all of the right reasons and it genuinely was.

Ollie Severn at William Powell Sporting made all of the arrangements. He was happy to learn from us what would be important with the trip and to make sure that the Safari guides knew exactly what it was that we wanted, both in terms of accommodation (comfort is very important at my age!), food and the actual hunting experience. We were very definitely not after trophy heads, but helping as paying guests, in the management of a sensible overwintering population; rather similar indeed to what we do hear in the UK with regard to the culling of surplus deer.

We flew from Heathrow to Johannesburg by BA and then had a 1½ hour internal flight to Port Elizabeth. We were met at that airport by our PA Josh, who was charming and incredibly helpful. The accommodation at the first camp was outstanding and I even had a bath, which I am not sure should really be available when hunting in Africa, but it was very enjoyable to relax in after a long day out on the veldt. We had three days there, with several successful hunts. These included springbok, black wildebeest and blessbock.

> The key to all such trips is to ensure that you go to a proper operator, rather than find one of the many cowboys

It was suggested that as there was some fascinating cave art in the area, we might like to meet Steve Bassett who is a relatively local cave art expert, having made this his specialist field over the last 25 years or so. Stephen is the most engaging, modest man that you could possibly meet. A very accomplished painter himself of both cave art and wildlife art, undertaken using the same artist tools that the cavemen had 8,000 plus years ago! It was absolutely amazing to see how he made his brushes and out of which animals' hair. We then went to have a look at some cave paintings, which were extraordinary. Although they were relatively sheltered from the elements (usually being at the rear of a cave), the clarity and indeed colours of many of these still were astounding. Almost every subject depicted was of animals, mostly very recognisable, including elephants, buffalo, warthog and eland.

As well as men, holding spears or in a couple of instances with bows. If you would have asked me if I would have been interested in spending much of a day (before going on a very successful duck flight in the evening), listening to a real expert on thousands of years of cave painting, I would have definitely said no! It was however a wonderful and very unique part of our trip, which my 29 year old son also enjoyed just as much as me.

We then moved to a Bush Camp further south (also in the Eastern Cape), which countryside was much less open and much more as I expected the African Bush to be. We had three more days successful hunting including shots at Impala, Warthog and Red Hartebeest. On our last afternoon, we went Large Mouth Bass fishing, which again was very successful.

I can honestly recommend a hunting trip to South Africa for any father and son/daughter of sporting families, which from our trip was a combination of a great experience, something very different to what we would normally do over here, very comfortable accommodation, great food (I have never eaten so much game cooked on open fires!) and fascinating hunting outings. The scenery was amazing with views sometimes in excess of 20 miles of totally unspoilt countryside. We will be back!

**To obtain more information on a trip similar to David's, please contact Ollie Severn on 01295 661033 or email info@williampowellsporting.co.uk**

WRITTEN BY
OLLIE SEVERN

# SOUTH AFRICA ROCK PIGEONS

## *The greatest of all?*

**For the past five years, I have been fortunate enough to travel to South Africa with groups of enthusiasts in pursuit of what many would consider the ultimate red-letter day: Rock Pigeon shooting.**

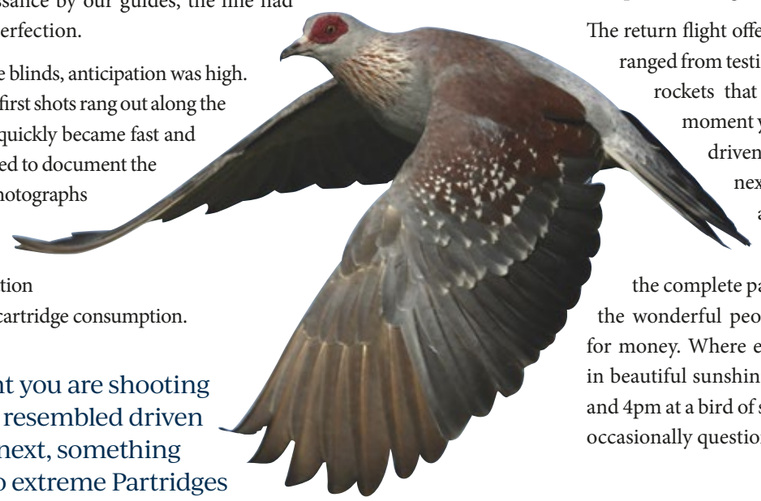
Our previous trips, centred around Bloemfontein in the Free State, have provided some truly exceptional sport. However, over time it became apparent that bird numbers there are no longer quite what they once were. Changes in agricultural practices, expanding sunflower cultivation and increased shooting pressure have all contributed to dispersing the birds across a wider area, or perhaps the pigeons had finally decided they had endured enough attention!

Following last year's visit, we set out to find the very best Rock Pigeon shooting which South Africa now has to offer. After some legwork, we discovered a new area, close to Johannesburg and with reports of vast numbers of Rock Pigeons. However, like all things, it was important we 'tested' it first. This aligned wonderfully as I was fortunate to be invited by some generous friends, my hosts in Pakistan, to enjoy a week of self-guided African bush hunting. After six days in the bush, we returned to Johannesburg before making the short journey to our lodge, where we would spend the next two nights.

The lodge itself was wonderfully comfortable, incredibly spacious and hosted with genuine warmth and hospitality. The interior décor was unmistakably South African, but after a day in the field, nobody was particularly concerned with colour schemes.

Our first morning saw us arrive at the chosen field shortly before 11am. The pigeons were just beginning to move, with steady trickles of birds leaving nearby towns and heading towards their feeding grounds. Much like our Woodpigeons here in the UK, South African Rock Pigeons follow flightlines between roosting and feeding areas. Thanks to extensive reconnaissance by our guides, the line had been identified to perfection.

As we settled into the blinds, anticipation was high. Within minutes, the first shots rang out along the line, and the action quickly became fast and furious. I had intended to document the day with plenty of photographs and video, but when the shooting is this good, content creation rapidly falls behind cartridge consumption.



> One moment you are shooting at birds that resembled driven Grouse, the next, something more akin to extreme Partridges

There has always been much discussion about the quality of Rock Pigeons as a sporting bird. I have long been one of their biggest advocates, but when encountered in these sorts of numbers, I genuinely believe there is nothing better. A headwind makes incoming birds fly low, skimming the tops of the sunflower fields. The result was some of the most exhilarating shooting imaginable, presenting every possible angle and challenge. One glance at the carpet of empty cartridges scattered in every direction around the hide, told the story. If there were only one type of shot on offer, the empties would lie neatly in one place. Instead, they formed a complete 360-degree circle.

The return flight offered an entirely different challenge. Birds ranged from testing crossing shots to towering, high-flying rockets that demanded complete adaptability. One moment you were shooting at birds that resembled driven Grouse in both pace and intensity; the next, you were tackling something more akin to extreme Partridges.

What I love most about these trips is the complete package: the quality of the sport, the pace, the wonderful people involved and the remarkable value for money. Where else can you enjoy world-class shooting in beautiful sunshine, firing c.650 cartridges between 11am and 4pm at a bird of such sporting quality? The shoulder may occasionally question the decision, but the smile answers it.

For those interested in joining us in South Africa, we have some exceptional dates available for 2027. A four-day shooting package, including five nights' accommodation, all meals and drinks, is available from just over £3,800 per Gun. We are delighted to offer both full-team bookings and individual places on the Offbeat Syndicate trips. Whether you are looking to bring a complete team or join as a single gun, we would be delighted to discuss the options available.

I was fortunate to be accompanied by friends on this particular trip and whilst I benefited from the pigeon guru enthusiasm to showcase what they have, I very much paid my own way. If nothing else, I hope that provides some reassurance; I am more than happy to spend my own hard-earned money on exceptional Rock Pigeon shooting. In truth, if somebody had asked me to stay for another week, home commitments would probably have lost the argument!

WRITTEN BY
WILL SOUTHALL

# The Benefits of a Good Grouse Season

**There is a tendency amongst those who have little involvement with the uplands to view Grouse shooting simply as a sporting activity. Whilst it is undoubtedly that, a successful Grouse season has a much wider impact, particularly in some of the most remote rural communities in England and Scotland.**

A good Grouse season (which we are very much hoping to have and at the time of writing, looks in many places to be the case), generates significant economic activity. Keepers, beaters, pickers-up, caterers, accommodation providers, garages, public houses and many other local businesses, all benefit directly or indirectly from visiting Guns, shoot day staff and the management of these Moors. In many upland areas, there are few alternative industries capable of generating comparable levels of employment and expenditure. On many Moors, there will be in excess of 65+ people contributing to the successful running of the day, be that the keepers, beaters, flankers, picker-uppers, lunch team, lodge team, etc, etc. They are (in the main) local people who look forward to and thrive (socially through engagement with others from all walks of life, physically through active participation in the day and economically through their pay packet at the end of the day) during good Grouse seasons. The reverse is also sadly very true.

Importantly, this income is often spread across communities during periods of the year when other sources of revenue are limited. Many individuals who work on Grouse days do so alongside farming or other rural employment, providing valuable additional income which helps support families and businesses alike. Perhaps the other two largest contributors are those not in work, at both ends of the spectrum, be that children on a weekend or in school holidays or retirees.

Conversely, poor Grouse seasons have consequences which extend well beyond the shooting itself. Reduced income inevitably leads to reduced investment, fewer employment opportunities and less money circulating within local economies. Over time, this can have a significant effect on already fragile rural communities. When you add to this the reduction in the social and physical benefits, the differences between those good and bad years become more and more stark.

Not every Grouse season will be a good one. Weather, disease and a host of other factors will always influence the outcome. However, when Grouse numbers are healthy and sensible management has delivered a successful season, the benefits are felt far beyond the boundary of the Moor itself. We should and must cherish these and fight to preserve them in the years to come.

To find out more about Moorland management, staffing or the running of shoot days contact **Will Southall** on **01295 277197** or scan the QR code to access the JM Osborne Rural & Sporting website.