

# THE PURDEY POST

*Heritage, craft & innovation, inspired by the great outdoors*

EST. 1814



*Issue 2*



# Celebrating 210 YEARS of innovation...

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Welcome back to the second edition of *The Purdey Post*. This time it's all about celebrating the innovation, craftsmanship and people that have shaped Purdey over the years.

With 210 years of history to draw from, we could have written a novel. In fact, when we asked our in-house historian Dr Nicholas Harlow to share stories from The Long Room through the ages (see page 12), he very nearly did. We rewind to the early days of Purdey for a roll-call of the inventions that make our guns exceptional, before speaking to technical whizz Alan Graichen-Cunningham about the advances that are taking us forward at speed (page 20). And, staying in the factory, we trace gunmaking through the generations, with the father-and-son duos that have taken apprenticeship through to mastery (page 4).

Stretching the legs of our guns is where the fun really begins though. Keen shot Patrick Galbraith heads to Purdey at the Royal Berkshire for a session refining his technique with one of the best instructors in the game, Steve Turner (page 22). Purdey Award winner George Ponsonby shows us the thriving habitat he's created in Gloucestershire to support not only grey partridges, but myriad other wildlife (page 28). Head of shooting at Goodwood, Edward Arkell, shares his love for their epic 12,000 acre grounds; while head of the Purdey Sporting Agency, Gordon Robinson tempts with trips further afield, for world-class shooting in Spain, Argentina and South Africa (page 15).

Tips on shooting attire come direct from *The Rake's* style savvy Tom Chamberlin (page 6); and our very own Annika Purdey gives her do's and don'ts on weekend-away etiquette, whether you're the gracious host or lucky guest. We also speak to the design team about the considered details woven into every collection by skilled makers, from classic cable-knitters to the clever creators of our rainproof technical tweed (page 18).

And my personal favourite pages in the paper: the beautiful centrefold with a selection of our guns – one to pull out and keep.

I hope you enjoy reading, as much as we enjoyed making.

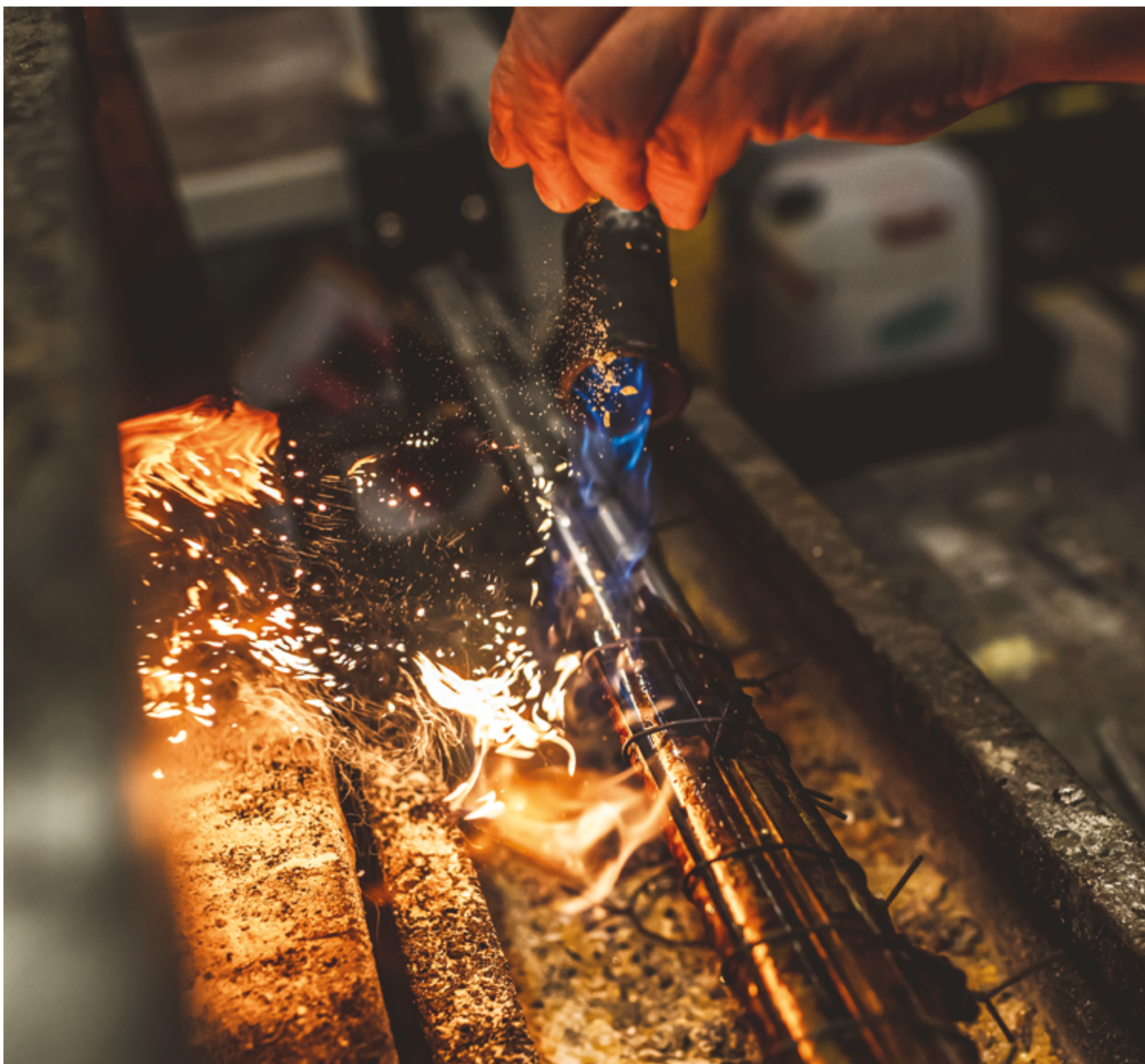


Dan Jago  
*Purdey CEO & Chairman*

# *Like* FATHER, *like* SON

Tracing our craft through generations

By TOM HOWELLS    *Portrait Photography* ROBIN BLAKE





*Continuing the Purdey tradition of keeping it in the family are father and son barrel-makers and regulators, Steve and Connor Cranston (below left), and finishers Tom and Russ Nicholls (above) – brought in by their father, Bob, who also apprenticed at Purdey from the age of 15, staying until he retired.*

At its heart, Purdey is defined by family. James Purdey's founding of the company in 1814 might have been its genesis, but the passing of the mantle to James Purdey The Younger – who joined in 1843 as an apprentice stockmaker, inherited the marque 15 years later, received a number of Royal Warrants, inaugurated his own sons into the fold, and moved the whole operation to South Audley Street in 1883 – made Purdey the place it is today. Zip forward 120-odd years, and the familial sharing of skills, passing the craft down through the generations, lives on.

On a particularly crisp, bright morning, the shop floor at Purdey's light-filled Hammersmith factory is as busy as ever. It's where all stages of the gunmaking process take place, and where we find father and son barrel-makers and regulators Steve and Connor Cranston. They're relative newcomers to the Purdey family – Connor has been with the firm for 18 months, with a decade of prior barrel-making experience; Steve for two years (though he spent 39 years at Holland & Holland beforehand).

Their relationship at Purdey is symbiotic. Steve, 57, is a far more experienced regulator – that is, someone who rigorously tests the workings of the gun in the factory's specially provisioned basement. It's an exacting skill that's pernickety to teach, especially given the high level of customisation and precision expected of a Purdey gun, the physical challenges exacerbated with age ("Recoil becomes a factor..." says Steve), and the fact that so few people can regulate both shotguns and rifles.

His mentoring of Connor, 26, is reflected in his son's decade-long expertise in barrel-making. "I started as an apprentice, but then I ended up doing 37 years as a regulator," explains Steve. "I've only really just come back to barrel-making so, technically, I'm his apprentice when it comes to that!"

Crucially, the draw to working alongside family is, says Connor, "the ability to help each other out"; to pass on and retain artisan skills that are an increasing rarity in the trade. "It's a fantastic journey for us," explains Steve, "to go through your career working for some of the best gunmakers and to finish off at Purdey is a real honour." A journey, adds Connor, "that we've really only just begun."

At the other end of the production line stand 'finishers' Tom

and Russ Nicholls, [age 44 and 40, respectively]. They're practical journeymen compared to the Cranstons: brought in on traineeships by their father, Bob, who apprenticed at Purdey from the age of 15, staying until he retired in 2012. Russ has been here 18 years; Tom just under 25. (They both had fascinating pre-Purdey callings: Ross as a junior gold Commonwealth Athletics champion; Tom as a member of the RAF.)

Both undertook the same training: learning how to 'finish' a gun by building it, setting the mechanics, adjusting the firing points, honing the woodwork, polishing and inking the metal engraving, applying the intricate etching, and preparing the gun for pre-sales testing. The sheer variation, they say, is what they enjoy the most.

It's a calling they're keen to pass on to the next generation of gunmaker. They, too, have apprentices – juniors who develop their skills at Purdey over a five-year period, in which they specialise meticulously in one part of the craft before being judged by an exacting panel and receiving their professional 'papers' at the culmination.

"There's the romantic side of being a gunmaker. And there's the reality, which is quite different," explains Tom by way of advice. "The reality is that it's eight hours of bench minimum a day doing a manual job. It's hard work; you need to really like creating and making things."

What's the highlight of working with a sibling? "None of it!" they chime in unison, before immediately backtracking. As with the Cranstons, it comes down to a proactively adversarial, fraternal relationship that, crucially, improves the work they do.

"In the Purdey workshop, you need other people to bounce off," Tom says. "Finishing is the last part of the process – it's what the customer is going to receive in their shiny golden box. It's not just about how it looks, it's about how it works as well. No matter how long you've been here, there'll always be something you could use someone else's perspective on. We critique each other's work in a silly, bantering way."

"There really aren't any reservations in working together," adds Russ, in conclusion. "We're quite a close family, so that helps." A pause. "But obviously, my guns are better."

*“In the Purdey workshop, you need other people to bounce off”*

# SHOOTING

## *in Style*

The all-important dress code in the field

By TOM CHAMBERLIN    *Photography* SARAH FARNSWORTH



Shooting parties are an interesting dynamic. Unless you have your syndicate, you will likely be thrust upon several others you've never met before, hence being appropriately equipped is paramount. To make this as seamless as possible, it's always best to follow the protocols – bringing a gift for the host, readying your conversational skills, and showing up on time (more on this etiquette from Annika Purdey on page 28) – practices we can all agree are part and parcel of a good shoot.

The above are the unflinching non-negotiables. Where waters become murkier is with regards to dress. Shooting is an exceptional opportunity to dress up, but what that means to each individual gun is entirely subjective. The vision of the English country squire, all immaculate in tweed breeks, a tailored sporting jacket etc. was almost entirely responsible for the export of British style in the Regency period. At the turn of the 19th century, it was the ne plus ultra.

Received wisdom in 2023, is that there is something of the parvenu in taking your place at the peg with a freshly minted, virginal set

of shooting attire. To some, clothes with moth holes, rips and splatters of quarry blood are much better for one's image on a shoot, showing that you're an old hand, engaged much more in making the bag than looking 'the part'. In the spirit of catering to both sides of the coin, here are a few do's and don'ts that you might consider when it comes to shooting attire.

### I. WEAR A TIE

While the aforementioned scruffiness has its justifications, an invitation to shooting is always an occasion, and one of the best ways to show you recognise this is by wearing a tie. Bearing in mind that many if not all of the estate team, who work hard to make sure your day is special and memorable, will be doing the same.

### II. HAVE SOME FORM OF TWEED ABOUT YOUR PERSON

Though corduroy trousers are perfectly acceptable and practical for shooting, tweed is the very earliest form of camouflage, designed to blend in with the estate's flora to hide from the fauna. By wearing tweed, you'll be paying

homage to the traditions of country sports; and be wonderfully comfortable while doing so.

### III. ENSURE PLENTY OF POCKETS

Whether this is to carry ammunition, cigars, tipping cash, hip flasks or any other miscellaneous paraphernalia, plenty of pockets is key on a shoot. And, if you end up in the wind and rain, your hands will thank me for the advice.

### IV. BE SUBTLE WITH COLOUR

Though I don't have much truck with the idea that new clothes are bad etiquette, brightly coloured tweeds are certainly not appropriate. The history of tweed shows that as early as it was invented, merchants would seek boldly checked and garishly coloured tweeds, but these were designed for use in the city and should remain there.

### V. REMEMBER A SMARTER OUTFIT FOR LUNCH

While it is understandable to want practical, sporting clothes for the field, there is a good reason the traditional shooting suit commission (five pieces), is not designed to be worn all at

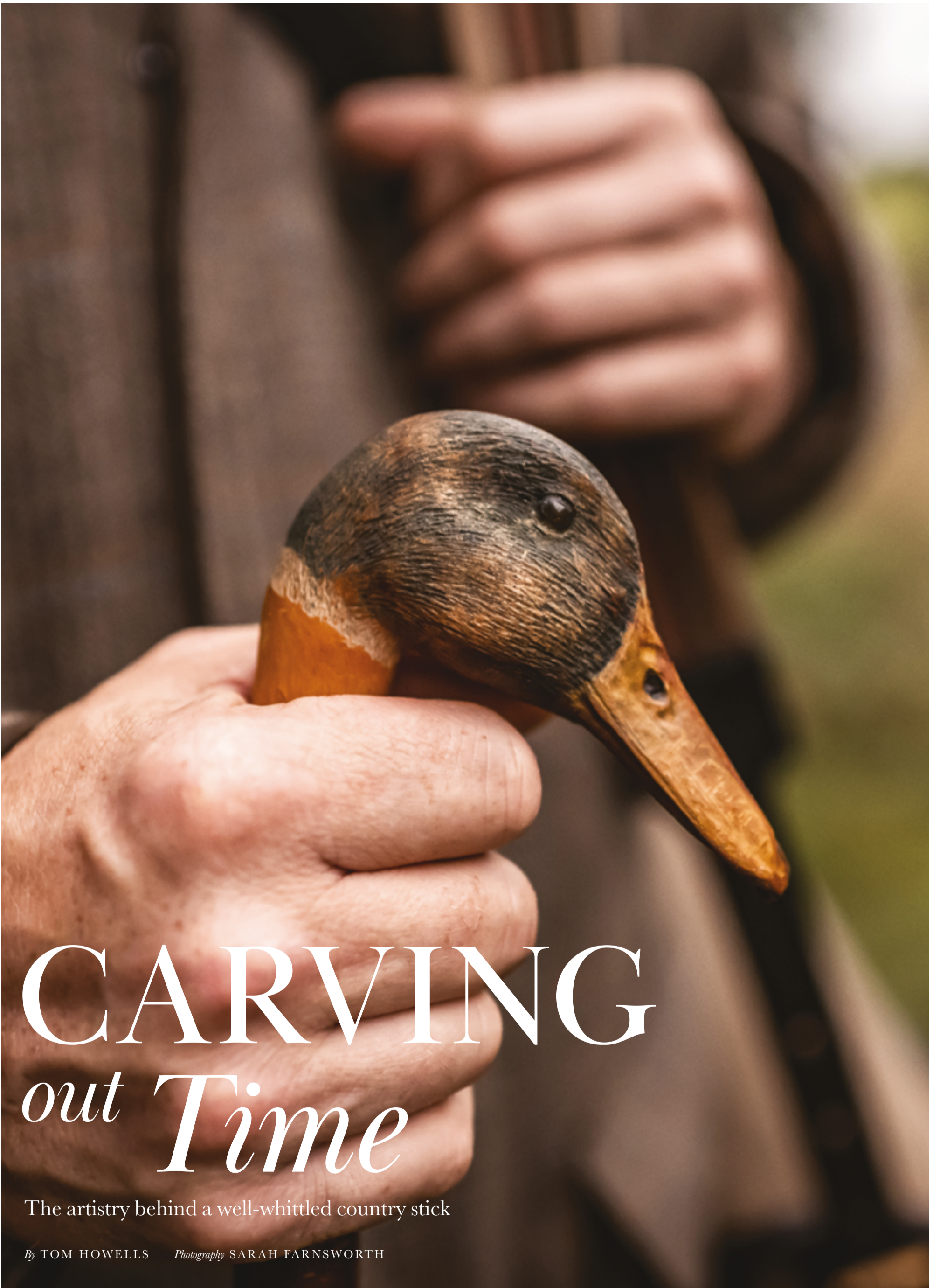
once. When one removes their boots for lunch, you may of course keep your long socks and breeks on, so long as there are a pair of derbys or loafers to slip into. But really, you should aim to have a tweed jacket and trousers at the ready to smarten up back in the house.

### VI. DON'T CHANGE YOUR MIND WHEN YOU SEE EVERYONE ELSE

Be true to who you are and how you wish to present yourself in the field. If you are particularly excited about the new Purdey cashmere-tweed Norfolk Jacket, or a shiny ammo belt, don't let people who might dress less formally stop you. If you truly don't shoot very often, or have recently started and are yet to break in your outfit, don't pretend like you are anything other than new to the game – it's fine, you're more than welcome. After all, if you are not going to hit anything, at least you'll look good trying.

*For additional guidance, look no further than Purdey's in-store personal styling service; garments can also be embossed, engraved, altered and made-to-order, for a Purdey piece that is uniquely yours.*





# CARVING *out Time*

The artistry behind a well-whittled country stick

By TOM HOWELLS    *Photography* SARAH FARNSWORTH





*“I look at a tree  
or a hedge, and  
see the shapes”*

Cast an eye across any refined hunting party – or, perhaps, one of our beautiful seasonal campaigns here at Purdey – and there’s often one accessory that stands out among the sea of polished barrels, muted tweeds, patinated leather satchels and flamboyant garters: the country stick. Usually topped with the intricately carved head of a native gamebird, it’s one of the most charming pieces in the sportsman’s inventory.

Ours are the work of one Robert McKernan, a hobbyist stick-carver turned artisan master, who creates small batches of sticks in his garage-workshop in Portstewart, County Londonderry. McKernan’s artistic trajectory wasn’t entirely conventional. After leaving school at 15, he worked as an electrician with his father, before moving to the petrochemical firm Monsanto (where he spent a year in a drafts office, learning to use lathes and the like) and then joining the police force. He’d always been a field enthusiast – training gundogs, hunting for snipe and woodcock, and making sporting forays to Yorkshire, South Ayrshire, and the Western Isles – but the segue into stick-carving came with meeting another amateur woodworker in the force in 1989. “I said, ‘Would you not think about carving a mallard?’” he recalls. “He says, ‘I couldn’t do that.’ It put the notion in my head.”

McKernan began whittling his own sticks, gifting them to local farmers and landowners whose rough land he wanted to traipse, and the gamekeepers he worked with on grouse counts and shooting parties on the Scottish moors. “It was a thank you to the gamekeepers,” he says. “A lot of them were running around with better sticks than the moor owners themselves!”

Thirty-four years later, McKernan’s aesthetic specialism remains wildfowl, gamebirds – anything he’s hunted, basically – and dogs. It helps, he explains, to carve from life, sometimes working to a physical bird after a shoot. “If it’s something strange, like a pintail or a widgeon, I can look at the head and get the finer details,” he says. “You actually need that – to carve from a profile of a photograph, you’re not seeing in below the bill or all the wee fine bits.”

That said, he’s seasoned enough to carve some designs with his eyes closed. “I could carve a mallard pretty much without looking at anything! Pheasants and red grouse, too.” Things are obviously a little different with the shorthaired pointers he occasionally fashions: “Here in my garage,” he laughs, “there’s probably just one lying at my feet.”

Every design starts with the wood. Provenance is all, and McKernan has always looked to his immediate surroundings for his materials. “First and foremost, it’s availability. And for me, the first

wood of natural choice was hawthorne,” he says, given his coastal home’s provision of the hardy perennial, which flourishes despite the salty sea air and interminable breezes, the natural contours of which he found alluring.

He’s since branched out (no pun intended) into a panoply of woods. The choice of material is still driven by pragmatism, but McKernan delights in utilising soft woods like ash, willow, and sycamore (“The white grain looks good on the bills”), harder specimens like beech, oak and blackthorn, and even apple and pear when a trunk becomes available. Just what he’ll make is dictated by the curvature and dimensions of the living materials. “I look at a tree or a hedge, and see the shapes,” he explains. “I’m seeing pheasants, ducks, and things – the actual thing before it’s even cut.”

He seasons the wood for anything up to three years to avoid cracking and shrinking – “Say I need a piece six inches long, I would cut that up maybe three or four inches on each side of that again, just to allow for the seasoning” – before taking to it with his tools.

First, McKernan uses a saw and a wood rasp to bring his chosen branch down to size, before carving the finer details with a Stanley knife, and getting into the intricate feathering with an engraver or – a sole concession to modernity – a set of Dremel wood-carving bits. Instead of painting the heads, he uses a range of light wood-stains sourced from the New Forest to afford a more textured effect, finishing them with an eight-hour dunk in his own blend of gunstock oil – turps to penetrate the wood, a light vegetable oil, and boiled linseed – and coating the shanks with yacht varnish. The average time he spends on a single stick is around 15 hours, and the result is a dashingly painterly object, as visually striking as it is robustly functional; a piece to treasure for a lifetime.

The dual sense of meditateness and surprise is still what drives McKernan, now 69, in his craft. Stick-carving is not, he stresses, a money spinner; but it’s a sanative calling. “There are some days I start to carve and it’s a chore. But after five or 10 minutes I find it difficult to leave! It’s absolutely therapeutic.” Crucially, he concludes, no two days (or sticks) are the same. It’s still, all these decades later, a quiet voyage of discovery.

“It’s the same subject matter, but they’re all different. Numerous times I’ve started carving into a piece of wood and the green comes through, or it has spalting, and it comes out fantastic. I’ve started carving a mallard, and maybe find a wee issue with some of the wood, and the mallard turns into a teal! That,” he says, “is the joy in it.”



*Robert McKernan, a hobbyist stick-carver turned artisan master, makes small batches of sticks for Purdey from his workshop in Portstewart, County Londonderry, specialising in wildfowl, game birds and dogs.*

A person wearing a green jacket and tweed trousers is walking through a field of tall grass. They are carrying a rifle in a black leather case. The scene is outdoors with a blurred background of trees and a cloudy sky.

# *In the* BAG

Our ultimate field kit essentials



1.



2.



3.

**1. Bridle Leather Gun Slip**  
 Your Purdey deserves nothing less than the durable protection of this gunslip, and the snug security of its sheepskin lining. The shape ensures an easy fit; and we can add your monogram, too.

**2. Bridle Leather Cartridge Bag**  
 The more shoot days this roomy bag accompanies you on, the more the patina of its leather will tell the story of your successes.

**3. Pentire Alpaca Field Sock**  
 Who can resist a good sock? Beautifully warm and made in the UK, each pair takes up to three weeks to knit. We encourage you to get these in all the seasonal colours, so you'll always have spares.

**4. Twin Strap Boots**  
 These boots are made for walking – and standing firm in the field, thanks to the sturdy grip of the Ridgeway rubber sole. So, you won't be able to blame missing any shots on losing your footing.

**5. Duck Silk Tie**  
 There's no such thing as too many ties, and this one is perfect for dinner after a good day's pheasant shooting (no matter if there are more birds on the tie than in the bag).

**6. Staghorn Thumstick**  
 Never underestimate the power and practicality of fine whittling. This stick is made in the UK from distinctive hazel wood, with a staghorn handle that's sure to bring you luck in the field.

**7. Featherburst Wallet Position Finder**  
 Positions please! If nothing else, this wallet – in beautifully embossed, dark brown, grain-leather, and complete with 10 numbered metal pieces – ensures pure elegance when placing your pegs.



4.



6.



5.



7.



*If the* **LONG**  
**ROOM'S** *walls*  
*could talk...*

The stories they would tell

By NICK HARLOW



Purdey's Long Room is a unique survivor of the Golden Age of gunmaking and game shooting. A fabled space within London's Audley House, it has hosted the greatest shots of the last two centuries, many of whose portraits keep a watchful eye over those who step inside today. It has also played an important role in wider British history, with plans for the D-Day landings hatched in secret around its table during the Second World War.

Built as part of the original design of the Queen Anne-style Audley House – which became Purdey's home on 1 January 1883 – its burgundy walls display a unique collection of images and memorabilia that connect modern visitors to historical clients.

The Long Room was originally intended as both the company's showroom and an office for James Purdey the Younger and his sons. It has remained a working space since its inception, displaying guns as well as serving successive generations for business and entertaining alike.

It is also a rare survivor, believed to be the oldest gunroom still in operation, and certainly the last in Mayfair. In the 1920s, Purdey described the room as holding 'the history of shooting for a hundred years', and it continues to do so today, as we celebrate its 140th anniversary at the heart of the London gun trade.

The story of the Long Room is intertwined with interesting people. Its name reputedly comes from one of James the Younger's personal friends, the Victorian cricketer Dr WG Grace. Both men were immortalised by the same portrait artist, and these hang in their respective Long Rooms (there's also a Long Room at Lord's Cricket Ground, you see).

Royalty plays a big part in Purdey history. Looking to the British monarchy, both Edward VII and George V contributed signed photographs to the Long Room's collection, and their descendants were hosted at Long Room dinners as recently as the 1990s. It has also seen visits from European and Asian royals, from King Alfonso XIII of Spain to the Maharajahs of India.

This patronage led members of the nobility and gentry to Audley House, and the Long Room played host to many greats of the 19th century, including Earl de Grey and Lord Walsingham – fierce rivals in the field, but unified in their preference for Purdey hammer guns. It's a tradition that continued into the interwar period, when the famed African hunter, JA Hunter procured his own pair of Purdey guns via the Long Room.

*“It's a rare survivor...the oldest gunroom still in operation”*



*Royalty plays a big part in Purdey history. Both Edward VII and George V contributed signed photos to the Long Room's collection, and it has also seen visits from European and Asian royals, from King Alfonso XIII of Spain to the Maharajahs of India.*



From America, many of the most famous families likely passed by the Long Room when purchasing Purdey guns to complete their kit when shooting in England. Members of the Vanderbilts, Astors and Carnegies all appear in the accounts at the turn of the century, and were joined later by the newspaperman, Joseph Pulitzer II, and the film star, Douglas Fairbanks Jr. When Purdey purchased James Woodward & Sons in 1949, other notable clients joined our books, including Sir Winston Churchill, who used Purdey as his gunmaker up until his death in 1965.

The room has also played a part in wider historical events. The Gunmakers' Association (now the Gun Trade Association) and the Worshipful Company of Gunmakers both used the room for their meetings during the 1930s and 1940s, and several pieces of UK legislation were drafted here. Perhaps most famously, meetings of General Eisenhower's Invasion Committee were held in the Long Room circa 1943, allowing both he and his right-hand man, General Walter Bedell Smith, to gather discreetly with John Cobbold, both the British military liaison and one of Purdey's directors. Bedell Smith, better known as 'Beetle', also used to bring the Purdey brothers gifts when he visited, including two US Army M1 carbines!

Today, the Long Room continues to serve as a record of all Purdey clients, past and present, as well as welcoming new visitors daily, eager to follow in the footsteps of so many renowned individuals, and perhaps become a part of the same tradition themselves.



# A Great DAY Out

Behind the scenes at Goodwood

By FARAH SHAFIQ    Photography SARAH FARNSWORTH

I always enjoy our shoot days, as you get to the back end of January,” says Edward Arkell, Goodwood’s head of shooting, sheltering from a morning of rather heavy downpours. “It’s fun to test your wits against those higher and more wily birds. A bit of rough weather makes things more exciting, too.”

Arkell has been at Goodwood for the last six years; he originally joined to run the race course, but has since also picked up shooting in the winter. “I’ve always shot, shooting has been part of my life since I was tiny,” he shares. “What I love about Goodwood is that we’ve got some very beautiful country to shoot over, which is wonderful, and we can provide quite challenging birds. We have a fantastic team behind the scenes, and a great list of clients. It’s a really interesting mix.”

What does a day out at Goodwood entail? “Every shoot is different, we very much try to make it as if the host is on their own estate. The whole point is that it’s a fun, friendly, relaxed environment for them to entertain guests as they wish; that’s the most important thing to us.” And the all-important birds? “You can expect a mix of pheasant and partridge — a couple of particularly good high pheasant drives; and partridges can always be challenging, especially if you get a bit of wind, which we often do here being quite close to the coast.”

On the whole, Goodwood is best suited to a more experienced shot, with an eye for the finer things. The night before a shoot, guests usually stay in Hound Lodge — “an intimate 10-room, sleeps 20, country house atmosphere, where everyone should feel very much at home; it’s an extension of the idea that the host is entertaining on their grounds,” explains Arkell. “A lot of our clients are involved in the estate for more than just shooting, they may well visit for racing or motor events on other occasions,” he adds. When it comes to kit, Goodwood has a stock of Purdey options ready to loan. “The majority of clients bring their own, although some international guests find it easier to borrow from us, to save any palaver.”

Where would we find Arkell on a day off? “I like small drives, a good variety of birds, always some duck or some snipe; a mixed day is great. I’d head out west and wild, right down to the far West Country, or west Wales is always fun.” He admits he’s more of a Side-by-Side man than Over-and-Under — “I’m old-fashioned” — and sings the praises of the Purdey Technical Yorkshire Coat. “I think it’s absolutely brilliant. It does exactly what it says on the tin: good, solid, warm and waterproof, you can’t really ask for more.” And with that, it’s back out into the rain for, hopefully, a great day’s shoot.



*The Goodwood Estate covers 12,000 acres of beautiful countryside, with challenging partridge and pheasant drives; and the luxurious home-from-home Hound Lodge to retreat to at the end of the day.*



*“Every shoot is different, we very much try to make it as if the host is on their own estate”*



## GREAT DAYS OUT WITH THE PURDEY SPORTING AGENCY

The Purdey Sporting Agency organises 100 bespoke trips a year across some of the most prestigious estates around the world. “It’s a complete sporting experience. Everything is taken care of, so you can just relax and enjoy,” says Gordon Robinson, who heads up the Agency. Here, he shares a little more about what to expect...

### UK

Arguably, the finest shooting in the world is found in the UK and the Agency works with the best of the best when it comes to country estates, from the Highlands of Scotland to the Valleys of Exmoor. All trips are hosted by Purdey and most are driven shooting, giving a true sense of the traditional British way that hasn’t changed much since Victorian times.

### SPAIN

“It’s a leisurely start, then after the first drive we all meet outside for tapas. The Spanish do it differently; these trips are always amazing” – With globally renowned hospitality across nine exclusive estates (one in Mallorca; eight on the mainland, near Seville, Madrid and the Portuguese border), in Spain it’s as much about the culture as it is a shooting experience.

### SOUTH AFRICA

In South Africa, you’ll find a staggering variety and quality of shooting; plus luxury accommodation in private lodges across several top estates around Bloemfontein. All you have to do is book a flight and prepare to enjoy some of the most exhilarating wild bird shooting you will ever experience.

### ARGENTINA

The Córdoba province in Argentina is celebrated as one of the premium locations for dove shooting, where they are considered wild birds, much like pigeons in the UK. The landscape is incredible, from mountains to maize farms, rolling hills, dry creek beds and narrow valleys – and the shooting is all about high volumes, it’s quite unlike anywhere else in the world.



# THE *Gun* ROOM

A selection of our best guns



## SIDELOCK SIDE-BY-SIDE

Our Side-by-Side Sidelock shotgun was designed in 1880, with its patented self-opening system. This unique design proved so popular that by the end of the century every crowned head of Europe had become a client of James Purdey & Sons. Today, our Side-by-Side remains virtually unchanged in both design and aesthetic, and is available in 12, 16, 20, 28 and .410-bore dedicated actions.



## SIDELOCK OVER-AND-UNDER

Our Over-and-Under was designed and patented by the firm of James Woodward & Sons in 1913, who produced it up until the company was purchased by us in 1948. The Woodward design is famous for being lightweight and exceptionally robust, and our modern guns incorporate several refinements by two of our most celebrated craftsmen, Ernest and Harry Lawrence. As with our Side-by-Side model, it is available today in 12, 16, 20, 28 and .410-bore dedicated actions.



## SIDELOCK DAMASCUS

When James Purdey began his apprenticeship in 1798, best London gunmakers often forged their Damascus barrels from old horse shoes, which were believed to have been toughened by the heavy wear they endured. Today, our all-Damascus gun is a world-first. Available in either Side-by-Side or Over-and-Under configuration, each is hand-crafted using Damascene steel alloy. Every piece has more than 100 layers, creating the distinctive and unique Damascus pattern. With exceptional purity and strength, it lends itself perfectly to the rigours of long service in the field.



## SIDELOCK DOUBLE RIFLE

We have been building double-barrelled sporting rifles since 1814, and developed the first Express rifle in 1852. The term was coined by James Purdey the Younger to describe the velocity, power and accuracy of his new design, taking the term from the newly introduced express trains. Today, our double rifles are built on a reinforced version of our famous self-opening Side-by-Side action, allowing for fast opening and reloading, and providing absolute confidence to the shooter when faced with dangerous game.





**SIDELOCK HAMMER**

Our Sidelock Hammer gun was re-introduced in 2004 in response to a revival of interest in hammer guns and the golden era of game shooting. The design incorporates two major differences from the original hammer guns; the addition of a required safety mechanism, and the inclusion of ejectors. This model is available in dedicated 12 and 20-bore actions, and has a full selection of optional upgrades as with all of our Sidelock models.



**PURDEY TRIGGER PLATE: GAME MODEL**

The shooting world has seen an increase in the prominence of higher birds and heavier cartridges over recent years. In response to these demands, we launched our Trigger Plate Over & Under in 2018. As with all of our models, the Trigger Plate is made entirely at our London factory and passes through the traditional seven stages of gunmaking. The action has a detachable trigger assembly, which is designed for ease of maintenance, strength and security, and is available in 12, 16, 20 and 28-bore on dedicated actions with a full range of bespoke options and upgrades.



**PURDEY TRIGGER PLATE: SPORTING CLAYS MODEL**

Our high-performance Sporting Clays model was developed by our in-house team to meet the increasing demand by clients for a specific gun suitable for this popular discipline. Based on our Trigger-Plate action, it features a special 9.3mm raised rib, higher comb and an ergonomically designed grip and palm swell. The bespoke stock and grip have been designed to assist the shooter's mount and reduce the recoil as much as possible, while remaining perfectly balanced and easy to handle. This model is available in 12 and 20-bore.



**PURDEY SPORTER**

The Purdey Sporter combines our 200 years of gunmaking experience with 21st century technology. Now entirely made at our London factory, the Sporter features a number of new additional innovations. As with all Purdey shotguns, the Sporter is steel proofed as standard to meet modern requirements. An additional feature is our innovative anti-corrosion coating on all internal parts, providing invaluable protection against rust. It also has its own Rose & Scroll engraving pattern; an innovation of our traditional pattern, which fully incorporates this model into our family of shotguns. The Sporter is available in dedicated 12, 20 and 28-bore actions.



**BOLT ACTION RIFLE: STANDARD MODEL**

We have been building bolt action magazine rifles since the 1930s, and in 2018 we gave our classic design a thorough overhaul to meet the modern demands for accuracy and performance. At the heart of this new design is the innovative Purdey chassis system. Made from titanium, it is embedded into the walnut stock and runs from the pistol grip to the forend, providing an exceptionally stable bedding platform; a critical factor of any accurate hunting rifle. These rifles include scope mounts as standard, and are available in any rifle calibre from .22-250 up to .300 Win Mag.



**BOLT ACTION RIFLE: SAFARI MODEL**

While the design of this rifle has been driven by innovation, it was also key to retain the tradition and elegance one would expect of a Purdey. The exhibition-grade walnut stock is traditionally shaped, and the magazine floor-plate is engraved with a classic, fine Rose & Scroll engraving pattern as standard. The Safari model is available in calibres from .375 - .500 Jeffrey, and comes with traditional open sights as standard. It can also be fully customised by the client, with a range of options and upgrades.



*It's* ALL *in*  
*the* DETAIL

Every stitch, button and trim tells a tale

By FARAH SHAFIQ

Let us take you back to the 1970s, Mount Street, London. Purdey has just opened the doors to its first clothing outfitters, next to the already well established HQ of Audley House, the firm's historical home since 1882. It's a move that makes sense – of course those familiar with Purdey guns would also appreciate a boutique selling specialist apparel for the field, made with the same eye for detail, quality and practicality that they've come to expect from the brand.

"It's all about the details," confirms Hans Madsen, designer at Purdey and knitwear specialist, having honed his craft over almost 20 years, following a Masters at the Royal College of Art. His philosophy has always been one of "evolution, not revolution", so it's fitting that he found his way to Purdey where this ethos shines through.

The heritage of those early Mount Street days inspired much of Purdey's recent collections, and as ever, it's the hand-made elements that tell particularly interesting tales. Tweed, the backbone of every classic field sports wardrobe, is a good place to start. Ours are woven at Lovat Mill, in Hawick on the Scottish Borders, which has been producing excellent tweed almost as long as Purdey has been making guns, since 1882. They are also vanguards for change, notably creating technical tweeds that speak to our modern-day shooting needs. Their state-of-the-art Dornier looms uniquely twist yarns to define versatile, flexible material that's full of character; then, the hand-craft comes into play, darning any flaws with the finely tuned skill of a restoration artist. Featuring Windowpane and Glen checks, houndstooths, herringbones and tattersalls, the finished styles are unmistakably Purdey, a seamless blend of tradition and innovation. Indeed, we're even making rainproof tweeds now; classic silhouettes and tones, enhanced by a pioneering three-layer waterproof fabric.

Knitwear – Madsen's favourite – has its own rich narrative thread. "It's made in partnership with Corgi in Wales, where they have been knitting in the same way for decades, it's like entering a time capsule," he smiles. Again, similar to Purdey, Corgi is a family business steeped in heritage that has been producing knitwear from its Carmarthenshire factory since 1892, and comes with Royal commendation. Madsen and his team design the patterns, working with Corgi's highly skilled craftspeople to bring their vision to life. "The Fair Isle Falcon Sweater in light Scottish cashmere is one of our key pieces for both mens and womenswear," Madsen notes. Look beyond the relaxed silhouette and you'll find a hand-laid intarsia technique, "an abstract geometric take, inspired by the wings of a Peregrine Falcon."

"Cable has been a dominant inspiration for the knitwear collections," he continues, "introducing luxurious 3D textures in pieces like the Cable & Rib V-Neck Cardigan, knitted by makers in Scotland with five-gauge cashmere yarn." Historically, cable knits had subtle differences depending on the region – a knitwear dialect, so to speak. "Cable knits tell stories that span the UK coastline; each village once had its own patterns," says Madsen. "It was initially developed out of necessity, by women knitting jumpers to keep their fishermen husbands warm." These days though, the women get to wear the jumpers too.

The design team is passionate about every button, stitch and trim – from the Nottingham Lace on womenswear shirts, made in partnership with Cluny, who collaborated on the wedding dresses of Princess Diana and Princess Catherine, using a technique that's as close to hand-made as it gets; to the silk ties and scarfs in Ancient Madder paisleys, printed in the North of England.

Purdey designer Andrew Voss talks animatedly about the stories that each piece carries, drawing parallels with the many facets of a Purdey gun. "Autumn/Winter 2023 was the first season we introduced a particularly ornate and beautiful button," he says. "We took inspiration from the etchings on some of our guns, such as the Rose & Scroll motif, and from a JPS monogram on an evening slipper we originally found at Audley House, simplified slightly into a J and a P. It's embroidered on many of the shirts, and carved into the domed horn button that's on the majority of our newer outerwear, including the capes and the Hyde Pea Coat."

As Madsen sums up: "We always seek makers at the top of their game, those who often work in family-run businesses, and have been honing their crafts over generations." It's a thread that runs through Purdey from the very start, woven into every piece we create. Take a closer look when you next throw on your jumper and button up your coat before heading out on a shoot – a moment for the detail please.



*Clockwise from top left: Aran Cardigan; Aran Scarf; Bi Colour Cardigan; Fairisle Falcon Cashmere Sweater; Technical Tweed Yorkshire Field Coat; Small Medallion Silk Scarf.*

*“We always seek makers at the top of their game... those who have been honing their craft over generations”*

# CABINET *of Curiosities*

Some of the most ingenious innovations in our arsenal

*By* SIMON DE BURTON



Founder James Purdey saw the sense in that even before he established his company – probably as a result of serving his apprenticeship with the celebrated gunsmith Joseph Manton, at a time when the centuries-old ‘flintlock’ method of ignition began to give way to the far more efficient and versatile percussion system.

During the early years of Purdey, James made improvements to enhance the reliability and safety of flintlocks, despite the fact that they were disappearing. Most notable was his use of Wyatt’s patent ‘safeguard’ of 1818, a clever device to prevent accidental firing. There is speculation, too, that he was a pioneer in the use of the waterproof ‘copper cap’ detonation system. And his son, James the Younger, carried this eye for innovation forward, bringing in most of Purdey’s major inventions.

**PURDEY PATENTS**

From the ‘improved apparatus for ramming and turning over breech-loading cartridges’ of February 1861 to the famous ‘Purdey Bolt’ registered in May 1863, originally operated by a thumblever and since used in countless rifles and shotguns; then followed further patented inventions for a ‘gun-loaded’ indicator; an easily adjustable breech elevator, and a safety system that prevented a gun from being fired when not fully closed.

Perhaps one the most celebrated Purdey patents, however, is for a device which Purdey didn’t actually invent, but in which the firm saw obvious sense and potential. The Purdey self-opening hammerless action, registered in 1880, was the brainchild of gunsmith Frederick Beesley and, since purchasing the patent the following year, Purdey has used it continuously on the basis that it

is undoubtedly one of the finest self-opening hammerless actions ever created. Indeed, it’s still very much in use today – a prime example of the maker’s ‘if it ain’t broke, don’t fix it’ philosophy.

More esoteric devices, meanwhile, have included the ‘light projecting dummy cartridge’, created in 1929 for the Purdey Electric Spotter Gun, a special version of which was made for King George V to keep his eye in while in poor health.

**WORKSHOPPING INNOVATION**

The spirit of innovation continues today at the Purdey gun-making workshop in west London, where technical manager Alan Graichen-Cunningham oversees an ongoing programme of technical development. Formerly a product design engineer in the aerospace, automotive and defence industries, Graichen-Cunningham’s goal is to combine high-tech with tradition.

“We are innovating in a business that is very much about traditional materials and hand craftsmanship,” he explains. “One example of this is the use of 3D-printing to speed-up the development of products. Traditionally, any new component would be created on the craft floor from start to finish, which is a very time consuming exercise.

“Now, a prototype that might take days or even weeks to make in the old-fashioned way can often be created in a matter of hours and then handed to the people on the craft floor in order to determine whether or not it is viable to produce.”

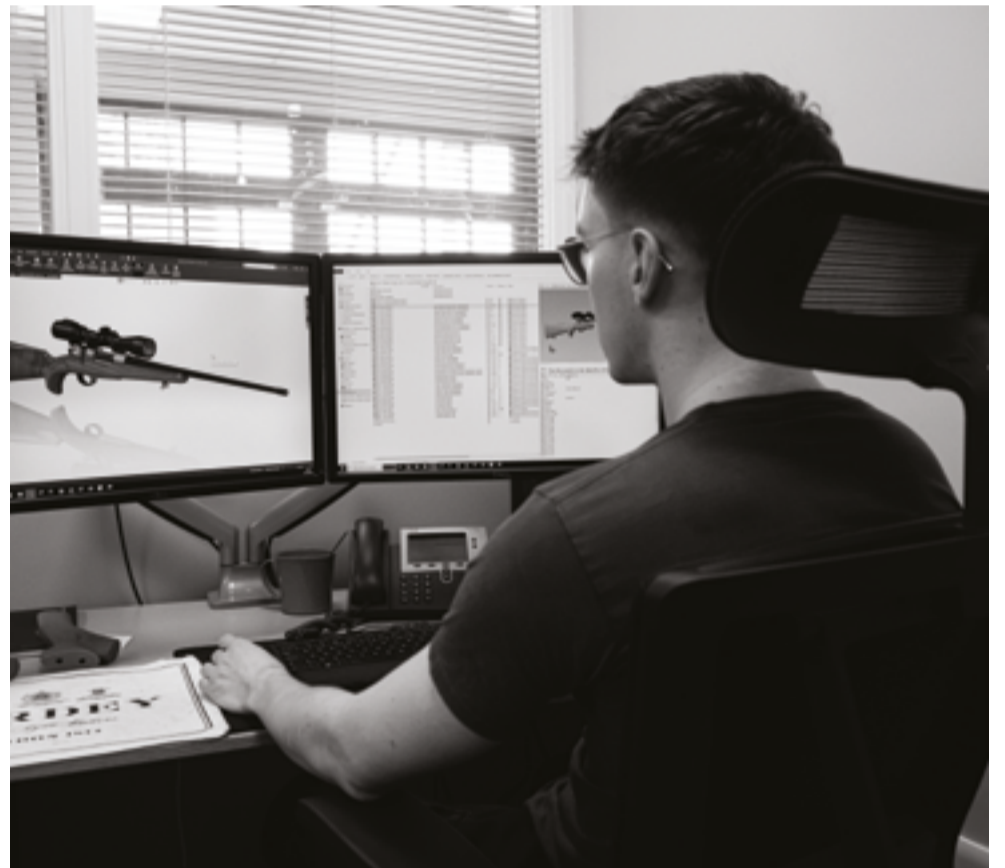
One example of a new component that began life that way is the new titanium heat shield; now an optional extra that reduces heat in the trigger plate fore-end during sustained firing. “Using

titanium was the result of looking at the type of materials used in other industries, such as the worlds of aircraft design and high-end bicycle manufacture,” says Graichen-Cunningham.

“Right now, we are updating the chassis for the Bolt Action Rifle. This is currently made out of titanium, which is rust-proof, extremely strong and light – which means superior stability, increased durability and less weight compared with a steel equivalent. However, as we are always looking to innovate, we are investigating other advancements in materials and designs to further enhance our offering.”

Another model the team has been working on for 2024 is The Woodward, to mark the 75th anniversary of Purdey’s acquisition of James Woodward & Sons. The firm was responsible for perhaps the most successful British ‘over & under’ design of the 20th century, which has remained in almost continuous production since its introduction in 1913. The commemorative Woodward replicates the beautifully simple ‘streamline action’, paying homage, while building a gun with a modernised spec for today’s shot.

Durability of components, heat reduction, compatibility of materials and new finishes are all part of the work carried out by the technical department. But, says Graichen-Cunningham, the past will always be respected. “One of the reasons Purdey has been so successful is that we have always tried to make worthwhile improvements without ever forgetting the techniques we have learned during the past 200 years. I truly believe what we are doing today will one day be recognised as an equally important part of the firm’s history as the many patents James Purdey registered during the 19th century.”



*Purdey’s technical manager Alan Graichen-Cunningham (above) oversees an ongoing programme of innovation that combines high-tech (such as 3D-printing, above) with tradition, documented by the many Purdey patents in our archive (bottom right).*



# TIPS *from* *the* **Top**

Schooled by a Purdey shooting pro

By PATRICK GALBRAITH    *Photography* SARAH FARNSWORTH

In truth my first outing of the season, a partridge day in Norfolk, was a bit of a curate's egg. There was no wind and heavy fog but the keeper at Walsingham Estate, Simon Owen, is long enough in the tooth to show some brilliant birds even when the conditions are against him. Regrettably, though, I struggled to keep up my side of the bargain. It wasn't that I was totally failing, but as my girlfriend's father delighted in pointing out, I was killing almost everything with the second barrel. What I couldn't work out was whether I was ahead of them with the first shot and then connecting when I slowed up, or whether I was behind them initially and then swinging through.

The following Monday I drove down to Purdey at the Royal Berkshire to face my demons. Unusually for me, I arrived early and took the opportunity to go for a wander with my young spaniel. I must admit that I've never found the Purdey ground to be a particularly easy day out — and I mean that in a good way. There are lots of places where the targets flatter your shooting. You leave feeling like King George V on a good day, but the following Saturday you're still missing those long crossers. The targets at PRB are about as close to the real thing as you can get, and give you nowhere to hide.

I popped into the gunroom to have a quick chat with Alastair Phillips before meeting Steve Turner who would be giving me a lesson. Alastair has forgotten more about guns than I'll ever know and it's brilliant to be at a ground where you can try guns out before you buy. I chatted to him about wanting to get something a bit lighter and he's currently putting his feelers out. Steve then joined us in the gunroom and we had a quick chat about what I wanted to work on before heading out into the rain.

I'm going to really offend some people by saying this, but there are lots of instructors out there, often jolly retirees who've done a course on instructing and who love their shooting, but are frankly useless when it comes to actually helping you become a better shot. Steve, it became abundantly clear from the off, is one of those rare coaches who really gets it. It isn't just that he's stood on a peg countless times on pheasant days — he's done it all. He knows his ducks, he knows his pigeon shooting, and he knows his wild partridges. His treasure trove of theory is based on practical experience.

To kick off, he had me stand under a straight oncomer to assess where I was at. After six shots, he said that it was clear I'd done a fair bit of shooting, but he wanted me to "come into the target a bit tighter" — essentially he wanted more of a positive connection and for me to shoot more deliberately. The four birds that followed this advice turned to dust, and we then moved on to crossers. I explained to Steve that the previous weekend, I'd been "second barreling everything" and he told me that the problem was obvious. As noted earlier, I was starting a long way behind birds, swinging for too long, then checking my swing, before shooting them much more fluidly with the second barrel. Again, his guidance was spot on. The right to left crossers that followed felt easy, and Steve then had me shooting the bird with my first barrel before shooting a clay fragment with my second — it's a trick that does wonders for shooting positively.



*“Great teachers, I always think, are able to make you believe in yourself, which is half the battle”*

Like most people, I don't enjoy missing, but it happens. What I found really interesting about Steve was how convincing he was when he told me it wasn't a problem, and to simply move on to the next shot. I often end up in a mire of misery when I start missing, but he had me cheerily reverting back to basics to start getting it right again. Great teachers, I always think, are able to make you believe in yourself, which is half the battle.

The sky cleared as we wandered back to the clubhouse for a cup of coffee. “The thing is,” I said to Steve, “you wouldn't just pick up a tennis racket and expect to be able to play well, but so many people don't bother with lessons and practice when it comes to shooting.” When he was away getting the coffees, my pigeon shooting mate, Tom Payne, a veteran instructor himself, replied to a text I'd sent earlier. “Steve Turner?”, the text read, “he's one of the best. I'd say that as game shooting instructors go, he's properly up there.” Tom always says it how it is and he was right, Steve has a gift.



*Putting in the practice with one of the expert instructors at Purdey at the Royal Berkshire is a sure-fire way to improve your performance in the field — and a really good day out in its own right.*





# COAT *of Arms*

Our favourite outerwear for all weathers





**1. Morlich Tweed Field Coat**  
 You really can't argue with this Purdey classic. Comfortable and warm in all conditions, pull up the collar, slip your hands into the fleece-lined pockets and know that you most definitely look the part.

**2. Technical Tweed Lancashire Field Coat**  
 Everything we love about tweed, but better. The innovative three-layer waterproof fabric would get the approval of any century-old weaver – it's simple, clever and effective, the holy trinity of great technical kit.



**3. Merino Lux Fleece Jacket**  
 The not-so-well-kept secret to staying warm while out in the field: layering. This wool-blend fleece is perfect for just that, and it will also do you proud when the overcoat comes off.

**4. Quilted Jacket**  
 Of all the quilted jackets, hanging in all the boot rooms, this is the one. Quintessential countryside dressing at its best, it works over and under (gun pun intended) pretty much everything else in your wardrobe.

**5. Scarf Cape**  
 If Purdey made superhero capes... In a beautifully soft cashmere blend, with contrasting check interior, and finished at the hem with leather binding, it's made for sweeping through the estate all season long.



**6. Ridge Parka Jacket**  
 Don't be fooled by the streamlined simplicity of this jacket, there's some seriously high-level performance tech going on here. You'd be hard pressed to find a more comfortable, practical piece of outerwear.

**7. Norfolk Jacket**  
 Checked inside and out, multi-layered and generously quilted, this jacket has it all buttoned up (with an optional fifth button for those extra windy days). As a bonus, the belt gives you the waistline you've always wanted.

**8. Estate Coat**  
 The devil is in the detail here, from the double-face fabric made in Scotland, to the leather neck-tie and subtle cocoon silhouette – a modern take on our outerwear that suits every setting.





# *Winning on* TECHNICALITY

Putting Purdey outerwear through its paces

By BENEDICT BROWNE    *Photography* SARAH FARNSWORTH

*“It is, by all accounts, the ultimate choice for foul-weather shooting attire”*



Technical tweed may sound like an oxymoron, but in the world of Purdey, it's the name bestowed upon the highly impressive new collection of shooting apparel, which combines traditional silhouettes and tones with modern technical proficiency. Though traditionalists will be well-acquainted with Purdey's best-selling raglan tweed shooting jacket, this capsule offering ensures you stay dry and comfortable even in deluged fields engulfed by demoralising rain and wind. It is, by all accounts including mine, the ultimate choice for foul-weather shooting attire.

This latest Technical Tweed collection includes a neat curation of eight garments – four for men and four for women – with the star pieces being the field coat and matching breeks, made from a pioneering three-layer tweed fabric.

The tweed itself is from Lovat Mill, the self-proclaimed and never-questioned 'home of tweed', located in Hawick in the Scottish Borders. History has proven that tweed is already proficient in water-repellency, yet the design team at Purdey has worked with two mid-weight fabrics in rustic, green hues that have a touch of nylon for increased durability. They've then laminated a technical, waterproofing membrane to the exterior that bolsters its defences and taped the internal seams, resulting in an impenetrable, inclement-weather-conquering jacket that's entirely Made in Europe.

In terms of design, the field coat boasts several distinctive features, including a raglan shoulder, articulated sleeves with gussets for improved arm movement, and a centralised action back. Then for comfort and convenience, there are fleece-lined hand warmer pockets, large bellowed cartridge pockets, an internal stow pocket, a drawstring waist and hem, and Merino knitted cuffs. Additionally, there's subtle external branding – a first for Purdey – and cutting-edge Recco tracking technology.

Downstairs, the breeks are also made from the same three-layer fabric as the jacket, keeping you dry from top to bottom. With taped seams and a clean, fuss-free waistband that meets double



pleats that help cut a sleek yet roomy silhouette, they have Merino cuffs, easy pop buttons, and lockable zips.

The three-layer fabric isn't particularly insulating, so for warmth, there's a removable quilted jacket made of sustainable HD wool fleece, the contents of which can be traced back to a herd of sheep in Yorkshire. With a new house tattersall check that's carried across the new range, the lightweight jacket can be worn as a standalone garment should the weather permit it. There's also a V-neck vest in tweed without the membrane and a pair of pleated trousers with belt loops.

Since time immemorial, shooting apparel has seemingly held steadfast, seldom undergoing significant transformation. However, with this capsule collection, which cohesively works together in perfect harmony, the paradigm shifts. Over time, the technical tweeds will gracefully soften, much like traditional tweeds, shedding their initial crispness, and delivering a deeply comfortable and weather-conquering ensemble of shooting gear. The only remaining question: where to put them to the test?

*The design team at Purdey has worked with two mid-weight fabrics, which have a touch of nylon for increased durability; then laminated a technical, waterproofing membrane to the exterior and taped the internal seams for impenetrable defences.*



# The Conservation GAME

For the love of grey partridges and their thriving habitat

By FARAH SHAFIQ    Photography TARQUIN MILLINGTON-DRAKE

It's nice being introduced as this year's Purdey Gold Award winner, I'm proud," says George Ponsonby, when we meet to talk about his success. "We entered because we wanted to be recognised as doing our own bit for wildlife and conservation. And, we thought it would be a fun challenge to be up against the best in the country."

Ponsonby bagged the Gold thanks to his brilliant work with grey partridges on his farm in Gloucestershire. Though he cites "an enormous amount of luck" as playing its part in the win, the steadily rising partridge numbers and thriving habitat he and his team have tended to speak volumes. "It's hard to put your finger on it, but there's something uniquely special about grey partridges, compared to a pheasant shoot, or dare I say it, even a grouse moor," he notes. "There's something beyond everyone's reach, it's so difficult to get right and to succeed, so very few people are doing it. It's hard work, and requires huge attention to detail — you have to be prepared to take the rough with the smooth. We do it because we love it."

So, what should we expect from a shoot at Ponsonby Farms? "Currently we shoot partridges at least once, sometimes twice a year. Our spring pair count has been hovering between 110 and 135 for a few years, but as we continue to fine-tune the habitat, we might eventually have a spring count of 150 pairs, which could mean three days of shooting greys — that's our aim."

"Pheasants we shoot between three and five times, depending on the season. The exciting bit is that it's very unpredictable; I don't know if we're going to shoot 30 or 130. I get as much pleasure from seeing the birds fly the wrong way as flying the right way, because if they fly the wrong way then they've outwitted me, and I like that," Ponsonby smiles. "If the pheasants were reared and then released, they wouldn't do that, they're much more predictable. But wild pheasants have legs like coiled springs, they fly much faster, much higher, they curl, they swoop, they soar, they duck and they dive — it's spectacular to watch. I know I have a gun, and they don't, but nevertheless it feels like we're pitting our wits against them. And, quite often, they beat us — it's a refreshing challenge."

For Ponsonby, conservation and shooting go hand in hand, and seeing the flora and fauna thrive is motivation in itself. "Good ideas evolve over time. The initial driver was so that we could have a bit of sport, but then we realised that what we were doing was benefitting much more than just our partridge numbers. I get an enormous thrill seeing bumblebee numbers recovering, or noticing an unusual butterfly. The farmland birds also benefit: skylarks, corn buntings, yellowhammers, linnets, goldfinches... Those numbers have gone through the roof. Hares, which are in decline everywhere, we've got hundreds of them! I think there's not a single person who wouldn't be pleased to see that sort of result."

"The business of insects is more crucial than I realised, our ecosystem depends on them," he continues. "If we don't do something to revive our insect numbers very quickly, we are going to be kicking ourselves in 20 years time. We created beetle banks, which are fascinating. A beetle bank is essentially some grassy habitat down the middle of a large field, usually with strips of wild flowers along both sides to provide both nesting cover and a plentiful source of insects for the young chicks. It really hit home to me when I was walking around the farm one evening and saw 20 or 30 swallows flying up and down a beetle bank, because they'd worked out that there was an abundance of insects. That's nature at work — when you give nature a chance, she seizes it with both hands."

"That, for me, is the whole point," Ponsonby concludes. "All of the habitat we put in is government funded, because it helps these species — not, so that I can shoot, that's a bonus. The pleasure and the reward actually comes from the thriving environment. Sometimes, on a very cold day in January, you can walk around a corner and suddenly the most enormous flock of linnets will lift out of a crop of kale. That's the joy of it."

*Photos taken from Tarquin Millington-Drake's upcoming book (available through Purdey & Sons) 'Living with Greys' to be published 9th May 2024. The book is based around George Ponsonby's grey partridge project in Gloucestershire.*



*"Wild pheasants have legs like coiled springs, they fly much faster, much higher, they curl, they swoop, they soar, they duck and they dive — it's spectacular to watch," says George Ponsonby from his estate in Gloucestershire, where not only game birds, but myriad other wildlife is blooming thanks to his cultivation of the habitat.*



*“It's hard to put your finger on it, but there's something uniquely special about grey partridges”*





# *The* Finishing Touches

A parting note to finesse your shooting weekend etiquette

By ANNIKA PURDEY Photography SARAH FARNSWORTH

## *The host*

### 1. MANAGE EXPECTATIONS

Send out an itinerary for the weekend to your guests well in advance. This will ensure they know exactly what fun to expect, and will stop you from being inundated with questions in the run up to their arrival – leaving you free to get plans underway.

### 2. SET THE DRESS CODE

It is always a good idea to suggest what you would like guests to wear, especially for evening attire. Perhaps one dinner is relatively casual, and the second is more formal, or even black tie. For shooting clothes and accessories, I leave it to their better judgement, but always put out a basket of spare gloves, hats, shooting socks and ear defenders, because we often forget things.

### 3. OFFER ELEGANT ELEVENSES

The short breaks after the second or third drive are one of the great joys of a day out in the field. Get inventive and fill your elevenses baskets with delicious treats. Chilled champagne and warming bullshots – a hot consommé laced with vodka and spiced with Worcestershire sauce and Tabasco – will always be a hit. As will locally sourced or estate-grown produce, such as mini pheasant burgers, venison sausage rolls, smoked salmon blinis and quails eggs with celery salt. I find a homemade fruit cake always goes down well, too. Do check you have enough plates, glasses and napkins in your picnic basket, and plenty of chilled water.

### 4. PLAN DINNERS WITH A DIFFERENCE

Take inspiration from Oliver Wilson, the head chef at the Tulchan Estate in Scotland and one of my favourite game chefs. Almost everything you eat there is grown, made or reared on the estate. The barbecue shoot lunches are spectacular – think pheasant breasts marinated in lime, chilli and honey, grilled rib of beef with chimichurri, and spiced venison haunch with yoghurt and flatbreads. His shoot dinners are a triumph too, from the elegant starters – such as venison tartare and salmon from the River Spey, which runs through the estate – to main courses of roast wild mallard and roast grouse.

### 5. MAKE COMFORT KING

In the lodge or house, ensure that guest bedrooms and bathrooms are comfortable and warm. Small details – fresh flowers and interesting books and magazines on the nightstand – make all the difference, as do indulgent products. I love Diptyque bath oils, and luxurious soaps from Officine Universelle Buly 1803 and Santa Maria Novella. British brand Bamford is also a firm favourite. Most people love a bath after a shoot, so try to ensure there is plenty of hot water too.

## *The guest*

### 1. REPLY WITH SPEED

Always respond to your invitations promptly. Once an invitation has been accepted it is set in stone, with no backing out!

### 2. BE PREPARED

Check the weather forecast and pack with a checklist so you don't have to trouble your hosts to lend you items you may have forgotten. I never travel without the Purdey Vatersay cape, which packs to nothing and keeps you bone dry on rainy days, while the elegant and practical new cashmere Field Coat will be a go-to for decades to come. I adore hats and usually wear a tweed or Loden baker boy cap, but if I want to elevate my look, I will wear a fedora with feathers. I always keep a pair of chocolate brown suede loafers in my car so that I can change out of my boots for lunch (buy a size up to accommodate shooting socks). For evening wear inspiration, understated elegance is always best, unless specifically told otherwise. Take a look at the Purdey Estate Evening Collection for well cut, quiet luxury.

### 3. BRING THE PERFECT PRESENTS

Choose a thoughtful gift, really considering what your hosts might like. Glassware, beautiful books, leather goods, and field accessories such as caps, walking sticks and cartridge bags, all make excellent presents. I have been given some wonderful things over the years, including beautiful leather-bound notebooks, game books and personalised correspondence cards from Smythsons. An exceptionally thoughtful friend once gave me a monogrammed cashmere dressing gown, which I always pack for a weekend away.

### 4. STICK TO THE SCHEDULE

Always abide by your host's instructions and timings on and off the field. When you gather for the pre-shoot briefing in the morning, be sure to pay attention to what you are allowed, and not allowed to shoot. It never goes down well to shoot something that is off limits. Be on time for everything. Shooting weekends are run with meticulous planning – if you are late for anything, you will throw off everyone's schedule.

### 5. BE THANKFUL

Before you leave, remember to thank everyone. Leave a decent cash tip in your bedroom for the house staff. After the shooting, thank and tip the keeper (ask your host's advice if you are unsure of the amount). As soon as you get home, write a handwritten thank you letter to your hosts. Well written letters bring back wonderful memories of time well spent. They will also help oil the wheels for an invitation next season.



*“Get inventive and fill your elevenses baskets with delicious treats”*

# PURDEY

*Heritage, craft & innovation, inspired by the great outdoors*

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