

# RIPLEY CASTLE SHOOT

RIPLEY CASTLE : NIDD : HOB GREEN : CAYTON : EAGLE HALL : ASHFOLD SIDE  
HARDCASTLE AND HEATHFIELD MOORS

March 2015

## NEWSLETTER No. 2 : 2015 – 2016

### Craig Smith

I start this Newsletter with some tragic news. It is with great sadness that I advise that our very good friend Craig took his own life at the end of January. Words cannot describe how we all must feel and our sincere condolences go to his wife Sophie and their three year old son Edward. I am planning something on the Moor to remember Craig.

### Office Move

My sawmill site is now ready for the developer so Lynda and myself have moved into a property I have in Boroughbridge. The only change is that our office telephone number is now 01423 323321. We have also done away with our fax. My postal address for the Shoot remains as The Old Hall, Burton Leonard, Nr Harrogate HG3 3SD and my other contact numbers remain as at present:

Mobile 07774 271781 – which still does not receive a signal at home. Home 01765 677343 after 8.00 p.m. is ideal.

### Overview of our 2014-2015 Season

Our season started with some unforgettable grouse and partridge days in ideal weather conditions. Unfortunately the mild, warm and often wet weather lasted until the end of December, which proved very challenging for George, David and their teams to stop the birds, particularly the pheasants from wandering. However we experienced some excellent shooting and these problems were in the main not apparent to the guns.

The winter did eventually arrive at the end of December when we experienced some very testing shooting. All in all a brilliant season albeit very hard for our Keepers.

### Return on Birds Released 2014-2015

#### Ripley Castle : Nidd : Hob Green & Cayton

	<b>Pheasant</b>	<b>Partridge</b>	<b>Duck</b>	<b>Overall</b>
2014-2015	46.50%	31.06%	63.80%	41.45%
Previous 8 year average	46.30%	30.81%	74.81%	42.82%

Bird shot average: 3.34

Birds shot in excess of the overall target bag for the season: 6.62%

You may remember in 2013 it was our partridge which provided the bulk of our sport. This season it was our pheasants which even in the mild conditions, performed exceptionally well.

Another excellent season at Ripley Castle.

### Return on Birds Released 2014-2015: Eagle Hall & Ashfold Side

	<b>Pheasant</b>	<b>Partridge</b>	<b>Overall</b>
2014-2015	41.46%	49.07%	45.65%
Previous 8 year average	49.60%	42.14%	46.51%

Bird shot average: 4.54

Birds shot in excess of the overall target bag for the season: 7.22%

You never know what a season has in store and this season it was our partridge that performed being the opposite of Ripley Castle. We had some excellent shooting with testing partridge on every day up to the end of the season.

## **Hardcastle & Heathfield Moors: 2014**

Who would have believed we could better our 2012 and 2013 Seasons but we certainly did. I can only describe our 2014 season as perfect in every way. We had an excellent stock of very fit birds together with wonderful weather on most days often with a good breeze. We then achieved record returns from 20 full grouse days and 6 days with grouse and partridge.

### **Returns for Hardcastle Moor**

	<b>Brace</b>	<b>Average Bag per Day</b>	<b>10 year average</b>	<b>5 year average</b>
2012	915	82	274	401
2013	989	95	342	586
2014	1,185	101	442	813

### **Returns for Heathfield Moor**

	<b>Brace</b>	<b>Average Bag per Day</b>	<b>10 year average</b>	<b>5 year average</b>
2012	456	65	158	211
2013	684	76	199	334
2014	1,059	99	289	526

### **Combined Return for Hardcastle & Heathfield Moors**

2012: 1,371 brace  
2013: 1,642 brace  
2014: 2,244 brace

These returns really show what can be achieved by hard and dedicated work. It's all down to George and his team, with Joel full time on the Moor, John half his time on the Moor with Callum assisting.

Our 2014 grouse season was certainly a season to remember.

## **Ripley Castle : Nidd : Hob Green & Cayton: 2015-2016**

After 20 years you would have thought we would have the Shoot infrastructure just how we want it. Far from it thanks to some severe wet weather, so during the out of season we are planning more work than ever before.

One main project will be to replace the duck boards in duck wood and build two more "play pens" on the lake. There will be four forward guns and five back guns. We plan to make our duck even more testing in the new season.

We have tracks to repair in Park Wood and much fencing to erect in a number of areas. There is a considerable amount of forestry work about to start. Birthwaite, Henry Wood and part of Cayton Gill will be thinned which will improve the presentation of our birds. Newton Wood and part of Ten Acre will be clear felled which will also help our birds.

Every five years David and I plan to clear out all our old stock of pheasants so this year we will be buying all our pheasant in as day olds from other hatcheries and not hatching any ourselves. This part of our plan will work. The only problem we have is due to the mild conditions in late 2014 our pheasant were everywhere and unfortunately many are still with us. We have more on the ground than ever before even though we have caught up for other hatcheries. It's a good position but I would have preferred all new stock for 2015-2016.

As advised in my Newsletter No.1 all our days will start at 8.30 a.m. and we will take a midday lunch in our new Shoot Cabin each shoot day.

In order to increase our vermin control and capacity to improve dogging in and other keeping work, in addition to David, Robert, Matthew and Patrick, Oliver Fletcher will join our team as a full time Keeper once he completes his game keeping course at Askham Bryan College. Oliver has worked with us for a number of seasons and I know he will complement our team. Everything will soon be in place for another successful season.

## **Eagle Hall & Ashfold Side: 2015-2016**

We are always trying to find new drives and no doubt George will have some surprises for us. There is also much to do to improve the overall infrastructure of the Shoot area.

In order to increase our effectiveness on vermin control and overall keeping work, George and his team, John, Joel and Callum will be joined by Courtney Banner as a full time Keeper. Courtney will divide his time between pheasant, partridge and Heathfield Moor. As always we will endeavour to improve the overall presentation of our birds which I must admit may take some doing!

## **Hardcastle & Heathfield Moor: 2015**

We have a good stock of young fit birds however we are ever conscious that the present mild wet conditions are ideal for the worm to prevail. Our pairs count shows we have a similar number of grouse to last season.

We experimented with two new drives last season. Blacksmiths Shop from Hardcastle to Heathfield with the guns stood on the Merryfield track. It produced some awesome birds with a bird shot average of 9 to 1!! As a return drive we drove birds over a line of temporary hurdles from Heathfield to Hardcastle which we have named Pithills. As this proved to be an excellent drive with 47 brace from this drive alone on our last day, we applied and obtained planning permission from Natural England to build a line of sunken butts. It could be our best drive on Heathfield, we must wait and see.

I am reminded by George, as I was last season, that it is very rare to achieve three good grouse seasons in a row. As we have just had three exceptional seasons we must wait and see what 2015 has in store which will hopefully be another exception!

## **Exclusive Membership**

As in our last two seasons this will be available to everyone who spends £2,500 or more before VAT on shoot fees during the season.

Benefits include:

- Discounts on last minute availability on selected unsold days.
- Discounts on clothes and accessories at selected retail stores.

I hope to increase the benefits so any ideas would be very welcome.

## **Charity Fund**

As in the past everyone has been extremely generous in supporting our daily sweep, fines, guest lunches and the competitions at our Shoot Dinner. This season has been exceptional and we have raised an impressive total of £16,690. The fund has been distributed as follows:

The Game and Wildlife Conservation Trust (North Yorkshire Branch)	£6,000
The Gamekeepers Welfare Network	£1,500
The Songbird Survival Trust	£500
The Eve Appeal: LadiesShooting.com official charity	£510
The Tanfield Grouse Charity Clay Day	£500
The National Game Keepers Organisation*	£1,500
The Game Keepers Memorial Fund**	£300
Princes Trust: Richard Jackson's Charity Bonfire	£500
The Princes Trust	£260
St Martins Hospice	£220
PPR Foundation: Pam Roberts aims to raise £1M for Brain Tumour Research	£1,710
The Jenny Unwin Appeal***	£2,000
Held in hand for other opportunities out of season	£1,190

\*To assist with the legal costs in overturning a decision by Natural England not to permit a Keeper to control buzzards. The verdict could have a far reaching effect on the future of our shooting.

\*\*The Game Keepers Memorial Fund has been established to raise funds to commission a bronze figure of a Game Keeper and his dog dedicated to all Keepers who have lost their lives in conflict serving our Country. It will be erected at the National Memorial Arboretum in Staffordshire.

\*\*\*Jenny who lives in our Village, sustained a cycle accident which has left her paralysed from the chest downwards. Our Shoot Dinner competitions and auction raised £2,000 (I also understand further substantial donations were made following the Dinner).

I am always looking for new worthwhile causes allied to our sport. Please let me know if you know of any.

## **Shoot Dinner 2015**

We had another excellent and very entertaining evening with 80 Landlords, Members, Guests and Staff attending. I feel it was possibly our most enjoyable Shoot Dinner so far.

## **Shoot Dinner 2016**

This has been arranged for Saturday 6<sup>th</sup> February, so please make a note in your diary.

## **Shoot Days Still Available**

I have experienced the best ever take up of days for the new season with over 80% of the days now sold. There are still a good variety of days available so I hope there may be something of interest in the attached list of available days.

## **Exclusive Days**

Any day on the attached list of available days where no guns have been taken can become an Exclusive Day with the target bag tailored to suit you.

## **Charity Clay Days: Warter Priory Estate, Near York**

### **Friday 5<sup>th</sup> June: Game & Wildlife Conservation Trust GWCT**

### **Monday 8<sup>th</sup> June 2015: Army Benevolent Fund ABF: The Soldiers Charity**

As a member of the organising committee we would like to invite you to field a team on one or both days.

Friday 5<sup>th</sup> June will have a GWCT theme and Monday 8<sup>th</sup> June will have an ABF theme. All proceeds over the two days will be divided equally between both charities.

Each day we will field up to 30 teams of four guns and four loaders. During the morning each team will shoot 5 clay stands plus a combined archery and surprise stand. On completion of the course everyone will enjoy a champagne reception followed by a three course lunch.

There will be a number of competitions and following lunch we hold an auction of many "Money Cannot Buy" lots. The cost is £1,800 per team and well worth it!

There are a number of prizes: Top Tossers who are first, Naughty Nines for ninth place and Sweet Sixteen for sixteenth place. All prizes are similar so everyone has a chance to win.

There are places remaining for a number of teams each day so please try to join us in supporting two very worthwhile Charities whilst enjoying a really great day out.

For an application form please contact:

Michael Wilson, Bridge House, Station Road, Gilling East, North Yorkshire YO62 4JN  
Tel 01439 788045 Mob 07528 657998 E-mail: mpbg.wilson@outlook.com

## **Instructors and Loaders**

It may seem very early, however demand has been excellent this year so if you would like someone with you, please let me know as soon as possible.

## **Hotels**

These are booking fast so please make your reservations as soon as possible.

In recognition of our support last season the Boar's Head Hotel in Ripley have reduced the prices to Ripley Castle Shoot Members for the new season: Single room only £75.00. Double room only £85.00. Prices include VAT. Your breakfast in The Boar's Head is also included in your shoot fee.

## **Finally a first from last season: Engagement**

In September 2014 we had a shoot day with quite a difference. At the end of the final drive of the day Giles Worthington proposed to his now fiancée Liz Hoey, so the champagne came out again and a very good day became even better.

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Many thanks for your support and I will keep you advised of our further progress.