

THE RIPLEY CASTLE SHOOT

RIPLEY CASTLE : NIDD : HOB GREEN : CAYTON : EAGLE HALL : ASHFOLD SIDE

HARDCASTLE AND HEATHFIELD MOORS

July 2010

NEWSLETTER No. 4 : 2010 – 2011 SEASON

We are now only a few weeks away from the start of our new season and I am pleased to report that even despite the recent heavy rain, everything has gone very well on the Moors, on the rearing field at Ripley Castle and the release of our poults at both Ripley Castle and Eagle Hall & Ashfold Side. We should complete all our releases by the end of July.

We have much to look forward to over the next few months and **the good news is that we will be shooting all our scheduled grouse days.**

SHOOT BROCHURE

I am pleased to enclose our new Shoot Brochure which I hope you will find of interest. This latest effort is easier to follow than previous publications (which must be an improvement) and much of the text has been updated in line with the current position of the Shoot. As always I welcome any comments or suggestions as to how this may be improved in the future.

LAST MINUTE CHECK LIST AND SHOOT PLANNER

My apologies for the bright colour. I know I am colour blind but when I chose this shade it must have been a particularly bad day, at least it may be hard to lose it!

SHOOT BROCHURE - RISK ASSESSMENT

As well as introducing the Shoot, our Shoot Brochure is my "Risk Assessment" for everyone shooting with us. I do not wish in any way to compromise the success and enjoyment of your shoot days. However, following recent events in Cumbria and Northumberland, unfortunately anything connected with shotguns and shooting, due to no fault of our own, will be under more scrutiny than ever. It is therefore important to remember that any form of shooting can be dangerous and we must all observe the basic safety rules of our sport in order to avoid any accidents and unwelcome press attention.

It is everyone's responsibility to be fully aware of what is expected of them by the other guns and Shoot staff.

It is also important to have the necessary insurance cover in place before the season and if not experienced in driven game shooting, to have someone standing with the person shooting to instruct them on the day. When you invite a guest it is important that you are aware of the level of experience they have and ensure that insurance is in place and that an instructor/loader has been arranged if necessary.

There can never be any compromise on gun safety and for this and many other reasons I would ask that anyone shooting with us has sight of our Shoot Brochure before their shoot day with us.

Our Exclusive Days have moved well this year and I have included additional brochures for everyone who has taken Exclusive Days. Could you please advise my secretary, Lynda or myself of the number of additional copies you will require in order that all your guests have sight of a copy before their shoot day.

I have also included an additional copy for everyone who has taken days with us this season which I hope you will pass onto any of your friends who may be interested in joining us in the future. I have had plenty of copies printed so please do not hold back on requesting more!

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FIELDSPORTS MAGAZINE – EDITORIAL BY ALEX BRANT

Last season we had two visits from the shooting press. On one occasion in December the assistant editor of the Shooting Gazette, Martin Puddifer visited the Eagle Hall & Ashfold Side Shoot. The snow and ice at Pateley Bridge were so treacherous that I cancelled the day. However as we had a Keepers Day at Ripley Castle on the same day which we were able to run, Martin and myself joined this team. The editorial on this day should appear sometime during the year.

On the other occasion in early October I invited Alex Brant to shoot with us at Eagle Hall & Ashfold Side when he produced the enclosed editorial for the Fieldsports Magazine.

It was one of those thick misty days with fine heavy rain which when you get one of these at Eagle Hall or on the Moors you certainly know about it. Although it was touch and go if we should cancel the day, we carried on and although wet through we all enjoyed ourselves. I hope you enjoy reading it, however the moral to this story is that maybe I should try to avoid inviting the Press, as there is every possibility it will rain, or be cancelled due to ice or snow!!

HARDCASTLE & HEATHFIELD MOORS

As most of you are aware we have experienced disappointing and varied returns in recent seasons from both Moors. George and I therefore decided to seek a second opinion from The Game and Wildlife Conservation Trust (formally The Game Conservancy Trust). Over a three day period in early July, Craig Jones one of their grouse consultants, carried out a count on both Moors together with other tests. His initial findings have proved to be quite revealing and will certainly help us plan our management of the Moors in the future.

The dry spring and early summer this year has been ideal for grouse and in theory it should have helped produce a shootable stock on both Moors

Hardcastle Moor

Craig's count showed we have a shootable stock of grouse with brood sizes averaging 7.5 young, which is excellent and providing there are no disasters up to and during the early season, means we will shoot all the days I have planned. He was very impressed with the overall condition of the heather and providing the move into a Higher Level Scheme does not damage the Moor or restrict our keeping we should continue to have a shootable stock in the future.

Heathfield Moor

Craig's count showed we have a reduced stock compared to Hardcastle with an average of 4 young per brood. However there should be sufficient to shoot one or two days. There are a number of reasons for the reduced number compared to Hardcastle which we will be addressing once a full assessment had been carried out.

Grouse Days

So the good news is that providing we do not experience any disasters we will be shooting all the scheduled grouse days this season. However as in the past should we be unable to shoot either Moor due to poor weather conditions or for any other reason. Depending on the conditions on the day, I reserve the option of shooting partridge in place of or as well as grouse. This is of course from September onwards, with the ratio being 5 partridge to one brace of grouse.

REARING FIELD – RIPLEY CASTLE

Pheasant

We produced 7,000 chicks through our incubator from our own eggs with the remainder of our chicks brought in as day olds. As well as rearing all our Ripley Castle poults, this year we have reared 6,000 8 week old poults for George at Eagle Hall & Ashfold Side.

Initial estimates show our losses from day old to 7/8 week old poults are around 6.5% but may well be lower once we have released all the poults and have more accurate figures. We also seem to have reared an increased number of Reeves pheasant poults which should keep everyone on their toes, at the same fine as last season of £50 per bird for our Charity Fund.

Partridge

Most are now released and estimates show a loss from day old to release at 10 weeks of only 4.5% which is an excellent return.

Duck

As in previous seasons we have bought these in as 7 week old growers. In line with my policy of reducing our stock of reared duck as our wild stock continues to breed well, our purchase of reared growers has been reduced by 25% compared to last season.



The total of all species released will be very similar to last season, however I feel the overall quality of all the poults has further improved compared to previous seasons, which is due mainly to the care and attention given to the birds by David and his team assisted this year by some excellent weather. I am very confident we will have more than enough good quality birds to shoot throughout the season.

EAGLE HALL & ASHFOLD SIDE

We have made a number of changes this season in the way we release the poults and the areas where they have been released.

As George and his team are hopefully on top of the foxes we are releasing our pheasant poults into pen sections rather than into purpose built release pens. This is a far more natural way of releasing poults and they should become accustomed to their surroundings sooner and in turn mature quicker than in a release pen. We are also releasing some partridge into new areas so we should see more partridge on our pheasant drives than we have done in the past.

Thanks to the efficient vermin control by George and his team together with the mild warm conditions, we are seeing quite a number of wild pheasant and partridge poults compared to previous seasons. There are also an increasing number of wild grey partridge broods being seen with the best two so far having 12 and 14 well grown poults.

As always George has a few surprises for us – I only hope they are good ones!

GOING - GREEN BY RECYCLING OUR USED SHOTGUN CARTRIDGES

How many times over the season do you look at your pile of spent cartridges at the end of a drive and think to yourselves, what a waste and could they be recycled! At last there is a UK company who are recycling used shotgun cartridges and other plastic waste products.

Agri-Cycle Ltd, Barff Farm, Caenby, Lincoln, LN6 2AG

Contact: Robert Moore on 01673 878215 e-mail info@agri-cycle.uk.com www.agri-cycle.uk.com

Agri-Cycle, which was established four years ago, have developed an agricultural waste plastic processing line at their site in Lincolnshire, one of only two that exist in the UK. They recycle most plastic waste products including used shotgun cartridges.

There is however a downside, that it does cost to go green. Agri-Cycle supply various sizes of bags and bins for storage of used shotgun cartridges at a small charge. We then need to deliver to a collection site near Malton.

However over the season I plan to accumulate a full load of used cartridges which they will collect from our yard. So would ask individual guns to bring your used cartridges to the Shoot Yard at Ripley, no matter where you have used them, where there will be bins for storage.

For those of you who run a shoot or individual guns who would be prepared to collect up used cartridges from the other shoots you attend, there is a small charge for bags and also bins if required.

For their enterprise to be viable Agri-Cycle need their raw material, i.e. plastic waste to arrive with them at no cost, they therefore need to charge to cover collection and transport costs:

- A bag with a capacity for 4,500 cartridges at £6.00 per bag, of which £2.75 is donate by Agri-Cycle to The Game and Wildlife Conservation Trust.
- A green bin manufactured from stockboard which will take a 4,500 capacity bag at £42.00 each. There is definitely no obligation to take a bin but it is useful to have one in any shoot yard.
- A bag with a capacity of 21,000 cartridges at £20 per bag.
- Black buckets made from recycled cartridges at £5.00 per bucket.

I propose purchasing a quantity of bags, bins and buckets from Agri-Cycle which will be available from Peter or David, I would ask you to return the bags to the shoot yard and we would store them for collection.

I do feel the cost involved is a small price to pay for a service our sport has needed for some time. I also understand that Agri-Cycle will be making a further donation to The Game and Wildlife Conservation Trust based on the number of cartridges they collect Nationwide over the season.

Agri-Cycle require all types of plastic waste products; feed bags, pesticide and spray containers, bottles, tree guards – anything plastic which can be recycled.

At Ripley Castle I only wish to handle used plastic shotgun cartridges, however if you wish to dispose of other plastic waste, please contact Agri-Cycle direct to make your own arrangements. I certainly do not plan for the Shoot Yard to become a plastic recycling depot!!

One final and very important piece of news is that our cartridge collector “Bob the Bucket” will be back with us at Ripley Castle this season and his new bucket is made from recycled shotgun cartridges!!

REMAINING SHOOT DAYS

Although this season we have experienced our best ever take up of days, you will see from the enclosed list that a good variety of days are still available many of which were not included on previous lists. So if you know of anyone who may wish to join us please let me know.

SHOOT FEES AND OUTSTANDING INVOICES

I would particularly like to thank those of you who have paid your August shoot fees early. I did not expect this but it is most welcome and much appreciated. I was partly correct in my forecast on the increase of VAT to 20%. The Chancellor has been kinder to us than I thought he would be by delaying this increase to January 2011. So we are safe for the majority of this season.

I also thank those of you who have paid your shoot fees on the due date as this has also helped my cash flow throughout the rearing season.

I have included copies of unpaid invoices for all those concerned and look forward to receiving the final part of your shoot fees when they fall due in August.

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## **FINAL CHECK OF YOUR KIT WELL BEFORE THE START OF THE SEASON**

A reminder to check your guns and equipment ready for the season. You may think your guns are fine until you are let down at the beginning of a shoot day. It is a small cost to have them checked over but as everyone may be doing the same I suggest you do not delay.