



LEFT TO RIGHT PAUL & MARK GRANT



TIM MILLER, SKEGNESS



JAMES POCKLINGTON, BOSTON



LEFT TO RIGHT STEFF MUNKS AND PAUL GRANT



MIKE HOPPE, WILTSHIRE



MARTIN REEVE, SKEGNESS



Pheasants & 5-Irons

It could be argued that the appreciation of shooting as a sport depends almost entirely on whether you are at the right or wrong end of the gun, and I suspect that were rabbits able to wield a finely crafted pair of Holland & Holland there would be a significant decrease in the export of tweed from the Outer Hebrides. This, however, is pure fantasy; with the economy as it is I doubt our cotton-tailed friends could afford even a slingshot.

Words and Photographs: Wil Hawkes

Lincolnshire Life and PhotoShooting ran a competition last year with the prize, of having a shoot photographed, going to Mark Grant. Strictly speaking it was his cousin who won but who are we to judge the generosity of others? A fantastic day was had by all with Mother Nature providing a beautiful day and plenty of vertically launched Fen birds. Less than a month later I was back at Boston West Golf Club to photograph the shoot of Mark's brother, Paul.

A golf course may be a fantastic place to lamp rabbits

at night, or stalk a couple of foxes, but why would a driven game shoot commence at one? All soon became clear.



MAN'S BEST FRIEND

The Grant estate is in its third generation, starting around seventy-five years ago with Mark and Paul's grandfather, Archie. As one of sixteen children, Archie had to make his own way, and despite countless hours spent on a moped seeking work it was serendipity that started the family off on the path that leads to the present day.

On coming home to find his father-in-law crying over an unpaid debt, and ever the dutiful son-in-law, a trip to



PAUL GRANT'S SHOOTING PARTY



MARK GRANT'S SHOOTING PARTY

Bradford had the potatoes paid for and the family farm placed in his capable hands.

In a new century the extended Grant family are farming almost three thousand acres, and have branched out into the leisure industry. Recent farming difficulties have seen many farms diversify simply to stay afloat, but it was in the late eighties when Paul and

Mark's father - farming about 1000 acres - had a crisis. Three children, two at agricultural college, couldn't easily make a living from the family farm.

Three feasibility studies were done including a farm shop and horse livery, but it was a driving range that really leapt out as it filled a gap in the market. In 1993 a driving range was set up with a small Pro Shop,

1996 saw a nine hole course and a small club house, and 2000 saw the course grow to eighteen holes and the club house grow considerably in size.

A combination of foresight, opportunity, and the available land saw the Grants eschew the risks of staying purely agricultural by embracing our culture's increasing spend on leisure activities. The golf course wasn't the end of it either,

with 2006 seeing the erection of a twenty-four bed hotel on the grounds of the course.

Old farming dogs can, clearly, learn new tricks.

The Grant brothers have a 2000 acre wild bird shoot, and while averaging 150 bird bags they only deplete around 10% of bird stocks by only shooting twice per season. This kind of social and sustainable game shooting is about more than the number of brace, it revels in the reunion of friends and ironically it also serves to increase bird populations.

As part of the Higher Level Stewardship scheme, the cover on the Grant estate is a fifty/fifty split of traditional maize with a mix of millet, linseed, sunflowers, triticale, and dwarf sorghum. Whilst



providing excellent cover for the wild Fen pheasants and partridge, it acts as food for songbirds. Though it would be naive to suggest that this environmentally conscious style of game shooting is altruistic, it's these gestures that may well keep driven game shooting from going the way of fox hunting.

There's no game left hanging by the back door, it will be months until your gun moves from the cabinet to a slip, and the dogs are far too full of energy. Sadly I can't move time forward, but hopefully these photographs from the Grant family shoots will both remind you of your own days in the field, and whet your appetite for seasons to come.



Are you a gamekeeper with a story to tell, or an industry that relies on shooting to survive? Maybe you're putting on an event and you want to tell the county... contact us on gunroom@lincolnshirelife.co.uk.

Two things. Shoot safely, and have fun. Do both and I will see you next time.

UK Professional Hunter's Tour

The tour aims to bring experienced professional hunters and outfitters from different regions of Southern Africa over to the UK. Enthusiasts and trophy hunters can find out more about hunting in such a different climate, whilst also trying traditional safari cuisine. There is also the opportunity to win some fabulous prizes in the free-to-enter prize draws, including a Weatherby rifle and fine hunting knives to name but a few.

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