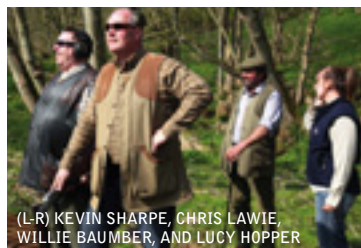




WILL HALES (GREEN JERSEY) GIVES THE ALL IMPORTANT SAFETY BRIEFING



(L-R) KEVIN SHARPE, CHRIS LAWIE, WILLIE BAUMBER, AND LUCY HOPPER



(L-R) JAMES MOODY AND PAUL SMITH



(L-R) ROB JONES WATCHES 'BORTHWICK' PICKERING DUST ANOTHER FAST BIRD



ERIC VAUGHAN



(L-R) DAVID HEWISON & 'BORTHWICK' PICKERING OFFER PAUL JONES A HELPING HAND

Simulated game, enjoyment proper

The English language is unlikely to be reprimanded for being inflexible, but it is precisely this quality that so often leads to misunderstandings. The literal meaning of a phrase is often heavily reliant on context or just past experience, and while you may feel that I am heading off on a tangent never again to set foot on the road of reason I beg you grant me a little latitude.

Words: Wil Hawkes

Of all the people I spoke to of simulated game shooting, at least half thought it involved a video screen and a shotgun strapped to a laser pointer. Thankfully though the result of this kind of confusion is easily rectifiable... not like the water polo player who had an unfortunate accident with a horse. Once again though I digress.

I was invited to Raithby Grange by Will Hales, who owns a simulated game shooting company called Good Game. Before we go any further I should probably make sure we have all forgotten about the video screen. Simulated game shooting is best described as "giving the pheasants the day off," as you are shooting out of the game season and using clays launched in flushes from



ENTIRE SHOOTING PARTY, POSING FOLLOWING THE POST-LUNCH DRIVE

oscillating traps situated in the cover used in winter to give as unpredictable a display of birds as possible.

Very pleasingly our day started with the very gradual arrival of the shooters while Will's partner in crime, Martin Reeve, cooked up a storm on the grill. Simply thinking "I'd love a cuppa" seemed to have one placed firmly but lovingly into your subconsciously waiting grip. From the outset it was clear that hospitality had been perfected. By about 10.30 we had all eaten as many breakfast buns as was physically possible and we waddled gracelessly into a circle for the all-important safety talk.

Traditionally on a shoot the captain or host will remind you of safe gun practice, which winged prey is fair game, and whether bunnies and hares can be shot "when safe"; Will didn't need to tell us about the game, just the safety. He also took great pride in his closing statement: "There's no etiquette. Even if it's three guns across... if you can shoot it, it's yours!"

The day was made up of six distinct "drives", but in each location there was more than one drive. The fifteen guns were split into teams of three, and on each drive proper only one of the team shot. This was useful because due to the high number of clays being launched you actually needed a reloader; nobody was double-gunning but I could tell that many of them wished they'd brought their matched pair. To give you some idea of the number of clays being presented, Will had very little change out of the 4000 clays loaded up at the start of the day.

Lunch was set up on a trestle table in the middle of a field, where mounds of guilty pleasure food were eagerly devoured by hungry sportsmen. And what better to wash down pork pie and chocolate than an ice cold beer from a cool box that could comfortably accommodate a family of four with space for luggage. The theme of the day seemed to be that there was no shortage of anything, be that laughter, beer, or challenging little black targets.

Bright sunny days are terrible for game shooting but clays don't mind flying into the sun and most of us achieved a quite impressive lobster impression, with the follicly challenged being wise not to eschew the Good Game hats being distributed by our host. Sun screen was generously offered but maybe it was bravado that had us all choose a week of watching our epidermis fall off.



DINING IN STYLE

The competitive flush at the end of the day was a highlight, and prepared us all for a delicious three course meal in an incredibly grand dining room. I was tempted to call it a banquet hall but there was no quaffing of mead, no spit-roasted pig, and fortunately no singing.

You could easily be sceptical of simulated game shooting, and I am sure that without the passion and experience of a seasoned shooter at the helm it could easily just be a clay shoot in the middle of a field. Simulated game shooting can give you practice for the season, offer a unique bachelor or hen party, entertainment for business associates, or just give you the chance to go shooting without being damp and frozen to the bone.

To give you an idea of how affordable it is, the whole day with all food, drink, clays and cartridges was just £150 per person, and by removing the extras you can end up paying as little as £55 per person.

Also, if you organise 12 or more guns then the organiser can shoot for free. Now how is that for an incentive?



Good Game can be contacted on the following numbers:
Will Hales, 07768 165365
Martin Reeve, 07767 690930

Good Game will also be running the clay shoot at the Revesby Show on the 2nd of August.

If you have something to tell the Gunroom, let us know by email: gunroom@lincolnshirelife.co.uk

Hillbilly's Country Store
Of Lincoln

88a Bailgate, Lincoln LN1 3AR
01522 589070

Buy Online: www.hillbilyscountrystore.co.uk

Barbour AIGLE HUNTER

MUSTO PUFFA Joules