

COUNTRY QUERIES

Send queries to Rosie Macdonald, Country Queries Editor, The Field, Blue Fin Building, 110 Southwark Street, London SE1 0SU
Email country-queries@hectareshouse.co.uk
For more go to www.thefield.co.uk

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WHOSE SHOOTING RIGHTS?

Q We are relative newcomers to the countryside and don't necessarily know all the rural ways. Our neighbour has a small piece of land. At the end of a day's shooting on a local shoot, he appears from his house and walks his dog round his field and shoots any pheasants that have escaped the main shoot – a single drive, as such. While we don't disapprove, we wonder whether it is legal.

PC, by email

A Occasionally houses that used to belong to a large estate, but were sold off with land, had their shooting rights withheld, but provided the neighbour has the right to shoot on his land then, yes, this is legal. The British Association of Shooting and Conservation explains that pheasants are wild birds and once released they no longer belong to anyone. Therefore, as long as it is not a Sunday or dark, your neighbour has the right to shoot the pheasants if they are on his land. If a shot bird falls on to your land, technically it is yours, and the neighbour has to have your permission to pick it from your premises, otherwise in the eyes of the law he is trespassing.



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READER'S TOP TIP

A bottle of Greenall's gin will be sent to the provider of the reader's top tip each month

If gumboots are wet and smelly, a quick solution is to cut a boot shape in a good-quality carrier bag, tape the open seam, apart from the top and toe and put it in the boot. Taking care not to get it all too hot, blow a hair-drier down the boot for a few minutes. Don't let it melt the bag. If you have more time, warm newspaper is a very good start to the process.

John Clements
by email



FRENCH 75

This drink was concocted by a First World War flying ace who liked champagne but wanted something with an extra kick. It can be made

with cognac in place of the gin.

- 1 measure Greenall's gin
- Juice of half a lemon
- 1tsp caster sugar
- Champagne

Put the gin (or cognac), lemon juice and sugar into a champagne glass or, ideally, a champagne saucer. Stir well until the sugar has dissolved and then top up with champagne.



PIGEON PATE

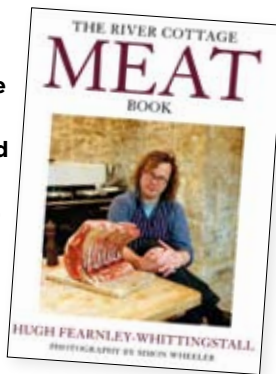
Q We seem to have an excess of pigeon and I have tried many different recipes. I would like to make a pigeon paté but cannot find a recipe. Can you help?

EWC

Deddington, Oxon

A This is from *The River Cottage Meat Book* by Hugh Fearnley-Whittingstall (Hodder & Stoughton, £30).

Heat 25g butter and one tbsp of olive oil in a frying pan, add a chopped onion and a large clove of chopped garlic. Fry until soft. Remove from the pan and add another 25g butter and tbsp of olive oil. Turn up the heat and quickly fry the meat of six pigeon, plus two or three pigeon or chicken livers if you have them, until browned. Remove from the pan and place in a food processor. Quickly deglaze the frying pan with a small glass of port and tip this into the food processor along with an egg, 100g sausage meat, one tsp redcurrant jelly, a sprig of thyme and a pinch of ground mace, and season with salt and pepper. Process until fine but with some texture. Line a dish with stretched streaky bacon, rind removed, leaving enough hanging over the sides to cover the paté. Place the mixture in the dish and fold over the loose bacon. Cover with a double layer of greaseproof paper secured with string. Cook in a bain marie at 180°C for about 1½ hours. The paté is ready when it starts to shrink away from the edge of the dish. Allow to cool. The flavour will improve if it's left in the fridge for a few days.



SMELLS LIKE GUN OIL

Q For as long as I can remember, one of the pleasures of shooting has been the smell of gun oil, in particular Youngs 303. Recently I the product lacked the familiar odour and was told that Youngs had to remove one of the ingredients. Do you know what this ingredient is and where I can source gun oil that smells like gun oil?

GBP, Framlingham, Suffolk

A I have spoken to John Rothery in Hampshire, the manufacturer and supplier of Youngs 303. The company is

adamant that the recipe for this gun oil has remained the same for many years. Youngs 303 contains mineral oil, kerosene, emulsifiers and corrosion preventatives, ingredients that have evoked "the smell of shooting for over a hundred years". Another well-known gun oil is Napier, which has a distinctive smell, and is recommended by many gun shops.



COPPER SHINE

Q I have a circular copper dish approximately 1ft deep and 1½ft wide in which I grow plants. It sits in the garden and is now completely black. I would like to get it cleaned so the original copper colour shows through, and then cover it in some form of varnish to prevent it re-tarnishing. Where might I get this work done?

SS, Fareham, Hants

A Copper that has turned black from the weather may need to be polished by machine to bring back its original hue. Brass Master specialises in the repair, cleaning and production of items in brass, copper and bronze. The firm would polish this item by hand on a three-phase polishing lathe,

which would return its original mirror finish. Firstly, a string mop and special soap would cut through the black grime; followed by the application of a stitch mop and polishing soap that would help its shine return; and ending with a soft mop and rouge polishing soap for the original mirror finish. To help keep this finish the dish could be sprayed with a clear lacquer but the lacquer cannot be guaranteed for items kept outside; it would last very much longer indoors. The process would take an hour and cost approximately £70. Call Brass Master on 07713526495 or visit www.brassmaster.co.uk.

Before and after – an example of the work that can be done by the Brass Master to restore copper items



WARM HANDS

Q I suffer from poor circulation and shooting in cold weather is a real problem. I have tried leather and neoprene gloves to no avail. I do not want to give up this winter sport but am getting desperate. Can you help?

JW, North Cave, Yorks

A This is a problem many guns experience and I have been given the following suggestions. Firstly, it is important to keep the pulse point warm on your wrist and Farlows of Pall Mall recommends wrist warmers (above),



which are leather and lined with fleece; they cost £35. Farlows also suggests windproof gloves (right) which, although looser than leather, still allow for a good feel of the gun; they cost £44. Farlows also sells Simms half-finger gloves made of breathable wind-stopper fleece that reduces heat loss from exposure to the wind. They also resist water absorption, and cost £30.



Both styles of glove can be worn with a pair of silk and Lycra gloves underneath. These gloves, which cost £12, are supplied by skiing expert Snow and Rock. Because they're slim-fitting they allow a good "feel" of the gun. Farlows also suggests hand-warmers that sit in the palm of your hand. Some guns have found these very helpful without being obstructive. Call Snow and Rock on 0845 100 000 or visit www.snowandrock.com. Call Farlows on 020 7484 1000 or visit www.farlows.co.uk.

MY Red-letter DAY

Mike Swan

IT happened in late January 1979. Several inches of snow had been lying for over a week in south-west Wales, and the frosty nights had caused it to crust over, so everywhere was scrunchy underfoot. My great mate Eric (the terrible) Roderick had invited me to come and stay a couple of nights and try to shoot a woodcock.

In those days we had no dog, and it was hard work hunting through the snowy woods and thickets. Whether the birds had cleared off to the coast or we were just no good at finding them, I don't know, but we saw only one, and Eric pulled off the shot. His success made me green with envy, for I had never even had the chance to raise my gun at the elusive woodcock.

A little later Eric spotted a fox trail heading into a big thicket. More by luck than judgment, I was in the right place when Charlie made his exit and I bowled him easily. Eric was cock-a-hoop, but that really only rubbed salt into my wounds. For him, the pelt was worth more than a week's unemployment benefit. For me, it was just another pest-control job, and I had done plenty of that. Oh to swap that success at a fox with his at a woodcock.

Still an even bigger ambition might just be realised: a first goose. The local whitefronts had been fighting at dusk over the fields behind Eric's house. For a south-country wildfowler this was hugely exciting; aside from the protected Brent, there were no geese in my home area.

As it grew dark we skulked behind a hedge waiting for the flight. Hopes were not high, for there was only a gentle northerly breeze and not a cloud in the sky. Even if they showed, they would be way too high. The appointed time came and went, and not a sign. Half an hour later I heard them: that wonderful high-pitched yelping of whitefronts. I strained and strained for a glimpse, and when they called again I realised they were behind me. There was nothing for it but to turn and crouch in the hedge bottom, hoping not to be seen. The calls got louder, and seemed high overhead, but still no view. At last I saw them, still far off and set to pass way to my left.

I was about to run in an effort to intercept, when I realised they were side-slipping towards me. I concluded that they were far too high, but then, as the far-end bird passed over me, I decided that it was on, flung the gun up and fired the choke barrel. To start with nothing seemed to happen, but then I realised that the bird was "getting bigger", and a second later a young whitefront scrunched, very dead, into the snow at my feet. I still believe that it was the most delicious goose I have ever eaten.