



# *THE FIELD'S* TOP SHOTS

Via electronic bleepings, carrier pigeon and small boys bearing messages in forked sticks, we have gathered in nominations for *The Field's* Top Shots list 2014. This year's selection was especially taxing, a Jeroboam job, but here they are in all their glory, the Titans of tweed. We've managed to extract, with the diligence of a private-practice dentist, their pearly perceptions on the kit and techniques that will help to make us all better >

### WILL ASHBY

Considered by one expert witness to be “a brilliant and stylish shot and a proper gentleman, a real treat to watch after seeing so many muppets make a hash of high pheasants day after day”.

### PHIL BURTT

Belvoir Castle’s shoot captain “loves being on the end of the line where he can trim out a few”. Uses a pair of William Evans 30in-barrelled side-by-sides, full choke and 30g of No 6.



Phil Burtt

### DUKE OF CAMBRIDGE

Heavy is the head that will wear the crown. But when not on official duties and taking his turn administering the Cow & Gate to young George, Prince William still manages to make the cut as a first-class shot, both at Sandringham and in Spain.

### MICHAEL CANNON

The owner of Wemmergill and Stags Fell continues to attack the shooting season with the keenness of a cocker. A slight contretemps with a tiger (of the rug variety) created a lull last season but he’s now recovered and planning his usual 80-plus days campaign.

### SALLY CANNON

Half of one of the keenest shooting couples in the world, always shoots at least her share of the bag. Cannon has the charming ability to notice, and comment, on others’ flashes of form, while concentrating on the job in hand.

### ANDY CASTLE

Built like a grizzly but with a pleasing disposition, Castle makes shooting look like a picnic with his 32in-barrelled Kemen Titanium over-and-under. Came unstuck at a Norfolk clay-shoot last summer, when his West London Shooting Club team was seen off by the local keepers.

### SIR EDWARD DASHWOOD

Continues to amaze with his commitment to the sport, be it Turkish wild boar or Western Isles woodcock. Last season, shot 16 woodcock on the trot in Pembrokeshire with 16 cartridges. After shooting side-by-sides for 30 years, he has “moved to the dark side” with an EJ Churchill Premiere 32in-barrelled 12-bore over-and-under, with full chokes, for high pheasants. Uses EJ Churchill Hellfire copper-plated 30g No 6s. Top tip? “Move your feet and shoot where it’s going, not where it’s been.”



Sir Edward Dashwood

CHARLES SAMBURY-PLICE

### LOUISE BALTESZ

Daughter of the formidable Sir Joe Nickerson and sister to Rosie Whitaker (featured later), she shot outstandingly on October grouse at Wemmergill last season when the wind was up and there wasn’t an easy bird on the moor. Uses a pair of 20-bore, 28in-barrelled Browning B2 over-and-unders, fed with 28g of Sipe No 6s.



### GEORGE DIGWEED, MBE

Our greatest all-round shot, Digweed has won 23 world shooting titles. Uses a 32in-barrelled Perazzi MX2000 over-and-under 12, choked full/full, and Gamebore Pigeon Extreme 34g No 5s. Most difficult shot? “A late October grouse, downwind and below your feet, shot behind.” Top tip? “Keep still until a driven bird commits to a line upon which you can pretty much do what you want and it won’t change course.”

### DAVID DILLON

The former captain of the All Ireland team is reputed to be the finest wild-bird shot on the island, with “the ability to shoot right-and-lefts at crows at over 70yd, with each bird falling stone dead, every time”.

### RICHARD FAULDS, MBE

An Olympic gold medallist in 2000, Faulds remains in top form on game and clays (he was recently prohibited from entering a high-value competition). Now using a Guerini 32in-barrelled RF1 12-bore, choked full/full, with Express Supreme Game 32g No 5s and 36g No 4s. Most difficult shot? “The bird you challenge yourself to kill – but think you might not!” Top tip? “Make the effort to do things to the best of your ability. In short, ensure your gun is correctly fitted, perfect your technique and practise. Don’t spend £1,500 on a day’s shooting, get to lunch and wish you’d spent a couple of hundred quid busting a few clays during the summer.”

### ROB FENWICK

The managing director of the EJ Churchill Shooting Ground continues to make the Duracell bunny look sloth-like. Yet he remains a courteous countryman at all times, sometimes sleeving his gun before the drive’s over to leave “his” birds for neighbours. Now uses an EJ Churchill Crown over-and-under 12-bore, with 30in barrels both choked 3/4. Most difficult shot? “A curling, really high pheasant in the wind.” Top tip? “Don’t worry about missing or wind yourself up – just concentrate on the next bird. The great shots are not scared of missing – and they certainly don’t remember when they do.”



Rob Fenwick



Fie Foghsgaard



Simon Ford

### FIE FOGHSGAARD

The family estate, Spott, in Dunbar, has allowed her to hone her skill and she now shoots competitively worldwide when not running her bespoke sporting agency, Fie’s Club. Foghsgaard uses her family guns, a pair of multi-choke side-by-side 12s,

inherited from her father, fuelled with RC Sipes, 30g No 6s. Most difficult shot? “The first on a driven day.” Top tip? “Write your thank-you letter immediately.”

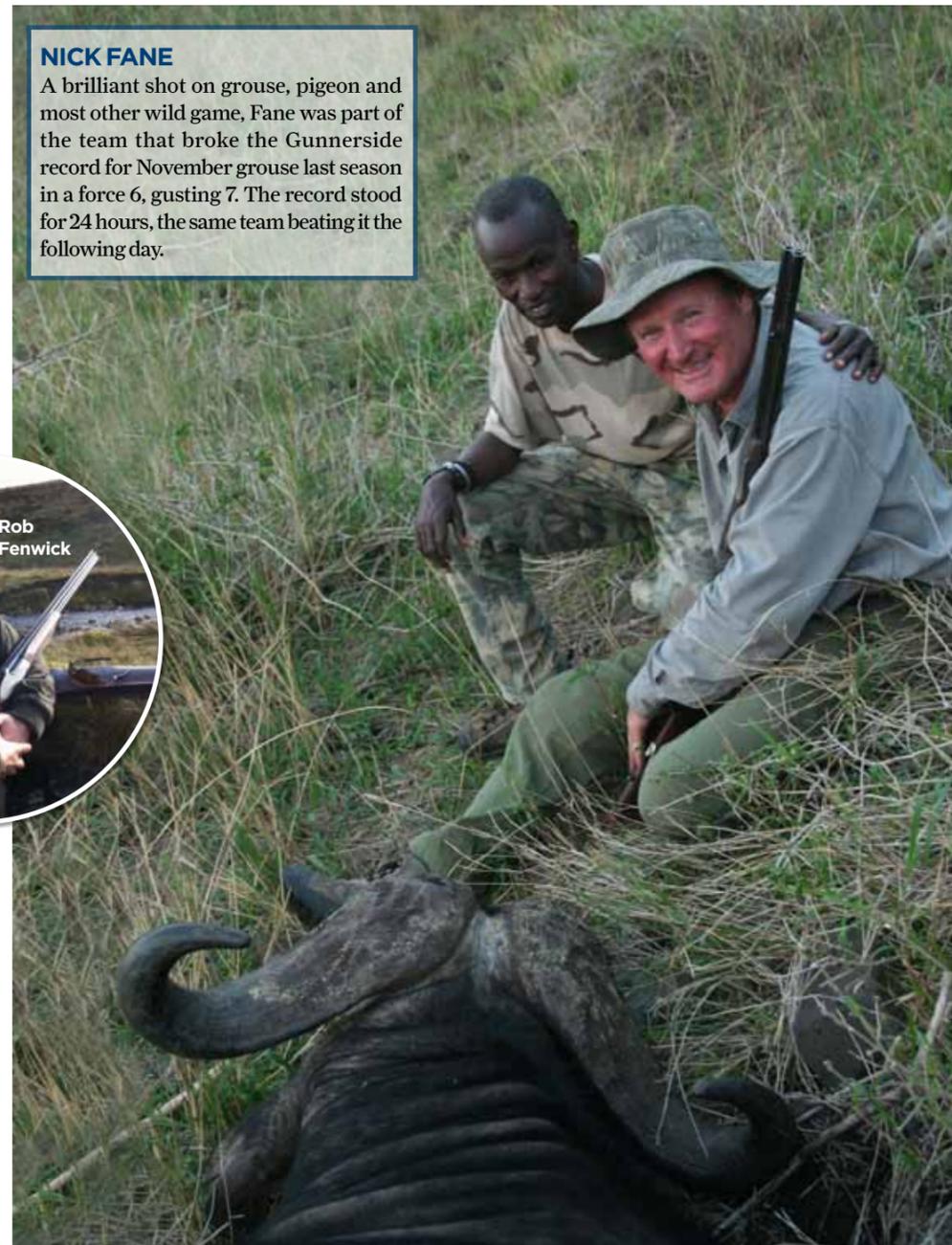
### SIMON FORD

“He’s so bloody good!” says one admirer of this high-bird specialist, who uses a 32in-barrelled Perrazzi MX8 12-bore, choked full and full and FOB cartridges – 30g No 6s for partridges and grouse, 34g No 5s for pheasants. Most difficult shot? “A tall, single, slow-gliding pheasant with a slight curl. It’s not an instinctive shot and has to be measured accurately.” Top tip? “Move your feet, look long and hard at the line of the bird and remember each shot is different.”

CHARLES SAMBURY-PLICE

### NICK FANE

A brilliant shot on grouse, pigeon and most other wild game, Fane was part of the team that broke the Gunnerside record for November grouse last season in a force 6, gusting 7. The record stood for 24 hours, the same team beating it the following day.



### FRANCIS FRANCO

Brought up by his right-wing relative, Franco is rated by a harsh critic as “one of the quickest shots I have ever come across – and he rarely misses”. Passionate about his sport, he travels with his own loader, David, who loads the Spanish way (sitting in front), even in a grouse butt. Franco usually takes two or three guns, using different guns for different birds, and is seen changing chokes after each drive. “He is great fun, unless you are shooting next to him.” Only likes shooting wild game, such as grouse, Spanish partridges (in Jerez in the south where they are still wild), wild duck and woodcock.



Will Garfit

### COLIN FRENCH

His nominator writes, “Of the thousand or so people we see in the field over the season he is the standout shot. He’s extremely modest, very quiet off the peg but absolutely deadly. Everything seems to crumple at any height, extraordinary!”

### WILL GARFIT

Probably the only hardcore pigeon-shot who’s a member of the Royal British Society of Artists. Loaders remark how he drops birds in a neat circle in front of the butt, as though they’d come straight in to decoys.



Charlie Gilder

### CHARLIE GILDER

Shoots clays for Gloucestershire and has a Range Rover that rivals the Connaught’s cocktail bar. Not bad for a 22-year-old who spends 40-plus days a season in the field, beating as well as shooting. Uses a 28-bore with 28g cartridges, proving it’s not the weight of metal that counts but where you put it.

### JOHNNY GOODHART

Lethal on all fur and feather, he is one of the great all-rounders. On grouse he shoots “a pair of 12-bore, 30in-barrelled Arrietas choked 1/2 and 1/2. On Westcountry pheasants, a pair of AYAs with 3/4 and 3/4 choke. For Spanish partridges, a pair of 12-bore 30in Grullas, choked 1/2 and 1/4 choke.” Mainly uses Rio Classic Game 30g No 6s and for the Westcountry Rio Super Game 32g No 5s.

### CHERYL HALL

She’s been clay-shooting for only 10 years but has tucked 24 world sporting championship titles under her belt. Uses a Beretta DT11 with Hull cartridges and has turned her talents to game-shooting. Hall works in the lift industry but her shooting motto is taken from Yazz and the Plastic Population: the only way is up.

### DR JAMES HAY

A self-made businessman, Hay has a string of racehorses and a passion for shooting; he is said to have a high regard for his gamekeepers. Hay owns Ray Ward, the Knightsbridge gunshop, and his shooting skills are said to have been honed by John Ward. That, and a busy shooting diary, has propelled him to the

front rank. He shoots a pair of Purdey over-and-under 12s, designed by Ward and fed with Express 32g No 5s, specially loaded for his guns. Most difficult shot? “The next one. Especially when straight overhead as my back is not supple after two disc ops. I try and do a ‘Digweed’ and shoot them as crossers.” Top tip? “It’s fundamental to move your feet.”

### JOHN HEAGREN

The head instructor at the Bisley Shooting Ground was once a gamekeeper, and it shows. While top claybusters struggled with “birds” off the 120ft tower at the recent Stratstone Super Seven (with a luxury car as first prize), Heagren shot ‘em like a tweedy game-shooter and drove home in a Morgan Aero Supersport.

### RICHARD HEATHCOTE

An admirer says, “Watching him shoot at Clovelly in a gale this year was truly a pleasure. He stood out even among an experienced team of guns as an exceptional shot, killing everything stylishly in front (with his 20-bore) and rarely requiring a second barrel.”

### JEREMY HERRMANN

The ace hedge-fund manager and owner of Muggleswick and East Allenheads grouse moors applies his analytical mind to both fishing and shooting. As a result, his knowledge of quarry and equipment forms a significant part of his formidable approach to sport.

### JONATHAN KENNEDY

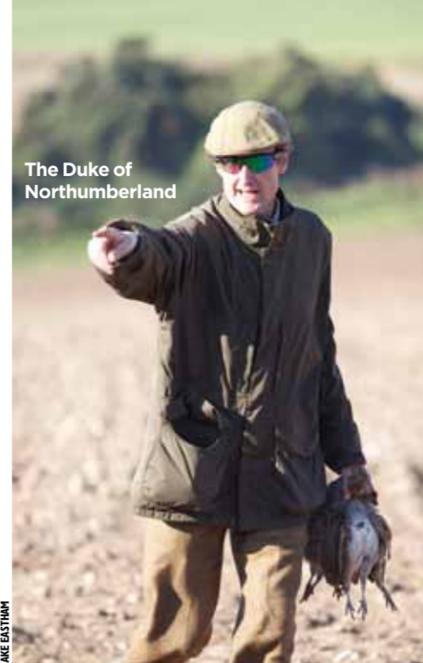
A supreme performer on all game but especially grouse, on which his knowledge is encyclopaedic. The moors can bring out in some an enthusiasm that shades into aggression and selfishness but Kennedy is unfailingly modest, charming and generous. Top tip? “Always select the easiest grouse.”

### JAMIE LEE

You might need to pack a good book if you’re shooting with Lee and find yourself in the back row. “I was sweeping behind him last season,” comes one report, “and in the end I just put down my gun and watched a virtuoso performance. Absolutely nothing got through.”



Jamie Lee



The Duke of Northumberland

### CHRIS MAYBURY

Rated by one who sees thousands of high birds shot per year as “the Number One shot last season, expert on high pheasants over the Welsh mountains, Westcountry partridges and grouse in Northumberland”. Uses a custom-grade 12 made by Galazan, a titanium gun with 32in barrels, choked 3/4 and full and weighing just 5lb.

### LORD JAMES PERCY

Like his elder brother, still at the top of his game. If there is a common denominator among the best performers it’s their addiction to pigeon-shooting. Percy considers this bird “the prince of flight”. Top tip? “To be asked shooting is an enormous privilege and one should therefore have the decency to be in good enough shape to do justice to the sport your generous host is providing. It’s one thing being a good shot but it’s not much good if you can’t walk for more than a few yards without calling for the magic sponge.”

### BOB MILLER

The owner of Gunnerside leaves younger generations in awe of his sporting prowess. A formidable sportsman in the field and on the seas (in 2003 his yacht, the *Mari-Cha IV*, became the first monohull to cross the Atlantic in under seven days), Miller was part of the team that broke another record last season – for November grouse on Gunnerside.

### JOHN NICHOLLS

“An outstanding shot, loves high birds and can stand shoulder to shoulder with the best,” is one admirer’s verdict. “I have watched him out-shoot some of the ‘usuals’ on particularly tricky days. Enthusiastic and runs his Barrow Farm shoot with total calmness.”

### DUKE OF NORTHUMBERLAND

Down to earth and friendly, the Duke remains a top grouse-shot and, more to the point, still really loves the whole thing. He was in the line with George Digweed on a blustery November grouse day last season. The honours were even. ➤



### MARK GILCHRIST

If you want to pick up a few shooting tips and grab something for supper, look out for Gilchrist’s Game for Everything stand at game fairs throughout the country. While you’re parting with the readies for one of his game pies, remember that most of the filling’s been shot by him – a real incentive to shoot straight.

JAMES MARCHINGTON

JANE EASTHAM



## PAUL PORTZ

“Portzy”, an American blessed with a good sense of humour, continues to be one of the most reliable shots on all winged quarry. He made a staggering bag of pied menaces when he was drafted in to deal with a plague of magpies last year. House guests asked to “fetch something from the freezer” should not be surprised to find it filled with vermin of all varieties, kept in cold storage to be resurrected as decoys on his next unusual outing.

## SALLY PRENDERGAST

The Wiltshire farmer’s wife continues to shine, her form showing on a most challenging day at one of the local shoots renowned for high birds. While the air turned purple with male misses, Prendergast kept her cool and dropped seven partridges on the trot.

## ROB ROE

Known as DynoRob, Roe is in the drain business.

He is said to be “young, handsome and far too gifted with his 28-bore on grouse, high partridges and pheasants”.

CHARLES SAINTUR-PLAICE



Jack Smallman

## SIMON ROOD

Showed early form at Cirencester, when he won the national university shooting championships thrice, Rood now works at Ray Ward. At 6ft 5in, he manages consistently “to shoot pheasants on the edge of the earth’s atmosphere”. Close mates with Peter Wilson, with whom he does serious *après* shoot.

## JACK SMALLMAN

Son of a Sussex keeper and based in Sussex, Smallman is rated as a “quick, agile and wonderfully elegant game-shot” as well as being handy with a rifle. Part of the new wave of cooks championing and providing game, he started and runs his own business, South Downs Venison & Game.

## ANASTASIA SPARROW

One of the new generation of lady shots who take their shooting very seriously, Sparrow trains four days a week and competes on the



Anastasia Sparrow

fifth. Recently competed at the Nad Al Sheba Shooting Championship in Dubai. Uses 12-bore, 32in-barrelled Perazzi MX2000S with Eley/EJ Churchill Hellfire cartridges. Top tip? “Largely, I

owe my game-shooting success to my coach of six years, John Heagren. His best advice (I say it in my mind every time I pull the trigger) is, ‘Just trust yourself.’”

## LOUISE STIMSON

On top form last year, when she demolished the opposition at The Prince’s Trust clay-pigeon shoot at Sandringham with her teammates. Spent the next day showing how prettily she can shoot the real things over standing wheat.

## REUBEN STRAKER

Never far from a grouse moor, Straker had a brilliant season at Raby. “There’s still no one who shoots there who’ll take the gold medal from him,” said one witness. “He seldom has a bad drive, let alone a bad day. Whether the grouse come high or low, fast or slow, there’s still a heap of them around his butt.” ➤

## AJ RHODES

The City banker’s keenness is best illustrated by his cartridge consumption in Argentina: 9,500 in a day. Ouch! Not surprisingly, according to one fan, “Pigeon nonchalantly passing over at great height at the beginning of a drive are routinely picked off at a huge distance – though always after the first gamebird has been shot, of course.”



DOUBLE BARRELLED PICTURE COMPANY



Prince Harry of Wales

### PHILIP THORROLD

The Norfolk boy first won the British Open Sporting Championship in 1985 – then again in 2010. Possessing formidable natural talent, he has just developed his own shooting system, The Answer, to solve the problem of finding the right line and lead when game-shooting. Mostly uses a Beretta 682 with 29in barrels choked 1/2/1/2 for clays, game, pigeon up to 60yd, with 32g No 5 Victory Europa cartridges for pheasants and pigeon.

### PRINCE HARRY OF WALES

Prince Harry brings to his shooting the single-minded determination that took him to the South Pole with *Walking with the Wounded*. Last season wasn't a good one for the wild partridges for which Sandringham is renowned but he shone on the grouse, taking part in one late-season day when the bag was stellar. He still sneaks out for the odd fowling trip with his brother.

CHARLES SANDS/SHIRLEY PLACE



Peter Wilson

### JOHN WARD

Deadly on high pheasants, grouse and duck, he uses a pair of Watson Brothers high-pheasant over-and-unders with 32in barrels bored full and full, fed with 32g of No 5s, "for everything except duck and then I use the Wardy steel

32g No 4s made by Express". Most difficult shot? "The next one." Top tip? "That given by George Digweed: 'Have you tried playing tennis?' Seriously, when you get to your stand, pick your spot where you want to kill your birds and make sure you have a good feet position. Being able to move your feet easily is vital when game-shooting."

### ROSIE WHITAKER

Immersed in the Pony Club, Whitaker is now plaiting and poo-picking with the best of them.



Michael Yardley

But when she picks up her 20-bores she shows herself to be a true daughter of shooting legend Sir Joe Nickerson and despatches game with an efficiency that would have won the old man's heart. Especially impressive on a Sussex shoot's high drives last season, when her husband was so dazzled by the steady deluge of birds he had to be remonstrated with for not loading quickly enough.

### PETER WILSON

The Olympic gold medallist was in cracking form on Dorset's high birds last season, the tally being recorded in his new egamebook, an app for the electronically adept. Fond of heavy artillery when required, which he uses to devastating effect.

CHARLES SANDS/SHIRLEY PLACE

### MICHAEL YARDLEY

Field gun reviewer Yardley, seldom seen without trademark trilby and gilet, brings his technical gun expertise into practical play on the shooting field, especially in Serbia on the doves and quail.

### JEREMY YOUNG

Young's prowess was best displayed on a late-season Spanish day. A gentle Euro-rivalry had bubbled up, with the British considered second division by their Continental cousins. The next day's bag, counted individually, told a different story and had it been a game of footie, Young would have been rated the top striker. ■

### NICK ZOLL

A brilliant fisherman and keen 'fowler, Zoll is committed to restoring grey partridges to a patch of Norfolk. Shoots with a variety of side-by-sides in 12 and 20, "but my favourite all-rounder is a First World War 12-bore Holland & Holland Royal, 29in barrels, choked 1/2 and 3/4, with Lyalvale Express Supreme Game 28g No 6s on most game days but 30g or 32g No 5s for extreme stuff". Hardest shot? "Any, if hung over! But specifically pigeon in a strong wind that won't fully commit to decoys and bank off the outer edge of the pattern." Top tip? "That given to me when a boy: 'If you want to hit it, you've got to want to kill it.'"

