

## JASON ABBOT

Not only can he shoot a bit (he won the British Open Side-by-Side Championship three times) but he's also renowned for his encyclopaedic knowledge of English guns and how to "keep them on the road".

## JIM ALBONE

Verdict from a fellow Top Shot? "Simply the best pigeon-shot. I once watched him stand at the bottom of a 100ft-high beech belt, 15-20yd below the belt. The birds flighted 15-20yd above the trees and he killed 80 for 100 shots."

## WILLIAM ASHBY

He's been knocking on the door for the past couple of years and is living proof that the more you do the better you get. Like many good shots, he started shooting pigeon. Very polite. He will only take the best birds.

## WILLIAM ASPREY

Owner of gunmaker and luxury goods emporium, William & Son. Insists he's no great shakes but the grouse disagree.

## TONY BALL

Still a formidable shot. Once his target radar's locked on, he gives no quarter.

## LOUISE BALTESZ

Daughter of the formidable Sir Joe Nickerson and sister to Rosie Whitaker (see below). Shoots beautifully and not afraid of adverse weather, killing some very showy cocks in a sleet storm last winter.

## PHIL BEASLEY

One of the first professional pigeon guides, Beasley is to the farmer's pest what Black Death was to the 14th-century London: completely lethal.



Edward Buxton

CHARLES SAINSBURY-PLACE

## DUKE OF BEDFORD

Andrew Bedford's party piece is to shoot birds a *long* way in front. His brother, Jamie Russell, confirms how daunting it can be, "I spent most of my first shooting years behind him. Given his accuracy, it tended to be a lot of watching; I didn't get the chance to shoot at much."

## JOHN BIDWELL

The past World Sporting Champion is an annual attraction at the Game Fair with his trick-shooting display. When you can shoot seven clays in the air at once, few gamebirds stand a chance.

## PHIL BURTT

His performance on grouse, pigeon and pretty much anything else that flies is such that many of the younger shots on this list grew up not wanting to be firemen, train drivers or astronauts, but Phil Burtt.

## EDWARD BUXTON

Enjoys intense competition with polo-playing flatmate Jeremy Pemberton. Better at snooker than Pemberton, but the latter's a better fisherman. Impressive on Argentinean doves.

## DUKE OF CAMBRIDGE AND PRINCE HARRY OF WALES

Rated as two of the finest shots on wild, driven English partridges shown in the traditional manner, they are fast and precise and kill cleanly. The speed at which they reload is remarkable; often they take two in front and two behind. They ensure their birds are collected and are reluctant to move on until every bird is picked. They make a point of thanking the beaters, pickers-up and the rest of those who make a shoot day. The elder is considered the more consistent shot.

## SALLY CANNON

Married to Michael, owner of Wemmergill and a string of other estates. Shoots in all weathers - and very prettily - with her Beretta 20s. Extraordinarily encouraging to the couple's many guests on the moors.



The Duke of Cambridge (left) and Prince Harry of Wales

CHARLES SAINSBURY-PLACE

### ANDY CASTLE

The strong-hand-shaking, wide-smiling, Kemen shooter was rated by a top keeper last winter as “the best shot we’ve seen all season”.

### WILLIE COLE

Former manager of the West London Shooting School, he left to become the shooting manager at Ashcombe, the Dorset estate famous for its archangel pheasants. Comes from a family of ‘keeping royalty – and rated “seriously tidy” on high birds.

### IAN COLEY

He’s Great Britain’s Olympic shooting coach so he knows a bit about the sport. His shooting school is in the Cotswolds, famous for its high birds from hanger woods, but few have the altitude to escape Coley.

### SIR EDWARD DASHWOOD

Not just a one-trick pony, a deadly shot at all gamebirds, be it grouse, woodcock, teal or snipe. Incredibly enthusiastic and very fast. Don’t miss your grouse if he’s around – you won’t get a second chance.

### JAMES DEAN

A huge character, heard before seen and described as “a posh version of Sid James, sharing the same laugh and *joie de vivre*”. A straight shot and fantastic host, not scared of a glass of Kummel. Yells “Marvellous!” at good shooting and “Paralytic!” at poor.

### GEORGE DIGWEED

He’s probably the greatest all-round shot ever. So far he’s won eight World FITASC Championships, nine World Sporting Championships, 13 European Championships and 14 World Cups. On grouse, pheasants, pigeon and duck, Digweed kills at ranges that make you completely rethink the capabilities of a shotgun.

### NICK FANE

Brilliant on grouse and most game, from Cape buffalo to snipe (he was part of the team that broke the record on the Grogarry estate on South Uist), Fane is a passionate proponent of young shots. They are given every support on the family’s shoot in Hampshire.

### SIR MICHAEL FARQUHAR

Brother of Capt Ian Farquhar, Master of the Beaufort (it’s a strong sporting bloodline). Their cousin, top professional hunter Robin Hurt, notes that, “Nothing delights Sir Michael more than to take on a very high bird that has flown down the line of guns, missed by all, to meet its match to his gun.”



George Digweed

FIELDSPORTSCHANNEL TV

### RICHARD FAULDS

He’s got an Olympic gold in trap-shooting, 19 World Championships and eight European Championships to his name. But Faulds is far more than a clay-shooter. As one admirer notes, “This young man can pull down the highest, widest and farthest gamebirds and wildfowl with the minimum of fuss and great style.” Now runs the Owls Lodge Shooting School and gearing up for the 2012 Olympics.



LUCINDA MARLAND

### ROB FENWICK

The grandson of HM The Queen’s Windsor headkeeper (retired), the manager of the EJ Churchill Shooting Ground is extraordinarily accurate and a complete gentleman, commenting on others’ occasional glimpses of form while remaining resolutely silent on his own *tour de force* shooting.

### ROY FLOOD

He owns and runs Castle Air in Cornwall and his technical approach to helicopters and performance cars is carried through to shooting. “He can shoot 70yd pheasants with ease, using a gun regulated to that distance with Teague full chokes in each barrel,” reports a fellow gun.

### SIMON FORD

The people’s choice, Ford is the subject of glowing reports: “pushing the sport to the limit of his ability”, “fearless; will take on any bird but never reckless”, “a great shot and superb host”, and “a pleasure to have on any day”. With a ratio of 2:1, consistently kills 50-75yd birds without pricking or injuring.

### ANDY FUSSELL

His father is Philip Fussell, one of the all-time great shots and countrymen. A friend comments, “Also a good cricketer, like his father, and brings his hand/eye coordination to the shooting table to devastating effect. When it comes to pheasants, he is deadly.” ➤

“ALL INVITATIONS ARE GREAT BUT WILD DUCK-SHOOTING ON THE ISLE OF SHEPPEY HAS TO BE NO1 FOR ME” **GEORGE DIGWEED**

“ ‘MY FAVOURITE QUARRY HAS TO BE WILD. AND, ALTHOUGH I ADORE GROUSE, ON BALANCE I'D GO FOR WOODCOCK’ ”

SIR EDWARD DASHWOOD

### WILL GARFIT

The landscape painter and guitarist left Pink Floyd just before they made it big. He does not regret it – a view not shared by the countless pigeon and grouse that have come within his range and promptly expired.

### WILLIAM GASCOIGNE

His passion for his sport is matched by his accuracy and fondness for vintage guns. Others reach for heavy artillery; he pulls down cloudscrapers with a hammergun.

### JOHNNY GOODHEART

Managing director of CCI International, provider of clays to the gentry. Shoots almost as much in Spain as he does here. Deadly, not only on grouse but on other forms of game, too. Famous for dropping piles of wigeon.

### JOHN HEAGREN

The head instructor at the Bisley Shooting Ground and a top performer on game. Has the rare ability to teach new tricks to old dogs. If you want to down grouse, he'll show you how.

### NICOLA HERON

Part of the British Helice Shooting Team (a target that mimics the old live-trap pigeon-shooting), Heron can also turn on the form with the feathered stuff.

### JEREMY HERRMANN

Outstanding grouse- and pigeon-shot, his best day in a pigeon hide was 602. Multi-moor-owner, “he may well become the best grouse-shot ever in a few years,” reckons a seasoned observer.

CHARLES SAINSBURY-PLAICE

Bertie Hoskyns-Abrahall



BRENDAN O'SULLIVAN

Charlotte Kerwood

### ANTHEA HILLYER

FITASC is the toughest form of sporting clay-shooting and Anthea has won the Ladies World Championships seven times. Her stylish despatch of driven game is legendary.

### EARL OF HOME

David Douglas-Home's day job is chairman of Coutts & Co, but he's also president of BASC and devoted to snipe-shooting – a form of sport that doesn't suffer the duffers. And he most certainly isn't one.

### BERTIE HOSKYNs-ABRAHALL

One of four brothers renowned for their sporting prowess in Yorkshire and anywhere else showing a sporting bird. He's a lawyer, a trustee of the GWCT and a sportsman/naturalist of the old order. Shoots in plus-sixes with an accuracy matched only by his consideration for his neighbours.

### JONO IRBY

Now the general manager of the Woburn estate. Modest and good-humoured, he uses a big Browning to the dismay of the highest pheasants and partridges in the land. Motto: “Never take a knife to a gunfight” – in other words, tool (and skill) up for the mega stuff.

### JONATHAN KENNEDY

The leading land agent when it comes to grouse moors. Outstanding all-round shot but Colman's finest on grouse and pigeon. If you want your grouse killed, Kennedy's one of the first to call. Legend has it that he travels up on the Twelfth with 40 ironed shirts.

### DAVID KER

A London art dealer and amazingly relaxed shot who hardly ever misses and deals with high pheasant with aplomb. A big man, he's an extremely graceful gun to watch in action.

### LIZZIE KERSHAW

A *grande dame* of the magazine world, Kershaw is seldom out of cocktail frocks in her workaday London existence. But come the weekend, it's breeks, 12-bores and no prisoners.

### CHARLOTTE KERWOOD

Only 24, she's already won three golds for England in double trap at the Commonwealth Games. She's now a major hope for Great Britain in Olympic trap at the 2012 Olympics. Charming and modest, she's also great company on game-shoots. On one drive last season, she had four consecutive right-and-lefts, using her Perazzi MX2000. The gamebirds were the only ones surprised.

### LORD MARGADALE

Head of the Morrison family, owners of the 10,000-acre Fonthill estate in Wiltshire and the 50,000-acre Islay Estates renowned for woodcock, Alastair Margadale has plenty of opportunity for sport and makes the most of it. A clean, elegant shot, but is his brother even keener? (See Hughie Morrison.)

### JONO MILLS

Works in the Newmarket racing world and shoots "a rather brash Browning 12-bore with OTT gold engraving and insists on wearing a battered secondhand jacket that's too big for him," says a friend. "But hard to fault – a real bag-filler – who, last season, killed the highest pigeon I have ever seen shot."



The Duke of Northumberland

CHARLES SAUNTSUR-PLAGE

### HUGHIE MORRISON

Brother of Lord Margadale, he has four right-and-lefts at woodcock to his credit but needs another five to equal his grandfather's record.

### DUKE OF NORFOLK

Edward Norfolk is devoted to wild game, so much so that one of his 50th birthday presents was the planting of one of the finest – and longest – native hedges in Britain. Came first in the Purdey Awards this year for his wild-partridge Peppering shoot in West Sussex. Always makes his share of the bag.

### AMELIA, LADY NORTHBROOK

A modern Diana, who hunts and shoots with elegance and Hellis's. Always in the prizes at the Tyrwhitt-Drakes' famous Lobster Shoot in Bereleigh, Hampshire.

### DUKE OF NORTHUMBERLAND

"Personally I would have to say that Ralph Northumberland and Lord James Percy continue to hold joint top spot from what I experienced last season," reports the Duke of Norfolk. "It was interesting seeing how they performed on our wild-partridge day down here at Peppering in a new environment. They both took a little bit of time to get warmed up but in the second to last drive with a good hedge in front of them they shot outstandingly well, getting over 30 wild partridges each (the bag for that drive was 108). At one stage James Percy had three grey partridges in the air at once out of the same covey, having taken the first two as soon as they topped the hedge and changed guns with incredible speed." Shoots with a veritable battery of Spanish Grulla sidelocks. ➤

“ I HAVE A PAIR EACH OF 12- AND 20-BORE BERETTA EELS, STRAIGHT HAND STOCK, DOUBLE TRIGGERS, USED WITH EJ CHURCHILL HELLFIRE GAME, COPPER-COATED, FIBRE WAD, 30G, NO 6 SHOT ” JONATHAN KENNEDY



The Duke of Norfolk

JAKE EASTHAM



Lord James Percy

### EARL PEEL

Willie Peel is now Lord Chamberlain of the Royal Household, a job that once involved censoring the saucy bits in plays. A great all-rounder, his performance slacked off last season after he tore a ligament pulling out ragwort, an injury that had him despatched to the end of the line at the Duke of Westminster's Spanish shoot.

### JEREMY PEMBERTON

Very tidy shot on extraordinarily testing doves in Argentina with his mate Buxton. Misses provoked language that would have impressed both Shakespeare and Alf Garnet.

### LORD JAMES PERCY

Younger brother of Ralph and half of the dreaded Percy sandwich, Lord James is a classic shot, sticking to tradition and a side-by-side. "A pleasure to watch, displaying superb shooting technique, always in balance with the lithe elegance of the good shot," says one commentator. "I was in the line with him at his Linhope shoot last January," says *The Field's* editor, Jonathan Young, "and he fired just 16 cartridges all day. But each one accounted for a bird that would make a normal gun's season."

### KATIE PERCY

With Ralph as her father, and James her uncle, it's perhaps not surprising she's a great all-round shot and very sporting. Her sister Melissa is good but Katie is considered to have the edge. A headkeeper says she's one of the best ladies he has seen – an accolade indeed.

### JOHN PLUMPTRE

The benchmark of keenness. Possesses a wonderful wild-duck and rabbit-shoot on the Kent marshes and is reputed to shoot every single day of the year except Christmas.

### JULIA PLUMPTRE

A great lady shot married to John (above), always elegant with her Boss side-by-sides and unfailingly supportive of other women in the field.

### PAUL PORTZ

"Excellent shot, don't be fooled that because he's American he can't shoot," comes our report. "Likes to use a pigeon magnet on grouse and hawk kites on pigeon."

### MICKY ROUSE

Has won most sporting clay championships and can beat most people on clay flushes – firing from the hip. He doesn't use this trick in the field, much to the birds' chagrin. ➤

### MARK OSBORNE

A land agent and owner of William Powell, Osborne must have the credit for the restoration of many British grouse moors. The pick-up round his butt always takes time.

“ ‘WHERE DO I LOVE TO SHOOT? ANYWHERE I KNOW WELL; ANYWHERE NEW AND EXCITING’ ” LORD JAMES PERCY

## LORD JAMES RUSSELL

Younger brother of the Duke of Bedford and equally keen. Thinks he could improve his performance with a switch to over-and-unders but outstandingly accurate already.

## PETER SCHWERDT

“Obsessed” is an understatement. Schwerdt thinks of shooting every moment and puts his thoughts into devastating practice on pigeon, grouse and high pheasants.



## NICK SILK

He's a Hampshire farmer with a passion for pigeon-shooting whose twin sons have followed suit. Of the two brothers, Ben is considered to have the edge.

## STEVE SMITH

“Smithy is a wonderful high-pheasant-shot and was once part of a huge day at pigeon where the team shot 1,800-plus; his share was 350. His German shorthaired pointer Muller spent the entire day chasing the whirly,” says our informant.

## LORD FRANCIS STAFFORD

Francis Stafford has long been on the Top Shots list for his ability to kill the highest pheasants effortlessly. Always encouraging the young, he's extended that to working with them, chairing the Countryside Foundation for Education, set up to inform children, parents and teachers about country matters.

“FOR REASONABLY HIGH-VOLUME SHOOTING I'D SHOOT A SPANISH GUN (GRULLA, AYA OR ARRIZABALAGA) WITH VARIABLE CHOKES AND A FIBRE-WADDED RIO 30G 6 (GROUSE) OR A RIO 32G 5 (HIGH PHEASANTS)” **JOHNNY GOODHART**



## LOUISE STIMSON

Works for the National Gamekeepers' Organisation, so should be able to shoot a bit. A gun notes, “I stood beside her at a driven partridge day and witnessed exhibition shooting. Another day she was working five dogs, each carrying a bird simultaneously.”

## REUBEN STRAKER

One headkeeper observes, “As well as being a deadly grouse-shot, he never misses a chance of a shot. Snipe do not cross his butt unsaluted, and not many escape. He also has an unerring knowledge of where all his birds have fallen.”

## PHILIP THORROLD

He started shooting at 14 on his parents' and grandparents' farms in Thelnetham, Suffolk and went on to win the British Open Sporting Championship in 1985. A formidable game-shot who now teaches worldwide.

## TOM TYRWHITT-DRAKE

Tom polishes his skill at Bereleigh, the family estate. Capable of standing toe-to-toe with some of the best of his contemporaries. “Always loud and always proud, he can walk the walk and talk the talk,” says a fellow gun.

## WILLIAM VAN CUTSEM

The van Cutsem shooting gene is strong. William's skills are inherited from his father Hugh, one of the best shots of his generation, and honed by practice on Hilborough in the Brecklands. The son is “one of the finest up-and-coming shots, noted for clean kills” and “an absolute pleasure to shoot with”. ➤

“ ‘MY FAVOURITE GUNS ARE HOLLAND & HOLLAND ROYAL 12-BORE SIDE-BY-SIDES WITH 1oz SUPREME GAME CARTRIDGES: SUPERBLY BALANCED WORKS OF ART FIRING AN EXCELLENT, EXTREMELY FAST AND TRULY KILLING CARTRIDGE’ ” NICK FANE

#### JOHN WARD

An awesome high-bird shot, “Ward [of the Ray Ward Guns dynasty] is now shooting more than ever, with Dr Jim Hays – who, incidentally, is fast becoming Top Shot material,” comments one campaigner. “John is a living example that late nights do not necessarily impair your shooting ability. He’s been up at the top for a long time and still does the business.”

#### SIMON WARD

“Simply the finest all-round shot I have ever seen at game – very modest and polite,” says one keen and extremely experienced shot. Was a member of the team on the record-breaking day at Wemmergill last season.

#### EDWARD WATSON

Watson’s “friends” try hard not to nominate him but find themselves simply unable not to do so – he’s that good.

#### ROSIE WHITAKER

Sister of Louise Baltiesz, so another holder of the formidable Sir Joe Nickerson shooting DNA. Last season shot a right-and-left at grouse, 45yd up and curling back over a ghyll on Reeth, the family moor, with a 30mph wind behind it. We weren’t surprised.

#### ANDY WHITMORE

Whitmore owns Avalon Guns and is a larger-than-life character on the high-bird circuit, where he shows that he can use a gun as effectively as sell one.

#### BRETT WINSTANLEY

He won the junior class at the World Sporting Championship with 180, just one target behind the legendary Richard Faulds and George Digweed, who shot 181. Now proving he can dish out the same lethal scores on pigeon; recently shot 69 without missing one.

#### ALLEN WOODS

Woods shoots “amazing pigeon, grouse out as far as 60yd and Cotterdale’s high pheasants with ease,” says a witness.



Rosie Whitaker

#### MIKE YARDLEY

*The Field’s* gun reviewer was the British Side-by-Side Champion in 2004 and is formidable in the line, where he wields a 32in-barrelled Guerini 20-bore fuelled with 32g No 5s.

#### CLAIRE ZAMBUNI

The 6ft-tall blonde uses her Holland & Holland to devastating effect. Now runs The Shooting Society and The Covert Girls, whose members include Helen Barbour of the sporting clothes company. No one can mistake her presence in the shooting field; she’s a true force of nature.

LUCINDA WARLAND

Claire Zambuni

