

A day with...

Trumps Farm shoot

High-flying pheasants mirror Heathrow-bound jets when **Tony Jackson** visits an enterprising Surrey shoot in the shadow of London's landmarks

i Shoot information

Where: Trumps Farm, near Chobham, in Surrey

When: 12 December 2009



Picker-up Michelle Athey's two efficient Labradors

“We must be one of the closest driven shoots to London,” said Anthony Collier, who, with his father Donald, owns Trumps Farm, situated close to Chobham, in Surrey. “In fact, from the highest point on the farm you can see the city centre and the London Eye.” Under the flight path from Heathrow and close to the M25, with its constant background roaring hiss, one could hardly describe the setting as one of remote rural calm. Despite the noisy intrusion of the 21st century, however, the farm is still a peaceful oasis in an area that is rapidly being transformed from countryside to suburbia.

The changes are startling and irreversible. I know this area well for I lived near Chobham for 20 or so years. Where once I would have thought nothing of hacking to a meet of the local foxhounds, the Bisley & Sandhurst, now I would scarcely dare cross the bustling road. Fields once used as cattle pasture are now equestrian paddocks and erstwhile cottages have been gentrified and upgraded for London workers.

The fact that a successful driven shoot

is now established on the 365 acres of Trumps Farm is largely down to one man, Richard Mumford, who lives nearby in Chobham. He had the good fortune to be brought up correctly in the ways of shooting and the country life by his father Dick. Indeed, Dick, now 90 but very active, still shoots every week and has been able to help Richard with practical advice when the shoot was first started three years ago.

Pigeon were the catalyst. Richard told me that nine years ago, while passing the farm, he noted large flocks of pigeon attacking some rape and decided to call on the farmer, Anthony Collier. He was given permission to shoot and was then invited to take part in a farm walk for the odd wild pheasant. The concept of a shoot was discussed and a few birds were put down, but after a year the mini-shoot folded and Richard lost contact with Anthony for five years. However, following a chance meeting, the idea for a driven shoot was again raised. As a result, three years ago the Trumps Farm shoot was established and, from a modest beginning, it is now thriving.

When Richard first took on the shoot there was only one old pen and little

else. In that first season he and his father erected a release pen, put down a few hundred birds and invited some friends along to test the water. It worked and with Anthony Collier's enthusiastic co-operation and support the shoot is now well established and has a bright future.

Though a part of the ground has in the past been used as a landfill site, long-established oak, silver birch and ash woodland provides several good drives, supplemented by gamecover in the shape of jumbo sorghum and maize. While the latter was not very successful last year, the sorghum was, said Richard, fantastic. Plans are in hand to increase the gamecover next year and, as Anthony explained, to expand on tree planting to provide more cover and drives. There are several pools holding duck and a lake, which, though not currently shot, will be brought into the equation next season.

The gamekeeper is Richard himself. Using a small private rearing unit with incubators near Shepperton Studios and assisted by a shoot member Jason McCarthy, some 2,500 pheasants, 200 partridges and 1,500 duck, together with 170 guineafowl, were reared from eggs last season. Other shoot members, ▶