

I SUSPECT many might expect me to nominate Scarborough Clump here at Holkham, but the truth is that, despite the efforts of past headkeepers to open it up and create launch pads for the birds, the growth of all those trees means the drive doesn't work as well as it did in its heyday. I'd therefore go for Hare Clump, a covert that was once blanked into Scarborough, but is now a drive in its own right.

These days, the beaters and the keepers push Scarborough into Hare Clump and the birds are driven back over Scarborough's tall treetops. With the wind behind them, those birds have to climb and get some speed on—they are all, without exception, really high and testing

**The Earl of Leicester, Holkham estate, north Norfolk**

MY favourite drive is called Eric's bog, after my best man Eric Roderick, and it's at Upper Tumble in West Wales. We found it by accident after a summer fire left it clear of rank vegetation and the snipe moved in. On one memorable occasion, after I'd crawled into place along a couple of hundred yards of ditch, Eric drove about 200 snipe over me and I managed to nail four for four shots, including a right and left

**Dr Mike Swan, head of education at the GWCT**

THE best grouse south of the border is what I would class the James Hill end of the Pikelaw day on the Raby estate in Co Durham. It isn't because it's a drive, which is part of a day I set up here, but simply the quality of the birds. Very fast, coming with the prevailing wind, they can vary from heather-huggers to 40-yarders as they cross the head of a valley. They're simply spectacular and I've seen many a good shot's ratio reduced to ruins

**Lindsay Waddell, retired Raby head gamekeeper and former chairman of the National Gamekeepers' Organisation**

I WOULD have to go for a driven grouse moor called Fourstones, near High Bentham, right on the border of Lancashire and Yorkshire, where I used to shoot in the early days and, at the time, was owned by great friends of my parents, Robin and Toddy Cowen. There are some classic drives, of which Masters Close was probably the most famous and intimidating to a young shot.

However, the drive I remember most vividly is the one above the lunch hut. It wasn't a big drive, but classic for grouse, with a gentle slope, a tight (but not too tight) horizon and a good breeze. Placed between >

# The drives of our lives

Whether it's on a wind-buffed moor, anticipating partridge starbursting over a hedge or hunkered down waiting for wily wild duck, everyone has a dream drive, as Paula Lester reports



**Shore-fire winners: partridges driven off the cliffs at Mulgrave, North Yorkshire**

my father and my brother, the birds swirled at pace in front and then broke through the line. We all had successes—as well as misses—and plenty of time to talk about it over a lunch of Molly's pie, greenhouse tomatoes and ginger-beer shandy

**Jonathan Kennedy of CKD Property Advisers**

I LOVE standing on the peg at The Poplars here at Elveden, with the sun's faint glimmer receding upon crispy and white underfoot vegetation, the birds picking up with the wind in their tails—one, two, three, as they gather height in a wind-lifting momentum, curving sideways across the line. There's the smell of cordite, then Frank calls out quietly 'Over' and it's my turn—*bang, bang!* Birds descend in various guises and I can hear shrill dog whistles in the distance. There are the glowing cheeks of my friends and the warm camaraderie of a drive mutually enjoyed as we head home, very much contented

**The Earl of Iveagh, Elveden estate, Suffolk**

AT the Tennis Courts, on the Downton estate in Shropshire, the guns stand facing the river and shoot lightning-quick birds flying over the river gorge, having been driven out of the woodland 100ft above the line. They come from all angles, so be prepared to be in need of a sit down at the drive's end

**Martin Puddifer, Editor of The Shooting Gazette**

AS a boy, I was fortunate to spend nearly every weekend shooting with my father in mid Wales. Our favourite spot was a flight pond overlooking the Severn Valley. Everything, from the walk over muddy fields to agreeing which position we would take, was fraught with immense anticipation—it was exciting every time. Wild winds and torrential rain were ideal and once the pheasants stopped crowing as they went to roost, we knew it wouldn't be long until we heard the plop of teal on the water. All our senses were on high alert—even the dogs were shaking. On certain nights, mallard would pour in and others were a complete blank, but the walk back in torchlight always involved much laughter and joking—a flight of double figures involved discussions late into the night. I still have great memories of the place and we scattered my father's ashes there—he's probably still listening out for those teal

**Dylan Williams of the Royal Berkshire Shooting Group**

AFTER a heavy night, Doors front man Jim Morrison would breakfast on half a watermelon sprinkled liberally with salt.



Glyn Satterley, Turquin, Millington-Drake

**Give me moor: the pursuit of grouse, the king of British gamebirds, draws many to our glorious uplands**

For my money, Sand Farm on Lewis is the best hangover cure out there and the best grey-lag flighting in the Hebrides. To me, it's all about how a drive makes you feel—wild-fowling is always going to be more exciting than a pheasant or partridge drive because of its sheer unpredictability. Last year, the stars aligned and I shot a snipe, a teal, a grey-lag goose and a mallard. It was quite possibly the most thrilling morning of my life

**Patrick Galbraith, Editor of Shooting Times**

ANYWHERE on Reeth in the Yorkshire Dales. I'm not good at remembering the names of grouse drives, but any and all on that wonderful place are as good as it gets. God designed it for presenting superb driven grouse and then its custodians made it even better. Those birds seem to go a yard faster than anywhere else. Coming down an October gale, black against the heather, they look frankly dangerous

**Ian Coghill, chairman of the GWCT**

I WOULD choose Green Wall on our own shoot at home in Dorset, because I love shooting, beating, flagging or picking-up on it. It's off the side of Dungeon Hill, in the heart of the South Dorset hunting country. There's a piece of ground that juts out and is covered in trees—we drive the birds out of a predominantly maize and kale cover crop, over the treetops towards Great Wootton Wood.

It's such splendid topography that, whether you're standing on a peg in the trees or out in the field, the birds can be extremely challenging

**Peter Wilson, Olympic double-trap shooting gold medallist**

THE walk down to The Point at Mulgrave may be a little precarious, but it's well worth every slippery step. You stand on the beach, at the foot of those towering North Yorkshire cliffs, and await an endless flurry of partridge, driven over the edge. One has to move fast and my aim is rarely true, but it's the most spectacular, thrilling and beautiful of drives, furiously fast specks darting over, then wheeling back to the safety of their cover. Add in a Magpie Cafe fish-and-chip lunch from nearby Whitby and you come pretty close to heaven

**Tom Parker Bowles, food writer**

THERE'S a piece of bog and reed that sits in the low ground of the Raby estate. Framed by dry-stone walls, it usually holds in October a good head of snipe and teal, with a fairish chance of a mallard, grouse and wild cock pheasant. To shoot it successfully, you have to slide into position with the stealth and silence of a hungry python, while the small beating team approach it from dead ground half a mile off.

Standing is impossible—the quarry would lift in an instant—so you stay crouched behind the stone walls, peering slowly over the top for any sign of movement and listening intently for the *scaap scaap* of a rising snipe.

When the first rises, a speck in the distance, we watch him with merlin intensity, waiting for the moment he's 30 yards out, then trying to tumble him well in front—much the easiest shot with a snipe.

On a good drive, we might end up with four couple of snipe, two pheasants, a grouse and three teal. To me, that epitomises the best of shooting'

**Jonathan Young, Editor of The Field**

