

The DRIVEN PARTRIDGE Shoot

— LARRY'S SHORT STORIES #85 —

A driven bird shoot had been on my wish list for years, but when the invitation came, I almost didn't go. After looking at the price tag, my answer was "no"; but Brenda suggested that it would be a great opportunity for me to spend some quality time with our daughter – OK, I'll go.

Naturally, I had a lot of ideas about how a driven bird shoot worked; but the experience was far grander than I was expecting. The European tradition of driven bird shooting, the other guests (including two from Holland & Holland), the food and the castle - which dates back to the 16th century - provided an unbelievable backdrop for the main event – shooting driven birds – red legged partridge.

For me the most interesting part was the shotguns, the actual shooting and the bird drives – twelve in total, over three



My guns were a matched pair of Purdeys, shown here with a brace of partridge.

days. The best reason to own a matched-pair of fine English side by side shotguns is to shoot driven birds – that is, to use them for

their intended purpose. Sara took Holland and Hollands and I took Purdeys – both 12 bore; but most of the other shooters used 20 gauge over/under guns, and one guest shot a pair of 28 gauges.

The shooting was mostly incoming birds, with a few crossers – all birds were in range and at times I had too much choke. On some drives we had a couple seconds to shoot, after acquiring a target; but on other drives we held our guns at the ready and shot before you could say one thousand and one. Sitting on our right side, facing to the rear, was our loader. We handed off our empty (and still



Sara and I pose in traditional English garb, just after a drive. The shotguns are the pair of Holland and Hollands that Sara used on this trip.

closed) shotgun with our right hand, extending the left hand to the front; immediately the warm barrels of the loaded gun found our palms. When the sky was full of birds, it was a shot a second.

“...it was a shot
a second.”

Now, they've been shooting driven partridge on this ranch for 150 years, because its plateaus and canyons are ideally suited for such. There were 45 drivers on foot in each drive, pushing the partridges until they flew off the plateau, over the canyon to the plateau on the other side. Yes, we eleven shooters were lined up, one per peg, in the bottom of the canyons, about 50 yards apart. At the end of each drive, all I could say was **wow!**

Midway USA

Larry Potterfield

Ventosa Castle
20 minutes south of
Toledo, Spain
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The shooting party, with guests, in front of Ventosa Castle -- with a day's shoot of partridge in the foreground. Sara and I are on the far right; the Holland and Holland folks on the far left. Photo courtesy Guy Davies.