

IN THE FIELD

NOVEMBER 2022

By Sir Johnny Scott Bt.

"HOLTS PLATINUM CLAY DAY"

On August 5th, Holt's held their immensely popular annual charity clay pigeon day at the Old Shooting Ground on the Sandringham Estate, by kind permission of the Her late Majesty Queen Elizabeth II. This is the fourteenth time Holt's have held the event and very significant sums have previously been raised for charities chosen by Nicholas Holt and approved by the Royal Estate. Among them, Walking with the Wounded, the Gamekeepers Welfare Trust, the Game and Wildlife Conservation Trust and last year, the Gurkhas Welfare Trust. This year's beneficiary was Riding for the Disabled, of which HRH The Princess Royal has been president since 1985, with the day generously sponsored by the Chestnut Group of pubs and restaurants in East Anglia and eight other businesses.

Forty teams of four competed at the Platinum Jubilee Clay Day, shooting five simulated driven game drives and raised £30,000 for this wonderful charity which does so much for those with mental or physical disabilities. After lunch in the marquee provided by Crowley's of Suffolk, prior to the prizes and fundraising auction, Nicholas Holt proposed a toast to the Queen, followed by a toast to HRH The Prince Phillip, Duke of Edinburgh, who died last April. Nicholas is in the privileged position of having known the Duke, both as a tenant of the Sandringham Estate since 2003 and as a shooting guest, but everyone in the marquee had good reason to be grateful to the Duke for his unwavering support of shooting for conservation.

Lauded as a devoted consort to the Queen for over seventy years, he was the rock that enabled Her late Majesty to fulfil her vital role for the nation and Commonwealth, whilst pursuing his enthusiasm for carriage driving, young people - through his Duke of Edinburgh Awards Scheme - and dedication to conservation. The Duke was a distinguished president of the World Wildlife Fund, with a passion for conserving the world's endangered species and after his death, the director general of the WWF International said of the Duke: "His farsighted and passionate commitment to conservation will benefit generations to come."

A keen shot, who enjoyed wildfowling and punt-gunning on the Wash as much as the wild pheasant and partridge at Sandringham, or the grouse at Balmoral, in 1968 the Duke became the first royal patron of the Wildfowlers Association of Great Britain and Ireland - later BASC. He was president and then patron of the Game and Wildlife Conservation Trust from 1965, providing tremendous support to GWCT and was a strong advocate for their science led practical



Sir (Walter) John Scott, Bt. MFH

Sir Johnny (as he is better known) is an author, natural historian, broadcaster, columnist, countryside campaigner, artisan snuff manufacturer and retired hill farmer.

He wrote and co-presented the BBC2 series *Clarissa and the Countryman* with Clarissa Dickson Wright. He writes for a variety of magazines and periodicals on field sports, food, farming, travel, history and rural affairs.

A lifetime devotee of the countryside and its sports, he is currently:

- Joint Master, The North Pennine Hunt
- Regional Director, Vote OK.
- President, The Gamekeepers Welfare Trust.
- President, The Tay Valley Wildfowlers Association.
- President, The Newcastle Wildfowlers Association.
- President, The Association of Working Lurchers / Longdogs.
- Centenary Patron and Honorary Life Member, British Association for Shooting and Conservation.
- Patron, The Sporting Lucas Terrier Association.
- Patron, The Wildlife Ark Trust.
- Patron, The National Organisation of Beaters and Pickers Up.
- Board member, The European Squirrel Initiative.

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approach to game and wildlife management. He was particularly pleased at the association between the Sandringham Estate and GWCT, which led to the successful grey partridge restoration project in which he was heavily involved. As early as 1971, the Duke had written: "This bird is more than just our favourite game species. It represents a typical wild bird that suffers from all the pressures of intensive agriculture, urbanisation, pollution, over-population and a host of other ugly sounding words and phrases. If we can solve the problem for partridges, we shall be conferring enormous benefits on many other species that are in trouble." In 2000, when David Clark became head keeper, there were only seventy pairs on the estate. By the 2011/12 season there were 2,250 pairs.

Like many dedicated sportsmen naturalists, the Duke loved bird watching and had two wooden huts erected on the edge of the Sandringham Estate, one for himself and one for the Queen, so they could watch the seasonal movements of migratory waterfowl out on the saltmarshes. A man of immense charm, who would talk to anyone regardless of their position in society, he was renowned for his blinding common sense, acerbic comments and intolerance of fools, once replying to a question from a hapless journalist: "Cats kill more birds than men. Why don't you have a slogan: 'Kill a cat and save a bird'?". The world of shooting and conservation has lost a great champion and true friend, but his legacy lives on.



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