

Shooting with Lady L

Shooting Gazette meets the figurehead behind the Bryngwyn Hall Estate and its impressive offerings for shooting parties on and off the peg.

Over the years, *Shooting Gazette* has been fortunate enough to visit, dine and even stay over in some resplendent country houses ahead of a day's shooting. We have been welcomed and made to feel at home by a long list of inspirational, colourful and charismatic people, passionate fieldsportsmen and women one and all.

Back in April we headed to Bryngwyn Hall near Llanfyllin, an 18th century neo-classical hall designed by Robert Mylne which has been painstakingly restored to its former glory by its current inhabitant Auriol, the Marchioness of Linlithgow, since it was passed onto her in 1987. Though the 10-bedroom hall is available for hire for numerous purposes, Lady Linlithgow's home is very much her own. Each room, corridor and wall is home to numerous illustrations, photographs, paintings and much more charting the lives of her esteemed family tree who have trodden paths all over the world. Expect to be thoroughly spoilt before, during and after your day's shooting; ours consisted of five drives - including a scintillating grouse drive with the hall as its backdrop. We spoke to Lady Linlithgow regarding her approach to hosting shooting parties. As a go-to advisor on a number of subjects sporting and otherwise "Lady L", as her staff affectionately refer to her, certainly knows a thing or two...

Shooting Gazette (SG): When did you first start thinking about bringing simulated

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Auriol, the Marchioness of Linlithgow, is the driving force at Bryngwyn Hall.

shooting to Bryngwyn Hall and what sort of experience did you visualise offering to visiting parties?

Lady Linlithgow (LL): "My first thought of starting my simulated game shooting business on the estate was when a friend, who I had met in the shooting world and had enjoyed shoot hospitality here, fell in love with Bryngwyn. He brought a group of friends to stay after shooting clays at another venue as a warm up for the shooting season. I thought why not start simulated game shooting here, so the idea was born and he initially helped me set it up."

SG: Have you drawn inspiration from anywhere or anyone in particular?

LL: "The topography here at

Bryngwyn is so breathtakingly beautiful and lends itself to shooting that simulated game days seemed to be the way forward. My estate is not large enough to run the calibre of live game shooting for which Wales is famous. It is perfect for simulated game days with the addition of a neighbour's adjacent spectacular, high hill land."

SG: Who are the days run by and who makes up the staff on a simulated day?

LL: "I am the impresario in all sectors. The paperwork, finance and decisions are run by myself aided by my assistant in the office. We have a top young trapper, Gruff Jones, who runs my Promatic Huntsman XP and other traps. He is a delight, a keen Shot himself, a farmer also an excellent mechanic and very reliable. The shoot captain is Ian Hartland who is a top Shot and qualified instructor. Ian is ex-Army and has the best sense of humour and manner to organise and help the Guns and run our days. We have highly qualified instructors to name a few, Colin Morgan, John Berry and Derek Wetter. I have a wonderful team. Christine Horton, who has worked for me for 37 years, is a top cook and keeps me in order and on track. I also have a tip top chef, plus other loyal members of our Bryngwyn team to lend a hand."

SG: Where will Guns find you during the day?

LL: "I am at the front door when guests arrive, at breakfast and in charge of hospitality. I'm in



Guns can expect to tackle any number of targets.

the background but not on the pegs when out in the field. Colin Morgan is in charge of registration and I leave Ian and the instructors/loaders to assist the Guns. We all keep in close touch by walkie talkies so we all know who is where and what needs to happen next. At the end of the day I am in the front hall by the blazing fire to serve tea, cake and drinks to all.”

SG: The hall must be a massive asset before, during and after the day’s shooting.

LL: “Bryngwyn is the greatest asset, it is not all bacon buttes in a back building. It is a welcome through the front door into my beautiful family home with sensational food and hospitality. I love people and am fascinated by them, nothing gives me greater pleasure than entertaining people to a very high standard and letting them use my home as their own. Many people stay the night in great luxury before or after a shoot which is great fun.”

SG: How do you make sure that each simulated shoot day is different from the last without compromising on standards and visitor’s expectations?

LL: “We currently have a selection of 16 drives so I ask Guns what standard and replication of live game they wish to shoot. For the novice we have easier drives and for the experts extreme drives. I am always trying to find new options and we are working on more this year. I keep a record of which drives Guns have shot on previous visits and offer alternative drives. I also keep a record of what they have eaten. I ask the team leader to chose what their party would like from our menu for lunch or dinner.”

SG: How would you describe your personal approach to hosting shooting parties?

LL: “It is a pure delight for me to



host both simulated and live game hospitality. I do my best to make people feel welcome, wanted, spoilt and at home at Bryngwyn. I am so happy when we have shooting guests here; it is a special day for us and all my team. I like people to feel like kings or queens whilst visiting us.”

SG: Where do your guests tend to come from and who are the sort of people you most look forward to welcoming at Bryngwyn Hall?

LL: “I look forward to welcoming everyone. Some of my parties are local and word of mouth has

brought a lot of people here. It is so good for business entertainment and they know it will be a wonderful experience. We have an international clientele. One new client flew from Chicago to attend one of our simulated game days and experience Bryngwyn hospitality. I am finding that groups who stay here and have booked top live game shoots in the shooting season benefit from a simulated game shoot prior to real game birds. This gets their eye in with the help of experienced loaders/instructors and they can have special and double gunning tuition. The loaders on

the simulated game day often accompany Guns to the live shoot and this works brilliantly.”

SG: Are you hoping to use Bryngwyn Hall as a venue where novices and youngsters can come to get their first taste of game shooting?

LL: “This is an idea that I hope to fulfil next season with a mixed day of clays and live game. There are a lot of new people taking up shooting who do not really know how to handle a gun or understand the intricacies of putting on a game shoot. I think the guns should all

take their turn with the beaters on a drive so they understand what goes on behind the scenes. I was born into a North Wales sporting estate and I was my father’s main beater. It was a lot of fun and good exercise.”

SG: What is life like during the shooting season when Guns come to stay with you?

LL: “It is the greatest time my team and I all love it. The house is very warm and glows with log fires, lights, laughter, music, and delicious food. Once Guns have experienced a shooting house party stay at Bryngwyn they never want to stay

Simulated shooting



anywhere else for shooting. They bring their own wines and many have superb cellars. The proof of our hospitality and welcome is that some of my clients have stayed here for 14 consecutive years.”

SG: Game features prominently on your simulated shoot day menus – what are your thoughts on the efforts currently being made to increase its consumption both inside and outside game shooting?

LL: “It is only right that what we kill we should be eating so any efforts to encourage people to eat game both outside and inside the sport are admirable. I am continually experimenting with my expert chefs, with new recipes for the whole spectrum of game shot each season. We have some unique recipes, with more enroute. I hope all good restaurants, private houses, pubs and hotels will try their best to make a huge effort to create good food with game.”

A simulated shoot day at Bryngwyn Hall costs £220 + VAT per person with a minimum of 250 clays per Gun. Shooting parties must contain a minimum of 10 with a maximum of 20 Guns per day. X Comp from Hull Cartridge are available for a fee. Prices include full hospitality. For more information, visit bryngwyn.com