

# Rural Life

Your monthly guide for those who love the country lifestyle

## Gun maker sets sights on safety first in annual shooting season

THE age-old tradition of shooting is not only a local custom but a hobby with great depth and a widespread community of passionate enthusiasts.

Gareth Rule, of established family-run gun makers AW Rule & Son in Somerton, spoke to the *Western Gazette* to give us a brief insight into the gun-making business and the world of shooting.

Gareth comes from a prestigious gun-making pedigree and this has in turn furthered his interest in the entire industry of shooting and developed his passion for the sport.

The family business was originally formed by Gareth's father Anthony "Tony" Rule in the late 1960s after he moved to Somerton following his ten-year gun-making apprenticeship with world renowned master craftsman James Purdey.

In 1990, Gareth's father transferred his business from Langport and had a workshop built into the family home, which first introduced a young Gareth to the shooting world, igniting his passion for the industry.

After leaving school, Gareth completed a four-year apprenticeship as a gunsmith then a six-year full apprenticeship in gun stock-making under his father. He now runs the family business.

Having been around guns for 20 years it is no surprise that Gareth is passionate about shooting as well as gun making. He said: "It's an interest that stems from a passion for the whole industry, from the history and tradition to the equipment and attire. Every aspect plays its part in making the experience on the day the best it can be."

One of the factors in ensuring this experience is not ruined by a

misfire or gun malfunction is to ensure your gun is regularly serviced, Gareth said.

He added: "People that go game shooting should have their guns serviced every 12 to 18 months, our primary role is maintenance with of course our top priority being safety."

"Even if you have only fired a gun once during the year, a service is a must, as there's every chance there could be congealed oils or a number of other factors affecting its function. As we say, a dirty gun is a dangerous gun."

For many people shooting is an exciting but somewhat alien prospect, with many unaware of how to get involved, or what game shooting really entails.

Gareth said: "The place to start is clay pigeon shooting, as it is open all year round and creates an environment where you can sample the sport without necessarily buying all the equipment."

"Going clay pigeon shooting is also a good way of integrating into a shooting community. Networking and socialising at these events will give you the opportunity to integrate yourself with a group of game shooters who may invite you to join their shooting party."

"Initially you will most likely be invited to go beating. Beating is where you flush the birds out from cover. This startles the birds so they fly out and reveal themselves."

"After that potentially you may be invited along to a shoot."

AW Rule & Son Gunmakers caters to a vast range of different customers, offering its services to as many people as possible. In an effort to expand this it is now open on Saturdays and is available to answer any of your gun and shooting queries.



**FAIR GAME:** The game season started on August 12 and runs until February 1.

### This month

Rural Life talks to family business owners and esteemed gun makers AW Rule and Son about the origins of the family business, while gaining an insight into the world of gun making and game shooting. We also find out from professional arborist Nick Hellis what is affecting Britain's beloved conker trees and how serious it is in not only causing smaller conkers to be produced but potentially threatening the very existence of the trees themselves.

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## Grouse starts famous twelfth

THE grouse is not only famous for promoting whisky but also for kicking off the game shooting season too.

The shooting season runs between August 12 and February 1.

By law, the launch of the grouse season (known as the famous twelfth) starts on August 12 and runs until December 10.

Following that is the partridge season which runs from

September 1 until February 1, with the duck and goose season running from September 1 to January 31. Running from October 1 to February 1 is the pheasant season.

Clay pigeon shooting is a great all-year round activity and will give you plenty of opportunity to practice for the game season.

There are a variety of locations in the Somerset area that host clay pigeon shooting.