



The Game Fair returns

At last, something to celebrate and look forward to. Book now for the inimitable festival of the countryside at Ragley Hall

WRITTEN BY MARTIN PUDDIFER

The Game Fair returns to Ragley Hall in Warwickshire on Friday 23 July to Sunday 25 July. The Hall, home to the ninth Marquess of Hertford, sits in 450 acres of landscaped gardens and parkland near Stratford-upon-Avon, an ideal spot for sporting sorts to flock to this summer. More than 120,000 people are expected to attend the event.

The Field will be in attendance (as we have been every year) and we will be delighted to meet our readers, new subscribers and sporting friends. Visitors to our stand on Gunmakers' Row will be able to take advantage of our excellent show offer: subscribe and save up to 40% plus get a free gift. We look forward to seeing

you there. But what else is happening at this year's Game Fair?

GUNMAKERS' ROW

A trip to Gunmakers' Row is an essential part of any Game Fair itinerary. Leading gunmakers will showcase new and existing products, while the very best top-notch sporting retailers are on hand to provide all the extras for your shooting day, from coats and cartridge bags to decent gin. For those keen on vintage guns meet experts from auctioneers, including Holts and Bonhams, who will be on hand to appraise recent acquisitions and family heirlooms.

THE SHOOTING LINE

Guns of all abilities will discover a warm welcome at the hugely popular Shooting

Line, run by EJ Churchill. It'll be packed with have-a-go stands, demonstrations and competitions (including the CPSA Champion of Champions and 40-bird Sporting Game Fair Challenge), as well as the chance to enjoy 30-minute or 10-minute 'shooting experience' lessons with BASC instructors.

Bring your gun along and take the opportunity to get your eye in ahead of the new season – and with the challenge of replacing lead shot at the forefront of everyone's minds, the Shooting Line is the perfect place to test a number of leading brands' lead-free, sustainable cartridges. You'll be able to see for yourself the kind of ballistic impact they possess. →





FISHING VILLAGE

Situated at the heart of the fair beside Ragley's lake, the new look Fishing Village offers much more than the chance to practise casting a line. Alongside demonstrations from Charles Jardine, Paolo Ercoli and The Veniard fly-tying team, among others, novices and experienced fishers alike will be able to draw upon the knowledge of noted speakers, including Marina Gibson and Henry Giles at the Landing Stage, a theatre that will also host talks by David Lyons from the fishing and mental-health charity Tackling Minds. Members of the Game Angling Instructors' Association (GAIA) will be on hand at the lake to guide those interested in taking up fishing through those first casts.

SHOPPING

We like nothing better than shopping at the Game Fair. This year some 230 retailers will attend for the first time, alongside familiar favourites across nearly 1,000 stands. Visitor's can buy everything from fine art to 4x4s, from garden statues to walking sticks. Philip Blacker (this month's *Sporting Artist*, see pages 108-109) will be exhibiting on the Rowles Fine Art stand, a wonderful opportunity to appraise his work.

The Game Fair is one of the best places to discover the latest products and take

advantage of excellent show offers (see *Game Fair Kit*, pages 14-15, for some retail inspiration). It's also worth remembering that no shopping trip would be complete without a complimentary copy of *The Field*, which you can pick up, along with a subscription (it makes the perfect gift), at *The Field* stand on Gunmakers' Row.



Above, top: brush up on your fishing skills at the Fishing Village. Above: there's always time to shop

FOR THE FIRST TIME

Catch a special screening of the 1976 film *John Macnab* at the open-air cinema within The Clarence Court Main Arena. The three-part dramatisation of John Buchan's 1925 novel tells the story of how a barrister, cabinet minister and banker set themselves a shooting and fishing challenge in the Highlands and it's an absolute must for any fieldsports enthusiast. It is the tale of derring-do that *The Field's* Macnab Challenge is based on. The film will be shown at 6pm on the Saturday and will be introduced by John Buchan's granddaughter, Ursula Buchan. Seats are limited, so book your tickets as soon as possible.

The Totally Game Area, hosted by the British Game Alliance, aims to educate visitors on everything involved in preparing and eating what we harvest through shooting, and there will be delicious things to try from the 16 small producers in attendance.

The new LAPADA Pavilion is a must for lovers of art and antiques. A comprehensive list of exhibitors will display their selection of sporting art, sculpture, furniture and jewellery.

THE FIELD'S KITCHEN THEATRE

We are delighted to sponsor *The Field's* Kitchen Theatre again this year, a perfect match between heritage, harvesting game



Above: the Euro Challenge will take place on the Friday. Left: the hound parade is always popular

the Euro Challenge, the same day as the brand new HPR Home International in the International Gundog Arena. The eagerly awaited Home International takes place on the Saturday and Sunday for retrievers and spaniels respectively, and spectators will see a showcase in quality handling and dog work from some of the best.

New for 2021 is the Working Gundog Test Challenge, aimed at amateurs handling retrievers and spaniels. Qualifiers for the challenge's grand final have already been taking place, and finalists will compete for a prize of £2,000 for the two overall winners. It's not all about the plate. Enter your family hound in the have-a-go scurries or learn about familiar and rare gundog breeds in the Sporting Dog Pavilion. Gundog demonstrations will take place in the Clarence Court Main Arena, where you'll also find the hounds parade and the hotly contested terrier racing.

Dogs are *de rigueur* at The Game Fair and the Marquess of Hertford, who has numerous four-footed friends at Ragley, is a huge supporter of them. "As a former shepherd and former flock master I always take great pleasure in watching the working breeds and spent many enjoyable →

and the best game cookery. Watch José Souto and Rachel Green showcase the best of game with demonstrations sure to educate and entertain. VIP package holders will be able to enjoy a menu created by chef and TV presenter James Martin at The Enclosure restaurant over the weekend. The Country Food Trust is this year's Official Charity of The Game Fair and has joined forces with chef Tim Maddams and the ethical food company Eat Nice Be Nice to run the Nice and Wild restaurant at the

fair. If lunch including smoked pheasant shawarma or a wild venison, ginger and soy spicy rice bowl appeals then waste no time in reserving your table at Nice and Wild via The Game Fair website.

GUNDOGS

You will be unable to move for gundogs at The Game Fair, which is once again home to an impressive programme of events. Teams from across Europe will gather in the Gundog Challenge Arena on Friday for

years following various packs of hounds,” he says. “I had two particularly notable sheep dogs, Lynn and Shep, whose loyalty and outstanding ability in the field were a pleasure to behold. Dogs have so many different roles and abilities and we are looking forward to welcoming them all.”

DEBATES, DEBATES, DEBATES

The Game Fair would be nothing without tough conversations. Charlie Jacoby will once again compère lively discussions at the Carter Jonas Game Fair Theatre, with contributions from the CLA, Countryside Alliance, GWCT and BASC, among others, on issues affecting our rural way of life. Lord Hertford hopes a number of topics will attract discussion.

“The countryside is probably more relevant to society now than it has been for much of the past hundred years with so many people looking to move back to more rural locations,” he says. “The Agriculture Bill and the Environment Bill are likely to create one of the most significant changes in land management in my lifetime. The environment is of particular concern to me and environmental issues are something that I have been focusing on in recent years.

“We are looking at how we can reduce our carbon footprint at Ragley and I hope this will be one of the subjects widely debated as it is so important to how the countryside is used and managed in the future. Lead in the food chain is also an increasingly important subject and one which we are focusing on within Ragley’s butchery business. Warwickshire couldn’t really be much farther from the sea but the pollution of our rivers and coastline, along with the unchecked decline of keystone species such as the Atlantic Salmon, should also be an important topic for debate.” We heartily concur.

FOR THOSE STAYING OVERNIGHT

With staycation being the buzzword for summer 2021, use The Game Fair as a chance to enjoy a spot of camping or glamping. Canvas bell tents are offered with



Above, top: the venue, Ragley Hall. Above: thought-provoking debates (left); fun for all the family (right)

a variety of furnishings, from the basic to the luxurious, but you can bring your own tent, caravan, motorhome or horsebox to the 10x10 pitches. Catering concessions are available at the campsite, which is open for five days. So how will Lord Hertford be spending his time at The Game Fair?

“The last year has been a particular challenge personally as I have been unable to welcome people to my home. One of the

“It’s Time to Celebrate is the tagline for this year’s event”

benefits of Ragley for an event such as The Game Fair is its central location and so I am looking forward to catching up with so many of my friends that I have been unable to see over these months of lockdown.

“I enjoy The Game Fair process, from the beginning of the site set up, and the variety of interests over the three days of the show will keep me very busy. On top of that we are hosting a number of events and parties in the house and I am looking forward to the whole weekend.”

The organisers of The Game Fair are proud that the event is happening at all given recent events and hope it will be one to remember. It’s Time to Celebrate is the tagline for this year’s event, and so we will. ■
For more information about The Game Fair, visit thegamefair.org



THE FIELD GAME FAIR SUBSCRIPTION AND TICKET OFFERS

The Field has been attending The Game Fair since its inception in 1958 and we look forward to welcoming you to our stand on Gunmakers’ Row. Come and say hello to the team, enjoy a complimentary copy of the magazine and take advantage of our special show subscription offer – subscribe and save up to 40% plus receive a free gift.

Readers also can take advantage of an exclusive ticket offer: £30 per ticket, including exclusive premium parking (ideal after a long day at the show or for depositing bags). Simply use the code THEFIELD21 at the checkout.