



Anne-Sofie Lucan

The Countess of Lucan explains how guns and game captured her spirit, and why she developed a range of clothing to suit her sporting lifestyle

I HAVE held a fishing rod with some skill and ridden Icelandic horses in Denmark since childhood at least as well as I now ride those from Hyde Park Barracks, but it has always been guns and game – big, running or driven – that captured my spirit. That's not to say I wasn't standing behind my father as a young girl, beating and learning terrain from the beaters, handling shot game or gralloching deer, but that unforgettable moment for a passionate gun, when body and weapon really become one, was reserved for my early twenties.

I have been fortunate enough, since that moment, to have enjoyed some of the finest days available for grouse, pheasants or partridges each year here in Britain and I liked it so much I made a career of it, building up an elite sporting agency, Fie's Club, with access, much treasured, to some of the best-run shoots across the country.

Whilst driven game is a particular focus, I'm ever enthusiastic to explore game hunting more broadly, an openness that last year allowed for one of the most exhilarating and unforgettable moments in my sporting life: my first heart-pumping *monteria* in Extremadura, Spain. Extreme by name, extreme by nature and too good an opportunity to be missed due to a three-month-old baby. That's why nature gave it two parents, I said to my unfortunate husband.

We were 40 guns shooting over 600 hectares of undulating, picturesque vistas. I was tucked into a large crevice and could see far afield. For much of the time one saw little, just hearing bursts of noise when

the dogs barked or feeling the vibration of hooves as animals rustled through the bushes and undergrowth.

Then, suddenly, a pig, deer or mouflon would spring into view from the scrub and then only for a flash of seconds – a real call on the adrenaline, stealth and alacrity of a

TOP TIP

The best advice I have been given is that respect for the sport is everything, from respecting above all the game, common courtesy to fellow guns, careful handling of the gun itself and tipping properly, right through to writing handwritten notes to hosts.

patient gun. It presents an unforgettable series of challenges on a vast but superbly, and sustainably, run estate and it is one a partner can enjoy as a mere spectator, too, as when resting on a blanket they can feel the vibrations of the animals running. That, combined with the sounds and dogs and game, makes the heart beat faster.

A really good female shot can raise eyebrows, sometimes dismissive or disappointing, in any place and there have been a few odd moments in the UK when I have faced some recalcitrant types but, happily, it is rare. If you love a sport with a passion, you get good at it and if you love that sport a lot, you like other people who are good at it regardless of who they are or where

they came from. And there are a lot of great female shots to look up to. I think of Carmen Foroni, a world champion in competitive shooting, who doubled up as a super model (Carmen Carmen), and a person I have had the honour of getting to know.

Or then there is Cristina López de Ceballos y Fernández de Córdoba, who owns the leading hunting, shooting and outdoor urban casualwear shop in Madrid, Serbal de los Cazadores. Cristina is a pigeon-shooting champion and in 2017, while seven months pregnant, she won the Helice World Championship. Wow! What a dynamo.

All of us in the competitive shooting world are, of course, led by the best of the best, Nicola Heron. She heads Team GB, is a director of the CPSA (Clay Pigeon Shooting Association) and a Fedecat shooter, and spends much of her time at shooting competitions with her husband. That's what I call a true romance – a proper love of a sport.

I have found, in recent years, that in the drive for practical outerwear, some of the care and respect in simple dressing has been lost in a cloud of dull grey and green technical fabrics. That spurred me on to my latest endeavour, LUCAN, to develop a line of urban, casualwear that is both elegant and functional for shooting: well treated, waterproof tweed with the ergonomics for shooting – such as good vents and practical pockets – but styled for either women or men so that you feel comfortable wearing the items straight from the shoot onto the train or plane back home and on to a dinner party. Above all, the clothes have little flashes of colour and pizzazz. *The Field* has kindly pictured a couple of these. I hope fellow guns, male and female, love them as much as I do. ■

View the range at: www.houseoflucan.com