

A BIT OF A MANIC MONTH

Mick Garvey recalls a busy few weeks – with the promise of many more to come

September was a busy month for me, even though I had been giving the squirrels a bit of a wide berth due to the pheasant poults getting settled in, but that's all about to change now the season has started. The Midland Game Fair is the last major show of the year so I was keen to have the full weekend there to meet up with a few good friends and suppliers. Scott Country International, as always, were present and we had a great night out on the Friday discussing many ideas for the future and I'm quite excited about it, to be honest. More conversations about new products were held with Sharon and Gwyn from DJD decoys, the Enforcer guys, and with Tony and Edward at ASI, the FX Airgun rifle importers, both of which caused a stirring of excitement.

I also spent quite a while talking with Claire, Sheila and Chris at Air Arms about different pellets etc, and as you'll know, the AA Diablos are the only lead projectile to grace my barrels. Air Arms do a great deal on pellets at the shows, and it is always a priority for me to pick them up then – and the coffee is not too bad either. Best Fox Call was another supplier for me to chat with, and that was solely for my foxing supplies, but it was great to catch up with Rob from BFC.

ALL GO FOR THE SHOWS

I rounded the month off with a visit to the South Yorkshire Shooting Show at Doncaster racecourse, a relatively small show, but a very interesting one and I'm sure it will grow. Again, I met up with the Enforcer guys and they confirmed what we'd talked about regarding new kit in the pipeline. I also had an interesting meeting with the Northern Shooting Show organisers which I hope will lead to some very exciting (for me, anyway) liaisons. Our very own Gary Wain was there and we had an informative talk about his speciality – pellet testing. I might have given him some food for thought regarding pellet performance in FAC air rifles. I was lucky enough to meet up with a few readers of Airgun World, and it never



Happy as a sandboy with the Impact.



You need good eyes here.

ceases to amaze me how well informed they are and how they can remember some of my features from way back. It's always a pleasure to chat and exchange information. Cheers guys, you rock!

“the weather has been unusually warm recently and I wasn't expecting too much action”

I cannot finish this without mentioning The Old Hedgecreeper, Rob, and his 'interesting' field craft show. Sadly, this was spoiled by the actions of some despicable low-life stealing a gundog whilst Rob was performing. Luckily, the dog has been returned to its rightful owner

Blink and they're in.



I spy something beginning with ... F.

after a huge plea for help on social media, making the dog too hot to handle. Well done, everybody! I simply cannot comprehend how the owners felt. Unfortunately, there was a similar incident at the Midland, but as far as I

am aware the owners there haven't been as lucky and the gundog is still missing.

WICKED

So on to the pest control. A couple of missed calls whilst working on scaffolding, and a

rather alarming voicemail from one of my permissions, left me in no doubt that I needed to get to this place asap. Jay, from the steel works, had an infestation of ferals that were causing a right old mess from up above. Friday afternoon is the only time I can take care of this job when the workforce has knocked off early, leaving me with time to roam freely. Some might remember me taking care of the ferals here previously, and that was in the colder months when they came in for warmth, but the weather has been unusually warm recently and I wasn't expecting too much action – how wrong I was!

The first visit had me coming face to face with half a dozen of the flying rats and every one taken out with the sub 12 .22 Wildcat. I have this topped with my old trusty Mk1 Photon, getting on a bit now I know, but still managing to do the business. The onboard IR is adequate for my needs here, but I stick the Tracer f900 on top just in case I need it. I really love this IR lamp from Deben, but I have been given a Wicked Hunting Lights A51IR from the people in America who supply SC International, which is a great gesture after only meeting them at the Shot Show earlier this year. So, I'll be doing a comparison test between the f900 and the Wicked – interestingly, the Wicked has three LEDs, two of them are IR and the third is a red one.

My second visit wasn't as productive, and I took just three from the upper steelwork, but that was all there was and it doesn't really matter. It's a nice change of scenery, and my efforts are greatly appreciated – I have a 'job for life' there apparently. I have even been given my own personal PPE gear for the job, which is nice.

A FEW PROBLEMS

A new permission on a huge rapeseed plantation was dropped in my lap this month. There are about 10 fields, most of which are relatively small, but the main field is huge and is getting hammered by the pigeons. This permission has brought a few problems, to say the least. There are public footpaths around and through the fields, but as advised by the farmer, no one seems to pay attention to them and generally wander wherever they like.

“Best to leave them to it, Mick,” was his advice, “but if you can make your presence known by being seen driving round, that should help.”

My first lap of the fields was after work one evening and he hadn't been exaggerating. The walkers were everywhere; some with cameras, some with dogs, cyclists and runners, too. Everyone seemed pleasant enough as I drove past saying ‘Hi’ and asking them to be aware that if they saw my truck then I would be shooting and if they could try and keep to the paths it would be appreciated. Everyone was happy, or at least they were until I turned one corner and spotted a huge parliament of magpies out in the field. It would be rude not to take these nest robbers out of the game whilst here, and I set about getting amongst them with the FAC FX Impact/Hawke Airmax, and the nearest was about 45 yards so this would be the right gun for the job today. I took four, one after the other, through the passenger window with my back to the houses behind me so that safety was ensured.

PATIENCE REQUIRED

The magpies were just getting the idea that something was wrong, cackling like crazy and buzzing the dropped birds, when I heard a voice behind me.

“You’re going to have to stop doing that!”



FAC and sub-12; both took plenty, but not as many as the Canon.

Every magpie culled equals songbirds saved. It's all part of the wildlife management deal and I'm happy to play my part in it.



I did the obligatory roll of my eyes before turning to see a gentleman standing with his hands on his hips, and I'm sure I could see steam coming from his ears. I put the gun down, unloaded, in the passenger footwell, turned and asked why would that be?

“You can't shoot here, that's why!”

Keeping calm and professional is the only way to deal with this situation and after explaining all the ins and outs of what I was actually allowed to do, that I had permission from the landowner, and what was on the general licence to shoot, he seemed to calm down and the steam ceased – although it looked like reappearing when I explained that he was actually trespassing.

Once calm, he asked me if I shot woodpeckers. I told him no, and explained that no one else should be doing so either. I gave him the list of allowed quarry again, and said that I would continue to shoot, and that I



was on more of a recce to find a suitable place to set up a hide. Obviously, I'd be keeping a distance from this fella's back garden – I'm sure he'd be back giving me more grief.

Just when I thought it was safe to get back to the magpies and pigeons, he reappeared.

"Do you shoot crows?"

I'm sure my eyebrows were now in my hairline, and for the umpteenth time I gave him the list.

"Well," he said. "I feed crows in my garden and there's four that come every day. Can you please not shoot these four?"

I tried to keep a straight face and asked if he could identify the said four crows. If he could, then I would certainly not shoot them intentionally. I was greeted with a blank look, but I think my point was taken.

LOOKING GOOD

I have never seen so many magpies in one area and I'll be setting my stall out for this place. I could have taken double figures if it hadn't been for my conversation with the crow man, but that's all water under the bridge and on my last visits I haven't seen anything of him. I ended that mission with four magpies, two woodies and a feral. Further visits have seen similar bags, but the ground got a bit of a soaking and travelling round was going to mess up the crops so I'm



To be continued.

waiting for it to dry up a little before setting up a permanent hide.

Good news on the squirrel front, though. I have replaced a few feeders with new, bigger ones, and set up my trail cams to check out the activity. I have to report all is looking good. I even managed to get out twice for a couple of hours and sat under a beech tree that was

shedding beech nuts at an unbelievable rate. It sounded like rain on the fast-turning leaves. I ended up taking eight woodies, a crow and two skinnies, and again, there would have been more if I hadn't been taking so many photos.

Here's to a bumper autumn – I simply cannot wait! ■

The enormity of the new land.

