



**Knight
Frank**



IN ASSOCIATION WITH
SHOOTING TIMES
& COUNTRY MAGAZINE

ADMG - KNIGHT FRANK 2007 STAG SEASON REVIEW



The Association of Deer Management Groups is the representative body for deer forest owners and deer managers in Scotland.

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Front Cover: Ben More, Mull

All photography by Glyn Satterley, except pages 8 and 9 photography by Ewen Weatherspoon.

A review of the 2007 red stag season

The weather was fine and the stags in exceptionally good condition with stalkers reporting a "classic" rut.

Tony Jackson reports

For the majority of forests, the 2007 red deer stag stalking season in Scotland was, without doubt, one of the best for years both in terms of both weather and condition of the deer. Of course, there were exceptions, particularly in the west and north, but for the most part the weather remained dry and mild, with only sporadic rain. Several head stalkers noted that it was an old-fashioned season with a classic rut. Nearly all the forests reported that deer were in very good condition, some even holding fat at the end of the rut, while in many cases weights were well up on the previous year.

The main rut commenced in early October, but there were reports of stags holding hinds and roaring from mid to late September. On one forest in Argyll, stags began to roar on 23 September but hinds did not come into season until 8 October.

The only fly in the ointment has been the irresponsible behaviour of some hill walkers on a few estates. While the majority are prepared to cooperate with a forest and take note of warning signs or use phones, others go wherever they please, ignoring ridges and paths, with the result that deer are scattered and a stalking day is lost. One party chose to camp for five days in remote deer ground, then walk every hill in the area to cause massive disturbance. Another forest in Inverness-shire was badly disturbed, not only by walkers taking direct routes to summits, but also by mountain bikes penetrating ever deeper into the area.

Aberdeenshire

Baddoch reported a poor distribution of deer due to continual disturbance by hill walkers. The first roar was heard on 3 September and the rut was over by 14 October. This was the story too from Glen Callater and Mar Estates. The deer were in very good to excellent condition. A Taylor, stalker at Glenmuick, watched a golden eagle attack a yearling hind, an action that panicked the herd.

Angus

David Wilson, from Hunthill, noted that it was an "old-fashioned rut", while Fred Taylor from Invermark lost two days due to hill walkers and a helicopter hovering over the beat; summer conditions most of the time, and very dry.

Argyll

On the whole, the weather throughout the season was good, if mixed, with one or two forests reporting north-west winds, even hail, while others enjoyed south-west winds sun and dry conditions. For all, however, it was a relatively open season and the condition of the deer, in every case, was described as very good to excellent. Mark Brown, stalker at Castles, reported stags having some very good heads, while calves were big and healthy. Alistair Hunter, from Dalness, had increasing numbers of hikers using pony paths and walking through corries, while at Glen Noe walkers were camping in glens and on the hill. On the other hand, at Glen Strae, stalking plans had to be changed only on one occasion due to hill walkers. Peter Lawson, stalker at Kinlocheteacuis was delighted to see sea eagles and golden eagles, including one young golden. Mr J M Turnbull, owner of Strone, reported that it was the best season since the early 1990s.

Bute

David Wilcock, stalker at Dougario, Isle of Arran, noted a short, sharp rut, beginning late and finishing by mid October, with the deer in excellent condition.

Caithness

J Bain, stalker from the Welbeck Estates, reported 109 stags killed, the heaviest at 24st 11lb. The first roar was on 26 August, and the rut proper began in mid September. Several stalks were ruined by walkers and "though some are considerate, a small minority are hell-bent on not complying with requests or giving way to stalking parties".

Islay

Deer were in very good condition with a high hind/calf ratio on the Laggan Estate. There were no problems other than those posed by ticks – a very bad infestation. Stephen Stubbs, stalker, reported a 16-point stag shot, palmed on the right antler, though beginning to go back.

Inverness-shire

Nearly all the numerous forests in Inverness-shire reported either an early rut, beginning even in August (at Conaglen stalking began on 10 August) or a classic, typical rut getting underway in late September to early October. Niall Rowantree, stalker at Corrou, said that the rut was vigorous and many of the alpha males were returning to the winter ground before 20 September. Stags at Corrou seemed to have fared better than hinds. One big old stag, on his own when shot, was found to have part of a shin bone wedged in his jaw, and worn away by tongue action.

Lea Macnally, stalker from Glenquoich, reported a poor season, lacking in mature stags due to mortalities in the previous bad winter and spring. However, some very good stags were left holding hinds when the season finished. The majority of walkers ignored signs. Owen Mailer, stalker at Kingairloch and Glensanda, had 20 guests who each shot their first stag. He also noted that 95 percent of hill walkers were cooperative. At Kingie, stalker John Cameron had the lowest number of stags shot (15) for 17 years – many deer were lost in the wet winter. Even good, middle-aged stags died. It was exactly the same story at Barrisdale, with heavy winter and spring mortality. Again, the lowest number of deer shot (10) since records began.

Perthshire

The weather throughout the season could hardly have been better: long, dry sunny spells, a westerly wind and rain on only two or three days. There was, however, a fall of snow on 10 September.

On many forests the rut started in the second or third week of September and was over by the middle of October. One forest, however, Glenturret and Monzie, reported a slightly later than normal rut which ended quickly, with few mature stags seen. Every forest reported deer in good to very fat condition. George Macdonald, stalker at Camusericht, heard the first roar on 20 August, building up to a traditional rut. Various days were disturbed by walkers or mountain bikers, all claiming they could do as they pleased. It was the same story at Edradynate, where the hill was constantly ignored by walkers ignoring flags and signs. However, public access was no problem at Glenartney. James Barrie, stalker at Glenloch, reported a pure sika stag holding hinds at the Ben Challam end of the forest and more hybrids appearing in the cull.

Alistair Stephen, stalker at Lude, watched two stags fighting, when a third appeared and then charged before chasing one away to fight the other. The ousted stag was shot.

Ross-shire and Isle of Lewis

For most forests the rut was under way by the end of September, though Arnisdale, owned by J H Richmond-Watson, reported a late rut, not underway until 8 October. The stalker, Ewen Ballantyne, reported a 15-pointer, which was 14 or so years old and weighed 17st 2lb, shot by Clare Richmond-Watson. All forests reported deer to be in very good condition with plenty of fat. At Eilanreach, five stags weighing more than 18st were shot, and also a three-antlered stag. Several forests reported that very few run stags were seen, even at the end of the season.

The weather varied, with rain and low cloud in early September, but October was, on the whole, dry and mild. On the Isle of Lewis, however, stalker Chris Macrae had a foggy early season, a good mid season, but closing with rain, wind and mist. However, 120 stags were brought to the larder, the largest number recorded since records began in 1878. In 1912, 117 stags were shot when Murdo Macrae, Chris's great-grandfather, was headstalker on Eishken. Allan Cameron, stalker at Inverbroom, reported that "the large numbers of hillwalkers in the Fannichs are now unstoppable. They ignore signs and us, since the new legislation, and no longer phone or try to liaise in any way".

Aberdeenshire

Forest	Owner	Tenant	Stalker	Stags Shot	Av Weight	Heaviest
Ballogie	M Nicol	various	P Littlejohn	25	13st 3lb	17st 6lb
Glendye	C Gladstone	W Thomson	E Stewart	41	12st 6lb	20st 5lb
Glenmuick	Okeover Estate	n/a	A Taylor	72	13st 6lb	17st 2lb
Invercauld	Baddoch	Invercauld Estate	various	28	13st 2lb	16st 8lb
	Glen Callater	Invercauld Estate	various	50	13st 4lb	18st 11lb
	Home Beat	Invercauld Trust	D Pennell	41	14st 2lb	21st 8lb
Mar	Capt M Nicholson & others	n/a	I Campbell	53	13st 7lb	17st 12lb
Mar Lodge	National Trust for Scotland	n/a	S W Cumming	256	13st 10lb	20st 10lb

Angus

Forest	Owner	Tenant	Stalker	Stags Shot	Av Weight	Heaviest
Glenisla & Glencally	Archie Bennett Jnr & Major J P O Gibb	various	J Williamson	124	14st 4lb	19st 4lb
Hunthill	H N L Keswick	n/a	D Wilson	96	12st 1lb	16st
Invermark	Earl of Dalhousie	n/a	F Taylor	109	13st 8lb (dr)	17st 5lb (dr)
Rottal	D Ward	n/a	D Collins	22	14st 3lb	17st 12lb

Argyll

Forest	Owner	Tenant	Stalker	Stags Shot	Av Weight	Heaviest
Ardfin, Isle of Jura	A Riley Smith	n/a	W MacDonald	56	14st	23st 5lb
Ardkinglas	D Sumsion	n/a	J Ferguson	62	11st 6lb (dr)	16st 6lb (dr)
Ardtalla	Sir John MacTaggart	n/a	C Sharp	38	15st 8lb	23st 3lb
Ardtornish	Ardtornish Estate	n/a	S Boulton	46	15st 3lb	28st 8lb
Ardchattan	S Troughton	various	B Campbell	16	12st 1lb (dr)	18st 5lb (dr)
Balliemanoach	J & C Macpherson	n/a	G Macpherson	10	no details	no details
Black Corries	Vicomte A de Spoelberch	n/a	A O'Connell	39	13st 11lb	16st 12lb
Blackmount	P Fleming	n/a	A MacDonald	83	14st 2lb	20st
Castles	D Rees	n/a	M Brown	2	13st 7lb	14st 8lb
Dalness	R J Fleming	various	A Hunter	18	14st	17st 7lb
Dunlossit	Dunlossit Trustees Ltd	various	D J MacPhee	33	16st	22st
Glencoe & Dalness	National Trust for Scotland	n/a	J MacDonald	40	11st 7lb	14st 7lb
Glen Etive	P Fleming	n/a	I Dingwall	20	15st 3lb	21st 1lb
Glen Noe	L H Maitland	n/a	A Serviant	7	15st	19st
Glenkinglass	R Schuster	n/a	A Ross	35	14st 4lb	18st
Glen Strae	R Schuster	n/a	M Brown	23	12st 7lb	16st 8lb
Kinlochteacuis	P Lawson	n/a	P Lawson	8	13st 2lb (dr)	17st 8lb (dr)
Laggan, Islay	Laggan Properties Ltd	n/a	S Stubbs	26	16st 2lb	18st 4lb
Strone	J M Turnbull	n/a	J M Turnbull	30	13st 4lb	18st 3lb
Tarbert Estate, Jura	W W Astor	n/a	G G Muir	52	14st 8lb	23st 4lb

Arran and Bute

Forest	Owner	Tenant	Stalker	Stags Shot	Av Weight	Heaviest
Dougarie Sannox	S C Gibbs Charles Fforde	various N/a	D Wilcock J A McKinnon	29 69	14st 12lb 14st 2lb	18st 10lb 23st 8lb

Caithness

Forest	Owner	Tenant	Stalker	Stags Shot	Av Weight	Heaviest
Dunbeath/Glutt Estates Welbeck	S W M Threipland Welbeck Estate Co Ltd	n/a n/a	W Milne / F McKay J J Bain	76 109	13st 8lb 15st 7lb	19st 8lb 24st 11lb

Inverness-shire

Forest	Owner	Tenant	Stalker	Stags Shot	Av Weight	Heaviest
Achnacarry South	D Cameron of Lochiel	n/a	B Green	36	14st 10lb	22st 1lb
Achnacarry North Forest	D Cameron of Lochiel	various	A MacDonald	52	14st 12lb	19st 2lb
Ardverikie	Ardverikie Estate	n/a	D Langlands	152	13st 10lb	19st 10lb
Barrisdale	J & R Gordon	n/a	D Scott	10	14st 11lb	16st 5lb
Ben Nevis	John Muir Trust	n/a	A Macaskill	6	No details	No details
Camusrory	R Crosthwaite-Eyre	n/a	V Stockwell	28	16st 2lb	18st 4lb
Conaglen	J Guthrie	n/a	R Maclean	45	14st 1lb	21st 8lb
Corrour Forest	Corrour Trust	various	N Rowantree	330	12st 10lb	18st 2lb
Culachy	Falconridge Holdings Ltd	n/a	S Bremner	46	14st 1lb	No details
Coignafearn	Coignafearn Estate	various	S Dey	205	14st 11lb	19st 7lb
Dochfour	R J Baillie	L Smith	L Smith	3	15st 7lb	19st 4lb
Dalwhinnie & Strathmashie	Agro Investments	n/a	I K MacDonald	25	12st 7lb	17st 4lb
Glen Dessary	Sir Patrick Grant	n/a	Sir Patrick Grant	35	14st 9lb	19st 2lb
Glenquoich	D Gordon	n/a	L MacNally	17	14st 3lb	18st 4lb
Glenshero	Alcan Highland Estates	various	B Hendry	108	13st 4lb	17st 11lb
Killiechornate	Alcan Highland Estates	various	A Walker	54	13st 10lb	16st 10lb
Kingairloch & Glensanda	Kingairloch Estate	n/a	O Mailer	52	16st	22st 3lb
Kingie	I & H Brown Ltd	n/a	J Cameron	15	15st 7lb	17st 10lb
Kinloch Hourn	H C Birkbeck	n/a	D Cameron	9	13st 12lb	16st 2lb
Mamore	Alcan Highland Estates	various	G Loudon	8	No details	14st 4lb
Nevis	C Macintosh	n/a	R Mackinnon	15	13st	17st
North Morar	IRS Bond	n/a	A MacKay	30	15st 2lb	18st 4lb

Sutherland

For most forests the rut began from mid to late-September, ending around 10 to 15 October, and tended to be short, sharp and vigorous. At Glencanisp and Drumrunie, several false ruts were experienced from mid-September onwards, associated with high pressure, clear skies and cold nights. A return to mild, humid conditions then halted activity and the rut proper started on 24 September. Most stags were well run by 12 October.

On the whole, September proved to be very wet with strong winds. There were cold north-west winds and rain at the beginning of September. At Dalnessie, and at Glencanisp and Drumrunie, while a few days were lost to poor weather, stalking was severely hampered on many days due to mist. Generally, the weather was milder and wetter than expected. Every forest reported deer to be in very good condition, with many carrying significant back and kidney fat well into the rut. Peter MacGregor, stalker at Inchnadamph, reported that the hills are becoming increasingly popular with walkers, an aspect which certainly affects the stalking. At Dalnessie, stalker Andrew MacKay saw a very large number of frogs on the hill and many snipe in October. At Corriemulzie there were more hillwalkers than ever before, but all were cooperative with one exception. Two hummels were seen and one shot. A wide head, 38in from tip to tip, was killed on 16 September.

Invermark



Perthshire

Forest	Owner	Tenant	Stalker	Stags Shot	Av Weight	Heaviest
Ardvorlich	Ardvorlich Estate Ltd	n/a	R Baynes	47	14st 3lb	17st
Atholl	Bruar	various	D Morrogh-Bernard	49	13st 3lb	16st 2lb
	Clunes	various	R Hepburn	92	12st 13lb	16st 9lb
	Dalnamein	n/a	K Grant	101	12st 12lb	17st 3lb
	Forest Lodge	various	G Cumming	106	13st 7lb	17st 7lb
	West Hand Beat	various	A Reid	80	12st 3lbs	15st 4lbs
Auchlyne	Mrs E Paterson	various	G D Coyne	25	14st 5lb	17st 2lb
Boreland	Judge R A R Stroyan QC	n/a	T Frost	60	13st 4lb	17st 4lb
Camusericht	Argo Investments	various	G Macdonald	58	13st 11lb	17st 13lb
North Chesthill	Mr A Riddell	Syndicate	H Shearer	23	12st 2lb	15st 12lb
South Chesthill	Major Gen Ramsay	n/a	D Pirie	48	14st 6lb	20st
Cluniemore	Pitlochry Estate Trust	n/a	B Troup	25	14st 12lb	17st 2lb
East Schiehallion	John Muir Trust	n/a	A Macaskill	17	No details	No details
Dalnacardoch	Dalnacardoch Estate Ltd.	various	K Simpson	136	12st 10lb	16st
Edradynate	M Campbell	A Cargill	A Cargill	15	13st 3lb	16st 2lb
West Glenalmond	M Montgomerie	n/a	D Campbell	12	13st 7lb	21st
Glenartney	Baroness Willoughby	n/a	A Work	130	14st 2lb	19st 2lb
Glenlochy	S Robertson	n/a	J Barrie	65	13st 3lb	17st 4lb
Glen Lyon & Farleyer	I Wotherspoon	n/a	J Lambie	50	14st	16st 6lb
Glenturret & Monzie	Glenturret Estate	n/a	I Macphee	4	13st	14st 7lb
Innerhadden	L & S Barclay	n/a	C Macintosh	29	11st 6lb	17st
Invergeldie	J & R Priestly	n/a	A Rogerson	15	14st 13lb	19st
Lude	D Gordon	various	A Stephen	75	13st 8lb	20st
Monzie	D M Crichton	Glenturret Estate	I Macphee	2	13st 2lb	14st 2lb
Remony	A & J Duncan Miller	n/a	B Blackley/ A Hogg	20	13st 8oz	19st 11lb
Suie	Mrs J Bowser	various	G D Coyne	12	14st 8lb	20st 8lb
Tarvie	Sir Michael Colman	P Fetherstone	-Godley	35	12st 12lb	15st 6lb
		J Tod				

Ross-Shire and Isle of Lewis

Forest	Owner	Tenant	Stalker	Stags Shot	Av Weight	Heaviest
Arnisdale	J H Richmond-Watson	Various	E Ballantyne	30	14st 4lb	18st 10lb
Cluanie & East Quoich	C Siva-Jothy	n/a	R Campbell	31	14st 10lb	17st 9lb
Coulin	The Hon P Smith's Discretionary Trust	n/a	N Morrison	32	13st 6lb	17st
Eilean Darach	Mr & Mrs G Crawford	n/a	B Fraser	2	No details	No details
Eilanreach	Lord Dulverton	n/a	A A Mackenzie	40	14st 12lb	18st 12lb
Eishken	N Oppenheim	Various	C Macrae	120	11-12st	14st 4lb
Fannich	Medieval Industries	n/a	R Matheson	34	13st 10lb	17st 4lb
Glenshiel	No details	n/a	C Campbell	26	14st	17st 6lb
Inverbroom	M Lorimer	n/a	A Cameron	42	13st 8lb	20st 1lb
Inverlael	F van Beuningen	n/a	A MacGillivray	38	12st 10lb	18st
Kildermorie	I A Duncan	n/a	D Russell	41	11st 11lb	16st 11lb

Ross-Shire

Forest	Owner	Tenant	Stalker	Stags Shot	Av Weight	Heaviest
Lochluichart	I Leslie Melville	various	G Robson	73	14st 4lb	19st 9lb
Strathconon	Kirkbi Estate	various	A Cameron	118	12st 10lb	17st 2lb
Strone	F van Beuningen	n/a	I Fraser	24	13st 2lb	17st 13lb
Torridon	National Trust for Scotland	n/a	S MacNally	12	12st 12lb	15st 3lb

Sutherland

Forest	Owner	Tenant	Stalker	Stags Shot	Av Weight	Heaviest
Baledigle	I A Duncan	n/a	D Russell	3	No details	No details
Ben Loyal	Count A Knuth	n/a	I Smart	66	14st 3lb	20st 13lb
Corriemulzie & Loubcroy	n/a	various	A Mackenzie	79	13st 11lb	18st 8lb
Croick	J Hall	n/a	A Sutherland	18	15st 10lb	18st 8lb
Dalnessie	Ericht Farming Company	various	A Mackay	30	14st 10lb	17st 8lb
Dunrobin	Countess of Sutherland	various	I Smith	30	14st 7lb	22st 7lb
Glencanisp & Drumrunie	Assynt Foundation	Assynt				
		Biz Ltd	J McGonigal/S Brauer	134	12st 4lb	20st 1lb
Gobernuisgach	Duke of Westminster	B Stewart	D Campbell	25	13st 11lb	17st
Inchnadamp	G Vestey	n/a	P MacGregor	69	13st 10lb	17st 7lb
Kildonan	Mrs M E A Clay	n/a	A Grant	78	12st 8lb	20st
Kinloch	A Sykes	n/a	H Montgomery	40	14st 6lb	16st 8lb
Reay Forest	Duke of Westminster	n/a	D Allison	187	14st 1lb	19st
Skelpick & Rhifail	Hon G E Lopes	n/a	E Anderson	24	15st 2lb	20st 8lb
Strathmore	Heather Gow	n/a	R Watt	41	14st 6lb	18st 3lb



North Uist



Mar Lodge

“The heaviest reported stag of the season was shot on Ardtornish with a weight of 28st 8lbs.”

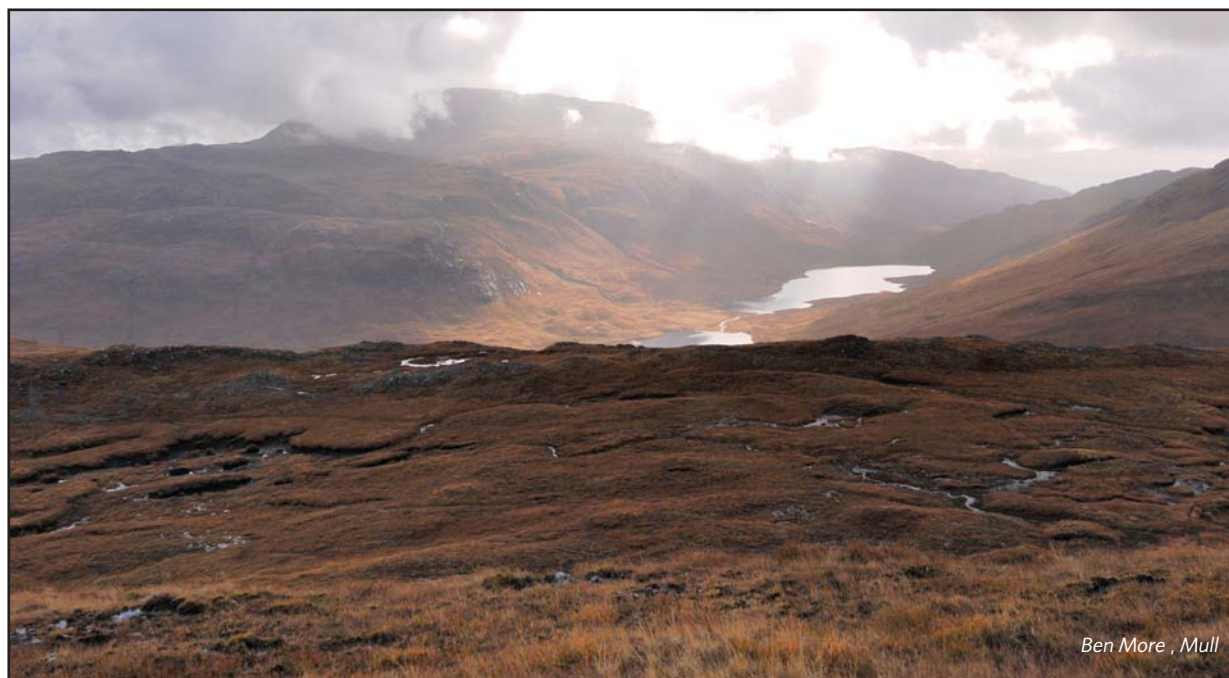
Boom or bust – 2008 and beyond

Angus Cheape FRICS

Gordon Brown, during his long tenure as Chancellor of the Exchequer, bored us to distraction with his reference to *no return to boom and bust* and a constant refrain on the merit of taking *tough decisions* in the best interest of the country. Since moving next door to 10 Downing Street, this hollow rhetoric has been exposed for all to see and by common consent the country now faces a difficult period, very possibly the *deep recession* so often denied. How will recent events influence the land market and will amenity property in Scotland continue to represent a solid and appreciating asset?

2007, in common with several previous years, has seen only modest activity in the land market generally and it is some time since a recognised deer forest was exposed in the open market. Several places of limited size, one of which was described to me in complimentary terms as a *pretend estate*, have been advertised and sold successfully against a background of strong competitive demand. Findynate in Strathhtay is perhaps a good example where I believe there were nine offers and a sale achieved reflecting a big premium on the quoted asking price in the region of £4 million. Dunira, a very beautiful mixed farming and sporting estate near Comrie in Perthshire, also sold well. Similarly Gruinards on the Carron sold quietly to the neighbouring ownership at Glencalvie. All this may suggest that a multi-interest landholding, irrespective of size but with a convenient location, may remain a very good investment indeed.

After many years of indifferent trading, arable farmers now enjoy the best prospect since the years following entry to the Common Market in the mid 1970s. At harvest in 2006 feed wheat was worth little more than £60/tonne, a year later around £90/tonne and in the past 12 months prices have doubled to almost £200/tonne. This is all very encouraging but the cost of inputs is rocketing and producers will require a price nearer £400/tonne to achieve parity in real terms with the wheat price in 1975. Would that demand for red deer venison approached that for grain!



Ben More, Mull

I recall that in 1967 hind venison was selling for one and tenpence/lb, the equivalent of about 15p/kilo. There have been countless initiatives over the years designed to promote venison, none of which have shown much success, and in real terms the venison price has barely shifted in 40 years. Perhaps there should be more recognition that whilst a stag killed in September, or indeed a hind in the early winter, produces venison of the highest quality, a great deal of red deer venison sold through game dealers is very indifferent. Would it not make sense to market Prime Scotch Venison in a similar fashion to, for example, Aberdeen Angus Beef, a brand with a worldwide reputation for excellence? This **would** be a luxury product.

Boom or bust? Even on the slender evidence available to us over the past five years, the underlying asset value of much of Scotland has doubled and I doubt there will be a major reverse in the medium term.

Productive land, as distinct from land held for the purpose of amenity, at say £6,000-£8,000/acre still looks good value by comparison with the equivalent throughout much of Europe. As we have seen wild land remains in strong demand.

There is a boom in soft commodities and along with the many other incentives to land ownership, I expect a further advance before any plateau in demand is reached. It has been said that the hyper-inflation of the 1970s and early 1980s saved many landholdings in Scotland by levelling debt and increasing the nominal value of the asset. Boom or bust – there are many plausible theories but I remain optimistic about this very small but increasingly rich market.

Angus Cheape is a consultant to Knight Frank and can be contacted on 07974 357 795.



Callum Ferguson - rifle maker

Dick Playfair

Callum Ferguson custom-builds rifles. As a profession, there probably are just a handful of craftsmen in the UK who do this. He only builds centrefire rifles - not rimfire or air rifles - and describes himself as being 'spiritually competitive'. In his line of business that means taking precision and accuracy to the absolute limit.

While the production of hunting rifles may be his core business, the fact that his target rifles were used by both the first and second placed competitors in the F-Class European Target Championships at Bisley last October is evidence of his drive for accuracy. At that level there is no room for luck or compromise.

Callum has now been running Precision Rifle Services for 17 years, 14 of these based at Tomintoul. What a superb setting for a workshop, next to Strathavon Lodge, set in the heart of whisky country on the Glenlivet Estate. For a man who trained in wildlife management at Sparsholt College, Hampshire - one of the leading colleges in the country for land-based industries - this is the perfect place to be based, and to appreciate the seasons as they pass by.

Following Sparsholt, he became a stalker/gamekeeper working for Tillhill Economic Forestry in the Scottish Borders and from there, he moved to Border Barrels in Newcastleton in the late 80's to learn the manufacture and fitting of matchgrade barrels.

For a career that demands such technical expertise and skill it is perhaps extraordinary that Callum has no engineering or other technical qualification or background.

"I learned a great deal while at Border Barrels, but it was as important that I had experience in the hands-on use of firearms for countryside management. I could understand the job they were required to do, and I knew that what I wanted to achieve - and what is needed from the point of view of animal welfare - is the most accurate equipment available. Something that is almost surgical in its capability."

All Callum's rifles are custom-built using high quality imported components - barrels, actions, triggers and stock blanks are all bought from the USA. Why not source these here? Callum says:

"The US rifle industry is massive, well established, and reliable. In my experience there is no competition for the small, niche component specialists which this market supports."

PRS is not a big business - with just three full time staff. Callum says that he is not an easy taskmaster, and works best as his own boss. And the fact that he does much of the work himself is also a unique selling point.

"Customers know that I do the work, and that's what they want. They pay the price because they want a well-built product, and that's what we try to produce."



PRS has grown from a standing start to a never-ending full order book; his rifles promoted mostly through word of mouth and now the internet. His customers are based worldwide - New Zealand, South Africa, Russia and Holland for example, with most UK orders coming from the Home Counties around London, and then Newcastle. He could easily employ more people and double production, but it is his belief that this could wreck his business overnight should quality slip.

A PRS rifle costs upwards of £6000 in synthetic stock / stainless configuration. To produce this would take around 60 hours all told, but to produce the same with an exhibition-grade walnut wooden stock could take three times as long, requiring lots of extra time for finishing the metalwork and the stock.

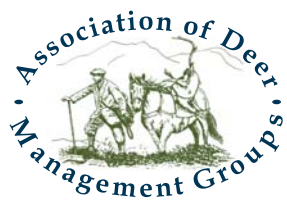
He says: "Principally, my customers are paying for accuracy and reliability, and not for looks."

Married with two sons, they could follow him into the business, but he would prefer they probably did something else. And while he misses being out at the start of the roebucks, he now prefers to escape the business altogether by "making Subaru's go faster"!

But many stalkers - even those who do not own one of his rifles - will have encountered him as he has acted as an instructor at the DCS Best Practice events, and described as "highly informative, extremely knowledgeable and has the professionals hanging on his every word."

On his website, Callum says that he is "dedicated to producing the most accurate rifles in the world." The success of PRS is evidence that he is doing that, but cautions "a rifle is only as good as the components, tools and expertise used in its creation." And while components and tools can be acquired by anyone, expertise can only be acquired over time, by someone with the right drive and dedication. That's what you find at PRS - in abundance.





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