

# RED GROUSE

## at Hadrian's Wall

— LARRY'S SHORT STORIES #292 —

You're immersed in history when visiting this part of England. The Romans were here two thousand years ago, the invading Normans put up castles a thousand years later — after the Battle of Hastings in 1066. We were at Hadrian's Wall; about the farthest north the Romans were able to conquer when they moved into the British Isles in the first century. They built the eighty mile long, twelve feet high, Hadrian's Wall, from coast to coast — to keep their neighbors out.

Son Russell and I were there to shoot red grouse at moors named Muggleswick and East Allenheads. The United Kingdom is the only place in the world that red grouse live and we believe that the northern part of England is the very best place to go for them.

We had flown into London and relaxed for a couple of days, visiting with the folks at Purdey and Boss — and walking in Hyde Park. Then we rented a car and drove north to a place called

Naworth Castle, just south of the border with Scotland. This is a real castle, made of stone with very high ceilings and a dining room 100 feet in length.

Red grouse are typically driven to the shooters by a line of "beaters" with dogs. The birds fly about eyeball high and divide left or right — or both, just as they arrive at the shooting butts (blinds). The flocks arrive in small groups of 10-20 birds. They fly low and fast and are the fastest of game birds — 70 miles per hour. Add a tail wind of



*Butt #5 was pretty good! On top of the moors, it can be cool and windy in mid-September, often with a bit of rain. That's one of my pair of Purdey 28-gauge side by sides.*

15-20 miles per hour and you have a serious "fast ball of feathers," for a shooter more used to a 50-mph clay pigeon.

It seems that each year I must re-learn just how fast these grouse fly. Always swing from the hips is great advice, but my hips don't seem to understand 85 miles per hour.

Finding myself behind the bird, just before the shot, my arms take over to finish the swing, pulling

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my face off the stock and of course messing up the lead. Then, of course there is foot position; as the flock comes in, I am positioned for a shot out front, but invariably the shot is left or right and my feet are pointed in the wrong direction. Foot position is also very important — as I re-learn! Well, there's always "next year!"

**Midway<sup>USA</sup>**

Larry Potterfield  
Naworth Castle  
Muggleswick and East  
Allenheads Grouse Moors  
Hadrian's Wall, near Brampton, UK  
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*Just a sign, but this is the location of the Birdoswald Fort at Hadrian's Wall. The Romans built the wall and this fort in the second century and abandoned it during the 4th and 5th centuries.*



*We stayed three days in this beautiful old Castle, driving out to the grouse moors for shooting, each day. Naworth Castle dates back to the 12th or 13th century.*