

**NIGEL ALLEN
visits Park Farm
Cottage – a hunting
paradise that you
can enjoy whilst
on holiday**

As I turned the car into the gates of the farm, a dozen or so rabbits, their ears translucent in the morning sun, scampered away into the bushes. Things were looking good. Even better as I slowly made my way down the long driveway; squadrons of crows, magpies and woodies lifted from the fields that flanked me!

I'd arrived at Park Farm – an airgun hunting paradise that's available 24/7 to patrons of the farm's on-site self-catering holiday cottage.

Now in its second season, Park Cottage is run by husband and wife team, Roe and Jo Norman – and to say that its location on the Somerset/Wiltshire/Dorset borders is idyllic is a massive understatement.

Roe, himself a keen shooting enthusiast and airgun hunter, had invited me along for a day to see for myself just what the farm had to offer – and he and I joined up with keen airgun hunter, Duncan Jones, who was enjoying a week away from the pressures of everyday working life with his wife and young baby.

"Kim, my wife, loves the peace and tranquillity that this beautiful countryside offers," Duncan told me, "and it gives me the chance to spend time in the fields with my airgun. It's the perfect way for both of us to wind down."



Another shot presents itself...

Set within the farm complex but with its own, private garden area, the cottage comfortably sleeps two – with room to put up a child on the sofa bed or in a cot – and is well kitted out with all the mod-cons for year-round comfort. It's the perfect base for exploring Park Farm's 120 acres of wild flower meadows and woodlands – not to mention the many local attractions, which include Longleat House and Safari Park. I'd certainly have



Above: Duncan Jones, with his mixed bag of Park Farm vermin.

This picture: Duncan enjoys the 120-acre airgun hunting paradise.

Inset, right: Park Farm's Roe Norman passes on tips about the local vermin hot-spots.



PARK LIFE



Run by Roe and Jo Norman and their two-year-old daughter, Gracie (right), Park Farm is set amongst some of the best airgun hunting grounds you can ever imagine (above).

no problem staying there for a week (or two) – but as I only had a day to cram it all in, I toggled up in my cammo gear and joined Duncan on his next foray...

“Actually,” Duncan confessed, “I don’t even have to leave the cottage – but don’t tell the wife!”

Pointing to the huge field that adjoined the garden’s fence, he remarked: “There’s an abundance of quarry out there all day long – and I picked off a crow half-way through breakfast!”

He’d already amassed a large tally – and a mixed one, at that. Park Farm is home to a multitude of quarry species and you can expect to see crows, rooks, pigeons, collared doves, jays, magpies, squirrels, rats and rabbits. Any self-respecting airgun hunter can expect to bag them, too.

“Of course, it’s not *just* about hunting,” Roe was keen to emphasise. “Being born and bred in the country, the

conservation issue is extremely important to me and this farm plays an important role in establishing the right balance of nature. We even have a couple of country wildlife sites.”

He continued: “That said, though, it’s vital that the pest species are kept under control, which is why I offer free hunting rights on my land to airgunners who stay here. They, too, play an important role in keeping the vermin numbers within acceptable limits – and while I won’t entertain the ‘shoot-em-up’ brigade who like to take pot shots at anything that moves, I’m comfortable encouraging the responsible shooters who take their hunting seriously.”

To ensure a ‘sensible’ clientele, Roe rarely takes shooting parties of more than two and freely admits that the cottage break is ideally aimed at Father-and-Son or husband-and-wife couples who want to spend quality time away from fast, city life. You need to be insured – through the BASA or the BASC – and Roe prefers



‘changeable’, I could clearly see that it would be impossible for anyone’s spirits to get dampened in any season; the scenery and shooting opportunities were breathtaking every step of the way.

Duncan was clearly an accomplished airgun hunter – and his former military training was evident as he switched into stalking mode every time an opportunity presented itself. I’d watch from a distance as his German camouflage disappeared into the shadows, hear the ‘*phut*’ of his silenced Air Arms... and then watch as he re-appeared, more often than not with a beaming face and another feather or fur trophy!

The variety of shooting locations ➔



Duncan tracks a squirrel – one of the many pest species resident at Park Farm.



that you have some field and shooting experience.

“I may have a lot of vermin,” says Roe, “but that doesn’t mean I’m happy for them to be shot at by an irresponsible airgunner who hasn’t got a clue about fieldcraft... and can’t hit a barn door, let alone deliver a successful head shot.”

However, there’s plenty of ground to check your combo’s in-zero at Park Cottage and Roe is more than happy to freely offer hunting advice. Given his wealth of experience of the surrounding land and knowledge of the wildlife, it’s well worth capitalising on this!

As we ventured through the rolling countryside, I was shown a viewing platform for badgers, four ponds and countless copses that were teaming with vermin life – and though the British summer weather was typically

FE!



Park Farm offers all kinds of hunting territory, including a multitude of copses (above) and four ponds (right).



⇒ would be enough to keep any airgunner satisfied for years, let alone the week – and Park Farm lends itself to just about every type of hunting challenge you care to mention. Stalking, hide-shooting (for which decks can be provided), ratting... and, by prior arrangement with Roe, you can even lamp or get transported around the farm in his Land Rover.



You can even shoot quarry from the comfort of the cottage's back-garden!

With a sudden down-pour, we ventured back to the Cottage for tea and a chat before Duncan set off on his evening's foray. A rabbit stew was already in the oven – and the next couple of days' meals already 'shot' and prepared! If the

weather was good, tomorrow's lunch was to be pigeon breasts with garlic butter, done on the Cottage barbeque...

My day had come to an end far too soon and though I had my rifle in the boot of the car, I declined Duncan's kind invitation – with Roe's permission – to join him on his evening rabbit stalk; I had to sort my photos and write up my report on this airgun hunting paradise. Work, pressure, ticking clocks and all that...

But as I drove back along Park Farm's long driveway and those woodies, crows and magpies lifted once again as they had done upon my arrival, I couldn't stop thinking about the place.

I had a week's leave due and I'd got the Park Cottage brochure in my kitbag. Mrs. Allen would love it, no doubt about that... and I'd still get to go shooting with my airgun whilst away on holiday. What more could any airgunner want?

Park Farm offers some fantastic wild flower meadows to stalk through – and an abundance of bunnies to creep up on!



PARK COTTAGE



PARK COTTAGE WAS formerly a grain store and stable, and has been converted to a very high standard with stylish furnishings and many original features. It comprises:



KITCHEN

Fully-equipped, with washer/dryer, fridge, microwave, toaster and kettle.



LIVING ROOM (above)

Open plan, with dining area. Sofa bed, wood-burning stove (for cosy nights-in!), TV, video, electric. View through patio door onto private garden and fields.

BATHROOM

Bath, with shower, basin and toilet.

BEDROOM

Twin beds, elm-beam ceiling.

GARDEN

Private and fenced, with grass area and patio, wood-furniture in seating area, barbeque, clothes line and some flower beds.

PARKING

Private and ample, adjacent to living quarters.

EXCLUSIONS

No pets and no smoking in cottage. Shooters must be insured. No large parties.

PRICES

From £215 to £280 per week, according to season. Available year-round, including Christmas/New Year.

CONTACT

Roe Norman – 01749 812230 or e-mail enquiries@parkfarmcottage.com

