

CLAYS FOR GAME SHOOTERS

The British Side-by-Side Championships is a celebration of a great English tradition, reports **Caroline Roddis**

It's a clay competition like no other. The British Side-by-Side Championships has been run at Atkin Grant & Lang Shooting Ground for years and attracts a loyal following. Hundreds came to the ground for this year's event on 25 August, looking more like a gathering of game shooters than a clay competition. "We love it," enthuses AGL director Charlie Stewart-Wood. "We encourage people to dress up – you'll see people walking around in full tweed suits. We've actually got the weather for it today, too, as it's not too hot."

The 145-bird layout is designed for the job, with grouse, high pheasant and rabbit targets. "We're very much game shooters within the company and it's natural for us to put on these kind of targets," Charlie explains. "Most shooting competitions today are mainly for over-and-under shotguns. Trying to shoot those with a side-by-side is a bit of a nightmare, so we try to simulate game birds as close as we can."

"We specialise in game tuition here and our ground is very much set up for this – we've got a 90ft tower and a grouse butt, for example."

The championship is more than just a competition; it's a festival that brings together some of England's finest gunmakers, who display a stunning variety of side-by-side guns on the day, from their latest models to vintage pieces in superb condition. Gunmakers present this year

included Stephen Grant & Sons, EJ Churchill, Chris Potter, William Evans and Carl Russell & Co. The exhibitors all bring demo guns, and AGL has a selection of side-by-sides in the shop that visitors can try.

"The festival adds another dimension to the day," comments Charlie.

"People come and have breakfast, shoot half the course, come and see the gunmakers, meet their friends, then go and shoot the rest of the course before having lunch – so rather than just shooting and going home, it's a whole event."

Despite the relaxed festival atmosphere, there was still a healthy dose of competitive spirit and scores were close in most of the categories, including a three-way tie for the Continental High Gun category.

Alongside the trophies, the winners received Lyalvale Express cartridges. Overall champion was J Lacey with a score of 112, with F Townsend Runner Up on 110. The Continental High Gun prize was shared between D Kent, D Butler and G Cotton, all with a score of 93. Winners in the other categories are in the table below.

12g	M Stafford	108
16g	R Franks	78
20g	J Field	75
28g	M Crudgington	91
Ladies	C Curtis	77
Juniors	C Hollick	96



Country clothing was very much in evidence, with attending game shooters encouraged to show their colours



The layouts were designed with side-by-side guns in mind, ensuring an enjoyable shoot



Despite the event's friendly nature the competition was very real indeed