

Dear Mr O'Reilly,

Further to an email I received from Guns on Pegs on February 27th, please see below a letter of support I have drafted for use as you see fit in your drive to have certain forms of shooting recognized in the UK's inventory of Living Heritage. The email also made mention of sending examples of work, including photographs and websites relevant to shooting heritage. To this end, please feel free to link to, or use any of the images / content to be found on https://www.instagram.com/jack_snipe_uk/ . If you do wish to use any, I can see if I am able to locate higher quality copies.

Best wishes, and good luck,

Peter Barker-Morgan

Dear Sirs,

Please take this as a letter of support in relation to the cultural value of shooting.

Shooting taken as a form of hunting, is an activity that is in many ways synonymous with what it is to be human. We have hunted for food since before our ancestors were human, and as such, it is deeply entwined with what we are, and where we have come from. Field sports in general, and shooting in particular, comprise of culture both with a 'c' and 'C'. There is the 'c' culture of fraternity that comes with group activities where we all pursue the same goal, the informal meals shared, the stories and tradition. There is also the 'C' culture - as a sport we are rich in art, literature, cuisine, language and dress. These things are not so much singular activities, but part of a world in the round - a world that is deeply embroidered and part of a wider cultural tapestry.

There are of course the obvious benefits to our sport - the days shared between those of different generations on a voluntary and equal footing, in an increasingly isolated and individualistic world. The work in conservation - the culling of deer, the restoration of ponds, the maintenance of hedgerows and woodland. These things speak for themselves. In my capacity as a landowner, and in my previous capacity as a family member involved in the management of the same land, the fact that I was able to express to other stakeholders as a sporting value (not in a financial sense) the value of seven acres of snipe bog in an otherwise well drained environment, resulted in not only a benefit to me, but a benefit to the population of snipe, and conservation generally. The fact that this argument trumped the alternative, which was to drain the land, and in so doing charge a higher rent, is proof of the overlapping benefits a cultural activity brings in what is increasingly a world that narrows to financial value alone.

To pick wildfowling in particular - a lot has been written in regard to the feelings it provokes in those who pursue it. These feelings are often expressed as a form of wonder, but I would like to try for a moment to quantify them. Wildfowling - which here I describe in the strictest sense as the shooting of ducks and geese below the sea wall, but that as a general rule do not entirely limit it to - bears witness to the intersection of land and sea, day and night, life and death. It inhabits in a true sense a liminal space – a place between places, but not fully of them. A place where the veil between things is for a short time drawn thin. This is not to pander to the absurdities of the supernatural, but to suggest in these activities we find a real connection to our place in the world. If we have chosen our spot well, and our luck is in, it is a full stop for our quarry, and everything else around us moves on – the day rises, and so does the tide washing away any trace that we have been there. As a species, we are apart from other animals in our ability to look both backwards and forwards, and also at the facets of what might have been, and what still might be. The reason I believe wildfowling evokes such strong emotion in its proponents is that it provides the means to stand on the cusp of so many things at once - it is a time and place where things crystalize and fracture at a moment along their fault lines – like a stone being cut.

There is immense value in all shooting sports, but especially so in an everyman's sport such as wildfowling. From Kenzie Thorpe, to Stanley Duncan to Sir Ralph Payne-Gallwey - it is a sport shared equally, and accessible – not much less so now than in the past - by all. To fail to recognise the value in this would not only be to depreciate a shared culture - it would be to take a step towards removing what it is to be human.

Kind regards

Peter Barker-Morgan