



Aiming for the perfect score

I HAD always thought of clay pigeon shooting as slightly odd.

Hunting for the table, I could understand. There is something to show for that. And anyone who enjoys eating fowl would admit there are few smells to set the juices flowing like that of a gently roasting pheasant, grouse or wild duck.

Blasting ceramic discs (110mm x 16mm) out of the sky? Where is the appeal? What is to gain?

It took Tim Bailey and Steve Simcock, chairman and founder member of Greetland Shooting Club about the time it takes to shout "Pull" and the trap to release a couple of clays to persuade me otherwise.

For a start, they point out, this is an Olympic sport. And one, you

By Tim Worsnop

will be pleased to know, Britain is rather good at.

It is also a sport where dedication is repaid with success. Which is probably why a large proportion do not hunt for the table.

A top clay pigeon shooter must master a series of different disciplines. Trap shooting requires aiming at clays that are moving away from you; Skeet is where they are launched at 90 degrees to the competitors and Sporting (of which there are two forms) aims to simulate the flight of different types of birds. For instance a spring teal - a type of duck - takes-off at 70 degrees.

And, contrary to what people might imagine, it is not that

expensive. A starter 12 bore shotgun bought new - the favourite makes are Browning, Beretta and Miroku - might set you back £1,000, though the sky's the limit for anyone wishing to push the boat out. A good second hand model would cost a more modest £300.

Cartridges are £3.50 a box of 25. Typically shooters would use 50 in one session. Clays are provided by the club at £6 for 50 to members and £8 for non-members. New membership is just £20, dropping to £15 in the second year.

And it is safe. Each event is strictly marshalled by two Clay Pigeon Shooting Association trained safety officers. People go through a lengthy vetting process involving the police before they

are granted a shotgun certificate.

Tim and Steve are as keen as mustard and never miss a Sunday shoot come rain or shine.

"It gets you out of bed on a Sunday morning and into the fresh air. And there is a good social side too," says Tim (34), a technical support manager for a lighting component company in Leeds, who has been a member of the club for six years.

"And it can get quite competitive. Some of the members have been known to have the odd quid as a side bet," laughs Steve, a technician at Spen Valley High School, Liversedge.

The club hosts days when beginners can have a go, under strict supervision of course. If you are interested try going to www.greetlandshootingclub.com



**Above: Taking aim: Tim Bailey, chairman of Greetland Shooting Club
Pictures: Charles Round**