



SHOOTING GALLERY

Housed in a wing of a Georgian stable yard is a shooting lodge designed as a space for large-scale entertaining – and to display the owners' sizeable collection of sporting trophies

TEXT **MARCUS FIELD** | PHOTOGRAPHS **SIMON BROWN** | LOCATIONS EDITOR **LIZ ELLIOT**



BOTH PAGES The owners' impressive collection of hunting souvenirs in the long gallery includes a case of grey partridges (opposite). The oak refectory tables (this picture) are by Will Fisher of Jamb

Country-house architecture is full of surprises: the humble door that leads to a great hall; the long gallery with its breathtaking scale; the perfectly placed window with an unexpected view on to an avenue of limes. But there are few modern-day projects that equal this new shooting lodge on a Hampshire estate for dramatic effect.

The spectacular trophy-filled main room, designed to seat 50 people for shooting lunches, is hidden inside the wing of a Georgian outbuilding recently restored by Smallwood Architects. The brief from the owners of the estate – who live in the adjacent neoclassical house, a recent replacement of a dilapidated Victorian pile – was to create an informal space for entertaining friends after a muddy morning out in the field. After putting back the missing roof and one entire side of the building, Smallwood handed over the shell to decorator Cindy Leveson to transform it into a warm and welcoming interior.

At the heart of Cindy's scheme is the remarkable collection of more than 200 trophies gathered by the owners during their many shooting expeditions at home and abroad. 'There was an entire cottage full of stuff waiting to go up and I knew it would be the key,' she explains. 'I remembered a photo I saw years ago of antlers covering a whole ceiling. It was the obvious way of dealing with it.'

But before the spectacular sight of the shoot room is revealed, Cindy's plan leads you through a series of more modest and practical spaces. The lodge is entered through a boot room with comfortable benches and pegs hung with vintage shooting gear. Off here is a cloakroom with a double basin set on a pretty forged-iron base piled with copies of *The Field*. A square hall leads to a small preparation kitchen and contains a glass case of stuffed jackals, a small hint of what lies beyond.

Then, as you enter through a set of double doors, the full impact of the 26-metre-long shoot room opens up in one dazzling hit. Beasts of all

manner and size seem to leap out at you: glass cases are filled with stuffed weasels and wildfowl, while boxing hares and jet-black crows line tables placed round the room. Above them hang the heads of bison, deer and exotic curly-horned game. And then, right up to the apex of the roof, hundreds of sets of antlers cover the ceiling. For Cindy, the composition was a labour of love. 'The architects drew each trophy to scale and we set them out on our elevations,' she explains. 'It's not a scientific arrangement: we put them where they looked best.'

With such a dramatic backdrop, the furniture needed to be simple and

functional. To seat the lunch parties, Cindy commissioned Will Fisher of Jamb to create four oak refectory tables with a combined length of 15 metres, along with matching benches made using oak from the estate. The tables round the walls are from favourite sources, including Dean Antiques and AVW. 'Nothing too precious,' points out Cindy. 'as you do need to be able to put your drink down on them.'

At the far end of the room a huge chimney-piece, also supplied by Jamb, is the focal point of a more intimate space arranged with a linen-covered sofa and antique armchairs that have been reupholstered in tweed. 'I wanted everything to look as if it had always been here,' says Cindy.

One more surprise remains in the form of a galleried snug reached from the hall. With its own fireplace, bearskin rug and comfortable chairs, it provides the perfect eyrie from which to observe the action in the shoot room

below. From here, it is easy to imagine the scene in the dying light of a winter day, the whole place alive with feasting friends, all watched over by the few hundred furry and feathered trophies of their sport that have now been so artfully immortalised on the walls around them □

Leveson Design: 020-7622 8815; www.levesondesign.com

Smallwood Architects: 020-7376 5744; www.smallwoodarchitects.co.uk



THIS PAGE CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT The shooting lodge is housed in a wing of the Georgian buildings that stand adjacent to the main house. A weasel is captured in a naturalistic setting; the majority of the taxidermy was done by Colin Dunton Taxidermists. A cushioned bench, upholstered in 'Loreta' by William Yeoward, provides a comfortable seating area in the boot room. In the entrance hall, sporting accessories – such as a gun case, shooting bags and polo mallets – are arranged for decorative effect. **OPPOSITE** The walnut mirror and colourful table lamps in the sitting area are from Dean Antiques in Fulham

