



The barns are being marketed as an exclusive holiday retreat and shooting parties are starting to take notice.



The properties have a number of focal points, not least of which is the lovely dining area.

Williamston Barns, Northumberland

An award-winning barn conversion run for shooting people, by shooting people. By **Robin Scott**.

When it comes to sporting stays the ideal accommodation doesn't always need to have a saloon bar downstairs to tick all the boxes. For proof, take a look at Williamston Barns. Owners Neville and Viv Gill have turned a set of stone barns on their secluded 1,000-acre Northumbrian estate into remarkable accommodation capable of catering for parties of up to 14 people.

The beautifully restored barns draw visitors worldwide,

and while they are advertised as an 'exclusive holiday retreat' they're increasingly coming onto the radar of shooters. This is not surprising. Williamston, hidden away in the breathtakingly beautiful North Pennines near Alston, is surrounded by grouse moors and pheasant shoots of the highest order.

Yet there's another reason why the self-catering barns are becoming popular with shooting parties: Neville is a lifelong shot and Viv has great experience of shoot day catering and

entertaining. In fact, Neville's interest in the sport extends far beyond the grouse moor and superlative pheasant shoot, which have been in his family for 300 years.

The Barn, which sleeps up to eight people in four king-size en-suite bedrooms, can be combined as a single unit with the Cowshed (which sleeps up to six in three king-size en-suite rooms) to accommodate larger parties of up to 14 people. All the en-suites are marble and the restoration work has been both meticulous and sympathetic with many original features, such as walls, slit windows and roof being retained. Even

an old dovecote set into one of the walls has been kept to now become a window.

The inside, which is light and spacious, is an absolute revelation. Viv and Neville have created a modern open plan living space complete with oak flooring, staircases and under-floor heating that sits perfectly with pieces of antique furniture carefully selected from the main house.

If all of this wasn't enough to tempt you, as we went to press word reached us that Williamston Barns had won a coveted Silver Medal in the Boutique Guest Accommodation of the Year category at this year's Northumberland Tourist Awards.

Cost: From £1,520 for a team of eight guns staying two nights. Cost per room per night is £95.

Shoots nearby: Narsdale, Garrowgill, Hartside and Whitfield.

Contact: williamstonbarns.com



The accommodation can cater for up to 14 people in several luxury bedrooms.

Scores

Catering: 9/10 Highly recommended outside caterers can be appointed, serving food made from locally sourced ingredients.

Accommodation: 9/10 Top on style, fabulously comfortable.

Atmosphere: 10/10 Peaceful and tranquil...or close the doors and make as much

noise as you want inside the thick stone walls.

Service: 9/10 Efficient and friendly.

Suitability for shooters: 10/10 Dogs welcome inside and out (but not in bedrooms). Gun storage facilities and drying rooms available on site.

Total: 47/50

Other options in the area

The nearby market town of Alston and surrounding area is a popular tourist attraction with dozens of hotels and inns offering accommodation at prices to suit every pocket. These include: Nent Hall Country House Hotel (from £70 per night, nenthall.com), Langley Castle Hotel (from £165 per night, langleycastle.com), and Lovelady Shield Country House Hotel (from £89 per night, lovelady.co.uk). ■