

[On the first day of Christmas...](#) [1]

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My true love sent to me: a partridge in a pear tree. In the original song it seems that 'my true love' is God, that the partridge symbolizes Christ, and the pear tree represents the Cross. Well, maybe.

But in Britain, until this year, if you wanted to deal in game - not just partridges but pheasants, hares, grouse, moor game, woodcock, deer, or rabbits, you needed a licence from the local authority under section 18 of the 1831 Game Act (plus an excise licence from the Post Office under section 14 of the 1860 Game Licences Act). The 1831 legislation laid down strict rules on when game could be sold - an attempt to ensure that breeding cycles were not disrupted. Freezing and refrigeration of course make a nonsense out of this, but our politicians seem to have overlooked this for the last half century. That is how laws are made.

The requirement for a licence to shoot game has been [scrapped](#) [3], but shooting on Sundays and Christmas Day is still banned, thanks to a campaign by the League Against Cruel Sports. (I guess it's not so cruel to shoot things Monday-Saturday.) Critics also argued that Sunday shooting would disrupt people's lie-in, and could prove dangerous as people went for a Sunday stroll. Still, they told us that nobody wanted to shop on a Sunday too, and now (even though our rulers allow the shops to open only a few hours) Sunday is a hugely popular shopping day. We really should scrap all this regulation.

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