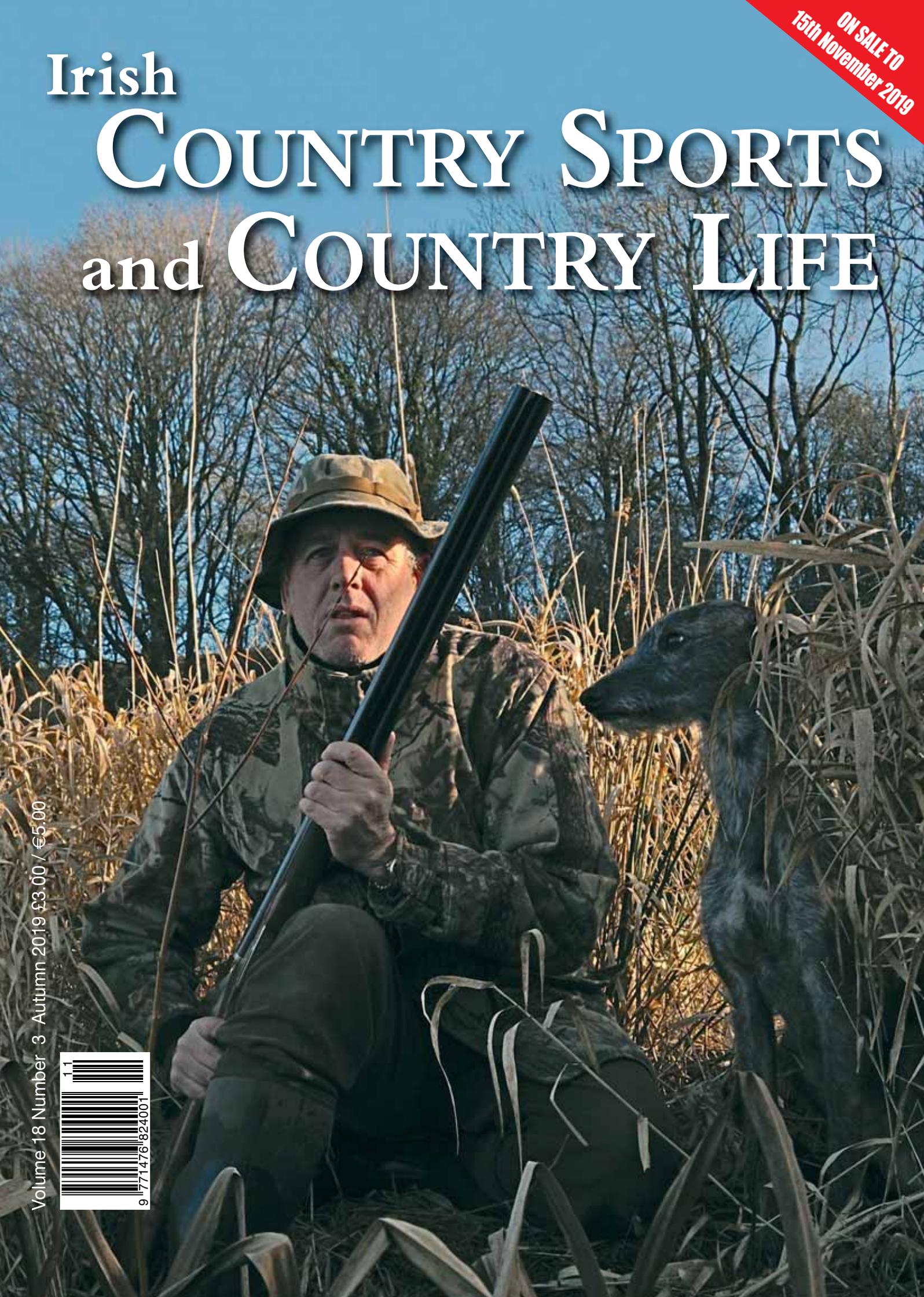


Irish

COUNTRY SPORTS and COUNTRY LIFE

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Front Cover:

'Waiting for the flight'
Photograph by Simon Everett.

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Country Sports and Country Life Rol Comment

Summer for some means fishing. For me it means mink hunting, which is a not unrelated pastime given its aqueous environment. There are only a few mink packs in the country and they are all based in the south of the country, including Cork where the love of hunting with hounds in its variety of forms is a passion for many and widely followed. I joined one of the packs at the beginning of July, not far from Mallow, where we hunted for several hours along the Blackwater River. The Blackwater is one of the finest fishing rivers in Ireland, especially famed for its salmon fishing. It's also an excellent place for hunting mink.



injected with a herbicide in its stem.

We walked for a kilometre along this 30 metre wide stretch of the river, on a warm, cloudy, summer's day, and after a while one of the dog hounds began to tentatively open up. He was followed by a few others. The volume grew louder and louder, until it was a great, stirring chorus of sound, reverberating off the water's surface. Members of the hunt, positioned further along the bank, hollered. They had spotted the mink and raised their caps. Enthused by this, the huntsman encouraged his pack onwards. This hunt lasted for a couple of hours, until

I joined about 50 friendly hunting folk in a large farmyard at 11 in the morning and we walked for a mile down a long, gentle slope where we met up with the Blackwater whose waters were mostly waist-high, although there were a few spots where you would go in over your head. A pack of 15 couple of fine-looking hounds swam up and down the river and searched the river banks. After half an hour they began speaking (which is always a lovely sound in any riverine environment) and followed two animals (one quite large, the other considerably smaller) for an hour until we lost the scent. We tried hard for the next hour or so to pick up the scent again, probing likely spots where the mink might be lying. One of our number, a young, enthusiastic fellow, forded the river with gusto making for a great pile of tree branches beside a thickly overgrown stretch of riverbank. He was of the opinion that the quarry might be lying in the branches or the undergrowth.

Unfortunately, the river dramatically deepened at one point and he could no longer find footing on the riverbed. It was time to do the breaststroke! Undeterred he swam over to the branches and began probing with his stick and striking the earth in the hope of flushing the creature. Several others joined him and there was great activity in this small area for a lengthy period of time. I am sorry to say it all came to naught. After a while, the huntsman had had enough and said we would move on.

The section of the Blackwater where we had been hunting had only been ten metres in width but now we rounded a corner and the river changed dramatically in character, widening to about 30 metres. Clouds of flies were flying in centrifugal masses above the water. Stretching away on either bank were large fields of golden barley. On the banks there were yellow, white and pink flowers, and bumble bees feeding on thistles. There were sprays of white flowers on the river's surface. Amidst this beauty it was disappointing to see large blocks of concrete masonry in the river and along the banks. This masonry has been here a couple of years and still hasn't been moved. It was disappointing as well to see that the Japanese Knotweed was still growing abundantly in the area. In fact it seemed to have increased in expanse compared to last year. Japanese Knotweed is a real curse and destroys biodiversity on riverbanks. It takes over. If it's growing in your vicinity then be careful because it can undermine the foundations of buildings. Cutting it alone won't get rid of it. It will also need to be

the huntsman realised we were tired and hungry and blew for home, and the quarry made good its escape. Not to worry. It had given a fine hunt and will no doubt produce another excellent day on some future date. We had been out for seven hours and our rumbling stomachs now guided us back to the sandwiches in our cars.

At the end of July, I joined the same pack again, on the River Bandon near Dunmanway. This was a long drive from Birr, almost three hours, but worth it. The River Bandon is a lovely river. Its name comes from the Irish "Abhainn na Bandan" which means River of the Goddess. It rises in the Shehy Mountains and after travelling for 45 miles comes to an end at Kinsale Harbour. The river is famous for its Atlantic salmon fishing. The biggest recorded salmon caught in Ireland since 1991 was caught here by a Kilkenny angler in July 2008. The salmon weighed 12.8 kilograms and is on display in the Munster Arms Hotel in Bandon town.

It was a typical July day – cloudy and humid. The first three hours were uneventful. We walked along the river's banks and there was not a peep from the pack. Eventually we went into a very large wood and things dramatically changed. This wood felt like one of those fairy tale woods you read about when you are a child and which are scary. It also made us feel a bit like an explorer bravely forging through a jungle. The place was a maze and it would be easy to end up lost in it and wandering around for a long time. Its deciduous trees were thickly planted and low-growing. The undergrowth was dense. I always feel a slightly uncomfortable sensation going into such places without a compass and a map, because I trained as a walking guide and I would normally never enter large, pathless woods without a compass and map. (As one writer memorably commented about walking in these places: "These woods are about the possibility of getting lost. There's an irrational fear, a semi-pleasurable frisson, that one might get lost for ever. Woods make me think about darkness and light.") The river had divided into a number of streams here and we sank down into the riverbed with the water rising above our waist, we tripped over the multitude of tree roots, we jumped ditches. The hounds found two animals here and hunted for the next three hours, never leaving the wood. It was great fun and a great workout.

Derek Fanning
ROI Editor

Nowadays we are used to seeing firefighting in the media. Not the flames and fire brigade stuff, but the struggle to get the country sports or conservation line pushed out to some newspaper or broadcaster who has just launched into a tirade against some aspect of shooting or fishing or even farming.

You know the sort of thing I mean, the wildly exaggerated opinions on the controlling of vermin is a recent topic.

A previous Comment talked about the strike by Wild Justice/Packham at the licensing system to control by shooting in GB and the rush to get something in its defence carried quickly.

Why does it seem that we wait for the proverbial to hit the fan before we put out the good news stories that are waiting to be told?

Ah, but all that licensing stuff was sorted I hear you say. Perhaps, but look what's happening in that strange world of Guardian readers who were treated to this - Waitrose, Britain's largest retailer of game, is to ban the sale of birds shot with lead, as experts call on the government to ban its use.

The move has been welcomed by the government's independent expert group, which concluded that there was no way to reduce the risk to human health and wildlife from lead shot other than by using alternative, non-toxic ammunition instead.

And who were these custodians of our health? None other than our old friends from the Lead Advisory Group. Remember them? Even old Swiftie got in on the act: 'John Swift, a former chief executive of the British Association for Shooting and Conservation (BASC) who chairs the Lead Ammunition Group, welcomed Waitrose's move, but said the Department for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs must take action to phase out lead shot.'

"Waitrose deserve huge congratulations and they are showing real leadership and we need more of it," he said. "The only way we can get rid of all these risks is to replace lead ammunition. Defra has got to pull its finger out and get the stakeholders around the table discussing the way forward."

According to Swift, tradition and a fear that banning lead shot is an attack on the shooting industry is stopping Britain's shooting groups from backing a transition to non-toxic shot. He said the number of different shooting organisations had not helped, with rival bodies worried they would be caught "on the wrong side of the argument. There is an attitude nowadays that anything that potentially restricts countryside sports is an attack on countryside sports, so the wagons circle and the attack has to be repelled. That prevents them from engaging constructively with a process of change, which strikes me as eminently doable."

And another LAG member Debbie Pain said: 'Killing large numbers of birds through poisoning is not a good idea, particularly when it puts people who frequently eat lead shot game at risk – and those people are mostly from the hunting community...'

Anyone go to a shooting friend's funeral recently who had died from lead poisoning caused by eating lead-shot game? No? Me neither, nor have I ever seen a case reported, but what would we know.

One comment in the paper about 'environment secretaries ignoring advice from the Lead Ammunition Group,' perhaps best summed up the thinking by government. Bizarrely no mention was made of all the legislation to impose various restrictions on



the use of lead when wildfowling etc.

The BASC comment in the piece was: 'As a market leader, we welcome Waitrose's decision to stock and boost their wild game meat range. Any increase in the availability of game in the public market is good news for the rural sector. Game is a healthy source of protein, is growing in popularity, and we recognise Waitrose's decision.'

I'll make no comment on that statement's effectiveness, just move on to the need for proactivity rather than reaction.

Elsewhere in this magazine, we are running a GWCT report 'The impact of pheasant release at Exmoor shooting estates,' which illustrates clearly the positive impact of pens in woodland and on farmland for ground plants, mosses, lichens, conifer woods, and hedgerow birds. It is a scientifically researched report. It is very positive. It is to be welcomed and I have no doubt that there is a direct read-across to release pens in other areas of the UK. Conservationists should welcome the report as should shooters everywhere.

And can we expect to see this covered widely in the media anytime soon? Has it been used as an instant rebuttal for continuing anti shooting drivel? Has it been used pro-actively to get our 'retaliation in first' (as it is called in the business) Is anyone awake in the opulent PR/news management blocs in our membership bodies?

However, no amount of well researched papers etc aimed at policy makers counts as much as the public vote for politicians. The public votes nowadays along populist lines generally speaking. What I am really saying is - if the good messages are there to inspire positive public opinion, then get them into the public domain ASAP. Do not wait until a rebuttal is required. It does not require a crystal ball to see the coming areas of attack. Do the PRs not have media strategies in place - by this I mean strategies to run with NOW in areas likely to be targeted some time soon? It would be unthinkable that thought is not given already to coming attacks. The membership bodies should make use of the positive messages that GWCT and others already have NOW - in anticipation of whatever lies in store from the Wild Justices of this world. Set the PR agenda for a change in a positive manner NOW.

There was another sortie, this time on puffin shooting. A Daily Telegraph article trumpeted - Puffins being hunted and brought back to the UK despite Government efforts to save the species - and of course Packham on his Facebook account weighed in. Three days later I saw a shooting publication's 'investigation PROVES puffin hunting claims are a lie.....a few phone calls to the Icelandic authorities have revealed poor journalistic standards in the mainstream media.'

Some papers that piggy backed on the original story did then publish the facts, but as far as I am aware, the Telegraph did not. I suggest too little too late anyway, a response to old news

As noted above, organisations like GWCT really do have emphatically well researched factually positive messages for the shooting and other organisations to make best use of. We have the facts. Get them out there NOW. Get these factual correct 'good news' countryside and conservation stories published NOW. By the time a rebuttal is needed I'm afraid the news agenda and the headlines have moved on.

Paul Pringle, Northern Editor



'Cheers to Barbour's 125th Anniversary'

Leading heritage and lifestyle brand, Barbour celebrates its 125th anniversary this year, a significant milestone in the company's history. The Barbour story began in 1894 in the Market Place in South Shields in the North East of England. Today this 5th generation family owned business remains in the North East, with Barbour's headquarters and factory located in Simonside, South Shields. The company remains true to its core values of quality, durability, attention to detail and fitness for purpose, celebrating the unique values of the British countryside through its legendary product range.

The Icons Re-Engineered collection, new for this

Autumn/Winter celebrates this anniversary with a limited edition of iconic jackets for men and women that have featured large in the history of Barbour. Each Icons Re-Engineered garment is inspired by a legendary wax or quilt jacket from the archive that reflects a significant period in the company's history, updated into a contemporary style steeped in Barbour heritage, relevant for today. Embodying 125 years of experience and expertise, the Icons Re-Engineered collection offers the very best in protection, comfort and practicality against the worst of the weather.

For more information about the collection, please visit www.barbour.com

Red Deer Rut Watch – Killarney National Park, Sunday October 13th 2019

Dear Member

To book your place email us at info@irishdeercommission.ie confirming the names of all those attending, your contact number and email address, places are limited so book early!

The Red Deer Rut is one of nature's great annual spectacles and has taken place in Killarney every year for over 5,000 years. Killarney National Park is among the best locations in Europe to watch wild Red deer during the rut. This event is hosted by the National Parks and Wildlife Service and the Irish Deer Commission, and is free of charge.

The event is Family Friendly and Suitable for all Fitness Levels.

Places are limited and must be booked in advance, further details will be provided nearer to the event. Only those who receive email confirmation may attend.

Kind regards

Kenneth Sewell, Hon. Secretary



Irish Deer Commission

irishdeercommission.ie





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Homefield & Stream, 18 Church Street, Enniskillen BT74 7EJ N. Ireland
(+44) 02866322114

Sportsden, Trimgate Street, Navan, Co. Meath Ireland
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Barbour
125 YEARS
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Some NARGC updates from the summer of 2019



Hello again to Irish Country Sports and Country Life readers.

When last I wrote for these pages we had the European elections in prospect and the Wild Justice (a misnomer if ever there was one) attack on pest control in the UK. Here in Ireland we track the activities of Wild Justice as their devotees and followers on these shores will be quick to exploit any victories they might achieve. Thankfully they were frustrated in their attack on Crop Protection, Health and Welfare of animals, their feedstuffs and the protection of nesting birds, but not before serious disruption was caused to this vital work carried out by gamekeepers, farmers, shepherds and shooters.

Well, as suspected, this was only the opening skirmish in their war against shooting. They have now attacked game bird releases claiming that this activity disrupts nature's balance. This from people who have championed the reintroduction of raptor species long extinct on these islands. Raptors that have ravaged sheep herds, hare populations, curlew, plover, dove, grouse and countless other bird species. This from people who now agitate for the reintroduction of wolves to these islands. If they succeed there won't be a hill farm safe from these predators. Make no mistake these wildlife warriors will not be in the business of providing sustenance for their pet projects. Re-wilding gone mad you might say. We in the field sports community must ally with the farmer to oppose these people. They play on the fluffy bunny sympathies of a largely urban population with an imaginary image of what the countryside might be. They are helped by a media that paints a fantasy picture of the countryside, whilst at the same time portraying shooters and hunters in the same light as gangland villains.

I mentioned also the European elections. Here the outcome was like the curates egg, good in parts. In the South we saw a Green and an Anti-elected. Dublin was no better with the same outcome. Only in Midlands/Northwest did we get three fieldsports supporting MEPs elected. One of these, Matt Carthy, is already active on our behalf in Europe and nationally in progressing our campaign on opposing the EU proposition on banning lead shot.

NARGC national chairman Dan Curley is co-ordinating the effort

in Ireland along with FACE Ireland Chair Michael Fenlon, Face Vice President John Flannery and FACE Secretary General Dr. David Scallan. This is a hard fight but we are making progress and finding allies along the way.

The paradox in all of this is that we and the Greens should be on the same side, as we all have the survival of the natural environment at the core of our efforts. Sadly the Greens have adopted the goals of the anti-field sports lobby and in so doing alienate those who could help most. The fact that we are excluded from many conservation projects because of this prejudice speaks volumes.

We have had a busy summer covering events from the Cork to Galway shows and a visit to Shanes where Michael received a lifetime's award for his contribution to field sports. The national clay shoot over two days on Pat Loughnane's ground in sunny Ballinasloe was a wonderful coming together of shooters from across the country and ranging in age from 15 years to 85 years young. As ever thanks to Clonfad Gun Club, the NARGC markers and referees, Galway Game Hunting Federation, Clay shoot subcommittee, Competitors and all those whose contribution went to make for a fun and successful event.

The competition was fierce with old rivals doing battle again. Modesty forbids that I mention my home county triumphed once more, so I will congratulate the trojan efforts of Carlow (winners of division 3) and the drive that carried them over the line. Full results are published on our web page.

Many challenges await us. September will see the next phase of the ECHA action on the lead ban. We will be well represented there. The new season will bring the usual suspects out to call for a ban on our sport.

We in the NARGC will continue to forge improved links with the farming organisations and our fellow sporting organisations to secure the future status of our lifestyle. I will end with some photographic highlights from our year - see next page.

Until the next timeJohn Toal (National PRO, NARGC)



At the Press Launch of the NI Game Fair at Shanes Castle, Alderman John Smyth, Mayor of Antrim and Newtownabbey, greets Michael Fenlon, Vice Chairman NARGC. Also included are (left) Paul Pringle, Communications Director of Great Game Fairs of Ireland and (right) John Toal, NARGC PRO.



Meath ladies at the National Shoot.



Getting up close and personal with wildlife.



Meeting and greeting on our stand in Galway.



IFA Countryside and NARGC discussing the lead ban at the Galway Fair



The N.A.R.G.C. Members' Compensation Fund

Members' Compensation Fund for Hunters, Clay Shooters, Target Shooters and others who are Members of our affiliated Clubs

The National Association of Regional Game Councils encourages game shooters and clay/target shooters to support the Shooting Lobby by joining a Gun/Game Club, Clay Pigeon Club or Target Sports Club affiliated to the NARGC. With 24,000 Members, you will be joining the most authoritative voice for the sport of shooting in Ireland. You will also enjoy the benefits of your Compensation Fund, which pools the cash contributions of its members. Only Fund Members can benefit from the Compensation Fund. Protection is available for Fund Members up to a ceiling of €10m per incident. The Fund is administered by the Association in the best interests of the Association and its Associate Members. The Association welcomes the affiliation of new Clubs through its RGC structure.



In addition, with the NARGC you have:

- Full-time staff dedicated to working for shooting interests
- A say in the running of the Association - elections/resolutions
- A Members' Magazine posted free to your home at least once annually
- Habitat and other Grants for your Club - €350,000 granted annually
- Special Funding for Grouse Projects
- Grants for the purchase of Predator Control equipment by Clubs
- Mallard/Pheasant Release subsidies for Clubs and RGC's - currently €4.37 per bird
- Research into Game and other species
- Club of the Year Award

- Game Meat Handling Courses
- Representation otherwise at EU level
- A good working relationship with Farmers
- An Association Shop - books, badges, stickers, ties etc
- Monitoring and input into the drafting of legislation affecting shooting sports
- Inter-Club & Inter-County Annual Clay Shoots - biggest Clay Shoot in Ireland
- Members' access to information/advise on all issues every day
- Proficiency Courses and Safety Seminars for Associate Members
- Constant Government lobbying in Ireland and at EU level

We now offer Fund Membership to Club Members who are under 14 for just €10

For information on the Compensation Fund, call our Fund Office on FREEPHONE: 1800 222 444 or telephone our full-time National Fund Administrator on 086 788 8411 (office hours only please)



APPROACHING DISTANCE: The new Z8i 3.5-28x50 P from SWAROVSKI OPTIK

Responsible hunting over long distances demands an experienced shot. Local knowledge, correct estimations of external influences, personal experience, and the right equipment are key factors that can have a decisive influence on shot accuracy. The latest rifle scope from SWAROVSKI OPTIK is the perfect high-performance companion for challenging hunts. The Z8i 3.5-28x50 P offers excellent detail precision, even over long distances, and will win you over with its limitless versatility. The newest member of the Z8i family will be available from selected retailers from September 2019.

Second to none

While the light weight of the new Z8i (665 g/23.5 oz and 380 mm/15 in long) is a real asset for mountain hunting, the 28x magnification on this rifle scope is superb for longer distances too. The 8x zoom range, outstanding optical display performance, and uncompromising image definition over the entire field of view enable maximum detail recognition at all levels of magnification.

Perfectly designed

Like all Z8i series models, the new Z8i 3.5-28x50 P is characterised by its special features: the slimline 30-mm (1.2-in) central tube

blends seamlessly with any hunting firearm. The perfectly ergonomic illumination unit with large operating features make it quick and reliable to handle. The SR mounting rail ensures quick and easy fitting.

Customised

The functional accessories increase the user-friendliness of the new Z8i rifle scope, as well as help protect the device and customise it for each individual hunter. The ballistic turret flex (BTF) can be used as either an elevation or windage turret. 70 tangible clicks help the hunter to set distances precisely. The personalised ballistic ring (PBR) offers even more individuality. The throw lever (TL) makes it quick and easy to adjust the zoom ring. The scope lens protector (SLP) prevents dirt getting into the objective and eyepiece lenses.

The Z8i family comprises six models for different hunting priorities.



Inland Fisheries Ireland welcomes Climate Action Plan

Inland Fisheries Ireland has welcomed the Government's Climate Action Plan to tackle climate disruption which has been published this afternoon. The plan, which contains 180 actions to ensure Ireland will meet its 2030 targets for carbon emissions, also sets out how Ireland will achieve a net zero carbon emissions by 2050.

The plan looks at every sector including the public sector with all public bodies set to receive a new climate action mandate to prioritise climate action. Earlier this year, Inland Fisheries Ireland introduced energy efficient vehicles with a view to achieving a 24 per cent reduction in the CO2 emissions from its fleet.

With 5,600 kilometres of coastline, 70,000 kilometres of rivers and streams

and 144,000 hectares of lakes and ponds, Inland Fisheries Ireland's 300 staff use vehicles to allow them to carry out their work. In addition to moving to energy efficient vehicles, the organisation has implemented a fleet management system to generate additional efficiencies and to ensure the fleet is being used in the most appropriate manner and that driver safety remains a priority.

Dr Ciaran Byrne, CEO of Inland Fisheries Ireland said: "This new national plan, together with a new mandate for the public sector offers an opportunity to refocus the philosophy of our organisation. As an environmental agency, we are very aware of the critical nature of climate change and the impact it is having on our fisheries resource. We are looking at every aspect

of our work to see how we can reduce our environmental footprint.

The move to 'green' vehicles is just one of many changes which we are making to ensure we reduce our overall emissions. We are carrying out audits on our largest energy consuming premises and when it comes to fisheries protection, we are looking to see how we can patrol in a truly efficient manner. We are reducing our consumption by 50 per cent on sea patrols by introducing new state of the art RIBs (Rigid Inflatable Boats) for use as fisheries protection vessels and we are also carrying out patrols via kayaks and bicycles. We are at a crossroads when it comes to climate change and this plan provides us with a framework to help us make the right choices and build a sustainable future."

For more visit www.fisheriesireland.ie



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HER MAJESTY QUEEN ELIZABETH II
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When buying a new Z8i rifle scope, you get a BTF (ballistic turret flex) free of charge.
Promotion valid from August 1 until October 31, 2019, while supplies last. Get your free BTF in selected stores.

Countryside Alliance



Randalstown & District Open Clay Shoot 2019

Randalstown & District Game Conservation Society extend a massive thanks to all the shooters who braved the weather and turned up on Friday 14th June, for their shoot, in aid of the NI Children's Hospice.

The club extended their grateful thanks to Countryside Alliance Ireland, all the local businesses, and their own members for supporting the event and donating raffle prizes. The event raised the significant sum of £850 for the charity.

Results:

30 bird sporting - 1st Liam Mc Donnell 27/30, 2nd Tim Neill 27/30, 3rd Scott Simpson 26/30. The 12 bird pool was won by Kevin Sweeney.



Randalstown & District's Fundraiser for NI Children's Hospice 2019

Deer bTB Survey - Can You Help?

There is currently a bTB epidemic in cattle in Northern Ireland. The eradication programme for bTB costs and estimated £40 million per year, with an average of 1000 cattle culled each month. But despite these large-scale eradication efforts, bTB remains a huge problem for the NI farming sector.

Agri-Food and Biosciences Institute (AFBI) would like to raise your awareness of a research project being carried out into bovine Tuberculosis in deer in NI. This project aims to gain a better understanding of the extent of bTB in Red, Sika and Fallow deer.

AFBI hope this work will have several benefits, including; a clearer picture of the role deer may play in the current TB epidemic in cattle, an improved understanding of the biosecurity implications of processing and consuming venison; a greater appreciation of the animal health and welfare consequences of this disease and the production of novel scientific knowledge.

AFBI are asking members of the deer stalking community to provide the heads (with antlers removed) of shot animals for TB testing. Samples will be collected from a convenient location by the DAERA Wildlife Unit. For anyone aware of the DAERA fox survey, sample collection will work in much the same way. This survey is set to run from 1 November 2019 to 31 March 2020. Further details on how to contribute will be provided in the near future.

In the meantime, AFBI would be very grateful if any interested parties would provide them with a small amount of information to aid in the set-up of project logistics. If possible, they would ask for

a name, contact email/number, and the DVO (divisional veterinary office) you are likely to be operating in (for map – www.caireland.org). All information will be treated in the strictest confidence, and in line with GDPR regulations.

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to get in touch with Siobhán Porter at siobhan.porter@afbini.gov.uk or 028 9051 9495.

Operation Silver Fin

Police have teamed up with the Department of Agricultural, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA) and the Loughs Agency along with partners from the Partnership for Action Against Wildlife Crime Fin group as part of an operation to target poachers on Lough Neagh.

Cookstown PSNI Inspector Daniel Walsh said: "Following concerns about poaching in the area we were keen to work with our colleagues to prevent and deter poachers from targeting our waterways. We know that those involved in wildlife crime may sometimes be involved with other crime types and it is important to send out a clear message to those involved that we are taking this seriously."

Emma Meredith, PSNI Wildlife Officer commented: "PSNI are committed to tackling wildlife crime including fish poaching in conjunction with our partners. Wildlife crime is taken extremely seriously by the Police Service of Northern Ireland. The significance of this kind of crime cannot be under-estimated. At the most serious level it can have a direct impact on the economic, environmental and cultural lives of communities and can also negatively affect the conservation status of some native species.

Operation Silver Fin, which was launched at the end of April, is a new initiative which focuses on encouraging the public to report suspected fish poaching to the appropriate agency, enforcing fishing regulations and increasing awareness of the legislation surrounding fishing and the importance of protecting fish stocks.

The initiative involves increased monitoring by enforcement agencies. While the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs are concerned with fish poaching in their designated areas, Lough Neagh was chosen as the location for the launch given its status. However, over time it is hoped Operation Silver Fin will focus on waters across Northern Ireland, particularly in areas where local knowledge suggests poaching is prevalent.



Pictured at the launch of Operation Silver Fin

A spokesperson for DAERA Inland Fisheries said: "Commercial and recreational fishing is a significant contributor to the local

rural economy. Illegal fishing can have a harmful impact not only upon local fish stocks, but also the livelihoods of licensed fishermen that catch them. DAERA Inland Fisheries are responsible for the conservation and protection of inland fisheries outside of the Foyle and Carlingford areas. Enforcement patrols aim to deter, disrupt and detect illegal fishing activity and are a key aspect of protecting fisheries. To help us protect fish stocks we are keen to work with the public and other partners that can assist. Help protect your local fish stocks and the livelihoods of licensed commercial fishermen and report all incidents of illegal fishing to us using DAERA's 24hr Pollution Hotline phone number 0800 80 70 60."

John McCartney, Loughs Agency and chair of the Partnership for Action against Wildlife Crime fin sub group, said: "It is great to see all partners working together united to combat fish poaching."

As a member of the fin poaching sub group, Countryside Alliance Ireland was delighted to be in attendance at the launch.

Irish Red Grouse Association Collaborate with NPWS and GWCT

The Irish Red Grouse Association Conservation Trust (IRGACT) continues to expand its initiatives in Red Grouse Conservation and Management and are continuing two successful projects initiated last year.

Through its membership of the Game & Wildlife Conservation Trust (GWCT) it has recently completed another round of certified training courses with their Scottish office. These popular courses were fully booked out again this year and covered such subjects as grouse health & disease, nest protection, predation control and heather management.

The IRGACT are privileged to have such a close relationship with the GWCT as they have over 50 years research accumulated on game and wildlife management and its membership gives the IRGACT access to all the GWCT publications and the expertise of the GWCT advisory staff.

Good Hunting Practice

In 2012 Countryside Alliance Ireland (CAI), the Ulster Farmers' Union (UFU) and the Northern Ireland Masters of Hounds Association (NIMHA) signed a 'Memorandum of Understanding and Co-operation' (MOU) to inform and advise on best practice and protocol for those engaged in hunting with hounds on agricultural land, and to encourage compliance.

The MOU sets out the basis on which CAI, the UFU & NIMHA will co-operate for the good of country sports and the rural way of life in Northern Ireland. Co-operation is crucial between farmers and those organising hunts on agricultural land and ongoing communication is key. Good relationships protect the interests of all concerned and CAI has asked all hunts to re-familiarise themselves with the MOU.

Lyll Plant, Chief Executive Countryside Alliance Ireland, said: "Countryside Alliance Ireland continues to fully support the Memorandum of Understanding and Co-operation for the good of country sports in Northern Ireland and for the rural way of life.

"I believe that such co-operation is essential in light of the many threats facing Northern Ireland's countryside, which must be addressed constructively and collaboratively by all like-minded people and organisations."

Another major initiative of the IRGACT has been the extension of its contract with the National Parks and Wildlife Services (NPWS) for a joint Red Grouse conservation project on a section of the Slieve Bloom National Park.

This national park and nature reserve is one of the best breeding grounds for Red Grouse in Ireland and the objective of the joint project is to grow the breeding grouse populations on the Slieve Bloom to a sustainable level and to a position whereby surplus grouse can be translocated to other grouse moors where populations are under threat.

The IRGACT continue to make its expertise and contacts available for other Red Grouse Conservation projects where the opportunities are similar to the Slieve Bloom project.

The Irish Country Lifestyle Festival, Galway

Countryside Alliance Ireland (CAI) was in attendance at the new Irish Country Lifestyle Festival in Galway on the weekend of 15

& 16 June. This new event, which was a game fair and garden festival combined, was held at Galway Racecourse.

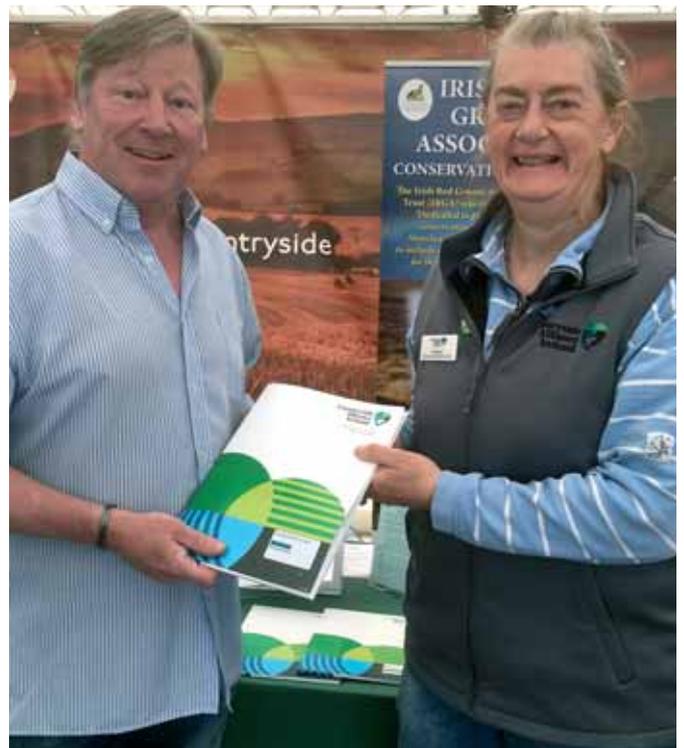
The weather was mixed over the weekend, but this didn't appear to dampen spirits of seasoned game fair goers. Ashley and Liz were on hand to chat with visitors to the CAI marquee and they were ably assisted by Alex Graham who had volunteered for the weekend.



Tom Kavanagh & Ashley Graham admire one of the handmade sticks on display

Countryside Alliance Ireland were pleased to be the largest all-Ireland country sports organisation at the Festival and were delighted to host The Irish Red Grouse Association Conservation Trust Limited in our marquee.

Much interest was shown in the Red Grouse Association which was established in 2010 and is dedicated to the management of moorland and lowland heaths for the sustainability of the iconic Red Grouse and other moorland breeding birds.



New CAI member Wesley Graham is welcomed by Liz Brown.

Visitors to the CAI stand included CAI members from far and wide, NARGC Chairman & NARGC PRO, Dan Curley and John Toal respectively, The Muzzle Loaders and renowned stick maker, Tom Kavanagh who presented CAI with one of his beautiful handcrafted sticks.

CAI sponsored a number of events at the Festival including the children's dog show on both days, organised by Gundog Rescue and Rehoming. Sunday's winner was Harry Flynn with his dog Bonnie. Harry was slightly reluctant to have his photograph taken but his Mother, Donna, was on hand to assist!



Young Harry Flynn is pictured with Bonnie alongside Mum Donna

Livestock Worrying Continues to be a Major Issue for the Ulster Farmers Union

Livestock worrying remains a major issue for Ulster Farmers Union members and the Union started a social media campaign on 25 July (scheduled to run weekly until 28 August) which is designed to raise awareness of the issue and to help educate their farmers and dog owners on steps to take in order to reduce incidences of livestock worrying occurring in Northern Ireland. CAI has been asked to share this information with you.

Irresponsible Dog Owners Continue to Have an Impact on Our Beautiful Countryside

Please ensure that YOU are a responsible dog owner by:

- Keeping your dog on a lead at all times
- Know your route and avoid going near livestock such as sheep and cattle
- Cleaning up after your dog. Dog mess can spread diseases which can be harmful to sheep and cattle

With a total of 165 cases of livestock worrying reported to local council dog wardens in Northern Ireland from 1 April 2018 to 31 March 2019, and with many cases still going unreported, incidences of livestock worrying occurring in Northern Ireland have escalated in recent years.

It is a well-known fact that many of the incidences of livestock worrying which occur in Northern Ireland each year are completely avoidable if dog owners stepped up to the mark and were responsible for their pets.

It is an offence under The Dogs (Northern Ireland) Order 1983 for a dog to attack, kill or chase livestock in such a way as may cause injury, suffering or death to livestock which results in financial loss to the owner of the livestock. The owner of the livestock being attacked can take action to protect his/her flock and/or herd and this can involve shooting the dog/dogs involved.

Bluefin Tuna Data Collection Pilot Programme

While there is no sport or commercial fishery for Bluefin tuna in Ireland, authorisations will be soon be granted for 15 angling vessels to participate in Tuna CHART (Catch and Release Tagging) a pilot Bluefin Tuna Data Collection Programme.

The programme will see the 15 authorised vessels catch, tag and release Atlantic Bluefin tuna for data collection purposes off the Irish coast. The authorised vessels, which are located in Cork, Clare, Galway, Sligo and Donegal will support scientific work to increase knowledge of the behaviour and abundance of Bluefin Tuna in Irish waters.

Authorisations will be granted to the 15 angling vessels from mid-August until mid-October. All skippers and trained crew have participated in training with guidance provided around fish handling, welfare, tagging and data recording. Participants in the programme will catch, tag and release Bluefin tuna while adhering to strict fish safety and handling procedures at all times.

Minister Michael Creed TD said: "My Department has been working on this project for two years at both EU and domestic levels and I am happy to announce the commencement of the project this month. This initiative will allow the Marine Institute and Inland Fisheries Ireland to collect valuable data on the migratory patterns of Bluefin tuna in Irish waters in a tightly controlled environment. This project has been a wonderful example of cooperation between my Department, DCCAE, SFPA, IFI and the Marine Institute and I am looking forward to the continued development of this relationship."

The Sea Fisheries Protection Authority and Inland Fisheries Ireland will undertake inspections and patrols around the coast to ensure this remains a strictly controlled fishery. Anglers wishing to engage in this fishery must only do so on a sea angling vessel specifically authorised to participate in the pilot programme. Any person engaging in this fishery on any vessel which is not appropriately authorised will be in breach of the Sea-Fisheries and Maritime Jurisdiction (Bluefin Tuna) Regulations 2019 (S.I. No. 265 of 2019).

A full list of authorised skippers can be found at www.fisheriesireland.ie/bluefin

ROGUE WEBSITE ALERT

Inland Fisheries Ireland is alerting the public to a rogue website which claims to sell salmon and sea trout angling licenses for Ireland. The website, which carries Inland Fisheries Ireland branding, asks anglers for their personal and payment details however it does not supply legitimate fishing licenses.

Anglers are reminded that the only authorised website for salmon & sea trout licences is www.store.fishinginireland.info. This site is operated by Inland Fisheries Ireland and anglers will receive receipt of any purchases on this website via email.

Any member of the public, who has submitted personal or financial details to a fraudulent fishing license website, should contact their local Garda station directly to report the incident.



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An insightful visit to the Loch Erne & Boa Island Breeding Wader Project

Lizzie Grayshon and Jodie Case of the Waders for Real team visited Lough Erne Wildfowlers Council (LEWC) in County Fermanagh, Northern Ireland, to learn about the work being carried out to recover declining wader populations. Severe declines of Curlew, Snipe, Redshank and Lapwing have been experienced in this area since the 1980's with factors such as changes in land use and increased predation affecting productivity. For this reason, the LEWC stakeholders are active in the sustainable management and conservation of Lough Erne to improve the status of breeding waders.

We arrived Monday lunchtime where we met Michael Stinson, the project manager and Tom McGoldrick, Chair of the Lough Erne Wildfowlers Council (LEWC). We took a short trip to Upper Lough Erne where they have recently begun work for breeding waders - Snipe, Curlew, Redshank and Lapwing. Lough Erne is the second largest lake system in Northern Ireland with reputedly 365 islands, comprised of two connected lakes referred to as the Upper Lough in the southern part due to it being higher up the river, and the larger northern lake known as the Lower Lough. After initial scrub management work in early 2019, 2 pairs of Curlew bred on the main island (up from one pair in 2018) and even more encouragingly, 4 pairs of Lapwing returned to the site, having been absent for many years.

We went out on a small boat to view some of the islands and visit areas where we could provide habitat improvement advice to further increase wader breeding numbers and increase productivity. Sharing knowledge on what works for breeding wader recovery is essential for the recovery of declining waders. From the boat we spotted some large lapwing chicks that were close to fledging; a great and promising success for their first year back in this area – the group and farmers were very excited by this success!

On the Upper lough, the work is led by Derrylin and District Gun Club (a founder member of LEWC) and the club has done some really great work on these islands already, clearing areas of scrub that have grown up and liaising with farmers to promote better management of the grazing for waders. This is showing with the increase in breeding Curlew and return of Lapwing. Curlew are an extremely threatened species in Northern Ireland (a local decline of more than 90% in breeding pairs since the 1980s) and across the rest of the UK, so being able to retain breeding pairs is extremely encouraging.

On the second day of the visit, we were taken to Boa Island at the northern part of the Lower Lough which is a larger expanse of water. In this area LEWC have been running the Boa Island Breeding Wader Project since 2014. The project has increased displaying Snipe numbers by 480% (5-29 birds) between 2014-18, with Redshank, Curlew and Lapwing also now breeding in areas



they had previously deserted. Until 2018 the project was solely funded by reinvestment of wildfowling permit revenue with occasional grants from NIEA and Wildlife Habitat Charitable Trust. However, in late 2018, the project received a very significant financial boost from a National Lottery Heritage Fund grant, which will allow the project to expand in the next 4 years.

While on Boa Island, we were shown many of the farmed areas and met with a local farmer to take a closer look at some of his fields to discuss further possible management options. He was keen to do more with the project (having been involved since 2014) and suggested new scrub removal on one of his fields, near to the water's edge. He was delighted to report that he had seen Snipe chicks on his lawn (which adjoins a breeding wader field) the previous week!

Predator control is carried out across the Lough, with many of the farmers and wildfowlers carrying out corvid and fox control. Michael, the project manager also uses some of the project budget to carry out control, purchasing Larsen Traps and carrying out corvid control himself. The lack of corvids around Boa Island was very noticeable. Michael explained that the numbers of corvids trapped and controlled have reduced, showing that their control efforts are having an effect in the vicinity of the main sites on Boa Island. Fox control is a constant battle, with foxes swimming between islands, making it difficult to reduce the population, however, control of foxes is a continued effort.

Our final activity during our visit was a meeting with some of the members of LEWC at a local community centre. Michael provided an introduction to the wildfowlers of why we had come to visit the Lough and their project, then Lizzie gave a presentation on the Waders for Real project, showing the various habitat management implemented and other possible actions the LEWC project could adopt to help their progress, such as placing temperature loggers in nests to better understand hatching success. There was a lot of questions and interest in the Waders for Real project after Lizzie's talk.

This project is inspirational - started, driven and part-funded by stakeholders and waterfowlers, with limited AES support, it is a great example of what can be achieved with commitment and advice. Our aim was to help enthuse more farmers in the area, to support the wildfowlers and project coordinators. We hope we did and wish all involved the best of luck with continued commitment to increasing wader numbers and offered our support in the future should they require it.



Many islands on the Lough have succeeded to dense scrub or woodland through lack of grazing.



An example of a cleared area of island by LEWC.



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Country Sports Ireland

Country Sports Ireland Trained Hunter - Large Wild Game (Deer) meat hygiene course approved!

We were very pleased in early July, to receive official recognition that the Country Sports Ireland Trained Hunter Large Wild Game (Deer) meat hygiene course has been accepted by the appropriate Competent Authorities in the Republic of Ireland (including the Food Safety Authority of Ireland and Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine). This means that successful course participants will be regarded as 'Trained Persons' in accordance with EU Regulations and approved to sell deer carcasses to Approved Game Handling Establishments.

The Country Sports Ireland Trained Hunter Large Wild Game (Deer) meat hygiene training course is also externally accredited by Lantra – a leading awarding body for land-based industries. We believe that Lantra accreditation is important recognition of the quality of Country Sports Ireland training and of the skills and knowledge of our course instructors.



LWG - a high quality training manual accompanies the Country Sports Ireland Trained Hunter Large Wild Game (Deer) meat hygiene course.

course participants following the first two courses has made all the hard work worthwhile.

From the outset on both days it was clear that learners had prepared well for the course and had spent time reading a high quality course training manual. On the day of the course learners were also treated to detailed practical demonstrations of carcass handling and inspection in the ideal surroundings of Premier Game Ltd, Burncourt, Co. Tipperary. This was followed by an extremely comprehensive and interesting presentation covering all areas relevant to the course.

Sincere thanks to those learners who attended these courses and whose enthusiastic participation helped make it such a fantastic

success. Special thanks also to Premier Game Ltd for hosting our practical sessions and to our team of experienced and knowledgeable instructors.

The next Country Sports Ireland Trained Hunter Large Wild Game (Deer) meat hygiene course takes place on Sunday 15th September at the Midlands National Shooting Centre, Tullamore.

DSC 1 delivered

Creggagh Field Target Club, Draperstown Co. Derry provided an ideal venue for the third Country Sports Ireland Deer Stalking Certificate Level 1 (DSC 1) course of 2019 which took place on 23rd & 24th August and had been fully booked weeks beforehand.

The facilities at Creggagh Field Target Club are second to none and the knowledge and hospitality of club officers outstanding. Special thanks also to course assessor James Scott, event sponsor Finbarr Harkin and course attendees were a pleasure to work. Country Sports Ireland DSC1 course continues to go from strength to strength and dates for courses early in the new year will be published on the website www.countrysportsireland.org very soon.

Deer Stalking Training Course – outstanding success!

Our last Country Sports Ireland Deer Stalking Training Course for this year was held on 20th July in the fantastic setting of the Midlands National Shooting Centre, Tullamore.

Participants were treated to detailed presentations covering all relevant aspects of deer hunting and then undertook written, shooting and practical safety assessments. Successful



Learners at the Country Sports Ireland Trained Hunter Large Wild Game (Deer) meat hygiene course.

Historic Weekend

The first Country Sports Ireland Trained Hunter Large Wild Game (Deer) meat hygiene courses were subsequently delivered on the weekend of Saturday 3rd and Sunday 4th August in Cahir, Co. Tipperary. This was the culmination of months of hard work by a team of people developing the course, training materials and manual. However, the fantastic feedback that we received from



Country Sports Ireland Deer Advisor, David Dunne delivering a practical deer carcass inspection demonstration.

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candidates were awarded a certificate which is accepted by Coillte for hunting under licence on Coillte properties and also National Parks & Wildlife Service in respect of section 42 license applications.

Thanks to all those who attended Country Sports Ireland Deer Stalking Training Courses throughout 2019. Feedback from course participants has been also fantastic and will help us to continue to develop the course and improve content, delivery and assessment techniques for next year.

Finally, we would like to sincerely thank the entire Country Sports Ireland course delivery team and our partners at the Midlands National Shooting Centre, Tullamore who together deliver a course which is growing in popularity and reputation with every event.

Unwelcome Developments

Coursing licences suspended

On Friday 9th August National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) issued a press release indicating that Rabbit Haemorrhagic Disease (RHD) has been confirmed in the wild from rabbits in Co. Wicklow and Co. Clare and a hare in Co. Wexford. In all cases the animals were tested at Department of Agriculture, Food & Marine Laboratories where RHD2 was subsequently confirmed.

The press release also confirmed that the Department had decided to temporarily suspend the licences issued to the Irish Coursing Club to capture and tag hares for the 2019/20 hare coursing season with immediate effect until a clearer understanding of the extent, spread and implications of the RHD2 virus emerges.

At the time of writing, it is unclear how long this suspension might last but we have been in contact with NPWS and will closely monitor developments as anything that affects local rabbit and hare populations will also have a significant effect of many popular, local country sports.

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* actually it's more of a screech, but you know what we mean!

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There are fewer than 50 breeding pairs of barn owls left in Northern Ireland. Donate today to bring this precious species back from the brink.

Ulster Wildlife

The 10th Irish Fly Fair and International Angling Show 2019

Ireland's biggest fly fishing extravaganza will again feature the largest group of fly tyers and game angling stands under one roof. A host of the greatest fly dressers fly casters and angling celebrities from all over the globe will once again gather at the Galway Bay Hotel in Salthill, to participate in the 10th Irish Fly Fair and International Angling Show.

On the 9th and 10th of November, visitors will come from all over the world to this celebrated event. They will have the opportunity to see some of the finest fly dressers from around the world practice their art, while champion fly casters will be available to demonstrate and advise on fly casting techniques and fishing tactics.

Stevie Munn said: "The show gets bigger and better each year. Last year's Irish Fly Fair saw some of the best fly casters and fly tyers in the world descend on The Galway Bay Hotel in Salthill. The show is a fantastic success with many of the fly dressers, demonstrators and visitors to the show returning again and again, the feedback is always exceptionally positive, with many saying it was the best game angling show they have ever been to in the world, we hope to build on this and have many new trade stands, fly tyers and celebrities for this year, keeping the event fresh."

The tackle trade will be very well represented with a huge range of quality trade stands, including, tackle, outdoor clothing, and fly tying gear and many others, so something for everyone! The

show welcomes back angling celebrities, who will be demonstrating and advising on all aspects of fly fishing along with our new guests. There is tuition from qualified angling instructors APGAI who will give free casting and fly tying lessons during the two-day exhibition.

Experts from around the world, like Charles Jardine, plus Irish favourites, Tom Doc Sullivan, Dr Ken Whelan and many more will be hosting talks and seminars on various angling related topics.

The 'Veniard Youth Fly Tying Competition' will give young people a chance to show the professional fly dressers what they can do.

Stevie Munn added: "The Irish Fly Fair is hailed as one of the finest shows of its kind in Europe and a great weekend to meet up with old friends and make new ones and it's a must for all angling enthusiasts."

"Thanks to everyone who supports the show, including sponsors Guideline, Ahrex Hooks, Veniard, Semperfli, Costa Glasses USA, Regal Vise USA, Fulling Mill, LTS, Partridge Hooks, Trout & Salmon, Trout Fisherman and Irish Country Life & Country Sports magazine. Located in one of Galway's best Hotels, many visitors now come for the weekend with their families and experience the whole atmosphere of the show. Please give it your support, angling needs 'feel good' events like this."

For more details see www.irishflyfair.com or contact Stevie Munn by Email anglingclassics@aol.com

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Anglers are asked to report catches of invasive pink salmon

An appeal has gone out to anglers and the general public to be vigilant and report the presence of any Pacific pink salmon encountered in Irish river systems over the coming months. In 2017, this non-native fish species unexpectedly appeared in unprecedented numbers in multiple river systems in the south-west, west and north-west of the country.

As pink salmon predominantly have a two-year lifecycle, there is potential for the species to reappear in Irish rivers again this year and every second so called 'odd' year thereafter. However, they can also turn up in 'even' years and a single specimen was recorded in the River Suir in 2018.

Pink salmon are a migratory species of salmon, native to river systems in the northern Pacific Ocean and nearby regions of the Bering Sea and Arctic Ocean. The species also has established populations in rivers in northernmost Norway and in the far northwest of Russia, originating from stocking programmes undertaken in this part of Russia since the 1950s until 2001.

Dr Cathal Gallagher, Head of Research and Development at IFI said: "The potential presence of pink salmon in Irish rivers again is of ongoing concern to Inland Fisheries Ireland as its presence in large numbers may negatively impact some of Ireland's native species such as Atlantic salmon and sea trout as well as estuarine

and coastal marine fish species and their associated ecosystems. Despite only very limited information being currently available to assess such threats, the climatic and environmental conditions in Ireland are considered quite amenable to facilitate the establishment of Pacific pink salmon populations in Irish river systems."

Anglers are asked to report catches of pink salmon to Inland Fisheries Ireland's 24 hour confidential hotline number – 1890 34 74 24 or 1890 FISH 24.

As these fish die after spawning, some dead specimens could also be encountered along Irish rivers. Anyone who catches a pink salmon is asked to:

- Keep the fish and do not release it back into the water (even in rivers only open for catch and release angling)
- Record the date & location of capture, and the length and weight of the fish
- Tag the fish and present it to Inland Fisheries Ireland and a new tag will be issued to replace the tag used
- Take a photograph of the fish.

Inland Fisheries Ireland will then arrange collection of the fish for further examination. This will help establish the abundance and extent of distribution of the species in Irish waters.



Mature male pink salmon with characteristic humpback and spotted tail.

(Photo by Eva Thorstad, NINA)

New €246,000 angling facilities in Donegal

Creeslough & District Angling Association today opened its new angling facility at Lough na Toovey, Co. Donegal. The facility, which was co-funded by IFI through its National Strategy for Angling Development, was officially launched by Sean Canney TD, Minister with responsibility for inland fisheries.

The facility at Creeslough is just one aspect of the development project delivered by the local angling group which manages a number of salmon and trout fisheries in the area. The project saw the improvement of angling access and infrastructure across three sites in the area: Lough na Toovey, Glen Lough and Owencarrow River.

The angling facility at Lough na Toovey includes a new slipway and mooring

pontoon, a boatshed, and a car park. At Glen Lough, a new improved roadway over 1.2 kilometres leading to the angling site was constructed while at Owencarrow, 15 stiles and ladders and 33 fishing stands were erected over 300 metres of the river bank. Inland Fisheries Ireland provided funding of over €216,000 with Creeslough & District Angling Association providing match funding of €30,000 to enable the completion of these valuable amenities for the area.

Sean Canney TD welcomed the angling amenities: "The new facilities will enable safe and easier access to the fishery for the local community, while also supporting tourism in North Donegal. This is a first class angling site located in a county renowned for its beautiful scenery and superb angling resource. As

a result of this project, more local and visiting anglers will be fishing in the area, which in turn will provide both recreational and economic benefits for the community."

Paddy Boyle, Creeslough & District Angling Association said: "Fishing as a sport and recreation is dependent on the quality of the natural environment around us. Angling clubs have a role as custodians of this wonderful resource, and we owe it to future generations to look after the fish and their habitat. This development at Creeslough is proof of what angling clubs can achieve in partnership with local development agencies and Inland Fisheries Ireland. We asked for their help and got it because we presented them with a well thought out plan for the conservation and development of our fisheries".

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CHILDREN'S FISHING SUCCESS AT SHANES CASTLE

Bobby Bryans and the team were **running the hugely successful children's put and take fishery at the Game Fair at Shan's Castle and we are indebted to all concerned for sharing the joys of angling with children of all ages.**

Here, Bobby Bryans relates a happy story from this year's event: 'I got a phone call for a lady called Heather asking to book some time at the children's put and take pond and I explained to Heather that there was no need to book time with us. Heather then told me that 27 years ago she had been taken to the fair by her family and now she would like to take her daughter and the grandkids to the fair.'

'The day of the fair arrived and I was on site for 7.00 AM to setup and get everything in place. Now we all know we cannot control nature so as the clouds rolled in, with some serious thunder and lightning, I knew it was going to be a hard day at the pond. Well the fair opened at ten, our first guests (the children) arrived and they began learning how to fish with our coaches and friends.'

'A few fish had been caught by the children but it became very difficult to get the trout to take the bait, whether with worms, sweet corn, bread or by spinning. Well naturally it was the weather that was making it hard, and then Heather arrived with us along with her mum, daughter and grandkids, so our coaches set to work to try and get the children their first ever fish.'

'One of the children soon caught their first fish and was really delighted and while we tried our best to get the other grandchild a fish, the fish were having none of it. After a while Heather came over to thank me as she had to leave, but that was not the end of this little story. Around two hours had passed still the other child had yet to catch a fish. As a last resort I took him under my wing for a few minutes before he was due to leave with the others to enjoy the rest of the Fair. Well, I'm delighted to report that the fishing gods smiled on us as it was not too long before his little face lit up with the biggest smile. Yes, he'd caught his first fish and angling got another welcome young



What a result and the happy faces say it all!



A fabulous fishy first for young Jacob Turner.

recruit.'

Another young man to claim his first ever fish was Jacob Turner, the son of Matt Turner and the grandson of none other than that well known field trial

labrador enthusiast Philip Turner. Philip says that it was marvellous to see the smile on Jacob's face and feels sure that fishing is certain to see much more of Jacob in the years to come.

Taxidermy Association of Ireland Championships

The T.A.I. are proud to announce their second year of Taxidermy Championships in the Castle Oaks Hotel in Limerick, with Registration on 27th of September where ALL competitors will get the opportunity to register their specimens. Saturday 28th will be a jam packed day of talks and demonstrations.

This year we will be joined by Mr Martin Berndt, a first place winner (2012) at the World Taxidermy championships. We also have a visiting neighbour from the UK, Ms Emilie Woodford. Practising Taxidermy since 2016 she has worked alongside the likes of Carl Church. We also have two of our own Irish Taxidermists, Peter Gregory and Dave Hogan, both of whom have been practising Taxidermy for over 30 years.



This year we are welcoming back Mr Rick Way, our independent Judge, who will also be accompanied by our second Judge Mr Wesley Kevenaar. Rick works for De Museumwinkel and Wesley currently works for the world renowned Bouten & Zoon.

Entry to the championships are open to all members of the Taxidermy association only. Non-members can of course attend the talks and seminars and can purchase a day pass. There will also be a visiting opportunity for the general public to see all our mounts, throughout the day, however competition pieces will be available for viewing after the judging has taken place.

For more see our Facebook page and our website, www.taxidermyassociationofireland.com



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DAERA Inland Fisheries – The Bushmills Salmon & Whiskey Festival 8th & 9th June 2019



shelter. At one point the torrential rains pushed our marquee to capacity as the visitors sought shelter. Luckily the promotional goods we brought included umbrellas, however they quickly ran out!

The Inland Fisheries team were joined by a host of other representatives from the Department, including Northern Ireland Environment Agency (NIEA), DAERA Marine Fisheries, and AFBI who share and conduct research at the Salmon Station. The Loughs Agency were also in attendance with promotional information relating to fishing opportunities in their area. Fly tying was on display, along with an angling simulator which is always an eye catcher especially for the young siblings who like to compete to catch as big a fish as possible! NIEA provided microscopes for people to get an

Seamus Connor (Chief Fisheries Officer of DAERA Inland Fisheries) presenting International Year of The Salmon 'pop-up' to Lionel Knobbs of The Loughs Agency.

DAERA Inland fisheries are again reflecting on another successful Open Day of our Salmon Station in Bushmills. We run this annually in conjunction with the Causeway Coast & Glens Council which showcases produce of the local area during the Bushmills Salmon and Whiskey Festival.

A variety of activities and stalls are set-up throughout the town of Bushmills but the Salmon station remains one of the biggest attractions. Guided tours of the facilities demonstrate the very important conservation and protection work carried out to benefit the under threat species. Survival rates are very low for salmon at sea and practices such as catch and release are a necessity born of this. This is a great opportunity for our department to highlight these measures and further still we are

participating in The International Year of The Salmon. Developed by NASCO this campaign spans the years 2019-2022, this



Guided tour about to begin beside the DAERA roadshow bus.

open day being one of our featured events of the campaign.

The weather held up fine for the Saturday with very little rain. On the Sunday, however, our marquee was a welcome

up close view of the bugs and critters which make up part of the river wildlife diet. Guided tours were provided by technical staff from Inland Fisheries, demonstrating the work in different areas and showing the importance of such work.

On site, we also had the DAERA roadshow bus, which was occupied by the DAERA Marine team. Marine animal bones and equipment used in marine biology were on display and marine litter was also emphasised.

All in all it was another successful year. Even with the unfortunate weather on Sunday 1631 visitors were on site! Year on year this event becomes more popular and thoughts in the team have already turned on how to improve for next year!!



One group of the guided tour at the Adult & Smolt traps.



Peter Irvine, Headquarters Senior Fisheries Officer, introducing the first talk.



Richard Turner, Senior Fisheries Officer, explains the range of work carried out in the hatchery.



Learning about Fisheries Protection's enforcement work from Bushmills Salmon Station Manager Tim Delargy.



Getting an introduction to salmon fry.



Up close and personal with some more salmon fry!

Grouse - From Moor to Table with the Boisdale Group of Restaurants



Prepared by Andy Rose, Executive Chef of Boisdale Group of Restaurants

At a time when grouse shooting is under attack from ‘Wild Justice’ and the Labour Party we were delighted to receive a press release from the Boisdale group of traditional British restaurants, stating that their restaurants in Canary Wharf, Belgravia, Bishopsgate and Mayfair would be featuring grouse on their menus. They informed us that in the age old tradition of top London restaurants trying to be the first to feature grouse on the menu, after the opening of the season on the ‘Glorious Twelfth’ they would be flying in grouse from the Berwickshire moors to headline their restaurant menus.

Even if you have not been fortunate to be on the moors on ‘the twelfth’ the Boisdale restaurant chain is inviting readers to ‘Fly in to Boisdale’ to partake in the Glorious 12th celebrations and

savour red grouse - the king of all game birds - uniquely indigenous to Scotland and northern England.

Boisdale Roasted Young Berwickshire Grouse, Game Chips & Grouse Liver Pate Crouton Redcurrant Jelly, Bread Sauce, Red Wine Gravy with a glass of Vacqueyras Grenat Noble 2011 Domaine Le Clos des Cazaux, Rhone Valley, France at £34.50 will be available until November at all Boisdale restaurants.

Boisdale is wild about game and all manner of beasts of chase and fowl find their way to the tables, be it red deer, hare, wild fowl, mallard, pigeon or partridge – and all can be enjoyed in the restaurants when in season but none as famous, celebrated and in-demand as the Red Grouse also known as “hare foot” (from Latin *Lagopus lagopus scotica* ‘Scottish hare foot’).

Grouse is dark in colour and exceptionally rich in flavour which can make it an acquired taste but one that has won worldwide acclaim. The diet of the Scottish red grouse comprises 95 per cent of heather, providing it with a unique, sought after flavour.

This year, staying close to Boisdale’s Scottish roots and year-on-year tradition, Boisdale will be flying the grouse from the Scottish borders at the start of the shooting season and offering the bird with a glass of Vacqueyras Grenat Noble 2011 Domaine Le Clos

des Cazaux, a unique artisan Rhône wine made from 100% Grenache grapes from a single vineyard blessed with a touch of Botrytis. The wine is full bodied and rich, yet surprisingly



elegant and spicy, with a hint of honey on the finish and less than 1,000 cases produced only two or three times a decade.

Andy Rose, Boisdale Group Executive Head Chef, comments, “I’m proud to be offering a delicious Scottish grouse dish to customers and supporting the UK’s game industry which generates about 150 million pounds for the economy and maintains 2,500 full time jobs from gamekeepers and beaters to people in tourism and hospitality. Scottish moorlands are a natural environment unique to Britain and the equivalent of UK’s very own rainforest. The land management techniques carried out to maintain these moors are essential so they remain the perfect breeding ground for red grouse and other Scottish wildlife.”

The availability is very limited, so we strongly recommend that customers book ahead to “plate the offer”. Bookings on 020 7730 6922 for Boisdale of Belgravia, Bishopsgate, Mayfair and Canary Wharf.

Photos by James Bedford - www.jamesbedford.com

For more information, images & menus visit www.boisdale.co.uk/



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Percussion Tradition Warm Trouser BrownKhaki £38.00

Percussion's newest tradition trouser comes in a 2-tone brown rather than previous years Green. Designed for colder weather these DWR treated trousers to give protection against light showers and will keep you warm on colder days due to its microfleece lining. Leg Length: 31" Sizes 30 - 44

Colour: BrownKhaki



Percussion Tradition Trouser BrownKhaki £30.00

Percussion's newest tradition trouser comes in a 2-tone brown rather than previous years Green. Designed for mild weather these DWR treated trousers to give protection against light showers and will keep you cool on warmer days. Leg Length: 30" Sizes : 30 -47

Colour: BrownKhaki



Percussion Round Neck Sweatshirt Olive £30.00

Percussions round neck sweatshirt comes lightweight and perfect with a shirt and tie.

Colour: Olive Sizes: Small - XXXL



Percussion V-Neck Sweatshirt Olive £25.00

Percussions v-neck sweatshirt comes lightweight and perfect with a shirt and tie.

Colour: Olive Sizes : Small - XXXL



Somlys Silentek Jacket Green Pixel Camouflage £75.00

Somlys silentek soft-shell comes fully waterproof, its very silent material makes it great for stalking.

Colour: GreenPixel Sizes : S - XXXL



Somlys Silentek Trouser Green Pixel Camouflage £65.00

Somlys silentek trouser comes fully waterproof and breathable. Its also lightweight and very silent.

Colour: Green Pixel Sizes: 30 -44



Somlys Short Sleeve 3DX Camouflage Spandex T-Shirt £22.00

Somlys Camouflage T-shirt comes very lightweight and breathable, the stretchy spandex material gives the t-shirt more comfort and mobility.

Sizes: Small - XXXL



Somlys Long Sleeve 3DX Camouflage Spandex T-Shirt £25.00

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Sizes: Small - XXXL



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Boisdale Grouse Recipe



Get A Grade grouse from a specialist supplier. Grade A, is an indication of quality and condition. Boisdale gets grouse from Braehead Foods Ltd www.braeheadfoods.co.uk



Pluck the bird's breast and legs. Don't bother to pluck the wings, neck or head as these will be discarded. Remove the head and wings with a large knife or kitchen scissors.

To remove the guts, make a small incision through the skin at the rear end of the bird. Be careful not to stir the guts with the knife as that will cause unnecessary mess and possibly spoil the meat. Push the fingers into this small cut and run them along the underside of the breasts inside the cavity of the bird. Hook them over the whole contents and pull out the guts. Keep the liver and heart and discard the rest Scorch the remaining feathers.



Wrap the breast with a few slices of bacon. Cross the bird's legs and tie with a butcher's string. Using bacon adds moisture and fat.

Add seasoning salt and pepper.

Push a few sprigs of thyme inside the chest cavity.



Roast in the oven for 15 minutes in total. 4 minutes each side (2 x breast & back) Finish off the bird on a frying pan for 1-2 minutes using rapeseed oil, butter and a few sprigs of thyme, basting frequently.



IMPORTANT Rest the bird for 5 minutes before plating or carving.

Serve with Game Chips & Grouse Liver Pate Crouton Redcurrant Jelly, Bread Sauce, Red Wine Gravy.

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GERMAN POINTER CLUB OF IRELAND EVENTS



The club held our annual retrieving test and dog show at Hopes Point, Mullingar with a nice crowd and plenty of dogs, we had German Shorthair, Wirehair and Longhair Pointers, Hungarian Vizsla And Brittany Spaniel a good variety from the HPR section. The club would like to thank Martin Hope for the ground, the sponsors Feedwell Dog Foods, Cildara Hunting, Vicknoble Kennels, and Jake Doyle.

We would also like to thank Micheal Mullins for sponsoring the prize for the dog show, Sally Moffatt Paddockpoint Kennels for coming up to judge the dog show, everyone who helped out, bought a raffle tickets, and our judges for the retrieving test Paul McAuley and Gerry Devlin and of course all competitors and spectators on the day.

Retrieving Test

Hopes Point, Mullingar 15/07/18

Judges: Mr G Devlin Mr P McAuley

Puppy:

1st GSPD Master Ryland Ms M Molly / Mr P Peppard

2nd GLPB Caldera Baltimor Belle Mr R Doran

3rd GWPB Black Bellona Mr E Nolan

Novice:

1st GLPB Caldera Baltimor Belle Mr R Doran

2nd GSPB Tomanipointslip Jig Mr J McCooe

3rd GSPD Master Ryland Ms M Molly / Mr P Peppard

4th GSPD Captain Scarlet Mr T Duffy

Open:

1st GSPB Tomanipointslip Jig Mr J McCooe

2nd GSPB Birchwood Chloe Mr D McCabe

Ger Hurley sponsored a trophy in memory of Paddy Donohar for top dog and it went to Mr Robbie Doran with his German Longhaired Pointer Caldera Baltimor Belle.



1st IN OPEN GSPB TOMANIPOINTSIP JIG MR J McCooe with Mr G Devlin and Mr P McAuley.

Dog Show

Puppy Class

1st HVWB Zoldmali Lukacs Mr S Woods / Mr J Sipos

2nd GSPD Master Ryland Ms M Molly / Mr P Peppard

3rd GSPD Fedix Di Villa Car Ms P Rochford

4th GWPB Mustwork Ben Mr G Hurley

Open Class:

1st GSPD Mr M Cody

2nd GSPD Look At Me Mr P Begley

3rd GWPB Little Meg Ms C Fergus

4th GSPB Birchwood Chloe MS A R McCabe

Hunting & Pointing Trial

The club also held a hunting & pointing trial in the Dublin mountains with kind permission of the Dublin regional game council. We had 12 dogs with 2 reserves to run with conditions changing from nice weather to heavy rain and mist throughout the day. The judges on the day were Mr Paul McAuley, Mr R Behan and Mr P J Clarke. The results were 1st V.Good GSP bitch Blackstone Elesha for Mr James Doyle, and 2nd Good GSP dog Look at me for Mr Peter Begal.

Many thanks to all who helped and

our sponsors Feedwell dog foods. Mr Steve McManus was also presented with the points cup for top dog of 2018-2019 season for winning 7 trials.



Mr Steven Mcmanus with FTCH Squire Astor (Rom) IKC FT Dog of the year 2018 and points cup. Winner of 7 Open field trials in 2018.



Chairman Mr Gerry Devlin and judges Mr Paul McAuley and Mr Ray Behan Presenting Mr James Doyle With First Place In The Trial.



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We characterise today's hunting culture with a sense of traditional craftsmanship. Highly-qualified gunsmiths, stock-makers and engravers make the weapon into a masterpiece which highlights the personality and passion of its owner.



The Blaser range is available in Ireland from several gunshops including McCloy's of Toome and Lakeland Shooting Grounds, Mullingar.

Superb Shotguns & Rifles from the Blaser range



F3 Vantage

The new "F3 Vantage" not only scores with the mechanical perfection found in all Blaser shotgun receivers, it also delivers ideal target awareness due to the hybrid nature of the raised rib. The new "F3 Vantage" not only scores with the mechanical perfection found in all Blaser shotgun receivers, it also delivers ideal target awareness due to the hybrid nature of the raised rib. To fully appreciate the new rib design the engineers turned to the next critical element, stock design. Available in several variants you are assured your shoulders and neck will



be relaxed allowing better movement from any shooting position. Recoil management is also addressed by using the original KICK-EEZ recoil pad made with Sorbothane the softest and most durable pad on the market. Available in both right and left handed models, all Blaser firearms are covered by a 10-year manufacturer's warranty.

Blaser F16 Heritage Pair

Elegant, beautiful and exquisite are some of the few words used to describe the Blaser F16 Heritage Pair. Blaser products are known for their performance and reliability, ensuring you will have no compromises in the field. Taking all the key components from the F16: perfectly balanced, extreme point-ability and elegance. The F16 Heritage Pair with the side plated fine leaf arabesque engraving, exceptional finest grade 8 walnut wood, with true pair features: wood stocks from the same blank plus consecutive serial numbers. Ensures a divine pair of guns which will have heads turning this season, and for many more seasons to come; for all the right reasons.



F16 Sporting

Perfectly balanced, with one of the lowest profile receivers on the market, the Blaser F16, elegant and extremely pointable at the same time. It is the unique combination of excellent characteristics which makes the all new Blaser over-and-under shotgun F16 second to none. With the lowest profile receiver on the market the F16 boasts an exceptionally low centre of gravity, making it extraordinary pointable and dynamic. This is boosted by the accentuated dynamic, semi-rounded action design, devised using an innovative



monocoque construction. The shooter feels immediately the difference when picking up the shotgun. The Sporting version, which weighs just over 7 lb 8 oz. (3.4 kg), is available with 30" or 32" inch barrels, while the Game version weighs approximately 6.1 lb 13 oz. (3.1 kg) and is available with 28" or 29" barrels.

Superb Shotguns & Rifles from the Blaser range



R8 Ultimate: Simply Better Shooting

The R8 ULTIMATE sets a new standard in terms of functionality and design. The two-piece thumbhole stock ensures a completely relaxed shooting position, as well as optimal control of the rifle when firing. New, modular stock options allow the customer to tailor the rifle to his individual needs.

Adjustable comb – multi-level comb, operated intuitively without tools, with the memory function, ensures perfect mounting in every situation.

Recoil absorption system – makes for a pleasant shooting



experience. Internal absorption elements are available in different hardness to adjust to your personal preferences.

Adjustable recoil pad – includes the option to adjust the length, height and pitch of the recoil pad. Available with either leather inserts (cocoa) or black elastomer inserts.

Sauer 100 Fieldshoot

Target shooting or varmint hunting: The new S 100 Fieldshoot is the perfect choice when maximum focus on the target is paramount. From the outside the rifle captivates through a laminate wood stock with a dark oil finish that can be adjusted individually to the shooter's needs. Three-position safety combines easy handling with maximum reliability. The Sauer 100 stands out thanks to its adjustable, crisp single-stage trigger. It can be individually adjusted between 1,000 and 2,000 g (2.2 – 4.4 lb). In addition, the 620 mm (24") long Varmint Match precision barrel with 22



mm (0.86") taper makes the Fieldshoot a precision-guarantee for long-range shooting and long shooting series.

Now available in 223. Cal.

K95 Ultimate Carbon

The K95 Ultimate Carbon combines tradition and technology in a unique way. The two-piece ergonomically designed thumbhole stock ensures a completely relaxed hand position, as well as optimal control for accurate shooting. The Carbon fibre offers an astoundingly high strength at an extremely low weight – this makes the K95 Ultimate the best choice when stalking long distances through impassable terrain. Like the R8 Ultimate the K95 Ultimate can be tailored



to the exact needs of the shooter – due to the newly developed modular stock options such as adjustable comb, recoil absorption system and adjustable recoil pad. These are identical for both rifles.

Mauser M12 Black Impact: Compact, long-range specialist.

The best shot can often be the result of a long walk. The impact is second-to-none for combining a compact hunting platform but with match accuracy.

Short overall length, low weight and ultimate precision come in the complete

newly balanced Mauser 12 Impact bolt action rifle. The black burnished surface protects all the steel components from corrosion and the cone-shaped bolt handle permits dynamic repeating of the action even when in the prone position.





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Lever Rifle Action

Lever action rifles have been around for over one and a half centuries. In the USA, Cap and ball versions were in use in the 1830s and the first metallic cartridge-firing version manufactured by Spencer made its appearance in the American civil war 1861 - 1865. Post war demand for these rifles became so great that numerous manufacturers designed and produced models some of which are still in production today.

Among the best known is Winchester, Henry, Marlin and Savage. Collectors highly prize the 1866 .44 Henry calibre Winchester rifle better known as the Yellow Boy. The 1894 30-30 calibre model, the "Tutty Tutty" incredibly popular, remained in production until the 1950s and countless thousands are still in use around the world. Despite initial use by the US and other armies, lever action rifles were never the most suitable for military

purposes despite having made appearances in numerous conflicts around the world including during a little known revolt in former East Germany in 1953. Vast numbers are used worldwide today on farms, ranches and in some instances abroad as personal/home defence purposes. I know a few people in South Africa who carry them everywhere, including across their lap while driving.

While very few lever rifles above .22 calibre have been used in Ireland down the years, anyone who has ever seen a cowboy film or TV series will be familiar with their appearance. This situation is currently changing with the increasing popularity of the National Association of Sporting Rifle and Pistol Club's (NASRPC) Gallery Rifle competitions. The sport caters for small-bore and centre-fire lever-action events on various authorised ranges around the country, with

categories for both iron sights and optics.

Gallery rifle is popular abroad with many countries involved. Ireland's IGRF hosted an International event last year with teams from the UK, Germany, South Africa and Australia competing. Irish shooter Jeff Kehoe won the individual World Championship in centre-fire Gallery Rifle plus Irish Teams won the centre-fire and small-bore team events. They will be defending their titles in South Africa this year prior to publication date.

My attention was caught by the new Henry 'Big Boy' rifle

Having hung up my two big game rifles a few years ago, a lever action rifle seemed an obvious choice as a single replacement. The NRA's American Rifleman Magazine published an interesting photograph



The Henry Big Boy with chronograph and ammunition tested.



The Henry's all-brass metalwork.

in 2016 in the run-up to the Presidential election featuring a line of 1000 shooters on-range, all simultaneously firing a Henry lever-action rifle. Clearly intended as a nose-thumbing exercise at the Democrats, what caught my attention was the rifle model used by each participant - the new Henry Big Boy, in various calibre. All metal-work was brass making it a very attractive rifle - Henry's pedigree is one of the most respected in the business. Benjamin Tyler Henry had worked for Winchester back in the 1860s before he set up his own facility, introducing numerous innovative features that are being used by most manufacturers to this day. A new Henry Big Boy in .357mag/.38spl calibre was available through an Irish firearms dealer, I booked it and took delivery shortly after securing the necessary Restricted Firearms Certificate — .357 exceeds the non-restricted level of .300 cal for rifles.

Lever action rifles differ from bolt-action and most semi-autos by using an underneath lever to feed a round from a tubular magazine. Rounds are first loaded through a "gate" or through top of the tubular magazine beneath the barrel. Ammunition with Spitzer (pointed) bullets is a no-no. Any sharp movement including recoil would very probably cause a pointed bullet to set off the primer in a proceeding round-with serious results. Round nose or semi-wad cutter bullets are most suitable.

In my opinion the Henry's rear V sight looked a bit wide, leaving far too much margin for error when sighting. While the latter is designed for general use, particularly hunting in the USA, it is not the most suitable for producing tight groups on paper targets. Replacing the back-sight with a US-made Skinner Peep sight solved that issue. The human eye automatically centres the foresight tip in a rear aperture when

taking a sight picture. Fitting a 'scope to a lever-action rifle isn't always conducive in maintaining its good looks so I ruled it out.

This rifle uses pistol calibre ammunition which produces zero recoil in shoulder-mounted firearms, plus with rimmed rounds there are no head-space problems. The rim determines total space occupied in the chamber irrespective of a firearm's dimensions. In bolt-action rifles rimmed ammunition is head-space positive but has been known to cause recycling problems if rounds are not spaced correctly in the magazine. A rim below and forward of the round about to be chambered will jam the action solidly.

Thumbing back the hammer makes it ready to fire

Anyone with experience of the old .303 Lee Enfield will remember that! They may also remember the convenient fixed aperture (peep) sight on view when the adjustable rear-sight folded down. One important feature with lever-action rifles is being aware of their lack of a safety catch. They are considered safe carried with a round chambered and hammer in the down position. Thumbing back the hammer is all that's required to make ready to fire. I'd be wary of that, unless the rifle is used on a properly controlled shooting range. In the field it would depend on circumstances and surrounding terrain but outside of safe controlled and specific situations, a round up the spout is never a good idea!



Replacement after-market aperture sight.

The first task with the new rifle after replacing the rear sight was to test fire it and chronograph muzzle velocity. As this ammunition is used in both rifles and revolvers, the manufacturers understandably don't provide performance statistics. My chronograph which is almost 40 years old, long overtaken by high tech computerised gadgets still records exceedingly accurate data so it was dusted off to measure what the Henry could produce. Pen and paper to take notes are the only extras required!

The chronograph was placed 3 metres from the muzzle for the tests. Three brands of ammunition were used, all with 158gr. Bullets - Magtech and Top Shot in .38 Spl, plus Winchester in .357 magnum. The latter higher powered bullet obviously recorded the highest muzzle velocity - 1,550 feet per

second .38 Sol Magtech @895 FPS and .38 Top Shot @ 750 FPS. Another brand of .38 spl with 125grn bullets failed to cycle in the rifle - either because the rounds were shorter or the cases were synthetic. The recorded velocities are well below the 1,700 foot pounds of muzzle energy stipulated in the Wildlife Act for deer shooting – the highest MV of 1,550 FPS converts to 842.7 foot pounds, ruling out rifles using pistol ammunition for deer. Realistically .357/38 lever rifles are little more than shoulder-mounted long-barrelled pistols.

Accuracy drops off after approximately 125 yards as velocity decreases. A spitzer (pointed) bullet would probably be more accurate beyond this distance, but can't be used in the tubular magazine. Competition shooting / Vermin

control is what .357/.38 lever-action rifles are best suited for. The latest (2019) version of the Henry Big Boy is a chrome all-weather model fitted with a rubber recoil pad, comes in various calibre and weighs one pound less than the brass version. Not allowing rain, damp or other liquids anywhere near firearms is a hobby-horse of mine, so an all-weather model wouldn't really be of interest.

I'll be using my new rifle on the local target shooting range in club events; it's most unlikely to feature in national competitions alongside top shots like Jeff Kehoe. We'll give it a go and see what happens!

*Garda Jeff Kehoe winning the Gallery Rifle World Championships in 2018.
(Photograph by James Connolly)*





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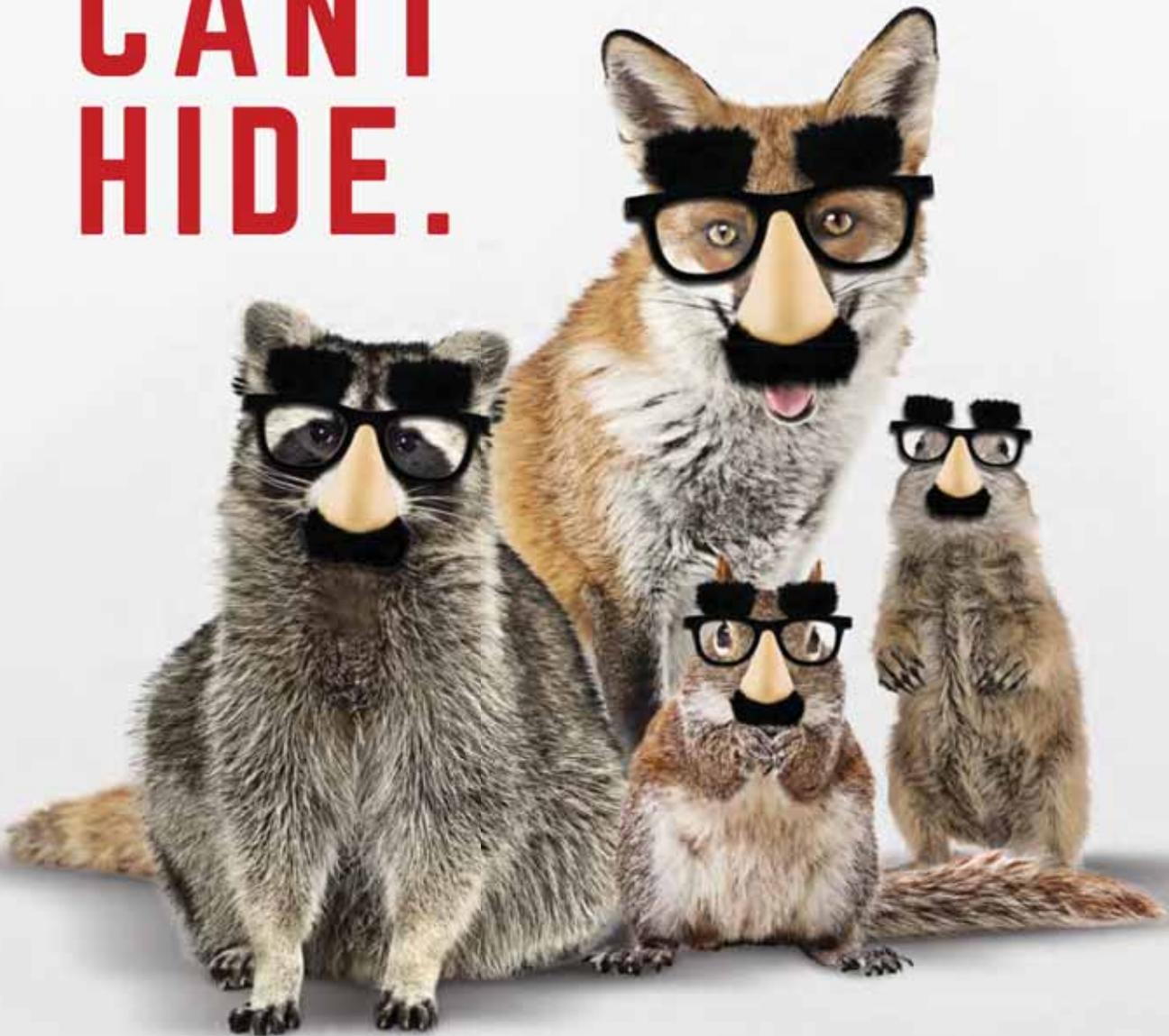
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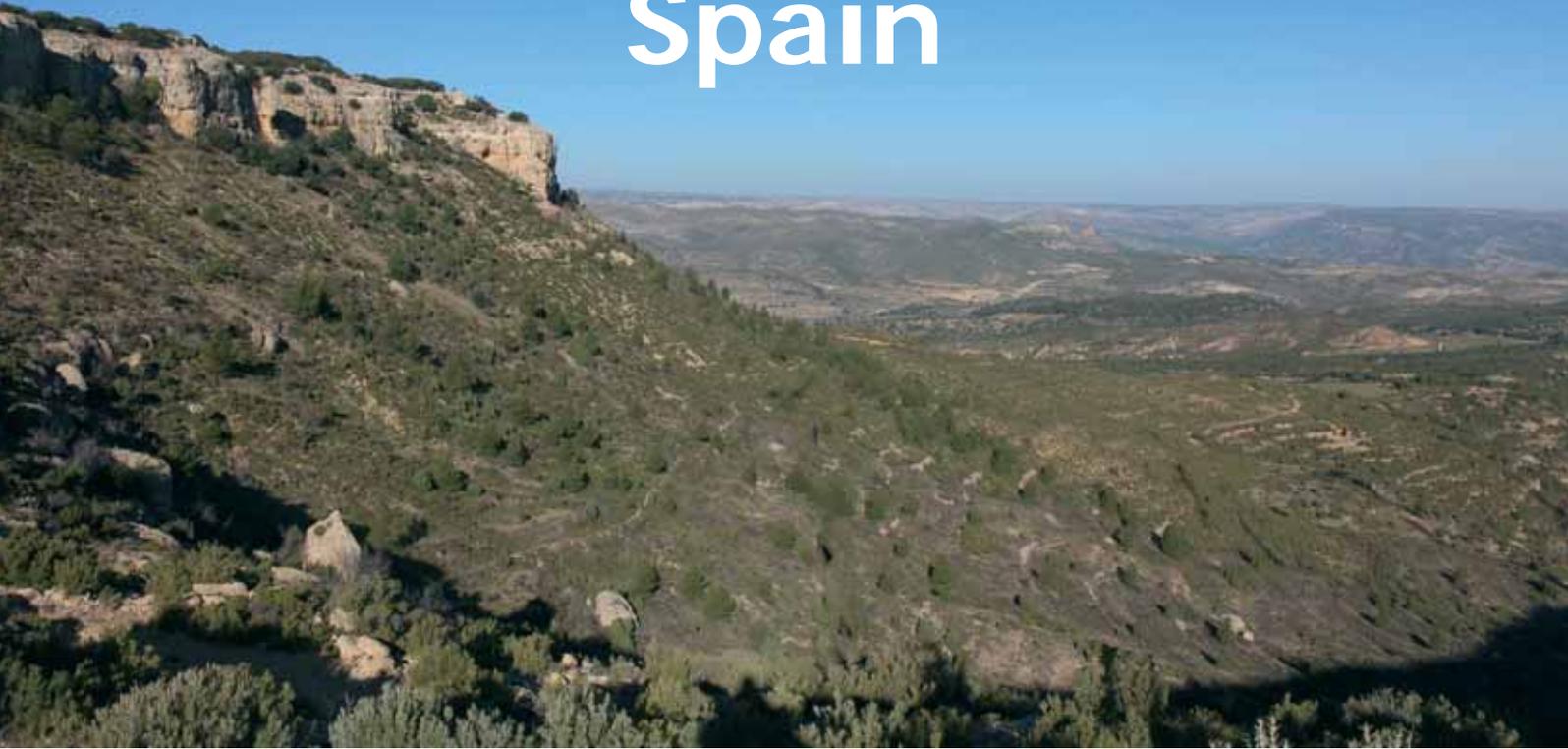
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Beceite ibex, Castellón, Spain



Incredible blue skies hunting ibex in Spain.

There's nothing like getting away for a winter break to the sun, but when I said to my wife Anna we were heading to the Castellón region of south east Spain for a long weekend, I'm not sure she had tagging along on a hunting trip in mind. Hunting the Beceite ibex, one of four sub species of wild goat found in different regions of Spain, in the middle of February would be a new experience for us both.

The area we were hunting covered 80,000 hectares and we drove 30 miles through a mixture of vegetated valleys and more open sparsely-covered rocky hills to get to our allocated hunting area. A criticism of Beceite ibex hunting, and one that had made me not rush into it before, is the amount of time spent in vehicles. But we didn't see anything of interest from the truck and eventually, from a vantage point in the hills, we watched a group of 20 ibex heading into the cover of the juniper bushes having come off one of the cereal terraces they had been feeding on.

Although my guide, Jordi, didn't speak much English I understood his

explanation that there were no roads where the ibex had gone, so we drove to the top of a ridge, parked up and headed off on foot with the sun on its way up into the sky at around 9am. It was an incredible landscape to walk in, with loose rocks littering the dry orange soil in between the rosemary and juniper bushes. Working our way through and around a mixture of these terraces, scrub land and over, up and down stone walls we navigated our way to the area where we had last seen the ibex.

Jordi gestured for us to hang back while he scouted over the top of the next hill and he sank slowly to his knees as he stalked us right to the spot where the group had bedded down. He gestured for me to come forward, which I did, moving slowly and trying to keep as low as possible. I was mindful not to kick any of the loose rocks from under my feet. I spotted the ibex in question as I crested the hill and Jordi started setting up his shooting sticks.

I placed my Rigby Highland Stalker carefully on the sticks and judged the distance to be a maximum of 50 metres.

Of the group we had spotted from the truck we could only see four – a female, two males and a male kid. Jordi tried to explain which one he wanted me to shoot and I understood the instruction to shoot the one 'behind'. "Shoot, shoot", urged Jordi, but the one I was focused on was obstructed by the kid. Jordi took the sticks, shuffled them a little more to the right and repeated "shoot, shoot". There was still no shot on the one 'behind' as the kid hadn't moved, and it then stepped forward, following its mother who had sensed something was up. The soft bang of my .275 Rigby Highland Stalker rifle rang out and I saw the ibex fall immediately. We then watched the surrounding undergrowth rustle to life and the other ibex dashed off to safety further up the hill.

My heart sank when I understood Jordi say, "you shoot wrong one." He had intended for me to shoot a representative male but, lost in translation, I had taken a slightly smaller cull animal. As we approached, Jordi seemed happy enough with the mistake and I understood him to say it



Glassing the Spanish terrain with his Leica rangefinding binoculars.

was a good one to take anyway as the six-year-old was not going to produce longer horns in future.

The bullet struck a little higher

It was certainly good enough for me

as I couldn't afford to shoot a medal animal and I knew that taking a cull male meant I would be able to hunt a



Chris set up on sticks with his Highland Stalker, with guide Jordi advising which ibex to shoot.



A female Beceite ibex with horns curved the wrong way.

female the next day. The bullet had struck a little higher than I had aimed but it was close enough. By now it was 10:30am and following customary pictures we cut out the two loins which we ate for dinner on the last night. They were a little tough but, considering they hadn't been hung, they were okay. The flavour was great and it's always nice to eat something from the animals you hunt.

The following day I was heading out for a female ibex. We were hunting nearer to the lodge, but in a more rocky and scrub-clad area. We drove to a few vantage points and glassed for ibex in the open areas between scrubby vegetation. Jordi spotted a group of females, but they were in a tricky spot to approach and looked heavily pregnant, so we passed on that bunch.

Heading round a ridge road we looked across the next hillside and spotted two females feeding half

way up the slope. Jordi drove the truck out of sight, and we set off on foot to take a closer look. To approach the ibex, we needed to drop down into a small valley, using it for cover as we headed up the hill. This started out as a rocky shrub-clad ravine, but as we went up hill we faced waist-high gorse bushes interspersed with rosemary. I began to regret my decision to wear lightweight summer trousers as we waded through

the spinney gorse and moved my Rigby out of the way of as many branches as possible. I can deal with a few scratches, but I'm not keen to put a lifetime's worth onto the wood in one day.

They were heading towards a large area of cover

We reached the head of the small valley and suddenly Jordi put his trigger



Chris' Rigby Highland Stalker in .275 Rigby.

sticks up and gestured for me to get the rifle on them. I got the gun up and searched the hillside for the ibex, spotting them after a few seconds. They had seen us and were heading towards a large area of cover. I pinged my rangefinding binoculars onto the nearest large rock a couple of times to make sure I had a good reading. It came back at 230 metres. The ballistic calculator in them gave a click factor of 11 which I knew to be accurate as I'd set up the binos for my chosen .275 bullets a couple of days before at home for just such an eventuality. Hoping I had enough time to adjust the scope, I unscrewed the elevation cap and clicked up the instructed number.

As I'd set up my scope for a 100m zero and checked the bullet drops on paper at home I knew that at 200m the bullets would be dropping 9cm and at 300m they would have dropped some 61cm. I'd already decided that at 200m if on a pack I'd just hold over, but off the less stable trigger sticks, shooting uphill at a good 45 degrees with bended

knees I wanted the reassurance of being able to place the cross hairs on the animal's chest and I was relying on the ballistic calculator to take the angle of shot and elevation above sea level into account for me.

After confirming with Jordi which female to shoot, I held my breath and the soft bang rang out. It was gratifying to see the female drop on the spot, rolling down a couple of natural rock steps but stopping dead before she fell any further. Given the situation, I was pleased with the shot and Jordi was very enthusiastic.

With the scope returned to its 100m zero, we headed on up the hill to find our quarry and thankfully made it out of the gorse bushes and onto some rock scree. Heading up a bit higher we came to the natural steps of rock that were jutting out of the hillside and found our ibex lying on the edge of one of the flat rocks. A typical female ibex has short 10cm horns and I could see that my one was different. Both horns had grown curved down. On seeing the head Jordi became more excited and kept repeating

“special trophy”. Jordi's phone came out and pictures of the extremely old 15-year-old female were sent out immediately to other guides.

The stalk on the female ibex had been great, topped off with a shot I was proud of and a trophy of a lifetime. Before we left to head back down the hill, Jordi pointed out a wall of rocks that had been placed in front of an overhang. The ibex had landed right in front of an old sniper's nest from the Spanish Civil War. It was a sobering reminder that so many of the places we hunt in, were, due to their landscape and terrain, frontlines in human conflicts.

I was lucky to enjoy two memorable stalks and have the opportunity to enjoy a hunt with my wife and friends. It was an experience I'll always cherish.

Anyone interested in hunting Beceite ibex, medal or cull can contact me for details: chrisrogersdeer@gmail.com or phone +44 (0)7950 455679.

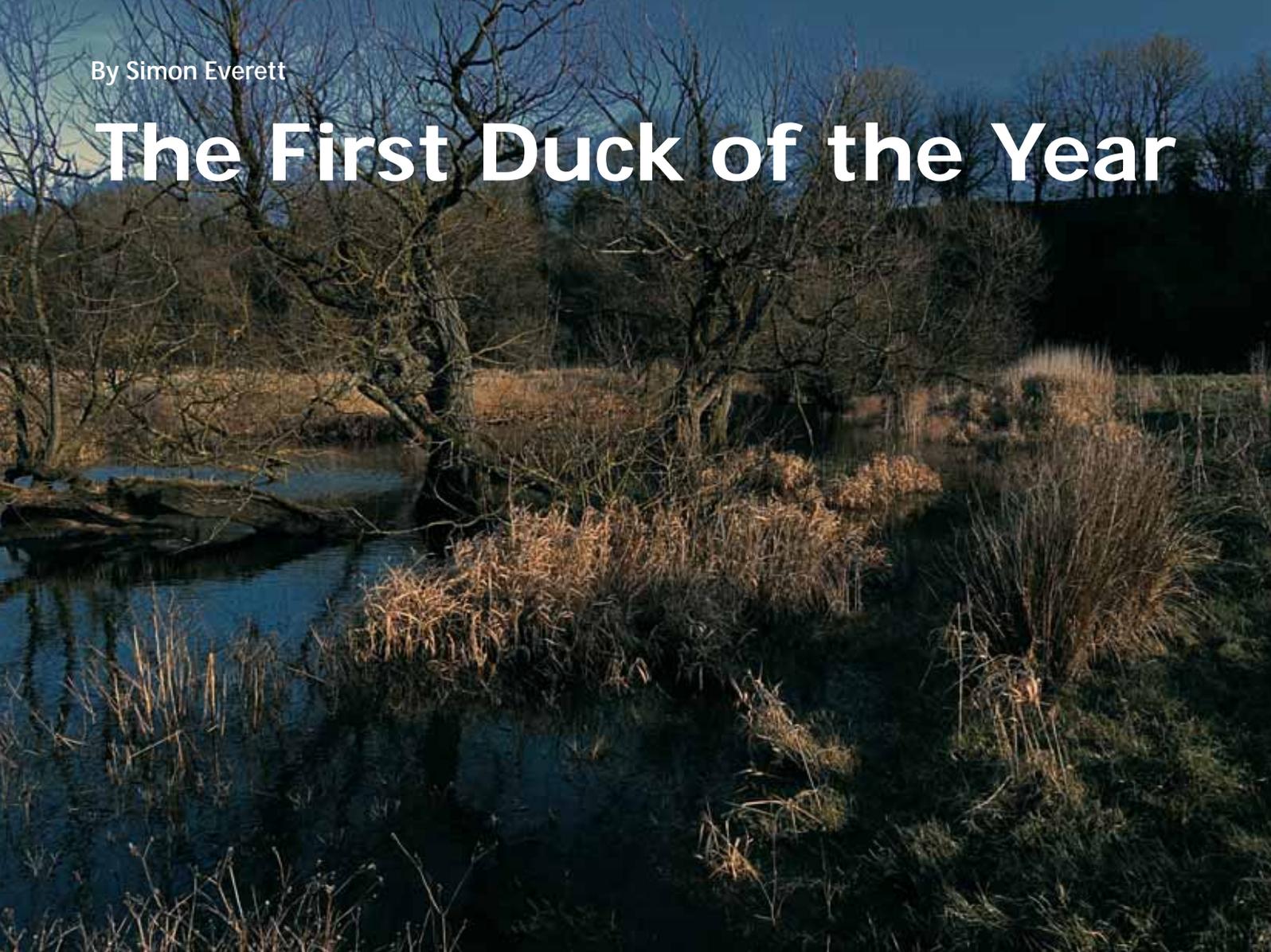
For further information about Rigby's Highland Stalker visit: www.johnrigbyandco.com.



From L-R Chris Rogers with his guide Jordi and Chris' six year old male cull Beceite ibex.

By Simon Everett

The First Duck of the Year



When we arrived the sky was just starting to lose some light.

With the ferociously cold wind blowing, but thankfully no snow, I took the dog over to the farm to see if there would be any geese or ducks dropping in on the 'pond'. The pond is actually an old oxbow lake with some petrified trees alongside and in the middle. The ducks like it and we get wild mallard, teal and the odd snipe dropping in. It is ideal for pheasants too, with plenty of thick reeds and rushes in patches. Along one bank there are big sedges, which make a perfect hide, by just pushing in and making a bit of a hole.

I gave him the run of the woods and the banking first, just to blow the cobwebs out and burn off some of those Christmas calories that we all accumulate, he gets some scraps and bits, in his bowl not from the table, but it is inclusion with boundaries. It makes him feel even more part of the pack, that is my take on it anyway. I

don't agree with the 'a dog is a tool' mentality, there is a special bond between us and I intend to maintain it as strong as I can.

With the moon coming over the tree tops, the crows starting to make noises about going to roost and the sun having left the sky and the clouds



We settled 20 yards from the open water.



Shooting in the moonlight.



I instinctively lifted, pulled through and fired.

turning pink it was time to get settled in to our sedge grass spot. I whistled him in and we made ourselves comfy, or as comfy as an icy, damp bank-side can be! I had brought bismuth with me, a bit of overkill perhaps, but if the greylags came over I would need the 42 grams of number 3s, for the ducks I had 34g of 5s because that was as small as they had when I bought the cartridges about 5 years ago! The goose shells were handy in my pocket and the duck sized ones were up the spouts.

The pair were about three gunshots high!

As we crouched there, Tigs tucked in and sitting beside me, we heard

honking. Typical, by the time I had opened the gun to change cartridges they were already upon us. I closed the gun and stayed low, there was only a pair and they were miles high, possibly in range if you are George Digweed or someone, but I know my limit and these were about three gunshots high! It was better we remain hunkered down and hidden.

About 20 minutes went by and I was beginning to think that the thin rime of ice over the pond might put the ducks off, but we had settled 20 yards from the open water and there wasn't a ruffle on the water, despite the howling gale. Surely the ducks would find this quiet, sheltered backwater attractive? Just then I heard the unmistakable sound of a mallard calling.

Sure enough a pair appeared against the sky over the river. They curled round and set their

wings to drop in like a couple of arrows, with their wings half folded back. As they hurtled across the field I stood, lifted the gun and swung through as I pulled the trigger. Just one shot rang out and the lead duck folded up and landed on the ice with a bit of thump. I couldn't see the other as it changed course, it was lost against the alders and I didn't even get a glimpse as it climbed away. I didn't mind, we had one in the bag. Now I just had to coax Tigs, hardly a gundog, to face the cold water and ice and go and fetch it. I waded out as far as I could and urged him forward.

I left the pheasants alone despite them taking wing

He had clocked it and was desperate to please but the ice was holding him back as he was breaking through it, he couldn't swim and he couldn't jump the ice to break it. I called him out and walked round to

the other side to have-a-go from there. A few pheasants took wing from their roosts in the alders, but I let them go unsaluted.

We got round to the opposite side and Tigs obviously knew the plan because he went down the bank as was looking at how he could get out to retrieve the duck. We found a spot where the ice was thin and he waded out before hopping onto the ice sheet the duck was on, it was shallower from this side and he made it without any problem.

All the time I was encouraging him to give him confidence and keep him going. As he was teetering on the ice with the duck in his mouth another pair started their descent and I instinctively lifted, pulled through and fired. We had a brace! He brought the first duck back to me and I helped him out. Then we walked the 30 yards or so down the bank to opposite the second duck. It was in water not on

ice and Tigs waded out through the thin ice before swimming to the prize and grabbing it, then swimming back to the edge. I had waded out and as he reached the edge of the ice shelf I reached under him and lifted clear of the water and carried him to the bank. He had braved the cold water and ice for me, it was the least I could do. He gave himself a shake and we decided to head for home and get him towelled off and out of the wind. A good flight though, even if it was short and sweet.

Short and sweet perhaps, but we had enjoyed a good flight.



The Impact Of Pheasant Release At Exmoor Shooting Estates

This study examined the effect of pheasant release and game management on Exmoor, for woodland plants, mosses and lichens, conifer forests, game crops, other crops and breeding birds in hedgerows. Exmoor is an area with high shooting activity and a large number of released birds. This study looked at a representative group of seven large shoots covering 40,000 acres in total on the southern Exmoor fringes, to examine the environmental impacts. It gives us a broader view of the possible effects on the area and is the first time many have been studied.

Key points

- Hedgerows on game estates had roughly twice as many breeding birds, and three times as many of seed-eating resident species, than hedgerows on reference areas without game management.
- Conifer woods managed for game had improved biodiversity, with a more open canopy, more grass and bracken,

and more woodland birds.

- Game crops made up almost 4% of the cropped area, consisted of 13 different species or mixes and contributed to a more mixed landscape, with a greater variety of crops and smaller fields than would be seen without game management.
- Pheasant release pens had more bare ground, and fewer woodland herbs and ferns.
- There was less moss, lichen and similar species on trees in pheasant release pens, and in the surrounding woodland.
- Shooting estates of various sizes were studied, looking at five factors that might be affected. Pheasant releasing and game management had positive effects on three of these and negative effects on two.
- There are other possible impacts which have not yet been studied, and more

understanding is needed for some of those which have.

Background

Pheasant releasing is common across the UK, to provide birds for shooting in the winter. They are released into woodland pens in late summer, where they adjust to the habitat, grow and gradually disperse across the countryside before the shooting season begins in October. There is a lot of debate about releasing large numbers of birds into woodland, and the effect it might have on the plants, animals and wider environment. Lots of research has been done and these studies show that, in general, the presence of the birds themselves in the release pens can have a negative effect on plants and soils.

In the wider area around the release pens, a positive effect is often found, as a



A typical release pen.

result of the woodland management that is done in areas that are used for game shooting. This includes encouraging shrubs, coppicing, and keeping clearings and tracks open, which allows light into the wood, which is good for butterflies, birds and other plants. Shoot management guidelines and the Code of Good Shooting Practice have been developed to help shoot managers minimise the negative effects which can be seen, whilst keeping the positive ones.

These findings have been shown across the country, but there is a particularly high level of shooting activity in the Exmoor area, and a high number of birds are released, although we do not know how many birds were released at the study sites. There are concerns about whether larger shoots may have more of an effect on the local habitat as they release more birds. This study was done to find out what effect pheasant releasing was having on the habitats and environment of Exmoor estates.

The study overall

This study looked at the effect of pheasant releasing across southern Exmoor. It ran for three years from 2015-17, on seven shooting estates and a variety of suitable reference areas. These reference sites were not managed for game and were used as matched comparison areas for the pheasant release sites, allowing the scientists to study the effect of the pheasant release. They were chosen in areas of nearby farmland, the Exmoor National Park, or National Trust estates, depending what was most appropriate. All seven shooting estates had professional gamekeepers managing the pheasant release areas, and they ranged in size including smaller shoots (total area 1,000 acres) and very large ones (covering 14,000 acres). The GWCT is grateful to all sites that participated in this important study.

The scientists studied which plants were found on the ground, in what numbers, and the mosses, lichens etc found on trees in the surrounding woods. They measured the type and number of bird species in woods and hedgerows, and looked at the game crops nearby – how much land was used for these, the

layout of the crops and which species were planted.

The study was divided into five sections, all of which pheasant release nearby might have affected:

In woodland:

- Plants on the ground in broadleaf woodland
- Mosses, lichens and similar species in broadleaf woodland
- Conifer woods – birds seen, plants and shrubs found and canopy density

On farmland:

- Game crop plots – the amount planted, species chosen and arrangement in the landscape
- Breeding birds in hedgerows

What they did and what they found: in detail

Ground plants in deciduous woods

Other studies have found that woodland plants can be affected by pheasant release pens, depending on the stocking density – i.e. number of birds for the area. Pheasants scratch and trample the ground, and their droppings add nutrients to the soil that would not otherwise be there, both of which change the mix of plants that grow. However, the woodland management of pheasant release woods will also affect the plants that grow. Management to open the canopy lets more light into the wood, so shade-loving species will give way to those preferring a lighter environment, and the changes are probably caused by all these factors together.

In this part of the study, 26 study plots were used, across seven shooting estates and four national park sites, in the following areas:

- Inside a release pen
- Outside the release pen, within the same wood
- In nearby woods without a release pen
- At four national park woods

At each plot, six sampling points were chosen randomly within 100m of a central point. At each sampling point, two areas of two square metres each were surveyed. 312 vegetation surveys were completed in this section of the study alone. Each one identified and recorded the species present, and how much of the ground was covered by each species.

Overall, the number of different

species between pheasant release pens and reference sites were the same, but the amount of ground covered by these plants was lower for some groups of species. Inside release pens, 40% of the ground was bare, compared to 10% outside release pens in game woods and also 10% in national park woods. There were fewer woodland herbs, 15% in pens compared to 30% outside pens and in national park woods. On control plots outside the pen, twice as many fern species and three times as much fern coverage were found in woods with pens than woods on the same estate without pens. There was five times less fern cover in release pens compared to control plots within the same woods. Although these species were still present, they were found less often. These results are broadly similar to those of other work looking at woodland ground in and around release pens.

In general, these effects were confined to the pen itself, and did not spread into the surrounding woodland, but the results for ferns did affect the whole wood. Overall, similar ferns were found in estate controls as in national park woods.

When the control areas on shooting estates were combined (those in release woods and those in other woods), no differences were found between these estate controls and those on national park sites.

Mosses and lichens

This part of the study looked at both bryophytes and lichens on trees, as well as mosses on the ground. Bryophytes are small plants that grow in moist areas, and do not produce flowers or seeds. The term includes mosses, and a group of plants called liverworts. These plants are sometimes studied as indicators of air quality, and they can be affected by air pollution. Woodlands in the west of England in particular usually have good air quality and have an important mix of bryophytes and lichens. Overall, 32 species of lichen, seven moss species and four liverworts were found in this study. It is important to find out whether these are being affected by pheasant releasing. As well as adding nutrients to the soil, pheasant droppings may also enrich the air, for example with nitrogen, and this

could impact sensitive plants like mosses, liverworts or lichens.

Surveying these species requires specific and expert identification skills, so a specialist contractor was employed. At each of the 312 random sampling sites mentioned earlier, a 40x50cm square on the ground was also surveyed for bryophytes and lichens. The closest suitable tree was chosen and four surveys of 50x10cm were done around the trunk, 1.5m above ground.

34 different moss species were found on the ground, with no difference in the number and mix of moss species between release pens and other sites on the shooting estates – either reference areas in the same wood, or in other woods without pens. There was also no difference between the number of moss species in shooting estates and national park surveys, but mosses covered over 20% of the ground on national park sites, and less than 15% of the ground on shooting estates.

When the scientists looked at mosses and bryophytes growing on trees, the number of species and amount of each species was the same between shooting estates and national park sites. However, when they looked more closely at the different sites within shooting estates, they found 30-50% fewer liverwort species and less coverage in woods with a release pen, compared to woods without a release pen. Woods with a release pen had around half the amount of liverworts compared to woods without a pen. There were also about 25% more moss species found on trees in woods without a release pen compared to release woods, either inside or outside the pen. No differences were found for lichens. In general, national park woods had similar amounts of bryophytes and lichens as woods on game estates that contained no release pen.

Conifer woods

There are large areas of conifer woodland around Exmoor; much of it was planted in the 1970s and is now relatively mature. Many game managers use areas of conifer woodland on their shoot, and this part of the study looked at the plants, shrubs and structure of conifer woods that were managed for shooting

compared to those that weren't. Birds were also counted in the study woods.

26 conifer woods were selected from maps across four shooting estates. In each of these woods, 20 surveys were carried out at random points. At each of these 520 points, the scientists recorded which plant species were present and how much space each of these covered in a square metre of ground, as well as the shrubs and trees within a 10m square and the birds they saw or heard whilst there.

The scientists found that there tended to be more shrubs and wider spacing between trees in game-managed woods, but the differences were not significant in statistical tests. This means that, although more shrubs and wider spacing was seen in game woods, the difference was not great enough for us to be sure it did not occur by chance. However, the differences were large. For example, of the ten-metre squares surveyed, in game woods almost two-thirds had shrubs, compared to just over one-third in non-game woods. The canopy was more open in game woods, as might be expected from the higher level of woodland management that occurs here. The woods all had a fairly diverse mix of tree species, rather than being entirely made up of one species, and game management did not affect this. There was more bracken and grass in game woods, but again the differences were not statistically significant (bracken: game woods over 80% compared to non-game woods around 55%; grass: game woods almost 40% compared to non-game woods less than 30%).

Bird encounters were also recorded – this means either birds that were seen, or those that were heard during the survey visit of approximately two hours. Significantly more birds were encountered in game woods. This was true of songbirds (average 13 in game woods versus 7.5 in non-game woods), woodland birds (4 vs 2.5) and all birds overall (18 vs 10).

Game cover crops

This part of the study aimed to understand the game cover crops maintained by shooting estates, how much is present, of which species, and how it is laid out in the landscape. On six shooting estates, a questionnaire survey

was carried out with a follow-up site visit.

There were 175 game crop plots on the six estates studied – an average of 29 plots per estate. The questionnaire result showed that the average size of game crop blocks, which may be made up of several plots next to each other, was eight acres (just over three hectares), and the plots had been used for game crops for between 5 and 25 years. On average these plots covered 3.7% of the cropped area, ranging from 3% to 10% on different estates, and consisted of 13 different crops, including several crop mixes. The most common were maize and kale, followed by wild bird seed mixes and many others such as reed canary grass, artichokes, chicory, mustard and linseed.

When looking at the arrangement of game crops, the scientists recorded where these plots are in relation to fields, hedgerows, woodland etc and whether the layout is in strips or blocks. Although there are some common features – for example, the plots often have open strips called 'headlands' around the edges and 'rides' through the middle, half are next to woodland and almost half border a hedgerow – overall it is a mixed picture, the game plots having various different characteristics. This variety across the landscape is rare in modern farming.

To look into this in more detail, digital maps were used on which the fields and their contents were accurately plotted for a subset of three of those six surveyed estates. On these three estates, the average size of an individual plot was 4.4 acres (1.8 hectares), and when looking at the larger blocks, made up of game crops next to each other, the average block size was 7.2 acres (2.9 hectares).

Farming maps from the late 1960s were then used to compare the changes in landscape from the era before the intensification of farming to the farmed environment today, looking at the whole cropped area of those three estates with digital cropping maps. Maps from the 1960s were compared with both the existing cropping plan, and also to a theoretical plan of what the sites may be like if the crops planted for pheasants

were removed and replaced with crops that would likely be seen in their place. The addition of game crops to the countryside makes today's farmed landscape more similar to that of the 1960s than otherwise is the case in modern farming. This means that the crops are more mixed, with more diversity and generally smaller field sizes for those fields that are not grass.

Hedgerow birds

This section looked at whether the presence of game crops near to hedgerows had any effect on the number and type of songbirds in those hedgerows in spring. Although we know that game crops themselves can attract various bird species in winter, we don't know if that means that more birds breed nearby in spring.

The scientists counted breeding birds in hedgerows on three game estates and three suitably matched reference sites on a large National Trust property that had no shooting. All of these sites were mainly grassland, with some arable, but the game estates also had game crops. All birds seen or heard in the hedgerow sites were recorded, but not those flying overhead or in adjacent fields. The size of the hedgerow was measured, as well as the distance to the nearest woodland.

28 different species were recorded in this part of the study. The average number of birds per kilometre of hedgerow on game estates was 12, twice as high as on the reference sites, which had 6 per km. When looking in more detail and looking only at the seed-eating species such as blackbirds, blue tits, bullfinches and chaffinches, there were on average almost three times as many birds per kilometre of hedgerow on game estates (8) compared to non-game sites (3). The study also showed that within shooting estates, hedges close to game crop plots (closer than 200m) had more breeding songbirds than hedges further away (more than 400m).

What does this all mean?

Inside release pens, the pheasants themselves seem to affect vegetation, possibly by adding nutrients to the ground in their droppings, as well as the physical effect of scratching at the ground while looking for food and eating

plant material. We do not know the stocking densities of these release pens, but the changes seen here are similar to those seen elsewhere where pens are stocked at average levels, which still tend to exceed the recommended densities.

Where GWCT guidelines are followed and pens are stocked at below 1,000 birds per hectare (or 700 on ecologically sensitive sites), these changes can be reduced or avoided whilst the benefits of game management are retained. These guidelines have been incorporated into the Code of Good Shooting Practice. Although we believe that stocking densities have fallen in recent years, this reinforces the importance of shoots keeping to the recommended guidelines.

The effect of release pens on mosses and liverworts that was seen in this study is interesting, and its cause is not known. It may be that the pheasants increase the amount of nitrogen in the air, which is known to slow the growth of these plant groups. It may be because game woods have more light at ground level. These findings are important, because mosses and liverworts have never been studied before when looking at the effect of pheasant release, and this is the first evidence for a possible effect. We do not know either how far up the trees into the canopy, or how far out from the release pen this effect might extend, or whether it would also be reduced or avoided with lower stocking densities and these would be interesting to investigate.

The presence of a large area of game cover crops, particularly because of the range of species and mixes present, will bring benefits to many species through the winter. Many studies have shown that such crops are used by farmland wildlife, for example songbirds, butterflies and bumblebees. One benefit of the sites in this study is the large size of the game crops present. In general, game crop plots larger than around 1 hectare are more beneficial to birds, and in this study the large estates had game crops that were on average much bigger than this. The open areas around and through game plots are beneficial to butterflies, and the variety in placement provides habitat that is more suited to different bird species across the estate.

The addition of game cover crops to the farmed landscape on these estates has the effect of making it more similar to the environment in the 1960s, when crops were more diverse, fields were smaller and hedgerows more common. Overall, it is thought that these changes have been detrimental to farmland wildlife, as a more mixed habitat can provide for more species at different times of year. In regions that are mainly grassland, such as some of our study areas, game crops can be the only source of seed in winter.

This is supported by the findings on hedgerows in this study. Hedgerows that are closer to game crops contain more birds than those further away, and hedgerows on game estates have more breeding birds than those without game management. This applies only to the birds that spend the winter here, but not to those that migrate here from their winter feeding sites, as the game crops are no longer present when they arrive in time to breed. It may be that over-winter survival is better, or that birds just stay in the area as a result of game crops providing food nearby. Overall, though, the numbers recorded in this study are lower than might be expected on a mixed farming environment elsewhere, which may be because the area is predominantly grassland, which provides limited food for seed-eating birds in winter. There are other possible effects of releasing, which the study did not look at.

This study revealed some interesting findings regarding the impact of game management on the habitats and species of Exmoor. It is particularly relevant to note that, despite some of these estates working on a large scale, with suitable management the positive effects can be retained despite, or sometimes perhaps because of, those increases in scale. Large areas of game cover crop of different varieties across the landscape are possible on a large estate in a way that may not be feasible on a small or medium sized shoot, and income from the shoot can provide resources for beneficial woodland management. Regardless of size, shoots should adhere to releasing guidelines and the Code of Good Shooting Practice for maximum benefits.

Federation of Irish Salmon & Sea Trout Anglers

Conaidhm na Slat Iascairí Bradáin agus Breac Geal

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F.I.S.S.T.A.

VALUE OF WILD ATLANTIC SALMON CELEBRATED AT NASCO CONFERENCE IN NORWAY

FISSTA had the strongest scientific team yet representing the Irish salmonid angling fraternity when the Thirty-Sixth Annual Meeting of the North Atlantic Salmon Conservation Organisation (NASCO), was held in the first week of June once again. Parties highlighted ongoing work to assess the health of wild Atlantic salmon stocks and better understand the threats and pressures they face.

The two main FISSTA objectives were to highlight and progress the

mackerel predation issue highlighted in the Holst hypothesis which we want tested, and the promotion of the progress made by Norske Industri of Norway to getting sea lice work-plans on a progressive track and within their deadlines. Both issues got a great airing thanks to FISSTA Vice Secretary Michael Stinson and ably supported by Jens Christian Holst who represented FISSTA at NASCO for the first time.

A number of Parties have implemented further reductions in home

water fisheries while also implementing projects to address key threats such as water quality, barriers to migration, and degraded habitat. These domestic efforts are critical to ensuring the continued survival of the species across its range where these discussions took place north of the Arctic Circle in the beautiful sea-side city of Tromsø, Norway. Representatives from six Parties and a number of non-governmental organisations (NGOs) including FISSTA along with observers came together to discuss the many environmental and human-caused factors influencing the health and abundance of wild Atlantic salmon.

Parties to NASCO gather each year to review the newest scientific information and consider actions being taken and those still needed to ensure the conservation of this iconic species. This year's meeting of NASCO was particularly significant given that 2019 is the focal year of the International Year of the Salmon (IYS) initiative. IYS aim was to bring people together to share and develop knowledge more effectively, raise awareness and take action to establish the conditions necessary to ensure the resilience of salmon and people throughout the Northern Hemisphere.



The August rains brought some good floods so the salmon and seatrout could run the Salmon Leap Falls on the Glen River at Carrick, Co Donegal.

Highlights from the soon to be released State of Salmon Report were presented and this signature outcome of the IYS initiative will be a key outreach and education tool for a number of key audiences. This was a most beneficial NASCO as the Organisation's annual meeting was preceded by a two-day multidisciplinary Symposium featuring a series of talks and discussions related to 'Managing the Atlantic salmon in a Rapidly Changing Environment – Management Challenges and Possible Responses.'

Opportunities to raise awareness

This symposium went beyond a typical series of scientific presentations by successfully incorporating various perspectives on the value of Atlantic salmon and opportunities to raise awareness and increase the resilience of populations throughout their range.

Presenters challenged participants to incorporate new approaches and ideas as they moved forward with conservation, management and science initiatives.

The Symposium Steering Committee presented a set of recommendations to NASCO related to how the organisation and its members can work to ensure salmon and their habitats are conserved and restored in the face of changing conditions.

NASCO President Jóannes V. Hansen of Denmark (in respect of the Faroe Islands and Greenland) stated: 'I could not be prouder of what NASCO is achieving for salmon through IYS. The first ever NASCO IYS Symposium was a tremendous success, and several of the important recommendations stemming from it have already been incorporated into NASCO's work.' At the 2018 NASCO Annual Meeting, a new regulatory measure for the West Greenland mixed stock fishery was agreed to by the Parties. During review of the measure by NASCO in 2019, improvements were evident in monitoring and control activities in the 2018 fishery and Denmark (in respect of



Congratulations to Chance Cole age 11 from county Armagh, who caught his first and second ever salmon on the Abhainn Bhui River on Sat 17th August with the Slieve League Anglers Club In Donegal.

the Faroe Islands and Greenland) reiterated its commitment to fully implement the 2018 measure, including reducing their 2019 quota to account for the 2018 quota over-harvest. In addition to receiving updates on mixed stock fisheries occurring in West Greenland and in Labrador, Canada, harvests of at risk populations of North American origin salmon in the St. Pierre and Miquelon mixed stock fishery were also discussed.

Parties to NASCO and NGOs continue to invest important resources in research to better understand the complex ecology of salmon at sea; highlighted projects including the continuation of a 17-year time series tracking smolt and post-smolt migration and survival at sea from four index rivers in the northwest Atlantic and new multi-year, multi-faceted studies including telemetry and pelagic ecosystem studies in the northeast Atlantic. More information on these critical scientific efforts can be found at: <http://www.nasco.int/sas/research.htm>.

NASCO continues to look for ways to improve implementation of its agreements on fisheries management, habitat protection, and the impacts of aquaculture on wild Atlantic salmon. A workshop was held again this year to critically and publicly review how well NASCO members are meeting their commitments. Holding members accountable in this way is essential to the effectiveness and credibility of the organisation.

A new reporting cycle began in 2019 that strives to increase transparency, clarity, and thoroughness of information shared by the Parties. Efforts to improve this process are ongoing but FISSTA are finding it difficult to enthuse our Irish government to make a much more serious commitment to our wild Atlantic salmon in the coming season.

The Parties to the NASCO Convention are: Canada, Denmark (in respect of the Faroe Islands and Greenland), the European Union, Norway, the Russian Federation, and the USA. There are 44 non-governmental

observers accredited to the Organisation. The 2019 Annual Meeting concluded to the satisfaction of some but not all 114 participants, including scientists, policy makers and representatives of inter-governmental organisations and non-governmental organisations who met to discuss the

status of wild Atlantic salmon and to consider management issues.

FISSTA OBJECT TO ANY FURTHER INTER DEPARTMENTAL FAKE CONFRONTATIONS BEING STAGED

A report in the Connaught Tribune has

led to a serious downturn in cooperation with the relevant authorities who are charged with the responsibility to protect and develop our wild salmon resources as per their programme submitted to NASCO. Below is the FISSTA letter sent to Minister Canney immediately after our members read the report.

Dear Minister Canney

We wish to draw your attention to the article in the Connaught Tribune in which the Principal Officer (PO) of your department, the DCCAE declared at a recent meeting in Galway that the salmonoid species will be extinct in 30 years.

As Chairman of this Federation of Irish Salmon and Seatrout Anglers representing 90 clubs and over 20,000 anglers, I call on you as Minister to confirm if you share this view and if you retain confidence in this officer to continue in this role to implement your international vision for our Irish salmonid fisheries conservation programme as expressed to me and my colleagues at our brief meeting in Athlone yesterday. Sadly, we did not get the opportunity over the hour's meeting to respond to you in person yesterday, but we hope we will get more value from our next gathering if we are allowed an input on the next agenda.

We urgently require your response to the enclosed article and clarification on this view by your PO and if you support it. If not, we ask you to confirm the new team arrangements you will make to implement the Implementation Plan 2019-2024* which your staff lodged at our annual NASCO meeting we attended in June 2019 at Tromso in Norway, as

we no longer have confidence in your PO to continue in salmon matters. Your IP clarifies to the nineteen other wild salmon countries around the Atlantic Ocean that The Irish Government acknowledges the status of salmon as set out in Directive 92/43/EEC (Annex II & V) and the requirement to protect and conserve this species.

We also seek clarification on whether the CEO of IFI also supports this view. If not, he too, must be seen to distance himself from said assertion and to publicly seek the removal of said officer from his team. Does Deputy Noel Grealish TD who also attended the meeting in Galway where these comments were made, support the views of the principal officer? If not, we need to know what is he going to do about it?

Please remember, we are dealing here with a priceless national resource revered in history and folklore that must be conserved protected and enhanced for future generations to enjoy. Every shoulder must be put to the wheel to achieve this and those who believe your IP policy is apparently futile are better left off your team to implement other strategies in your department that they believe are more credible than your plan for conservation of the wild Atlantic salmon.

FISSTA awaits a response from Minister Canney TD)

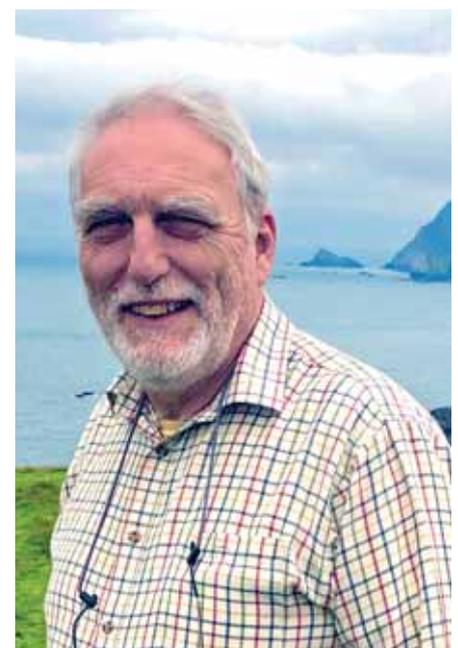
This charade where our Department personnel no longer have belief in their policies must be challenged and a remedy sought now. The previous issue carried the following extract on aquaculture impact, when we said: Sea lice levels have increased progressively at the Rosroe site since November 2018 and DCCAE requires immediate action by DAFM to effectively control lice prior to the salmon and sea trout smolt run from the National Salmonid Index Catchment on the River Erriff.

DCCAE requires an urgent update on what action the Department of Agriculture Food and the Marine is taking to resolve these situations and a response to our requirements set out above, which relate to our statutory responsibilities for the conservation of salmon and sea trout.

It seems that the Department of

Communications, Climate Action & Environment (DCCAE) has had to take the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine (DAFM) and the Marine Institute (MI) to task for failing in their statutory responsibility to protect wild salmon and sea trout from the unmanageable and out of control lice levels on salmon farms along the west coast but particularly from Donegal to Connemara.

FISSTA recommended the Department to issue notice on the seriousness of this situation as re-ascertained by the DCCAE requiring an urgent update from the DAFM on what action the Department is taking to resolve these situations. Now, we find out this month that the team is indeed rudderless and holed below the water once again. This can no longer continue.



Following the Irish Game Fair at Shanes Castle, exhibitor Paul Morgan of Coch-y-Bonddu books went 'on tour' in Donegal.



Poachers with a deep feeling for the land and its game

Setting up a long net late at night.

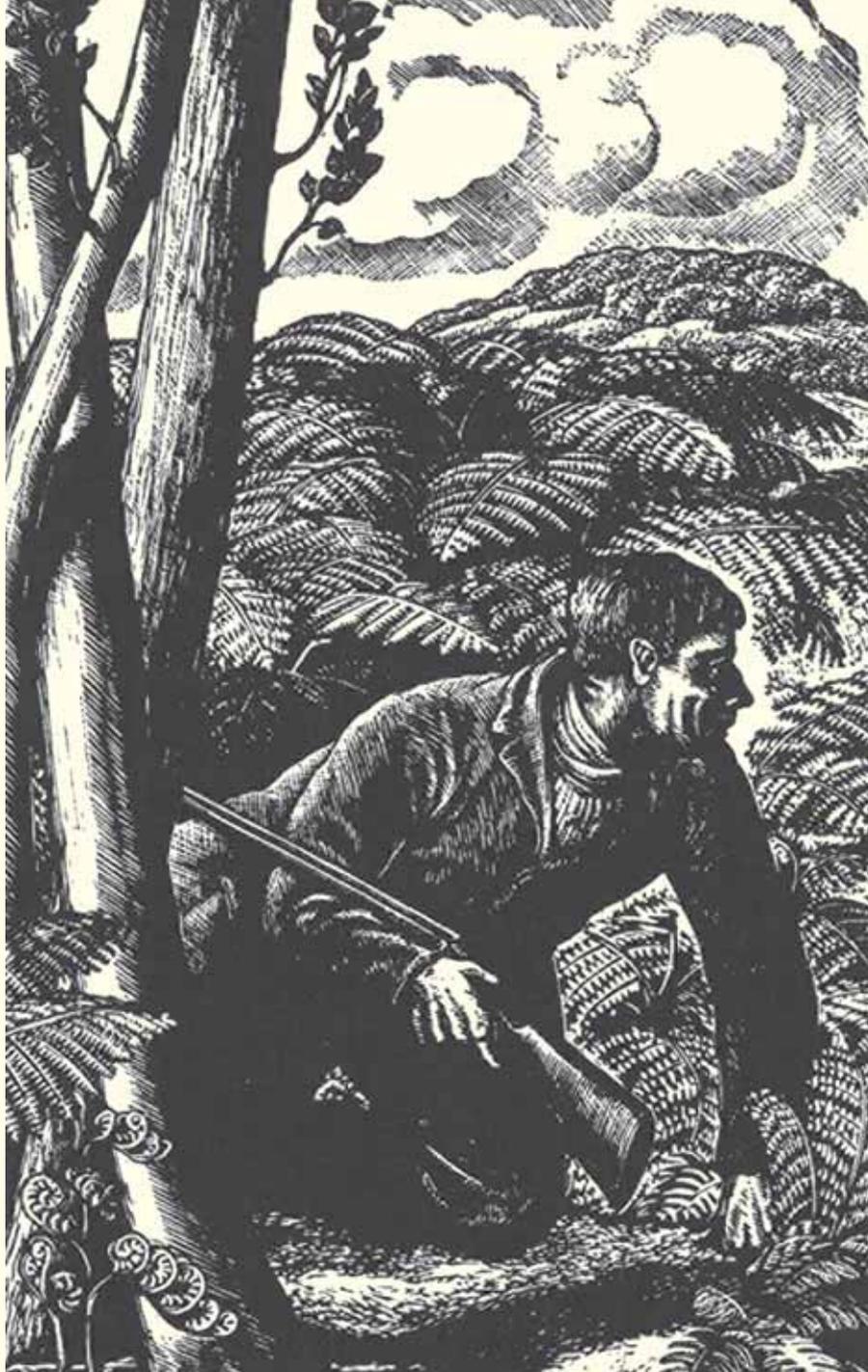
Nobody could possibly defend poaching or say anything positive about it. In Africa especially it's a plague which, because of its uncontrolled nature, threatens the future of species. On the other hand, most reasonable people, I feel, would not be against a certain amount of controlled, big game hunting in Africa. But unfortunately there are a lot of unreasonable people out there. The social media world, by way of an example, is not a reasonable place and likes to demonise big game hunters without providing the balanced reflection that a certain amount of big game hunting can provide some much needed employment and income for people living in a frequently hard-pressed continent. But balanced, thoughtful approaches can seem pretty rare and not a state of mind which people choose to engage in.

There used to be a time in Ireland and Britain when poaching wasn't the indefensible thing it is nowadays and a blind eye was turned to it. The reason was obvious. Much of the land was owned by tough, harsh landlords who were extremely zealous about protecting their game. To the average British and

Irish peasant this was a bitter pill to swallow. He reflected to himself that the game of the land shouldn't be the property of any one man alone. This poaching tradition continued well into the 20th Century. A certain amount of it still goes on today but I have never met a member of the hunting community who looks favourably on its contemporary practitioners. In the past, particularly during the 19th Century in Ireland and during the height of the Land League movement, it was a very different state of affairs.

There's quite a wide literature about poaching, including a number of gems which are well worth purchasing. For example the Scottish writer Ian Niall published a fantastic book in the 1950s called "The Poacher's Handbook", which is very well written and features many scenes which will resonate with every lover of the chase. I have often gone out hunting rabbits with a ferret and a hawk during the night (with the landlord's permission of course) and because of this many of Niall's descriptions strongly resonated with me. He has a deep feeling for the land and its game, and this feeling imbues the text.

There's another renowned book about poaching which was written by a man from my hometown of Birr. This was Jim Connell (1852 to 1929), who as well as being a passionate hunter was also a socialist and a defender of workers' rights. He wrote the famous song "The Red Flag." In his book "Confessions of a Poacher" he begins with Dryden, "I am as free as Nature first made man, / Ere the base laws of servitude began, / When wild in woods the noble savage ran." In his opening paragraph Connell pleads his defence in the presence of any frowning readers, "we plead that, considering the few opportunities for enjoyment to be found in this country of monopolised land and soul-killing competition, we have led lives more unselfish and far more enjoyable than that of the average man." He argues that the poacher isn't a thief and quotes a legal text which points out that "wild animals cannot be made the subject of that absolute kind of ownership which is generally signified by the term property." He argues that the law of property should not apply to animals in a state of nature. Connell adds that farmers whose crops have been damaged by the game bred on their



When the classic book "The Poacher's Handbook" was published in 1950 it included a series of acclaimed wood engravings by the artist Barbara Greg. The engravings are very evocative and capture the picturesque nature of hunting. This particular wood engraving perhaps shows a poacher hiding from a gamekeeper.

farms often look favourably on poachers because they are inadvertently protecting their crops. He adds that quite a few gamekeepers began their career in the outdoors as poachers.

Hares were to be counted by the thousand

Connell reminisces about his time growing up in Birr, a time which, despite all the poverty and lack of decent medicine and general injustice of the era, contained much positivity for him because many hours were passed in the outdoors. He recalls the moment,

when he was eight years old, when he first saw a hare being chased and caught by a greyhound. "The sight was quite unexpected, and I well remember how it threw me into such a state of excitement that for some moments I could not speak...We lived in a spot bordered on one side by the Bog of Allen, and on the other by the Slieve Bloom Mountains. In both, hares were to be counted by the thousand, and it need hardly be added that the country between, some two miles across, was always well stocked. The bog, too, was frequented by wild ducks, wild geese, and grouse; and

every half mile there tumbled down from the mountains streams which swarmed with trout, and, during part of the year, with salmon also." He recalls setting out with three or four other boys at nine in the morning, armed with an eel spear, a couple of long rods with snares attached, a long-handled landing net, and walking for miles along the river banks. One of the people who gave him poaching advice was a member of the Royal Irish Constabulary, a man called Brennan. We can only read with envy about the land and rivers teeming with game: "In one of those streams, which ran into the Shannon, I have seen young salmon so plentiful that it is hardly an exaggeration to say that from an elevated spot on the bank ten thousand might be counted. To catch these was an easy manner. We only had to take a lidless basket with a handle across it, attach a rope to the handle, throw the basket to the other side of the stream, and haul it across."

In the summer he walked for hours up into the Slieve Bloom Mountains until darkness fell and he slept under a rock or beneath a bush throughout the night. "There was a cavern about fifteen miles from my home which was occasionally used by illicit distillers for the manufacture of poitín. To this I always paid a visit when I found myself at all near it, and if there was any whiskey in the place, invariably encountered company more jovial than elevating. Whether it contained whiskey or not, it was always a convenient place for resting or sleeping, and many a sound nap have I enjoyed there."

Connell said the years he spent hunting in this part of South Offaly near the Slieve Blooms were the happiest years of his life. He moved to Dublin at the age of 19 where "hard work and want of opportunity for a long time banished all thoughts of sport."

"Confessions of a Poacher" is a very enjoyable book, but "The Poacher's Handbook" contains writing of the very finest calibre. There are nature descriptions so beautifully written here that you would enjoy it even if you were

anti hunting. Ian Niall is the master of creating atmosphere and we feel we are on the moonlit hillside with him with our ferret and our shotgun and keeping a wary eye out for angry gamekeepers. The introduction to the copy in my possession was written by an Oxford university English lecturer called Bernard O'Donoghue. O'Donoghue was originally from Cork and like many people in that wonderful county has a passion for hunting. He also wrote a book in 1987 called "Poaching Rights". O'Donoghue points out that *The Poacher's Handbook* is a classic essay in one of the major sub-genres in English Literature, the naturalist's diary or handbook. It's part of a long and distinguished heritage of outdoor writing including Izaak Walton's "The Compleat Angler", and the writings of Gilbert White, John Clare, Francis Kilvert and Flora Thompson. There are translucent moments in Niall's descriptive passages when the natural world becomes charged with insight and with profound peace. The pragmatic man often dismisses these moods but that's a foolish stance.

A game of cat and mouse between gamekeeper and poacher

Niall expertly describes what it's like growing up and the experiences of a boy when nature is luring him outdoors away from the less exciting and less interesting environs of the schoolroom or the chapel - "how hard it was to seem attentive to the preacher when, behind the schoolhouse the pigeons called through the wood, and close by its door ran a singing stream!" The book features a number of great poaching characters including Black Bill, Little Hugh and Francis McGinn whose lives, Niall argues, can teach us about the lessons to be found in nature and can point us to the good things that are lying dormant within us. In this "utopia of animals and people" a game of cat and mouse between gamekeeper and poacher is often played out.

The first character we are introduced

to is Jeck who "was unreliable as a worker. One day he would be at the plough, plodding the hill with the gulls flying behind him and the next day he would be missing." As they sat drinking tea during a lull in the work with horse and plough, Jeck "would take a mouthful of tea, and look dreamily at the landscape to the west." However, he wouldn't tell the small boys what was on his mind, because "small boys are rarely the recipients of confidences that might put a man in prison."

When he grows up Jeck teaches him the ways of poaching. He tells him to not go poaching on cloudless, moonlit, quiet nights but choose nights with more dark and more noise - "There should be a breeze to cover your approach, a sound in the poplar tree like the waves on the shore, a whispering through the wood." Poaching is an ancient thing, the author points out. "It is old, old like the scent of peat smoke from the lonely cottage; the cairn on the hill; the flight of geese in late October. In the flat country of East Anglia a man rose at five today to take a pheasant, and last night, in Wiltshire, kindred spirits were running out the long net, stopping to recognise the yelp of the fox and the cry of the owl."

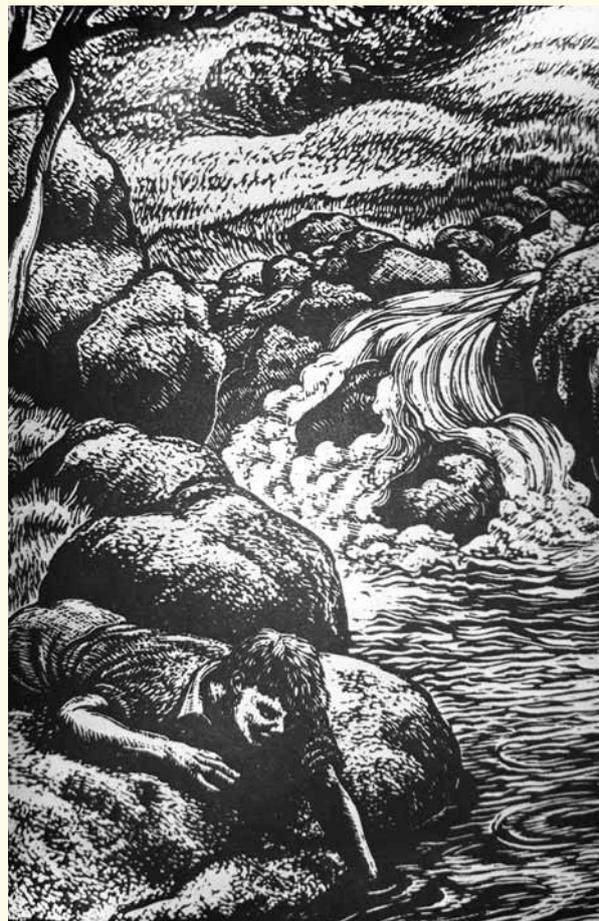
The narrator, as he's walking over a field of summer stubble with gun in hand sees a hare taking fright and running away. Instead of trying to shoot it he watches in admiration, comparing the elegance of its running technique to a bird in flight. The running hare, he says, is poetry in action. It is the same poetry in action that we see in the bounding deer or in the blood horse.

Niall explains some of the reasons why poachers were looked favourably on by many. He says most tenant farmers turned a blind eye. Tenant farmers with mean-spirited landlords were especially sympathetic. These mean-spirited landlords were keenly aware of their legal rights and their powerful



(Above) "There comes a raw storm of hail, or a downpour so heavy that it travels across the fields like sheets of glass, and this man puts a scarf round his head, buttons a greatcoat about him and makes for the wood."

(Below) "He is at the old game of tickling a trout. His hands go feeling in under the belly of the rock. He knows the places where the biggest trout shelter."



position in the community. They were also very slow in carrying out much needed repairs to their estates, preferring to pocket the money to pay for their various greedy pursuits.

He tells a funny story about Little Hugh. When Little Hugh was a boy he was captivated by the beauty of peacocks in the local big house when he was working there as a gardener. Hugh was so taken with the peacocks' beauty that he decided to steal one. He did this by drugging one of the birds with alcohol, by pouring some whiskey on chicken meal. "In a little while the bird was stupefied and Hugh quickly tied a sugar bag on its head. For the rest of the afternoon the peacock sat in drunken contemplation under a laurel bush." Hugh brings the bird back to his cottage and his mother is horrified when she sees what he has done. The gamekeeper and the head gardener quickly figure out who the culprit is and arrive at the cottage to retrieve the peacock and admonish Hugh. On another occasion the boy is caught illegally fishing by a landlord and his argument in defence is one which resonated with many poachers, "It's nobody's fish until somebody's caught him."

Niall writes well about the pastime of ferreting and rabbiting. He writes about the frustration of losing ferrets in rabbit warrens and spending long, tiring

periods digging for them (this was in the days before ferret finders). His preferred method of hunting rabbit is to beat through gorse with a gun. As he describes hunting rabbits with a shotgun the writing becomes excellent and memorable: "You will hear all manner of little sounds, the timid chirp of the wren, the drumming of the woodpecker and the sound of leaves drifting down to make a carpet on the ground. Listen to the distant cockcrow, the tractor buzzing in the field, the lowing of the cow, and distinguish from all these the sound of the gamekeeper's boot on the board of the stile, a heelshod against a stone, a cracking twig. Without a sound the small birds will come over, frightened by the keeper's progress along the path through the trees, a pigeon will burst from the top of a nearby fir and it is time for you to go, to go noiselessly as the fox skirts the place where a man is."

Pitting his wits and risking his freedom

A few years ago the English gamekeeper, David Hudson published an excellent book about the various aspects of his job. In the book he reflects about the tradition of poaching and its contemporary manifestation. In the old days, he points out, some gamekeepers spent a lot of their time trying to stop poaching taking place on

their land. "Although," says Hudson, "there is little financial incentive today for poaching on a large scale, at least as far as pheasants are concerned, there were times when a successful poacher could make a reasonable living from his activities. There were also times when poaching might be the only means of putting meat on the family table. In harsher times there was a great deal of sympathy for the poacher in many sections of society and a sense of the little man pitting his wits and risking his freedom against the rich landowner with his armies of keepers and watchers." However, Hudson points out, nowadays a brace of pheasant in England will only fetch about a pound or less and therefore there are few poachers willing to risk being caught and prosecuted for such small sums of money. He adds that the poaching of deer and salmon remains reasonably lucrative. He points out that most contemporary poaching activity is of an ugly nature. It includes illegal coursing by men arriving in their vans with their running dogs. It includes the netting and poisoning of fish under the cover of darkness. It includes shooting by the light of spot lamps those deer that go down to the public roads during the night. "Such blatant and often large-scale activities are far removed from the romantic image of the poacher using his cunning and fieldcraft to take 'one for the pot'. They are serious crimes and, in the case of the poisoning of salmon can cause damage to the river system that will be years in recovering as well as ruining the sport for anglers and the livelihoods of those who rely on the fishermen for their income." In some cases the poaching gangs are willing to resort to violence to avoid arrest. "Most keepers will have few problems other than the occasional opportunist poacher, but for a few unlucky ones organised poaching gangs can cause real trouble."

The Poacher's Handbook by Ian Niall
published by Merlin Unwin Books
(£14.95).



Rabbiting with ferrets and nets.

Drey Poking With Teckels



Poppy makes a nice retrieve.

As a country sports enthusiast I have an interest in various things. I like to master whatever I become involved in, I like to spend so much time and attention and detail doing something that I know I like the back of my hand. The rabbit is something I have spent much time on and there are times I feel I have truly mastered the art of rabbit catching when he again out does me.

In fact only recently I was working within the grounds of a well known stately home when this happened. I approached the job quite relaxed, totally sure that I would have no problem eradicating a few well heeled conies from the manicured lawns. A Trevi-like fountain poured behind me as I stood with goose grass stuck to my flat cap and a small lurcher with me. A suited land agent questioned me deeply on my use of firearms and if my dog would attack the pea fowl! I reassured him on both counts we were quite safe. Fudge is a biddable old girl and will leave feathered friends well alone, but my land agent again needed reassurance as

the dog spun a heavy looking rabbit past what looked like the hand of Constantine, soil going out behind her as she tore the lawn up and smashed through a box hedge, before pinning the rabbit to the ground. "Nice catch, pity about the lawn" he said looking sort of nervous! We talked another while and I returned to my vehicle, Fudge came behind with her rabbit and I agreed to return in a few days to start work.

In the meantime we had been invited to a 'squirrel drive' by a good friend. A squirrel drive is quite an interesting affair and makes for very good sport. It had been a few years since I had attended one and the last time it had been at this same location as today. The squirrel has become public enemy number one, even among people that we would normally consider opposed to country sports and shooting. The demise of the red is a terrible situation, but one that I am totally convinced is not entirely down to grey squirrels. Greys have a large hand in it, yes, but I don't feel they are the entire cause as there are many strands to the whole situation.

However, one cannot deny that greys do insurmountable damage in many ways and control on their numbers is a requirement of a balanced countryside. It is frequently said that dawn and dusk are the best times to find grey squirrels most active and I have found this to be generally correct, aside from winter when I have found them most active in the early morning.

There were three of us today, myself, another gun and a 'poker' who was in charge of poking the dreys and keeping an eye on the Teckels which were assisting with retrieving. We entered a field that led into a wood which dropped down pretty steeply and a shot went off before we even got over the fence with a squirrel down for my friend. One has to be careful when collecting shots squirrels as they are often not as dead as they appear and my friend David Rogers got quite a bite one Saturday morning after collecting one he shot from a tree which had decided not to give up just yet. It was a bad bite but very funny. The grey squirrel is a very tough animal, hardy and muscular and



The author in action.

won't go without a fight. I used to own a small blue whippet who caught a squirrel one day at the foot of a tree and it gave her a biting she didn't forget for a long time. After that, when she met a squirrel she either ignored or barked at it! I have also caught them in the most unusual places and once caught one about three feet down a rabbit hole, in a Fenn Trap in the middle of winter, as well as catching many dozens in drop boxes over the years, one of which was on the coastline, a very strange place to find one.

Teckels really have a thing for squirrels

Our poker began poking and it

wasn't long before the first drey produced two runners, the first going my way and the second going right. I was shooting with my trusty folding .410 and missed with the first shot but killed him with the second and he fell flat onto the forest floor. I whistled Poppy to fetch him up and she did so with great enthusiasm. The Teckels really have a thing for squirrels and seem to adore retrieving them. I think it's the size as they sit comfortably in their jaws and are not overly heavy. Anyone training a young gun dog could do worse than using a few frozen squirrels for retrieving training as they are incredibly tough and my friend has used frozen ones over many weeks that

have been thawed, used and frozen again many times, when a rabbit would fall apart within a few runs. The custom made drey poker, a set of connected tent poles, was now working to good effect I could feel my neck stiffen as I had now been staring into the trees for some minutes. It was late winter, with the trees just starting to bud, so it was relatively easy to see them as they fled and the Teckels were now even starting to look up too, as this was their second time at this particular task and they were getting the hang of it. It's very fast and exciting sport and often, as the squirrels run and jump from branch to branch, you end up shooting one another's as someone else fired a split second before you did with your neck twisting and turning to keep up. No two dreys are ever the same and although it is usually one drey which holds one squirrel, many times it is two, and this particular drey held three, only two of which we accounted for.

The other gun brought him to the floor

With the shooting season over, the feeders still remained and some of these particular ones still had feed in them, so we approached very softly. As I looked round the trunk of a tree an 'Irish Monkey' shot up the branch of the far tree at which I fired, followed by a shot from the other gun which brought him to the floor. During this commotion we scattered another pair which we both missed, but then made up by one running between the feeders which I folded and was quite pleased with myself.

Our drey poker was now looking slightly askew and no doubt had as sore a neck as me, so I offered to take over and he used his own twenty bore shot gun which is also a nice size for the squirrels. The next few dreys showed next to nothing until, quite surprisingly, we had two doubles in a row which our friend and his twenty bore accounted for, one from each. It was the best shooting I have seen in a while and like most good shots he really took his time,



The rabbit hole squirrel.

which is something most people including myself don't do when it comes to squirrels.

Our bag ended with eight and it was a really enjoyable day. Cold, crispy, dry and it was so good to be out with the Teckels getting some work and a few shots thrown in. Big bags of anything are not of interest to me, it's definitely quality over quantity. Squirrels weigh on average between 400 – 600 grams, but the Boxing Day Special of 2014 weighed in at 975grams, a whopper I think you'll agree. He is pictured here beside a large male rabbit and looks similar in size. I still have him in the freezer alongside the various oddities intended for mounting, including blue, blonde and black rabbits, a stoat, a pine marten and a wall-eyed magpie I caught in a Larsen trap.

It is reader, that time again. A time we call 'the season' which is a time to enjoy the driven bird, the stalked deer or the flushed rabbit. It is also a time to enjoy the feeling of the golden stubbles of September, the frosty mornings of the autumn and the joys of walking with a gun on your arm and a dog at your heel. Life gets no longer, the countryside is only getting smaller. We must enjoy it while we can.



The 'Boxing Day special' weighed in at 975 grams.



A bag of grey squirrels.

Hunting Roundup

Northern Ireland Hound Show

The Northern Ireland Masters of Hounds Association annual hound show, held in conjunction with the Co Armagh Agricultural Show, took place at Gosford Forest Park on the second Saturday in June. Our Judges, Mark Hankinson (former MFH, the Wilton) and Rupert Macauley MFH (the West Wicklow) had entries from seven packs for their consideration, four local and three from the Republic.

The Meath took the unentered doghound class with Banker over South Tyrone Bellamy with Ballymacad Larry in third place.

In the unentered couples class the South Tyrone brothers Cardinal and Canyon edged Ballymacad Larry and Lancer with Louth Taylor and Tanker taking third place.

The entered doghound class saw South Tyrone Pluto prevail over Meath Bingo while East Down Godney 17 came third.

In the Old English doghound class Louth Ringer18 and Ranger17 came first and third respectively with Ballymacad Penknife18 between them in second place. Interestingly, all three hounds here were sired by Louth Randle12 who has been extensively used by both Modern and Old English packs.

The East Down Foxhounds prevailed in the entered couples class as Godney and Gosling17 took first place over Meath Billy and Bingo, with South Tyrone Saunter and Sandstone18 coming third.

The restricted couple of doghounds class saw Ballymacad Peanut and Penknife18 edge Iveagh Thatcher18 and Vintage18, which saw their new huntsman, Jack Harris, take his first rosette. East Down Hamish and Harquelin18 completed the line up.

In the stallion hound class the South Tyrone took the first two places with Hardy16 and Baptist16, respectively, while Meath Lancer17 took third place.

Another South Tyrone '1-2' saw the Doghound Championship go to their Baptist16 with his kennel mate Pluto taking the Reserve Championship.

This was a good time to break for lunch as the threatened rain had now arrived with a vengeance. Happily our excellent caterer, Lucy Livingstone, had arranged an awning to protect us judges and stewards as we dined.

The bitch classes began without rain and in increasing sunshine with Meath Drama taking first place over South Tyrone Betty and third place going to Louth Talent.

As the heat increased, the unentered couples class went to Louth Tickle and Talent with Meath Drama and Dreadful in second while third place was taken by Ballymacad Candy and Carly.

South Tyrone Ludo16 saw off her kennel mate Playful for second place in the entered bitch class with another Playful, Meath's 18 version, coming third.

The Old English bitch class saw Iveagh Brighteyes17 take the honours with Louth Riddle18 in second and Tynan and Armagh Sequel13 in third place.

The entered couples class saw South Tyrone Plenty and Plasma edge Meath River15 and Barmaid15 with third place going to East Down Pillow and Pippin16.

Pillow and Pippin then took the Restricted couples class, ahead of Ballymacad Marking and Mantle while third place went to Tynan and Armagh Tantrum17 and Laughter16.

The two couples class saw the South Tyrone triumph with Benefit14 and sisters Padlock Pansy and Pastry15 ahead of Meath River15, Banish15 Barmaid15 and Playful18 with third place going to East Down Risky14 and sisters Pillow Pippin and Pigtail16.

In the Brood bitch class, the South Tyrone had a first and third with Pansy15 and Benefit 14 respectively and East Down Risky14 between them in second place.

All too soon our day ended with the Bitch Championship. This went to South Tyrone Ludo16 with Meath Playful18 as Reserve Champion.

This had been a good show watched by a large crowd throughout and great credit is due to the organisers and to the hunt staff for the high standard of hounds on show.

NIMHA presents cheque to local charity

The Northern Ireland Masters of Hounds Association has again presented a cheque, for £1,000, to the Belfast based charity The Mitre Trust.

A charity which is based at Belfast's Musgrave Park Hospital the Trust deals

with orthopaedic and rehabilitation physiotherapy services, frequently needed by equestrians of all disciplines.

Craig Cavan, vice chairman of the Association, presented the cheque to Avril Brown, manager of the Trust, at Balmoral Show outside Lisburn, Co Antrim, which is Northern Ireland's premier agricultural show. Avril Brown assured him that the Trust greatly appreciated the gift which it would put to good use.

Northern Ireland Inter Hunt Chase

The Inter Hunt Chase, generously sponsored by Wilson's Auctions took place, as usual, at Balmoral Show outside Lisburn Co Antrim and closed the show on the Friday evening, giving the large crowd some excellent entertainment.

The Leitrim Harriers took the Best turned out award and their member Wendy Cooney, riding side saddle, later repeated her 2018 success by winning the Most enterprising rider award.

The Newry Harriers and the Longford Harriers tied for third place leaving the Edenderry Harriers and the Donegal Harriers to contest what turned out to be a frenetic final, which the Edenderry team of Val Ward, Brian Mullen, Adrina Conlon and Trevor Gurmin won.

This very keenly contested event ended, as it always does, with grins and handshakes all round.



Craig Cavan presents a cheque for £1,000 to Ariel Brown of the Mitre Trust on behalf of the Masters of Hounds Association

Around the Puppy Shows

The **Tynan and Armagh Foxhounds** enjoyed an excellent day's weather for their puppy show at Seavaghan where the judges were Limerick native Graham Bustin, formerly huntsman of both the Limerick Foxhounds and the Waterford Foxhounds, who now hunts the Blue Ridge hounds in Virginia and Iveagh Foxhounds huntsman Jack Harris.

Huntsman Keith McCall had 4 couple of doghounds and 2½ couple of bitches, from two litters, on show and our judges quickly passed the following placings to Brian Dougan MFH.

Doghounds

1. Lawyer Langton 16 Language 16, 2. Landline Sibling of Lawyer, 3. Lodger Langton 16 Lotto 16,

Bitches

1. Lotus Sibling of Lodger, 2. Ladybird Sibling of Lawyer, 3. Lonely Sibling of Lodger,

The Championship was then awarded to Lawyer with Lotus as Reserve Champion.

On the following day, the **East Down Foxhounds** had as judges James E Norton, formerly joint master of the Westmeath Foot Beagles and Paul Harte, of the West Wicklow Foxhounds.

Huntsman Declan Feeney produced 3½ couple of doghounds and 2 couples of bitches, from two litters, for appraisal. After due deliberation the following placings were passed to Craig Caven.

Doghounds

1. Salter York and Ainsty (N) Bedouin 16 Saucy 13, 2. Sandstone sibling of Salter, 3. Ripon Bailiff 11 Ringlet 14

Bitches

1. Rivet Sibling of Ripon 2. Sandy Sibling of Salter, 3. Riddle Sibling of Ripon



The Edenderry Harriers Team - Winners of the Wilson's Auction Inter Hunt Chase at Balmoral Show.

New Beagle pack completes its first season

Anyone who sets up a new pack of hounds in the current public and financial circumstances is deserving of great praise.

In Richard Bonham, the County Westmeath based Lakeside Foot Beagles are trebly blessed. Not only has he founded this new pack but this year has also seen Richard qualify as a solicitor and become engaged to be married. Added to this he has erected a kennel block, which is a model of compact practicality, looking out across an impressive lawned area on which the inaugural puppy show was held.

The new kennels are based at the home of Richard's immensely supportive parents, Johnny and Amanda, who have previously walked puppies for no fewer than five other local Hunts, the Ballymacad, the Meath, the Westmeath, the Tara Harriers and the Belgarret Beagles. Richard's fiancée, Jen Diamond, is already showing signs of being very supportive too!

Richard has three joint masters, Jan Farrell an ex master of the Meath, Marian Mortell and Ion Hamilton and I was

delighted to see that Richard was assisted in the ring by the immaculately turned out James Meehan (7) who, I was told, is just as helpful in kennels. He certainly looked and acted the part here.

The 2½ couple of doghounds and the 2½ couple of bitches Richard presented showed very well with not a shy one among them.

Judges Mark Ollard, huntsman of the Westmeath and Maurice Quinn of the Ballymacads, worked swiftly through the three litters before handing the following placings to Johnny Bonham.

Doghounds

1. Wilson Woodrock and Blackwater Valley Actor 1, Their Wisdom 16, 2. Barrister Park Rally 16 WBWV Bannaher 17, 3. Wishful Sibling of Wilson.

Bitches

1. Orbit Park Rally 16 Cavanpole Option 16 C, 2. Willow Sibling of Wilson, 3. Barney Sibling of Barrister,

Everything here is set fair for a long lived and successful Hunt club and, with the first season under their belts I have no doubt that that will prove to be the case.



Declan Feeney, Huntsman at the East Down Foxhounds pointing out the new entry at the Hunt Puppy Show.



Huntsman Keith McCall shows the Tynan and Armagh new entry to judges Graham Bustin and Jack Harris at the Hunt Puppy Show.

DALRADIAN UPDATE



The Peaceful Beauty of the Sperrins.

We had hoped to report on a visit to the Dalradian Mine but unfortunately this had to be postponed due to staffing holiday plans on the company side and then due to a re-occurrence of the cartilage problem in my knee which prevented me driving. However, we recently received a press release from Dalradian in which it appears the company claims to have addressed some of the protestors concerns primarily in a change of their operating plans, namely the use of Cyanide and smelting on the Sperrins site. We took some of the main points in the press release and put them to Councillor Emmet McAleer, recently elected to Fermanagh and Omagh Council on an anti gold mining platform.

The company said: “Dalradian has submitted a package of Further Environmental Information (FEI) to the Department for Infrastructure (DfI), completing another step in the planning process for its application to build an underground gold and silver mine in County Tyrone. The FEI addresses requests from the authorities for more details on certain aspects of Dalradian’s planning application and third-party representations. It also includes a number of environmental enhancements to the project made after listening to feedback during the planning process.”

It appears the company has gone to

great lengths to stress how it has addressed concerns about the environmental impact of the proposed mining operation

www.dalradian.com/environment)

It claims: “The project will be carbon-neutral – meaning it will not contribute to climate change - through measures such as using renewable power, electric vehicles, covered conveyor belts and biodiesel. The fuel usage has been reduced by 25% or approximately 1 million litres per year. This commitment to a zero carbon footprint will be for life of mine and is a first in the European mining sector.”

And

“Use of the latest modern sorting technology underground to recover the maximum amount of mineral while removing the minimum amount of rock, ensuring that the impact on the local environment is minimal. “

And

“Water demand reduced by nearly 30%; all water for operations will be sourced on-site and recycled within the site. The only requirement for off-site water is for drinking, showers and toilets, which will be supplied by a new mains connection.”

And a headline grabber

“No cyanide or smelting will be used. Instead, simplified processing will yield a partially refined product that will receive further treatment overseas.”

From the President and CEO

Commenting on the progress of the application, Patrick F.N. Anderson, President and CEO said:

“We recognise that while the economic opportunities are exciting, protecting the landscape and safeguarding the environment are equally, if not more, important. That is why we have made these further enhancements to ensure that Tyrone has a modern, environmentally responsible mine operating to the highest standard.”



Previously Dalradian had mainly stressed the possible economic benefits of the project, so we asked Councillor McAleer what the protestors thought of this new environmental initiative by Dalradian?

Photo in header of Emmet McAleer from the last magazine

In terms of the company’s claims that they are “completing another step in the planning process for its application” it could well be argued that they are further engaging in the process of project splitting. That by removing plans for the use of cyanide it somehow makes the planning application more acceptable. However, our concerns were never solely about the planned use of cyanide, we were against what we perceived as a threat to The Sperrins AONB long before cyanide was

ever mentioned. Gold mining is a potentially toxic industry. It can release heavy metals such as lead, mercury, cadmium, manganese, arsenic, all of which are extremely harmful, not solely to human health. The rock in this area also contains traces of uranium, and high levels of radon. These are radioactive materials which again could pose grave risks to our health and well being, as well as to local and migratory animals, and to local plant life, soil and waterways.

The idea that the gold mining plan could possibly be carbon neutral is highly questionable. Even factoring in the suggested 25% reduction in diesel usage, the company's own estimates still appear to involve the use of 3-3.5 million litres of diesel per year. If the company no longer plan to process the rock on site, will the number of HGVs on our small rural roads increase from those initial figures? On top of the carbon dioxide emissions (estimated at c 8,500 tonnes per annum), our roads are already in a serious state of disrepair, and barely suitable for use for the volume of traffic they currently experience. How will they deal with the addition of several large lorries each day? With the increase in traffic volume, there is an increased likelihood of a local RTAs, potentially involving someone out running, cycling, walking or horse riding.

Another worry locally is the reference to "renewable power," which could relate to the proposals for the Doraville/Broughderg wind farm (Ref: LA10/2015/0292/F), which proposes to site 33 wind turbines of heights up to 149m within The Sperrins AONB. On top of the obvious scenic pollution this would cause, people are concerned about the damage these structures will have on the local environment, active peat bogland, and the on-going health concerns (to both human and animal life) associated with such machines. People continue to question exactly how "green" this energy actually is, with huge damage being done to the foundation sites required, access roads, not to mention the materials used in constructing such large-scale turbines. Coupled with the recently announced price hike of almost 14% (<https://www.moneysavingexpert.com/news/2018/08/power-ni-to-hike-electricity-prices-by-nearly-14/>) people are wondering what advantage the proliferation of wind

farms across County Tyrone is actually achieving, other than blighting the pristine landscape?

The claims that Dalradian will use "the latest modern sorting technology underground to recover the maximum amount of mineral while removing the minimum amount of rock" again seems highly dubious. Does such technology/equipment exist, and if so what qualifies as the "minimum amount of rock" to be removed? The company could apparently still be digging, drilling and exploding 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year, potentially releasing the previously mentioned heavy metals and toxins which have been undisturbed. The serious risks arising from the discharge of heavy metals, leaching sulphuric acid, toxic dust and fumes, abstraction of volumes of water and pollution of both surface water and of the water table could remain. Acid water arising from acid mine drainage was identified by Dalradian in their exploration works site back in 2013. The process of acid mine drainage is not likely to go away and in fact could get worse and continue in perpetuity.

The reduction in water use would appear to relate to the removal of the plans to use the cyanidation process, which has obviously been raised as an issue rendering the planning application unacceptable/unpassable. Furthermore, even factoring in a 30% reduction in water usage, their plans state that this still equates to 2.5 million litres of water per week, which is supposedly to be "sourced on-site"? How do they propose to do this – bore wells, from the local rivers and aquifers? These questions raise further, major implications and concerns. If water is to be "recycled within the site" then why the need for "a new mains connection" to supply water for drinking, showers and toilets? If their advertisements were to be believed, this recycled/treated water was to be purer than drinking water, yet they appear to deem it not fit for purpose even in waste disposal/sewerage treatment? What is the reality here?

Whilst it is good news that this company has appeared to acknowledge that the use of cyanide is neither safe nor suitable in this process, what this in turn means, however, is a likely increased cost in terms of transporting and processing the extracted rock, which in the long term could render

the company's proposals financially less viable. Whether this means they will look to relocate the processing plant elsewhere, or re-introduce the cyanidation process somewhere further along the planning application line is anyone's guess.

We consider it an insult to people's intelligence for this company to talk about "protecting the landscape and safeguarding the environment" and an "environmentally responsible mine" with reference to a project with potentially serious environmental impact. In our opinion the only "environmental enhancements to the project" that will be welcomed by the community is the scrapping of the project and the sites returned to their previously pristine condition. The 19,000+ objections on the planning portal are testament to this.

Publisher's Note

Irish Country Sports primarily got involved in this controversy due to concerns being expressed to us by our readers. This concern mainly emanated from anglers, but other readers who enjoy and cherish the wild beauty of the Sperrins also expressed grave concern.

As a responsible journal we have tried to see both sides of this controversy.

While Dalradian has made some concessions to the concerns of the community by proposing to reduce the potential environmental impact of the proposed mining operation, it is obvious that the local community still has serious reservations.

Dalradians' CEO has also highlighted the potential economic benefits of the project. "The mine will be immensely beneficial for Co. Tyrone and the wider region, creating 1,000 jobs and spending of £750 million locally over 20-25 years. We will be investing in training and working with local colleges to make sure that it is the local people who benefit most from the long-term jobs and opportunity that this project will create."

As readers would expect, before Irish Country Sports and Country Life takes a final position on this controversy in the next issue of the magazine we hope to take up Dalradian's invitation to visit the mine and, on the basis of this, discuss with residents and anglers their concerns in detail.

The Great Game Fairs of Ireland 2019



The Game Fair at Shanes Castle utilises an innovative international media campaign to promote and internationally acclaimed showcase event featuring Ireland's uniquely precious heritage of country sports, pursuits and past-times, living history and our wonderful artisan food and drink sector to an international audience.

Following the success of our All Ireland Game Fair at Shanes Castle in 2018 there was arguably even greater success for the Great Game Fairs of Ireland's 66th Fair at Shanes Castle this year, when in spite of almost apocalyptic weather exhibitors, competitors and public judged the fair to be one of the best ever. With an unrivalled prize fund across the very full and imaginative range of competitions, an expanded exhibitor base, a fantastic range of both static and area displays there was more to interest, entertain and even educate the whole family.

The fair even had a most spectacular opening on Saturday, with not only torrential cloudbursts, but also loud thunderclaps and spectacular lighting bolts. We were also rather bedevilled with lighter showers that day and early Sunday, but the weather was pleasant in between and the crowds rolled in with four car parking teams working hard to reduce queuing.

The Shanes Castle site with its roadways and fast draining soil is

without doubt one of the best game fair sites in Ireland. It is not only beautiful and historical, but also very practical in all weathers. This means crowds are confident to turn up in large numbers in all weathers and find good ground conditions. With our layouts we plan for bad weather and hope for good, which is why in 41 years we have never had to cancel, or ask our public to attend with poor underfoot conditions. And try to minimise the walk from the car parks.

While we made an investment in roadways to make the Birr Castle event more viable, it was a much more difficult site to operate. All infrastructure had to be brought by forklift through a small entrance gate and car parking hired separately and over a mile away from the main site. We did work with this for 10 successful years, but only because of the beauty of the site and our very obliging hosts Lord & Lady Rosse.

During 2017 and 2018, we visited many potential sites for an ROI fair but none had the advantages of Shanes Castle and the cost of putting in the necessary infrastructure was rather formidable. Few people outside of a major event organising team realise the immense time and cost and the number of people involved in planning, building and mounting a major public event on a 'green field site.' It certainly isn't just get a field, put in a couple of loos, get a burger van, advertise it on social media and you have an event! The larger event

the larger the financial commitment and the necessity of good professional planning, promotion, operations and an experienced team.

And crucially one really needs a window of good weather for about a fortnight and, importantly, 4/5 days before building starts to get the grass cut and to start building on good ground. Then a good week of good weather for the buildup, two excellent days of weather for the event and two or three days to strip out the infrastructure and tidy up, to give the host back the ground in something like the condition it was hired. The weather gods don't always play ball I'm afraid!

It was against this backdrop that we received an invitation to join up with the Galway Home and Garden Festival at Galway Racecourse. There were a number of things against this primarily, for instance, apart from the year of Foot & Mouth Disease when we ran at Ards Airport, we have always hosted our events in traditional country estates. Other negatives were the western location, the doubts people raised about being able to stage gundog and clay shooting events, and the other major negative – the date had to be mid June! This not only meant that in some ways we were competing with our own NI fair, but also that our team had to put two major events on in two weeks!

But, when we visited the site we saw immediate 'pros to balance the cons'. The racecourse, although located in an



Pictured at the press breakfast – just some of the people who help make the fair the most successful country sports event in Ireland.

urban location, is a quite scenic, on a sharp well maintained site with a very obliging staff and management team. There were several of the facilities already on site including buildings that could be used for exhibition stands, and it was pretty much poor weather proof in terms of access and parking. We were also able to envisage where and how good gundog and clay shooting events could be organised.

In short, the more limited investment needed to ‘suck it and see’ for a year and obviously the opportunity to offer ROI sportspeople their own even, won out and we set the event up with quite limited objectives.

The build up went smoothly and with sunshine bathing the show on the day before opening, the layout looked both practical and smart. BUT the weather forecast was dire! Saturday morning broke grey, damp and rather miserable with a heavy shower greeting our first visitors waiting to enter through the turnstiles. A reasonable crowd built up over the day, but the presence of several competing attractions in the area including a major match with two local team plus an increasingly bad weather forecast didn’t fill us with confidence for the Sunday.

The forecast was right - drizzle turning to almost horizontal heavy rain from midday until very late afternoon which against the backdrop of competing attractions did deplete numbers.

However, there were a number of

positives, in spite of the appalling weather we hit about 70% of our target for attendance: we had a superb gunmakers row and clothing stands; a really good show from the sporting organisations; and great gundog and clay pigeon shooting competitions on imaginatively laid out courses. Most exhibitors reported good businesses with a few reporting exceptional sales so, all in all, we felt it had been a worthwhile gamble that hadn’t quite come off in full. And it was a tired team that made the long journey home to immediately start on the Shanes Castle fair!

Straight into the Preparations for the Irish Game Fair at Shanes Castle

Hardly drawing breath the team was straight into the preparation for Shanes Castle less than two weeks later. During the period when we were building Galway Paul Pringle and Irene had kept the Shanes organizational and promotional programme on track – both made a trip down to help at Galway before straight back and picking up the Shanes reins!

The team deserves great praise for the seamless way we moved from one event to the other and we were in very good shape on the ground when we launched the fair with our press breakfast and awards ceremony with c 120 people present on the Thursday before the fair.

Another huge success in spite of thunder, lightning and heavy showers

A very smooth build up of our biggest physical event yet and a superb press event in bright sunshine was literally the ‘calm before the storm’ as the truly atypical weather hit the fair on Saturday morning.

But building on the truly magnificent advertising and PR programme of 2018, a similarly creative promotional campaign and a really exciting programme of events and attractions, pre fair interest in the fair from all over Ireland and the UK was great. And in spite of the odd weather the crowds happily rolled in to enjoy our new attractions and of course our famously popular traditional ones.

Competitions

Our competitions were amongst the best in Ireland. With our prize structure comparable to top UK events, we attracted top competitors from all over the UK and Ireland in all of the sports. Following on from superb clay shooting prizes at Galway, we had an equally fine prize structure at Shanes that included a Blazer shotgun (from McCloys), a Cogwell & Harrison (from Ardee Sports) and a Sabatti Rifle (from Casale 2000). Gundog competitions with excellent cash prizes sponsored by Feedwell and Red Mills attracted record entries and the new HPR test was a big success. The All Ireland Terrier & Lurcher Championship Show and

Racing and the Five Nations Terrier, Lurcher & Whippet Championships had a real international flavour, with competitors from NI, ROI, England, Scotland & Wales. Top prizes in the two big lurcher challenges – the Master Mc Grath & Mick the Miller again went to ROI dogs in spite of strong challenges from NI and the UK.

Trade Stands

At both fairs visitors wanting to purchase virtually any product associated with country sports and country life were well catered for with a superb range of gun, tackle and clothing stands many with excellent bargains. Many of these stands were coming to Ireland for the first time or returning after an absence. These included Fortis and UK Covers clothing, Troth knives, Tidepool Decoys and Muntjac Dog Training Equipment, and gunsmiths Chris Symonds and Scott Wilson combining to display some quality English guns and accessories and offer a complete gun repair, assessment, cleaning and fitting service.

When one adds in all the old favourite stands like Charlie Keenan, Edinburgh Clothing, Mourne Outdoor, Duck Dri, Instamold, Flight & Bite, McCloys, Elite Guns, Smyths Country Sports; cars, boats and 4x4s, tackle and fly tying equipment; everything for dogs from food to accessories; taxidermy, sporting art; game displays and the game keepers marquee; and instruction from clubs and organisations there was much to interest the country sports enthusiast.

These were supported by two huge pavilions packed with country craft and fine food producers with many opportunities to taste before purchase including the cookery demos in the Flogas kitchen. The fine food theme was carried forward with the re-introduction of an oyster bar – these could be served with a glass of prosecco or Guinness.

Attractions

With all day action in the Main arena, Country Sports in Action and

Living History arenas to watch plus several ongoing demonstrations, competitions and ‘have a go activities.’ Visitors were spoiled for choice as to which acts to watch and enjoy, sports and activities to try and trade stands to visit the fair really did live up to its billing as a ‘great day out for the whole family.’ In fact several respondents to our survey stated that, to fully enjoy all that was on offer, they would intend to spend two days at the fair in 2020!

Canine and Equestrian extravaganzas-and ferrets & falcons!

As usual the fair’s canine programme with top quality gundog competitions and displays including the new Estate of the Year Gundog & Handler competition sponsored by the Sheepish Dog Bed Company <https://thesheepishdog.com/>; the 31st annual All Ireland Terrier & Lurcher Championships and associated international races and Five Nations show championships; dog agility show and demos; the NIGFSS Open Dog Show and the Gundog Rescue & Rehoming Scurry and Shows.

Philip Titterington joined up with Edwin Dash to co-ordinate our best ever equestrian section with the Whip & Collar Club putting on an excellent display of quality vehicles; The Donkey Society NI organising a ‘Donkey Village’ and working displays; Cochise Horses with their dancing horses; thrilling medieval jousting from the Knights of the North from the borders of Scotland; mounted equestrian archery from Zoltan ‘the Hun’; horse and hound displays and John Fee’s gypsy encampment and horse drawn threshing.

Of course there were lots of other animals to see including free flying falconry and static displays from the NI school of Falconry, static display from the Irish Hawking Club and various dog shows and ferret shows and racing organised by Graham Fyffe, Darren Moore and Steven McGonigal in the Countrysports in Action Arena.

Lots for children

We recognise the important role that the young have to play in the conservation of the countryside and the rural way of life and so in many ways the fair I designed to not only entertain them but educate them.

The Living History Village and arena displays are in effect great outdoor classrooms where children can interact fully with re-enactors with timelines from the Vikings to the 1798 rebellion. Several of the conservation bodies are there and all of the sporting organisations have staff dedicated to providing advice on the sports, access opportunities and coaching. APGAI Ireland lead the way here with fly tying and casting instruction which the children can then use to good effect in the DAERA Fisheries sponsored ‘Put & Take’ fishery organised by Bobby Bryans and the NSN team.

There are several opportunities for children to show and compete with their dogs. Many starting off competing in the dog shows and scurry organised by Gundog Rescue & Rehoming before going on to compete with success in the main gundog competitions.

There are many other opportunities for children to participate including air rifle shooting and archery and even chance to mingle with hounds and beagles! Plus of course there is a wide range of children's amusements.

Looking forward to 2020

The Irish Game Fair will take place at Shanes Castle, Antrim on the 27/28 June and with several stand bookings already in we are gearing it up to be the largest Irish Game Fair ever, so country sports men and women from all over Ireland and further afield should be planning their attendance – look out for the promotional video coming soon.

Meanwhile we are in discussions with a possible site for a new ROI fair – details of this will also be posted soon on our website www.irishgamefair.com and on social media.

Pictured at the 2019 Great Game Fairs of Ireland



Philip Titterington with Anne McHenry, Alderman John Smyth, Mayor of Antrim & Newtownabbey Council and Michael Fenlon, Chairman NARGC.



Members of the Whip and Collar Club with the Mayor and NARGC Chairman & PRO.



Young anglers waiting for a bite.



'What a fight' - the DAERA angling simulator in action.



APAGI Ireland helping young people to tie a fly.



Steven Smyth with another happy Barbour customer.

Pictured at the 2019 Great Game Fairs of Ireland



The Country Crafts Pavilion was a hub of activity.



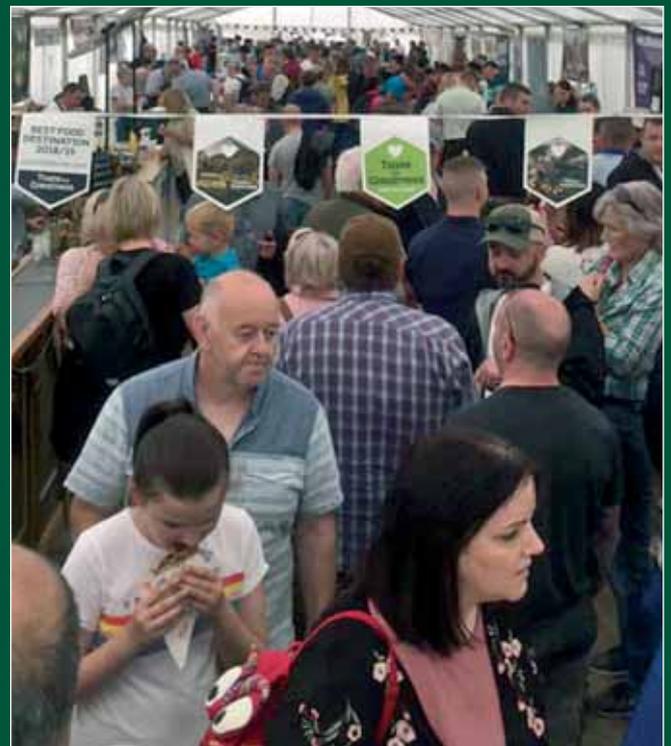
Some of the gundog competitors at Galway.



(Above) Some of the enthusiasts at the Irish Stick making Championships.

(Below) See how it's done - John Crowe with some fabulous food.

(Below Right) Enthusiastic members of The Irish Ladies Flyfishing Association.



Spoilt for choice in The Fine Food Marquee.



Pictured at the 2019 Great Game Fairs of Ireland



Catch of the day - the Mills family from Larne.



The redcoats march into battle.



Medieval soldiers line up.



Swords and muskets engage in battle.



The skirl of the pipes with Cleland Memorial Band leading the troops.



Jim Shannon MP (left) and fellow VIPs enjoy the carriage driving spectacle.

Pictured at the 2019 Great Game Fairs of Ireland



Lords & Ladies prepare for the joust.



A Knight of the North.



John & Gemma Wray showing some of their ferrets.



Two knights clash in the jousting.



Gamekeeper Hayley Dobbin and helper.



The Shanes Castle Organ playing some merry tunes.

Pictured at the 2019 Great Game Fairs of Ireland



A good representation of the Irish gun trade were at Galway.



The Stickmaking Championships Award Winners.



Albert Titterington interviews the winning team of 'Shoot of the Year' competition' watched by Gundog Rescue's Sam Willoughby and sponsor The Sheepish Dog Co.



Action from the Cochise Stud riders.



Ancient horseback weaponry from Zoltan.



Kilultagh horses and hounds.

Pictured at the 2019 Great Game Fairs of Ireland



'Cheers' all round for some gin sampling.



Elite Guns from Newry.



The Eagle Owl was a great favourite.



Steven McGonigal showing the skills of The Victorian Poacher.



A stylish exhibit from Stately Homes.



The team from McCloys Guns Unlimited at Shanes Castle.

Pictured at the 2019 Great Game Fairs of Ireland



The winning carriage taking pride of place.



This carriage was runner up.



Capturing the thrills & spills of Main Arena action.



Getting to know the beagles.



Delicious Carlingford oysters!.



CIC Trophy measurement.

Terrier, Lurcher, & Whippet Show Roundup

The DWTC Dog Show and Race Day 12th May

Showing Results

Children's Handling Class Brooke Rafferty with Red
Champion Pup Maurice Mc Dowell with Marshall
Champion Whippet Brooke Rafferty with Millie, Davy Best with Kelly
Champion Lurcher Maurice McDowell with Poacher, Lisa Beggs with Cirez
Champion Terrier Chloe Mc Keown with Pops, Hugh Higgins with Flash
Champion Strong Dog Jed Brady with Ben, Declan Owens with Kelo
DWTC Perputal Cup Hare Class Sean Burke with Kesh
The Billy Copeland Cup Maurice McDowell with Blue.
Overall Show Champion Chloe McKeown with Pops

Racing Results

Puppy Racing Brooke Rafferty with Lisa Whippet Racing Alec Savage with Murphy
Under 21 Joe Leonard with Runaway Scared
Under 23 Michelle Rafferty with Gin
Over 23 Stephanie O Connor with Bear
Bull X Champion Scott Brookes with Flash
Lee Brookes 2nd in Collie Class with Bobby
Mick The Miller Michael Mc Grath with Stella
Master McGrath Stephanie O Connor with Bear
Congratulations go to organisers Leanne and Tom Barry and their brilliant back up team, who all worked tirelessly to make this show so successful.

The Sporting Whippet Club NI Dog Show 8th June

Showing results

Children's Handling Conghal Burke with Jet
Whippet Pup under 6 months Tracy Gill with Dinah
Whippet Pup Shane Mc Killion with Frankie

Whippet Dog Janet Duke with Oscar
Whippet Bitch Elaine Smyth with Millie
Working Whippet Colin Tucker with Cooper
Racing Whippet Kirsty Fyffe with Rascal
Veteran Whippet over 6 years old Colin Tucker with Tia
Whippet Pairs Janet Duke with Ash and Oscar
Best in Show Elaine Smyth with Millie Reserve Kirsty Fyffe with Rascal
Elaine and Kirsty qualified for the 5 Nations Whippet Championship at Shanes Castle

Racing results

KC Adults
Grade A Final Kirsty Fyffe with Rascal
Grade B Final Elaine Smyth with Phoebe
Grade C Final Shane McKillion with Suzie
KC Puppy Final Shane McCillian with Frankie
KC Veteran Colin Tucker with Tia
Non KC Adult Final Barry Chambers with Alfie
Non KC Puppy Final Sean Burke with Jet

Armagh Sporting Dog Charity Show 23rd June

Racing Results

Puppy Derby Champion For Race Bred Pups under 42lb Fiona Devlin with Rebel Country (Batman), Conor Nolan with Della.
Whippet Puppy Dash Sean Burke with Jet, Shane Mc Killion with Frankie
No Limit Puppy Emily with Fluor, Charlene Rafferty with Rocky
Pure Bred Greyhounds Michelle Rafferty with Sky
Whippet Bitch U 20 Inches Susanne Addis with Poppy, Sean Burke with Lilly
Whippet Dog U21 Barry Chambers with Alfie, Sean Dooher with Joe
No Limit Whippet Sean Dooher with Jill
U30lb Kirsty Harper with Tilly
U40lb Alison Gamble with Zira
U50 Kirsty Harper with Megan

No limit Seamus Heart with Moses
Hairy Dogs U23 Danny Maxwell with Blue; O23 Seamus Heart with Nora
Bull Cross Kirsty Harper with Skylar
Novice Unders Conor Nolan with Della;
Novice Overs Chelsea Rafferty with Rosie

Showing results

Champion PUP Stewart Graham with Ace, Gerard Leonard with Nova
Champion Whippet John Mc Stay with Pip, Davy Best with Merlin
Champion Lurcher Neil Pinkerton with Ben, Lisa Beggs with Joker
Champion Terrier Martin Mc Donald with Saoirse, Eamo Mc Erlain with Spooky
Champion Strong Dog William Hanna with Tia, Christopher Davos with Axel
Overall Show Champion and Best in Show Martin Mc Donald with Saoirse, Neil Pinkerton with Ben
The proceeds from this Charity Show were given to The Cancer Fund For Children.

The Galway Game Fair & Country Lifestyle Festival 15th & 16th June, Ballybrit Race Course, Co Galway

In Country Galway by the sea, in the shadow of the wild atlantic way lies the beautiful Ballybrit Race Course. On this historical site, the first racing festival took place on 17th August 1869 where it is believed 40,000 people turned up to watch this grand event. The racecourse measures one and a half miles long and Ballybrit has a long and exciting history and has become what is now one of the most famous tracks in the world. Although the weather was not kind to us, this did not dampen the spirits of the good Country Sports people who came out from all areas of Country life to attend this big event.

Showing Results

Champion Whippet Raphael O Reilly with Sky
Champion Lurcher Mark Dupplaw with Booty Reserve Champion
Tina Morrissey with Eddie Champion
Terrier Keith Breen with Busker Reserve
Champion Eamo McErlain with Spooky

Champion Puppy Niall O Cloghan with Ryder

Judges were: Whippets Jim Dalton, Lurchers Niall Healey, Terriers Jed Brady. Many thanks to Tom Barry and his wife Leanne and their back up team for running the dog show so smoothly despite the heavy rain.

THE IRISH GAME FAIR AND FINE FOOD FESTIVAL AT SHANES CASTLE, 29TH & SUNDAY 30TH JUNE

The Irish Game Fair and Fine Food Festival, was held in the magnificent setting of Shanes Castle and is Irelands largest Game Fair and Country Sports event. These two days were action packed with loads of sporting events to suit the whole family. The Castle is steeped in history and sits on the north-east shores of Lough Neagh.

It was here in the fine summer weather, that thousands of visitors came to view the challenges for the sporting elite and to partake in the many events happening over the two days. The Game Fair provided a vast array of sporting interests, from Clay pigeon Shooting, Falconry, Gun Dogs, Angling, Fishing for youngsters, Donkeys, Ferret showing and Racing, Amusements for the children, and many more sporting attractions too numerous to mention.

As usual the Canine world was well catered for, with a full programme of showing, racing, and the now famous 5 Nations Championships. Excitement was also building for the racing highlight of the year, the Master Mc Grath and Mick the Millar finals.

In the Mick the Miller final, Josh O Connor's dog Bear pipped the post first, followed by Michael Mc Grath's Tucker taking Reserve. It was so worth the journey to see the look of joy on these two young enthusiasts faces. This was quickly followed by the Mick the Millar race and Ned Kanes dog flew past the winning post, followed by Michael Mc Grath's Stella.

After a great day's excitement at the Racing on Saturday, Sunday was a new day for Ferret, Dog Showing and 5 Nations Championship.

Results

Master McGrath Josh O Connor with Bear, Michael McGrath with Tucker

Mick The Millar Ned Kane with Snowy, Michael Mc Grath with Stella

Five Nations Champions

Whippets Dermot Lawless with Blue, Tracy Gill with Luca

Lurchers Maurice McDowell with Poacher (Handled by Malachy Mc Fall) Neil Pinkerton with Ben

Terriers Drita Manson with Frankie, Paul Mc Keown with Pops

Showing Results

Puppy Champion Maurice Mc Dowell with Outlaw

Champion Whippet Janet Duke with Luca, Davy Best with Merlin

Champion Lurcher Jed Donagh with Jake, Lisa Beggs with Cirez

Champion Terrier Darren Crawford with Joe, Eamo Mc Erlain with Spooky

Overall Best in Show and Show Champion Darren Crawford with Joe

Racing Results

1st Davy Downey with Stiffles Mum

2nd John Wray with Belle

Ferret Results

Polecat Hob or Jill Raymond Brown with Athenia, Marty McGreevy with Nipper, Davy Downey with Sheila

Albino Hob or Jill Ian Fitzgerald with Snowy, Ray Brown with Sasha, John Wray with Sid

Any Other Colour Hob or Jill Gemma Wray with Reggie, Davy Downey with Stiffler's Mum, Yvonne Duffy with Bear Best in Show Raymond Brown with Athenia Reserve Ian Fitzgerald with Snowy

The Irish Game Fair is run with and under the guidance of people who are passionate about country sports. Albert and Irene Titterington, and their co directors bring a creative marketing flair, vast event organisation, a wealth of experience, and a lifetime commitment to the promotion and enjoyment of all country sports.

Judges were as follows: Whippets Sammy Shaw, Lurchers John Shaw Terriers Jamesie Toal and Five Nations Judges Whippets Mickey Quinn, Lurchers, Kieran Young, Terriers Terry Crossen. Final thanks go to Tom Barry Director of Lurcher, Terrier and Whippet, Racing and Showing, his wife Leanne Barry, Ethan, and their team of helpers, for organising and running the Racing and Showing at Shanes Castle so effectively and efficiently again this year.

Major investment over the last number of years by the Great Game Fairs of Ireland has seen development to an unchallenged level, where town and country come

together to celebrate and enjoy great craic, and of course our wonderful country sports and traditions.

NEW RULES FOR QUALIFYING FOR THE FIVE NATIONS TERRIER, WHIPPET & LURCHER CHAMPIONSHIPS AT THE GREAT GAME FAIRS OF IRELAND 2020

In future rather than shows in Ireland, Scotland, England and Wales having to apply for qualifying status in advance and those competitors wishing to qualify sometimes having to travel considerable distances to try to qualify, we have decided that anyone whose dog is awarded the Championship or Res Championship at any show in the UK or Ireland, from the 29 June 2019 can claim a qualification for the Five Nations. To ensure a smooth transition to the new rules those dogs that qualified for the 2019 Fair and competed are also deemed to have qualified.

1. Owners of dogs qualifying after the 29th June can confirm their qualification by emailing Tom or Albert to claim their qualification to irishcountrylifestyle@btinternet.com.

2. The owner of the dog claiming the qualification must give details of the name and date of the event, the body organising the show, the name of the dog and the owner's name and contacts.

3. The claim must ideally be made within 21 days of the event where the dog(s) won and no later than the 1st June 2020.

4. Only the Champion and Reserve Champion qualify – dogs beaten by these dogs do not 'step up' on the basis that the winners are already qualified.

5. The date of the implementation of these new rules is from the 30th June 2019.

6. We have had a system in place for some years whereby anyone actually present at the final can make an objection to the winner or reserve in the Five Nations or indeed any winner at the fair by making a formal objection and putting down a deposit of €50/£50. This will be returned if the objection is upheld. If the challenge fails the money will be donated to charity. This will be the ONLY system of dispute that will be considered and no debate will be entered into over the results AFTER the event. This is the system used by the other sports and there are no unseemly disputes after these other competitions.

THE IRISH GAME FAIR, SHANES CASTLE 2019



Winner Josh O Connor with Bear, Reserve Michael McGrath with Tucker.



Ned Kane with Snowy, Reserve Michael McGrath with Stella.



Maurice McDowell with Poacher (Handled by Malachy McFall) Reserve Neil Pinkerton with Ben.



Winner Dermot Lawless with Blue, Tracy Gill with Luca.



Winner Drita Manson with Frankie, Reserve Paul Mc Keown with Pops.

LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT AWARDS - CELEBRATING GREAT COUNTRY LIVES

Five coveted Lifetime Achievement Awards were presented at the press launch of the 2019 Irish Game Fair & Fine Food Festival, Shanes Castle, Antrim. Awards are presented in recognition of outstanding contributions to country sports and heritage.

Commenting, Albert Titterington of the Great Game Fairs of Ireland, said: "It is an absolute pleasure each year to have the opportunity publicly to recognise some of the outstanding individuals who commit their time, talents and enthusiasm to preserving rural traditions of all kinds. These people work tirelessly behind the scenes and without any thought of reward. Their contributions to country sports and traditions is immeasurable and we should all be grateful to them. In addition to achieving excellence in their chosen sphere, each of these country people is passing on the baton to future generations and I thank them and wish them continued success."

Michael Fenlon, Vice Chairman NARGC

Michael Fenlon is Vice Chairman of the influential National Association of Regional Game Councils and a much-respected member of the gun-trade (recognised for his tireless and hugely effective advocacy of his sport

At national level, the Regional Game Councils are united to form the National Association of Regional Game Councils



Michael Fenlon (right) with Paul Pringle, Editor, Irish Country Sports & Country Life.

(NARGC). The NARGC acts as a national lobby organisation looking after the interests of resident sportsmen and sportswomen through assisting in the development and implementation of national wildlife policy, legislation, research, education, habitat purchase and development,

financing, game release programmes etc.

The Association is also a Seanad (Upper House of Irish Parliament) Nominating Body and is included in the Agricultural Panel on the Register of Seanad Nominating Bodies. Its inclusion on the Seanad Register is recognition of the importance and wide representation of the Association. The NARGC's expertise in wildlife matters has been recognised by successive Governments in the past and this was clearly demonstrated by the Association being represented by several of its members on past Wildlife Advisory Councils, the Heritage Council, the Firearms Legislation Review Group and the SAC Appeals Advisory Board.

John Leighton, President of the Ulster Gundog League

Over the years John has enjoyed considerable sporting success with the dogs he trains and we have been proud to have enjoyed his support and insight as he served as 'Spaniel Director' with our Fairs, shaping competitions and ensuring top quality entries.

His reputation, gained over forty years in competition, commands instant respect in gundog circles and John is a popular figure across this island and beyond. We are indebted to him for his contribution to country sports and we have known him as a convivial and knowledgeable sporting companion who is always willing to share his insight and expertise with others. Country sports need ambassadors like John and we are delighted to honour his contribution with the presentation of The Great Game Fairs of Ireland Lifetime Achievement Award.



John Leighton (left) is congratulated on his Award by Paul Pringle

John Barr Jr.

Lurgan man John Barr Jr is part of a local family well known and much respected in gundog circles, a third

generation sportsman who has countless wins and many brilliantly trained dogs to his credit.

Over the years he has enjoyed fabulous local, national and international success in running dogs, but he's quick to tell you that, even at his level, 'every day's a school day'! John is always willing to share his skills with others as he passes on the baton to future generations and his love of Gundogs and understanding of them is unsurpassed.

His achievements are many and varied, but I know he takes particular pride in having won the prestigious Irish Retriever Championship, something which his father had won some years before – an exceptional father and son achievement and one which might tell us that there is something very special in the Barr family's sporting blood!

"Country sports need ambassadors like John and we are delighted to honour his contribution with the presentation of The Great Game Fairs of Ireland Lifetime Achievement Award. We look forward to many more great sporting successes – and great dogs – in the years ahead.



John Barr Jr. is pictured (left) with his Award

William Foster, fundraiser for Gundog Rescue & Rehoming

William really is the 'powerhouse' behind this important



William Foster (right) is congratulated by Paul Pringle.

organisation and his determination and commitment drive its continuous fund-raising programme. Thanks to William and the hard working team, rescue dogs are cared for and loving new homes are found for them. In addition, the organisation does a great deal to encourage responsible Gundog ownership and, in particular, helps develop the interest of young people in the facet of Countrysports.

We are delighted to honour William's contribution to the health and wellbeing of many Gundogs - and to the happiness of their new owners - right across the country.

Madeleine Kelly, leading angler

Madeleine has been a member of the Irish Ladies Fly Fishing Team on no less than twenty occasions and has captained the team six times – tremendous achievements in a wonderful sporting career from a woman who just seems to get better with every passing season. Her graceful, seemingly effortless casting style is a delight to watch and inspires male and female anglers with awe, if not envy!

Although she can certainly be competitive when called upon, Maddy is incredibly generous with her mentoring of others and she is always ready to share her skills and insights. In particular she is passionate about 'passing on the baton' to young people who may be discovering angling for the first time and she has worked hard to introduce children and young people to her chosen sport.

Above all, Maddy is determined to encourage other women to follow her lead and she has been the driving force behind a great many initiatives designed to encourage female participation in a sport which has, traditionally, been dominated by men. We have no doubt that she will maintain this focus for the future and we wish her continued success in opening the sport to more women. Angling is fortunate to have such a passionate and capable advocate.



Madeline Kelly receives her Award from Paul Pringle.

Feedwell at the Great Game Fairs of Ireland



Jamie Clegg presents Jonn Barr with his award.



Feedwell Preliminary Award Winners.



Feedwell Novice Retriever Award Winners.



Feedwell Open Retriever Winners.



Feedwell Overall Winners, Judges & Officials.



Pat Peppard receives Top Dog Award from Albert Titterington.



The Feedwell Five Nations Whippet Championships.



A lovely smile from young Rebecca as she receives her dog food.

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John Barr Jr with FT CH Shimnavale Jasmine of Drumnamoe
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Obituary

MORRIS GETTY – POINTER LEGEND

The world of Pointer and Setter field trials has been deeply saddened by the death of Morris Getty of Bushmills, Northern Ireland. Morris was a top Pointer handler and trainer spanning more than 40 years and on his day he would be the man to beat. He was, quite simply, a brilliant handler. He got the very best out of his Pointers. He had a formidable team and they were great game finders on the grouse moors.

My first vivid memory of Morris is way back in the 1970s when he and his wife Jean came to Scotland in their car, appropriately enough it was a Morris Minor Traveller. That vehicle contained everything you could possibly imagine for field trials throughout the British Isles and the Republic of Ireland. I'm told he even carried a spare bag of dynamos in case the vehicle broke down! They were a great team and his wife Jean was always there when Morris required his next Pointer to compete in the field trials.

It was on the grouse moor that he often gave a masterclass in quartering and game finding abilities. Kennel Club records show that he made up countless Field Trial Champion Pointers – FT CH Glenroan Dizzy, FT CH Glenroan Dan, FT CH Glenroan Heather. FT CH Jimmy Be Good, FT CH Weeping Willie, FT CH Ebony Raven, FT CH Morning Sunset, FT CH Bossy Ben, FT CH Fearn Rhum, FT CH Devil Dreamer, FT CH Black Spider, FT CH Skipping Cricket, and his last FT CH Gentle Jim who won the Champion Stake at Bollihope Moor, County Durham, in 2013. FT CH Black Spider won the Champion Stake at Glenalmond Estate in Perthshire in 2002.

In 1979, Morris won the Irish Championship with Glenroan Heather. Four years later, his son Richard, aged just 17 year old, won the Irish Championship with Richard's Jess. Morris also made up a Field Trial

Champion Irish Red Setter bitch Red Swallow. In 2000, Morris was part of the winning Irish Pointer team at Her Majesty the Queen's Balmoral Estate in Scotland

Many moving tributes have been paid to Morris on social media following his passing on Wednesday June 5, 2019. Former field trialler Gordon Bowker said: "We trialled with Morris in the early 90's. His lovely wife, soul mate and trial manager Jean was always there by his side. She knew what

dog was next, etc. Jean was always kind and thoughtful to all competitors. Many such times come to mind as we remember! When my wife Christine knitted me a jumper for the trials – wow it was much too long, well below my knees. We were staying in the caravan in a field near Lord Mansfield's trial in Perthshire, Jean spent an evening undoing/altering it for me to normal size and it fitted really well. I always remember hearing Morris calling – "Jean" and the next dog and numbered arm band would be delivered to him."

A Panel Kennel Club Judge Richard MacNicol said: "Morris had some of the best Pointers I have ever seen." Fellow A Panel Judge Steve Robinson said: "Morris was a great handler and dog man, very generous with his knowledge and advice a real character with a fantastic sense of humour." A Panel judge Meryl Asbury said: "So very sad to hear this. Morris was always such fun



to be with and always had time for everyone."

Godfrey McRoberts, of Northern Ireland, told me: "I first met Morris at Slieveanorra at the Northern Ireland Pointer Club trials in 1979 – Sammy Morrison was the club secretary at that time.

"Morris was running a liver and white pointer bitch called Glenroan Heather and won the stake. He had another black and white bitch at this time called Glenroan Hunter which was very good. These dogs were the foundation of his future kennels and could trace back to the Blackfield pointers of Joe Dubb, who imported pointers into Ireland from Scandinavia. Of the many dogs he had, at any one time he had up to 30 dogs, the best pointers I saw were Glenroan Heather, Skipping Cricket and Bossy Ben."

By Jon Kean

Obituary

William (Bill) Parker



The late Bill Parker.

The world of hunting, shooting, fishing, stick-making and collecting lost one of its greatest champions when Bill Parker passed away at the age of 84 on 30th June of this year after a long illness. Bill's loss is deeply felt by his family and he is greatly missed by his friends in the country sports fraternity. He touched the lives of many people in the pursuit of his myriad sporting interests, artisan skills and expertise, which included collecting hunting- and shooting-related historical books and artefacts. Bill's generosity in lending his time and using his extensive knowledge and skill for the benefit of others was legendary. Along with many of his friends, I have the privilege of owning fine examples of Bill's exemplary workmanship, now to be treasured as a permanent memento of a great craftsman and friend.

Bill had a special interest in deer, serving as Chairman of the Northern Ireland Deer Society during his many years of dedicated service as a committee member, which he sustained

even through his illness. By way of preparation for the many excursions organised by the Society in these years, Bill would put on his Lisburn Historical Society hat and research the history of the houses and estates to be visited, ready to give a presentation to the members. He delivered each of these presentations in his own inimitable style: facts combined with interesting asides and interspersed with anecdotes illuminating what his research had revealed.

Bill's love of deer naturally included a concern for their welfare in the context of controlling the species. I was lucky to accompany him on many deer-culling expeditions in the Western Isles of Scotland and mainland Scotland. In hunting with Bill, I witnessed the respect he had for the beauty of the deer and learned from him the duty on all hunters to carry out the cull with clinical expertise and professionalism. He would often remark that taking the shot was a serious business and a great responsibility.

Among many happy memories of our stalking trips, the most memorable destination was undoubtedly the Scottish Isle of Jura where we stalked with a great friend, islander Davy Mack. On one stalk Bill took an unplanned swim in a stream swollen to a torrent by melt water coming down from the ice capped Mountains. It was a narrow escape for Bill as he was washed into an eddy and then able to get himself out of the stream just as I reached him. He was soaked through, with his rifle in its case still strapped to his back. Before I could speak, he asked first if I could retrieve his stick, which was standing upright in the stream, and next whether I had seen his hat. I remember us agreeing that the hat had probably reached the sea and begun making its way south.

When Davy arrived on the scene, he and I made the case for writing off the day and returning to the lodge but Bill dismissed this argument and insisted on going on with the stalk, wringing out his wet clothes on the hillside in the sub-zero temperatures of a biting wind.

Davy and I knew that getting the job done and getting off the hill would probably be more efficient than persisting in debate with Bill. After he insisted – again – on me taking the first shot the race was on for Bill to get his beast and for us to get Bill back to the lodge.

As we climbed higher it got colder, even for those of us in dry and wind-proof clothing, but Bill was intent on pressing ahead. At last Davy stopped and slowly dropped to his knees, waved us both forward and briefed us that he had spotted a number of hinds ahead, all lying down. We were to crawl towards them one at a time, with Bill to take the hind on the left of the group as soon as they stood.

Once in position Davy and I had Bill sandwiched between us to keep him sheltered from the wind and snow. For the two of us every minute felt like an hour but by contrast Bill was totally focused on his hind, trigger finger in his mouth while he waited for the beast to stand up. I was astounded, and worried, to see that frost was forming on his clothes and his eyebrows.

Davy gave a series of very shrill whistles intended to make the deer stand up, but to no avail. We waited as Davy whistled some more without result before giving a long singing call of “Halloooooooooooooo,” at which all of the deer stood up. Bill’s shot was instantaneous. As the hind fell, Davy was up and ordering Bill to his feet so that we could start the fastest mountain descent I can remember.

With the benefit of the hot peaty Jura water in the huge Victorian bath back at the lodge, Bill was none the worse for his icy dunking and narrow escape at the place now dubbed by Davy as ‘Billy’s Leap’. Such was the resilience and determination of the great man (then in his seventieth year) that he would not let his getting, as he put it ‘a little wet and chilly’, spoil the day for the rest of us.

Fellow Irish Game fair goers will remember Bill from his appearances in the arena for historic re-enactments with

our Muzzle Loading Display Team. From the very beginning Bill was the heart of the team, our mentor and resident expert who held us all together.

It was a privilege to have known Bill for nearly four decades and an honour to have been included amongst his friends. We will all think of his many stories and fondly recited poems and quotations – and we will remember him as man of unquestionable integrity, wit and wisdom.

Dave McCullough

Publisher’s note: Bill Parker

I would wish to thank Dave for a very insightful obituary for our dear friend Bill Parker but I thought I should add an additional tribute from the ‘Great Game Fairs of Ireland family’ about the important role that Bill and friends especially Dave played in the development of key traditional attractions at the Irish Game Fairs.

I first met Bill at a URA ‘black powder’ shoot at Ballykinler in the late 70’s and found him to be a kindred spirit in terms of an interest in local history and shooting of all kinds. From that group we developed the concept of performing historical re-enactments at the Game Fairs. The ‘regiment’ resplendent in red coats made by Irene out of Chelsea Pensioner coats took the field at the 1982 Clondeboy Game Fair with a ‘Battle of Culloden’. Bill, of course, with his historical attention to detail and his skill as a craftsman went the extra mile and produced two very smart uniforms for himself and his son Edwin.

Our expertise and sense of theatre, increased with the acquisition of two cannon and we created quite a spectacle for the audience who were quite unused to seeing re-enactments, muzzle loading weapons and cannon! Bill’s expertise as an engineer and historian was fully utilised in the construction and shooting of the cannon.

That was the start of Bill and the ‘muzzle loading’ team’s involvement in the fairs and this included on occasion running a muzzle loading clay pigeon

shooting competition – Bill whether at clays or game enjoyed showing what he could do with his muzzleloader.

Bill and the ‘muzzle loading team’ of Dave McCullough and Ian McConnell became a regular entertainment feature at the press receptions and fairs and including Ballywalter, Birr Castle, Shanes Castle and Montalto and he also took part in re-enactments at the fair and re-enactments of the Battle of Ballynahinch and Antrim. With virtually every re-enactment Bill would produce some historical detail, often in the format of research papers, and usually some historical curiosity from his major collection of militaria.

As with anything he did Bill embraced the history and spectacle of the re-enactments with enthusiasm – sometime too much! When we re-created one of our most ambitious re-enactments of the Battle of Antrim at Clotworthy House – George Logan and I had detailed re-enactors well versed in ‘fighting’ in clashes – I had suggested to Bill that he and I take the two wings outside of the main clash. When the two sides closed I was horrified to see Bill rush into the fray and even more so when he was knocked to the ground in a most spectacular fashion. We quickly helped him up and our commentator quickly ad libbed that one of the wounded participants was ‘being removed from the field’. Most of the good crowd of spectators cheered as Bill came round as they thought it had all been choreographed!

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pz83QZZGXGM>

Apart from his involvement in the fairs I had the pleasure of both target and game shooting with Bill on several occasions and as in all things he was always well turned out, courteous, and full of enthusiasm. And on occasions he delighted us in showing what his 80yo black powder shotgun could do!

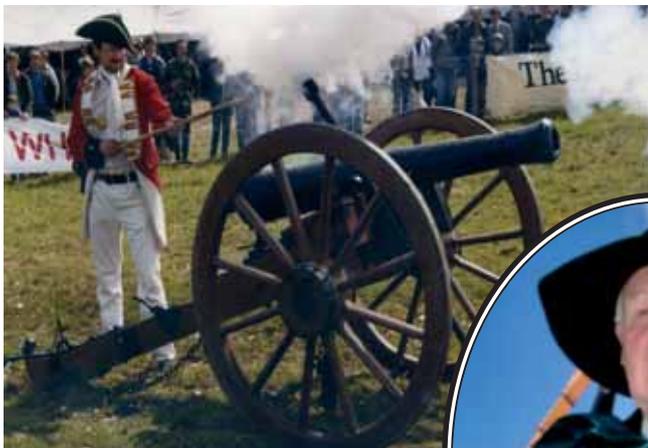
The whole Game Fair family wish to acknowledge the vital contribution Bill made to our fairs and will miss him greatly.

Albert J. Titterington



Bill (far right) and Edwin Parker as 'drummer boy'.

(Below)
Bill winning the Ardee sponsored Clay Shoot at the Clondeboye Fair.



Cannoneer Dave McCullough with the cannon built with advice from Bill.



Bill at Montalto, as rebel, with one of the many curios he collected the collar of Henry Munro's dog. Munro was the leader of the United Irishmen at the Battle of Ballynahinch.



(Above Left and Right)
The Muzzle Loading teams at Birr Castle and Shanes Castle Game Fairs.



(Left) Bill with 'Roddy McCorley' at the Battle of Antrim re-enactment.



Iascach Intíre Éireann
Inland Fisheries Ireland

Humphreys launches new €140,000 angling facility in Monaghan

Monaghan County Council has opened a new €140,000 angling facility at Lough Muckno, Castleblayney, Co. Monaghan. The facility, which was funded by Inland Fisheries Ireland through its National Strategy for Angling Development, was officially launched by Heather Humphreys TD, Minister for Business, Enterprise, and Innovation. The upgrade to the facility will help attract international angling competitions and visiting anglers.

The fisheries development project saw the opening of an inaccessible angling stretch and the addition of 40 new coarse angling pegs along the shoreline which were required to cater for the large number of anglers who were coming to visit and fish the lake. In addition, a new access point to the Lough was developed for anglers incorporating 500 metres of road access, a vehicular access track beside the lake shore and new car parking spaces. Inland Fisheries Ireland provided funding of €105,248 while Monaghan County Council contributed €35,000 to the project.

Heather Humphreys TD, Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation welcomed the facility in Monaghan: “Lough Muckno is a renowned angling destination and a valuable amenity to the community at large, offering significant value from both a tourism and recreational perspective. I am delighted to see investment in this facility which ensures it remains at international



Minister Heather Humphreys TD officially opens Lough Muckno's €140,000 angling facility

match standard.”

The project is just one of many fisheries development projects being delivered across the country under the National Strategy for Angling Development, which is the first comprehensive national framework for the development of the angling resource. The Strategy provides opportunities for habitat improvement along with funding which will improve angling access and tourism development.

Cllr Seamus Coyle, Cathaoirleach of Monaghan County Council said: “The development of this new stretch was required because of the success and popularity of the three previously developed sections on the lake. Because these stretches are regularly booked to capacity, it was important to provide another stretch to cater for all those who want to fish the lake and this is where South Lodge comes in. I have no doubt that this development will have a

significant impact on the local economy and look forward to welcoming more international visitors to Castleblayney”

Dr Ciaran Byrne, CEO of Inland Fisheries Ireland said: “Lough Muckno has been extremely effective in attracting angling visitors to the town of Castleblayney over the years and this has had a positive economic impact on the area. It is fantastic to see rural communities engaging around the angling resource and we continue to support projects nationwide which look to support the improvement of fish habitats and remove barriers to accessing the fisheries resource.”

Traditional Irish wooden ship sets sail towards West Greenland to follow salmon migration and highlight their decline

Ireland's sole surviving ocean going wooden sailing ship, the 'Ilen',

which was re-built through a community educational programme in Limerick, has set sail from Limerick Docks to follow the migratory journey of salmon in the Shannon River to West Greenland. ‘Salmon’s Wake’ is the title of The Ilen Project’s Community and Schools Education Programme which is highlighting the decline of salmon during International Year of the Salmon.

The Ilen Project operates the wooden sailing ship ‘Ilen’ as a community learning platform from her home port of Limerick. The rebuilding of the Ilen and her preparations for sea were completed in June and the crew from all parts of Ireland are looking forward to her longest ocean voyage since 1926.

The voyage follows a creative programme which saw building workshops and community days take place at multiple locations across the city with local schools, artists, craft makers and institutions all playing a role in bringing this majestic ship back to sea. Young people from Limerick and West Greenland are participating in this project and discovering what both communities share as North Atlantic maritime island peoples.

Sean Canney TD, Minister with responsibility for Inland Fisheries said: “The ‘Salmon’s Wake’ project is just one of a number of initiatives taking place across the country as part of International Year of the Salmon to raise awareness of what humans can do to ensure salmon and their habitats are conserved and restored against a backdrop of several environmental factors. Inland Fisheries Ireland is co-ordinating International Year of the Salmon in Ireland and is supporting the The Ilen Project’s Salmon Wake initiative to generate interest in the status of salmon populations and the role they



The ‘Ilen’ returns to the ocean for International Year of the Salmon.

play in Ireland’s economic and cultural heritage”, he added.

Atlantic salmon populations are widely distributed throughout Irish freshwaters with over 140 such systems designated as salmon rivers. While in the 1970s, the number of Atlantic Salmon returning to Irish waters peaked at 1,800,000, the numbers returning have decreased by 70 per cent in recent decades.

Gary MacMahon, Director of The Ilen Company said: “The Ilen is today setting off for its longest voyage in decades. It is the culmination of a lot of hard work by so many in our community who helped us realise our vision of reimagining this impressive ship. Throughout this journey, participants in the project have shared and learnt skills through the build which will remain with them for a lifetime. It is a symbol of what can be achieved when people work together and it is fitting therefore that our ‘Salmon Wake’ journey is highlighting the decline in salmon populations.”

Dr Ciaran Byrne, CEO of Inland Fisheries Ireland said: “We know that for every 100 salmon that leave Ireland to go out to sea, 95 don’t make it back due to a range of challenges which they face at sea. The Ilen Projects ‘Salmon’s Wake’ programme is a timely tribute to this iconic species during International

Year of the Salmon and it is hoped that it will help create awareness around their decline in Ireland and across the northern hemisphere.”

For more information about the Ilen Project, visit www.ilen.ie and to learn about International Year of the Salmon, visit www.fisheriesireland.ie/iys.

Salmon and sea trout anglers reminded to submit 2019 logbook and gill tags

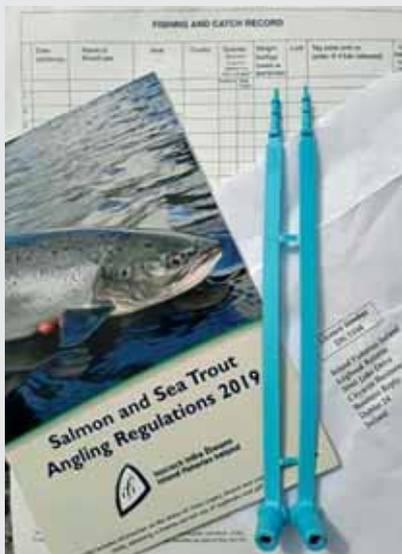
Inland Fisheries Ireland is reminding all salmon and sea trout anglers of the importance of returning their 2019 angling logbook and unused gill tags. These returns provide vital information and facilitate informed decision making on Ireland’s wild Atlantic Salmon and Sea Trout stocks. Anglers are asked to return their logbook as part of the Wild Salmon and Sea Trout Tagging Scheme which regulates salmon and sea trout fishing in Ireland and is administered by Inland Fisheries Ireland.

In accordance with the Wild Salmon and Sea Trout Tagging Scheme, anglers are required by law to return their completed logbook and all unused tags once they have finished fishing for the season or as soon as the season is over at the end of September and no later than the 19th of October annually.

The return of logbooks and tags can be done via the business return envelope which was supplied at the time of license purchase. In the absence of the prepaid logbook return envelope, anglers can return their completed logbook and unused tags to the Inland Fisheries Ireland office addressed on their licence/logbook. The records from this year's angler returns will support management decisions in 2020.

As part of the Scheme, an angler must attach a valid gill tag to a salmon (any size) or sea trout (over 40cm) immediately on landing. They then must enter the details of the catch and gill-tag used into their logbook. If the fish is to be released, anglers must also make a catch record in their logbook.

For more information visit www.fisheriesireland.ie. Any queries in relation to the scheme can be sent to salmonlogbookreturn@fisheriesireland.ie



Salmon logbook and gill tags.

Fishy Fun for all the Family

The fisheries resource came to life at the National Museum of Ireland – Natural History this summer as a free event called Fishy Fun brought a range of interactive activities suitable for all the family. Inland Fisheries Ireland and the National Museum of Ireland – Natural History



Some young enthusiasts taking part in Fishy Fun.

partnered on the one day event in July as part of International Year of the Salmon (IYS) which aimed to engage the public around the challenges facing salmon today.

Visitors to the museum learnt about the fantastic collection of fish on display and how Ireland's most iconic fish species, salmon, is facing its biggest challenge yet. Fisheries staff were on hand to help young fisheries enthusiasts examine the creepy crawlies which live in Ireland's rivers and lakes via microscopes while novice anglers tried their hand at fishing through a virtual fishing simulator! In addition to the collection within the museum, aquariums showcased some of the freshwater fish which live in waters across Ireland.

For families who couldn't make the event, the Salmon of Colour Children's Colouring Competition is

running until October. Pick up a copy in the National Museum of Ireland – Natural History or download for free online at www.fisheriesireland.ie/iys to be in with a chance of winning a €100 voucher and a private tour of the museum!

Catch and Release Pins Programme

Catch and Release contributes to the maintenance of healthy fish stocks and ensures future generations can continue to enjoy the fisheries resource.

Merit Pins are available and will be awarded to anglers who return salmon to water throughout the year.

Send your catch details to Inland Fisheries Ireland to earn a #CPRsavesfish pin. Visit www.fisheriesireland.ie/iys to find out more.



Image courtesy of Christin Breuker.

Nymphs for Dollaghan

I have often fished for grayling and trout with nymphs and in the old days I simply made a cast upstream and retrieved the fly line the same speed or at times slightly faster than the current, while watching my fly line but also feeling for takes. This was done with weighted nymphs, which would be leaded or with a brass head bead nymph, with perhaps a spider pattern on a dropper. This is still a great way to fish and will count for countless feeding fish, in the right type of water.

But for the last few years, with the invention of tungsten beaded nymphs, there have been great advances in fishing flies. Tungsten is denser than brass allowing tungsten beaded nymphs to sink more quickly. This means that in faster rivers or deeper pools you can get the trout fly down to the bottom zone, where the fish are feeding on the natural nymphs and larvae.

Tungsten nymphs are probably the most popular river fly patterns today! These are nymphs in which the classic brass bead replaced the tungsten bead in all possible sizes, colours and shapes. Thanks to the fact that they reach the fish despite the strongest river stream and the deepest river pools, they become super-efficient nymph patterns! Their development was greatly helped by fly fishing competitions, mainly with the trend of modern nymph techniques coming from Poland, France, Italy,

Belgium and the Czech Republic. Most anglers call it Euro Nymphing and it is now massively popular in Ireland, the UK and elsewhere for trout and grayling.

But what if your quarry is not really feeding like most migratory species in rivers, like salmon, sea trout or a bit closer to home, Lough Neagh Dollaghan, which run up my local rivers to spawn? Well, simply put, tungsten beaded nymphs have been a total game changer. I recognised this about 15 years ago when I caught salmon on trout nymphs on the rivers Drowse and Mourne. This happened more than once and I also quickly started to catch Dollaghan regularly on tungsten nymphs.

This has become a top tactic and is now commonplace with many anglers. I call it a game changer, as catching big Dollaghan was for years a thing we all did at night and this is still probably still the best way to get a monster sized fish. It's very similar to seatrout fishing at night, but it's a way of fishing that takes its toll as you really need to be able to change your body clock, if you want to do it successfully and often during the months when the fish are in.

I recently re read Hugh Falkus' book *Sea Trout Fishing*, which covers everything the would-be sea trout fisherman could possibly wish to know. He looks at sea trout behaviour, biology,

tackle, casting, fly fishing, spinning and bait fishing techniques and tactics in a style which is easy to read and informative. He has dedicated a large part of the book to night fishing and if you're a Dollaghan fisher it's a fantastic read, a classic, and many of the techniques he mentions will help you catch fish in the dark. Falkus was lucky as he lived beside a river and as he was a full-time writer could plan his work around his fishing.

With tungsten we can catch regularly during more sociable hours

But night fishing takes its toll and is not easy if you have a family and or a full time job. I did it for years and it was fantastic and most of my biggest Dollaghan were caught at night using traditional sunk line methods, but now with tungsten we can catch regularly during more sociable hours during the day. Conditions always play a massive part in our success but now we can, if we know the spots fish hold constantly, harass these mostly non feeding fish, as by keeping our nymphs at the depth where the fish are sitting. As my father used to say Salmon and Dollaghan don't have fists but if you keep annoying them, without spooking them, your chances of catching them suddenly become a lot better as they may lash out.

There are different ways you can present your flies, depending on the stretch of river you are fishing. Euro Nymphing tackle and tactics work brilliantly in deep fast streams, or while fishing your nymphs under a pimp, which is just a small float will work well in slower deeper pulls, once you find the right depth. Though watching a float can be very addictive, it's not for everyone and some rivers I fish have already banned this method, as some anglers now have become very static while 'pimping.'



A lovely cock fish taken on the Belfast Nymph.



A good hen fish also taken with the same nymph.

This really is not a tactic to use if the rule of the club is to rotate the pools while traditionally salmon or Dollaghan fishing when others want to fish the same spot, with a down and across method. I like to move about a good bit when fishing and get away from to big a crowd, so a tactic I use often is fishing and retrieving my flies through small pools and pocket water with a tungsten beaded nymph as my point fly and a traditional fly on the dropper. This opens a lot more water to you, fishing more spots and I have found it very successful on slow and deep parts of rivers where a strip and draw retrieve can work well or a figure of eight retrieve, with varied speeds of retrieve. For the pattern, I'm not sure if it really matters that much as most tungsten beaded nymphs that work on trout will also work for Dollaghan, but we all have our own favourites. Mine like many fly concoctions, come with a wee story.

I wanted a nymph-type pattern that was really tempting

I had been fishing years ago a heavy hare's ear type nymph, but with an orange hackle behind the bead and a bit of twinkle flash in the tail. I'd had some success with salmon on this pattern in low water and it also worked on the local river for Dollaghan and trout, but I wanted a nymph-type pattern that was really tempting on my local rivers for Dollaghan fishing during the day. Dollaghan at night always took flies

with a bit of flash and many of the best night patterns have silver, gold or pearl bodies, so I started dressing some nymphs with a bit of flash. It's maybe unfair to call these flies nymphs, as they are not really made to imitate a nymph, but are made to cause a reaction. Instantly they worked for me on the rivers no matter what nymphing method I used but, as I am an angler that likes to move, I found them deadly while pulling or retrieving. Not really nymphing tactics to be fair, more like lure fishing so maybe this pattern is the way it's most often fished would be better termed a mini lure or even a pulling nymph.

I didn't name it, it's just a fishing fly that worked, but my friends Marc Lite from Scotland and Espen Eilertsen from Norway started calling it 'The Belfast Nymph' and the tactic and fly also worked well while we were fishing for Grayling in Norway. This pattern is meant to be cast and retrieved with its flash and hackle pulsating to attract and cause fish to lash out and take. One thing I must add when casting a heavy fly on a trout rod, it helps greatly if you can cast and use a haul on the back cast and slip line at the right time to help load the rod and make it easier to get some distance. A tungsten beaded fly can damage a fly

rod if it hits the rod blank, so be careful. A good tip is to start with a shorter tapered tippet, a tactic that can turn a blank day into a good day. Try it, it means you can get to your bed at a reasonable hour. Tight lines.

Pulling Nymph or Belfast Nymph (if you're in Norway)

Thread: Semperfli Nano Silk

Hook: Partridge K4A Grub / Shrimp 8

Bead: 3.2 or 4mm Veniard Tungsten (all the colours seem to work though, rainbow, pink, red, yellow and orange are great)

Body: Pearl, Silver or Gold braid

Rib: Fine Silver or gold wire (makes the fly more durable)

Thorax: Red or Orange fur or synthetic with a few strands of Twinkle Flash

Hackle: Badger hen or Greenwell hen.

Game Angling Consultant Stevie Munn works full time as a fishing guide, writer and qualified game angling instructor in fly casting and fly tying. He is a member of The Guideline Power Team and the Irish rep for Costa glasses and Semperfli. He has appeared in many angling books, magazines and DVDs and gives casting demonstrations at angling events all over the world. He grew up fishing on rivers and loughs of Ireland where he often guides. He runs teaching courses in Ireland and host groups to fish in Norway, Argentina and other parts of the world. You can contact him via email anglingclassics@aol.com and for more information visit www.anglingclassics.co.uk

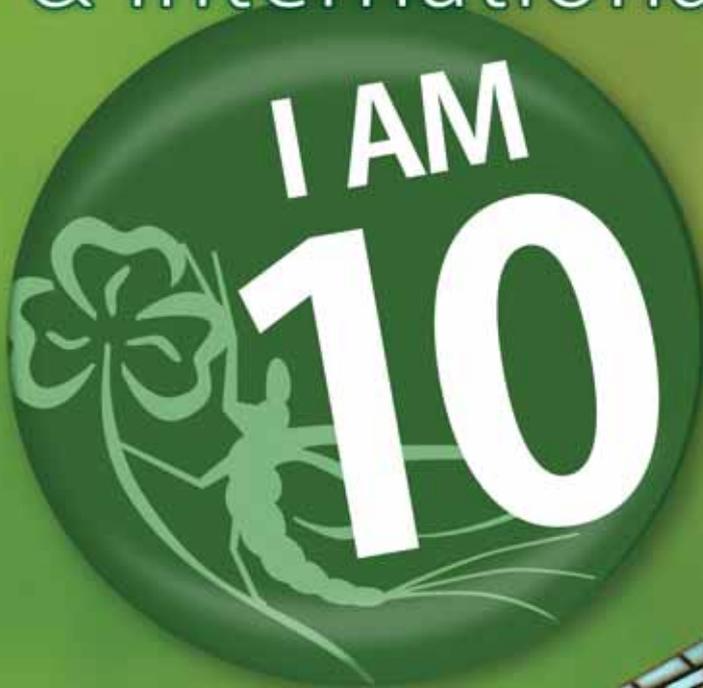


The Belfast Nymph.

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The sounds of autumn echo across the September sky, the music of the returning grey geese reminds me that the summer is over, as the skeins pass high overhead on their way to the freshly cut stubbles, the full moon throws a blue caste over the landscape. Samhain is the Gaelic festival marking the end of the harvest festival and beginning of the Darker Half of the year, it follows Lughnasa which marks the autumn equinox. In Celtic culture Samhain is seen as the liminal time, when the boundary between this world and the Otherworld is more easily crossed by the Aos Si, the spirits or fairies. Right now, standing waist deep in a dark pool in the Six Mile Water in the wee hours of a September night, surrounded by the sights and sounds of the countryside, I could easily believe other forces are at work here and I have company other than the mallards, otters and herons which are my usual companions. I find this time of year filled with melancholy, the warm,

easy days and nights of summer are behind us, on the horizon the chill winds wait with leaden skies bringing storms from the north. This for me is a time to enjoy the remnants of the fishing season and to reflect on the season just passed, a time to take stock of the sport and companionship enjoyed through a season that passes all too quickly.

I cast my mind back to May, the little river is running low, clear and clean, beds of water crowfoot waving in the current, their tresses providing home for great numbers of nymphs of upwing flies, cover for the trout, oxygen to the water. When the water is low it flows in currents through the beds of bright green weed, the gravel glowing bright and clean. Some wet fly fishermen give off about weed in the water, but where there is weed there is sanctuary for large trout and they have to come out to feed. The River Water Crowfoot is indigenous to the Six Mile Water, it is the reason why the river was so highly esteemed as a dry fly river, but was

suffocated and killed by pollution until it only existed in pockets at the very bottom end of the river. Now, much of the pollution has gone thanks to the work of the Six Mile Water Trust and the crowfoot is coming back and with it the fly hatches — this year saw the biggest hatch of Blue Winged Olives in many years and the trout were not slow to take advantage.

I was fortunate to have a few evening sessions, the banks are dredged and high, you must slide down into the river wading stealthily upstream, targeting rising fish or likely lies as you go. My tools are a Guideline Fario 4 weight rod and Orvis reel, the ammunition is a size 18 quill body emerger pattern with CDC tuft. Stevie Munn ties a beautiful hackled version, but I like the simplified one as I don't worry if it ends up in a bramble or branch and the quill body only lasts for a dozen fish anyway, even if it is varnished. Sherry Spinners are in the air but the duns are still hatching and I can see the trout taking them. The



A perfect specimen of a Lough Sheelin wild brown trout.



Spent Gnat mating at Rusheen Bay on Lough Sheelin.

emerge pattern will cover nymph feeding trout as well so I dab a little floatant on the wing, rub it off again and degrease the last two foot of the tippet. There can be no drag on the fly or refusal is a certainty, so slack line casts are the order of the day.

A succession of smaller trout come to hand but as the summer sun drops over the horizon the better trout appear, I notice a quiet whorl under an overhanging bank and drop the fly quietly upstream. The tiny tuft of CDC drifts into the shadow of the bank and gentle sip initiates my strike, suddenly the rod is bent over as a lovely brown trout bolts downstream past me for the deep water. It jumps several times before I can slide him over the net to remove the barbless hook, a pristine brownie, more than a pound weight, butter golden flanks flecked by black and red spots, perfection!

Blue winged olives are hatching, the trout are on the fin and feeding hard

A few nights later the fishing club meeting finishes early and I dash down to Paradise Bridge at Templepatrick, there will just be time for a few casts and the rod is set up in the car anyway. This time I go up to a pool where I know a few better fish lurk; weed at the

neck provides food and shelter, but an old sunken telegraph pole provides a safe haven for larger residents. The trouble is you need a hatch to get the fish going, the pool is slow and deep and the fish easily disturbed. Tonight the blue winged olives are hatching, the trout are on the fin and feeding hard. I carefully lower myself into waist deep water, some of the trout stop feeding, but after several minutes they recommence. I try to target a better fish, there is one that seems to push more water with its quiet rises and the gentle cast drops the fly a couple of feet upstream of his position. The fly is sucked down quietly, but when I strike everything goes solid then bedlam as a large Dollaghan careers around the little pool, jumping and slashing. I have to apply side strain to stop him leaving the pool, I can't wade down as the water is deeper than my chest waders. Gradually he tires and with a sense of relief I hustle him to the net, dripping and gleaming, three pounds of beautiful trout, metallic gill covers and big black spots tell me this fish has come from the Lough. I can't believe it, Dollaghan in our wee river in May. I catch another a few days later which confirms a few have come in but, before we get excited about the Dollaghan, another event is about to take place — the Mayfly are

beginning to hatch on the classic Irish Limestone Loughs, my favourite time of the year!

The mayfly festival occurs at the very best time of year to be in the countryside, the Whitethorne trees flush with amazing scented blossom, the summer migrants arrive, our swallows, warblers, buntings and larks. The cuckoo calls and flits among the wooded islands and peninsulas of our wild loughs searching out the nests of the smaller birds to offload its eggs. Of course the Mayfly provides an abundance of food for the bird life and for the trout after them having endured lean months following their spawning ordeals and the bounty provides an opportunity to pack on the weight and return to superb condition.

This year, I was fortunate to be invited to fish Lough Erne for a couple of days with Stephen Richardson who knows Erne like the back of his hand. Stephen is a superb angler and fishes with the legendary Sean and Darren Maguire, so some of the magic has obviously rubbed off. First day and I was recovering from a stomach bug but went out anyway; Stephen had eight fish the previous day and I wasn't going to turn down the chance to be out there.

As we motored out from the Beleek end of the Lough, there were Mayflies

hatching and it was only eleven in the morning. The weather was fair, sunlight and broken cloud and a gentle breeze, my heart skipped a beat as Stephen took the boat through treacherous rocky shallows up toward The Gardens, I wouldn't like to be caught here in a storm with the rolling waves fetching from miles away up the vast Lough. Stephen set the boat to tack around the side of the islands, following the margins where the calm and ripple meet and where Mayfly tend to gather and trout patrol. From the first drift it was obvious the trout were up and feeding and the hatch of fly intensified as the afternoon wore on, my Mosely May accounting for five fish before teatime, great sport on the Sage 5 weight rod. Stephen had the biggest trout of over three pounds and it looked and fought suspiciously like a sea trout. After burgers and beer on one of the islands we headed back toward Beleek hoping to see some spent gnat as they were just starting and sure enough we managed another three fish in the evening bringing the total to ten trout landed, a couple kept for the table and the rest released. It was great to be out on the water again and a fantastic start to the Mayfly. I'm not used to seeing so many trout, never mind catching them on the big loughs.

My next adventure was Lough Sheelin, one of my favourite places, for fantastic craic with the fishing club, great digs at Innyside Lodge, Guinness at Watty's Rock and the lough with its stunning flora and fauna, incredible biodiversity - it's got to be the richest lough in Ireland. The Mayfly hatch can be so abundant that it makes angling a waste of time, the surface like mayfly soup and a layer of dead mayfly rotting on the shores.

We took the third weekend of May, it's always a gamble, and missed some fantastic sport on the greenfly as they appeared earlier in the week. However, the spent gnat had started and on the first night, Friday, the wind dropped and most of the guys had a fish or two on the spent, a great start and those fish



A Spent Gnat mayfly settles on the rod.

were celebrated well into the small hours in the local hostelry. The rest of the weekend was frustrating as the wind got up and prevented the millions of spent fly from going out. Our Saturday 'Mallusk Anglers' competition was won by Gerry Teggert and Stevie drifting precariously close into the Derrysheridan shore, furiously stripping wet flies with the boat shipping water from time to time! The rest of us pulled into the sheltered Rusheen Bay, lit the BBQs, opened a bottle or two of vino and just enjoyed the day and the incredible sight of clouds of Mayfly dancing along the shore. Those are days to be treasured, good food, drink, companionship, banter and great times in amazing surroundings, money can't buy the experience and perhaps it's why we've been gathering in this hallowed place for twenty-five years and more.

Trout appeared as if they had been waiting for them

On Sunday night, the wind dropped briefly and the spent gnat left the shore

to deposit their eggs out on the lough, first a trickle, then hundreds, what a sight! As soon as the fly littered the surface trout appeared as if they had been waiting for them. My boat engine wouldn't start and I was pulling away at the cord when I heard a loud suck behind the boat and as I swung around the fish took another fly with a leisurely rolling rise and I could see it was a considerable fish, maybe over eight pounds weight and it was feeding away upwind of me so I couldn't even get a cast at him.

I shouted out to Bobby who was a hundred yards behind me and pointed out the fish going toward him, then I rowed into the nearest slick and scanned for feeding fish. Sure enough, another trout was grazing up to the slick, taking the fly with an urgency not really common in spent gnat feeding. I dropped the fly ten feet in front of him and my heart missed a beat as I anticipated a take at any moment – the take didn't come as the trout turned back down the slick and away from me. He



Dollaghan ran early this year on the Six Mile Water.

went down about fifty yards and then turned and came back up. There weren't a huge number of fly on the water and if I could just get in range I knew I'd have a fair chance of rising him.

Again he continued feeding until he was within casting range and I dropped the fly in front of him, this time though he rolled over the fly and I managed to delay the strike just long enough for the trout to turn down. The firm strike drove the hook home and the trout bolted into a run which ended in a slashing jump, the five weight Sage was bent double again. My full concentration was focused in playing this trout, I'd fished for two days to hook him and I didn't want to lose him now. Tension built as the boat drifted down toward reed beds and the fish made several rushes upwind. I couldn't follow and had to play him back down to the boat, eventually getting the net under him just before the boat drifted into the reeds at Plunket's Point. A quick photo, hook removed and slipped

back into the water, a pristine wild trout, five pounds plus and as beautiful as only Sheelin trout can be. By the time the fish was released the wind got up again and the fly stopped going out, my brother Philip said it was a half hour spent fall, but we didn't complain as he had a fish of five pounds as well!

When the Mayfly passed, I returned back to the Six Mile Water, the fishing for little wild trout was excellent as the Blue Winged Olives continued to hatch in abundance, now joined by spurwings, the Little Sky Blue which is a pale watery, size 18 or smaller being taken with relish by the trout. As July passed, the sedges came into play giving a frantic hour at dark as the trout slash at the scuttling insects. This year, the Dollaghan arrived exceptionally early and in great numbers, with large fish among them. While the big fish are taken on large wet flies from the deep holding pools, I'm quite happy to catch smaller fish on dry fly and nymphs. It's not that I don't like catching the big

fish, but I like the lighter tackle and skills required with my preferred methods and it's good enough for me to know that the really big fish are there. I love the fact that, after all the work done to revive the Dollaghan population on the Six Mile Water, they are not being slaughtered as they are respected, photographed and released. This is the way to manage the fishery, and with habitat is being improved, water crowfoot is back, fly life recovering and the fish are once again abundant, not bad for a very small stream which was severely polluted ten years ago.

As the season draws to a close and the Dollaghan assemble in the pools for spawning, I can rest content that our angling heritage on this little stream is being preserved and managed well. Hopefully it will endure for future generations, our legacy in a world which seems to see the environment and everything else as disposable, but some things are worth protecting!



Just do it!

Skipper keeps an eye on the action.

I hear all the time from folk reading publications like this one ‘I’d love to try that.’ Well, why not? This magazine and others show anglers with their prize catches and hunters with their trophies.

Some readers may possibly think ‘I cannot do that, but I’d love to catch a shark. The gear must cost a fortune and I cannot afford that.’ I have to admit that I fell into this group when I first started fishing for shark in the mid seventies. But a friend invited me to join him on a charter boat off Cork and a whole new world of experiences was opened up for me. I quickly discovered that you don’t need to own the gear, as all necessary gear can be hired from the skipper for a really modest fee. If, like me, you then decide to buy your own set of gear you will have some knowledge of what you really do need to get.

Back then I bought a Penn Senator 4/0 for shark, which I still use it today. A little maintenance after each trip, as simple as a wash in fresh water and a wipe with an oily rag, means it is still like new. In fact I landed a 186 lb. Common Skate with this reel two years ago. If you are going to invest, I suggest that you ask skippers and other anglers for advice. Charter skippers have seen it all, and if you know what you hope to

fish for then a charter Skipper will put you on the right track.

But as I said you do not need the gear: some skippers will even lend beginners gear for practically nothing. More than once I have discovered that I did not have enough weights with me but skippers usually have a supply for sale or rent. If you borrow some be sure to give them back after the session, or pay up if you lose them. It is rare that specialised gear is needed in our waters. Angling for the likes of Bluefin Tuna, however, is one case in mind but that really is for the catch of a lifetime. It is great that a number of charter boats have been allowed to fish for them for scientific research, strictly catch and release, however!

Do not be afraid of trying charter boats and learning from their skippers as these people make their living from the sea and are a font of knowledge. As for price, most charge by the day, running a boat costs money and often there is a deckhand to pay as well, so it’s best if you can get a group together for a day out as this reduces the individual cost. If you are going out in a group of about five or six expect to pay in the region of €80 each. The cost per angler depends on how many go as the boat usually has a fixed charge. Other things to consider are which type of angling, for example

trolling means the engine is running all day so burning fuel and putting up the cost. Type of fish is another consideration. Skate and shark mean that you don’t want a lot of lines fishing at the same time, with the possibility of everyone catching fish at the same time. So four on a boat is probably best if all are fishing, otherwise tangles and wasted time is inevitable.

A great place for different species and fishing experiences

Ireland is really blessed with the variety of salt water angling available to us, particularly off the south and west coasts. The east coast can be a great place for species such as tope, smooth-hound and bull huss. In the past I have fished with charter boats all around our coastline and of all the boats I have fished from I can only recall one that I did not return to, simply because he tried to ‘bluff a bluffer,’ and within minutes I realised that he did not have the experience he claimed to have. The other boats have been fine. Anyway if you ask other anglers you will find plenty of excellent, very knowledgeable skippers out there. They want you to have a great time and catch fish. I won’t name any skippers but I know anglers will recognise the skippers I’m talking about.



The late Des Mills was a fine skipper.

A lot of the good skippers are booked out months, sometimes years in advance, so don't delay in getting in touch with them to ask a date. As with anything in this country you pick your date and take your chance with the weather. Skippers are sensible when it comes to safety and will keep in touch if the weather looks as if the boat can't go out. Trusting the skipper on this is the way to do it. Anyway it's not much fun rolling about at sea, when on a different day you could be fishing in comfort. Shark fishing in particular involves a fair bit of sitting and waiting. Then again, you don't have to go out for a full day in some areas, as many charter boats will cater for families who just want to go out for a few hours to catch some mackerel for tea. These mackerel trips are a great way to introduce kids to boat angling as they will catch fish, and fishing is a fantastic lifelong pastime which gets them away from computer and mobile phone screens (at least for a while).

I have fished using charter boats in Africa, Australia, Alaska and lots of other places. Rules differ, for example in Alaska you need a licence and there is a bag limit. Wherever you go on holidays, I would recommend a day out fishing. Many times I have gone out and caught nothing but there is always something new to see. Mating turtles off Africa, breaching humpback whales off Alaska (or West Cork). Enquire where you are staying if there is fishing available (sometimes it is not up to our safety standards but you can always back out if you are uncomfortable).

I had a great trip catching barracuda off the Canaries with a local fisherman and his son and when I first went to Cuba in 1985, four of us hired a luxury marlin boat for a very cheap price and I saw a Marlin jump nearby and I got to see sailfish feeding on the surface. We caught some reef fish and the crew member free-dived to the reef and caught crayfish which we then had for lunch on a tiny sand island. Next time I

visited Cuba, prices had risen steeply and I could not afford to charter a boat so I fished from the shore and caught some lovely little fish.

Recreational angling is definitely not destroying stocks

Many boats and skippers here in Ireland are well known to specialise in many types of angling. Some are particularly expert in catching blue sharks, some tope and smooth-hound, and others skate for example. I could name some of them but I know that I would leave some out. All these fish are returned alive and survive very well if handled correctly and the good skippers will ensure that they are. Unfortunately there are some anglers who just want to go out to fill their freezers and kill anything they catch. I know most charter skippers hate this but I also know that if they insist on a bag limit and let that be known, these anglers will simply go to another boat who might



not care so much about ethics. I have stood up for angling at many meetings to remind everyone that recreational angling is not destroying stocks; we all must be aware that the sight of a boatload of anglers carrying plastic bags of fish off a boat does not help the argument that angling is sustainable! One Fishery representative told me he saw this and later found a bag of ling and pollock left beside a bin in the port and this is inexcusable. If you eat fish please only take what you will use. If you sell your fish you are not a recreational angler but a commercial one. I have attended these meetings for the past 14 years and if the industry can take a swipe at recreational angling it will. I believe they see it as competition for the same fish.

As well, social media has lots of sea angling group pages and increasingly charter boat skippers have their own pages too. Contact them for advice and details of what might be available. Even if you avoid social media, in my opinion you cannot go wrong by taking a walk around a harbour, looking at the flyers offering fishing trips and by chatting directly with the skippers. Tight lines!

(Top) A sailfish is returned to the water.

(Middle) The skipper tags fish.

(Bottom) Some bream and mackerel were kept for the table.

By Peter Smith

SUPERB SKINNERS



The imposing River Usk was an outstanding backdrop to the work on the second day.

The Skinners World Cup Retriever Event was held on 11th and 12th May 2019 on the beautiful Glanusk Park Estate near Crickhowell, Powys in mid Wales. The Tests on Saturday were held amidst spectacular scenery on Llangynidr Mountain by kind permission of the Duke of Beaufort and on Sunday on the lovely Glanusk Estate, courtesy of Mr Harry Legge-Bourke. The event

was judged by Barry Taylor (England), Judy Rainey (England), Les McClean (Scotland), Thomas Hughes (Ireland) and Karin Tunander (Sweden).

There were fifteen teams with four members each, and as well as the four home countries, the event attracted entries from all major European nations, ensuring not only keen competition, but also the sense of being truly international. Nigel Probert, well

known handler, trialler and test participant of Llangynidr Kennels, organised the tests and is to be congratulated on his unstinting effort over a period of twelve months in setting up a demanding, but fair, course. He also organised a large team of helpers from local Clubs so that events proceeded like clockwork.

On the Friday preceding the Test, I had the privilege of attending the Judge's briefing, where Nigel Probert assigned the Officials to their stations and described each test in detail. The Tests for Saturday were doubles on the high ground and were long and testing, always with a shot and usually involving a distraction. Blinds of 150 – 180 yards across undulating ground were not unusual. The Tests for Sunday were usually singles, some with distractions, but all with a slight twist which had been imaginatively introduced to ensure dogs and handlers were thoroughly tested. There were no "gimmies."

Competition started on Saturday promptly at 9.30am in glorious weather on Llangynidr mountain (it would have been a forbidding place in foul weather). The whole event was done on the safari system, making maximum use of available time. Surprises abounded, with retrieves which seemed extreme on Friday, being made to look routine by a talented group of competitors. Nigel Probert had



The top dog being cast for a retrieve against some wonderful scenery on the first day. (Photo Jan Evans)



3rd placed Danish team John Juul Henriksen, Krsitian Bredahl Olsen, Mads Rinke Kristensen and Danny Frazer. (Photo Jan Evans)



Top dog DFTCh Stenhojgards Cille-Lovis with handler John Paul Henriksen. (Photo Jan Evans)



2nd placed England with David Latham, Annette Clarke, Lee Hartiss, Sarah Miles (res), and Steve Richardson. (Photo Jan Evans)



Judge Thomas Hughes and your correspondent admiring the Skinners array of trophies and awards on the steps of Glanusk House.



The Irish Team of John Barr jnr, Matty Lambden, Captain John Williamson, Declan Boyle and Tony Rodgers.



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achieved wonders in producing a course which quickly sorted the good from the mediocre. Any weakness in dog or handler was ruthlessly exposed and the day progressed without hindrance to a successful conclusion, when it was announced that Denmark, Scotland and England were competing for top honours. After a sumptuous Gala Dinner (of which more later) we retired, excitedly looking forward to the second day.

Day two was started at 8.45am in the lovely Glanusk Park, where again Nigel Probert had organised some comprehensive exercises. Singles with distractions, innovative use of the river, and singles saluted with a shot, but where trusting the dog was the only way to success, again produced a spread of marks where excellence was rewarded, so that by 1.00pm we had a set of results, without the need for any run offs.

So ended a most glorious two days of competition in an idyllic setting. The sense of camaraderie and sporting ethos that the event induced was amazing, and much of this was achieved through the relentless effort expended by the team from Skinners. Full marks to Roger Skinner and his Board of Directors for providing the investment and having the foresight to sanction this event, and to Will Delamore, Maisie Rush, and Laura Peakman for their efforts on the ground to nurture the competition to a highly successful conclusion. Few will forget these few days, including the opportunity of meeting new and old friends, from all participating countries, and of exchanging views on all aspects of gundog competition and husbandry.

I previously mentioned the Gala Dinner at the HQ Hotel, which was a masterpiece of organisation, with

National dress mixing easily with Welsh tradition to produce something very memorable. The introduction of a local Male Voice Choir as the entertainment was inspirational and there was hardly a dry eye in the house when, after several encores, we finished the evening with a rousing rendition of the Welsh National Anthem.

The prizegiving on Sunday was conducted on the lawn outside the Estate House by Harry Legge-Bourke, who complemented everyone on an outstandingly successful event. After some intense competition, the results were confirmed as follows:

1st Scotland, 2nd England, 3rd Denmark, 4th Ireland, Top Dog – John Juul, Henriksen from Denmark with DFTCh Stenhojgards Cille-Lovis

So ended a wonderful weekend of sport as it should be. It was a real privilege to be there.



Victorious Scottish Captain Roddy Forbes holds aloft the winners trophy with Team Members George Buchan, David Lisett, Lewis McNeill and Drew Allen. (photo Jan Evans)

Pointer & Setter Champion Stake 2019

Winner FTCh Koram Jemma Sparkfield quartering with tremendous pace and style.

The first Champion Stake for Pointers and Setters was held in 1869, with just six dogs hunting partridges on Sir Vincent Corbet's estate near Shrewsbury. The Judges were Viscount Combermere, Sir Vincent Corbet and Captain Denman and the winner was Mr. R. Garth's pointer dog Drake. On the one hundred and fiftieth anniversary of that first Champion Stake a field of forty-two runners met on the 29th and 30th of July at Bollihope: Sheikh Mohammed Al Maktoum's glorious moor in County Durham. Bollihope has hosted the Champion Stake in alternate years since 1973 when the decline of the grey partridge in England meant that the trial switched on to grouse and, as always, our hosts gave us a wonderful welcome including providing refreshments for everyone before and after the trial.

There were fifteen Pointers, twelve Irish setters, ten English setters and five Gordon setters. Ireland was well represented with twenty-one of the runners being Irish bred, owned or handled. Sheila Steeds was the Chief Steward and Head Keeper Peter Fawcett was Steward of the Beat with the guns being carried by David Renton and Sam Faulkner. The Judges were David Hall and Steve Lound who won last year's stake with FTCh Frosted Elfin at Fleetstalk. The trial should have been run under the three judge system but Wilson Young was indisposed so we went ahead with David and Steve only.

The previous day's trials had been cancelled because of heavy rain and the forecast wasn't great for the first day of

the Champion Stake with thick mist as we crossed the high moors on our way to Bollihope and heavy rain threatened for the afternoon. In the event, both days were dull and relatively cool after the recent heatwave with a good, steady breeze and, as always at Bollihope, an ample supply of game.

The beat that Peter Fawcett had selected for the first day was ideal for pointer and setter work, both from the point of view of the competitors and of the spectators. Mostly flat ground with well managed heather meant that the handlers and the Judges could watch every move of the dogs while staying in the middle of the beat and the gallery had a clear sight of everything that happened – good or bad.

Whether the grouse were being more cooperative is open to question

Not that there was much bad, though there was a high attrition rate among the eleven brace of dogs that the Judges saw before we broke for lunch. My (completely unofficial) book had only five dogs 'clean' out of the twenty-two we

had seen and David Hall confirmed the number (though not the actual identities of course) as we were setting out for the afternoon's sport. Whether conditions and scent had improved, or whether the grouse were being more cooperative is open to question, but of the twenty dogs that ran after lunch twelve made it through to the second day of the Champion Stake: a success rate of 60% compared with 23% before lunch.

The highlight of the afternoon was the run between Terry Harris with FTCh Koram Jemma Sparkfield the pointer he owns jointly with Maria Jacques, and Mark Adam's Irish setter FTCh Ballydavid Spitfire. Both dogs quartered their beat with – as the Kennel Club's Field Trial Regulations demand – pace and style, and treated us to a great display of running before both slammed on to point on a scattered covey. Mark had the first workout and Spitfire roded in steadily and produced the grouse on his side of the covey while Terry and 'Scarlet' watched quietly until it was her turn to put up the remaining birds. It was



Runner-up John Naylor sets off pointer FTCh Goddrib Bari of Bitternboom.







All smiles as Nicky Harris and Carol Brown approach the Judges with Gordon setter Trollsteinen's Neamour of Clitters and pointer Ardclinis Emerald of Crahan.

pretty much the perfect display of pointer and setter work, with Scarlet just having the edge for me with the pace and drive she displayed when hunting.

We had moved a lot of grouse ahead of us as we worked into the wind and some of the later runners had difficulty with scattered birds that had probably dropped in and were light on scent and liable to run. Generally though the dogs coped well, as might be expected at Champion Stake level. The first day ended with the presentation of the Ladies Trophy, in memory of Eppie Buist, Barbara Beazley and Auriel Mason, for the most stylish dog on the first day, the winner being Terry Harris and FTCh Koram Jemma Sparkfield.

The weather for the second day was much the same: overcast and warm but, thankfully, dry. We drove a little further across the hill road to the new beat: a long gentle slope leading into a dampish valley bottom with patches of rushes scattered across the heather. Again, there were plenty of birds and with just eight and a half brace to run there was plenty of time for the Judges to assess every dog. We lost the first two brace fairly quickly with a missed bird and then a flush, then Carol Calvert and her English setter Gortinreagh Gala did a classic job of popping out a scattered covey a bird at a time.

Nicky Harris and John Naylor shared a good run with Gordon setter Clitters Teca and Pointer FTCh Goddrib Bari of Bitternboom respectively, the pointer doing a superb job of producing bird by bird a covey that were tucked tightly down in a bed of rushes. Terry Harris and

Scarlet had another faultless run with some determined quartering through long heather culminating in a find on a single bird. A couple more brace ran without incident and then the Judges put their heads together while we wondered if that was the end of the action for the Champion Stake.

An extension to the second round

It wasn't. After their deliberations four dogs were called back to run in an extension to the second round. They were Terry Harris and FTCh Koram Jemma Sparkfield to run with John Naylor and FTCh Goddrib Bari of Bitternboom: then Nicky Harris and Clitters Teca to run with Gerry Devine and his English setter bitch FTCh Gortinreagh Faith. Both runs were short and, thankfully, without any major incidents because these were the four dogs in line for places. Nicky had a nice find and production and then all four were safely back on their leads and the trial was over.

We stopped for lunch and then ran another trial. The Kennel Club Derby

Stake for puppies had been cancelled because of the heavy rain on Saturday but, thanks to the generosity of Peter Fawcett Colin and Julie Organ were able to Judge the stake after all and find a winner in Mr Laurent Hild's pointer bitch Ardclinnis Judy of Morness handled by Richard MacNicol. Then it was back down to Bollihope for the results.

The winner was Terry Harris & Maria Jacques' Pointer Bitch FTCh Koram Jemma Sparkfield, handled by Terry Harris. Second place went to John Naylor's Pointer dog FTCh Goddrib Bari of Bitternboom with Nicky Harris in third spot with her Gordon setter Clitters Teca and Gerald Devine's English setter bitch FTCh Gortinreagh Faith in fourth.

Apart from the first four places there were three Diplomas of Merit for Carol Calvert with her English setter bitch Gortinreagh Gala, Bill Connolly with his Irish setter dog Sheantullagh Djouse and Mark Adams with Irish setter dog FTCh Ballydavid Spitfire. John Naylor also took the Keepers' Choice with his second placed FTCh Goddrib Bari of Bitternboom.

As ever at Bollihope we enjoyed a cracking Champion Stake with some wonderful dog work all made possible by the generosity of Sheikh Mohammed Al Maktoum and the hard work of Peter Fawcett, his keepers and their families. Without such support there would be no pointer and setter summer trials and we would lose forever the opportunity to savour the beauty of these high moorland landscapes and the sheer delight of seeing the best pointers and setters in the world doing the job that they love.



Gerry Devine and Mark Adams coming forward with English setter Gortinreagh Jack Duggan and Irish setter FTCh Hunshigo Donald.

A Golden Age

‘It was when a society became most distressed and antiquated that it would recreate an overwhelming fantasy of some Golden Age, a time when all was great and glorious, when people were more noble and causes more magnificent and honourable.’— Greg Bear, *Foundation and Chaos*. A glamorous world long gone except for remnant black and white movies, was a world inhabited by Maureen McKeever. A silent Ireland, bereft of motors and large country estates where country pursuits such as shooting, fishing and horses provided almost exclusively the entertainment. A life touched by World Wars, Hollywood and of course the changes in Ireland both physically and culturally post-Independence as well as relationships with US Presidents, Queens and European Kings. Here is Maureen’s story!

Maureen Kiernan was born on 29th March 1917, the eldest daughter of James A. Kiernan and Helen Devine. James was the county solicitor and Registrar for Leitrim in Carrick-on-

Shannon while Helen’s father was one half of Horan and Devines Solicitors in Dublin. James had purchased Derrycarne House in 1937. Derrycarne House was built in the seventeenth century and the Nisbitts’ had resided there for over two hundred years, before the historic estate was purchased by William Richard Ormsby Gore the second Baron of Harlech in 1858. He was the MP for Sligo from 1841-1852 and was High Sheriff in Leitrim in 1857 and MP for county Leitrim 1858-1876.

His estates in Sligo and Leitrim extended to 32,457 acres in the mid-nineteenth century and in Leitrim alone he owned 7,000 acres. His lands were managed by the Chief Steward Mr. Goodman. The Gores strove until the end to keep their estate until the Land Commission in 1924 divided the lands amongst the tenants and small local farmers. The house was a grand affair with famous gardens where local people fished and boated on the Shannon which flowed adjacent to Derrycarne.

The Kiernan’s had a number of notable guests including Thomas Finlay who became the Chief Justice of Ireland and his brother Bill who became the Governor of the Bank of Ireland. Thomas’ daughter Mary Finlay Geoghegan is Judge of the Irish Supreme Court. Interestingly Thomas and Bill’s father Thomas also served as Governor of the Bank of Ireland. Other well-known visitors to Derrycarne included Richard Hayward, actor and author who wrote the screenplay for *The Quiet Man*. His close friend was Maurice Walsh. Walsh’s book “*Castle Gillian*” was adapted into the classic film “*The Quiet Man*”. Due to the phenomenal success of this film, Walsh’s other book “*The Road to Nowhere*” was adapted to a film

screen play and Maureen was offered a lead role in this film. Unfortunately, due to the outbreak of World War II the film was never made.

Her father James, as typical for the time, partook in country pursuits. He was a keen shot and fisherman. Wildfowling brought him particular enjoyment and he kennelled a number of strongly built springer spaniels. Maureen, not to be outdone kept a number of Labradors. Carrick at that time was a busy stop off point for barristers on their way from Sligo to Dublin and the Bush hotel was one of the landmarks of the town.

A cornerstone of the red setter breed

Of course, travel at that time was limited to a pony and trap and the very occasional bus trip with passengers like hens and calves! In 1939 Maureen took the pony and trap to a Martin Colohan in Ballinasloe as she had seen an advert in the paper selling a red setter. She was to name this dog “*Uiscebeatha of Derrycarne*” and subsequently all of her other dogs after alcoholic beverages, and the Derrycarne kennels had begun. Not long after she acquired a female red setter from Dan McMenamin who was T.D. from Donegal for over thirty years. Dan, also a barrister, and his brother Willie, a state solicitor, had many fine red setters at this time with Dan owning FTCh Roscombe Red Grouse amongst them. However, it was Willies’ FTCh Derrycarne Red Admiral of Rye, bred by Maureen who became one of the cornerstones of the red setter breed, becoming a FTCh and possessing a fine construction. Of interest, Dan is the father of the famous Irish stage and screen actress Rosaleen Linehan.

In 1944, Maureen’s father died and her mother Helen put the estate on the market as it was too big to manage. The idyllic life in Dromod was over. The estate was purchased by an English lady



IRISH SETTERS: Miss Maureen Kiernan, of Dromod, County Leitrim, with her famous setters. Among them is “Uiscebeata of Derrycarne.” Green Stars and other awards.



James A. Kiernan, Helen (nee Devine) and daughters Maureen and Maeve in Derrycarne House.

called Lady Dorothy Mack. The same access to the estate was not to be continued and the relationship with the local people soured. Being the wife of a British army commander didn't help. One night there were shots fired at the house and this convinced the owner to put the house up for sale. She could not secure what she considered a fair price for the house and in spite she demolished the house rather than sell it at a loss. Today where the house stood is overgrown with trees planted by the land commission and the famous gardens are no more. The spectacular views of the Shannon and the vista of the countryside is obscured by an evergreen forest.

The Kiernan's, Helen and her two daughters, Maureen and her sister Maeve, moved to Ballinderry House in Mullingar. Helen died there leaving the place to Maeve who produced many top-class showjumpers for the legendary Iris Kellett such as Brown Sabre, Valetta, Foxtrot and Silvertrot. Iris broke the mould and was the first top class female show jumper. She schooled Eddie Macken and Paul Darragh. She was inducted into the Texaco Hall of Fame in 2006 and received an honorary doctorate from the University of Limerick.

Maureen and her sister did the society circuit including the RDS and at a private dinner after World War II, she

met her husband Desmond McKeever, who was a member of the Royal Irish Guards Regiment. He was part of the D-Day invasion and was unfortunate to be caught in an explosion that resulted in traumatic and life changing injuries to his face. He spent the rest of the war having reconstructive surgery in London though he remained partially deaf. Though, as recounted, the only physical difference was that his shoulders were at different levels.

In the stable overnight with 'Vaguely Noble'

Maureen moved with her new husband to Cleaboy Stud farm for the owner Major Lionel B. Holiday, a millionaire Englishman. The stud produced under the management of Desmond McKeever famous classic horses such as Vaguely Noble (winner of the 1968 Prix de l'Arc de Triomphe), the top rated horse at that time, Heathersett (English St. Ledger), Night Off (English Oaks), Neasham Belle (English Oaks), Highest Hopes (French Oaks) as well as Windmill Girl (who bred Blakeney the Morston, both English Derby winners) and No Argument (a top-rated stallion). Maureen got locked into a stable with Vaguely Noble when as a foal had pneumonia. He had gone to give the



Dogs and Their M

Miss Maureen Kiernan won two prizes with her Irish setter, Uiscebeata of Derrycarne. The show was held at Monkstown, Co. Dublin. Miss Kiernan has probably won more prizes at Irish dog - shows than any other woman

night feed and someone bolted the door not realising she was inside. Her husband being partially deaf did not discover her till morning!

The McKeever's have a great history with horses: Desmond's father John was MFH in Louth while T.R. McKeever Desmond's brother was a renowned trainer and jockey. Indeed, the winning jockey for the Irish Grand National receives the Eric McKeever perpetual trophy. He was a first cousin of Desmonds. Sir Henry Cecil, the famous English horse trainer often stayed over in Cleaboy. After the sale of Cleaboy in 1978, Desmond had been offered the position of Manager of Stackallen Stud in Navan but sadly he died of a heart attack. Desmond Kavanagh, married to Maureen's aunt Mabel Devine, left Orangefield House in Finea, Westmeath to Maureen. Orangefield was mainly used by the family as a summer residence in the summer months for fishing in Lough Sheelin and for keeping horses and red setters. Throughout all of this time, Maureen produced hundreds of top-class show Irish setters. Indeed, many went to very famous homes.

In 1966, Maureen was in the headlines when King Baudoin of the Belgians chartered his own private jet to pick up a pup "Ruddy" sending his Belgian Ambassador to Ireland to county



Hitting the headlines



King Timahoe enjoying Christmas in the White House with the Nixon family.


 April 9th 1964

Dear Mr McKeeven

Thank you so much for your letter about the name for your Volcan cat - I have discovered from Weatherly's that Alan Loch Sheelin is already taken - Apparently some more in Ireland have it. I was very disappointed,

Calan, and I hope that next year he will perhaps have a little outing -

I will let you know when the name is settled -

I am, yours very sincerely

Elizabeth R

Westmeath. When the Irish Kennel club contacted her for an Irish setter pup she had no idea it would be going to the White House to the current US President Nixon. Nixon was to call the dog "King Timahoe."

President Nixon said once before the visit of a Prince to the White House "During the Prince's visit, King Timahoe is only to be referred to as Timahoe, as it would be inappropriate for the Prince to be outranked by a dog".

She produced a number of Show Champions and travelled the country in search of Green Stars.

According to the Irish Kennel Club, she was the owner of ten Irish Show champions, though of course bred many more. These notable dogs were the aforementioned Uiscebeatha of Derrycarne, Simon of Seaforde, Aghalane Quest of Derrycarne, Derrycarne Idea, Derrycarne Alcoholic, Derrycarne Manhattan, Derrycarne Martini, Derrycarne Carlsberg, Cill Dara Velvet Mist of Derrycarne and, Derrycarne Tia Maria. Derrycarne Cremede Menthe was to be her last dog. Each year, Maureen used to attend her local establishment in Mullingar "the Granville Arms" to get the name of new

alcoholic drinks to name her latest pups.

In Orangefield, she bred some excellent race horses and sold a colt "Finea" by the famous Vulkan to the Queen Mother. A long association of correspondence began between the pair which is a fascinating antiquity now. She also shared correspondence with the ex-Taoiseach, Charles J. Haughey with their joint interest in race horses. In her later life, she took up a role as hostess at dinner parties for the former Australian Ambassador to Ireland Lloyd Thompson at the embassy in Killiney in Dublin where her friends included the President of Ireland Dr Hillary.

Her last dog died a year before her. She retired to Mullingar and died on 13th November 2006 and was removed to Vera Lynn's WWII song "We'll Meet Again". While Maureen lived a full and quite an extraordinary life, she was a resilient woman living in a time of unprecedented change. She is survived by her daughter Caroline and grandsons Desmond and Michael.

The racing connection continues today as her grandson Michael Molloy is a promising jockey and with that pedigree behind him, you would not bet against a Grand National win to continue this story!

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