

Irish COUNTRY SPORTS and COUNTRY LIFE

Including The NEW IRISH GAME ANGLER magazine



SPECIAL GAME FAIRS ISSUE

IRISH GAME & COUNTRY FAIR & FINE FOOD FESTIVAL



Exciting Jousting from the Knights of the North
BIRR CASTLE, CO OFFALY
27th & 28th AUGUST 10.00am – 6.00pm
Ireland's most action packed family event with:

- | | | |
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| • Medieval Jousting | • Carriage Driving & Bygones Area | • Huge Tented Village with unrivalled shopping opportunities |
| • Living History Village | • Dancing Horses | • The Attractions of the Birr Demesne |
| • Re-enactments | • Air Rifles & Archery | • Angling Tuition for Children |
| • International Gundogs | • Fine Food Pavilion | • IFI LICENCE holders get your SPECIAL ANGLERS DISCOUNT |
| • International Clay Shooting | • Cookery Demonstrations | |
| • International Terriers, Lurchers & Whippets | • The Dog Guru | |
| • Falcons & Ferrets | • Action Packed Main Arena Programme | |

ADMISSION: Adult €15 Family €35 Parking & Programme Free

For Further details see:

www.irishgameandcountryfair.com www.countrysportsandcountrylife.com

E: irishgamefair@btinternet.com Tel: 048 44839167/44615416

The Fair is supported by



Fáilte Ireland
National Tourism Development Authority

Country Sports and Country Life Editorial Comment



**Northern Editor,
Paul Pringle**

Biro. Coke. Hoover. And here in Ireland if you love the country lifestyle or countrysports - Shanes or Birr.

What's the connection? Simple really — each of these words is known nationally and internationally as a generic term, synonymous with a particular class-leading product.

We want a cola — we ask for a coke. Some dusting to do — get out the Hoover. Simple.

It's the same with game fairs in Ireland. If someone asks a friend: 'Are you going to Shanes?' 'Will we see you at Birr?' the chances are the other person knows exactly what is meant.

It seems that many people nowadays use 'Shanes' and 'Birr' as shorthand for the events at Shanes Castle, Antrim and Birr Castle, Birr, Co Offaly, the locations our top game fairs, superb country-based family entertainment and stunning venues.

For many, simply saying that you are going to Shanes or Birr confirms a trip to enjoy one of the Great Game Fairs of Ireland.

And with Birr coming soon, here's a little taster of fairs and countrysports to help get you in the mood for our next event.

Welcome to our 'special' Internet edition of Irish Country Sports & Country Life magazine. It's a special online version for our 80,000 readers worldwide. A little later we'll bring it right up to date in time for full-scale autumn edition which will also be available in the shops.

In spite of less than ideal weather, our Fair at Shanes Castle was a huge success. The weather forecasts which predicting poor weather of almost Biblical proportions did

not deter the public who came along in their thousands as usual.

Now it's all systems go for the Irish Game & Country Fair and Fine Food Festival at Birr, County Offaly (its full title) set in the glorious Irish midlands countryside, amongst fabled castles and steeped in history.

Have a look inside and savour the sights and sounds of Shanes. If you weren't there why not come on down to Birr on 27th and 28th August — just before the countrysports season gets into swing.

Birr Game Fair has an atmosphere and character which make it something very special. Equivalent in size to the Shanes Castle's event, it offers so much that you won't find elsewhere — plus the stunning world-renowned estate gardens are also there for you to enjoy.

For even more fun and family entertainment, why not also join us at our boutique event — the very stylish, Ballynahinch Game & Harvest Festival in Montalto Estate, Ballynahinch on 24th and 25th September. Only held once before, it really has something different for the discerning country lifestyle enthusiast.

Meanwhile, please 'like' our Facebook pages and also join thousands of friends of the Great Game Fairs of Ireland on our group page. You will get the latest information just as it becomes available, and can enter our free competitions for fabulous prizes. And we'd love to have your feedback too.

Great Game Fairs of Ireland – fabulous family events for lovers of the country lifestyle in beautiful estates and now with a huge family of Facebook and magazine friends as well.

We'd love to see you at Birr!



**ROI Editor,
Derek Fanning**



promoting Irish country sports to an international audience.

**Following the success of the IRISH GAME FAIR
at Shanes Castle see video at**

www.irishtv.ie/antrim-matters-85-2 and also Harry Cook's video
vimeo.com/176987228 the team move forward to delivering two more
spectacular celebrations of the countryside, countrysports and the rural way of life at:

The **IRISH GAME & COUNTRY FAIR**, Birr Castle, Co Offaly on the 27th & 28th August
see www.irishgameandcountryfair.com

AND

The **BALLYNAHINCH GAME & HARVEST FESTIVAL**, Montalto Estate, Ballynahinch, Co Down
on the 24th & 25th September
see www.ballynahinchharvestfestival.com

ALL IRELAND EVENTS with an INTERNATIONAL FOCUS

‘Whether the weather be good, or whether the weather be bad’ – the team from the Great Game Fairs of Ireland deliver SUPER GAME FAIRS



This year's Irish Game Fair at Shanes Castle looked set to break all records with more trade stands than ever before including two massive new marquees 50 metres x 15 metres packed with fine food; a hugely successful preview of the Battle of Antrim re-enactment staged two weeks in advance; a huge prize fund; a real international focus and the best publicity ever for any Irish countrysports event.

Then ‘lightning struck twice’ in that, amongst a huge surge of all Ireland soccer mania, both Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland qualified in the ‘Euros’ and we learned that we had to compete with the huge attractions of their qualifying matches on both days. And the weather forecast for both days didn’t look too clever either.

Saturday was a dull overcast day and in spite of the clash with the Northern Ireland v Wales match the day went fairly well to plan with record crowds, as visitors simply came and went a little earlier.

We had hoped that the Sunday forecast of heavy rain showers, thunder

and real lightning would not happen – in fact it was worse! Heavy persistent rain hit the fair in the morning and we feared for attendance especially as the ROI match was scheduled for just after lunch. However we were delighted and somewhat humbled to see the crowds who turned out in what was in effect a ‘two coat day’. Yes we had to compromise on some of the attractions – falcons don’t fly well in bad weather and our spectacular cavalry charge for our Battle of Antrim re-enactment had to be cancelled.

However most of the events went ahead as normal and our strategy of widening the aisles in order that ground

conditions would be good - worked well. As can be seen in the [irishtv.ie](http://www.irishtv.ie) video of the fair on Sunday, filmed by Chris in truly appalling conditions, people simply forgot about the weather to enjoy the Irish Game Fair of the season. See <http://www.irishtv.ie/antrim-matters-85-2> and also Harry Cook’s video <https://vimeo.com/176987228> In fact, the Welsh gundog team in the international gundog event made the best of the conditions and Wales ‘did the double’ – having beaten NI in the soccer they won the international gundog event, top dog etc. etc.

There is always a certain satisfaction



The Fine Food Pavilion.



The Craft and Fine Food Pavilion

to be derived in delivery a successful event in adversity and there are always highlights to be remembered. This year for me it was how well we had 'bought into' the NI year of Food & Drink 2016 delivering one of the largest fine food festivals in NI and presenting the food

impeccably in a brand new 50m x 15m marquee sponsored by North Down Marquees with the overflow joining with crafts in a marquee of the same size.

And how we gave our host area of Antrim big events over two weekends

including delivering not only a very successful fair, in poor weather, and a very colourful and successful re-enactment of the Battle of Antrim in the 1798 rebellion, in Castle gardens on June 4th. The latter was staged with the support of the Ulster Scots Agency.



Re-enactment in Castle Gardens in good weather!

The fair was staged with the support of

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SCENES FROM



SHANES FAIR 2016



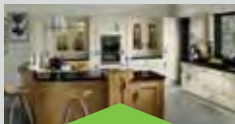
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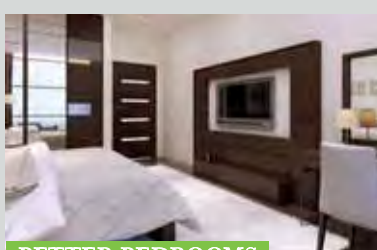


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SCENES FROM



SHANES FAIR 2016





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GRADE B



GRADE C



GRADE D



GRADE E

VIEW ONLINE

WEBSITE UPDATED DAILY
WWW.MCCLOYS.COM

The Irish Game & Country Fair at Birr Castle in 2016 promises to be bigger and better than ever



As we go to press with this Great Game Fairs of Ireland GAME FAIR SPECIAL we are delighted to report that the second of our 2016 events, the Irish Game & Country Fair at Birr Castle, Co Offaly on the 27th & 28th August is on course to be 'bigger and better than ever.'

Trade stand bookings are running at an all time high, especially those featuring country sports products; competition prize structures are well up, with a huge array of fabulous prizes; we have some very entertaining attractions booked and the social media interest is tremendous with two of our Facebook competitions for tickets reaching c120,000 contacts. Please do like our Facebook page <https://www.facebook.com/Great-Game-Fairs-of-Ireland-366710296491/> and join our Great Game Fairs of Ireland Facebook Group <https://www.facebook.com/groups/172092726163876/>. There are always competitions and great debates.

What you can SEE and DO at the Fair

ANGLING – Director Glenda Powell

The angling displays are sited in the picturesque Anglers Row and Salmon and Woodcock Pavilion overlooking the lake. There's great tackle and boat stands, a huge array of country clothing stands — many with excellent bargains.

And if you are an angler, there are special IFI discounts for permit and licence holders — collect your voucher from your local angling shop or IFI.

**ANGLING FOR ALL at the IRISH GAME & COUNTRY FAIR,
Birr Castle, Co Offaly 27th & 28th August**

The angling section features fisheries, tackle dealers, boats, and representative organisations, fly tying, casting instruction & demos, competitions and an emphasis on encouraging children. PLUS a major information stand by Inland Fisheries Ireland (IFI) and access to the attractions of Ireland's largest country sports event and the world famous gardens & attractions of Birr Castle Estate. Other attractions include medieval jousting and re-enactments plus the Fine Food Festival with a celebrity chef rooking all types of fish dishes.

For further details see: www.irishgameandcountryfair.com Tel: 048 44839167
E: irishgamefair@btinternet.com

The Angling Section is supported by Inland Fisheries Ireland and all IFI permit holders or licence holders can have a €5 voucher for admission off the cost of an adult ticket (normally €15); a family ticket (normally €35) or will cover a child's admission (normally €5). To activate this voucher simply put in your permit/licence no below and present the voucher at the gate:

MY INLAND FISHERIES IRELAND PERMIT/LICENCE NUMBER IS:

Supported by  **Faite Ireland** This offer cannot be used in association with any other offer.

**€5
OFF
voucher**

(cannot be used
with any other offer)

The Salmon and Woodcock Pavilion has a good range of stands from fisheries, to sporting, artists and taxidermists and also major information stands from FISSTA (The Federation of Salmon & Sea Trout Anglers), DAERA Fisheries Division and Inland Fisheries Ireland. Tuition in fly tying and casting is available through APGAI Ireland instructors including Arthur Greenwood and Peter O'Reilly. The Woodcock & Salmon Pavilion also features a stand from the Irish Working Terrier Federation, a display of some of the fine trophies from the ICPSA, shooting & fishing to let, fantastic sporting art from John Moore, and international class taxidermy from Ingrid Houwers.

FINE FOOD

The Fine Food Festival at Birr is a fantastic mix of artisan food and drinks from all over Ireland and the UK. Centre



stage is the Flogas Kitchen presided over by top chef Emmett McCourt, who demonstrates some fabulous rabbit, venison, game and fish dishes, and also has along signed copies of his World No 1 Travel Cookery book *Feast or Famine*. Once again, Peter Gott from Silfield Farm with his famous game and wild boar pies has the stand that most people simply can't pass without a nibble or a purchase. We will also offer great street food, with some delicacies such as crepes, hog roast and of course some good 'sit down' meals.

COUNTRYSPOrts ORGANISATIONS

We have huge commitment and support from the country's leading fieldsports bodies. Quite uniquely, the Fair is supported by all the main Hunting, Shooting, Fishing and Countryside organisations including the NARGC, FISSTA, CAI, IFA Countryside, CI, HAI, IWTF and the Deer Societies.

The main sporting organisations recognise the Irish Game & Country Fair status as the ROI's national game fair and we are delighted in facilitating them to take a strong promotional message not only to Ireland's country sports enthusiasts but also to members of the public.

We asked the three largest organisations to say what can be seen on their stands (see separate article for latest details).

COUNTRYSPOrts COMPETITIONS

International GUNDOGS sponsored by RED MILLS: Saturday: Spaniel Novice; Open and Gundog Scurry (open to all breeds); Sunday: Retriever Novice, Open and International Test.



International TERRIERS, LURCHERS AND WHIPPETS

Then there's top lurcher, terrier and whippet shows and racing, with the best ever Irish prize fund. Saturday features the FEEDWELL ROI Game Fair Racing Championships for lurchers, terriers and whippets, while Sunday features the

NUTTS ABOUT PETS ROI Terrier, Lurcher and Show Championships followed by, in the main arena, the highlights of the terrier & lurcher season — the RED MILLS FIVE NATIONS Terrier & Lurcher Championships. When you add in a ferret show and racing there is plenty to entertain anyone interested in working dogs.



Top class CLAY SHOOTING: At least three guns to be won and other top prizes to be won within a fabulous layout to appeal to both novice and experienced shot (see separate article regarding competition structure).



SUPERB SHOPPING VILLAGE: With bargains galore on everything from a great range of guns & tackle, archery equipment; cars & 4 x 4 vehicles; shooting & fishing accessories; country clothing; gardening & household equipment all with some great bargains and the IRISH STICKMAKERS CHAMPIONSHIPS.



LIVING HISTORY VILLAGE & RE-ENACTMENTS

As visitors to Ireland's Ancient East would expect, the

castle has a great history going back to the Anglo Norman period and this is reflected in our focus at the fair with our Living History Village and displays. Medieval jousting by the Knights of the North from the borders of England and Scotland provides exciting equestrian action plus great feats of swordsmanship and the use of weaponry of the period.

Then moving forward in time, Living History Ireland will bring to life through re-enactments and a large encampment, the attack on the castle by Sarsfield's forces and the county's involvement in the 1798 rebellion campaign. They may even throw in some Viking living history as well! This is not only entertaining, but also an educational experience for families to discuss life in these troubled times with the re-enactors.



SPECIAL FEATURES - ANIMALS GALORE, ACTION PACKED MAIN ARENA and lots of 'have a go' activities: including air rifle, archery, gundog scurry, pony rides; lazer clay pigeon shooting — all the family can

safely 'have a go'; a dog training demonstration and training session by Keith Mathews the BBC's Dog Guru and his son Cole – the 'Mini Guru'; Free Flying Falconry; dancing horses; medieval jousting, gundog demos, horse and hounds the Victorian Poacher, Carriage driving and much, much more.



The ATTRACTIONS of the Birr Castle Demesne



And in addition to the huge range of attractions provided by the fair there are the attractions of the Castle and Demesne including the world famous gardens, the Science Centre, the courtyard café and the Great Telescope – visitors can enjoy these attractions as part of their admission fee to the fair — the only additional small fee is to the tallest TREE HOUSE in Ireland. For more information on the Birr Castle Demesne and visiting times throughout the year see www.birrcastle.com

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YOU DON'T HAVE TO BE A GREAT SHOT OR WILLIAM TELL TO WIN GREAT SHOOTING PRIZES AT BIRR CASTLE!

Some of the biggest clay pigeon shooting prizes in Ireland will be on offer at the annual Irish Game & Country Fair over Saturday 27th and Sunday 28th August at Birr Castle, Co Offaly. And according to the organisers even novice and rough shooting shots have a chance of winning some of that prize pot, including amazing shotguns up to €3,300.

SATURDAY 27TH AUGUST

50 BIRD OPEN SPORTING CLAY CHAMPIONSHIPS.

**1st prize an ATA Shotgun
sponsored by Brian
Connaughton
from
Wild Hunter**

2nd prize €100.00

3rd prize €50.00

10 bird pool stand 33% pay out main prize €100.00

5 bird long teal 33% pay out minimum €100.00

SUNDAY 28th AUGUST

50 BIRD OPEN SPORTING GAME FAIR CHAMPIONSHIPS

**Top PRIZE is a fantastic
BLASER F16
(either Sport or Game Gun)
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by Tom & Niall Kirwan from
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2nd prize €150.00 3rd prize €75.00

10 bird pool stand 33% pay out main prize €100.00

5 bird long teal 33% pay out minimum €100.00

BOTH DAYS – Enter Saturday or Sunday 4 PERSON team event

Win your club or syndicate 100 pheasants worth €500.00
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Blaser

SPECIAL PRIZE DRAW FOR ALL SHOOTERS

Well known gun dealer Francesco Morelli, from Casale 2000 Ltd, in Cashel, Co Tipperary came up with a novel idea to make competition open to all comers. Francesco says "Quite a few of our customers said that the top prizes at clay shoots often go to the real experts but we wanted to both introduce clay pigeon shooting to a wider audience and give the ordinary shooter a chance to win a gun of a lifetime. We'll be offering anyone who has a valid Firearms Certificate an opportunity not to be missed and with a little bit of luck, a chance to win this fabulous prize!"




Francesco invites you to visit his stand for some excellent deals on Caesar Guerini And Sabbati and other shotguns, Diana Air Rifles, Bullseye mounts and other quality products such as Truglo, Muela, Mundi Pound, plus sporting clothing, archery and other shooting and fishing equipment.

Anyone who shoots 10 bird pool stand or 50 bird open over the 2 days can enter their score card into the draw to win this fabulous gun.

Draw will take place on Sunday 28th at 5.30pm.

Enquiries contact Seamus 087 2664191 or Joe 087 6604604

The Great Game Fairs of Ireland team and the Clay Pigeon Shoot organising team would like to thank the  National Association of Regional Game Councils for their continued support for the Game Fair Clay Shoot.

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MOST OF THE MAJOR SPORTING ORGANISATION WILL BE AT BIRR —
we asked three of the major membership organisations
what visitors to their stands can expect

THE NARGC SPONSORS BIRR COUNTRY FAIR MAIN ARENA IN 2016

The NARGC is delighted to have the opportunity to sponsor the Main Arena Programme at the Irish Game & Country Fair 2016 in Birr Castle on the 27th and 28th of August.



**National Association of
Regional Game Councils**

The NARGC has been a big supporter of this event in Birr for many years and has consistently increased its association with and participation in the Fair over those years. As Ireland's largest game shooting and country sports organisation, the NARGC welcomes the opportunity to meet its many members who attend the Fair over the two days and to impart specialist knowledge on varying aspects of hunting and shooting.

In addition, information on game rearing, trapping and grouse management will also loom largely. There will be a wild bird display which is always a winner, especially with the Fairs' young enthusiasts who always find pheasants, partridge and suchlike especially exciting. All organs of the NARGC will be represented at the Fair.

John Carslake will have a desk highlighting his experience in and discoveries surrounding his project on Grouse on Boleybrack Mountain, near Glenfarne in Co. Leitrim. Chris

Gavican will have a desk and will be of assistance to anyone seeking information on the NARGC's Compensation Fund, Personal Accident Scheme and related. This surely affords those attending a great opportunity to talk to Chris about the Fund's Dog Scheme and other Schemes as may interest those present. Ger Burns and his team will have a desk on Game Development and, in addition, will be able to assist on matters concerning the Club of the Year competition, held annually. Seamus Heraty will have a desk giving advice on all matters concerning pest control, trapping and matters related.

John Flannery will be present with his colleagues to deal with matters concerning the safe use of firearms, firearms legislation and related. Ray Devine will be present to let you know the latest on his surveys and research concerning woodcock and of course the ever popular, Emmett McCourt, will also be in the NARGC Marquee to

demonstrate and show off his talented culinary delights. There will be many more desks and commercial stalls and displays to attract anyone's attention or to meet and hear the views of ordinary sports shooting enthusiasts, whether the interest is game birds, deer, clay or target shooting.

The views of everyone attending assist the Association in the development of the kind of representation and services which members require and this has influenced in no small measure how the NARGC has so successfully operated and developed down through the years.

The NARGC today has broad shoulders of representation and focus, and covers an enormous array of fieldsports interests, quite apart from the obvious ones involving game shooting and pest control but also other aspects of target shooting and issues akin.

Quite apart from the focussed activities of the NARGC itself, there



The NARGC stand attracts huge interest from the crowds at Birr.



Celebrity Chef Emmett McCourt shares the secrets of game cookery.

will also be a number of commercial outlets in the NARGC Stand this year, as before. The finishing touches are currently being put in place for those who wish to acquire display space to exhibit and sell their wares.

We will be delighted to welcome all field-sports enthusiasts to the NARGC

Marquee located along the front of the main arena which, like in previous years, will be in excess of 35 metres long and where our NARGC personnel will provide expert advice on the benefits of the Association in their many facets.

If you come to Birr this year, be sure

to pop in to the NARGC Marquee where you will not alone receive the traditional welcome experienced in previous years, but will also meet old acquaintances, make new friendships and truly feel that you are a meaningful part of the wonderful organisation that is the NARGC.

Countryside Alliance Ireland at Birr Castle

Countryside Alliance Ireland (CAI) is once again delighted to be exhibiting at the Irish Game and Country Fair at Birr Castle on 27 and 28 August. The fair gives CAI the ideal opportunity to showcase the organisation's work while engaging with members, potential members and the public in general.

The CAI marquee will this year host the Wild Deer Association of Ireland with their collection of heads and deer stalking equipment, renowned Irish stickmaker, Tom Kavanagh, with his impressive display of hand crafted sticks, Kildare Regional Game Council and renowned taxidermist Mick Dunne.

CAI Chief Executive, Lyall Plant, comments: "The Irish Game and Country Fair at Birr Castle is the perfect forum for CAI to meet and chat with our members and supporters. With fieldsports, foods and a superb atmosphere all coming together in one of the country's most stunningly beautiful locations, the Fair offers

something for everyone who loves the countryside and rural way of life. We are delighted to have a significant presence and to play such a vital part."

The CAI team relishes the opportunity to get out and about to speak with fellow country sports enthusiasts face to face, so please do come along to the CAI marquee where a warm welcome is guaranteed!

Exclusive Offer for CAI Members – Discounted Entry to Birr Castle Game Fair

Countryside Alliance Ireland is delighted to announce that we have procured tickets on behalf of our



members to attend the Irish Game and Country Fair at Birr Castle.

We are pleased to be able to offer two adult entry tickets for the price of one; two adult tickets for €15!

Discounted tickets for Birr Castle are available to purchase now and must be ordered in advance through the CAI

offices, they cannot be purchased at the Fair.

To avail of this superb offer, please contact the office on 01 690 3610 (R of I members) or 028 9263 9911 (NI members), quoting your membership number and we can take payment by credit or debit card.

Tickets must be ordered before 4pm on Friday 19 August 2016 to ensure delivery. No exceptions.

Come and chat to the CAI at Birr - pictured here are (l/r) Lyall Plant (CAI, Chief Executive) & Barry O'Connell (CAI Board Member) who will be along with the full team to meet the public and showcase the organisation's work



Federation of Irish Salmon & Sea Trout Anglers

Conaidhm na Slat Iascairí Bradáin agus Breac Geal

VISIT US AT www.fissta.com

The Chairman of FISSTA - Ireland's Premier Angling body - Mr. Paul Lawton, is delighted to announce once again their participation in the Irish Game Fair at the very special venue of BIRR CASTLE.

Paul Lawton said: "Angling generates over €800m. and supports 10,000 rural jobs to the economy (source TDI) and Birr Game Fair has played their part in promoting this vitally important country sporting business at this time every year in our mid season.

"This annual event is the highlight of our country sports season where we meet our angling fraternity to discuss and monitor the mid season salmon and sea-trout runs and returns from the great salmon and sea-trout rivers of Ireland. It is a very special time for FISSTA to promote the salmon youth angling

programmes which are run by over 80 clubs on the island."

FISSTA National Secretary, Noel Carr said: "For the past few years we had all our members assisting in our many campaigns to conserve our wild salmon and sea-trout and in particular to stop the mega salmon farms planned by the state run BIM which, if granted a licence would wipe out our wild fisheries.

"Thanks to the support of the Great Game Fairs of Ireland and the Irish Country Sports Magazine who gave us access to this huge country sports audience attending Birr Game Fair, we

are delighted that the application was withdrawn six months after last years Birr Castle Game Fair. It is events such as these that gives our angling and country sports the focus and impetus to intensify our campaigns and to bring them to successful fruition."

Everything For Angling & Angling Enthusiasts

Anglers from all the main rivers and clubs of Ireland now gather in Birr to participate at The Irish Game Fair at Birr Castle to meet and exchange notes on developments in salmon and sea-trout angling and conservation. The fair



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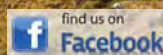
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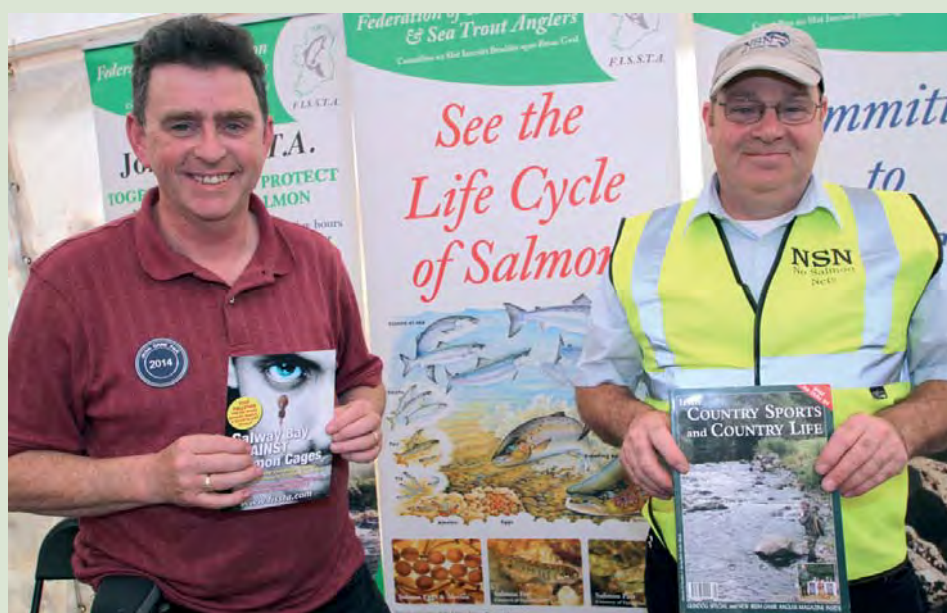


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FISSTA - making the case for for angling & conservation with their Secretary Noel Carr (l)

has built up a huge following over the past few years as a venue where clubs and businesses can promote their brand of sport angling to a fast growing market of angling enthusiasts who are planning and placing bookings for the 2017 season. This is where all issues are raised and addressed by club members who travel to what is now Ireland's premier country sports event in the countryside calendar for anglers. The Great Game Fairs of Ireland partnered with the premier magazine Irish Country Sports and Country Life which features our quarterly newsletter allows us to spread the FISSTA message of angling to a very broad country sports fraternity who support us in our everyday work. We are most grateful to Albert Titterton his excellent team at the fair and magazine for providing such professional fora and for their fulsome support and cooperation in helping FISSTA to bring salmon and sea-trout angling to a wider public.

FISSTA Stand at Birr Fair - Newcomers Fishing Advice

The FISSTA stand is hosting a one-stop advice centre where newcomers can get the following information and guidance;

WHERE TO FISH - where the nearest fishing is available — directions on how to access angling in your area eg salmon and sea-trout especially

HOW TO START - and what tackle

shop near you can supply you with the equipment needed to get started.

JOIN FISSTA CLUB LOCALLY - who can advise further — both at the show and in your local area.

WHO WILL HELP — where to get tuition — both at the show and in your local area.

WHAT YOU NEED - what equipment you will need and whose stands to visit at the show.

READ MORE ON ANGLING - what to read up on where to get the books.

LEARN TO FLY-CAST ON HOLIDAY - where to fish and stay on an Irish angling holiday river.

CATCH UP ON ALL FISSTA CAMPAIGNS TO CONSERVE AND PROTECT OUR WILD ATLANTIC SALMON

ANGLING SUPPORTS 10,000 JOBS AND GENERATES €800m.

LEARN MORE ON HOW TO PROMOTE BUSINESS ALONG YOUR LOCAL RIVER.

FISSTA will be on hand at the Birr Game Fair to inform and respond to any questions you might have regarding angling on Irish rivers and lakes.

Snippets - Latest News and Views - Much More Information at Birr

Meanwhile comes news that FISSTA's affiliated clubs have reported an encouraging improvement in the spring and grilse salmon run for this

season. There are a number of rivers that have also seen a remarkable improvement in the sea-trout numbers especially in the northern and western regions.

The River Moy numbers are once again the most prolific with anglers reporting good catches on the renowned fishery pools around Swinford, Foxford and Ballina. There are a number of closed rivers or rivers just open to catch and release that are showing good numbers of salmon returning which should assist in their reopening in the coming seasons.

Sadly, angling participation on our rivers has declined according to permit and licence sales, but this is mainly due to the lack of investment in the sport and fisheries in the past.

FISSTA have been lobbying this new government and minister to support a new plan to bring salmon and sea-trout angling and stocks back to its former glory.

Much more detailed information on all of FISSTA's work on behalf of angling interests will be given in the upcoming Autumn edition of Irish Country sports & Country Life which will be published soon.

Make sure to drop in to the FISSTA stand at the Irish Game & Country Fair at Birr Castle, Co Offaly on 27th & 28th August 2016. You will be made very welcome.

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The Great Game Fairs of Ireland DIASPORA goes Live for Birr

“If you’re Irish come to an Irish Game Fair and there’s a Great Game Fairs of Ireland welcome here for you!”

This was the message that came along with news of a new Great Game Fairs of Ireland Diaspora to cater specially for any Irish countrysports enthusiasts living abroad, or those with families living in the Game Fair host areas of County Offaly or County Antrim areas.

Great Game Fairs Director Albert Titterington explains: “We received ‘pump priming’ funds of €1,500 from the Taoiseach’s Local Engagement Diaspora fund to help create a Diaspora around our events. This will enable us to build links amongst countrysports enthusiasts of Irish extraction throughout the world. It will also help create Disaporas with Irish people living abroad who have family links with the Fairs’ host areas of Co Offaly and Co Antrim areas.

“We now invite all Irish countrysports enthusiasts and everyone in Co Offaly and Co Antrim to get involved, especially those from what were the dominant families in the area — the O’Carrolls in Offaly and the O’Neills in Co Antrim.”

Apart from the Game Fairs held in Antrim and Offaly which attract thousands of people to their annual events, Albert Titterington also produces Irish Countrysports and

Country Life magazine in both hard copy and online versions, with around 80,000 readers per issue.

Albert Titterington said: “We communicate with so many people on a national and international scale and there is an increasingly international focus on the Shanes Castle and Birr Castle Game Fairs. We also interact worldwide through Social Media and our other web-based activities. This puts us in a unique position to reach out on a global basis and create Irish forums whose common interest is countrysports.”

Albert confirmed that a great start had been made already by enlisting support from the 26,000 strong National Association of Regional Game Councils (NARGC) and the 20,000 strong Federation of Salmon and Sea Trout Anglers of Ireland (FISSTA) to help spread the news of this exciting new initiative. And he urged ex pats everywhere to access news and views from Ireland via the online version of the magazine, special feature in the magazine, and through the fair and magazine websites.

“We will feature a special Diaspora News Section in Irish Country Sports & Country Life magazine and our websites for members of the Diaspora living

outside Ireland to report on sport in their locality, share memories of home and link up with friends and family in Ireland. Countrysports enthusiasts living in Ireland can also reach out to friends and family living abroad and encourage them to get together at one of our fairs.”

Part and parcel of the Great Game Fairs Céad Mile Fáilte will be free tickets to the fairs for any friends with an address outside of Ireland. Visitors to the fair from abroad can also meet their friends and family in a special Diaspora area at the Irish Country Sports and Country Life stand in the Salmon & Woodcock Pavilions, where visitors from outside Ireland will receive a special ‘Diaspora Welcome Pack.’

Finally, Albert Titterington said that this initiative would strengthen links amongst countrysports enthusiasts and their families worldwide, and encourage many to think about their family roots in Antrim and Offaly. Many other exciting initiatives are planned which will be launched on the fairs websites and at the fairs in 2016/17 see www.irishgameandcountryfair.com and www.irishgamefair.com

For further information
E: irishgamefair@btinternet.com or
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His kindness resulted in a deluge of pledges for support for tickets at £1 each. And you too can demonstrate your support by donating to the charity through Paypal. The address to donate to on Paypal is wendyburke64@yahoo.co.uk

Our publisher Albert Titterington, who has been a keen supporter of the charity since it was founded, has agreed to draw the winning ticket on the eve of the new season - so get you tickets NOW! And Keith's generosity to the working dog world doesn't end there, in that he has donated FIVE DOG BEDS for the top working dogs at the ROI's top countrysports event, the Irish Game & Country Fair, Birr Castle, Co Offaly on the 27th & 28th August. Yes, the top terrier, lurcher, whippet, spaniel and retriever will soon all be sleeping on a KM Dog Bed.

And Keith will be having a stand at the fair so do call and see him — if you can't make Birr, Keith can be contacted on www.kmdogtrailers.co.uk

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Predicting Weather The Country Way



Weather lore traditions are often linked to farming and the sea.

*Predicting weather the country way is a fascinating subject
and while some of it might be bogus, a great deal is accurate.*

The weather is of course a very important matter for everyone, sometimes determining our mood and whether we feel upbeat or downcast, and sometimes making us change our plans for pre-arranged activities and eagerly anticipated weekends. In our contemporary high tech world it may seem that very few would still rely on old weather lore, but like superstition, it remains surprisingly common.

A marvellous little book that I read recently delves into this subject. It's written by Englishman Robin Page who lives in Cambridgeshire and is in his 70s. Robin has written about 35 books, all of them related to country subjects.

One of these books, a great volume called 'The Hunting Gene,' explores the fun and the thrill of hunting with hounds in pursuit of hares or foxes. In that book Page points out that wherever the tradition of hunting is pursued, it is generally (and paradoxically) beneficial for the quarry animals. It may seem a daft notion, but he argues the point well and certainly convinced me. He also pointed out that the level of animal roadkill on our roads far outweighs anything which the hunting and shooting fraternity would kill. He argues as well that hunting is not about the kill, but about the thrill of the chase, about the sociability of the event, and

about good exercise for our bodies.

In his little volume 'Weather Forecasting The Country Way' (which was published in 1977) Page says that many of us still observe the sky and the behaviour of animals, birds and insects for signs of what the weather will bring during the following days and weeks. He points out that for farmers the weather forecast is important for ploughing, drilling, hay-time and harvest.

There are many different ways of checking weather forecasts nowadays, including TV, radio, newspapers and the internet; and personally I find myself checking the forecasts regularly,



A sun shiny shower, won't last half an hour' is often heard around the countryside.

something which I'm sure the vast majority of people do as well. Some of us like to criticise Met Eireann, saying that its forecasts are frequently wrong, but I haven't found this to be the case and have found the forecasts to be generally good.

The weather always equals itself out

The most familiar bit of weather lore is 'Red sky at night, shepherd's delight,

Red sky in the morning, shepherd's warning'. Something similar can be found in Matthew's Gospel. In Chapter sixteen, verses two to three, it's written 'When it is evening, ye say, it will be fair weather, for the sky is red. And in the morning, it will be foul weather today, for the sky is red and lowering.'

Page says that many of the weather lore traditions are linked to farming and the sea, and there are hundreds of sayings. One of these sayings is 'The

weather always equals itself out', which certainly rings true. Another old saying which says the same thing is 'Be it dry or be it wet, The weather'll always pay its debt.'

'Rain before seven, Fine before eleven' is a reasonably good guideline, as is 'A sun shiny shower, won't last half an hour.' Mirages, or smoke rising vertically, promise a prolonged period of settled weather lasting several days, but if sound seems to be travelling



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Settled now - but will it 'rain nae mair?'

further it could be a bad sign because 'Sound travelling far and wide, A stormy day will betide.' Likewise 'Rain from the East will last three days at least' and 'If the rain comes down slanting, it will be everlasting.' Not so reliable is the rule 'Wet Friday - wet Sunday.'

A weather indicator such as the scarlet pimpernel

Page tells us that the wind which countrymen dislike the most is the winter east wind, which originates from the frozen centre of Europe: 'When the wind is in the East, tis neither good for man or beast.' During fine weather seaweed shrivels and feels dry to the touch, but when rain threatens it expands and feels damp. Cones also give simple guidance, because they open for good weather and close for bad. The scarlet pimpernel is a good indicator and is known as the poor man's weather glass. When good weather is in the offing, the plant's small red flowers open, but when rain threatens the flowers close. Other flowers share this quality: 'When the dandelions and daisies close, it is dark.'

If you are a vegetable gardener then

your onions could indicate what sort of winter it will be: 'If onion skins are very thin, then winter's mild when coming in, but if onion skins are thick and tough, winter comes in cold and rough.'

A well known saying is 'Ne'er cast a clout, before May is out.' Page says 'May' could mean the month or the flower of the hawthorn. Another well known prediction is, 'If the oak is out before the ash, then you'll only get a splash. But if the ash beats the oak, then you can expect a soak.'

Mice can be a good barometer too

Goats are indicators as well. If a goat grazes with its head into the wind, it is going to be a fine day, but if it grazes with its tail into the wind, then it will rain. If bats fly out after flies in the late evening then a fine day should follow. If rain is imminent, fish will swim near the water's surface causing ripples and splashes. If you are unfortunate to have mice in your house then they can be a barometer for approaching poor weather, because they become more active, moving from room to room, or from skirting board to skirting board, and squeaking.

When the day is going to be hot and dry, spiders spin long webs but, when bad weather is on the way, their webs are short or disappear completely. A well known saying is 'When swallows fly high the weather will be dry, but when swallows fly low get your rain gear in tow.' Another is, 'A ring around the sun or moon, means rain or snow coming soon.'

There are a number of important days throughout the year which are thought to influence the weather. The most famous is St Swithin's Day (15th of July): 'Oh St Swithin if thou'll be fair, For forty days shall rain nae mair, But if St Swithin's thou be wet, For forty days it raineth yet.'

Page says that by remembering the storms or heat waves of one month or one season, it is possible to guess quite accurately the weather of the next. Therefore you have 'A cold April and a full barn' and 'A wet May, Brings a good load of hay.' It's also said that 'A hot May makes a fat churchyard.' Page does note that it does seem that a warm May makes extra work for florists, undertakers and crematorium attendants. A wry note on which to finish.



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Summer On The Moors



Covey away from a pointer on point.

The problem with summer is that everything happens at the same time and now there's a new pointer puppy to add to the mix.

The pheasant poult arrive about the middle of July, pointer and setter field trials start in the middle of July and summer grouse counts start — guess when? — the middle of July. Life goes suddenly from gently working in the garden or around the shoot as and when the fancy strikes, to getting up in the early hours and driving to a distant grouse moor for counts or trials, rushing around looking after pheasants and partridges while still trying to find a few hours to keep the lawn and the vegetable patch in some sort of order.

Oh, and there's a new pointer puppy to add to the mix.

Our summer work on the hills and moors generally starts around mid-July, when the majority of grouse chicks should be sufficiently well-grown to be out of danger of being pegged by the dogs and able to get back with the parent birds after being flushed. Grouse chicks — in a normal year — hatch around the end of May and grow quickly from tiny balls of fluff into well-feathered, strong-flying young grouse.

The speed at which red grouse mature is astonishing. When a covey bursts from under the pointer's nose in July it is usually obvious which are the young birds and which are the parents. But, three weeks later the young birds from that same covey may be virtually indistinguishable from the old ones as they take flight. It is reckoned to be 'good practice' to select the old birds when shooting but it is far from easy to do so in the excitement as a covey swoops towards the butts or bursts from the heather under the pointer's nose.



Working out a point on the edge of the moor.



Handler and dog both drop as a covey takes off.

Grouse counts are important because they give the first reasonably accurate indication of the stock of birds on the moor and thus the amount of shooting that can be planned. Grouse shooting — especially driven grouse shooting — is an expensive business and Guns come from all over the world to shoot. Trips take time to arrange and last minute cancellations are potentially expensive so the sooner prospective clients can be assured that their sport is safe (or, in a bad year, advised that there will be no grouse shooting) the better for all parties.

So grouse counting is a serious business at one level but, given good dogs, decent weather and a plentiful stock of birds, it is also an absolute joy

for those of us lucky enough to be out there in the heather in the weeks prior to the Twelfth.

Unconcerned by the big red dog only inches away

It isn't all about the grouse. Where good keeping controls predators such as foxes and crows many other ground-nesting birds will thrive. Golden plover, skylarks, peewits, curlews and pipits are common on grouse moors but rare elsewhere. My Irish setter was solidly on point last summer on a little patch of rabbit-nibbled grass on the edge of the moor. When I went over to see what she had found I saw a golden plover chick, no bigger than sparrow, right under her nose and seemingly not at all concerned

by the big red dog only inches away. As I came into view it scuttled off into some rushes and Monkey looked slightly sheepish as if to say 'Well, I knew it wasn't a grouse, but I thought you might be interested...'

There are always a few late broods with young birds a few weeks behind — we call them cheepers because that's the sound they make when they flutter away. Once you realise that the birds the dog is pointing are under-age the lead goes on and the dog is led — hauled might be a better word — away. Mainly, this is to prevent the covey being scattered away from the parent birds but there is always the danger that a chick that sits too tightly may end up in the mouth of the pointer or setter. For the



Irish setter on point.

dog though, trained to work out the point until all the birds are flushed, being taken away when it knows there are still grouse in the heather is alien to everything it understands.

Sometimes one of the adults will try to lead the dog away from the brood by fluttering along just in front and trailing a wing to feign an injury. Once it has got far enough away from the chicks the broken wing will miraculously recover and the grouse will curl away back to find the rest of the family who have been creeping away in the opposite direction. I sometimes wonder whether this ploy might backfire if a hunting fox, cat or badger comes to realise that when a grouse is fluttering pathetically in front of it there is probably a whole covey of instant dinners lurking in the heather close at hand.

I remember a particularly foul-smelling substance called Renardine that some keepers used to drizzle around sitting pheasants and partridges in order to deter foxes. Legend has it that, while the stuff might work for a while, eventually foxes learned that where there was Renardine there was

almost certainly a hen sitting on a nest, with fatal consequences for the hen and her clutch.

A grouse that has just dropped in may give off less scent

You can learn an awful lot from these summer counts if you are observant. For example, scent may be excellent with the dogs pointing coveys from well back and popping out the singles left behind after the bulk of the birds have lifted with easy assurance. But then, having watched where the birds pitched in and made a mental note so as to avoid double counting, you may find that your pointer or setter will run through the area without getting a trace of scent from the birds that you know are there somewhere. Presumably, a grouse that has just dropped in may give off less scent than birds that have been sitting in the heather for some time. It doesn't always work that way of course because sometimes the dogs point the dropped in birds as readily as they do a fresh covey. Perhaps that is why a lot of shot

birds are picked up the day after a shoot having been missed by the retrievers when they were freshly fallen?

The main thing I am hoping for at this time of year is some decent weather. If it is wet or windy (or both) then young grouse are best left undisturbed. The chances of birds being pegged are far greater when the young grouse are crouched in the heather, sheltering from the rain and are reluctant to fly. Even if there are no instant fatalities, it is not a good idea to scatter the coveys to get cold and wet and, if I am to be honest, these days I am not that keen on getting cold and wet on the hill myself, even in July.

But hopefully there will be enough warm, dry days for us to get all our counts done in good time, watch a few field trials and see my pheasant poults getting off to a flying start. Then it will be August, the start of grouse shooting, the pointer and setter Champion Stake and the first signs of autumn in the fields and woods as berries ripen and leaves start to turn. Meanwhile,—I am hoping for some good big coveys and plenty of them.



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Black Death

Strawbridge shot their lurchers and longdogs on sight and would have meted out the same punishment to their owners, had the hangman's noose not been the punishment for cold blooded murder.

Viewed from our own egalitarian age, it is perhaps hard to appreciate, just how a person's class once affected their standing within British society. Village life, in the years prior to the First World War, was much governed by hierarchy and the centuries old feudal system laid down by the Norman invader, was still very much in place. Of great standing within this rural scene, was of course, the Head Gamekeeper.

Subordinate only to his master, the Lord of the Manor, the Head Keeper was feared and respected by all and, in the case of the great East Anglian shooting estates, held sway over possibly the finest sporting acreages ever known.

John Strawbridge was just such a Head Keeper and a man responsible for guarding and managing one of the most famous estates in the County of Norfolk. Broad shouldered, thick set, and moustachioed, he was in his fifth

decade and had risen from lowly keeper's lad to his exalted rank, by sheer determination and an almost sociopathic persecution of poachers.

Sadly, however, this tweed clad nemesis was convinced that prevention was better than cure, thus passing sentence over anyone who had the potential to be a poacher, whether actually guilty or not!

What did it matter to him, if some vagrant or farm labourer received an unwarranted blow from a pick shaft? Just as long as they posed no threat to his pheasants or partridge, his paranoia was justified. Added to this, his master filled the post of local magistrate, so if legal remonstrance was made it would fall on the stoniest of ground.

Hard bitten, and with a temper like a firework, Strawbridge trusted no one, and considered any newcomer to his Breckland parish, a threat to the furred and feathered game under his

protection.

Strangers, clearly, were up to no good and, if not presently employed in the act of taking game, undeniably had the potential to do so. Pedlars, tramps, or even travelling farm salesmen were viewed with loathing and suspicion; but if he despised all of these itinerant characters, the Head Keeper nursed a special brand of hatred for gypsies.

'Gyps', or 'Gypos,' as Strawbridge referred in those days to the Romany people, were, in his jaundiced opinion, the scum of the earth and born thieves and poachers. Their lurchers and long dogs he shot on sight and would have meted out the same punishment to their owners, had the hangman's noose not been the punishment for cold blooded murder. It was with resulting fury then, that Strawbridge received word of three, horse drawn gypsy wagons, newly camped on common land adjoining



With a flick of the whip upon the animal's shoulder, Strawbridge set off at a smart trot to confront the interlopers.



If not after game birds, they would have come to course hares.

his estate.

According to the landlord of the local inn, the three Romany families were travelling to Brigg horse fair in Lincolnshire, having stopped in the Breckland to rest their horses, before pushing on through the fens. Whatever the story, the enraged keeper knew it to be a lie and merely a ruse to afford a poaching raid into his domain. If not after game birds, the ‘Gypos’ would certainly have come to course hares with their dogs, something which he intended to stop — with bloodshed, if necessary.

Having ordered one of his under keepers to harness his pony and gig, Strawbridge climbed aboard the well sprung vehicle and with a flick of the whip upon the animal’s shoulder, set off at a smart trot to confront the

interlopers. As the vehicle moved along the unmetalled track, a set of weighty ‘brass knuckles’ within the keeper’s pocket, bounced in time with the pony’s movements.

Leaving the shade of the tree lined roadway, the grey pony trotted on under a cloudless August sky, as in the distance, John Strawbridge first caught sight of the three gypsy wagons. A thin column of wood smoke rose unhindered before the vehicles, as to the rear, on rough grassland, a number of coloured cobs took advantage of common grazing.

Brightly painted and drawn up in a semi-circle, two of the wagons showed green canvas covered ‘bow tops’, whilst the third was of the ‘Reading’ type, painted a dark maroon colour. Figures appeared to be seated

before the fire, whilst to the rear of the vehicles children played.

The Head Keeper leaped from the gig propelled by undiluted rage

Pulling up some short distance from the encampment, the Head Keeper leaped from the gig and, propelled by undiluted rage, marched across to the resting travellers. Believing attack always to be the best form of defence, Strawbridge bellowed for the head man and demanded to know what the hell they thought they were doing camped there?

Completing this scene of confrontation were four others, as seated on painted stools of indeterminate age, and closest to the fire, were an elderly man and woman. Nearer to the wagons, and at a distance from the spitting brands lay two athletic young men of olive complexion. Both sprawled

upon the grass and appearing quite relaxed, although their dark eyes were fixed unblinkingly upon the livid keeper.

Astride the fire of willow wood, stood a steel tripod supporting a blackened chain and cooking pot, and from the ancient cauldron drifted the unmistakable aroma of stewing hare meat.

Taking the aged clay pipe from the corner of his mouth, the old man spat into the flames, and without once looking up, announced that he, in fact, was head man.

Moustache bristling with anger, the Head Keeper considered his adversary. Small, wiry, and dressed in collarless shirt, fustian waistcoat and breeches, the old man wore upon his head a shapeless felt hat, and was

shod with the customary Luton boots.

Still not having made eye contact with Strawbridge, the gypsy's concentration was absorbed by the task of making a hemp long net, the fine, age smoothed elm net needle, slipping effortlessly back and forth between the old man's fingers.

Had John Strawbridge been a powder keg, this demonstration would certainly have been the flame of ignition, for considering the act of net making a blatant intention to poach game, the keeper lunged toward the old gypsy. Amid a stream of the vilest obscenities, he damned all the old man's race as thieves and liars and demanded they leave their present campsite immediately, or face a hiding.

At this, the youths, who so far had remained prone in the shade of the wagons, leaped to their feet, and in less time than it takes to tell, were nose to nose with the irate keeper. Tall, lean, and muscular, both had the look of pugilists about them and even as Strawbridge gripped the brass knuckles within his jacket pocket, he knew that the water had suddenly grown very deep. Although strong, he was no match for two gypsy prize fighters. As if to confirm the hopelessness of his situation, three sleek lurchers, hitherto unseen, slipped out from beneath a wagon axle to bare their teeth at him; all the time emitting a low growl. Throughout all of this, the old woman had remained seated by the fire, and had uttered not a word.

As Strawbridge, momentarily bested, began to back away, the shawl clad crone rose to her feet and pointed a long and bony finger at the slowly retreating keeper. As she did so, a tame crow flew from inside the Reading wagon and, as the murderous looking bird settled upon her right shoulder, the old woman began to speak: "Keeper," she croaked in a voice riven by time, "we have done you no harm, and the hare we shall eat tonight we took from common land, and not your land. I am warning you now that if you trouble us further, I will bring all the curses of hell to earth and visit them upon your head. You, would be wise to heed my words."

Backing all the way to the gig and with the bitter and unfamiliar taste of defeat upon his tongue, John Strawbridge mounted the vehicle and whipped the pony homeward. The road to his cottage seemed longer and rougher than ever he could remember, but the journey allowed his simmering wrath to be distilled into thoughts of violent revenge.

Dust filled the air of Strawbridge's shed as, in a methodical search, its contents were turned upside down. Pole traps, gin traps, lark lures and rabbit netting, all were thrown out through the open door, as recesses untouched for years by daylight were systematically explored. Finally, triumphantly, the object of his quest was uncovered and with much grunting and groaning hauled into the sunlight.

Relic or not, the mantrap's springs were still wickedly powerful

There, lying on the grass before him, was a device so terrible, that even by the standards of his own day, it was viewed with breathless horror. The 'Iron Wolf,' or man trap, had been outlawed in England for over fifty years, but Strawbridge, steeped in hatred and consumed by his desire for revenge, fully intended to re-employ the foul thing. Relic or not, the man trap's springs were still wickedly powerful, as after setting the evil device with the utmost care, the keeper sprang the trap with the fallen limb of an ash tree. Splinters flew in all directions, as the trap's steel jaws slammed shut against the dry wood limb. Greatly satisfied, Strawbridge released the shattered length of ash and then set about sharpening each of the trap's twenty, dagger-like teeth, to a bone splintering point. He would teach that old bitch to threaten him with her mumbo jumbo.

Later that same evening and under cover of darkness, John Strawbridge transported the 'Iron Wolf' to the edge of the common land. There, in grass of about knee height, he forced its great jaws open and set it in place. Carefully concealing its location with foliage, and without the slightest feelings of guilt or reproach, the keeper then slunk away to await developments.

Days passed, and still no word of gypsy calamity reached the keeper's ears. Surprised by this, Strawbridge



'The hare we shall eat tonight we took from common land,' said the gypsy.

took to frequenting the local post office, hoping to pick up some village gossip and on several occasions, asked the landlord of the inn what he knew of the 'Gypos' camped on the common. No one, it seemed, knew anything.

Then, over a week after the setting of the man trap, news came in an unexpected form.

Attending to everyday tasks, the Head Keeper was repairing arks in the rearing field, when George, the grocer's boy passed along the adjoining lane on his bicycle.

Following a squeal of dry brake blocks, the youth stopped his bike in the lane and shouting through the hedge informed the keeper that one of the gypsies on the common, was in 'A bad way'. Strawbridge ask for details and the youth informed him that the head man's leg was 'Busted up sumfin' bad!'

Without stopping to comment, and without even grabbing his jacket from the nail on the rearing shed door, Strawbridge dashed to the stable yard and demanded his pony and gig. Rushing to obey, a nervous young

under-keeper soon had the grey pony in harness and in under five minutes, John Strawbridge was aboard and trotting with all speed toward the gypsy encampment.

Grinning as he jogged along, he dwelt with twisted glee on his victory, and how he would have the 'vermin' on the move and out of the area before sunset. The sun beamed down from a cloudless blue sky, as the pony, innocent of any involvement, carried her malevolent master to his scene of triumph.

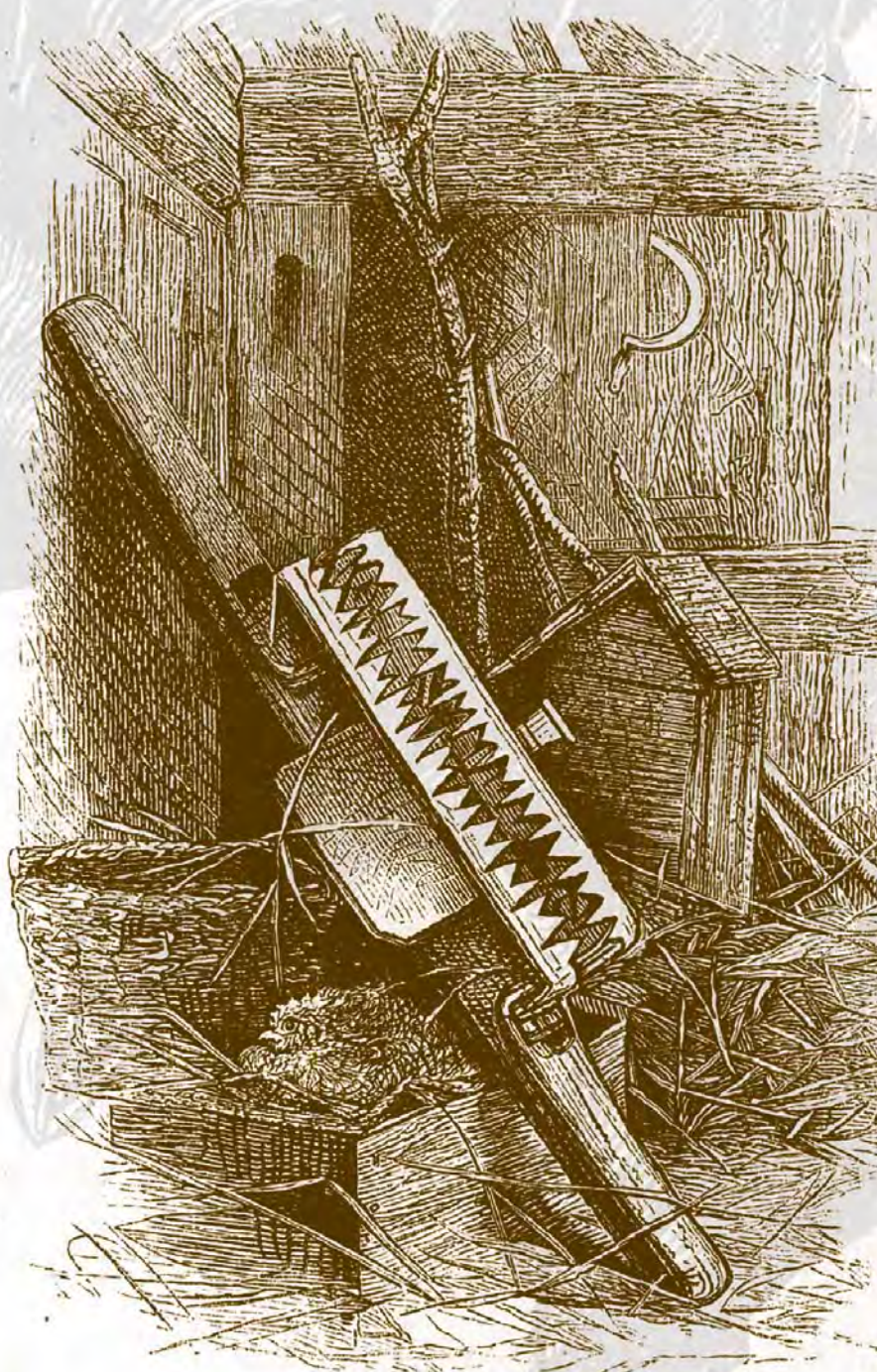
Reaching the gypsy camp, Strawbridge sprang from the gig and swaggered over to those gathered there. Several of the Romanies, including the old woman, were kneeling around a form laid out upon a blanket on the ground. It was the head man.

Ashen faced and unmoving, the old man was clearly gripped my unimaginable agony. The lower half of the blanket on which he lay was soaked with his blood, as was a shawl wrapped around his shattered right leg. Judging by the great blood loss, the wound to the leg was catastrophic and the old man close to death. Turning on Strawbridge, the old woman cried: "This is your work keeper. You have killed a good man, and for that you will pay."

Sneering, John Strawbridge looked down at the wizened crone and said the world would be a better place with one less like him in it, and that thieves and liars like them deserved no better. He wanted the lot of them off the common by sunset, or they too would suffer.

Again, the two young gypsy boxers sprang forward, bent on giving the Head Keeper the thrashing he deserved. The old woman, however, raised her hand and stopped them. As she did so, the tame crow hopped from the shaft of the reading waggon and alighted on her shoulder.

Turning, the matriarch fixed Strawbridge with a piercing glare, her dark eyes burning like coals, and



The 'Iron Wolf,' or man trap, had been outlawed in England for over fifty years.

hissed: "I warned you keeper. I warned you that hell would come down upon your head. And so it will."

The feather fell into the vehicle's interior as she recited an incantation in the Romany language

Raising her left hand to where the crow sat upon her shoulder, the old woman gently plucked a feather from its breast and then strode forward to the Head Keeper's gig. Here, as she let the feather fall like an ebony snowflake into the vehicle's interior, she recited an incantation in the Romany language that Strawbridge could not understand.

All there were hushed and looked on as the matriarch moved from the gig to the grey pony. Gently, she ran her hands over the animal, whispering to it in words of the ancient Romany tongue. At this, the crow sprang from its perch on the old woman's shoulder and, emitting a loud cawing, took to the air to quickly disappear amongst the surrounding tall trees.

Finally, the old woman turned and, pointing a bony finger Strawbridge announced: "I curse thee once. I curse thee twice. I curse thee three times Keeper."

At this, Strawbridge had had enough, and told the old woman that she could go to blazes with her spells; he wanted them off the common before dark, or they would all go the way of the head man. Barging past her, he climbed into the gig and flicked the pony into trot.

Jogging along the lane away from the encampment, Strawbridge felt smug indeed and not the least remorseful for the misery his actions had caused. He had shown those damned gypsies not to tangle with him. So much for their bloody prize fighters too; they had clearly realised he was more than a match for them; damned vermin.

Still the sun beamed from a blue sky and it was with some surprise that the keeper noticed a black cloud on

the horizon. Clearly they were in for a shower, although judging by how dark the cloud was, it was more likely to be heavy rain. Odd that, on such a clear August afternoon.

On the grey pony trotted as, in self-congratulatory mood, Strawbridge mused on how he would boast over defeating, single handed, an entire camp of gypsies. Oh, how his reputation would reach new heights, how the stories of his triumph would go about the village! He'd be a hero all right.

Jolted from his daydreaming by a large pothole in the road, the keeper glanced up, and was at once startled by the approaching storm cloud. How odd it looked, and much nearer now. And what was that sound?

With a pull on the reins he brought the pony to a halt, and stared skyward in amazement. The storm cloud was very strange indeed, for not only was it uniquely black; it was also travelling against the wind!

As Strawbridge watched transfixed, he noted that there was something oddly sinister about the cloud, and that on observation, it had at its centre, a dark, almost solid, swirling mass. Perhaps more worryingly though, the dark formation was turning through forty-five degrees and heading straight toward him.

It was hundreds of thousands of crows

That noise again. What was it? Then, in a single blood chilling moment of realisation, he knew: crows! This was no phenomenon of weather, but hundreds of thousands of crows, together, in one swirling, ferocious, airborne mass.

Turning, he whipped the pony on. It did not move. He whipped harder and shouted for the beast to 'trot on.' Still the pony did not move. The keeper's ears were now filled with raucous cawing, as suddenly all grew dark. Looking up, he saw the whole, black, savage feathered mass, descending upon him in a single,

vengeful column. Hell had indeed, been visited upon his head.

Lashing frantically with the driving whip and in blind panic, Strawbridge bellowed at the pony to move, but the animal, bewitched, remained immobile as if rooted to the spot. His screams, (for screams there were, reader) were drowned out by the roar of 100,000 wing beats as, in a diabolical feeding frenzy, living flesh was torn from bone by uncountable, stabbing black beaks. As the driving whip slipped from a bloodied hand, the struggling form of Head Keeper, John Strawbridge, descended deeper into the body of the gig, his empty eye sockets and tongueless mouth, unable to further bear witness to his own grizzly demise.

It was George, the grocer's boy, peddling along on his delivery bicycle the following morning, who discovered what remained of John Strawbridge. The grey pony, still within the shafts of the gig, grazed peacefully on the trackside herbage and all appeared serene, until that is, the delivery boy happened to glance inside the vehicle.

Once he had ceased vomiting, the ashen faced youth pedalled with all speed to the village police station, there to report having found, 'sumfin 'orrid.' The police, for their own part, were entirely baffled, for how could they possibly explain the presence of the skeletal remains of the local head gamekeeper, found in his gig, on a quiet country lane? The myriad scratch marks on his bones and skull were equally puzzling, as was the scattering of black feathers surrounding the crime scene.

The local population was questioned thoroughly and some suggested the police speak to the group of gypsies camped on the edge of the common. Of these travellers, however, there was no sign, for they were believed to have headed on across the fens, towards Brigg horse fair. They had flown, it seemed like birds in the air.

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Driven Boar Hunting in Poland

From Selena Barr

A heavy hoar frost works in a hunter's favour when stealthily waiting for wild boar to be flushed through woodland.

A crunchy layer of frozen beech leaves are impossible for trotters to traverse without giving a waiting Rifle a handy heads up. Hunting driven boar in Poland is adrenaline-charged and super thrilling. With the beaters' voices reverberating around the eerie woodland, everyone is on red alert, watching for signs of movement. With senses heightened, the challenge is to select the right animals according to the estate's management plan and kill them cleanly — ideally with just one shot.

Last year, Poland announced plans to wage war on its soaring wild boar population, after numbers of the feral animal increased by 150 per cent in just 10 years. In response, the government relaxed hunting restrictions in an attempt to take a chunk out of the boar population. The boar hunting season now runs for seven months instead of the three. It is thought that some 300,000 are now killed each year to keep the population in check.

Last December, I joined a team of 12 French hunters for a three-day trip to the remote village of Ostoja on the Poland/Czech Republic border. Organised by boar-mad outfitter Jean Philippe Bourgneuf, there was an expected bag of around 20 animals per day.

Accommodation was at the Czarny Tulipan, a traditional-style motel with spacious en-suite bedrooms situated about 45 minutes from the exclusive 15,000-hectare hunting ground. Run by father and son duo – Ryszard and Hubert – for the past 25 years, the unfenced hunting ground incorporates arable land and dense forestry where they cull 500 boar each season. English-speaking Hubert originally trained as a topnotch lawyer, but decided to divert his career to the hunting industry after he realised his unsuitability to a desk job. His team has been working with Jean Philippe for the past two years and as



Photos Tweed Media



First sighting was a dark hulking shape moving at pace.



The author with the new Sauer S404 with an Artemis stock, designed especially for women.

hunts in Eastern Europe go, this driven hunt was a very slick, professional affair.

Each day kicked off with breakfast at 6:30 so that we could make the most of the short December daylight hours. I didn't need an alarm clock however; I was already up and dressed an hour before I needed to be, buoyant with the chance to see some pigs. With the temperature well below zero I was sure to pile on the layers. It was cold but dry, so conditions were perfect. There was a real sense of anticipation.

The beaters were made up of local men along with their battle-scarred terriers. I wouldn't leave my baby daughter alone in the same room as these grizzly dogs, but they certainly knew their job in life and were insatiable for flushing wire-haired omnivores. The first drive saw the hunters surround a large area of dense cover. The trunks of the pine trees in front of me were peppered with bullet

holes, which was promising. I chambered a round into my new Sauer S404 with an Artemis stock, which has been designed especially for women.

The brush was too dense for me to see the boar

From the outset the terriers went wild, yipping ahead of the beaters in hot pursuit of game. Thankfully, all sizes, ages and sexes of boar were able to be culled. The only boar we had to avoid killing were sows with young. "Dzik! Dzik!" screamed the beaters. I understand very few words in Polish but I had made sure I knew the word for my quarry species beforehand. I could hear lots of footsteps rush past me but the brush was too dense for me to see the boar. Perhaps they would reveal themselves to my neighbour? Despite my varied and long hunting career, this was actually my first ever driven boar trip. The adrenaline was coursing through my body like I'd never experienced before.

Before arriving in Poland, I had visited Diggle Ranges near Manchester, UK for a practice shooting session on their brand new state-of-the-art running boar target. The concept of shooting a running animal is one that I found somewhat difficult to rationalise. I generally never shoot anything with a rifle unless it is static and I am steady either on sticks, bipod or from the rail of a high seat. Learning how to read a running boar and correctly place a shot requires a lot of practice. If an animal is wounded, a team of bloodhounds go out after each drive to follow up on blood trails. Even so, I was going to be certain that what I shot would be conclusive.

I was aiming for one-shot kills

My first sighting of the day was two hulking dark shapes moving at pace through the dense bramble cover. The boom of an unmoderated rifle followed



I opted for Full Boar ammunition from Hornady as they feature hard-hitting GMX bullets.



A team of bloodhounds go out after each drive to follow up on any blood trails.



Taking aim as screams of 'Dzik! Dzik!' are heard from the beaters.



Hunting horns were blown and we thanked the game.

and momentarily punctuated all other sounds. I guessed the gun 50 metres to my right had chalked up the first boar of the morning. When it came to ammunition I did not want to take any chances. Like I said, I was aiming for one-shot kills. Hunters often argue whether fast and light or slow and heavy ammunition is best. I opted for the latter as I wanted a round that was going to penetrate dense foliage. Some of the drives were in open woodland, but a few were in areas with lots of cover. After much consideration, I opted for Full Boar ammunition from Hornady as they feature hard-hitting GMX bullets for deep penetration and maximum weight retention.

My heartbeat counted the seconds as I heard another swarm of courageous little terriers in hot pursuit and coming closer. Suddenly, in my periphery, I picked up a frischling hurtling down the track behind me from the right. This was it, my turn. I had to wait until this surprisingly agile boar had created a wide enough angle away from my neighbour's peg for a safe shot. As it bolted towards me and into position, instinct took over. I picked up the line of the beast, squeezed the trigger and swung through the same as I would a pheasant. The boar's charging run was brought to an end with a dramatic cartwheel, signifying a well-placed shot in the area that mattered for a clean kill. I could see the carcass from my peg and was itching to go and inspect it, but walking off the gun line during the drive is strictly forbidden for very obvious reasons. When speed is of the essence, a Leica Magnus 1-6.3x24 scope offers an exceptionally broad field of view of 142 feet at 1x magnification making it ideal

for driven hunting when a complete overview of the terrain is needed.

After a brief lunch of barbecued boar sausages, boar stew and homemade cake, we were back outside in the cold to continue hunting. This time I was the end Rifle, so Ryszard and Hubert were both stood with me after placing everyone else out on the drive. I now felt an enormous amount of pressure to perform. So far the bag was sitting at 12 beasts, so there was an expectation that each Rifle would contribute properly. I dry mounted my rifle a couple of times and practiced my swing, then I stood as still as a statue, with only my eyes flicking from left to right repeatedly.

I mounted my rifle and fixed the red dot between its eyes

This drive was held in open woodland, with sweeping topography and plenty of backstops. I felt very comfortable shooting in this situation. "Dzik! Dzik!" screamed the beaters. My ears pricked up. Hubert whispered that the boar had doubled back and were now running towards me. Suddenly a boar appeared at the top of the hill in front of me. It was completely unaware that we were stood at the bottom, but it was super wary. I mounted my rifle and fixed the red dot between its eyes, following it as it ran towards me.

"Wait, wait," whispered Hubert. Once it was within 20 metres I squeezed the trigger and instantly dispatched the boar. Ryszard looked at me completely shocked and started speaking animatedly

in Polish to Hubert. Worried I had culled the incorrect animal, I asked Hubert if there was a problem. He explained that Ryszard, who is in his 60s, had never actually seen a woman kill a boar before. In fact, no woman had ever shot a boar on this hunting ground. I felt quite proud for my kind. Ryszard snapped a branch from a beech tree and dipped it in the boar's blood before ceremoniously shaking my hand over the carcass. I wore the branch in my hat all day and felt immensely satisfied with my shot — especially as I had an audience. The boar was in fact a very smart 70kg tusker, a trophy to take home.

That evening, after much slivovitz, the game was laid out in a plateau with my two boar near the front. After the hunting horns were blown and we'd thanked the game, Hubert announced the King and Queen of the hunt. Seasoned hunter Jean-Luc Mignonac was pronounced King, and to my amazement my name was called next. With a medal now adorning my neck, I felt that I had made a good account of myself on my first ever driven boar hunt.

Full package costs €3,000 per hunter, based on a private party of 12 hunters. This includes full board accommodation, three days hunting with 8-10 drives per day, hunting licence and insurance plus transfers from Berlin or Warsaw airport. Not included: drinks, flights and tips. For more information visit: www.wildboar-hunting-france.com

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HUNTING TIPS AND ETIQUETTE FOR FIRST TIMERS

- Redial your scope for each drive. For close range shooting, ensure your scope is on a higher number like 8.
- Ensure you fully understand which species, sexes, sizes and ages of animals are allowed to be shot – it will vary on every hunt.
- Never shoot lead sows with young.
- Consider bringing a shooting stick with you to sit on.
- Wear as much high viz orange as you can stomach.
- Shoot in the same way you would driven grouse – only ever out in front or behind. Once the beaters are close only shoot behind.
- Only ever shoot a 15° angle from your neighbouring hunters.
- Always ensure your rifle bolt is kept fully open between drives.
- Do not make too much noise between drives. Speak quietly so that the game is undisturbed.
- Do not drink alcohol while shooting. Large calibre rifles and slivovitz do not mix well.
- Open season for boar in Poland is end of October until end of January.
- Check with your outfitter whether the hunting ground is free range or fenced.



Announcing the author as Queen of the Hunt.

Fly Fishing For Dollaghan Trout



I must confess that I love night fishing on my own from time to time, but the mind can play tricks and sometimes things do go bump in the night. It just might be a Dollaghan!

Lough Neagh is the biggest fresh water lough or lake in the British Isles. It covers a vast 153 sq. miles or 400 sq. km. Its name comes from the Irish Loch nEathach meaning Lake of Eathach. For its size it is quite shallow around the margins, with the average depth in the main body of the lake about 9 m (30 Ft.); although at its deepest the lough is about 25 metres (80 Ft.).

Five of Northern Ireland's six counties have shores on the Lough: Antrim, Armagh, Down, Londonderry or Derry and Tyrone, with Fermanagh being the only one that does not. Towns and villages near the Lough include Antrim, Crumlin, Randalstown, Toomebridge, Ballyronan, Ballinderry, Moortown, Ardboe, Maghera, Lurgan and Magherafelt, and it is through these areas that some of Northern Ireland's best rivers for fly fishing flow. They include the Maine, Ballinderry, Crumlin, Kells, Ulster Blackwater, Upper Bann, and the river where I spent

most of my childhood and a river that I continue to fish to this day, the Six Mile Water.

I often fish for both salmon and trout, but perhaps for me one of the greatest things about this area is that it is home to variation of trout that is known locally as the Dollaghan, a fish which to many local anglers is shrouded in mystery, and to those who do not live in Northern Ireland, is relatively unknown. It's no ordinary trout, if there is such a thing, because I love all wild trout and have travelled far and wide in the pursuit of them. It is perhaps more like a sea-trout in its life cycle and can grow very big due to the rich feeding that is found in the Lough.

The name Dollaghan comes from the Irish Gaelic word *dulach*, which means swift running, and the translation of Dollaghan means 'run of fish' or 'running fish'. Interestingly it was commonly believed that the Dollaghan was a unique type of trout that consisted

of different strains or families. But recent scientific studies have shown that they are not genetically distinct from the resident populations, with only the life history being unique. They are a much sought after sporting fish, and many a night I have spent doing battle with arguably Northern Ireland's greatest game fish.

The 'big fat fellow' and a time of stillness and river sounds

Local names for these fish include Buddagh or Breddach which translate to 'big fat fellow' and the big ones look similar to the Ferox. There are smaller and younger Dollaghan known locally as Salmon Trout, their silver appearance giving them the appearance of a sea trout. Like sea trout they are very light sensitive and shy when they return to the rivers to spawn. All Dollaghan can achieve growth rates similar to Atlantic salmon while in the Lough, and on their



Black & Blue Jam Fly.

return they can weigh well into the teens of pounds, and there are stories of much bigger.

My personal best was a large cock fish of around 16 lb, but I have hooked bigger and know anglers who have been lucky enough to land some very big fish, close to 20 lb. In fact, an old friend, Bobby Bryans, once landed a fish that tipped the scales at just a shade just over twenty.

The best time to fish for them can be late in the evening and at night, which is a time I love to pursue them, because there is something almost magical about fishing at this time, a time that not only invigorates the Dollaghan, but also the bats and the otters and the owls. The stillness and sounds of the river at this time are wonderful and should be experienced by more people who enjoy not only desire great sport, but perhaps also enjoy different approach to fly fishing.

But be warned, if you decide to try for yourself make sure you minimise the potential dangers posed by the night time conditions, because believe me, you do not want to end up swimming in a river at night! For first timers, I'd recommend hiring a qualified and insured guide, yes someone like me, and I make no apology for the obvious plug. I learned from growing up on the rivers and fishing with my father, a fairly steep

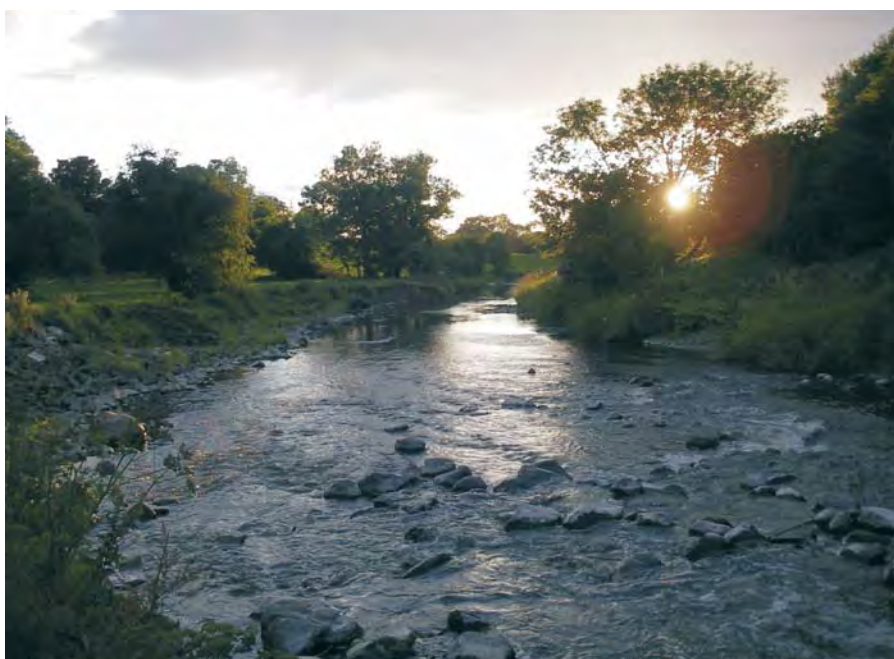
learning curve. If you are on holiday or just visiting and want to maximise your chances of hooking a Dollaghan, a guide who knows the water and the tactics required will help. And if you're not used to rivers and have never fished for migratory trout at night, a guide can help, not only the point of view of safety, but can greatly increase your chance of success. I have seen the biggest of men get quite unsettled and nervous while night fishing, because the mind can play tricks and things sometimes do go bump in the night. So if you are new to night fishing it might be nice to have company, although I

must confess that I love night fishing on my own from time to time, but I'm well used to it.

Landing a large Dollaghan sometimes needs a big slice of luck to keep it on. They seem to have a mouth that is hardened, probably due to their feeding habits, and they nearly always violently head shake while simultaneously falling backwards. If this behaviour is present, it is normally a good sign that you have just hooked something substantial, but it is also a critical time and many are lost at this stage. But in a season's fishing I normally catch quite a few fish over six pounds, big wild trout in anyone's book, and there are always some lucky anglers that will get a monster over 10lb.

Best conditions for night fishing come a day or two after a flood

Tactics for Dollaghan vary slightly from river to river, and you can have good sport during the daytime if the conditions are right, normally just before or just after a flood or fresh when the water has a hint of colour and looks like a fine dark Irish whiskey. But often the most successful time for the big fish is the evening and at night, but unfortunately if it's a moonlit night it often becomes very slow, bad for Dollaghan but often a good night for an



The witching hour approaches on the Six Mile Water.



The Fox Fly



A Dollaghan is gently returned.



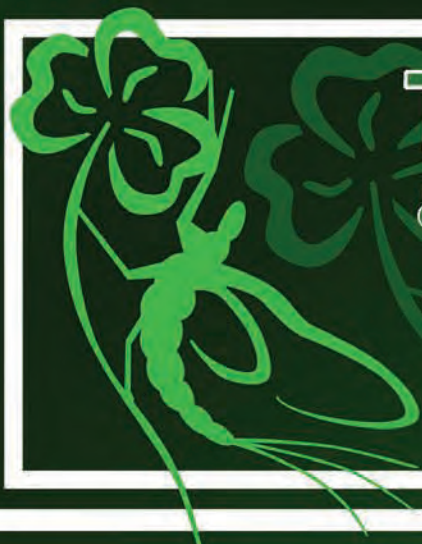
Yellow Shrimp Fly.

occasional salmon, all species can make your night worthwhile. The best conditions for night fishing normally are a heavy overcast sky a day or two after a flood, when the water is crystal clear. If you know where the fish are it can be super sport, and when the fish are on, it can be as good as any fly fishing that I have done in all of the countries that I have visited, and you can often catch some fantastic fish, but like all fishing, it also depends on your luck.

Fly tackle is very much a matter of personal preference, for me during the day ordinary river trout gear is fine, but at night I prefer to go heavier with a 9 to 10-foot rod that throws 7 to 8 weight fly lines. I would recommend a Marryat fly rod 9'6 or 10' for a 7 line, it's a perfect rod for night fishing and can handle these potential heavy weight trout.

When you make contact with a big Dollaghan, you require a rod with good backbone that can help you with hooking, especially when using sunk lines. A rod with good backbone also helps when the fish are fresh from the Lough, because large Dollaghan are powerful fish and a rod that can put pressure on them is vital, otherwise you can lose them in the rocks and snags, especially at night, as for flies, they are fairly standard patterns.

During the day, small traditional trout flies like the Back Pennell, Dunkeld and the Gold Head Hare's Ear take their share of fish, and modern tungsten bead Nymphs also work. But in the evenings I change to the night flies, which are basically traditional sea-trout and salmon flies. Hairwing or Irish shrimp flies do very well, fished on an intermediate or sinking line with a short leader. But they will also take a floating fly stripped across the surface, again, similar to sea trout. Large Muddlers or Chernobyl Ants are great at times as well. An important tip when night fishing is to remember when you change you fly is to turn your back to the water, do not shine your torch on the river as it can spook the fish and is also bad etiquette if other anglers are around.



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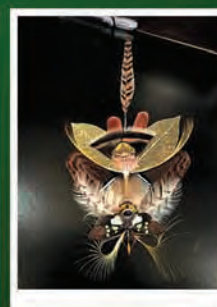
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REGAL VISE





A very fine fish captured on camera.

Do Dollaghan feed on their return to the river?

As I generally practice catch and release I do not get the opportunity to inspect the stomach contents of the fish that I catch. However, in the past there was no evidence to suggest that these trout were gorging themselves. Perhaps, like sea trout they take an occasional invertebrate, but I would suggest that in general do not feed when returning to spawn and take the fly, much like salmon, out of curiosity, playfulness and aggression.

Dollaghan like salmon, occupy certain lies and you will find them throughout the river system and, like most large trout, they like a bit of cover — overhanging trees, undercut

banks and so on. They will also lie around rocks and in deep runs and pools.

Dollaghan fishing has become much more popular with local anglers and I think the attraction of these wonderful, unique brown trout is their size and that they are truly wild. While fishing during dusk and into the darkness, it's the excitement of not knowing if it's going to be a 1 lb or 10 lb fish that hits you — or even a salmon. In fact, the last few months of the season when the Dollaghan fishing is at its peak, are almost like an angling night shift.

But it's not all good news, we do have some problems that need constant attention. Too many houses are being built close to rivers and pollution

incidents and illegal netting are just a few examples. But that said, we still have good fishing and Dollaghan have so far still thrived in the Lough Neagh system. If we could get the problems eradicated, we would have without a doubt, one of the world's finest brown trout fisheries. There are very few places in the world where you have the potential to catch wild brown trout over 6 lb in decent numbers every year. We need to treasure these wonderful fish, their natal rivers and their unique home, Lough Neagh.

Guided fishing can be arranged, and for more information please visit: anglingclassics@aol.com or www.anglingclassics.co.uk

Recommended flies

Black & Blue Jam (S. Munn)

Hook 8 – 12 Partridge PATRIOT DOUBLE UP-EYE
Body Gold or Silver holographic tinsel
Hackle Orange cock
Wing Blue Arctic fox with black squirrel or bucktail with a couple of strands of pearl twinkle.

The Fox Fly (R. Bryans)

Hook 8 – 12 8 – 12 Partridge PATRIOT DOUBLE UP-EYE
Body Silver or pearl flat tinsel
Rib Silver wire
Hackle Guinea Fowl
Wing Golden Pheasant red breast feather, black squirrel, Temple dog or buck tail, golden pheasant topping and a couple of strands of pearl twinkle (optional)

This Bobby Bryans pattern has been taking both Dollaghan and salmon on the Lough Neagh system for years. A great pattern.

Yellow Shrimp

Hook Partridge double 8 – 14
Tag Fine oval or flat silver tinsel
Rear Hackle Golden Pheasant rear body feather, wound
Rear Body Yellow Seal's fur
Rib Fine or medium oval tinsel
Centre hackle Yellow cock
Front body Black Seal's fur or floss
Rib Fine or medium oval silver tinsel
Front Hackle Badger cock
Head Black

A very good fly for both salmon and Dollaghan especially when used as a dropper.



THE MAYFLY MCNAB

A glorious sunset on the Lough Sheelin.

I just sat and took in the breathtaking beauty of the Lough with the blazing sunset. The panorama of the reflecting water and the mountains in the distance just topped off an amazing day's fishing.

Our fears for this year's Mayfly had been realised. Word came from 'Down South' that the Mayfly wasn't really up yet. But the digs and boats had been booked and paid for, so we'd just have to make the best of it. Another week would pass before our journey to Cavan and the iconic fly might start to put in an appearance in the meantime. As fate would have it, the festival queen had put in an appearance by the time we arrived, but as every angler knows the trout take a while to become accustomed to feeding on the big flies.

Lough Sheelin is a temperamental Lough at the best of times, there's so much food that the trout are spoilt for choice and to be successful everything must be in the anglers favour. I had missed the first couple of days of the trip and joined the party in Finea on Sunday, to be greeted to stories of fish caught and lost. Most of the action was to wet flies stripped through the waves and it was reassuring to know the boys

were having some sport.

Over the years I've had some great days fishing dry flies and to be honest I've become really complacent, content to pursue this method whatever the conditions. I spent the first couple of days drifting the Lough catching the odd trout on dry flies, but sport was patchy. We reckoned the trout were feeding on nymphs and emerging flies, rather than the emerged flies sitting high on the surface. This made sense, as the trout were still getting used feeding on Mayflies and maybe weren't familiar with the emerged duns. In the warm bright weather, the duns were emerging quickly and were only on the surface for seconds before flying off, so the trout hadn't had much opportunity to take them from. This didn't leave much chance for dry fly fishing, so I'd have to rethink my strategy as I intended to stay and fish on Tuesday when everyone else was going home.

The following morning I bumped

into another angler who reported great sport, fishing several different styles. He'd caught a trout on the Mayfly on the afternoon, Buzzer in the evening and finally, as the light failed, he managed to entice a trout of over five pounds to a big Murrough Sedge fly. We joked that his might be the equivalent to the Lough Style Macnab, being trout on three different styles of angling all on the same day and considering that the smallest trout was four pounds this added up to a grand days sport.

The original Macnab challenge has its roots in a 1925 novel by John Buchan whereby the protagonists had to bag three species — a stag, a salmon and a brace of grouse within one day between dawn and dusk and there is still a Macnab Challenge open to this day.

The idea came of a Mayfly Macnab. As I motored up the Lough that morning I was thinking what tactics would be the suitable for the conditions. I'd fished dry flies for two days, with



I lifted all six pounds of beautiful wild brown trout up for a quick photo and slipped him back.

only a couple of small trout to show for my efforts. I'd use whichever methods would catch a fish, but I'd have to adapt to the conditions. I was also aware from my aquatic invertebrate kick sampling back home of the life stages of the flies, the nymph, dun and egg laying spent, and the idea came of a Mayfly Macnab i.e. catch a fish on each stage of the Mayfly life cycle. It was just an idea but good to try it anyway.

The day turned out really bright and sunny with little breeze, tough conditions angling. I motored through Sailors Garden, across Corru Bay and on to Derrysheridan, the scenery was stunning and the Mayfly hatch had started from here to the top of the Lough. I was thinking of a good place where the trout may be ambushing emerging Mayfly nymphs as they made their way to the surface, a vulnerable time for a nymph, swimming in the open water with no cover they are easy pickings for predators.

At the edge of Derrysheridan, gulls were sweeping up and down the shoreline, a sure sign that Mayfly were hatching. I cut the engine and took the boat in quietly on the oars, not wanting to disturb any trout that may be feeding in the area. I pulled quietly up to an old metal pin close to the shore and tied up, then proceeded to set up two rods: one for the dry fly and one with the wets. The wet fly rod had a floating line and weighted Mayfly nymph on the point and a nymphy-looking hackled pattern on the dropper. The dry fly rod had a

Wulff pattern on the leader.

The pin where I had tied the boat was there to mark a dangerous rock reef lying inches below the surface. I could see treacherous rocks and huge boulders glowing golden under that brassy sun and, although close to the shore, they quickly plunged down into the depths. I just knew that trout would be patrolling the drop off at the edge of the shelf for the Mayfly nymphs rising from the deeps to hatch at the surface.

The faint breeze took me slowly along the shoreline, while I lengthened the flyline and sent the long leader out over the rock shelf and into the deeps

beyond. I gave the leaded nymph a while to sink down to the bottom and gave it several long pulls, pulling it up to the surface just as the natural nymphs were doing.

I felt confident something was going to take and sure enough three casts in, I let the nymph dive deep, two pulls, everything went tight, then the rod tip bucked and jumped as a lovely Sheelin trout fought below the boat. The pound and half trout was brought to hand and, as I slid it back into the water, the boat drifted around a little point and I saw a large swirl tight to the shore.

A short cast dropped the nymph beside the rise, let it descend then strip, strip and everything locked solid as a four pound Sheelin beauty proceeded to strip off my flyline and make for the deep water, where I fought it without disturbing the shoreline where the fish had been patrolling. It took a while to subdue the trout and after taking a few photographs, I slipped him back unharmed. I pulled up on the shore for a cup of coffee. Behind the point was a little sheltered bay and I almost dropped my cup when a huge swirl marked the presence of a large fish feeding just under the surface.



Object of the trout's desire - the egg laying Spent Gnat Mayfly.



Large trout cruised the contours of the shelf mopping up Mayfly nymphs as they rose to the surface.

My first instinct was to stalk quietly in amongst the rock

I was pleased with a four pound trout, but a little observation revealed several much larger fish which appeared to be feeding just feet from the shore. Mayfly were popping up along the shoreline and these trout were just patrolling up and down hovering them up. There was no breeze for a shoreline drift, so my first instinct was to stalk quietly in amongst the rocks and make a cast from the shore to drop a dry Mayfly into the feeding zone, rather than repeatedly casting a wet fly which would disturb the trout in the bright, clear conditions.

I watched a large trout make its way up the shoreline, sometimes taking with a quiet rise, sometimes a violent swirl and when he passed I dropped the Mayfly just where he had risen previously. That trout made its way up to the point and turned back to retrace its path. My heart was beating hard as my Polaroid glasses revealed the fish cruising right under the fly, a foot below it, and I could see every spot on the golden flank of that beautiful trout. It took no notice of my fly but was definitely feeding. This happened several times and I tried several patterns which all got the same treatment, utter disdain. Eventually I put the rod down, waded out as close as I dared and watched carefully. It turned out the trout

were taking the nymphs as they rose to the surface, not one dun was taken, the rises were actually just subsurface, many of the nymphs nailed just as they made it to the surface, easy pickings for these large trout.

So much for my dry fly attempts; the dun stage of the Macnab was going to be a tough one. I was joined by another club member who'd stayed behind and we watched the huge trout follow the contours of the shoreline feeding on the Mayfly nymphs in the calm water. Eventually a breeze came up sending a ripple across the bay and we climbed into the boats again, and I went back up to the pin leaving Willie to fish the point with one of my nymphs. Third cast in and another small fish, from the exact

spot the first fish had come from, same size too, a pound and a half, but by now a breeze had got up and I knew we would get a drift along the bay to cover the big fish.

The rod was almost wrenched from his arm as the trout grabbed his nymph

Willie and I drifted the bay side by side, the anticipation making me tingle, every sense on high alert; I knew one of us was going to hook a large trout. I put Willie on the inside to cover close to the shoreline as I'd already had three trout. As we crossed the little point into the bay there was a huge swirl as another nymph was taken just below the surface. Willie's flies sailed over and the heavy nymph plopped into the water beside the spreading ripples. As Willie stripped back the flies the rod was almost wrenched from his arm as the trout grabbed his nymph, there was a short tussle and the hook hold gave way. We didn't even have time to be disappointed as two more fish moved further along the bay, so Willie checked the hook point and we continued our drift. Half way down the bay I was pointing out the place where I had tried the dry fly from the shore to Willie and he popped the flies into the spot, only for the nymph to be seized and let go again, heartbreaking stuff!

Suddenly my line just stopped, I may have hooked the bottom but then a



A nice fish on the Spent Gnat

vibration along the line told me that this was a large fish which then suddenly woke up and bolted upwind, line stripping off the reel. The fish ran for about thirty yards then everything went solid, I knew something had snagged but I could still feel the trout trembling on the line. As I reached the spot there was a 'ping' and the big trout surged away into the depths, I could see a weed bed down below and knew the dropper fly had snagged but luckily it had broken off and I was still attached to the trout which was thumping about down in the depths below me.

After a long battle the big fish eventually came to the surface and I netted him, his beautiful golden flanks glistened in the sun and big black spots adorned his sides. I pulled the boat to the shore whilst keeping him in the net over the side of the boat and once there Willie and I weighed him and took a few pics before cradling him in the water until his strength returned and he cruised over the golden rocks into the dark depths below. What a days fishing, four trout including a four pound and trout of over six pounds, I couldn't believe it. Unfortunately the commotion had disturbed our little bay and the other trout went down, nothing appeared to be happening anywhere else so it was time to light the fire, set up the griddle and

get the steaks on, a nice brew from the Kelly Kettle finished off a great meal in the open air.

As we sat on the shoreline over tea, we were talking about my Mayfly MacNab. The trout were definitely focused on the nymphs, as soon as they hit the surface the Mayfly could hatch quickly and be away. The trout didn't have time to take the duns, whereas the nymphs were easy pickings. All this time the Mayflies were dancing above the trees which we were sitting under and I realised I might be able to get two out of three of my MacNab if the flies decided to go out and lay their eggs, a few spent fly on the water would surely bring the trout to the surface in the twilight of that calm, warm evening.

A few spent fly drifted overhead, pink light reflecting in their wings

I watched the direction of the light breeze and thought of a place where the spent fly might be coming off a shoreline, blown across the water between a couple of small islands. There were always a few trout about this place, just the spot to get a trout on the dry fly! By the time I motored up the Lough the sun was setting and everything was bathed in the pink and orange glow of a Sheelin twilight. A few

spent fly drifted overhead as I pulled up close to the island, the pink light reflecting in their wings.

I wasn't sure if the fish would be taking spent mayflies yet, the hatch hadn't long been started so they wouldn't have seen many spent gnat. I tied on a couple of spent patterns, greased them and settled into a drift, scanning the water for signs of movement.

I heard a distinct sucking noise far below the drift and soon a dimple betrayed the presence of a trout quietly sucking down the flies stranded in the surface film. The trout moved quietly along a little slick, up past the boat, too far away to cover with a cast. I pulled over beside the slick and within minutes another trout came sidling along taking the flies and this time I was able to drop my fly in its path. I had those heart stopping moments as the fish took one fly, then another as it came closer to the artificial. Then a dimple appeared where the fly was. I paused for a short moment, then struck to set the hook. A commotion as the trout bolted, stripping line off the reel. Fantastic!

At almost three pounds this trout fought hard on the little dry fly rod and I was delighted to land the fish on the spent so early in the Mayfly season. For a while I just sat and took in the

breathtaking beauty of the Lough, the blazing sunset was amazing, the panorama of the reflecting water and the mountains in the distance, this just topped off an amazing days fishing. I knew I'd have to leave, I had a Lough to cross in the dark and a long drive home in the early hours, but what a fantastic day's fishing in the bright sunshine, I could feel my face burning already. As for the Mayfly Macnab, that'll just have to wait for another time but two out of three ain't bad anyway!

As the sun set, Mayfly left the trees to lay their eggs and we scanned the water for trout feeding on Spent Gnat.



By Betty Hayes

Mayfly Madness

Traditionally and historically the highlight for every trout angler's season in Ireland the 'Mayfly time.'



Anticipation of a great day on the lake.

My abiding childhood memory is of my parents on standby, dapping rods and wooden boxes for storing live Mayfly ready, and the caravan packed just waiting for the call 'the fly is up.' Then the excitement as my mother made fresh soda bread, there were always fishermen calling to our caravan for endless cups of tea and Mom's famous currant cake generously spread with fresh country butter. There would also be a bottle of 'the hard stuff' stored away for celebration or commiseration purposes at evening time.

Dad would secure the house which might be vacant for the month of May; the West was calling. My brother and I and the dog, always a black Labrador, were also packed up, that is until eventually school got in the way. My how times have changed, but those memories have never faded and are part of me now as an adult.

Eventually I grew up, got a fly fishing husband, a caravan and children

(and dogs) of my own and yes, awaited the call of 'the fly is up.' Fast forward to this moment and I have long since paid my dues to doing it the hard way but I will always cherish that charmed upbringing and my treasured memories of Mayfly madness.

I still answer the call, when possible, of the Mayfly, but it's different now as the motorway gets me to the west of Ireland in about two hours. Caravans are a liability in this age of insecurity and other accommodation is usually available. However, the call to me no longer depends on wires strung between telegraph poles so, unless one has pre-booked lodging it could mean staying out in the sticks.

For the past three years, Michael and I have chosen Lough Corrib where the fishing has been to say the least frustrating. The climate has become most unpredictable, which has a huge impact on fly life and on the Mayfly in particular. Memories of shaking the

whitethorn bushes on an island and watching the swarms of Mayfly rise into the air, or seeing school children on the streets of Oughterard selling flies to visiting anglers may not be that many years ago, but it sometimes seems like it never really happened.

Last year, during the first week of May on Corrib, we could count the small number of flies as we used the bailer to scoop hailstones from the bottom of the boat. We didn't get many trout but of course I readily recall the 'whopper' which escaped over the rim of the net! Even wearing gloves our hands were frozen. Amazingly, as anglers and one year on, we forget the bad days and are once more gripped by Mayfly madness.

Boats were moored on the Owenriff River at the end of their garden

This spring we decided on Corrib again, staying at Camillaun Lodge in



Anne Kyne selecting best Mask Flies for Paddy.

Oughterard. The convenience of having their boats moored on the Owenriff River at the end of their garden, a large drying area (shed) plus only a five-minute walk to the pubs and outstandingly good restaurants in Oughterard is appealing. Also the proprietor, Deirdre Forde, makes scrummy muffins and her helper Kathleen knows how to cook breakfast kippers with scrambled eggs to perfection.

First day on the lake our boatman

Cyril Conlon, one of the most knowledgeable and dedicated of guides worked exceptionally hard to find feeding fish. Conditions were tough, bright sunshine and no wind; there was a lot of motoring involved as what looked like a good ripple in the distance would become mirror-like on our arrival. We saw some Mayfly hatching even an occasional spent fly, but these were ignored by the, probably replete, Corrib trout.

Although there were no natural rises

that day, Michael brought up a couple of fish and I lost one so at least we had action even if only for a few moments. A party of four anglers from the UK staying at the lodge didn't get near a fish all day. I believe they have been coming to the Lodge in the same week for something like twenty-two years. And we think we are dedicated!

Cyril ties his own top secret mayfly

Later that week, conditions improved and although Cyril was unavailable to boat for us I will credit him with my success. He ties his own top secret mayfly and, while I am privileged to have been given it (on loan), I am a member of the sealed lips circle therefore I cannot identify the material or describe the tying of Cyril Conlon's special Mayfly. He 'promised' me I would get fish the next day....and I did!

Anglers have to be eternal optimists and we were on the lake early the next morning confident of a great Mayfly hatch. Deirdre had engaged Patrick Malloy to boat for us. Another experienced gillie on the western lakes he worked hard in search of feeding trout. Our determination eventually paid off. Fishing the shallows at Inchiquin in a good wave with Cyril's special fly, well greased on the top dropper and a



This fine fat Brownie restored my confidence.



Mike preparing his special lunch in the hut on 'Saints'.

very small green Wulff on the point, I caught about four fish to one lb. and a lovely golden spotted beauty of two pounds. Cyril did promise!

Michael also had a slow start to the week, but his success with his own small cul de canard dries and his

modified Wulff patterns outweighed any disappointment at the limited

number of fish landed. Having had gold medal success several times in the art of fly tying, I believe he enjoys making flies as much as matching the hatch and casting them on the water. He caught about six or seven fish on our best day. I cannot report that the mayfly fishing on Corrib was a memorable experience but we live in the hope that next spring will revert to normal conditions with warm breezes, nice waves and mighty hatches of mayflies, olives and sedges.

I returned westward on 17th June and joined my media group for our annual outing to Lough Mask at the invitation of Tomás Burke at Tí Búrca in Clonbur. My boat partner for the weekend was my friend Diarmaid Fleming; we were well matched as neither is over ambitious regarding angling competition. Our boatman was

Noel Moran who stepped in when the intended gillie became unavailable. Noel proved to be exactly what one needs on Mask - knowledgeable, very careful yet confident and obliging. Both Diarmaid and I would recommend this guide, info@noelmoranfishing.ie. Interestingly his boat brought back memories, as it had belonged to the late Rod Tighe with whom I fished many years ago.

We had a slow start to our day as my partner was delayed somewhat but in a good cause. Journalist Diarmaid was reporting on the Mayfly in the west of Ireland for BBC World Service and was interviewing Anne Kyne, owner of the little, but stuffed full of angling supplies, shop in Clonbur village.

She was delighted to enlighten us with the latest lake news

It is not difficult to see why Anne is loved by every angler entering her premises. She is a charming lady who genuinely seems delighted to welcome fishing folk, old friends and new and to



A fellow angler.



Diarmaid's trout fell for a Gorgeous George.



The live Mayfly boxes are retired now.

enlighten us with all the latest lake news.... and gossip while 'pocket money' is exchanged for the killer flies of the day. Diarmaid's mayfly story was broadcast on Saturday on 9th July on the Kate Adie show on BBC 4 and has been tweeted around the world. The link is [@diarmaid_flemingbbc.in/29UEV4J](https://twitter.com/diarmaid_flemingbbc/status/29UEV4J). I received an excited message from our granddaughter Samantha in Grand Cayman as Diarmaid's story was being broadcast. Another example of how far we have progressed from the days of telegraph poles!

But back to the fishing: that morning, conditions were good, calm but with a nice ripple. As with Corrib there was almost no fly life of any description and we didn't see one fish rise. I persevered with a floating line and dry flies, changing from mayflies to sedges and even hoppers but the trout weren't interested. Diarmaid, using an intermediate line and fishing blind, landed two trout one a keeper, to Anne's version of the Gorgeous George.

I was glad to break for the lunch rendezvous on Saints Island, where boatman Pat O'Donnell had boiled up water for the tea in the Kelly kettle. Meanwhile, Mike Hennessey was busy cooking sausages, bacon, black pudding

etc. Nobody was in any great hurry to go fishing!

We took to the boats just in time. Quickly and without warning the weather became unpleasant and quite ugly. Thunderous clouds darkened the sky and the rain became a steady heavy downpour. The waves increased in height and strength and the water washing over the bow as we thrashed our way to shore was quite warm compared to the cold of the sharp stair-rods of rain.

I had a room at Hugh O'Donnell's Lake Shore Holiday Homes which was warm and comfortable but importantly, as I had seldom been more soaking wet after a day's fishing, there was a large laundry/drying room. Hugh also owns apartments in the village and can be contacted at Clonbur Angling Centre. As Sunday promised more of the same, and gave worse, most anglers retreated. Derek Evans ventured out with Mike and Maurice, but they experienced difficulties and did not persevere.

One of the highlights of our outing each year has to be Saturday night and the sumptuous meal provided by our hosts, the Burke family and their most attentive staff. After dinner an outstanding performance of excellent and diverse music by our very own Media Melody Makers was appreciated

by all. The Accordions of Diarmaid Fleming and Maurice Neill, the inimitable Paddy O'Flaherty making his violin run red hot, Brendan from Clonbur joining in with flute, even Larry Nixon couldn't resist keeping time with a pair of spoons.

For my birthday during the first week of July, Michael and I travelled to Galway. My present to myself was another chance to catch a good trout on Mask. Pat O'Donnell was on standby with his boat ready to go. However my treat wasn't to be: the drizzle and serious mist over a completely still lake became steady rain, making an early start out of the question. However, we launched at three o'clock but as we left Rosshill Bay conditions became very rough. The only shelter was along the shore at Saints where we managed a few drifts fishing Stimulators and Dabblers before landing on the island for tea.

Pat did his very best to put us over fish but nothing worked. He even took the boat (carefully) into The Quarries where we were all sure we would find great trout and were amazed that it didn't happen. We stayed out till ten o'clock and I realised that Mask had won, and had beaten me for another Mayfly season. Of course there is always next year...

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The Ballynahinch Game and Harvest Festival – country sports and country living celebrated in style

In 2014 when we had the opportunity to organise one of the Great Game Fairs of Ireland in the private and very beautifully renovated Montalto Estate, in Ballynahinch, Co Down, we decided that the venue lent itself to hosting a different type of countrysports and country living event – one with real style.



Quite uniquely the buildings that are part of what made Montalto the wedding venue of the year in both the UK and Ireland were made available both to house exhibits, run country fashion shows, stage a real country market of fine food and drinks and to feature baronial style medieval dining. In effect, we created the atmosphere of a large country house garden party. Those people who missed the event have heard about the great atmosphere and those who attended have been asking us when we were going to bring it back!

The answer is this year on the 24th & 25th September the

event will be staged again with all of the facets that made it such an attractive success in 2014 but also with many more attractions including, obviously subject to weather conditions, tours of the beautifully restored house and immediate gardens for a nominal £5 fee.

Once again we are offering the public a rare opportunity to visit the private Montalto Estate when the Ballynahinch Game and Harvest Festival together all the traditional aspects of country sports and country living, and beautiful homes & gardens in a unique setting.



The Carriage Rooms are central to a lot of activities.



Medieval Jousting & Revelry from the Knights of the North.

ARENA PROGRAMMES

There will be a full 2 day programme of events in two arenas – the main arena and an equestrian arena – attractions will include medieval jousting by the Knights of the North from the borders of Scotland; horse & hounds; gundog demonstrations; a canine training class by Keith Mathews the Dog Guru and Cole Mathews – the Mini Guru; fly casting; free flying falconry; sheep dog display by Shannon Conn, Countryfile's winner of One Man and his Dog; long netting by the Victorian Poacher and re-enactments and much more.



Rebels



Red Coats

GREAT SHOPPING VILLAGE of TRADE STANDS

Quite uniquely the trade exhibitors are housed both in the traditional marquee format (including the very interesting Salmon & Woodcock Pavilion) and utilising the super areas provided by the estate buildings including a huge Barbour country fashion stand by Smyths of Coleraine which is housed in the conservatory area and walled garden area of the Carriage Rooms and is one of the key brands for the Country Fashion Shows.

Other trade stands are stylishly presented in the format of the large indoor international hunting and country living

exhibitions with full shell scheme, carpeting and lighting in the large 2,000 sq metre plus hall. The range of stands here includes guns and tackle, a huge number of country clothing and fashion stands with some bargains to be had for the main shooting season; fine food and drinks and a game and fish cookery demonstration by Emmett Mc Court and other chefs in the Flogas kitchen; arts & crafts and homewares.

And once again the beautifully re-furbished stable yard will feature a fantastic range of artisan food and drink including of course Peter Gott from Silfield farm with his famous Game Pies and Andrew Boyd with his award winning Kilmegan Cider – fast becoming the country sports drink of preference.

LIVING HISTORY VILLAGE & RE-ENACTMENTS supported by the



Many readers have enjoyed 1798 Rebellion re-enactments which started off with a Battle of Ballynahinch re-enactment in Ballynahinch town followed by re-enactments in the estate, where in fact in 1798 the rebels made their last stand on Ednavaddy Hill. Since then we have carried out re-enactments of the Battle of Antrim in Antrim Castle and Shanes Castle where we also mounted a military/rebel encampment.



Grunal Moneta



John DeCourcy

Building on this expertise we will once again stage a Battle of Ballynahinch in Ballynahinch town centre and a number of re-enactments in the estate. There will also be a Living History Village and encampment in the Summer House gardens which will include both sets of combatants and families can wander through this and discuss weaponry, style of living etc with the re-enactors. In addition bringing another little bit of Down history to life Grunal Moneta, facsimile coin maker to the British Museum will be present and visitors can strike their own copy of one of the first Irish coins struck by John De Courcy and minted in Downpatrick.

And of course visitors can chat the Knights of the North

after their jousting performances and their feats of battle reflecting the Anglo Norman period in Down and Ulster.

COUNTRYSports COMPETITIONS and DISPLAYS

Clay Shooting - Director Kenny Thomas

Is in the capable hands of the local Ballydugan Club who is able to put on a spectacular layout with good prizes (at least two guns can be won – see full details on pages 16 & 18). We hope to also have laser shooting for children and non FAC holders to enjoy.

Angling –Casting and tuition from APGAI Ireland

And it is also hoped to have fishing on the lake (full details later)

Gundogs (sponsored by RED MILLS) –

Directors Joe Johnston and Ken Lindsay

Saturday sees Prelim, Novice and Open Retriever Tests organised by the Mid Ulster Gundog Association with top prizes.

Sunday sees a NORTH v SOUTH Spaniel test and a gundog scurry for any breed in aid of a Cancer Charity organised by Ken Lindsay & Willie Thompson

A NEW APPROACH to Terriers, Lurchers & Whippets – Director Tom Barry

Racing Starting : 10.00 am Sponsored By FEEDWELL
Winners : Trophies and a bag of dog food

1. Lurcher Pups
2. Whippet Race (inclusive of all)
3. Terrier Race
4. Open Lurcher Race Over 21”
5. Open Lurcher Race Under 21”

An Open Lurcher is a dog that has won more than two races

6. Traditional Lurchers which have not won a race
7. Bull Cross Lurcher Heavy
8. Bull Cross Lurcher Light
9. All Inclusive Racing Stake (winner £150 and Runner Up £50 sponsored by Maurice Mc Dowell & Albert Titterington) and (depending on entries - 32 dog stake, slipped in pairs - 6 runs to win). Same principle as the 32 Dog Coursing Stakes.

Ferret Showing and Racing organised by Darren Moore and Graham Fyffe 12.00 noon

Show Classes 1 Polecat Hob or Jill 2 Albino Hob or Jill 3 Any Other Colour Hob or Jill 4 EU Hob or Jill 5 Any Hob or Jill Kit Winners of Classes 1-5 to compete for Overall Best in Show



Ferret showing and racing is great fun.

Show Classes Start 1.00pm Sponsored by Nutts About Pets
Terriers

Winners Trophies and a bag of Dog Food - Best Terrier, Whippet and Lurcher win £50 and entry into the Champion of the Season Class.

1. Any variety terrier dog or bitch Pup
2. Jack Russell dog or bitch
3. Patterdale dog or bitch
4. Lakeland dog or bitch
5. Border dog or bitch
6. Crossbred dog or bitch
7. Plummer dog or bitch
8. AV Working dog or bitch
9. BIG MO's and ALBERT's ROGUES RACE — All Inclusive Racing Stake for dogs that have never been classified as 'elite racing dogs (winner £150 and Runner Up £50 sponsored by Maurice McDowell & Albert Titterington) and (depending on entries – up to 32 dog stake, slipped in pairs - 6 runs to win). Same principle as the 32 Dog Coursing Stakes
10. Pairs
11. Champion Class — Restricted to dogs which have won a Championship at any time.

Lurchers

1. Any variety dog or bitch pup
2. Under 23 smooth dog or bitch
3. Over 23 smooth dog or bitch
4. Under 23 rough dog or bitch
5. Over 23 rough dog or bitch
6. Collie cross
7. Heavy Bull cross
8. Light Bull cross
9. Hare
10. Fox
11. Ferreting (Pugs & Drummers) class for small lurchers
12. Veterans
13. Pairs
14. **Champion Class — Restricted to dogs which have won a Championship at any time.**

Whippets

1. Puppy dog or bitch
2. Whippet Dog

3. Whippet Bitch
4. Racing dog or bitch
5. Working dog or bitch
6. Veterans
7. Pairs
8. **Champion Class — Restricted to dogs which have won a Championship at any time.**

Dogs that have won a championship class throughout the year should only be entered in the Champion of the Season class.

FOR CHILDREN a spectacular entertaining and educational experience

Apart from the spectacular living history entertainment on display, the huge range of animals of all kinds from spiders and snakes to falcons & ferrets, children will be spoiled for choice for 'have a go' activities including fishing, air rifle shooting, laser clay pigeon shooting, simulators and archery. And for 'kids' of all ages there's a **FREE of CHARGE** vintage carousel – as many rides as you like **FREE** and the **VORTEX Tunnel** – a £3 entry pass also gives all day fun.

PUNT GUNNING – bringing more Downpatrick history to life

From just down the road in Downpatrick the Edgar family will not only put on a display of vintage weaponry but also something most shooters have never seen - a fully operational punt gun. Many people will have read of the punt gunning exploits of the famous Sir Ralph Payne-Gallwey on the

Wexford Slobs in his book 'The Fowler in Ireland' and some may know of similar exploits on Strangford Lough and the Downpatrick Marshes, but few will have seen such a punt gun in action. Now here is a unique opportunity to see punt gunning in action - for the two days of the fair you can see the punt gun being paddled down the Montalto lake and the huge gun fired.



Payne – Gallwey in action.



Liz and Mark Edgar in action.



Free Carousel Rides all weekend



FASHION & MUSIC

There are country fashion shows each day in the walled garden and all kinds of musical entertainment to suit all tastes throughout the event including Irish, Ulster Scots, Jazz, Pipe bands and even lambeg drums & fifes (as part of the battle re-enactments)

FINE FOOD - on the complete Menu!

In this NI Year of Food and Drink there are many fine food festival events being staged in Northern Ireland but few where FINE FOOD is part of the complete event,



Before this year, our Fine Food Festivals were well established and hugely popular attractions at the Irish Game & Country Fairs at both Shanes Castle and Birr Castle. This year the GREAT GAME FAIRS of IRELAND team have stepped up their commitment so

the new Ballynahinch Harvest & Country Living Festival at Montalto Estate would not be complete without a great selection of fine food to sample and buy.



Stylish food accompanied by stylish dress!

At Montalto, the Fine Food exhibitors will be located in the historic and very beautiful stable block and also in a special Fine Food area in the main exhibition hall. In keeping with the overall theme of the event, traders are being asked to come in period attire. As ladies did not work in retail until the late 1800s we think Victorian or Edwardian costume would be perfect!

While the costumes may add a little fun and theatre to the event, in the NI Year of Food & Drink it is entirely appropriate that the Fine Food and cookery should take centre stage.

Each stable in the Courtyard will also be a treasure to investigate, featuring one, two or even three exhibitors offering an eclectic selection of some of the finest food being produced here in Ireland - plus, of course, Peter Gott from Sillfield Farm in Cumbria. Peter has been attending the Great Game Fairs of Ireland for many years with his wonderful wild boar products, so if you've already eaten all your supplies from Shanes and Birr, you can stock up again at Montalto.

Two other stalwarts of the Game Fairs are James O'Doherty from Old Irish Creamery in Limerick and Victor Kitson and Linda Gourley of Springwell Sheep's Cheese. Again, both will be exhibiting at Montalto, James with his delicious plain and flavoured cheddar cheeses and Victor and Linda with their hand made sheep's milk cheeses.

You might like to try one of the craft ciders from Long Meadow or Kilmegan - perhaps with a Sillfield Farm wild boar pork pie and a chunk of Springwell Sheep's Cheese.

We're sure you will also find some interesting and flavoursome chutneys and relishes in the Fine Food Courtyard to add the finishing touch to your meal!

That's just a little 'taster' for what you can expect to find in the Fine Food Courtyard at Ballynahinch Harvest & Country Living Festival, but we can guarantee there will be many more treats in store, from traditional artisan breads and baked goods, through preserves and relishes, oils and vinegars, herbs and spices to rare breed meats and maybe even the odd olive or two!

And, of course, Game Fairs Chef Emmett McCourt will be there too in the FLOGAS demonstration kitchen. With the stag and the pig/boar being two of the themes of Ballynahinch Harvest & Country Living

Festival, expect Emmett to be cooking up some delicious venison and pork dishes to inspire your culinary experimentation at home!

CATERING WITH A DIFFERENCE: A MEDIEVAL FEAST THROUGH THE YELLOW DOOR

The Yellow Door's Simon Dougan, one of Northern Ireland's top chefs will be cooking up culinary delights with a distinctly Medieval flavour at the inaugural Ballynahinch Harvest and Country Living Festival, 24th and 25th September at the beautiful Montalto Estate.

The Yellow Door have popular delis and restaurants in Belfast, Lisburn and Portadown and it's the Yellow Door's professional outside catering team that will be managing the food offering for the entire two-day event but the undoubted highlight will be the Medieval Buffet Banquet to be held in the Carriage Rooms fine dining hall.

"I'm really excited about the concept of the Medieval Banquet and I've got great plans in store," said Simon. "The room will be set out in period style with long tables and bench seating, featuring reindeer hide covers for a bit of comfort with a difference. This will be totally open to all visitors to the festival and at a realistic price."

A keen shot himself, Simon is particularly excited about the chance to cook up game recipes with a Medieval flavour and a modern twist. "I can't reveal all just yet but expect the food to be gutsy and really flavoursome, with game dishes like pigeon pie, lots of meaty flavours and wholesome soups served in freshly baked bread bowls," he said.

"There will be a hedgerow harvest too with elderflower drinks and dishes and I'll also be putting a strong focus on desserts, like lemon posset and traditional puddings in a



All the ingredients for a medieval banquet

mouth watering display."

Adding to the Medieval theme, the Carriage Room Banquet will feature a falconer with an owl flying up the aisle, a harpist, knights in armour and servers in Medieval costume.

The Yellow Door will also be providing food on site around the Festival. Among other things, look out for a burger food station with a difference, providing food theatre with chefs demonstrating the art of burger making while you wait for your freshly made, truly delicious burger.

Find out more about Simon Dougan at www.yellowdoordeli.co.uk or visit the Yellow Door Deli on Lisburn Road, Belfast or Woodhouse Street, Portadown. Simon's book 'The Yellow Door, our stories, our recipes' is available to buy in store.

Admission prices for the Festival are: Adults £10, Family (2 Adults and up to 4 children under 15) £25, Children 5 – 15 £5 and car parking and programme FREE.

For further information see:

www.ballynahinchharvestfestival.com

Tel: 028 44839167 / 44615416

Email: irishgamefair@btinternet.com

During the time of the festival and for the week before Ballynahinch shops will have Harvest Window displays and some special offers. It is well worth a visit to Ballynahinch before or during the fair for some good shopping and when shops will also have special vouchers for discounted admission to the Festival.



Baronial Dining

The Ballynahinch Harvest Festival
is supported by



The Ballynahinch Game and Harvest Festival

- the last and most stylish game and country fair of the season

Montalto Estate, Ballynahinch, Co Down

24th & 25th September 10.00am – 5.00pm



What you can expect to see and do at the Game & Harvest Festival, Montalto Estate, Ballynahinch, Co Down, 24th & 25th September 10.00 am – 5.00pm

- An action packed Main Arena Programme featuring a rich mix of countryside and living history attractions including gundogs; horse and hounds; horse drawn vehicles; fly casting and falconry displays and demonstrations, living history re-enactments including the Battle of Ballynahinch; a Medieval jousting tournament by the Knights of the North from the Borders of Scotland; Countryfile One Man and his Dog sheepdog handler Shannon Conn; The BBC's Dog Guru Keith Mathews and the 'mini guru' Cole Mathews and much, much more.
- A full Game Fair programme of competitions including international clay shooting, gundog tests, angling, terrier, whippet and lurcher championships.
- A country focused retail exhibition village focusing on all that is finest in country sports and country living including a country fashion show; sporting art, taxidermy, stickmaking.
- A Fine Food Festival bringing together select artisan food and drink producers and suppliers from all over Ireland and the UK.
- Living history re-enactments celebrating the famous Battle of Ballynahinch, complete with a Living History Village by the Ulster Scots Agency where visitors can interact with combatants
- A Medieval theme including a Jousting Tournament, John de Courcy coins minted on site and a Medieval Buffet in the baronial themed hall complete with costumed servers, falconer and Medieval music.
- A celebration of harvest and the country way of life with music, arts and crafts displays, a horse drawn vehicle cavalcade and an exclusive country fashion show
- And of course, suitable entertainments for children, including lots of 'have a go' opportunities including fly casting & tying tuition; dog training clinic by Keith Mathews; archery; laser clay pigeon shooting; air rifle shooting and FREE Carousel rides.

A GREAT GAME FAIRS OF IRELAND EVENT



The Festival at Montalto organised by the Great Game Fairs of Ireland team combines all of the attractions of their game fairs at Shanes Castle and Birr Castle with facets of fine country living with a real celebration of the countryside in the fabulous setting of Montalto Estate.

For further details of the events see www.ballynahinchharvestfestival.com Also listen to the U105 Outside Broadcast on Friday 23th September from 9 – 12.00.

For details of how to exhibit at the event at Montalto call Country Lifestyle Exhibitions Ltd on 02844839167 or 44615416
E: irishgamefair@btinternet.com

The event is supported by:



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Northern Ireland Year of Food & Drink 2016



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