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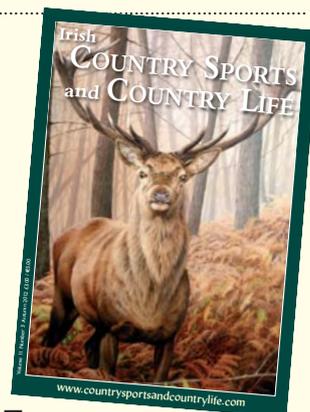
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Country Sports and Country Life

Rol Comment

Poor Returns

Another shooting season has come to a close and many shooters are concerned at the low return of pheasants whether reared or wild this year. One possible explanation is the very wet summer when hardly a fortnight went by without yet another deluge and, as you well know, pheasants can suffer badly from wettings. Duck numbers seem to have held up especially on some of the bigger lakes with some shooters bagging large numbers. Snipe and woodcock numbers varied around the country with areas in the Shannon basin being well up.

Other Problems

Low pheasant numbers are not the only concern for those of us who live, work or play in rural Ireland. With yet another raft of Garda stations being closed and the prospect of Garda patrol cars being the only presence we will see in future, many rural dwellers are anxious about their future safety.

There have been a large number of very violent burglaries and robberies in recent months and criminals appear to be able to roam at will. This retrenchment of Gardai into larger towns and cities will also affect rural shooters when renewing their firearms licences, as they will have to travel considerably longer distances to see a firearms officer. The local Garda knew his patch and those who lived in it and, as a result, I believe we had a better check system on legally held firearms. It wasn't perfect but neither is the new system which, as many shooters are facing their first renewal after three years, is proving to still have teething problems. Files have been lost and as these contain sensitive information on individual security it is a serious concern to many. In



some areas of the country the old lack of uniformity is alive and well with senior officers seeming to make up the rules as they go along and this is not acceptable to the law abiding sporting gun owner.

In recent times the NARGC have been very active in defending the rights of the shooter and, unfortunately, it looks like they will have to continue to do so for the foreseeable future. Is it not about time the authorities saw sense and, when they don't understand something, ask those who do?

New Technology

Inland Fisheries Ireland has developed a new method of helping the angler to identify

some of the alien species which are damaging our waterways. This is a new phone app which has a picture to compare to what you see on the ground and can then identify where it is so that it can be dealt with. It is important that all alien species whether flora or fauna be removed from Irish waters as they cause serious damage to native species.

You can find details on their website www.fisheriesireland.ie. While this site deals with the alien flora such as Japanese Knotweed, it is important that alien fauna are also dealt with such as zebra mussel, mink and the grey squirrel - never mind the more exotic that have been dumped from the heated aquarium when money ran short or the snapper turtle grew too big. I don't fancy the thought of landing one from one of the several rivers around Dublin where they have been reported. Stay safe out there and be careful with anything which is unfamiliar to you!

Philip Lawton
ROI Editor

Country Sports and Country Life

Comment

New All Party Country Sports Group at Stormont

How often have we heard 'it's no use, no one cares, no one listens.' However, we now have a new group established, right at the heart of government, which it is hoped will render such a phrase redundant in the future.

So, congratulations to BASC NI for their role in the establishment of an all party group on country sports in the Northern Ireland Assembly, which they say will 'provide a forum for politicians to discuss issues affecting country sports and the contribution they make to conservation, rural life, tourism and the economy.'

Lord Morrow (DUP) was elected as chairperson of the group, Danny Kinahan (UUP) was elected vice chairperson, Francie Molloy (SF) was elected secretary and Patsy McGlone (SDLP) nominated as treasurer.

The group has been established in order to 'develop, foster, promote and protect country sports and conservation activities across Northern Ireland, recognising the social, economic and cross-community benefits,' and will be under the chairmanship of Lord Morrow (DUP), with its secretariat provided by BASC NI. As Lord Morrow said, it will provide a valuable focus for politicians to take an active interest in country sports. And he cited one area of concern as our firearms licensing system, while BASC NI has also signalled the potential for a recreational deerstalking scheme to help with deer management on Forest Service Woodland.

I think that forming this group is an excellent move and clearly there is now scope for many areas of real concern from local country sports enthusiasts to be discussed at the highest level.

I do wonder though, how does a country sports enthusiast bring something to the group? Would they be expected to channel it first through one of the already established country sports organisations or can they 'go direct' as Joe Citizen? And if by the latter means, maybe it's something a representative organisation is working on already and will be taking it themselves to the all party group? Perhaps mechanisms are already in place to deal with this sort of situation.

Will all the representative bodies have equal status with the group, and by sitting as secretariat, will BASC NI be involved either directly or indirectly with matters brought by bodies and individuals other than itself? BASC NI's acknowledged expertise lies in shooting matters but by no stretch of the imagination can it claim that even a majority of NI FAC holders are members, and there will be other country sports which the group should want to deal with.

Country sports has a tough fight on its hands in terms of PR these days and I look forward to seeing how the group communicates with the general public, as well as 'died in the wool' enthusiasts with membership of other organisations such as BDS, UAF,SACS, CAI etc as well as BASC NI, or indeed those with no membership of any representative body. Public perception will be vital for the group's work. But these are early days and I am sure that we can expect many matters to become clarified in due course. As editor of Ireland's premier and most read hunting, shooting and fishing magazine, I am looking forward to hearing about their work involving country sports.

'It's the RSPCA - again - M'lud'

When Heythrop huntsman Julian Barnfield dared to suggest that the RSPCA's obsessive pursuit of both himself and the hunt was motivated by politics rather than any real interest in animal welfare, and District Judge Pattinson called the charity's expenditure in prosecuting them 'quite staggering' and questioned whether 'the public may feel RSPCA funds could have been more usefully employed,' the reaction was predictable, according to the Countryside Alliance.



And I agree.

The RSPCA apparently claimed overwhelming public support for what many see as the organisation's increasingly radical animal rights agenda and when the criticism continued they appeared to resort to the staple PR line of claiming gains in support.

However, it can be no coincidence that from December, just after the Heythrop case was reported, according to YouGov research, public attitudes towards the RSPCA appear to have fallen dramatically on virtually every measurement and as YouGov put it, figures as the charity gained attention from the hunt judgment and subsequent media coverage, its reputation appeared to decline in almost equal measures.

And as Bruce Forsyth might have put it: 'public perception means prizes' - or financial support in

the case of the RSPCA. 'Spare a copper for the animals' might perhaps be thought by some naysayers to mean 'never mind the animals, help us spend oodles on just one court case!'

Only time will tell if the U-turn by much of the public in its relationship with the RSPCA is reflected in a less adversarial and litigious approach by the organisation. Who knows, we might even see a similar U-turn by the organisation? I look forward to the day when it is apparent to me that its bulging coffers are targeted in the main for real protection of animals and real conservation development. I for one am appalled by the RSPCA using vast sums to pursue one off alarmingly expensive, and dubious cases. I expect my support to go where it has the most effect - and that does not necessarily include lawyers' fees.

I suspect that this view will become more widely held: the negative stories generated in the aftermath of Heythrop suggest that for the RSPCA the times may well be changin.'

New Tricks

On a lighter note, last fishing season I did something that I have called on anglers everywhere to do - take a newcomer out fishing. But this was no youngster; he was an old friend and only recently had I learned of his love of fishing. He had never fished a river for trout but had cast a line or two for rainbows.

Tackling up, I helped with fly selection, blethered on about watercraft, wet fly and dry fly, until in no short order we were at the river's edge. It was duffers' season, nice water, a few fish showed sipping olives and midge obligingly on the surface. I watched a few early casts and left him to it, obviously enjoying the new experience.

Later on, walking back to the car, he was going on about the many six or seven inch fish along with a larger one he'd caught and released and, by his enthusiastic comments, river fishing had him 'hooked.' "But, you know what, I'd really love to have a go for salmon before I turn up my toes," he said and I explained that later in the year our river had a few in it. Pausing at an upstream stretch to catch our breath, I spotted a swirl of sorts. "Have a go," I said and as I sat down to watch. He moved up stream like a panther, rolled out a couple of wet flies just upstream from the last sighting and you guessed it - he caught a lovely little salmon on his third cast which was admired and slipped back none the worse for wear. He was literally shaking with delight. Then he described the larger fish he had caught earlier and it just had to be a Dollaghan, but they were't due for weeks. Well that had me stumped. It seems that the longer you fish, the more surprises you get.

Tight lines for the 2013 season everyone!

Paul Pringle
Northern Editor

COUNTRYSIDE NEWS

Discover the Great Outdoors with Barbour's new Spring Range



Poppy Print

It's not long before the clocks go forward, so what better way to start planning for a Spring spent in the great outdoors than by looking at the new collections from countryside clothing stalwart, Barbour.

With bright colours and new styles featuring in the latest collections, Barbour maintains practicality and durability without sacrificing style.

For the ladies, our personal favourite this spring would have to be Barbour's collaboration with William Morris. Barbour has featured the famous pastel prints of the 19th century textile designer in the linings of its classic wax Utility jacket – making it a colourful companion for those early Spring walks.

The prints don't stop there either: Barbour has updated its signature Beadnell wax jacket with a range of exclusive new prints from its Country Cottage Prints collection. Inspired by the gardens found surrounding the quintessential country cottage, our pick from this collection would be the bright red poppy print that gives this classic Barbour piece a whole new contemporary edge.

For the riders out there, there are some strong equestrian influences this season. The Flyweight Cavalry is perfect for everyday use, featuring an elasticated back waist detail that makes the jacket both comfortable and wearable for either mucking out the horses or a lunch trip to the local pub.

For the fresh Spring mornings or chilly evenings, men needn't look any further than the Tyne Zip Neck, a rugged 100% wool jumper that is ideal for the practical Barbour man. Whether it's worn for the early mornings during lambing season or for early evening barbecues, this is the jumper to keep the chill off. Available in Derby tweed, Navy or Olive.

At the heart of the collections are the iconic wax jackets that made the brand a household name: the men's Bedale first ranged in 1980 continues to offer the best lightweight waterproof solution. This 6oz thornproof wax with optional hood promises to keep you dry whatever the weather. Now available in four colours, sage, black, navy blue and rustic, there has never been so much choice in this classic style.

Whatever the weather this Spring, these fresh new styles from Barbour will keep you protected and looking stylish all season. For stockists, visit www.barbour.com or call 0044 191 427 4210.



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00 353 18413096

Additional CAI Insurance Benefits Introduced

This year Countryside Alliance Ireland is delighted to offer some additions to the insurance benefits we provide to our members.

The insurance now provides provisions for recognised activities such as archery for everybody, and showing, dressage, pony club and gymkhana activities for under 17s. These improvements have resulted from feedback from our members who were keen for these activities to be included.

With the inclusion of the added activities, it now means that members can avail of public liability cover up to €12/£10million as well as accidental death and permanent disability provisions, for an extensive list of recognised activities. In addition, members can feel safe in the knowledge the insurance is regulated and controlled by an authorised body.

In recent years, CAI has struggled to maintain our membership fees at the same rate and, on a positive note, we have again been able to keep many subscriptions at their current levels.

However, over the past two years we have experienced a significant increase in claims relating to equine and hunting activities and therefore the rates for these categories have inevitably had to increase for 2013.

Further details on the membership insurance benefits and the membership rates, can be found by visiting the CAI website – www.caireland.org

'Rural Oscars' 2012 –Ireland's Winners Announced

The regional winners for the Countryside Alliance Awards, nicknamed the 'Rural Oscars', have been announced. These awards celebrate the characters, skills and dedication of the people who keep the countryside alive through enterprise and good quality produce and services. Judging of the finalists has now taken place and the winners for each region announced.

Lyall Plant commented: "These awards showcase the depth of commitment exhibited by Ireland's enterprises and businesses and their contribution to the rural community. Countryside Alliance Ireland is extremely proud to be able to acknowledge and celebrate some of Ireland's best businesses and enterprises and the wonderful produce that is generated here. We hope this accolade will show each winner how appreciated they are as they continue to provide their valuable services to the rural and urban communities. We also wish to thank everyone who took the time to nominate the entrants, as without them, these awards would not exist."

COUNTRYSIDE ALLIANCE IRELAND

Love the countryside

Ireland's rural champions for 2012

Local Food Category Champion
Bruces' Hill Farm Shop, Ballymena

Bruces' rear their own pork and award winning Dexter beef. The proprietor builds on his experience in third-world development funding in his focus on ethical aspects of food production and community-centred business.

They provide excellent customer service, sell high quality produce and are leading the way in County Antrim's artisan food culture.

Village Shop Category Champion - Rathlin Co-op, Rathlin Island

The Rathlin Co-op is a wholly volunteer led initiative which strives to meet the needs of the Island's residents. It is clear the shop is vital to the island as it supports many residents who would struggle otherwise.

Highly Commended: Dunloy Village Shop, Ballymena

Enterprise Category Champion

Cloughmills Community Action Team and Incredible Edibles, County Antrim

This Cloughmills enterprise demonstrates an extraordinary commitment and dedication to improving the quality of life of the village's residents through food. The team educates people on how to grow and produce their own food therefore reducing waste and saving

money.

Highly Commended:
Trail Kilkenny, County Kilkenny

Butcher Category
Champion
Martin Divilly Butchers,
Galway

Divilly's butcher has the championing of local food at its core. Their products are all sourced within Connaught and the speciality is their own dry aged Galway beef.



The very proud staff from Bruces' Hill Farm Shop.



Championing local food - Paula, Audrey and Martin at Divilly's.

The shop has a friendly, welcoming atmosphere and Martin and his team are dedicated to meeting customer needs.

The strong line up of businesses will now head to the House of Lords in London in March to hear if they have gone on to win an overall UK & Ireland title.

A Busy Spring/Summer In Store

The shooting season is at an end for another year. Each season appears to be shorter than the last; however that may simply be increasing age playing tricks! The time spent in between seasons is often used to debate and resolve issues surrounding country sports and this year will most likely be no different.

Countryside Alliance Ireland (CAI) works tirelessly throughout the summer months; on legislative matters, promoting our organisation, country sports and the admirable work that the country's field sports enthusiasts undertake.

CAI has always emphasised the need for like-minded organisations to stand united in the face of threats and non-supporters. We fully believe in the importance of this, and in equal measure, do not feel the need to belittle other organisations, but instead, to support other hunting and shooting bodies. Our organisation works extensively with others. We realise cooperation can strengthen our lobbying force, both in NI and R of I and we are happy to collaborate for the benefit of our members; which is our ultimate goal.

CAI members can feel reassured that we have their best interests at the core of everything we do and we continuously strive to provide the best service we can.

Countryside Alliance Ireland's New Website

CAI has a brand new website! There are now improved links to key issues, you can report a wildlife crime and most importantly, you will soon be able to join CAI online.

There are still the same links to our Twitter and Facebook feeds and for added convenience, we've kept the web address the same – www.caireland.org

Crowds Flock to Clonmel

The first weekend in February was host to the 88th annual coursing festival at Powerstown Park, Clonmel. This year was the first time it has been held over a weekend, changing from its usual midweek format, in order to attract greater crowds.

The change was successful with many newcomers attending the meeting on Saturday and Sunday. It was great to see people taking the opportunity to try coursing for the first time, and many of whom we were talking to had a great day out, and will hopefully return next year. There was a large turnout of both adults and the younger generation and thankfully, the weather stayed dry.

As usual, the coursing was to a high standard and was kept exciting with some unexpected results in the first and second rounds of heats. Whilst the going was testing, as expected with any ground in Ireland at present, this added to the variability of the contest and therefore the results.



CAI's David & Jenny at Clonmel.

As with last year, Jenny proved to be the most skilled of the CAI team in choosing dogs to follow, with one of her selections making the quarter finals of the Derby and the other being the eventual winner of the Oaks. 'Smart Ali' remained unbeaten through the three days and was rewarded with being titled the Greyhound and Pet World Oaks Winner for 2013.

The coursing festival generates huge revenue for the town and locality and injects a reported €15million into the Irish economy each year. It is an event on a grand scale and one that should be nurtured and celebrated.

There was an electric atmosphere throughout the week in Powerstown Park, and the facilities and staff ensured an enjoyable time was had by all. Congratulations must go to DJ Histon, the Irish Coursing Club and all involved for another very successful National Coursing Festival.

Survey on Perception and Awareness of Wild Deer in Ireland

Dr Fidelma Butler and Dr Ruth Carden, University College Cork, are leading a research team who have been awarded a grant by the Department of Agriculture, Food & the Marine to examine the use of forests by deer in Ireland.

This three year project seeks to quantify deer populations, habitat and silvicultural elements that influence local deer population densities and behavioural patterns. Methods for genetic fingerprinting of faecal pellets will be developed at Waterford Institute of Technology and used to estimate deer densities. The findings of this work will inform national deer management strategy.

An important part of this project is the assessment of how people across the island of Ireland view the presence of wild deer in the landscape. To this end a survey of the public perception and awareness of deer is being conducted. Further information on this project can be found at:

www.ucc.ie/en/forestecology/Research/FORDEER/

Please note this survey is in relation to wild deer on the island of Ireland. You can complete the survey in less than 5 minutes – <https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/FORDEER>

COUNTRYSIDE NEWS

Wild Deer Association of Ireland Deer Stalking News

First Dog Tracking Event for Deerstalkers

The Wild Deer Association of Ireland (WDAI) has been to the fore in ensuring that the endorsed and ethical method of deer-stalking with the aid of a tracking dog continues in Ireland by having the Wildlife Amendment Bill corrected in 2010 to protect this important practice. They also formed the first dedicated group for those with an interest in tracking dogs in Ireland in 2011, to provide and share information along with hosting related events. If you would like to join this group please contact Paul Hogan on 087 1425527.



Some of the large attendance at the dog tracking event

On 24th February 2013 in Cahir Co Tipperary, the association held the first ever dog tracking event for deerstalkers to be held in Ireland. Renowned dog tracking trainers Lisa Gaidies and Sebastian Meyer travelled from Germany as guests of the association especially for the event. The event was supported by the Irish Kennel Club and Countryside Alliance Ireland with Jim Sheridan and Vince Flannely attending from the IKC and CAI respectively. Lady Waterford also attended on behalf of her husband Lord Waterford who is ROI President of CAI.



Damien Hannigan WDAI with Lady Waterford and her Teckel.



Jim Sheridan, Irish Kennel Club, Vince Flannely Counside Alliance Ireland and Damien Hannigan, Wild Deer Association of Ireland.

Lisa Gaidies has been a professional tracking dog trainer for 10 years and is the proud owner of her own hunting dog school (www.hunting-dog-academy.com). She is the head trainer for several well known German GSP and GWP kennels, author for a German hunting magazine, and has successfully trained HPR dogs to the highest standard.



Lisa Gaidies & Charlie tracking a scent

Lisa gave a demonstration on blood tracking over a number of blood trails laid the previous day, the demonstration was aimed at beginner and intermediate tracking dogs.



Sebastian Myres of the Hunting Dog Academy discusses shot placement on a fresh deer carcass.

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COUNTRYSIDE NEWS

Sebastian Meyer is a very experienced all round hunter with many years of boar and deer stalking, specialising in training blood tracking breeds. Sebastian gave a presentation on shot reaction from blood, hair and bone fragments at the site of a successful stalk using a fresh deer carcass.



A very rare breed in Ireland the Hanoverian Scenthound owned by Enda Daly

The event was a great success with deerstalkers travelling from as far away as Donegal and North Ireland. There were numerous tracking breeds on display including Bavarian Mountain Hounds, Teckels, German Wired Haired Pointers and a very rare Hanoverian Scenthound. The event was oversubscribed with many new members joining on the day, to meet this demand it has been decided to hold another event in the coming months.



John Kavanagh with his Bavarian Mountain Hounds

Carcass Handling Seminar

The WDAI recently held a series of successful deer carcass handling seminar, the events were well supported by deerstalkers nationally and is one of the more popular events organised by the association for deerstalkers. The seminar marks the 14th consecutive year the event has been held, which continues to go from strength to strength.

The skill and knowledge of Deer Carcass Handling is something we all require new or old to deer-stalking and some would say the real work begins after the animal is culled. This year's seminars again included all facets of carcass handling with demonstrations on disease identification by a veterinarian. Evisceration, carcass preparation & home butchery were demonstrated by deerstalker and game butcher, David Dunne. An addition to one of the seminars was a talk on rifle maintenance by Conor Murphy of the Irish F. Class team.

George Lane DAFM veterinarian, WDAI member and deerstalker gave a detailed presentation on disease identification, the normal anatomy and physiology of wild deer, abnormal behaviour and pathological changes in deer due to diseases, environmental contamination or other factors which may affect human health after consumption. He also spoke about the hygiene rules and proper techniques for the handling, transportation, evisceration, etc., of deer carcasses after a successful stalk.

Chef and WDAI member Tom Sparling presented a master class of venison dishes. Tom is also a deerstalker with vast experience in fine dining including the world renowned Dromoland Castle. His demonstration included dishes from all the main cuts, suitable for all levels of cooking ability. The event was fully seated with a large viewing screen to improve viewing for the growing numbers attending these seminars. The seminar was free of charge and open to all WDAI members. Those attending were treated to a mouth watering venison BBQ and hot refreshments in addition a large display of game butchery and deer-stalking equipment were available at discounted prices, with all profits going to the WDAI.

For further information on events or membership go to www.wilddeerireland.com or email wilddeerireland@gmail.com you can also follow them on Twitter @wilddeerireland or like their Facebook page for all the latest deer-stalking news and events.

Group/Club Membership

Following requests from various groups and clubs, the WDAI are now offering Group/Club Membership. As our wild deer herds and the sport of deer-stalking face many challenges such as the illegal taking of deer, poaching and proposed changes to the current open season, amongst just a few, it never has been as important to have a strong voice for deerstalkers.

As the largest and most active organisation in Ireland over the last 30 years, representing people who work with deer and those involved in deer-stalking, the WDAI have been to the fore in addressing these issues and work closely with government and other stakeholders such as Countryside Alliance Ireland, FACE Ireland, Deer Alliance, etc. They also run a busy schedule of events on deer related topics. These events are free of charge and open to both individual and group/club members. The WDAI is a non-profit organisation and operated by dedicated members who unselfishly give up their time on a voluntary basis. For further details and application forms go to www.wilddeerireland.com Group membership is open to new and existing members

Review of the Open Season for Deer

Recently the Wild Deer Association of Ireland put a series of parliamentary questions to Minister Jimmy Deenihan regarding the proposed extension to the open season for deer and the current poaching epidemic. Following answers to these questions, no changes will be made at this time to the current season, something the association has lobbied for based on the feedback of its members. Sean Fleming TD is thanked for his support on this matter. Further details on the Minister's replies are available at www.wilddeerireland.com

Schmallenberg Virus and Wild Deer

The Schmallenberg virus has only recently been confirmed in Ireland with the first case detected in Livestock in October 2012. The first case was confirmed in 2011 in Germany and subsequently spread rapidly

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across Europe. The virus causes abnormalities in the foetus or the foetus to abort, to date losses in effected herds have been in the order of 20% with confirmed cases in wild deer. The spread of the virus is caused by midge bites who carry the virus. It is important to note there has been no evidence to show humans can become infected from midge bites or consumption of infected meat.

The WDAI were recently contacted by the DAFM to confirm if the virus has spread to our wild deer herds. WDAI members are currently collecting blood samples to help confirm if this is the case.

Significant decline in national deer cull

The WDAI recently received the national deer cull returns for the 2011/12 open season. The returns are an annual requirement for all licensed deerstalkers. The latest returns show a significant decline in the number of deer culled nationally this is despite an increase in the number of deer hunting licenses issues by Minister Deenihan.

Such a decline should be of serious concern to all deerstalkers and those with an interest in our wild deer herds, as these returns along with the current poaching epidemic and the potential effects of the Schmallenberg virus could cause our already decimated deer herds to reduce to dangerously lows levels.

Future Events

The WDAI are running a coach to this year's CLA Game Fair which is being held in Ragley Hall, Warwickshire on 19th - 21st July. The WDAI package includes Coach, Ferry, Hotel, Meals, Tickets and transfers for further details contact Dominic on 086 8120442.

A Hunter Competence Assessment Programme (HCAP) MCQ exam and workshop will be hosted by the WDAI on 20th April in Cahir, Co Tipperary if you would like to register contact Damien on 087 2496987

Deer Poaching

WDAI are actively working with a number of government agencies including DAFM, NPWS, Revenue Commissioners and An Garda Síochána in tackling the current poaching epidemic. There have been a number of recent successes with cases due to come before the courts and a number of prosecutions in recent weeks. For details on recent prosecutions for deer related crimes visit www.wilddeerireland.com or like the WDAI Facebook page. The WDAI would like to thank all those who reported suspected incidents of deer poaching and look forward to the continued support of licensed deerstalkers and members of the general public.

Hydro disaster on the River Braid

Writing as an angler, conservationist and member of Friends of the Earth, William Marsden, from Sion Mills, says he cannot understand how the DOE gave the go ahead for a Hydro electric plant on the Upper Braid above Broughshane.

He says: "This is not the Shannon or the Erne with large volumes of water but a tiny river which is struggling to sustain its Atlantic salmon stock which is at an all-time low. Does the DOE not care about the environmental damage this turbine will inflict upon the river?"

"I personally have witnessed the damage done by these so-called

environmentally friendly schemes as a number of years ago, while fishing the River Mourne, I saw for myself the carnage wreaked by the Hydroelectric plant at Sion Mills.

The picture shows five salmon, one seatrout and an eel. Note that all of these fish's heads have been damaged by the turbine blades. This photograph was taken by myself at Sion Mills and only shows the tip of the iceberg."

He went to say that that the turbine in Sion Mills was slaughtering vast numbers of adult and juvenile salmon for many years even with all of its safety measures in place and even up to this moment.

He continued: "But let's return to the issue in question, the turbine on the River Braid. The water intake pipe for the turbine receives its water a quarter of a mile above Acheson's weir and runs underground for at least half a mile under two fields. The outflow from the turbine is returned to the river a considerable distance



The turbine damage is plain to see.

below Acheson's weir. When this turbine is operational and generating how will the fish stocks in the river Braid be able to negotiate the weir? The water consumption of the plant will result in very low to nonexistent river flows over the weir. Even at high to medium water levels the weir is a formidable obstacle for the fish returning to their spawning beds.

"This turbine will be an ugly blight on the beautiful landscape above

Broughshane and no matter how many safety measures are put in place

environmental damage will be done to the fish stocks of the river Braid. Although there are claims that this turbine is based on a screw

design and is fish-friendly, remember...there is no such thing as a fish-friendly hydroelectric scheme! I would encourage all anglers and conservationists to visit the site and draw their own conclusions.

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www.shanescastlesteamgroup.com

NOTICE TO EXHIBITORS

The organisers can only accept exhibitors who have completed and returned an Entry Form before the closing date of

TUESDAY 9th APRIL 2013.

Unfortunately we will not be able to accept any exhibitors who turn up on the day without having entered and received the relevant Entry Pass. Entry forms can be obtained by contacting the following numbers:

028 2564 7938

028 9265 1999 • 028 9446 4648 or by email: walteramcneill@hotmail.com or ian@woolfengineering.com

Red Kite comings and goings in Co. Down

Once young red kites have dispersed from their natal territory they tend to go off and explore the countryside. Autumn and early winter, therefore, is traditionally a time of year when red kites wander and it is always interesting to see which birds turn up where. I reported previously on the adventures of Pale blue/White B7, a southern Irish released bird who had toured several Northern Irish counties since moving north in August 2011. Well, come the changing of the seasons, B7 is on the move again! This time, however, the bird which had spent time in Counties Antrim, Down and Armagh decided to head back down south and in mid-November was recorded near Lusk, Co. Dublin close to where it had originally been released in summer 2011.

At the end of September I was monitoring the birds leaving one of our well established roosts and in the early morning light saw a bird which I thought had a green tag with the number 35 printed on it. A green tag would mean that this bird had come from Dumfries and Galloway in Scotland. Although I wasn't 100% certain as the sun had been against me, another hint which suggested that it was indeed a Scottish bird was the fact the numbers on the tag were landscape, rather than portrait. It was over a week before I was able to confirm that Green/White 35 was in south Down when I relocated it near Katesbridge.

As I watched Green / White 35, another bird flew in and landed beside it. This bird was Pale blue / Blue B, another southern bird! Interestingly though, this bird is not immature like the white (i.e. Red/Blue 52 was born in Perthshire, central Scotland in 2010 and had previously been recorded by Robert Straughan in March 2011 about 3km from where we saw it. Has the bird been back to Scotland during this time, or simply gone unrecorded in the Northern Irish countryside, who knows?

Pale blue/White Z was a Welsh-born bird which had been part of the cohort released in Co. Wicklow during the final year of reintroduction by our project partner, the Golden Eagle Trust, in 2011. It's fantastic to see birds moving around and finding the Northern Irish kites. It's even better to confirm their presence by recording the wing-tags and hopefully a few of these newcomers may hang around as they would be very welcome additions to the gene pool.

WTSE found dead in Co. Kerry

We have received sad news from our project partner, the Golden Eagle Trust, regarding a 2010-released male white-tailed sea eagle.

Tagged bird, "3" was recently picked up dead in Co Kerry. You may remember this bird made quite a stir last year when he was rescued from a cove in north-east Scotland

"3" was originally collected from a nest on the island of Vikna, Norway and released in Killarney National Park, Co. Kerry on 04/08/2010. Spending his first winter in Co. Kerry and along the coast off west Cork, "3" disappeared off the radar on 3 February 2011. This was, until, he was spotted on the Banffshire coast in north-east Scotland on 29 October 2011 by a sea kayaker who reported seeing an injured WTSE stranded in a cove.

After rescue and a long rehabilitation by the SSPCA, "3" (who by this stage had been affectionately nicknamed "Irish Brian" by his Scottish followers), was released in Fife at the east Scotland WTSE release site on 13 December 2011 before being relocated at Drumpellier Country Park, Lanarkshire on 3 February 2012. Then suddenly, after a long gap (where was he?!), "3" was recorded back in Ireland when his transmitter signal was picked up in west Kerry in early September, just 25km west of his release site in Killarney. Sadly, in November a mortality signal was detected from his transmitter and following a search, his carcass was recovered from a hillside near Glencar, Co. Kerry. Unfortunately the body was too decomposed to obtain suitable samples for toxicology and the cause of death will be classed as "unknown". However, three WTSEs were found poisoned in this area in spring 2008. Most poisoning incidents to date in Ireland have been during the lambing season (February - May) when poisons have been laid illegally for foxes and crows.

The Irish White-tailed Sea Eagle Reintroduction Project is a collaboration between the Golden Eagle Trust and the National Parks & Wildlife Service of the Department of Arts, Heritage & the Gaeltacht. Visit the project website at www.goldeneagle.ie or follow on them on Twitter @GoldenEagleTrust

Vegetarian kite?

On 8th October I was monitoring near Katesbridge and I followed a couple of kites to a field which was being spread with slurry. Thankfully, the light was behind me which made reading wing-tags much easier and within a few of minutes I managed to read several tags. My attention was drawn to a kite sitting in a hawthorn bush which I was delighted to discover was Green / White 35, a bird which I had seen 9 days before at the end of September leaving a roost, but was not 100% certain as the light was against me when I'd originally seen it. More

notable was the fact it was picking off and eating berries from the bush, a behaviour which I haven't previously seen in any large raptor and I would be very interested to hear if anyone else has recorded this. Green / White 35 was one of a brood of three born near Ringford, Dumfries & Galloway in 2011 and it was last seen in Scotland back in March this year.

For more information please contact: Adam McClure, Red Kite Officer

RSPB NI, Belvoir Park Forest, Belfast, BT8 7QT

t: 028 9049 1547 m:07702237352

e: adam.mcclure@rspb.org.uk



Red Kite nest
(photo by Andy Hay, RSPB Images)



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Assembly group for country sports set up in Northern Ireland

An all-party group on country sports has been set up in the Northern Ireland Assembly. The group will provide a forum for politicians to discuss issues affecting country sports and the contribution they make to conservation, rural life, tourism and the economy.

The British Association for Shooting and Conservation in Northern Ireland (BASC NI) will provide the secretariat for the group which will be under the chairmanship of Lord Morrow (DUP). The group has been established in order to: "Develop, foster, promote and protect country sports and conservation activities across Northern Ireland, recognising the social, economic and cross-community benefits."

Lord Morrow said that the group will provide a valuable focus for politicians to take an active interest in country sports. He added that it was clear from the first presentation given by BASC that there are some areas of concern with our firearms licensing system and he looked forward to working in partnership with the group to address these and the other issues which affect country sports in Northern Ireland.



(L/R) Francie Molloy (Sinn Fein MLA), Amanda McCallion (BASC NI), Lord Maurice Morrow (DUP MLA), Paul Givan (DUP MLA & Chairman of Justice Committee), Tommy Mayne (Director BASC NI), Laura Morrison (BASC NI) and Danny Kinahan (UUP MLA)

Lord Morrow (DUP) was elected as chairperson of the group. Danny Kinahan (UUP) was elected vice chairperson. Francie Molloy (SF) was elected secretary and Patsy McGlone (SDLP) nominated as treasurer.

Minister helped promote the World's Biggest Wildlife Survey

The RSPB's annual Big Garden Birdwatch on Saturday 26 and Sunday 27 January 2013, gave people across the UK the chance to be part of the world's biggest wildlife survey. All that was needed was to spend just one hour at any time over Big Garden Birdwatch weekend noting the highest number of each bird species seen in your garden or local park at any one time.

Environment Minister Alex Atwood who was giving the RSPB a helping hand to promote the survey said: "It is a pleasure to be able to help publicise the Big Garden Birdwatch. This event encouraged a wide range of people to record and appreciate what they see in their own gardens. The information collected from this Big Garden Birdwatch is highly valued by my Department as it helps identify those species which may need conservation measures."

The Big Garden Birdwatch began in 1979 and continues to be an important 'citizen science' project for the RSPB as it helps paint a picture of population trends of different species. The more people that take part, the more can be learned; so why not encourage friends, neighbours or anyone you know to participate as well?

It was important to count all the birds that appeared in your garden including common species such as house sparrows and magpies to more exotic migrants such as redwing or waxwing. With the recent cold weather and more on the way the RSPB advised people to make sure their bird feeders and tables are full of high energy foods to attract more birds.

For more information, please contact Ciara Friers at Ciara.friers@rspb.org.uk tel. 028 9049 1547



Minister Alex Atwood and RSPB NI Director James Robinson filling out the 'World's biggest wildlife survey.'

Country Sports Ireland Strengthens Team

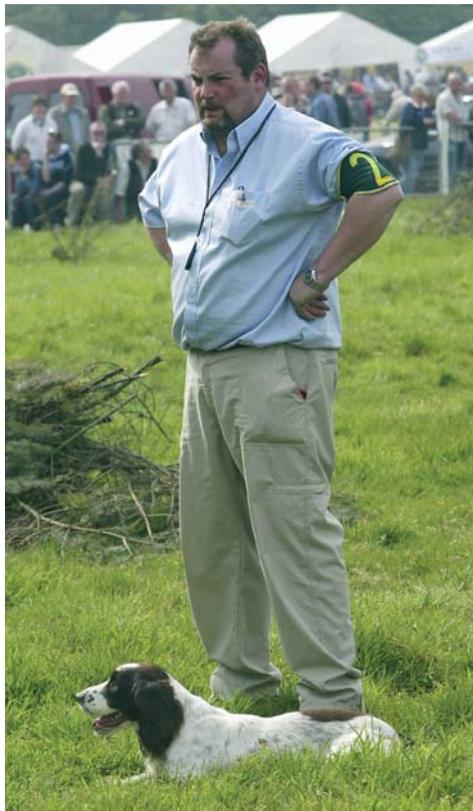
Country Sports Ireland has further strengthened its team with the appointment of Jon Binley as Membership Director for the Republic of Ireland. Jon will be responsible for membership service and recruitment and joins a highly experienced and capable team which will be significantly strengthened by this appointment. Jon is a very active angler, game shooter, gundog trainer and regular field trial competitor. His family run Massbrook Pet Foods which supply many of the gundog kennels, hunts and greyhound kennels throughout Ireland. He is therefore in an excellent position to liaise with country sports supporters and to reflect their views in the work undertaken by Country Sports Ireland.

Ronan Gorman, National Director, Country Sports Ireland said: "We are genuinely delighted to announce the addition of Jon Binley to the Country Sports Ireland team. Jon brings a wealth of knowledge and experience of many country sports which will help to improve and expand the work of Country Sports Ireland. We are determined to offer members throughout the entire island of Ireland the highest standards of service, representation and advice and we see Jon's appointment as an important part of this commitment."

Jon Binley said: "I am delighted to be joining the Country Sports Ireland team. I firmly believe that a local, independent organisation like Country Sports Ireland has an important role to play in promoting and protecting local country sports. I would encourage all Irish country sports enthusiasts to support Country Sports Ireland." Jon can be contacted on jon@countrysportsireland.org or by mobile on 087 4191490

Hector Goes Hunting

On Monday 28th January RTE 1 screened an excellent programme - Hector Goes Hunting - where presenter Hector Ó hEochagain in his own unique way gave viewers a fair and unbiased insight into the



Waiting his turn - Jon Binley in action

world of country sports. Hector visited the famous Scarteen Hunt Co Limerick, where he spoke with Chris Ryan the Master of the Hunt. He met with Rupert McCauley, Chairman IMFHA (Irish Masters of Foxhounds Association) and Paul Kerr showed Hector what beagling is all about. Hector got a clay pigeon shooting lesson from Terry Tyson in the Glenlow Abbey Hotel in Co Galway, and Paddy Cooke took Hector pheasant shooting.

It should come as no surprise that animal rights groups are bombarding RTE with complaints. However, Country Sports Ireland has written to RTE to congratulate them on making such a balanced and informative programme. Anyone wishing to congratulate RTE on the programme can do so by emailing feedback@rte.ie

New Rules on Tail Docking in NI

With spring upon us and the breeding season well underway Country Sports Ireland would like to remind breeders that new regulations came into effect from 1st January 2013 banning the docking of tails of dogs born in Northern Ireland unless they are an exempt breed. An exemption from

the ban is available for working dogs that are intended to be used for shooting or pest control – essentially spaniels, HPRs, terriers or any combination of these breeds. Dogs that meet the requirements of the exemption may only be docked by a veterinary surgeon within five days of birth and must be micro chipped before the dog is eight weeks of age at the same veterinary practice that carried out the tail docking procedure. Anyone presenting pups for tail docking by a vet may also be required to produce evidence that the pups will be used as working dogs in the future. The Regulations can be viewed at <http://www.nidirect.gov.uk/tail-docking-dogs>



BASC council nomination – Martyn Parfitt

Albert Titterington talks to an ideal candidate

I have often stated that members of BASC like myself in Northern Ireland feel a little bit divorced from the decision making in our organisation because there is no local general meeting or an opportunity to elect members of the local committee and few can take the time to go to the national AGM. I should make it clear that I am not in any way criticising those members who do represent NI interests on Council such as Robert Irvine and hopefully the new member Davy Stinson, but how many of us actually use our votes to vote for other candidates who could help BASC move forward to offer an even better service to its members.

Last year I was sorry to see that a candidate, Martyn Parfitt, who had taken

the time to put forward an excellent forward looking election manifesto, was not elected and I was pleased to see he was standing again. I have had the pleasure of discussing with Martin what he stands for, and reading his very detailed interview with the new chief executive Richard Ali available at www.martynparfittforbasc.wordpress.com/a-chat-with-richard-ali

You can read his manifesto on www.martynparfittforbasc.wordpress.com

I consider I can recommend Martyn to readers, both in Ireland and the UK as a keen shooting man, an active gundog handler and overall a fine candidate full of enthusiasm and good ideas. I certainly will be voting for him.

(Photo courtesy of Linda Mellor)

New Dog Breeding Regulations Announced

Agriculture and Rural Development Minister Michelle O'Neill has announced new legislation to regulate all commercial dog breeders. The Welfare of Animals (Dog Breeding Establishments and Miscellaneous Amendments) Regulations (NI) 2013 will come into force on the 1 April 2013.

Minister O'Neill said: "These Regulations set out clear welfare standards with which commercial dog breeders must comply. They provide the powers to allow action to be taken where a breeder does not meet these standards. Council inspectors will have strong enforcement powers to take action and to prosecute as necessary any commercial breeder who is operating in sub-standard conditions. I appreciate that regulation alone will not stop so called "puppy farming". This will take a concerted effort by members of the public, future dog owners, good breeders and enforcement agencies working together to identify breeders, licensed or unlicensed, who put financial gain before the welfare needs of their dogs and pups. However, the new enforcement powers and tough penalties will act as a strong deterrent to those taking part in illegal dog breeding activities, sending out a clear message that such activities will not be tolerated."

The Minister continued: "I would call on all future dog owners never to buy a pup from a breeder who suggests meeting you in a car park or other public place to save you travelling to their breeding establishment. Always insist on seeing the puppies with their mother. Working together we can and will stop puppy farming."

All the provisions in the new Regulations will have immediate effect for new dog breeders, however any dog breeders currently registered with their local Council will have six months, after the expiry of their current registration, to comply with a number of conditions of the licence which may require structural work to be undertaken to the premises. New Dogs (Guard Dog Kennels) Regulations 2013 will also come into operation on the 1 April 2013.

A breeding establishment is defined as one or more premises, within the same District Council area, operated by the same person from which that person keeps three or more breeding bitches; and (a) breeds three or more litters of puppies in any 12 month period; (b) advertises three or more litters of puppies for sale in any 12 month period; (c) supplies three or more litters of puppies in any 12 month period; or (d) advertises a business of breeding or selling of puppies.

Ronan Gorman, Director Country Sports Ireland, commented: "During the making of these new Regulations we continually made the point that whilst we welcome measures to eradicate puppy farming we believe this must not be at the expense of responsible breeders of working dogs."

The Regulations include a new definition for a commercial breeding establishment; the requirement for all commercial breeding establishment to apply and obtain a breeding establishment licence; an exemption for licensed dog breeding establishment from the requirement to obtain a block licence under the Dogs (NI) Order 1983; the requirement to microchip all dogs and pups in the establishment; the requirement to adhere to the licence conditions; a control on the age a bitch can be breed at and the number of litters she that can be produced in her lifetime; a minimum age a pup can leave the breeder; the need for breeding establishments to maintain records and introduce written socialisation and enrichment programmes for approval by the council, and an exemption for registered hunt clubs who do not sell dogs or pups and registered charities that do not breed dogs.

For further details visit

www.legislation.gov.uk/nidnr/2013/9780337989957/contents

KC ENGLISH SPRINGER SPANIEL CHAMPIONSHIPS 2012/13

The 2012/13 English Springer Spaniel Championship took place on the 10th 11th and 12th January 2013 at Buccleuch Estates, Thornhill, Scotland by kind invitation of his Grace, the Duke of Buccleuch.

Judges: Mr A Slater, Mr R Tozer, Mr I Wilson and Mr R Young. Reserve Judge: Mr G Ford

Results:

Winner - FTCh Broomfield Rosetta - Owner/Handler: Eddie Scott
2nd - FTCh Doncaster Star - Owner/Handler: Andy Whitehouse
3rd - FTCh Buccleuch Jazz - Owner: The Duke of Buccleuch - Handler: David Lisett

4th - FTCh Rosebay Fantasy - Owner/Handler: Aubrey Ladyman

Diplomas of Merit were awarded to:

4. Cheweky Gritsand of Glenfia - Owner/Handler: Anthony Morris
8. FTCh Kidnais Successor - Owner/Handler: Ian Clarke
9. Aine's In The Pink - Owner/Handler: Robin Patterson
11. FTCh Syncerus Sally - Owner/Handler: Mr G Devine-Jones
13. FTCh Badger of the Valley - Owner/Handler: Gary Veasey
21. FTCh Churchview Abs - Owner: Mr T Frost - Handler: Jon Bailey
27. FTCh Shalloakwest Stag - Owner: Mr A Ross - Handler: Mr G Ross (Also Best Newcomer)
32. Broomfield Annie - Owner/Handler: Eddie Scott
36. FTCh Morfudd Mungo - Owner/Handler: Gerry Meehan
37. FTCh Takmadoon Hazel of Stagsden - Owner/Handler: Alex Coultis

43. FTCh McGwyn Dealus - Owner/Handler: Willie Edgar
44. FTCh Bryngwrhyd Eira - Owner/Handler: Dai Lloyd
47. FTCh Wyndhill Brett of Stagsden - Owner/Handler: Alex Coultis
48. Int FTCh Skronedale Romulus - Owner/Handler: Des Donnelly (Also Best Dog)

Guns Choice was FTCh Helmsway Hope - Owner/Handler: Ian English

THE 81st KC COCKER SPANIEL CHAMPIONSHIP 2013

The 81st KC Cocker Spaniel Championship was held at Sandringham Estate, Norfolk by gracious permission of Her Majesty The Queen on 16th and 17th January 2013

Results:

1st Moelfamau Griffon: Owner/Handler Will Clulee
FTCh Argyll Warrior ex Flora Spreadabell
2nd Voodoo Black Widow: Owner G Philips, Handler Nick Gregory
Mallowdale Jamie ex Primevil Blue Sapphire
3rd Tudor Briar Moonwarrior: Owner Josie Tudor, Handler I Openshaw
FTCh Danderw Druid ex FTCh Randalyn Black Jazz
4th FTCh Lockslane Archibald: Owner Derek Lee, Handler Will Clulee
FTCh Larford Evan ex Oretton Candy of Lockslane

Diplomas of Merit

Centrewalk Moonshell: Owner/Handler Richard Preest
Tudorbriar Moonstar: Owner/Handler Nick Gregory
Milden Slipper: Owner/ Handler J Thompson
Fenlord Dancing Queen: Owner/Handler Robin Laud
Mallowdale Music of Tiptop Jack: Owner Nigel Partis/ Handler I Openshaw
FTCh Wetlands Spice Of Leeglen: Owner/Handler Graham West
Jess Of Misty Valley: Owner/Handler N Thomas
FTCh Chyknell Hidie: Owner/Handler Joe Shotton
Mallowdale Maggy: Owner S Dixon/ Handler I Openshaw
FTCh Winhocklin Single Star of Tiptopjack: Owner N Partis/Handler I Openshaw
FTCh Brook Furlong of Tiptopjack: Owner N Partis/Handler I Openshaw
FTCh Tiptopjack Sixpence: Owner N Partis/Handler Wendy Openshaw
FTCh Tiptopjack Dime: Owner Nigel Partis/ Handler I Openshaw
FTCh Gournaycourt Ginger: Owner Jan Menzies/Handler John Bailey
FTCh Mallowdale Midge: Owner/Handler J Heeley

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The West of Ireland Spaniel Club

Enda Jenning reports that The West of Ireland Spaniel Club held a Novice A/V Spaniel Trial on Tuesday 6th November 2012 at Brownhall Shoot, Ballintra, Co Donegal by kind permission of Mr John Hamilton and Mr Eddie Ward. The Trial was kindly sponsored by Mr Gerry Creaven of Creavens' Premium Pet Foods, Hollypark, Craughwell, Co Galway (www.creavenspremium.com). The trial was judged by Mr Tim Dennehy from Co Cork, Mr Pat Greene from Co Galway and Mr Christy Murphy from Co Mayo. The Steward of the beat was Mr Eddie Ward.

The trial took place in mature woodland with a blanket of testing cover along the floor consisting of a mix of young Rhododendron, Ivy and Bracken all intertwined with Bramble. The game supply of predominately Pheasant was fantastic and the birds were in pristine condition. A number of Woodcock jinked through the majestic trees and escaped unscathed through the treetops. Such was the concentration of game in certain areas of the beat, some of those young Novice dogs found the temptation too much and ended their aspirations early. Eddie Ward did a wonderful job in getting the birds just right for the day.

A full card of 12 Springer Spaniels and four Cocker Spaniels were drawn but unfortunately we lost a few in the days preceding the Trial due to Qualifications and other unavoidable issues. The trial ran smoothly and the judges made up their books. There was only one dog called to the water which was No 6. Poolgreen Abi, a Cocker Spaniel owned and handled by Mr Domhnall Creamer from Co Dublin and following a successful water retrieve were awarded The Game and Angling Centre Cup for 1st Place.



Eddie Ward and John Hamilton with Novice Trial Winner Domhnall Creamer (centre)

CHATSWORTH INTERNATIONAL RETRIEVER TEAM EVENT 2012

Tom Fox reports on the Chatsworth International Retriever Event which was held at Chatsworth Estate Derbyshire by kind permission of the Duke and Duchess of Devonshire. The Estate has been owned by the Cavendish Family for over 16 generations.

The competition was held over two days on the 31st May and 1st June 2012 by the English Kennel Club, with Ann Heading, Chairperson of the Gundog Working Group in charge of proceedings. Judges were Mark Bettinson, Steve Crookes, Mike Newsman and Joan Hayes.

Before proceedings got underway, a gala reception for all the teams which comprised Great Britain, Ireland, Sweden, Denmark, Switzerland, Germany and Norway, was held on the Thursday evening, hosted by the Duke and Duchess.

During the competition the retrievers were challenging but not too difficult, and one would expect to face them on a daily basis when either trialling or just rough shooting. Different areas of the Chatsworth Estate were used during both days.

Great Britain emerged as overall winners while Lee Hartis won the award for best overall dog. The Irish Team captained by Declan Boyle and including Jimmy Black, Thomas Hughes Jnr, Sean Diamond and Tony O'Hare were third overall. These gentlemen did us proud in every aspect of their performance and were true ambassadors for the sport, both when competing and when interacting with the other participants at this great event. A special word of praise must also go to Declan Boyle who ran two very good and fair selection tests in order to select the team.

A huge thank you to the following for sponsorship: Albert Titterfington, (Irish Country Sports & Country Life magazine), Thomas Brady (Glennane General Obedience, Armagh), Tannyoky Guns & Ammo (Newry), Newry Veterinary Centre (Liam Fitzsimons), and Soltex Carpets (Markethill). Everyone is encouraged to support these sponsors as they made it possible for the Irish Team to compete at this prestigious event. And last but not least, a final thank you to Ann Heading and the organising committee along with the team of helpers, judges, caterers, dummy throwers and many more behind the scenes. Well done to all concerned.



Ireland took third place and were great ambassadors for the sport.



England were the overall winners.

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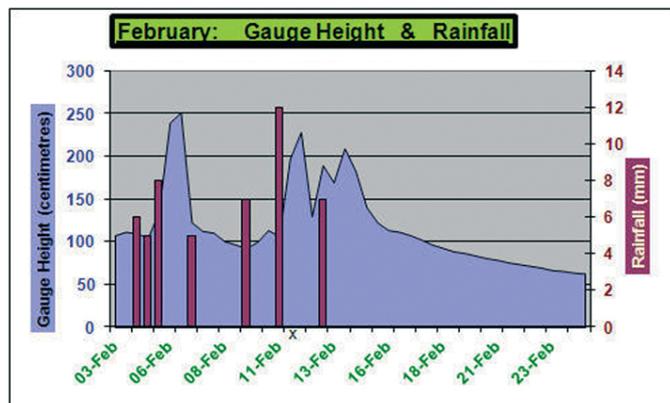
E-MAIL: thomasbrady2006@yahoo.co.uk

Blackwater Lodge News

Dropping & Dropping!

For the coming season, Blackwater Lodge have slashed prices to counteract the continuing recession.

Prices for fishing are down about 40% and accommodation by around 20%.



The river is finally dropping too. It's the first time since the opening of the season that the river has really come into fishable order. And the result is immediately obvious. The river is now fining off nicely, and it is only now that we can really fish with confidence as there is already a good head of spring fish through the system even to the upper river.

The forecast is for continuing dry cool weather, so the river will be coming into excellent condition & the chances of catching a springer must be very good in the coming days.

One Fish – Two Firsts!



Gary Byrne with the season's first fish

The First Fish of the Season was caught on the Lodge beats on Friday 22nd.

It was taken by Gary Byrne from Dungarvan on spinner, weighed 9.65lb & was sea-liced and was his first ever Salmon and his first visit to the Lodge.

Like most special events here at the Lodge, there's a story....

I had sent Gary and his friend Mark to fish on Upper & Lower Kilmurry and they arrived there about 10.00am.

For those of you that know the Lodge, Glenda was teaching at the Hut Pool on Upper Kilmurry (her Office!).

I called in to see her, then left at 12.00 to head for Fermoy. As I was driving away, I glanced into the top field ("The Inches") of Upper Kilmurry and saw Gary - rod bent - looking as if he was into a fish. I stopped, shouted to him to confirm & then parked & hastened down

the field to him. He was on the high bank at the tail of the Inches with an obviously fresh springer played out. Unable to tail it out, we nervously waited for Mark to appear having returned to the Hut Pool some 400 yards away to get the net. I landed the fish and the smile on his face really does say it all!

The fish was tagged and entered into Gary's logbook even although it wasn't a kelt!

If you don't understand this ironic joke go and read the thread "A Heads Up" on the Salmon Fishing Forum

www.salmonfishingforum.com/forums/thread59419.html

The first fish of the season off the river had been reported on Tuesday, February 19 on Killavullen Club waters, 20 miles upstream from the Lodge. This is probably the first time in living memory that the first fish of the season has been recorded this far upstream. This is obviously a consequence of the high water & mild temperatures we have had since the beginning of January.

On Wednesday 20th February, one of our rods had also lost a sea-liced fish of 8-10lb at the bank - he had forgotten his net! He also saw half a dozen fresh springers. The same day there was also a report of a sea-liced fish caught on another private lower beat.

Willowbreeze - N.I Heartbeat Trust Fly Fishing Open Competition

Willowbreeze FlyFishing Club in Larne are holding their annual N.I Heartbeat Trust Fly Fishing Open Competition at three different venues this year.

Round 1 - Turnaface Fishery Moneymore Sat 23rd March

Round 2 - Woodford Fly Fishery Sat 18th May

Final - Straid Fishery Sat 6th July

The entry fee is £20 and there are great prizes at each heat and some great raffle prizes as well and hot food will be available.

All proceeds will go to the N.I Childrens Heartbeat Trust

For further detail s please contact Ian on 07521313275

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(Main Day)

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Friday 24th May – see below

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Shearing competitions from 5pm

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Or secretary@ballymenashow.co.uk

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FLOWERS ON THE EDGE

Plantlife reveals how councils are putting some of Britain's most rare wild flowers at risk

Forget visiting magnificent gardens or travelling to far flung nature reserves if you want to see some of Britain's most rare and most beautiful wild flowers then look no further than a road verge! Yet many road verges are under attack from councils who mow them within an inch of their life and in doing so decimate the precious species that thrive there. Plantlife is so concerned about the impact this is having on British wild flora they have launched a campaign "Flowers on the Edge" which is calling on councils to better protect and manage road verges.

Plantlife Chief Executive, Victoria Chester says "Our wayside flowers are under attack and people are frustrated and angry at what they see as verging on vandalism. Flowers are routinely being mown down in full bloom and the cuttings left to rot and smother remaining plants. Over time, only nettles and coarse grasses can survive this onslaught. These flowers, with us since the last ice age, are on the edge – it's time to cherish them. Plantlife says: cut less and cut later!"

Species at risk!

- Harebell: A plant which defines the term "delicate" this member of the bellflower family forms thin nodding pale blue flowers at the end of filamentous stems. Because of its delicate nature it's unable to compete against larger plants, especially coarse grasses and so is lost from poorly managed road verges.
- Early purple orchid: Often arriving with the bluebell, the purple pink flowers of this early orchid make a handsome sight in Spring. Sadly bad verge management, modern development and farming methods have all taken their toll and it's by no means as abundant as it once was.
- Green-winged orchid: The harlequin of orchids can sometimes be found flowering on road verges in late spring. Its Latin name "morio" means "fool" and refers to the jester like motley of its green stripes on the sepals.

What's the problem?

- Councils are mowing verges too early, too often
- Not one council we contacted collected cuttings as part of their routine management.
- Only species like nettles, docks and coarse grasses benefit from this type of management.

Why does this matter?

With about 3 times more grassland on our road verges than there is left in the countryside, road verges are a vital last refuge for our wildflowers. With only 2% of natural meadows remaining, so the wildflowers on road verges play a vital role as a food source for



The way we would like to see a roadside verge.

pollinators. If flowers are left to set seed, this is not only good for their survival but also provides a valuable food source for birds and small mammals. A healthy road verge is a vital wildlife corridor in an intensively managed landscape.

FACE Ireland hosts International Meeting

On 21st and 22nd March FACE Ireland will host a meeting of the 39 European countries in Dublin with delegates arriving on Wednesday 20th and departing on Sunday 24th. Such meetings normally take place in Brussels twice each year but with Ireland hosting the EU Presidency the Irish organisation persuaded their European colleagues to come to Dublin for this meeting. At least 65 delegates are expected to be in attendance, many with their spouses. Despite our economic woes, Ireland is still seen as a very attractive destination for meetings as it is perceived as very much out of the ordinary by most mainland Europeans and therefore a greater number than would otherwise attend this meeting were it held in Brussels is expected.

The Minister for Arts Heritage and the Gaeltach, Mr Jimmy

Deenihan TD will make the welcome and opening address to the meeting which will take place in the conference centre of the Stillorgan Park Hotel. For further information contact: Des Crofton, National Director, National Association of Regional Game Councils, Castle Street, Cloghan, Birr, Co Offaly. Tel 090-6457757

FACE Ireland is the umbrella body in Ireland for all Irish hunting organisations. There are 300,000 people in Ireland who participate in some form of fieldsports - the highest per capita in the EU. FACE Ireland is in turn affiliated to a European organisation, The Federation of Associations for Shooting and Conservation of the EU (FACE) which is based in Brussels and represents the interests of the national hunting associations of 39 countries at the level of the European Union institutions. As such, FACE Europe represents some 7 million hunters in that regard.



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Rush for Rizzini at McCloy's Guns Unlimited



The exquisite workmanship of Rizzini Round Action shotguns.

Without doubt the guns everyone is talking about is the latest amazing examples from Rizzini at McCloy's Guns Unlimited, Toomebridge, Co Antrim.

Customers have been delighted at the workmanship and sheer quality of the entire range, but without doubt the star of the show has been the stunning round action model seen here.

Now there is a unique opportunity to double the enjoyment and pride of ownership with a sequentially numbered pair at an unbelievably low price.

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Some of the exclusive Beretta range of clothing.

featured, your a pipe dream of owning matching pairs could become a reality for the coming season.

And what about making the close season the 'clothes' season with the finest selection of exclusive Beretta clothing.

The latest range of Beretta clothing is in stock only at at

McCloy's, along with everything else that the sportsman or woman could possibly wish for. And the best bit - everything is there for you to try so that you get exactly what you want at the keenest possible prices - and no waiting for the postman!

And if you want a classy alternative style then look no further than the Laksen or Seeland range.

And there's much more specialist clothing and footwear to see as well. Whatever you are looking for - McCloy's have you covered from their extensive selection.

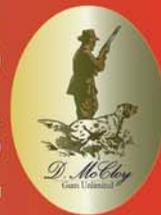
For more information on the huge range of stock at McCloy's call at our new premises at 10 Creagh Road, Toomebridge BT41 3SE or telephone 028 79 650641. Or you can find out more at www.mccloyguns.com/ or E-mail us at sales@mccloyguns.com



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Tay



The Tay designed for general country wear. The dual density oil resistant rubber sole provides excellent insulation and shock absorption for supreme comfort. Breathable Airmesh Lining.

Size 4 -13 Price £90

Torray



The Torray is a premium field sports boot with the Mossy Oak break-up camouflage pattern over the full surface of the boot. It has additional rubber overlays for reinforced toe, heel and Achilles areas. Breathable Airmesh Lining with extra fleece lining for superb insulation and comfort.

Size 4 -13 Price £120

Esk



The Esk has a heavy duty sole making it ideal for agricultural or equestrian use. Colours Black or Green. Breathable Airmesh Lining.

Size 4-13 Price £90

Tay Sport



The Tay Sport has been specifically designed for country sports wear. It has a sticky rubber sole with 5mm cleats and phylon mid sole with additional rubber overlays for reinforcing toe, heel and Achilles areas. Breathable Airmesh Lining with extra fleece lining for superb insulation and comfort.

Sizes 4-3 Price £110

Thurso



The Thurso 3.5 Field is a field boot combining a new style with cooling technology. The HYPER-VENT Airmesh lining has a diamond structure and is open faced to double the cooling effect by allowing air to pass more freely around the lining.

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www.charliekeenan.com

CHARLIE KEENAN

Greta



The Greta are ladies boots suitable for both work and leisure. They have 5mm CR-Foam insulation and toe and heel reinforcement. They are available in Fuchsia and Violet colours.

Sizes 4-9. Price £90

Lune



The Lune Ankle Boot is a high ankle boot suitable for field sports applications for comfort and warmth whatever the weather. It is lightweight and durable with a Breathable Airmesh Lining.

Sizes 4-13 Price £70

Everest



Grisport Everest a brown leather or Olive Nubuck walking boot from the Italian manufacturer.

Sizes 36-47 Price £75

Timber



Grisport Timber Hiking Boot are constructed from waxed Italian 'Dakar' leather and lined with a SpoTex Waterproof and Breathable Membrane. They also benefit from taped seams and a Lightweight Trekking Sole.

Sizes 4-0 -47 Price £65

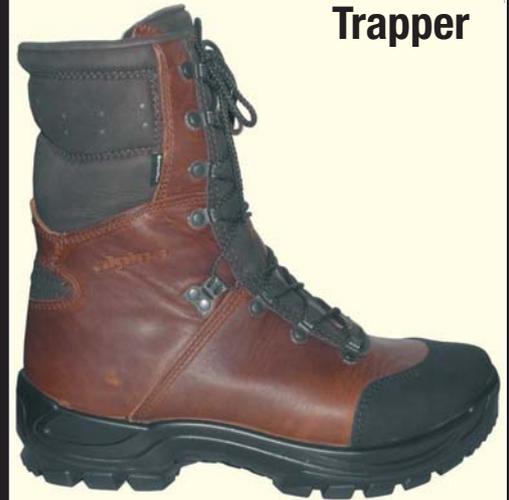
Ranger



Grisport Ranger is a hunting/ shooting country sports boot, a quality leather Italian-made boot, with a waterproof and breathable lining and beautifully padded throughout for wearer comfort. The Ranger also has a anti-slip vibram sole and pre-waxed leather for extra protection. Weight 1685g

Sizes 40 -47 Price £140

Trapper



Alpina Trapper is an Italian made boot constructed from high grade leather with an innovative Frasson sole with self cleaning cleats. The mid-calf style features a deep, protective rubber rand, soft kid leather cuffs, and metal lacing hoops throughout.

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History in the making with the largest Irish Game Fairs ever!



Whoa there! But there's no holding back the Great Game Fairs 2013!

In 2012, Albert and Irene Titterington and their family passed the rather unique milestone of having organised FIFTY Irish game and country fairs. In fact, it's been 35 years since they first brought the concept of a sustainable Game Fair to Ireland. The rest, as they say, is history.

Now here's another thought - add in the extra independent experience of the other members of the Great Game Fairs of Ireland team and the collective total hits a staggering 60 fairs.

Just how have they done this? Easy - The Great Game Fairs folk deliver 'what it says on the tin.' If it's in their advertising then - simple - that's what you get.

Their top Irish game and country fair success story is surrounded by creativity, professionalism, enthusiasm and attention to detail. Take last year when in spite of the appalling weather which caused top UK events to be cancelled and some Irish country fairs to descend into a muddy debacle, the Great Game Fairs of Ireland delivered two of the best ever Irish game and country fairs.

Now it's full steam ahead for 2013?

History will be made at Shanes Castle and Birr Castle this year with the largest Irish Game Fairs ever!

Already ambitious plans are being turned into a reality and they mean to deliver fairs of a scale not previously seen in Ireland and in fact 'the best Irish game or country fairs EVER'!

But how will the best get better?

For a start, the Shanes Castle and Ballywalter Game Fairs combine this year into the potentially huge Irish Game Fair and Flavour Fine Food Festival at Shanes Castle, Antrim on the 29th & 30th June. Two top fairs now on one site with bigger and better attractions, arena entertainment and trade stands.

The 'head of steam' built up over the Shanes Castle Fair will roll forward to the Irish Game and Country fair



On target to make history at Shanes and Birr.

The Great Game Fairs of Ireland 2013 Announce the following innovations The largest ever Irish Game Fair



will take place at **Shanes Castle, Antrim** on the **29th & 30th June 2013**
when the **Ballywalter Game Fair** and the **Irish Game Fair** will combine
to form a **SUPER FAIR** - under the title

THE IRISH GAME FAIR & FLAVOUR FINE FOOD FESTIVAL

www.irishgamefair.com

There will be many more attractions, three arenas, new international
competitions and an extra **£15,000** in prize fund.

www.irishgamefair.com

Irish Game and Country Fair



Birr Castle, Co Offaly **31st August** and the **1st September 2013**
will include an extra activity day on the **Friday 30th August** and be marketed
as **THE IRISH GAME & COUNTRY FAIR & COUNTRYLIFESTYLE FESTIVAL.**

www.irishgameandcountryfair.com

Tel: 028 (From Rol 048) 44839167 or 028 44615416

See the 2012 Great Game Fairs of Ireland on www.fieldsportschannel.com and www.dogandcountry.tv

at Birr Castle, part of Failte's 'The Gathering' marketing initiative. The Birr Castle event will be a week long series of countryside, country lifestyle and country sports events, seminars and activities, culminating in the enlarged Irish Game and Country Fair at Birr Castle on the 31st August and 1st September.

For our UK readers there has never been a better time to make that visit to Ireland and to compete for some very attractive Game Fair Championship titles and prizes. With all this going on at the historic Shanes Castle, birthplace of the Kings of Ulster is the place to be early Summer and Birr Castle nestling into a little historic country town, well the only place to be this late summer is Birr!

Now back to the big one in Northern Ireland on 29th & 30th June.



See and sample - we'll have top chefs in action.

The Irish Game Fair and Flavour Fine Food Festival, Shanes Castle, Antrim

Stand bookings are flooding in for this double value event and with the extra investment moved from the Ballywalter Fair plus the acquisition of some excellent new and existing sponsors we will not only have the best range of 'hunting, shooting and fishing competitions of any Irish game or country fair,' but also the best prize fund EVER.

Full details will be published on our web site and in the March and April online updates in our FREE to READ online Irish Countrysports and Country Life magazine (www.countrysportsandcountrylife.com) and the Summer hard copy and online editions of the magazine.

Here's as a little 'taster' of what's in store:

The Year of the 'Salmon & Woodcock'

This year our fairs' theme is that of two of Ireland's most iconic sporting species - 'The Woodcock and Salmon.' This will be reflected in special 'Salmon & Woodcock' Pavilions at both fairs featuring associated organisations, taxidermy and sporting art. This will be a central focus for our enhanced shooting and angling villages this year. And these will be just part of a hugely enlarged tented village of trade stands all with at least one huge bargain which could more than pay your very reasonable admission price to the fair. Don't forget the Great Game Fairs of Ireland provide one of the best country lifestyle shopping experiences.

One arena last year - now we'll have three plus a greatly improved range of both country sports and family attractions

The largest Fine Food Festival at any game or country fair in Ireland

Tipple and taste and see top chefs in action at one of Ireland's major fine food festivals. This will be co-ordinated and sponsored by Flavour Fine Food magazine.

A real crowd pleaser last year with its wide range of exhibitors and game and fish cookery demonstrations, this is already shaping up to be almost twice the size of 2012. Back by special public request will be the inimitable Emmet McCourt - rapidly becoming recognised as one of the top game and fish chefs anywhere in the UK and Ireland.



Neck and neck - lurcher racing action!

Come and join us at the
Flavour Fine Food Festival

at the IRISH GAME FAIR, Shanes Castle, Antrim
Saturday 29th - Sunday 30th June 2013



- Sample many multi award-winning food and drink products from some of Ireland's leading artisan producers
- Watch our chefs cook up a storm with the best of local produce
- Pick up a copy of Flavour and enter our draw to win a fabulous hamper of goodies
- Plus enjoy the many attractions of the Game Fair as a whole – great entertainment for all the family



Keep up to date with the Flavour Fine Food Festival on Facebook

<http://www.facebook.com/pages/Whats-Your-Flavour/>

Admission: Family £25, Adult £10, Child over 5 £5, including FREE Car Parking and Programme



Top layouts and exciting prizes at all levels

Ireland's largest and most varied gundog, terrier & lurcher and sporting dog weekend

There's the top international team competition as well as novice and open gundog tests for spaniels and retrievers in the fantastic setting of the banks of Lough Neagh.

Dog events with a difference - see the 27th Annual All Ireland Terrier & Lurcher Championships and for racing fans there's the international Master McGrath Racing Championship Final plus the qualifiers for the Five Nations Terrier & Lurcher Championships (final at Birr). When you add in dog agility shows and demonstrations; Pedigree dog show organised by the NIGFSS including classes for Irish Wolfhounds; parade of horses and hounds, gundog demonstrations by top handlers, a dog training class by the BBC's Dog Guru Keith Mathews - and an information stand by the Kennel Club - well Shanes must be the place to be for canine capers.

Fantastic Clay Shooting layout with top prizes

Shanes will have one of the best clay shooting layouts to be seen at any Irish Fair and some very top prizes including prizes for the new Northern Ireland Game Fair Open and Novice Championships.

Improved Angling & Shooting Villages

There's a fine range of shooting and angling stands already signed up for Shanes and these will be supported by top clay shooting and air rifle layouts and by excellent new angling competition arrangements and layouts.

Imaginative Living History Village – bringing the past to Life

From Vikings to Georgian periods, this village includes its own arena in the evocative setting of the old ruined castle. Its scenic loughside position provides not only colourful entertainment but a real educational experience for the whole family.

And that's not the half of it!

Over 35 years the Great game Fairs of Ireland have led the way in providing superb country sports and living entertainment for the whole family and this year promises to be the best yet.

For further details see: www.irishgamefair.com and www.irishgameandcountryfair.com

Take advantage of our special offer

The response to our ticket and magazine subscription has been so good that we are extending it to mid April – see details in the advert.



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'Keith has made a comeback'

Albert Titterington visits the new and revitalised business KM Dog Trailers



Keith Back at Work

In the boxing world they warn about making comebacks as boxers rarely come back either stronger or with new ideas, but last week when I visited the new business of KM Engineering, I realised that it and the main force, Keith Mcloughlin, had come back into the dog transport and housing business much stronger and buzzing with new ideas. I personally think this is one comeback that will be a huge success.

At one stage Keith's name was synonymous with dog trailers - if you wanted a professionally made, well designed trailer in Ireland, Keith was the man to see. Virtually anyone who was anyone had a KM trailer and I had two!

As I moved one way from lecturing at Queen's into full time business, Keith moved the other into full time lecturing. But I was delighted to hear he was back - and doing what he does best and not just training other people in the skills that have made him something of a legend in the canine world.

Of course the world moves on if you step off it for a while, but we feel a revitalised Keith has stepped back on at a much higher level and with even more enthusiasm while still retaining the values that made KM Trailers so desirable - well engineered products at a very keen price.

Most men cringe when their wife or partner asks: "What are you thinking about?" but Keith Mcloughlin

will inevitably answer... "The next idea for my dog trailers..." Ask anyone who has bought from Keith in his 20+ years and they will nod when they hear this. Keith is now happy to shout from the rooftops: "I'M BACK."

And he is back: bigger and better than ever. Keith has taken time out to forge new relationships and take a fresh look at new technology and materials in order to be able to produce that magic formula of allowing his creative and inventive mind run to full rein, whilst managing to capitalise on all that technology affords in order to get his message across.

Keith is passionate about his trailers and sees the timing of his return as perfect in many ways. When I caught up with him and saw his current top of the range product, I couldn't see beyond offering it as a prize at Ireland's largest and most varied canine event - the Irish Game Fair at Shanes Castle. Keith, knowing the status of this event and our event at Birr, exploded: "I'm delighted to present one of the best trailers, if not the best trailer ever made in Ireland and we'll also do something at Birr as well."



Top of the range trailer that can be won by the top gundog at the Shanes Castle Game Fair - but why wait when you can own one now!

Having acquired one of the best ever prizes for any gundog event - the top of the range KM Trailer worth just under £2,000 - I was keen to see what the top dog at Shanes would be going home with. Keith is a doggie

man through and through and his ideas and inventiveness have been drawn from the needs of the modern dog man. Keith went back to his drawing board with some very searching questions.

- How can we produce an all singing trailer – but with extras fitted as *standard*?
- How can we improve on all of our range (and our competitors)?
- How can we keep our prices keen - with no reduction in quality?
- How can we blow people’s minds with our ideas?

When he made the latter point he really struck a chord with me: when I taught marketing I always said that, in my business, I did not only work to the mantra of satisfying customers, we tried to not only satisfy them but delight them. I think Keith is working in a similar vein.

So, KM Dog Trailers was set up at their new factory in Seagahan Road, where I met with Keith and his team. KM needed space to work, room to develop and test and the project needed quality workers. So, everyone at KM has previously worked with Keith and/or could adhere to his demanding standards.

Now Keith’s enthusiasm for his new products is almost tangible. His eyes light up when he describes his ‘new baby.’

Ever heard these complaints? “It’s great having a lift up compartment but when we arrive at a shoot I need 20 minutes to untangle everything.” AS STANDARD - fully compartmentalised racking; space for your guns, cartridges, wellies - the lot.

“Great trip. We went out for a meal and next day the trailer was upended. Don’t know how the dogs slept at all. But I couldn’t leave the trailer hitched all the time.” AS STANDARD - fully extending jacking legs fitted to all trailers to stabilise, leaving the towing vehicle free to go.

“Pity the wife and kids couldn’t have a day out while we were shooting/training.” AS STANDARD - Bike rack for mounting two or three bicycles with no interference to the main trailer.

Flexibility and options were needed. And certainly, having a trained dog isn’t something which you will want to let go in a hurry. So KM wanted to go against the concept of having a tailor made/custom made/ fitted transporter for your specific car. “What happens when you want to change your car?” Keith asks with simple candour.

Back at the drawing board and KM stood out again when offering two more masterpieces as extras for the true dog man. Firstly, KM set about designing the roof-rack. “Let’s have storage and more carrying capacity.”

And now for KM’s piece de resistance. “What about allowing the dogs and owners, a bit more freedom at

events without worrying about them being over - heated in the trailer? The answer - a portable dog pen, attachable to the trailer to allow the dogs to jump in and out and fully enclosed, secure and safe?



A superb ‘extra’ as standard a portable pen with secure roof.

Personally I thought this idea was one of the best I had seen and I could see it being used at all sorts of canine events including dog shows, tests and fairs.

Before Keith got back to working at filling the stream of orders he has already taken, I wanted him to explain a bit more about the KM range of products; “We have the 2 and 3 berth trailers - all fitted as standard as explained previously. We have our full range of chew-proof dog boxes - all as stand alone or with our dog pens and runs plus whelping boxes and jump up beds.



Top quality chew proof dog cabins and kennelling.

We have just released our new ‘Cube’ - the no wheels, set on, lift off, dog transporter. It’s our latest design and well, it just speaks for itself really.’

As he runs through the range I can see for myself the

innovativeness of the design and the quality and workmanship of each of the products and I immediately made an order for a whelping box. When I thought to ask the price I was very pleasantly surprised to hear that KM definitely had made a commitment to deliver top quality products at a sensible price! Bearing in mind the cost of even just one puppy lost or damaged by the bitch standing or rolling on it starting at £175 for a custom made box, I cannot see how any serious breeder wouldn't want one! And at just £925 the basic trailer has got to be one of, if not, the best value trailer on the market.



Pair of twin trailers ready to go to Scotland.

I can see Keith is itching to get back to work and we don't get time to talk about the new website, his free give-aways from his Facebook page and KM's loyal following. Yes, Keith is glad to be back and all doggie

people who have been back in touch have been very supportive and encouraging. We at the Great Game Fairs of Ireland and Irish Countrysports and Country Life magazine are delighted to see a small business with real potential starting up again and we wish KM every success. I was really keen to take this opportunity to thank KM for their sponsorship and discuss other products however, Keith is a man whose keen mind is always thinking of further innovations and as he padded off back to work I heard him muttering: "I've just thought of something else. Gotta go."

If you wish to talk to Keith about your requirements: Tel No 02837 552113 Mobile 07587 248 147 or freephone 0800 999 7899.

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The Irish Game Fair takes place at Shanes Castle, Antrim on the 29th & 30th June 2013 www.irishgamefair.com and the Irish Game & Country Fair, at Birr Castle on the 31st August/1st September www.irishgameandcountryfair.com KM Dog Trailers will have a large stand at both events so do come and see Keith and his team there. We are delighted to announce that within the top prize fund at Ireland's largest and most varied canine events will be quality products from KM Trailers.



DOG TRAILERS

Product Range

Item	Size	Sell Price
Trailer	2 berth	From £925
	3 Berth	From £1050
	Twin Wheel	From £1400
	All-inclusive 5*	
	Twin Wheel	£1900 TOP Price
Chew Proof Dog Cabins	Large	£250
	Med	£200
	Small	£150
Whelping Box	Large	£175
Jump up Beds	Large	£50
New transporter "The Cube"		£295

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DOG TRAINING DVD REVIEW

RETRIEVER TRAINING - GURU STYLE

Retriever Training Guru Style features Keith Mathews, the Dog Guru, Ireland's most famous dog trainer and 'dog owner' trainer. Now training on the international stage taking his unique training methods to a worldwide audience, this boxed set of DVDs is the most lavish production imaginable and is without doubt the best ever Gundog training DVD.

Of cinema quality, it's produced by top director Harry Cook. Filmed in four different countries and three years in the making, this DVD is unlike anything you will have seen before. Nothing else even comes close!

For a start there is not one but four DVDs in the package lasting 92 minutes, 97 minutes, 106 minutes and 95 minutes respectively. Simply put, it's the most comprehensive training package ever available for retriever trainers, using methods never before caught on camera. Many of the exercises and methods used are really unique and boy do they work!

Each DVD is divided into broad topics. The first DVD includes choosing a puppy, first days home, training equipment, puppy training, becoming the pack leader and obedience training and each of these sections is subdivided into a range of related topics.

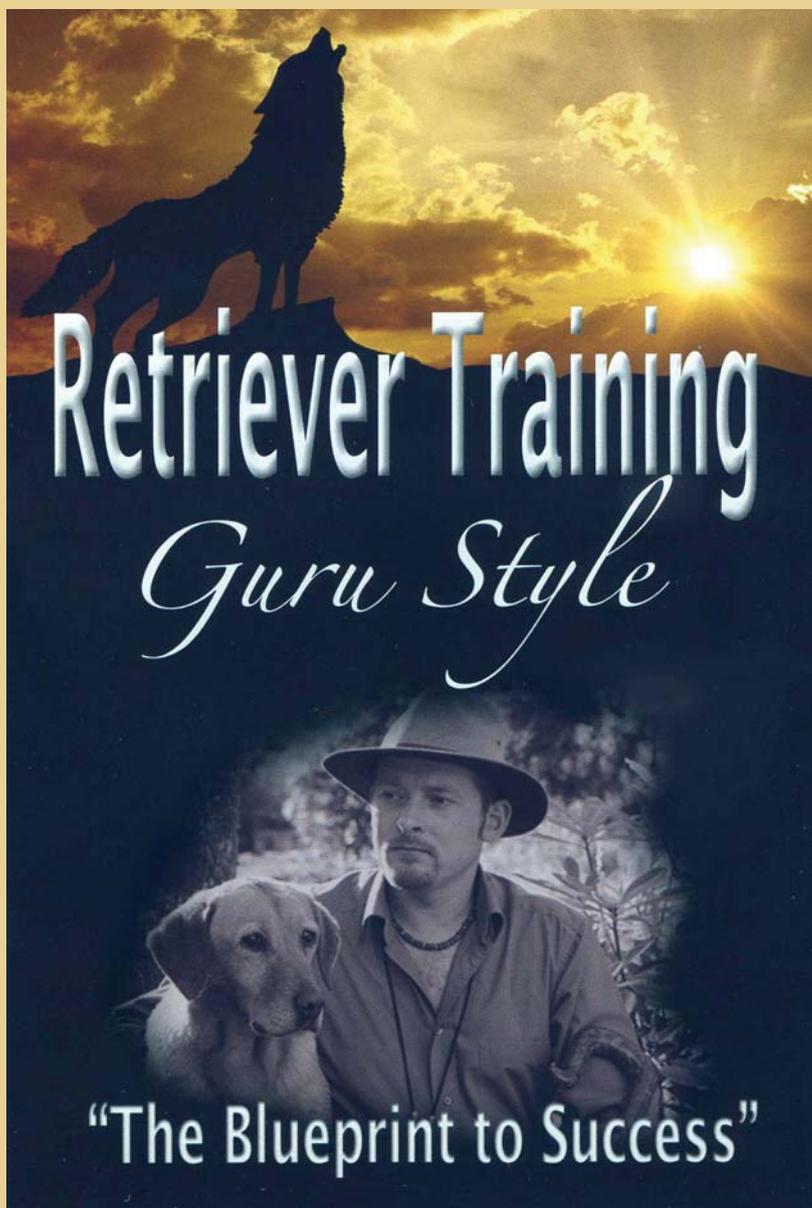
In the second DVD, sections are devoted to recall training, delivery to hand, intermediate training, whistle work, game finding ability, marking and the triangle. What is it? I'll leave that to Keith to explain but this is another that does what it says on the tin!

Next, we move to advanced training such as casting, the memory retrieve, developing the cast, handling, taking directions, the three card trick, and another new one to me, the rotating diamond. It also includes the 'get over' command, advanced water work and hunting the circle.

Finally, we learn how to polish our dog's skills with an introduction to cold game, the rotating diamond on difficult terrain, the compass - another one I wasn't familiar with - and simulated walked up training.

What has Keith left out? Well, I scratched my head long and hard and asked quite a few enthusiasts to come up with something. We all drew a blank. What we agreed was that the set of DVDs represents the most comprehensive Gundog training manual ever seen on screen. Yes, ever!

In the past we have all seen training videos with dogs which 'suddenly' behave as if they have had years of experience at the task in hand. Hmmmm. They are faced with say, the three card trick' and low and behold, after a wee toot on the whistle or two, they have it down to a tee. But not the Dog Guru. Keith guides us and the dogs in a step by step process using a wide variety of exercises and methods. He comes across a problem and addresses it. Never rushed, always the master of the unknown Keith is unflustered when a problem arises. What does he do? He uses an alternative plan and we are left with the



feeling he actually thinks like a dog. He 'helps' the dog to achieve success, then he builds on it and moves forward at the speed of the individual dog. If he runs into a snag, no worries, he goes back a stage, the dog continues at that, and then and only then moves to the next stage if he has mastered the preceding exercise.

Now, I have trained many dogs including springers, labradors and cockers over the years. Some of the springers were run in trials with varying degrees of success and nowadays my labs are used solely as peg dogs and for picking up. But let me say here and now, if these DVDs had been available in my formative days there is no doubt that I would have made a much better job of training my dogs.

Come to think of it, Keith's DVDs are inspirational so perhaps it's not too late to teach this old dog new tricks? Somehow I think there might be a wee pup coming on in a wee while and who knows what might happen if I keep Retriever Training Guru Style at my side!

For more information please visit www.dogandcountry.tv/

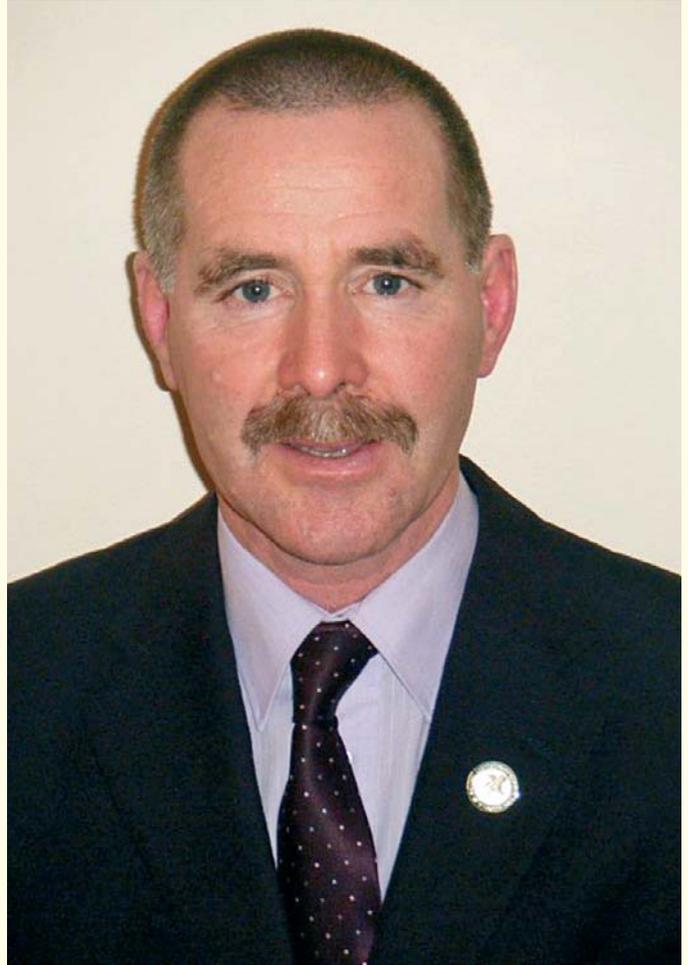
Sean Doris, Chairman, National Association of Regional Game Councils

What is your background?

I come from a rural background. I was born and reared on a small dairy farm in Co. Longford, near the village of Ballinalee. As a small boy, I played cowboys and Indians through the fields of our farm and neighbouring farms. On one of our neighbour's farms there was a small sand and gravel quarry, which gave the ideal setting for such games. There was always a rifle and gun and holster set on my Santa Claus List, which was typical for boys in the '60's. During my teens, I joined the FCA, which is the local Defence Force or Army Reserve. This brought me directly into the use of military rifles and knowledge of firearms generally. Target teams and competitions were a big part of my life during these years. Memories of these days are to be seen within my trophy collection. At age twenty I had joined An Garda Siochana and I am still a serving member today, having spent twenty-six of the thirty-one years in a small rural village in Co. Cavan called Redhills, very similar to the place where I grew up.

How did you get into shooting?

From a boy with a toy rifle, I had learned to stalk rabbits in the long grass. Rabbits were very plentiful on the farm where I grew up and were always a pest in my father's vegetable garden. From a very early age I would try out my skills on these rabbits with my father's side by side Marlin shotgun among the drills of carrots and cabbage. It was not long until I discovered that these rabbits were easier shot while running, provided the distance was right and you gave them a "bit of lead." A dog was always part of the game too. Our family pet, a collie dog, was always ready to help out to retrieve rabbits when shot. He also set pheasants while hunting and at the age of twelve I downed my first pheasant, set by the family pet. "Good old Spot!" Having spent my apprenticeship on our farm at rabbits and pheasants, I became legal with my shotgun at sixteen and also joined my local Gun Club, Ballinalee/Killoe Gun Club.



Sean Doris, Chairman, NARGC

This gave me a much bigger hunting territory which I made very good use of. Foxes, mink, rabbits, grey crows, magpies and pigeon were always target species and during the open season all game species came under the radar. My first gun dogs were an English Pointer, a small Fox Terrier and a Foxhound. All three got plenty of exercise. As well as shooting, hunting, snaring and trapping were part of the Club's activities.

I participate mostly these days in rough shooting, mainly pheasant and woodcock. I am a member of Redhills Gun Club, which has some of the best rough shooting habitats around. Duck and snipe are also high on the list. Pest control of all pest species is top of the agenda within the Club's activities.

What was the election process involved in your selection as Chairperson?

I became Chairman of the NARGC from a field of three candidates in October 2011 when I was elected by the members of the NARGC Governing Body at our AGM. My two fellow candidates for the position were both friends of mine in the field of shooting, both of whom I have served with for many years on our Executive Committee and on other Subcommittees. Our Association is a very democratic one, where everybody is eligible to be elected to any position with the support of the electorate from within the Governing Body.

What particular strengths do you bring to the position?

Difficult question for me to answer. Maybe it is for others to judge what strengths I bring to the position! My longevity of being 'around' the Executive table, as an Officer of the Association for close on twenty-five years could be a very important strength. Also my ability to listen and debate and to take heed of and develop the needs of the grassroots membership. I am also a strong believer in teamwork. I have made this a theme of my Chairmanship and I am happy to say that so far during my term I have been able to encourage and deliver a particularly good team spirit among the staff and Executive members alike and beyond. The fruits of that teamwork can be found in many of the issues in which we are involved. I also believe that if I give a person a job to do, they should be trusted and allowed to get on with it. What is the point otherwise of delegating in the first place?

The NARGC has two objectives: to represent and protect the interests, objectives and traditional rights of resident shooting sportsmen and sportswomen and to promote the conservation of wildlife and its habitat. With both in mind, what do you see as the key challenges in the next 12 months and how will you address them?

There are seismic changes occurring in the landscape, in the weather systems, and in the behaviour of some wild species, particularly migratory birds throughout their ranges. Migration dates are moving in harmony with the changing weather patterns and of course this also affects breeding. Attitudes in society are also changing right across Europe and Irish society is not immune. Nothing can be taken for granted anymore. This presents huge challenges for fieldsports generally but also, I believe, opportunities if we have the wit to recognise them. One thing is for certain, we

cannot presume that the general public will remain unquestioning about game hunting and its place in a modern society. And therein lies probably the most important challenge of all. Gone already are the days when we could justify hunting on the basis that it is a "traditional" rural activity. While the true justification itself has not changed, we must articulate it with greater technical knowledge and precision and a greater reliance on science to demonstrate that sustainable hunting is part of the conservation solution and not part of the problem. The question is not "Why hunt?" but rather "Why not?" if it is sustainable? Unfortunately, there are still many within the ranks of hunting who don't recognise that we must be more precise and even more open about our arguments for hunting. One only has to look at the issues we are regularly dealing with today compared to twenty years ago. Education, science and transparency must be at the heart of everything we do if hunting is to be understood and accepted by society into the future. Game meat is nutritious and healthy and our ability to continue to enjoy this bounty will be dependent on society understanding this and that hunting can continue on the basis of good ethical practices and on the principle of sustainability i.e. wise use of a renewable natural resource.

I see that you have 28,000 members with numbers increasing every year for the past 10 years - can this momentum be maintained and by what means?

As with many other organisations, membership is very important to the life of the NARGC if we are to strive and maintain our role as the largest game hunting, sport shooting and conservation organisation in Ireland today. With this to the forefront of our considerations, we presently have a Subcommittee chaired by Executive member John Butler, and consisting of members from within our Governing Body and beyond reviewing our membership structures and recruitment policies. This Committee, as we write, is tasked with looking at all aspects of membership, with a view to substantially increasing it. This was a decision taken by our Association through resolution at our AGM. If we are to develop and grow, we must embrace change and meet the new challenges which are coming our way.

Can you comment please on the relationship of NARGC to other country sports organisations including Irish and international bodies?

Our relationship with other country sports

organisations is very healthy. From our membership in FACE Ireland, where we are the largest organisation, this brings us into direct contact with all our sister organisations. Being a professional organisation with a full time staff and permanent office, gives us an ability and indeed obligation, to lead and bring others along with us for the common good of shooting and hunting. At international level we enjoy a very high profile. This has been due in no small measure to the efforts of our National Director, Des Crofton who has been the international face of Irish hunting and shooting for many years. He is currently a Vice President of FACE Europe, a role which is of great benefit to all shooting and hunting organisations in Ireland. NARGC is also an important member of CIC International by our direct involvement in CIC Ireland. As Chairman of NARGC, I currently hold the Chairmanship of CIC Ireland and Des Crofton is its Head of Delegation. This is a very new delegation, set up only last May, even though NARGC has been a member of CIC International for a great many years. CIC Ireland can only grow from strength to strength by the unity of all interested organisations.

How important is political lobbying?

If we are to survive, we must ensure that our legislators are fully briefed on our activities so that they have a clear understanding of our many activities and their legitimacy and reasonableness. This means we must of necessity participate in political lobbying. It is so important that all sides in any debate are kept informed, whether at local, national or international level. If those who make and formulate legislation which is going to affect shooting and hunting are to do so from a position of knowledge, then it follows that we must ensure they have an adequate understanding of the social and economic importance of our sport.

NARGC has used the courts to take on government and others on a range of issues - is there a danger in shutting off conduits to politicians and high ranking officials with such legal confrontation?

Firstly, it is not our primary function or wish to go to Court against any organ of the State. We prefer in the first instance to work with them. But sometimes we are faced with failures of state, coupled with intransigence in recognising/appreciating those failures and the profound effect they have on our club members. The NARGC's Constitution and Rules contains two

objectives, both of which are mandatory and one of which obliges us to protect the interests, objectives and traditional rights of resident shooting sportsmen and sportswomen. So when we meet a 'brick wall,' even though our preference is to talk, we sometimes have no choice but to resort to the courts and we have never shied away from that course where it has proven necessary. We, as an Association, are always ready to sit down and debate what is right for our members at all times, whether before, during or after an action through the Courts. While we have taken on Government Ministers and other organs of the State, we still enjoy a very good and healthy professional relationship with the vast majority of them, with everyone recognising the decisions of the Courts on all matters. To coin our National Director: We reserve the right to have a good row about what is important to us and then welcome our adversary to a drink afterwards with a view to moving on. To do anything other than this would be unprofessional. Many of those we have challenged in the courts have taken that principle on board, but it is to be regretted that a tiny minority have not. Personal agendas have no place at our table and this is why we try reach out to our opponents.

Is the NARGC's communication strategy working effectively and what changes would you like to see?

Communication is so important nowadays. With the modern day trends and importance of communication, we must make full use of IT. The importance of getting all relevant political news, policies, data, etc., out to our membership quickly cannot be emphasised enough and we must use all tools at our disposal e.g. text, email, Facebook, website, Twitter, etc. At present, we are delivering on this front, with a view to improving and reaching out to more of our membership in the future. Our communications machinery is constantly being updated and improved.

If you had to pick a personal goal to achieve before you handed over the position to your successor - what would that be?

My personal goals are twofold: (a) to oversee a structure which will deliver a significant growth in membership; and (b) to further expand our education programme thereby raising standards in hunting and shooting to a new level which will impress and give confidence to legislators and the general public alike that the NARGC is an organisation which can be trusted.

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FEEDWELL and Irish Countrysports and Country Life sponsor the NI Gundog Field & Show Society 'Gundog of the Year' competition.

Judge : Mrs L Howarth (Caleydene)

NI Gundog Puppy

1st Wendy Fleming's Pointer Carmandine Kimono of Glenariff (b)

2nd Chris & Hillary Laverty's Cocker Laveris Watch Me (d)

3rd Liz Boal's Irish Setter Sabrejill Spirit Dancer (b)

4th Kerry Brennan's Cocker Backhills Bewitched by Kerrijoy (b)

NI Veteran

1st Stanley Loughlin's Welsh Springer Waldheim Cynan (d)

2nd McKinley's Welsh Springer Sh Ch Kazval Frivolity (b)

NI Gundog

1st Tom & Marie Mervyn's GSP Ir Sh Ch Karlivar Dusky Rose at Tomanipoint (b)

2nd Chris & Hillary Laverty's Cocker Laveris Touch N Go (b)

3rd Kerry Brennan's English Springer Glenbrows Secret Agent at Kerrijoy (d)

4th Kerry Brennan's Cocker Ir Sh Ch Asquanne Ginnifer at Kerrijoy (b)



'Gundog of the Year'-Tom & Marie Mervyn's GSP Ir Sh Ch Karlivar Dusky Rose at Tomanipoint



Winner and Runner Up Gundog Puppy of the Year.



Winner and Runner Up Gundog of the Year.



Winner and Runner Up Veteran Gundog of the Year.

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Three generations of premium dog food production since 1961 - another chapter starts in the Feedwell story



The late Jimmy Clegg Founder of Feedwell.



Roger Clegg MD Feedwell.

Last year we said goodbye to one of Ireland's best known dog food entrepreneurs - Jimmy Clegg, founder of the Feedwell brand. However on a recent visit to the factory we were pleased to hear that a new member of the family - MD Roger's son, Jamie has decided to join the company that his grandfather founded.

Jimmy was not only a far sighted entrepreneur but he was a 'character' with whom one could enjoy a bit of 'craic.' From his early days working in the pet food industry to founding his own company he built up a fairly unrivalled knowledge of pet nutrition within his commitment of delivering his customers a top quality food at the best possible price. This is a commitment that son Roger has carried on and one which I am sure Jamie in turn will share.

I can think of no better way of remembering Jimmy than through the eyes of his son Roger in the eulogy he gave at his father's funeral. I think readers will agree that he paints a rather compelling picture of a man who while he worked hard at his business lived a very full and family orientated life.

"James Clegg born 12th Jan 1922 eldest son of William and Leila.

School and sporting life...

He was born in Newtownards in the family home in High Street where the Nationwide Building Society now has an office. Jimmy attended school at Regent House where he achieved academic success in both his junior and senior certificates. He was particularly good at mathematics. To demonstrate this he would challenge anyone using a calculator to beat him doing a tote with pen and paper. I never knew anyone to beat him.

Feedwell[®]

Whilst at school he entered fully into most sporting activities available. He played Rugby for the school in the mornings and Hockey for North Down in the afternoons. He also played cricket for the school and for North Down. He was also proficient in the racquet sports of Badminton and Tennis and I believe there is still a cup at home which he won in a badminton tournament.

After he left school he played Senior Rugby for Malone and London Irish before returning to captain Ards R.F.C. in 1949. Whilst in London he had trials for West Ham United and they wanted to sign him as a 'goalie.' He was always an enthusiastic and encouraging captain and was, on one occasion, when losing quite heavily and with 10 minutes to go heard to say, 'come on lads 4 quick tries and we'll beat them.'

He also had a great love of motorbikes and he and his brother Moore raced the bikes in Bangor Castle Park and other local tracks. I'm reliably told that in the dark of night on the eve of a race, the main road at Whitespots was a veritable racetrack as James and Moore got the bikes ready for the next days racing. Their mother did not approve, and on one occasion had to be restrained from chopping up the best bike with a hatchet.

Business background....

He had a varied and interesting career. When he left school he went into the Drawing Room at Short Brothers, then worked for the Milk Marketing Board based at that time in Magherafelt. He then worked for Kalamazoo selling business systems throughout Northern Ireland. This was probably

when he realised his true calling, he was a salesman, he could sell snow to the Eskimos!

An important moment in time...

Dad decided that all the pretty girls lived in Bangor, except his sister Dorothy of course, so on a Sunday he would walk from Whitespots to Bangor to eye up the talent on Bangor sea front. In time he spied Patricia on Bangor sea front. She remembers it well, this handsome chap winking and grinning at her. Her opening words were: "What are you grinning at.?" We don't know the response but we're sure he had an answer, he was never lost for words.

He soon discovered that Paddy as he called her sang in the choir in this church. Soon he was to be seen in the gallery winking and grinning at Paddy in the choir. What exactly Grandpa Morrow (Mum's father and the organist) thought of this behaviour we'll never know for sure, but the courtship succeeded and they married on 5th July 1944 in this church and had 67 ½ happy years together. The following year, the first joy of their lives Lorraine was born. Another motor bike story was often told of that time of James and Pat on a Motorbike with Lorraine on the fuel tank and Roger 'in the tum,' being stopped by a policeman who thought the bike was slightly overloaded!!

Family life and commitment...

Dad took a great interest initially in Lorraine's, mine and Gary's interests and then in the grandchildren's. These were varied and included all kinds of academic interests, car rallying (Lorraine), sport, board games and music. By now you would understand he was quite an expert at everything. He bought Lorraine and me a pony when I was 9 and Lorraine was 12. Lorraine was not sure if she wanted a pony, but I certainly wasn't getting a pony on my own. The horsey people here will know that leather used in horse tack has to be cleaned with special materials. Dad was a great shoe cleaner and was convinced that shoe polish was the best thing to clean tack with. One day when Dad having polished the saddle decided it was time to show me how to jump onto the saddle on my tummy and then throw my leg over the saddle, well he jumped onto the saddle on his tummy and went straight over the other side landing on his hands with his feet still atop the saddle. The



Jimmy with 'Paddy' and family at their Diamond Wedding Anniversary l-r Vicky (Roger's daughter); Roger, Paddy & Jimmy, Jamie, and Roger's wife Suzy.

family has had many laughs over the years recounting that story. That same pony Scout returned to Whitespots when Gary too decided he wanted to learn to ride.

Lorraine by now had decided she did not want a pony so a small yacht, an Insect Class yacht called Ladybird was bought. I can remember Dad, Mum and I sitting on Seacliffe Road watching regattas not knowing at that time anything about sailing. Lorraine would be seriously quizzed after the event as to why when other boats were going in one direction she would go in the other. He still had to learn about wind direction.

He was a great cook who always took charge of the Sunday roast, the Christmas dinner, Christmas cake, puddings, trifles laced with plenty of sherry which was amazing for someone who was tea-total.

He baked wedding cakes for his sister Dorothy and daughter Lorraine.

He also had an interest in horses and greyhounds and had great success with both, having success in the showing ring and the show jumping arena with his horses, and qualifying for many greyhound racing finals including the Greyhound Derby at The White City in 1972. He was a former chairman of the Northern Ireland Greyhound Breeders Association and was also on the committee of the Show Jumping Association of Ireland.

A major change of direction into the pet food industry

The next major career change was the one that shaped his future in the pet food industry. He was appointed salesman with Pedigree Pet Foods, and very soon after was made Area Manager for Northern Ireland, North of England and Scotland.

After a number of years some of the entrepreneurial genes which had been lurking inside the man waiting to be released escaped, and he decided to go into business by himself. By now he had some knowledge of the pet food industry and so decided to become a pet food wholesaler, which satisfied the escaped genes for a short time.

However it wasn't long before the remainder of the lurking genes escaped and persuaded Jimmy that he could make pet food and wholesale it himself. Thus Feedwell Dog Food was born in 1961 in an old train engine shed on the Belfast Road in Bangor. Dad bought a biscuit baking plant from the Ormeau Bakery and he and his old friend and workmate Frazer Duncan assembled the whole production line themselves.

Initially the wholesaling business continued during the day and Dad and Fraser made dog food at night into the early hours. In time the wholesaling business was terminated and all energies were focused on manufacturing and selling Feedwell.

In 1972 there was a major disaster in the fortunes of Feedwell. The factory was blown up as were many businesses in those early days of the troubles. In those days it took quite some time for the N.I.O. to provide compensation but thankfully Daddy had started a pet shop in Bangor and that along with Clegg Brothers sporting shop which he and Moore ran together at that time provided enough to keep the wolf from the door.

In 1975 the genes were reawakened and he journeyed to USA and visited Anderson International who were one of the pioneers of manufacturing Pet Food using extrusion process. Dad was convinced that this was the way forward and bought an extrusion plant. This was the first of its kind in Ireland and Feedwell was reborn in Annesborough. His old friend Frazer

and he assembled that plant themselves and NUMBER ONE production line is still intact and in perfect working order. The planning and the construction of the plant so impressed the top brass of Anderson International, that it was seen as a showcase for others wishing to set up a small plant.

One of the most amazing things about this was that Dad was now 53. Most people are starting to think of retirement at this age but not him.

A very full life...

He was a loyal member of this church and sang in the choir here for many years with his beloved Paddy. They did most things together including being members of Bangor Harmonic Society for some years.

He took a huge interest in his Grandchildren Caron, Pamela, Vicky, Rachael, Jamie, Andrew, and Charlie and was very proud to see them develop into young adults. He was especially pleased when one of his Grandchildren Caron produced a child, Lucy two years ago and he finally became a Great Grandfather.

He had a full life achieving a lot that most people can only dream of, he had a great sense of humour and the family can remember lots of occasions when his laugh bellowed out and tears streamed down his face, he was generous to a fault, loved his family dearly, and will be missed especially by his wife Paddy, sister Dorothy, children Lorraine, Roger and the family circle". Roger Clegg

A second generation...

Roger joined the business in 1979. As Jimmy had learned the business from 'the sharp end' so he required Roger to start and learn it from the bottom up.

Roger too played rugby at school and at Stranmillis and into his early thirties being capped by both Ulster and Ireland. After retiring from rugby Roger, whose uncle Moore had purchased him a gun for his sixteenth birthday, took an even greater interest in shooting and gundogs. So much pleasure has Roger derived from his dogs that they are the dogs depicted on the Feedwell bags. Having enjoyed rough shooting Roger moved into more formal shooting circles which saw him develop his interest in Labradors. His shooting exploits allow the company to advertise its products in the best possible way.

Having taught for a number of years Roger went into Merchant Banking before joining the company in 1979 after a three year return to teaching. He worked in tandem with his father, literally starting at the bottom, 'getting his hands dirty' maintaining the machinery and driving the delivery lorry around an increasing customer base while his father concentrated on sales and marketing.

And on to a third generation...

Jimmy would be very proud to know that his grandson Jamie has joined the company and in a capacity where he



Jamie following in a family tradition of Rugby and Pet food!

started his own career in sales and customer service. From a rural family, Jamie has been surrounded by dogs (and horses) and his interest in country sports has always been a keen one. Jamie graduated in Business Studies from Edinburgh University in 2011 and before joining Feedwell worked in the French Alps for a year in the hospitality industry. Now back at home playing rugby at Bangor, he seems to be thriving on the intricacies and demands of the work place and seems excited and motivated about what the future will bring.

Jamie says he is looking forward to building on Feedwell's already substantial customer base throughout Ireland. He believes service to have been paramount to the company's success over the years and is already building relationships with customers new and old that will, he hopes, last another 50 years of the company's history.

Whilst somewhat new to actually working in the pet food trade, his background meant that he was in a wonderful position to more fully understand and appreciate the great many challenges that exist within this ever changing market. He trusts that by developing on the existing Feedwell range as well as some new ideas up the company's sleeve, Feedwell will continue to provide the quality, affordable dog food that the brand's reputation has been built upon for so many years.

While Jamie's university training has given him the skills to be involved in a number of areas of the business including advertising and bag design, it is in sales and customer service that he will really focus on.

From my knowledge of Jimmy I can imagine that for him, to see two Cleggs working in harness together and in particular Jamie taking on his old sales, marketing and customer service mantle would be the finest epitaph he could imagine.

Albert J Titterington

Top Winning Dogs Thrive on **Feedwell**

Dogs such as those owned by Alan Rountree:



Alan C.M. Rountree casting Int FT Ch Waterford Edward of Tasco in the recent IK Champonship. They finished 2nd adding to Alan's illustrious handling record in the championship - one that is unlikely to be equalled.

These owners of top field trial, working test and show dogs all consider that by feeding Feedwell products, they get the performance from their dogs that they require.

These are just some of the owners of all types of dogs who use Feedwell regularly and express their satisfaction with well formulated products available at sensible prices.

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and Supports your sport**

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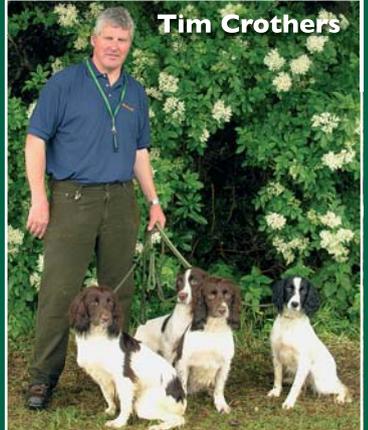
Damian Newman



Laurence Hennessy



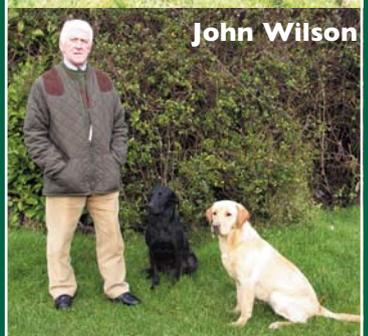
**Finbar's O'Sullivan's IR.
FTCH Rommels Mystery**



Tim Crothers



**Winston Kelly's
Glenloch Tyler &
Carraigairt Adam**



John Wilson

The 37th IRISH KENNEL CLUB Championship Stake for A.V. Spaniels sponsored by RED MILLS

The beautiful Estate of Glenarm Castle in Co Antrim played host to the 37th RED MILLS sponsored Irish Kennel Club's A.V Spaniel Championship. This was the third time this prestigious event has been held at Glenarm Estate. Initially in 2004, then 2007 and again, with expectations exceeded, in 2012. The final tally of 43 runners, 4 having withdrawn, consisted of 1 cocker spaniel, and 42 English Springer's of which 26 were bitches and 17 were dogs.



Guns Martin Daniels, Martin O'Riordan, Keeper Robert Betts and guns Willie Megaughin and Mark Clifford.

This championship was held on the 28th and 29th of December 2012 by the kind permission of Lord and Lady Dunluce. Special thanks must go to The Glenarm Estate Manager Mr. Adrian Morrow for his assistance in facilitating the running of this great event. The head keeper Robert Betts acted as the steward of the beat for the event. He had prepared the ground and the game supply with such precision that each competitor had an equal opportunity to show their dog's full potential. He must be congratulated for his constant attention to detail.

The judges for this RED MILLS sponsored IKC championship were Mr Tim Crothers from Ireland and Mr David Lisett from Scotland. Both of these are highly respected international judges The Referee for the championship was Mr Danny O'Neill from Ireland. The guns over the two days who shot extremely well, were Martin O'Riordan, Martin Daniels, Mark Clifford and William Megaughin.

The briefing began early on the morning of the 28th December, in the seaside setting of Glenarm village, delivered by the chairman of the championship committee, Mr Pat Brennan

The first morning hunting started with apparently bare ground, As the morning progressed the trial ground took on a different shape as we moved into an ivy covered woodland, with fallen trees and patches of

natural cover with ample amounts of ground game and pheasants.

Game was well dispersed, allowing dogs to show their hunting ability, and stamina. This type of ground was to continue for the remainder of the first day, getting lighter in some places and thicker in others but not too exhausting for the dogs.

On day two we moved into bramble patches interlaced with fallen bracken, heavy white grass and patched of whins with plenty of low briars. Without exception all the spaniels that were asked to hunt this tough difficult cover did so without habituation, although some were more aggressive in their hunting than others.

Day One

I was privileged to accompany Judge David Lisett throughout the event. As we started day one the first two dogs in line were, dog No 3. McGwyn Deallus handled by Willie Edgar running under Judge Tim Crothers on my left and dog No 2. Salamere Finn handled by Mr T. McCann was running under Judge David Lisett. No 2 unfortunately did not have a good first innings and was eliminated. No 3 had a number of finds and a retrieve on a rabbit and which ensured second run.

The next two dogs in line were No 5 Aughasla Tern handled by Kevin Murphy and No 6 Mr J Brennan's

Clodahill Farah handled by Pat Brennan, unfortunately she had a difficulty with a rabbit and was eliminated. Dog No 5 on the other line was going equally well but its pattern was a little ragged and was inclined to take too much ground forward, but having finds and retrieves it was good enough to go into the second round.

No 7 Pondbrook Bracken of Evansaura handled by Trevor Evans, had a quick entry and exit from the championship when unfortunately she moved on a bird.

FTCh Whitehope Euro handled by well known and well liked P J Davitt had a tidy run, having a number of finds and a retrieve across the line to a bird on the road. Starting with her usual pace and style she finished a little down on her gears but did enough to gain a second run. This bitch was born in 2005 and is still able to contend for top places at field trials, P.J. must be very happy with her.

Next dogs in line were No 11 Int FTCh Skronedale Romulus handled by Des Donnelly and No 12 Sean Moriarty's Tearsol Flash. It was a pleasure to watch these dogs, both are hi-powered males but while Tearsol Flash has a tight pattern, Skronedale Romulus is a wide striding spaniel hungry for ground, it was exciting to watch the contrast in styles. Within a few strides Tearsol Flash had a find and the bird was shot in front of him, he was steady to flush and the fall and was sent to retrieve which he did with great enthusiasm. Just as he was about to offer the retrieve to his handler, Sean Moriarty, a bird flushed close by him, he dropped his retrieve from his mouth to watch the bird flying away, he then picked up his retrieve but was dismissed from the trial for the sin of discarding his retrieve.

No 11 Int FTCh Skronedale Romulus on the other side was having a stop start run, with birds from the other line being shot and falling close by him, a bird that flushed wild from the middle of the line was shot and fell in front of him and it was a runner, he was sent for it and retrieved without any difficulty.

The other line had dog No 14 Finno under judge David Lisset, he was sent to retrieve in close proximity to Skronedale Romulus who was held on the drop and had to watch while the dog No 14 retrieved in front of him. There was a lot of temptation at this point but Des Donnelly and his dog were steady. He finished his run with a long retrieve from a grass field and would have a second run under Judge David Lisett later in the trial. Dog No 14 Finno Max finished his run at this point, having had finds and retrieves but he did not impress and did not receive a second run.

No 16 Mr H McEaney's FTCh Forestmay Poppy handled by Ricky Cashin had a smart and efficient run having nice retrieves and a very positive find on a cock bird, staying with her handler she would have a second run and receive a Diploma of Honour.

FTCh Hollydrive Theo handled by Mick Walsh, this

son of Poppet Rocket by Helmsway Hawk of Whichwillows is a super dog, hungry for game and with plenty of drive always with his handler and maintaining a nice pattern. He found a number of tightly tucked in rabbits and had a super find on a cock pheasant but all the rabbits ran back into the gallery and could not be shot and the cock bird was missed. All he needed was a retrieve to complete a run that was impressive. Unfortunately he was called in as a second dog down on a runner and when sent to attempt the retrieve he went off the whistle. He would not be called back.

No 15 Clodahill Ian, handled by Damian Kelly had a number of finds and retrieves but while not making any mistakes he was not an exciting dog to watch, he had a similar second run and would end the championship with a Diploma of Honour.

As No 17 was absent No 19 Chinachgook Roberto handled by Simon Dixon came into line under Judge Tim Crothers and dog No 20 FTCh Clodahill Annie handled by Pat Brennan came in after Mick Walsh's FTCh Hollydrive Theo retired. Roberto was the first dog down on the runner that Mick Walsh's spaniel failed on but was run on and had a second run under David Lisset and eventually received a Diploma of Honour.

Pat Brennan's little bitch Clodahill Annie had an exciting run but a hiccup on a retrieve deprived her of a second run. Next dog in line was Mrs A Binley's FTCh Lisgarvagh Candy, previously owned, trained and handled by the twice winner of the IKC spaniel championship Mr Paul Carragher, her handler was John Binley. This spaniel had an exciting level of determination and hunted cover freely and with plenty of style but a problem handling on to a dead bird in cover unfortunately created enough of a problem not to allow her a second run.

No 26 Mr M Kierse's Leaderry Twister was next in line under Judge David Lisset, unfortunately this little dog while full of pace and style had less than the requirement of training to compete at this level and perhaps another day and more experience on both dog's and handler's part will tell another story.

Mr R Thompson's FTCh Flaxdale Jamie at No 28 was a very exciting dog to watch. This dog was bred by Sam Polly the Breeder of Flaxdale Holly which was handled to greatness by the well known spaniel handler Robin Young. This is a very fast dog with huge drive and style and he completed his run without fault, and one wonders if a little more polish to his performance may have added to a better result than his award of a Diploma of Honour.

Mr Eddie Scott handling FTCh Broomfield Rosetta at No 25 had a very controlled run having finds and retrieves, this little spaniel bitch was very sure of a second run as she performed without fault under Judge

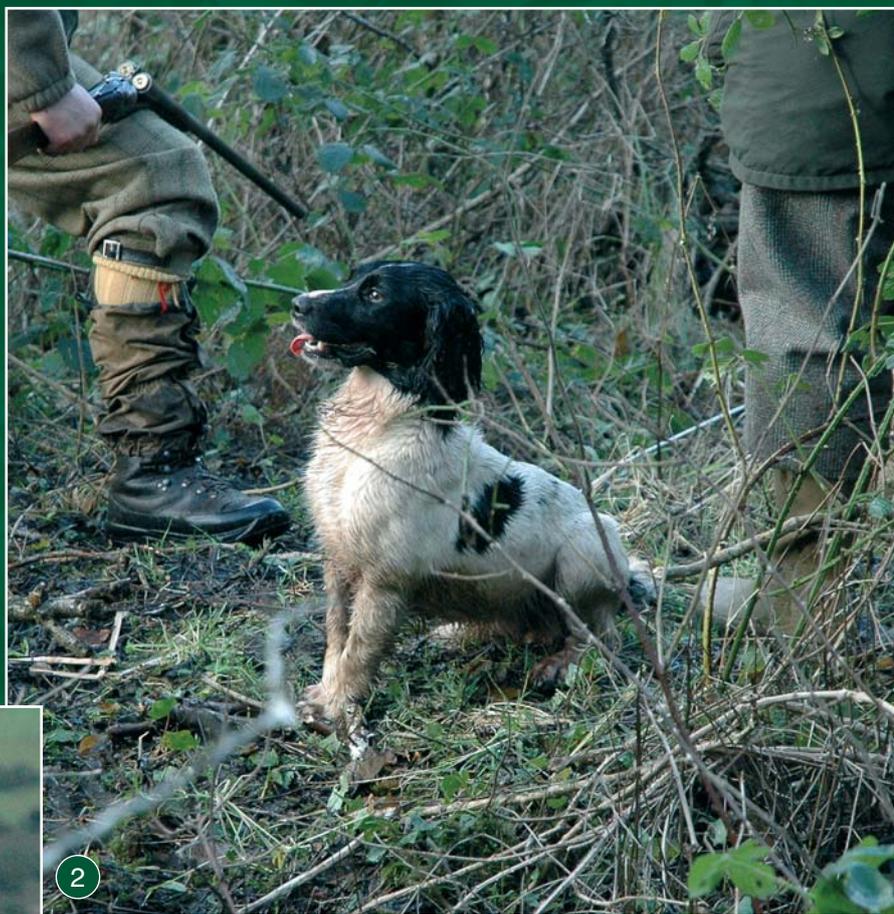
THE 37TH IRISH KENNEL CLUB CHAMPIONSHIP STAKE FOR A.V. SPANIELS



1. *David Lisset and Mick Walsh ready to go.*
2. *FTCh Forestmay Poppy waits for instructions.*
3. *Best friends Mr Brian O'Hara and Kevin Sommers.*
4. *Handler of FTCh Flaxdale Jamie, Mr R Thomson hands a bird to Judge David Lissett.*



GLENARM CASTLE ON 28TH & 29TH DECEMBER 2012 SPONSORED BY REDMILLS



1. Judge David Lissett and a happy Louis Rice before his run.
2. Sliabh Treasure placed second handled by Louis Rice.
3. Mark Clifford winner of the Dermot Cahill Trophy for the Guns's favourite handler.
4. FTCh Hollydrive Theo.



Tim Crothers No 27 Mr A Duncan's Turn'em Out Fizzy Dazzler a stylish black and white bitch had two very competent runs, unfortunately I did not get an opportunity to see her at close quarters but she was rewarded with a Diploma Of Honour for her work.

Following her was No 36 Windarra Tess handled by Mr Brian O'Hara, this bitch is a daughter of Skronedale Romulus and appears to possess all the drive that her father exhibits. Her run was short but explosive, she found quickly and retrieved to her handler but a glitch on the handover of the retrieve did not see her coming back for a second run.

Hollydrive Kurt at No 29 owned and handled by Mick Walsh began his run parallel to the river and there was plenty of cover to hunt at this point and he came into game quite quickly, a nice find and a hen bird which was shot out in front apparently dead. When he was sent he could not make any sense of the fall area and could not locate the bird, he was called in and the dog from the other line under Judge David Lisset No 40 Godspeed Phantom handled by Mr Ivan Wilson from Co Tyrone was called over to try for the bird. When this dog was handled to the fall he immediately took a line and had a wounded hen pheasant back to hand in jig time.

No 40 Godspeed Phantom handled by Ivan Wilson came into line after No 36 Windarra Tess because No 38 was a non runner, this very white and setter looking spaniel had an eye wipe on Hollydrive Kurt shortly after he began his run. As he was cast off to continue his run he gave a display of the most positive hunting I have seen in a long time, exciting to watch he hunted difficult ground with ease, showing beautiful style and pace. Finding game with ease and retrieving equally as confident he completed his run and I would suggest became a hot favourite to take the title. But as the football pundits say, it's a game of two halves, and his second run was going equally as well as the first when a simple find on a hen which was shot forward proved to be his undoing and he ended the competition with a Diploma of Honour, but one really well deserved. On the opposite line at this time was No 33 Cheweky Gritsand of Glenfia handled by Mr A Morris, a liver and white ESSB she had a nice tidy run ending with a find and retrieve on a rabbit, she would have a second run and would end the championship with a Diploma of Honour.

No 31 came in next, this was a cocker spaniel Ribbleshead Alex handled by Ivan Wilson, the reason the numbers became out of step at this point was because Ivan was handling his other Dog No 40 Godspeed Phantom at the time that No 31 was first called. This little liver coloured cocker bitch, certainly did not let her breed down, she was exciting to watch, her pattern and pace was typical of a top quality cocker spaniel and she located game and retrieved efficiently, a similar second

run in thick cover under Judge David Lisett ensured her of an award of a Diploma Of Honour.

No 42 Broomfield Annie handled by Eddie Scott was the next dog in line after No 40 Godspeed Phantom, and it amazed me to find another spaniel that could create similar excitement so quickly after the hot run of Phantom. But the same excitement was on the plate again, a black and white bitch flowing with such pace and style, she was a treasure to watch, efficient finding of game and super fast retrieving would see her entering the arena as another dog that would challenge for the top position at the championship. In her second run under Judge Tim Crothers a retrieve on a woodcock created enough of a problem for her to end the championship with a Diploma of Honour.

The final dog on the first runs of the even numbers was No 46 FTCh Carvear Gwaiather of Underway handled by Mr. Chris T Woolnough, while this dog had the necessary finds and retrieves he did not light any fire in me but he came through and had a second similar type run under Judge Tim Crothers and received a Diploma of Honour for his efforts. Running along side him was dog No 35 Mr E&J Smith's Nederscot Eirwen an ESSB again she had a sound steady run causing no great excitement but doing enough to gain a second run under Judge David Lisset where she was asked to hunt much thicker cover. She obliged without any difficulty and went on to receive a Diploma of Honour.

At this point the topography of the land changed, causing one judge to be on a much higher level than his co-judge and the last dog to run under Judge Tim Crothers on the first day was No 37 Jeremy Organ's Rothievale Ling of Edgegrove, as he was next dog in line his run only consisted of a long retrieve and his run proper would begin on day two.

Under Judge David Lisset, dog No 3 McGwyn Deallus handled by Willie Edgar would have his second run, all was going well until a bird was shot forward of the dog, landing at the edge of the woodland and apparently marked by the dog. It took far too long to collect and took a lot of handling also, this completed his run and he did not figure in the awards.

Dog No 5 Aughasla Tern, then had its second run which it completed successfully, during its run it collected a running bird, which was a bonus. It would receive a Diploma of Honour.

So ended day one, and on returning to the meeting point the Championship secretary advised to all assembled the dogs that were required for day two, a total of 25 dogs.

Day Two

The ground for the second day was in total contrast to day one, good hard spaniel ground cover with laid

bracken, briars, low whins and thick laid grass interwoven with green briars.

First in under Judge David Lisett was No 11 Skronedale Romulus, this dog gave a stunning performance attacking cover without fear, his handler keeping in contact with him as the dog powered on. Eventually, after what seemed a long run, birds were found and a cock bird which flew across gun Willie Megaughin was killed and fell 40 to 50 meters down an incline leaving the dog no chance of marking the fall of the bird. One cast from the handler saw the dog leaving cover moving in the direction of the bird which was 80 plus meters from the flush and finding and retrieving with no further commands. Running on the other line at this time was Jeremy Organ handling No 37 Rothievale Ling of Edgegrove, this bitch ran with plenty of style, the cover for her was a little bit more open than her brace mate but still she tackled the cover without hesitation. Finds and retrieves for her would complete her first run and her second run under Judge David Lisett was equally good, hunting cover without difficulty finding and retrieving some very difficult birds which fell into messy heavy cover.

Dave Templar at No 39 with Beggarbush Swift had his first run under Judge Tim Crothers, and started with a blind retrieve directly off the lead, this little bitch had a safe run without any great excitement which would allow her to have a second run later in the day. She would complete the championship with a well deserved Diploma.

The next dogs in line were Mr Louis Rice No 43 Sliabh Treasure and No 15 Clodahill Ian handled by Mr D Kelly. Sliabh Treasure was drawing attention to herself, hunting at a very fast pace she was showing great style and drive, flushing a bird which was shot over 80 meters away, she retrieved it without delay. This was a good run and would place her as a contender for the winning spot. Following her, Mr. Vinnie Cauldwell came in for his first run with No 45 Lisgarvagh West, this dog recently made up to the title of FTCh recently was to have a competent run which would see Vinnie progressing to have a second run and ultimately be rewarded with a Diploma of Honour.

Following on was No 47, Clanicker Oliver Hardy handled by Mr William Thompson this was the last of the first round dogs for Tim Crothers. A positive run for this dog with finds and retrieves, and his hunting was excellent showing no respect for the cover would ensure a second run under Judge David Lisett.

The first of the even numbered dogs to run under Judge Tim Crothers was No 4 FTCh Kidnais Successor and it was still early in the morning at 10.30hrs, and still a lot of dogs to see. This dog No 4 completed her run without incident and would win a Diploma of Honour.

On the other line dog No 19 Chinachgook Roberto, had his second run, but did not light any fires but had a sound safe run and would finish the championship with a Diploma of Honour.

Dog No 23 FTCh Morfudd Mungo was tried on a bird that another dog had failed on and successfully retrieved it. He would go on to have a nice run without complications and would end the championship with Diploma of Honour and also the award for the Best Retrieve.

Next in line was No 25 FTCh Broomfield Rosetta handled by Eddie Scott, this is a tidy little liver and white spaniel, her beat was the edge of a whin/furz bank and a grass/rush field. There was certainly a lot of pace in the spaniel, she attacked the cover with great gusto and flashed across her beat with great style and she was an eye catcher. Very soon she was into game and a find and retrieve came quickly, hunting on she flushed a number of birds from deep cover which did not allow her to mark the fall of a cock bird which had fallen across a ditch in the region of 50/60 metres from her. She was sent in the direction of the fall and would have to be handled over to the bird which was across the ditch, but at the moment she was stopped to be recast a bird broke from the cover and flew in exactly the same line as the bird she was been asked to retrieve. She marked the flight of this bird and of course when cast in this direction she went instantly across the ditch and had the retrieve of the cock bird back in jig time. Lady Luck always plays her part in field trials? She would at the end of the day take third place in the 2012 REDMILLS sponsored IKC Spaniel Championship. Her owner Mr Eddie Scott had already won the 2000 IKC Spaniel Championship with FTCh Broomfield Bonnet, an excellent track record in the IKC Spaniel championships for the Scotsman.

A second run for Ivan Wilson's cocker spaniel Ribbleshead Alex would give him a Diploma of Honour and this cocker showed us all how exciting and efficient cocker spaniels can be. Ivan Wilson's second dog, No 40 Godspeed Phantom, came in to her second run as one of the top dogs from day run but an apparently simple retrieve on a hen bird put paid to his chances of the title and finished with a Diploma.

No 33 Cheweky Gritsand of Glenfia in his second run under Judge David Lisett did not show the sparkle of his first run but he did complete his run and appeared to find his form towards the end of his run, he would receive a Diploma of Honour. No 35 Nederscot Eirwen, an ESSB was next in line and had another similar run to her first one, hunting with plenty of pace, as were all the dogs that were called back for second runs, she completed her round successfully and would also receive a Diploma of Honour.

Jeremy Organ was next in line with No 37 Rothievale Ling of Edgegrove, again this spaniel hunted the cover with hesitation and with plenty of pace and style, finds on her beat were shot on the bottom of the hill and she was asked to retrieve blind in really deep cover. She completed her task without any difficulty and would take the Fourth Place.

Of the remaining dog to run all were successful in completing their runs and would receive a Diploma of Honour, but one dog stood out for its pace and drive, No 43 Sliabh Treasure handled by Louis Rice was a delight to watch, going head on into the cover of low briars and bracken she gave a display to pace, pattern, style and was always under control. She would complete her run without difficulty. With all runs completed, the judges consulted their books and in a short time they called Int FTCh Skronedale Romulus and Sliabh Treasure to run off against each other, no other dogs were called. The run off took place on a laid over bracken bank, this cover is difficult to hunt for to find game dogs should hunt underneath the laid over bracken.

The black and white bitch was immediately into a pattern and hunting underneath the cover and going like a dream but he brace mate on his first cast attacked the cover, his demonstration of pure power hunting left the black and white bitch well behind on a comparison on hunting. Another few casts and the dog was eating up the ground, he was untouchable, a true power hunting spaniel. The secretary of the spaniel championship committee then called 21 dogs to the water, this was a testament to the standard of the dog that had competed at the 2012 championship.

The presentation took place in the Londonderry Arms Hotel, and the M.D. of RED MILLS, Mr Bill Connolly, made the presentation to the winners.

The Results of the 37th RED MILLS Sponsored Irish Kennel Club's championship Stake for A.V. Spaniel.

To the Winner: The Joe McGrath Perpetual Cup. The R. McElhinney Perpetual Cup 1st D. Donnelly's ESSD Int FTCh SKRONEDALE ROMULUS Sire. FTCh Clarburgh Art. Dam. FTCh Merlinsbrook Evita. Born 24/5/05.

Graded Excellent.

To the dog placed Second: To the dog placed second: The Parkmaple Perpetual Trophy 2nd L. Rice's, ESSB SLIABH TREASURE Sire. Ravens Inquest. Dam. Cheweky Wriggly of Sliabh. Born 26/5/09. Graded Excellent.

To the dog placed Third:

The Combined Spaniel Clubs of Ireland Perpetual Trophy 3rd E. Scott's ESSB FTCh BROOMFIELD ROSETTA. Sire. Bucchleuch Drummer. Dam. FTCh Broomfield Sunbeam. Born 5/5/08. Graded Excellent.

To the dog placed Fourth: The Cretoka Perpetual Trophy 4th. J. Organ's ESSB. ROTHIEVALE LING of EDGEGROVE. Sire. Cowarnecourt Gaffer of Edgegrove. Dam. Country Sage of Rothievale. Born. 20/5/10. Graded Excellent.

Diplomas of Honour went to the following competitors:

S. Dixon's ESSD Chinachgook Roberto I. Clarke's ESSB FTCh Kidnais Successor. K. Murphy's ESSB Aughasla Tern. D. Kelly's ESSD Clodahill Ian. H. McEaney's ESSB FTCh Forrestmay Poppy. G. Meahan's ESSD FTCh Morfudd Mungo. A. Duncan's ESSB FTCh Turn' em' out Fizzy Dazzler. R. Thompson's ESSD FTCh Flaxdale Jamie. I. Wilson's CSD Ribbleshead Alex. A. Morris' ESSD Cheweky Gritsand of Glenfia. E&J Smith's ESSB Nederscot Eirwen. D. Templar's ESSD Beggbarbush Swift. I. Wilson's ESSD Godspeed Phantom. E. Scott's ESSB Broomfield Annie. V. Cauldwell's ESSD FTCh Lisgarvagh West. C. Thurston-Woolnough's ESSD FTCh Carvear Gwalather of Underway. W. Thompson's ESSD Clanicker Oliver Hardy.

Other Awards:

Guns Award, The IKC Spaniel Championship award: L. Rice's ESSB Sliabh Treasure.

Best Retrieve, The Cathageinne Perpetual Trophy: G Meahan's FTCh Morfudd Mungo

Handler's award, The Dermot Cahill Perpetual Trophy: to best gun: Mr Mark Clifford.

Spaniel of the year award, The Duisk Perpetual Cup: Mr M Walsh's Hollydrive Theo

Breeder's Cup, The Eastern Region Army Game club Perpetual Trophy: Mr. N Blakeney.

Winner Des Donnelly accepts his award from Bill Connolly and Jenny Crozier RED MILLS.



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The Red Mills Interview with Nigel Carville

Albert Titterington speaks to the person who will be responsible for a series of interviews with owners of sporting dogs.



Top trainer and competitor Nigel Carville.

When chatting recently with Nigel Carville while I was shooting at Drumbanagher Estate, he said that when he read our magazine many years ago, the first pages he turned to were the ones featuring the gundog interview. He suggested that the gundog coverage of the magazine would be enhanced by 'bringing it back.' I said that we were always willing to listen to suggestions to improve the magazine and suggested that I do the first interview with him and then he would carry on with interviews with top UK and Irish dog owners – not just gundog owners but owners of other sporting dogs including terriers and lurchers. We are delighted that he not only agreed to do this, but he asked Red Mills to sponsor this series of articles. Suggestions for interviews are welcome.

Q: Nigel over the last five or six years you have come to the fore in the trialling in Ireland, through the success of your Astraglen Kennels. Can I take you right back to the start and ask you what was your first dog and when and how you acquired it?

A: My first dog was a liver and white Springer Spaniel pup called Tip, which my father in law recommended. I trained her by using Peter Moxon's classic book on gundog training.

Q: When did you purchase your first Labrador for training and trialling and what was its breeding and name?

A: My First Labrador was a black bitch called Holly. She was thirteen months old and was part trained. I purchased her from Bobby Robertson and she was Glenbriar breeding. I spent the next twelve months training with Bobby and still use a lot of the training methods and tips I picked up from him.

Q: Where and when was the first trial you ran in and how did you get on?

A: The first Trial I competed in was a Novice Stake organised by the Craigavon Gundog Club in October 1993 and got through to the last round and failed on my last retrieve (coincidentally Albert Titterington was the next competitor in line with me with his Golden Retriever dog, who I remember having a fine retrieve from a fast flowing River Bann).

Q: With which dog did you win your first trial and on what ground?

A: I won my first trial with Holly, the dog I mentioned previously. It was a Novice Stake at Moyolla Estate and it was her second trial.

Q: How many trials have you won?

A: Counting Novices and Opens, Irish and English Kennel Clubs 46 and numerous Awards

Glenbriar Carolhill Astra 4; Glenbriar Ripple 2; Astraglen Tara 1; Astraglen Clyde 3; FTCh Astraglen Amelia 5; Int FTCh Astraglen Brooke 14; Copperbirch Kite 1; FTCh Marranscar Blackcap 5; and Int FTCh Astraglen Faith 5.

Q: How many Champions have you made up? What are their names?

A: I have made up two Champions and two International Champions: FTCh Astraglen Amelia; FTChMarranscar Blackcap; Int FTChAstraglen Brooke; and Int FTCh Astraglen Faith.

Q: Which of your dogs to date would you rate as your best dog and why?

A: All of the above dogs I have trained have had their strengths and weaknesses, but Brooke would have to be my pick of them. She was a good game-finder and good on runners and she also won the Irish Championship in 2005.



FTW Waysgreen Apollo

Q. Through your career you must have met, seen and been influenced by many handlers, can I ask you who of these handlers most influenced or impressed you?

A: When I started trialling more seriously the late Sam Jennett stood out for his breeding policy with an excellent line of bitches, his honesty and love of his dogs.

The handlers that are still at the top in trialling are Mr W Higginson and Mr A C M Rountree, they have the ability to keep coming out with good dogs.

Q: Other than your own dogs, what Labrador dogs would you rate as some of the best you have seen or judged?

A: I have had the good fortune to see many good dogs over the years and if you look at the roll call of winners and award winners in the Irish Championship you will see the cream of their generation.

But having to pick one I would have to name FTCh Garendon Captain (Chief) owned by a good friend Steve Jolly. He won the IGL Championship and although I never had the chance to see him compete, I trained with and shot over the dog. He marked well, showed great style, would go anywhere you pointed him and excelled at taking runners.

Q: You are an A Panel judge what do you look for when judging a dog?

A: Drive, style, handling and game finding ability.

Q: What changes have you seen over the years in judging and running trials that (a) you think are positive and (b) more negative?

A: Positive change over the last few years has been more walked up Trials, which are more representative of a day's shooting.

One negative is the lack of young people coming into the sport

Q: How important is nutrition in conditioning your dogs for trials? What food do you use and why?

A: Nutrition is very important in having my dogs in peak fitness, in my experience feeding a top quality feed prolongs their working and competitive life.

The feed I use for my dogs is Red Mills Engage Duck and Rice. This product has a slow energy release so suits dogs that are working a full day, also being a complete feed it is great to use when travelling.

Q: As well as a handler you have developed a reputation as a breeder of good dogs and these dogs are in demand throughout the world. Can you tell us (a) which KC recommended screening tests you use? (b) why you think it is important that breeders should use the KC recommended Health Screening Tests? and (c) what you look for in a dog and bitch that you are going to breed?

A: The screening tests I use and recommend are BVA Hip and Eye Tests and all of my dogs have been DNA Tested clear for CPRA/CNM. It is important to screen for the above to minimise the chances of abnormality so your dogs enjoy a long and healthy life.

I normally breed from my own bitches and I like a sire that is proven in the field.

Q: You must have had many highlights as a trainer and handler as well as some disappointments can you share with us (a) your highlights? and (b) your biggest disappointments?

A: Some of the obvious highlights have been winning Trials and particularly the Irish Championship in 2005. But the opportunities to shoot, trial and pick up with my dogs at some of the finest estates in Ireland and the UK have been nearly as good.

The biggest disappointment has to be missing the chance to compete with Brooke in the 2006 IGL Championship, instead of which I spent two days at sea on the P&O Ferry (I also had Mr John Wilson's Labrador bitch with me, so he also missed his run).



The right material.

Q: You have been mainly associated with training Labradors, what qualities do you look for in your own dogs?

A: I like my dogs to have a natural love for retrieving and be responsive to handling.

Q: Do you prefer handling dogs or bitches?

A: I have handled both, but I have a preference for bitches, I think they are very honest and totally loyal.

Q: Have you trained any other breeds?

A: The first dog I trained was a Spaniel and still find them exciting to watch. I have also trained a flatcoat.

Q: Why do you think the Labrador is the breed most suited to (a) your training methods and (b) for overall trial success?

A: I use repetition and reward when training and I think it suits the Labrador's intelligence and loyalty. For trial success you need lots of the above and a good dog.

Q: On what estates do you pick up and what do you like about them?

A: I mainly pick up at Drumbanagher Estate by invitation of the Head Keeper, Mr Brian Byrne. I enjoy the quality of the birds and the time given to retrieve all game and the varied nature of the ground. I also have been lucky to enjoy invitations to pick up at other Estates.

Q: What is your favourite Trial ground and why?

A: It goes without saying - the ones I have won at!

Q: The most successful dogs you have bred apart from the ones you competed with?

A: Mr Ivan Lee's FTCh Astraglen Rusk and Mr Roy Rankin's FTCh Astraglen Fergie.

Q: When not picking up, training, breeding or shooting what do you like to do?

A: Holidays and Manchester United!

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Judging the IGL Retriever Championship

When, just before the outbreak of hostilities in 1914, a 'large and representative gathering of gentlemen interested in the work of Field Trials' met at the Kennel Club to resolve a range of issues relating to the relatively new sport of trialling they were clearly committed to, as one of their number put it, 'the good discipline of aiming at excellence.' Whether expressed exactly in those terms or not, that has been the driving impulse behind the event which was first run in 1909 when just eight dogs competed on Mr B. J. Warwick's shoot at Little Green, near Havant in Hampshire. We have been used, for many years now, to fields in excess of fifty

Field Trial Regulations, the maximum number of dogs permitted in a two day Open Stake is 24. Admittedly the Championship has, since 1996, been run over three days: but it has typically been completed in just over two so the apparent conundrum remains.

There is no contradiction though. For, as I have written on numbers of occasions over the years, the Championship is not a trial like any other. It has one overriding principal purpose, which is to find the Retriever Champion. Placings and Diplomas of Merit are, of course, sought after and are immensely worthy: but they are secondary to what it's all about. And it goes without saying that, in deciding which dog will carry off the magnificent trophy presented by Captain A. Glen Kidston in 1910, only excellence will do. It also goes



(L / R) The Judges: Linda Partridge, Greig Paterson, Philip Parkins and Graham Cox

without saying that playing a part in insisting on those exacting standards is the greatest honour that has come my way since being put on the A Panel in 1988.

Having observed at close quarters - and written about - every IGL Retriever Championship since the one held at Stratfield Saye in 1984, I had a more than keen sense of what those standards should be. When judging any trial I remind myself of a comment made by Lady Hill-Wood who, as a handler, won the Championship four times. "You can only", she said, "make one person happy." In one sense, that is truer of the Championship than any other trial: yet the Championship, more than any other stake, is one where handlers should be happy just to be there.

Every chance to show capabilities

The J. Regulations are, of course, a good guide to what you are there to do as a Judge at any trial. You are there to find the dog that pleases you most from the shooting point of view, taking natural gamefinding to be of the first importance. You should, moreover, do that by doing your level best to make sure that every dog gets a chance to show what it is capable of. As Regulation J (A) 3.11 puts it, "It is the duty of the Judges to give dogs every opportunity to work well by seeing that conditions are, as far as possible, in their favour." There's no room for any doubt there then. 'Duty' is a strong word and so it should be. That said, however, I hear you asking: 'But what are you looking for?' My starting point for answering that question is a brilliant little book first published in 1929 by a man who would finally - after two second places previously - realise his great ambition by winning the 1962 IGL Retriever Championship held at Sandringham with his bitch FTCh Hallingbury Blackbird. In just 25 small pages Vincent Routledge, in *The Ideal Retriever and How to Handle Him*, set out the timeless priorities of quality retriever

work. He concerned himself with the primary qualities like Nose, Brains, Determination and Mouth and how they relate to others such as Style, Pace, Obedience and Delivery.

Of the relationship between style and pace he writes that: 'pace' is a "much abused quality," adding that some fast dogs often prove to be the slowest in bringing game to hand because of their inability to hold ground. The dog which gallops about is contrasted with the quality dog which is quick to the 'fall' and makes every inch of ground before hunting further afield. Routledge was clearly of the view, even then, that many dogs were spoiled by too much whistle. Amen to that.

I certainly set great store by holding ground and it is that quality which makes excessive whistling unnecessary. Dogs have to be allowed to develop their hunting instincts and, if they are, what we call 'natural



A delighted David Latham, clutching the Glen Kidston Challenge Trophy, turns to thank the Judges.

gamefinding' is the result: and when a dog demonstrates that quality we can be sure that it is the dog rather than the handler that is finding the game. That really matters for, as Regulation J (A) 4.g reminds us: "A good game-finding dog should not rely on the handler to find the game. It should, however, be obedient and respond to its handler's signals where necessary."

Style really matters as well, and that might be thought to be 'in the eye of the beholder.' Not for this Judge though. For me, it's more a matter of a dog that has ability to adjust its pace to suit the conditions - particularly the scenting conditions - and the manner of its movement effectively tells the handler what it is doing, so enabling the handler to make appropriate handling decisions: when to whistle, when to stay silent. The aesthetics of the operation have to be understood in those terms. If a dog with all those qualities seems something of a paragon, well that is exactly what we are looking for in the Championship.

The attitude of doing right

I had in my mind, as I made the long drive up to Cawdor that Harold Arlen song published in 1944 and made famous by the Andrews Sisters, 'Accentuate the Positive.' Its hook line runs 'You've got to accentuate the positive, eliminate the negative and don't mess with Mr In-between' adding, for good measure, that it adds up to 'the attitude of doing right.' I had it in mind again as I made the Judges' speech after the presentation which

saw David Latham win the Championship for the third time, having previously won in 2003 and again in 2010 with the dog that won for the second time at Cawdor, FTCh Delfleet Neon of Fendawood.

We, the Judges, had been able to accentuate the positive because the meticulous preparations by Roddy Forbes, the Commercial Shoot Manager and his son Fraser, the Head Keeper, had given us every opportunity to examine all the qualities that Routledge had set out 83 years before. Not only had cropping patterns been specially adapted, the ground at Drynachan with the Findhorn River at its heart made for the most spectacular work that those present could remember. More than that, all barbed wire on the estate had been removed and buried, so we never had to consider whether it was safe to send a dog.

The Cawdor legend, inscribed under the crest above the Castle's drawbridge could not have been more simple. Just two words, 'Be Mindful', spoke volumes. For that is what our most generous host had been. As a host the Right Honourable Earl Cawdor could not have done more: and that made our judging task so much easier. Except that it wasn't. There was quality in abundance and we had really to 'go through the books' and then go through them again before deciding that David Latham's yellow dog, which had qualified twice over, had both demonstrated all the qualities we were looking for and, crucially, eliminated the negative. We had aimed for excellence and to have been part of the process of finding it was a great privilege.



(L to R) IGL President Richard Parker, Roddy Forbes, Commercial Shoot Manager at Cawdor, Her Grace The Duchess of Devonshire, IGL Vice-President and the spectacularly 'sporrned' Fraser Forbes, Head Keeper.

The IGL Retriever Championship 2012: memorable, magical and unique.

Beware the chance remark! A throwaway line at the Ulster Retriever Club two day stake in Gortin to Tommy Hughes to the effect that if he won the trial I would go to the Championship with him two weeks later, saw me meeting up for an early boat with Hughes Snr. & Jr., Simon Park and Richard Johnston, not forgetting the dog, for a wonderful trip to the North of Scotland for three days of unforgettable trialling.

This year's International Gundog League Retriever Championship was held at the Cawdor Estate, Invernesshire, by kind invitation of The Earl Cawdor, on Monday 26th, Tuesday 27th and Wednesday 28th November 2012. The stake was generously sponsored by Roger Skinner Limited. The Cawdor Estate runs to nearly sixty-thousand acres and is managed as a traditional Highland estate with thirty-thousand acres devoted to grouse, pheasant, and partridge.

The field duly assembled at the Estate, which is fifteen miles south east of Inverness at 8.00 am on the Monday morning. The announcements were made by the extremely hardworking IGL secretary Phillip Wainwright, who confirmed that the Judges were



Championship Winner David Latham with FTCh Delfleet Neon of Fendawood.

Graham Cox, Philip Parkins, Linda Partridge, and Greig Patterson. The Steward of the Beat was the Cawdor Head Keeper, Roddy Forbes, assisted by the Head Grouse Keeper, Fraser Forbes. The Guns were hand



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The Judges - Graham Cox, Greig Paterson, Linda Partridge & Philip Parkins.

picked by Roddy Forbes and introduced to the expectant crowd, who had assembled from all corners of the globe to witness this renowned event.

A total of fifty-two dogs had qualified for the championship. Three withdrew before starting, two had elected not to run and one was owned by Judge Phil Parkins. Of the forty-six that took to the field, thirty-eight had already achieved FTCh status. There were two Golden Retrievers and one chocolate Labrador, thirty-seven dogs and nine bitches.

The line moved off with Messrs Cox and Patterson on the right and Linda Partridge and Phil Parkins on the left, as we crossed a field of winter cereal which had a strip of game crop down it's centre. The weather was calm and clear with an occasional shower and scent seemed reasonable. We were soon into game as we approached a wood, and it was here that we lost Billy Steele's Irish bred dog FTCh Copperbich Paddy of Leadburn who was eyewiped by FTCh Leveghyl Silvercloud of Drakeshead, now owned and handled by M. Moran.

Coming out of this wood we entered a very large acreage of game crop which had been specially prepared for the stake, where we would spend the rest of the first day and all the third morning to conclusion. The crop consisted of turnips, linseed and kale which had been topped in strips, and had pheasant and partridge in abundance. The base of the crop had become in some

areas an interwoven mass of light roots, making it necessary for a dog to thoroughly hunt his ground to find residual scent. This did not prove easy for some!

Ninety minutes and ten dogs dropped

The trial now moved apace and there was a flurry of activity on the right which, after subsequent work, resulted in a three dog eye-wipe for John Halsted handling FTCh Asterix Aguyannis of Chatsworth for Lady Celina Carter. Birds came easily to hand for the rest of the day and some dogs faltered when game flushed en route to a mark, such was the concentration of game. The heightened activity was evidenced when one dog was eliminated for making noise immediately it was brought in to line. Ninety minutes into the trial and ten dogs had been dropped, and number twenty-two was only just taking it's place in the line. Early casualties included Jimmy Swindlehurst with FTCh Adoraden Quinn who won the Fermanagh two day stake, and last year's champion FTCh Kaliture Black Spruce handled by Ken Broomfield.

As well as continuing in the game crop, the squad of beaters took every opportunity to flush adjacent woodland, and at times we witnessed some superb shooting, particularly from fellow trial men Les McClean and John Castles. All game was wisely used by the experienced Judges. Good work was seen from Jane Coley with FTCh Waterford Ganton, Tom Bushby with



Roddie Forbes with the Guns.

Levenghyl Boxtone, and Andy Latham with FTCh Rimrock Hurricane. Also keeping very clean was Scot Mike Rolland with FTCh Emmawood Drake.

As we paused near the end of round one, which was two retrieves, nineteen dogs had gone and, almost immediately work was resumed, a hen was shot in front, on which four dogs failed. Perhaps, at 2.30pm, with light fading and the temperature dropping, scenting conditions were changing. Stumps were duly drawn and Phil Wainwright announced that twenty-one dogs would be required for the next day. Somewhat controversially, six dogs had been discarded for damaging game, a high attrition rate for this type of offence in the Championship, provoking much discussion in the HQ hotel that evening.

Day 2 and spectacular work

Day two we were promised, would be different, and so it proved. I cannot recall a more memorable day's trialling in any recent Championship, as that which unfolded at Drynahan. About eight miles into a Glen from our first venue, this provided the setting for some great retrieves. Crossing the river Findhorn by foot, we then climbed to line out at the base of a hill at Knockandhu on which were a line of beaters. Separating the competing dogs from the base of the hill was a strip of uncut barley, which had to be crossed by most dogs before a steep climb into scree and heather for marked retrieves, mostly partridge. At this stage retrieves were one hundred and fifty yards plus, and any dog not marking to the proverbial sixpence was severely handicapped.

Early work saw further eyewipes for John Halsted with FTCh Astrerix Aguzannis of Chatsworth, and one

of the emerging favourites FTCh Saxaphone Brown Ale of Lincswolds handled by Richard King. Dogs were eliminated for not marking or subsequently handling through the barley to the hill, or for hunting game before getting to the hill. Making steady progress at this stage were also Alan Schofield with FTCh Eastdale Harry, Keith Bedford with FTCh Kayteen's Cruise, John Halsted with Cherry Finlan's FTCh Jarail Star Rocky Road of Blackhatch, and completely clean Andy Latham with the winner from 2010 FTCh Delfleet Neon of Fendawood.

When this round of one retrieve was complete, we moved to the side of the river, where there was a drive at Pony Bridge and birds were shot in to a bracken strewn ravine for retrieves across the Findhorn. At this stage there were fourteen dogs left. There followed some truly spectacular work, with dogs taking the river, then a steep bank, and in some cases traversing a road, for birds some one hundred and eighty yards distant. Every dog was in line for this stage of the trial, the drive lasting in total ninety minutes. Five dogs were eliminated for not freely entering water, putting down game before entering water, or otherwise poor work. Nine dogs then had a single retrieve across the face of the hill in to bracken. The work here was truly spectacular with dogs showing tremendous style, pace and game-finding ability in demanding conditions,

Long were the discussions that night about possible outcomes: was David Latham squeaky clean? John Halsted was still there with two dogs, each with eyewipes to their credit, Jane Coley with a very visible running partridge to her credit and Mike Rolland, Alan Schofield, Richard King, Tom Bushby, and Keith Bedford were still there battling for honours.



Winning handlers Mike Rolland, Thomas Bushby, John Halsted, David Latham, Jayne Coley and Ms C Finlan (owner of runner-up FTCh Jarail Star Rocky Road of Blackhatch) with Cawdor Castle in the background.

Day 3 with surprises still in store

Back in the game crop on Wednesday morning, this trial still had surprises in store. No sooner had we started walking when a bird was shot behind the line, hitting a tree on falling and landing behind a wall. Outcome - out go John Halsted with FTCh Emmanygan Ramble and Richard King with FTCh Saxaphone Brown Ale of Lincswolds, and up in the reckoning goes Alan Schofield with FTCh Eastdale Harry who completed the coveted eye-wipe. Keith Bedford and FTCh Kayteen's Cruise were next to go out, after much judicial discussion, for picking the wrong bird. Two birds each saw all competitors on seven retrieves and nerves jangling. One final bird each to the finish, which saw some prosper and others falter, and at 11.30am books were closed and at eight retrieves each we had a result. Of the Irish entrants, Tommy Hughes was dropped after his second, Micky Corr failed on his third, and Alan Rountree was dropped after his fourth.

Results:

1st FTCh Delfleet Neon of Fendawood owned and handled by David Latham By FTCh Mediterian Blue x Delfleet Dawn Flush, Breeder Mr & Mrs S Crisp

2nd FTCh Jarail Star Rocky Road of Blackhatch handled by John Halsted, By FTCh Tasco Monk of Mansengreen x Thirmist Jasmine, Owned by Mrs C Finlan Breeder Mr J Starkey

3rd FTCh Waterford Ganton owned handled and bred by Mrs Jane Coley, By Endacott Kite of Chisbrook x FTCh Waterford Easter

4th FTCh Emmawood Drake owned and handled by Mr Mike Rolland By FTCh Hatchfield Fergal x Greenbriar Vogue, Breeder Mr G H Nevitt

Diplomas of Honour:

FTCh Eastdale Harry owned and handled by Alan Schofield, By FTCh Greenbriar Viper x Daughting Dulcie of Eastdale, Bred by Mr A B and Mrs S Schofield Levenghyl Boxtone handled by Tom Bushby, By Tasco Brimstone x FTCh Shadowbrae Mist of Levenghyl, Owned by the late George Ridley Bred by Mr P N Bates

In an age when it is fashionable to overcomplicate the very simple, David Latham and Neon were flawless, displaying skills, which like genuine artistry in any discipline, makes the incredibly difficult look workmanlike and effortless. This was the second win in three years for David Latham with FTCh Delfleet Neon of Fendawood and his third Championship after success at Sandringham in 2003. A most remarkable and thoroughly deserving achievement. Very well done indeed.

This was a Championship staged in idyllic ground, birds being presented on ground prepared by a master craftsman who also, being an A Panel judge and competitor, understands exactly the requirements of a Championship. Preparation for this event commenced in 2008, and Roddy Forbes and his team showed exactly how it should be done. This will be a very hard act to follow. Full marks must also go to Phil Wainwright, the IGL, and the multitude of helpers, for a most memorable, magical and very unique Championship.

Irish Kennel Club's 45th Retriever Championship sponsored by



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On 28th and 29th December 2012, the Irish Kennel Club held its 45th Retriever Championship, sponsored by Massbrook and the Binley family, for the first time at the beautiful demesne of Drumbanagher Estate, by kind invitation of Mrs Joan Close, the Close family and Mr Brian Byrnes. Drumbanagher Estate is situated a few miles south of the scenic village of Poyntzpass in County Armagh, Northern Ireland.

I have been trialling for a few years now, however this was my first time attending an IKC Retriever Championship and it was an honour to be asked to report on it with the help of Mr. David Boyce, who covered the other side of the line. It was a great experience as I was able to watch all the action up close without the pressure of having to trial. I thoroughly enjoyed watching some brilliant dog work and handlers, not all of whom got through to the end but that's trialling for you. The trial flowed, thanks to experienced judges, along with all those other people behind the scenes that we often forget about. The atmosphere over the two days was brilliant and welcoming, as this shoot always is, and all the competitors should be commended for qualifying for the IKC Championship in the first place and for their great sportsmanship.

It's thanks to estates such as Drumbanagher that gundog enthusiasts are able to continue with their sport. A huge amount of dedication goes into ensuring that they provide the type of game holding habitat, along with the estates natural topography, to provide the type of shooting that is sought after all over the island of Ireland and further afield.



Shauna McGroarty and David Boyce who reported on the Championship



Getting ready for the first drive of the Championship – Dog steward Mrs Hanneke Simons, Vice-Chairman John T. Malone and Treasurer Lady Waterford

Drumbanagher Estate's history

Owned by the close family since the 17th century, at the core of the walled estate was Drumbanagher House belonging to the Rev. Samuel Close (born 1683); then to his son, Maxwell Close (died 1793); grandson; the Rev Samuel Close (died 1817); and great grandson, Lieutenant Colonel Maxwell Charles Close. It was the latter who commissioned William Playfair to build a notable Italianate mansion in 1829-sometimes called Drumbanagher Castle. Built of Scottish sandstone at an enormous cost and completed in 1837, Drumbanagher Castle consisted of a two storey central block with two three storey wings built at right angles. The mansion was regarded as one of Playfair's grandest country houses.

Following occupation by the American and British armies during WW11, the mansion was demolished in 1951, but the large portico, which stood in front of the Italian Style house, remains to the present day and gives a sense of the impressive grandeur of the estate.

Brian Byrnes has been the Shoot Manager at the estate since 2000, his experience has helped transform the estate. Helping him to achieve this success, Brian is assisted by Rodney Watson, Raymond Rocks and a very competent team of beaters and helpers in ensuring, amongst many other things, the 12 drives at Drumbanagher continue to offer exceptional flexibility and variety for testing shooting for anyone who is a keen shot.

The 2013 IKC Retriever Championship

This year's championship was judged by Micheal Corr, Dermot Donnelly, Aidan Daly and Micheal O'Connor. This was Micheal O'Connor's first judging appointment at the IKC Championship.

The running order of dogs for the Championship was:
The Newcam Boss handled by Billy Lundy

Copperbirch Liffey handled by Keith Matthews
Watergreen Gangster handled by Sean O'Connor
GB FT Ch Waterford Galahad of Tasco handled by Alan Rowntree
FT Ch Cooperbirch Solo handled by Jimmy Black
Abbotswood Paddy handled by Tom Nolan
FT Ch Birdrowe Bobby handled by Anthony Reilly
FT Ch Watergreen Flash handled by W Ford
Nordenlights Cherokee handled by John Williamson
Altiquin Rain of Camgart handled by Gary McCutcheon
FT Ch Adoraden Quinn handled by Jimmy Swindlehurst
Leadburn Jamie handled by Declan Boyle
Watergreen Gladiator handled by Christopher Scott
Wild Boy Oscar handled by Alan Nolan
FT Ch Gleanne Faith handled by Ian Davis
FT Ch Corrib Mafi handled by Paul O'Brien
FT Ch Quarrypool Rough Diamond handled by John Behan
Tweedshot Trimble of Lettergreen handled by Sean Nolan
GB FT Ch Rumbleton Quicksilver handled by Martin Rush
Portlick Man of Maji handled by Adrian Costello
Shimnavale Excalibur handled by Richard Johnston
FT Ch Altiquin Ripple handled by Paul Toal
FT Ch Ffynongain Razor handled by Harry Gillanders
FT Ch Astraglen Faith handled by Nigel Carville
FT Ch Burren Injector handled by Tony O'Hare
FT Ch Trumpetaker Ash handled by Lorenzo Hynes
Doohooma Lad handled by Sean Diamond
FT Ch Astraglen Fergie handled by Roy Rankin
Watergreen Gemma of Monsell handled by Michael Cronin
Gleanne Rio handled by Jim Perry
The weather was mild and dry and it stayed that way for the remainder of the day.



Left to right – Judges Steward Mr. Martin Fitzgerald; Judges Mr. Michael O'Connor, Mr. Dermot Donnelly, Mr. Michael Corr, Mr. Aidan Daly and Judges Steward Mr. Declan McCarthy.



The Guns

The first drive of the day was The Avenue. The guns were lined out along the bottom of a steep valley field with birds being driven high over the top of the surrounding woodland and across the line of the guns. The dogs and handlers were lined across the top of the field on both the left and right hand sides, where they had full view of the birds being shot. The majority of birds were brought down some 100 - 150 yards in front of the dogs and handlers, either falling into game crop behind the guns or into the field where the guns were pegged out.

distance. Many of birds had fallen in view of the dogs and handlers, and, at times, this was to prove difficult for dogs which were sent for a specific bird, but had possibly marked down other birds. The judges were looking for clean stylish casts to the area of the fall with minimal handling. Any dog making a difficult job of this would and did suffer.

The retrieve that stood out in this drive, in terms of being different, was by Englishman Jimmy Swindlehurst's FT Ch Adoraden Quinn. Jimmy's dog was sent some 150 yards down the field into a rushy area. A bird got up and flew unsteadily. Jimmy allowed the dog after the bird but when it was evident the bird was gaining height, he stopped the dog on the pond's edge, where other birds were floating in view, and sent the dog back to the rushy area where he produced a bird. Generally, the majority of dogs made a good job of the retrieves and displayed the sort of standard that is required to compete at this level.

Once all remaining competitors had taken their two retrieves under each set of judges, it was time to move onto the second drive which was The Bulge. This drive had already taken place so the birds were on the ground



Mr Tom Nolan casts Abbotswood Paddy on a long retrieve

It was a heavy drive lasting approximately 30 - 40 minutes with a heavy flush of birds coming again towards the end. It was a pleasure to watch the guns make a sporting job of high driven duck, enough to test any gun's skills. The heavy drives, and those to follow throughout the two days, were also enough to test the steadiest of dogs, however the majority of them rose to the challenge.

There were enough birds brought down in this drive to give all competitors, who remained for the duration, two retrieves each. The majority of retrieves on the left side of the drive were taken down some 150 yards into game crop, with the right side of the line taking retrieves down into the bottom of the field at a slightly shorter



Mr. Sean Nolan casts Tweedshot Trimble of Lettergreen on a retrieve who finished 4th in the Championship.

for the next round to get quickly underway. This was a different scenario from the last as the dogs did not see the birds fall, therefore this was a test of the dogs on 'blind retrieves', which were at distances of over 200 yards across undulating terrain. A few handlers were unable to get their dogs to the area, some dogs picked the wrong bird and others went off the whistle. It proved difficult for some dogs that had to run past scent already on the ground where previous birds were picked, and some dogs were not as responsive as they had been, probably due to the distance. However, it was the championship, these are the types of conditions which dogs are tested under at this level, and many of the dogs and handlers made it look easy with the dogs remaining responsive throughout. Once the judges had finished with this drive the trial took a short break before moving on to the fourth and final drive for the trial on day 1. Drive Three had already been shot but was not used in the trial. By this point all remaining competitors had taken either three or four retrieves.

At the Demoan Drive, the first woodcock of the day was retrieved by Adrian Costello's Portlick Man of Maji (Adrian received the award for Best Newcomer) but also unfortunately for Adrian his next retrieve gave way to the first eye wipe of the day by Nigel Carville's FT Ch Astraglen Faith. Alan Rountree also had the first and only runner in the trial with his GB FT Ch Waterford Galahad of Tasco.



Mr. Alan C.M. Rountree casts GB F.T. Ch. Waterford Galahad of Tasco on a retrieve. Finished 2nd place in the Championship.

Apart from this, the dogs were more or less tested on an equal footing. Those dogs that required more handling or picked up another fault unfortunately did not see it through to the next round. Once all marked

birds for the trial had been picked, the judges made a call for the dogs required for the next round and split the dogs into two groups.

Next round

The retrieves to follow were taken in very thick heavy cover. The markers did an excellent job of marking down most of the birds. However, it's not always easy getting a game finding dog to cast at a distance straight through thick heavy cover to the area of a given fall. Naturally, there will be a lot of scent in this type of cover so a great deal of training and trust is required to execute these sorts of retrieves with the flair and ability that the judges were looking for on the day. The judges were more sympathetic to handling on these types of retrieves, but the standard of clean swift retrieves had already been set for the day and those who continued in this form were ultimately called upon for the second day of the trial. Unfortunately, a few excellent dogs went out on this round which could only be put down to a 'bit of bad luck.'



Mr. John Williamson casts his golden retriever dog, Nordenlights Cherokee on a retrieve.

The judges announced that Day One had finished. Each dog that remained had completed five retrieves. Competitors, officials and spectators made their way back down through the fields, back up to where the cars were parked and waited while the judges made up their cards.

When the judges arrived they announced that 7 dogs were to be called back for Day 2: No. 4 GB FT Ch Waterford Galahad of Tasco handled by Alan Rowntree, No. 9 Nordenlights Cherokee handled by John Williamson, No. 11 FT Ch Adoraden Quinn handled by Jimmy Swindlehurst, No. 12 Leadburn Jamie handled by Declan Boyle, No. 18 Tweedshot Trimble of Lettergreen handled by Sean Nolan, No. 26 FT Ch Trumpetaker Ash handled by Lorenzo Hynes and No. 28, FT Ch Astraglen Fergie, handled by Roy Rankin.

Day 2

The weather was much colder, with stronger winds and torrential rain at one point; however it cleared up in



The seven competitors for the second day of the Championship were left to right – Mr. Roy Rankin, Mr. Sean

Nolan, Mr. Jimmy Swindlehurst, Mr John Williamson, Mr. Declan Boyle, Mr. Alan C.M. Rountree and Mr. Lorenzo Hynes.

the latter half of the day. The first drive was the Clay Park drive which was in a large steep field surrounded by a wood with beautiful views over wooded valleys. The guns were lined along the top of the field and handlers were situated at the bottom of the field, a good 200 yards from the guns.

Declan Boyle's Leadburn Jamie picked up a couple of faults when he had a little difficulty getting the dog to the area and the trial was then down to 5 dogs.

The atmosphere was different today; there was an air of anticipation as the pressure mounted. The 7 dogs put through were all clean so the competition was going to be stiff. Unfortunately it proved too much for Englishman Jimmy Swindlehurst's dog, a dog that had probably been competing in walked up trials all season, and it ran in. It was lead on for Jimmy and his GB FT Ch Adoraden Quinn.

The remaining dogs all took retrieves with little to separate them and then it was time to move on to the water retrieve which is a requirement at all Trials held under Irish Kennel Club Rules. The 5 dogs completed the water retrieve and then the trial was moved on to the final drive for the competing dogs.

This was another heavy drive with high birds coming thick and fast over the top of the surrounding wood. The guns made a superb job of bringing them to the ground where they fell to all sides of the line in full view of the dogs and handlers at various distances. All 6 remaining dogs took their first retrieve of the day, unfortunately

Before the Kennel Wood Drive got underway, the judges announced that three dogs would be called in to sit through it. These were Alan Rountree's GB FT Ch Waterford Galahad of Tasco, Lorenzo Hynes' FT Ch Trumpetaker Ash and Roy Rankin's FT Ch Astraglen Fergie. This was another steady drive and this time the dogs and handlers were lined up in the wood where birds were plentiful, many landing only a stone's throw from where the dogs sat. The judges made the decision half way through the drive to allow the handlers to put their leads back on.



Mr. Roy Rankin casts F.T. Ch. Astraglen Fergie on the final retrieve in the Championship, under judges Dermot Donnelly and Aidan Daly.

By this point, general discussion amongst the gallery had got underway about who could potentially take the top spot. There had been conflicting views and unanimous views based on what people had seen and what they had heard. The fact remained, only the judges would have the full story having seen all the dogs run, however, there appeared to be very little between the dogs and the retrieves to follow couldn't have made it any easier for the judges. All three dogs had two retrieves each which required them to cast approximately 100 yards down through the wood and pick a bird. All three of them came up trumps again and pulled off clean retrieves with the style and drive that they had been exhibiting during the past couple of days.

The judges gathered to mark up their cards while the three competitors waited, appearing cool, calm and collected, however it was quite possible that they were wondering if they would need to take another retrieve while probably hoping that they would not have to, but the general feeling was, what will be will be! The judges

then announced that the trial was over and at that point it was possible to feel the tension drain from the air and congratulations, laughter and conversations commenced amongst everyone at the trial. At this point everyone made their way back to the Championship Head Quarters and awaited the results.

Top Table Speeches

Jim Perry welcomed everyone who made their way back to the championship headquarters.

Mr Perry thanked the Close Family, Brian Byrnes, Rodney Watson and Raymond Rocks for facilitating the 2012 Championship and said that it was a credit to them, and all those who helped out, for the fact that the estate was still thriving. Jim Perry went on to say that all those involved in the estate had spent months in preparation for the championship; they had brought in extra birds, drives were changed and all the plans were put in place for a successful couple of days.

John Agnew and his group of guns were thanked for being brilliant shots and most helpful in making the championship work so well. The efforts of Mr Agnew were also commended in going above and beyond to ensure it all went according to plan. Thanks were also given to everyone else involved in helping to make the Championship a success.

The judges' verdict

Aidan Daly said that they were more than happy with the dogs over the two days. He said that towards the end of the first day they thought they would have 12 or 14 dogs to go through to the second day and went on to say unfortunately there was a bit of difficulty and they ended up with 7 dogs for Day 2. Aidan said that they had a very difficult decision to make as the top three dogs brought to the last drive had A retrieves the whole way through the trial. Aidan went on to say that, in the end, it came down to the dog work and they picked a winner but on any other day it could be a different result.

The Results

The presentation of trophies was carried out by Lady Waterford.

1st No 26 FT Ch Trumpetaker Ash handled and owned by Mr. Lorenzo Hynes.

2nd No 4 GB FT Ch Waterford Galahad of Tasco handled and owned by Mr. Alan Rountree.

3rd No 28 FT Ch Astraglen Fergie handled and owned by Mr. Roy Rankin.

4th No 19 Tweedshot Trimble of Lettergreen handled and owned by Sean Nolan.

Diploma of Honour and Guns Choice were awarded to No. 9 Nordenlights Cherokee handled and owned by John Williamson.

The Fred McGurk Perpetual Cup for the most stylish yellow bitch was awarded to Nos. 1 The Newcam Boss handled by Billy Lundy.

The Sam Jennett Memorial Trophy for the breeder of the winning dog and the Ballyfremma Cup for the highest placed Irish dog both went to Lorenzo Hynes.

Adrian Costello was presented the Best Newcomer award.



Lady Waterford presents Mr. Lorenzo Hynes with some of his trophies as winner of the 2012 Championship



Lady Waterford presents Mr. Alan Rountree on his 2nd place in the Championship.

Following the results, the winner, Lorenzo Hynes gave an emotional thanks to his wife, family and friends for their continued support and the judges for their integrity over the two days. Lorenzo also thanked everyone else involved, close friends and the committee and said that this was the highlight of his career to date in gundogs.

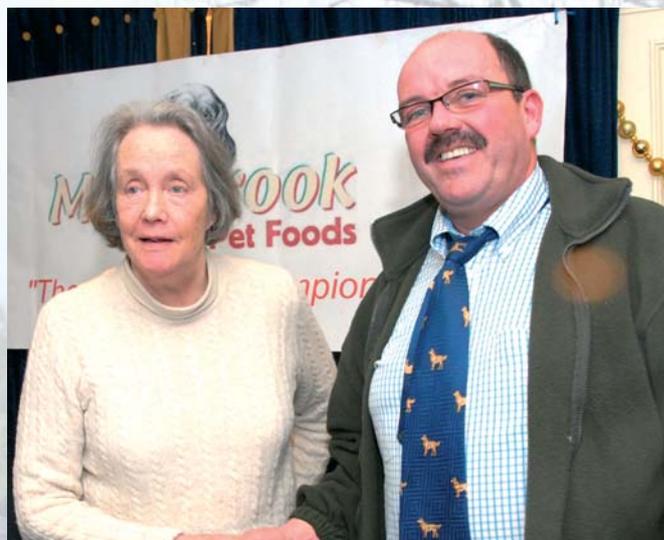
Finally, Mr Jim Perry concluded by thanking everyone for coming and making it a successful championship.

Dog Statistics

Some 38 dogs qualified for the 2012 Championship, 30



Lady Waterford presents Mr Sean Nolan his 4th place awards in the 2012 Retriever Championship.



Lady Waterford congratulates Mr John Williamson on his DOM in the 2012 Retriever Championship.



Chairman Jim Perry presents Mr. Billy Lundy with the Freddie McGuirke Perpetual Trophy for "the most stylish yellow bitch competing in the championship".



Lady Waterford presents Mr Roy Rankin his 3rd place awards in the 2012 Retriever Championship.

dogs ran and there were two changes to the cards which resulted in Sean O'Connor's Watergreen Hurricane being replaced by Jim Perry's Gleanne Rio and Brian Armstrong's Brackagh Jazz was replaced by Christopher Scotts' Watergreen Gladiator.

Qualified dogs that did not compete were FTCh Astraglen Blue owned by Ivan Lee, Kilmona Jodi owned by Matthew Lambden, FTCh Knock Shan Emma owned by Anthony Reilly (2011 Championship winner), Int FTCh Waterford Edward of Tasco owned by Alan Rountree, Int FTCh Apache Joe owned by Thomas Huges, Kaliture Black Spruce owned by Keith Broomfield, FTCh Rockenhart owned by David Boyce, FTCh Copperbirch Zeus of Gleanne owned by Thomas Brady.

From the 30 dogs that ran, 15 were Field Trial Champions which included: 12 Irish Champions and three UK Champions, 16 dogs came from the Republic of Ireland, 13 from Northern Ireland and one from England. There was only one minor breed in the competition, a Golden Retriever. There were 15 black dogs, 3 black bitches, 8 yellow dogs and 3 yellow bitches.



Ms. Lillian Jennett presents the Raughlan Sam Jennett Trophy to Mr. Lorenzo Hynes.

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Next Year

The 2013 IKC Championship will be held at Ballynatray House in Youghal, Co Cork by kind permission of Mr Henry Gwynne Jones on Saturday 28th and Sunday 29th December 2013.

And now something slightly unique - a report on what it is like to host the championships by Tom Stalker on behalf of the Drumbanagher Estate team.

Gundogs are such an integral part of all forms of game shooting. Without the aid of the legions of working gundogs our sport simply couldn't be pursued effectively, or indeed ethically, and perhaps may not exist at all. The devotion shown by gundog breeders, trainers and handlers in improving and enhancing the gundog in all its forms is to be applauded and supported at every opportunity.

Just such an opportunity was presented to Drumbanagher Estate during early 2012. Through our various involvements and associations with the gundog fraternity, the estate was approached with regard to hosting the 2012 Irish Kennel Club (IKC) Retriever Championship Stake. To host such a prestigious event is indeed an honour and an obvious accolade for any sporting estate. The event has previously been hosted by a number of the great estates in Ireland such as Coollattin, Dromoland Castle, and Ballinacor to name but a few. It was therefore with a degree of trepidation that we at Drumbanagher followed in the footsteps of these hallowed estates and accepted the invitation extended by the IKC to host both days of the competition.

Those familiar with the shoot at Drumbanagher will be aware that we have an active shooting calendar throughout the season. We pride ourselves on the provision of ample sport for discerning Guns and the habitat, quarry species and topography available on the estate would easily provide sufficient scope and flexibility to comfortably accommodate the two back-to-back days of driven shooting that would be required for the duration of the stake. Indeed, the two days shooting in question were added to the already full calendar as extra days over and above our norm. When these days became available, positions in the line of Guns were filled readily, partly due to the ongoing demand for shooting on the estate, but also due to the interest and support for retriever trialling within the local shooting community.

Clearly, shooting and the provision of game to facilitate the stake weren't going to be an issue, but what of the other aspects of hosting a retriever championship?

In reality there is more to consider than might at first meet the eye with such an event and much consultation and guidance from the IKC Championship Committee was necessary in order to ensure the smooth running of the event and guarantee that nothing would be left to chance. Judges, competitors, stewards, spectators, parking, pedestrian access, communications, media, transport, health and safety, toilet facilities, catering, etc., were all included in the joint mix of considerations between the IKC and Drumbanagher. A great debt of gratitude is owed to those from the IKC Championship Committee who patiently advised on requirements, those on the Drumbanagher team who worked so diligently to deliver what would be an outstanding two days of shooting and gundog competition must also be recognised, as must those who aided the event by their generous sponsorship. On this front a special word of thanks must go to Field & Stream (Moy), Carrickdale Hotel (Carrickcarnon), JMK Quads & All-Terrain Vehicles (Banbridge), Tannyoky Guns & Ammo (Poyntzpass), Norspace (Lisburn), Lettergreen Kennels (Tandragee), and Joseph Morton Ltd, Seeds (Banbridge).

Discussions regarding the event began in earnest during mid summer 2012. Members of the IKC Field Trial Committee, whilst being aware of Drumbanagher, had not previously visited us, viewed the ground or watched any of the shooting in progress on the estate. At the height of summer it can be difficult to appreciate just how the various drives on the estate work or what can be expected in terms of the game and shooting that they generally provide. However, a tour of the ground did go some way to providing an appreciation of operation of the shoot and even at that early stage plans were being formulated with regard to placing the lines of competitors and the gallery of spectators that would be expected over the course of the two days. Whilst of course the primary objective of the days was to provide the best possible trialling conditions, it was also vitally important to ensure that there would be a minimum of disruption to the progress of the shooting day and the enjoyment of the Guns. To ensure both, a degree of balance and cooperation would be necessary, but as already said, Drumbanagher has an inbuilt degree of flexibility which would help us accommodate most requests.

With the field trial committee familiarised with the shoot and its operation and with Guns confirmed for the two days of the championship, the intricacies of delivering on the expectations of both aspects of the

event had still to be determined and finalised by the Drumbanagher team.

One of the primary considerations would be the number of people and vehicles that would attend the event. Retriever trialling is of course well supported in Ireland and the Championship is always an event of particular interest. Clearly, the competitors and officials would need close access to the trial ground. However, parking is generally quite limited at the estate and whilst the verges of the main avenue in the estate would undoubtedly accommodate those directly involved in the trial. This simply could not be the case for other attendees if significant congestion was to be avoided. Therefore, additional parking within striding distance would be the order of the day for spectators. A convenient location was identified near one of the estate's rear access routes, with careful stewarding ensuring that spectators would be conducted on foot to the main trial ground where they could enjoy some excellent views of the dog work without becoming lost in the labyrinth of estate laneways or disturbing any nearby drives.

Despite the number of named drives Drumbanagher is quite a compact shoot and most of the drives are within a short walking distance of each other. Drumbanagher is also quite a picturesque estate with steep wooded valleys and tree-lined pastures and a relaxed walk between drives during our normal shoot days generally provides for a relaxed atmosphere and affords an opportunity for everyone to mix, discuss the day so far and admire the surroundings. However, during the course of the championship it would be necessary to ensure a continuity of shooting ahead of the field of competitors and spectators. Therefore, a fleet of 4-wheel drive vehicles from Range Rovers and Land Rovers, numerous examples of the ubiquitous Kawasaki Mule, and including all manner of quads would be necessary to minimise time in transit between drives.

As it was, the supply of game during the two days was both constant and copious and despite the atrocious weather on the second day, the birds presented superbly providing ample but extremely testing shooting up and down the line at each drive. Therefore we found that a number of drives were in fact excluded from the competition being surplus to requirements. Of course this situation had been taken into consideration during our planning and Drumbanagher's own team of pickers-up remained on standby through the course of each day to attend to the collection and handling of game where this would prove to be case.

To our dedicated team of beaters the two days of the championship were shoot days just like any other with little or no adjustment to their routine of providing birds over the Guns. This was perhaps with the exception of one or two slight delays between drives as the pace was



The Drumbanagher team of 'pickers up'

adjusted to prevent the shoot progressing too far ahead of the field of competitors. These intervals were clearly welcomed by the beating team who took the opportunity to rest their own dogs and to admire the spectacle of the field trial itself.



Head Keeper Brian Byrnes with his team of beaters

Catering arrangements were as normal for the team of Guns, the beaters and pickers-up who adjourned to the shooting lodge within the estate as usual for a hot meal. Outside caterers arranged by the estate were also present for those attending and competing in the trial and clearly the opportunity for a hot meal was a welcomed and unexpected luxury.

With the competition completed well in advance of the last drives of the second day of shooting, the attention of the trail turned toward results and to the formality of the presentation. This was conducted at a local hostelry close to the trial venue, which again had been organised in advance of the trial and in case the vagaries of the weather should hamper this important aspect of the event.

Whilst Drumbanagher is no stranger to the hosting of field trails, the Retriever Championship is something that little bit more special than usual. However, despite the sense of trepidation and of responsibility in hosting such an event, the needs of the trail appear to have been fully met, disruption to the shooting day was minimal, the format of the shooting at Drumbanagher seems particularly suited to the needs of the trail and in the aftermath, our version of the championship event seems to have met with positive comment from all quarters. We would have no hesitation in offering our support to the IKC in the future should our services ever be required again and we are proud to have joined the succession of sporting estates who have received the accolade of being an IKC Retriever Championship host.

Coming of Age in 1986 - Mallard, Girlfriends and Two Retrievers

The 1st September 1986 proved to be a bitter sweet experience for Michael. Bitter because it heralded a return to secondary school. Sweet because it was the first day of a new duck shooting season. To add to his discomfort, Michael's two older friends Stephen and Tom were commencing their first year in university. Both teased him incessantly about a term that starts in early October. How he envied them! Life became even more miserable as 1st September approached. Both his parents, Patrick and Mary, insisted that he had to turn up for the first day of the new academic term. Poor summer exam results meant that his pleas for leniency fell on deaf ears. 'Mallard and gun-dogs will not help you pass your exams' became the constant parental refrain. He did however, squeeze one concession from his recalcitrant parents, namely that he could join his father for the dawn flight. But even if the flight lasted all day he simply had to be on that school bus by 8.30 am.

Michael had been anticipating opening day all summer. Immersing himself in shooting magazines, he dreamed of magic flights, testing birds and memorable retrieves. He had literally plagued the local gunsmith since purchasing a side by side twenty bore. Constantly seeking advice on different cartridge brands and shot sizes, the gunsmith in an effort to curb his youthful exuberance eventually advised him that how he swung the gun mattered more than ballistics. Taking the advice to heart, he spent four evenings at the local clay pigeon shooting grounds. Apart from the springing teal, he shot decently enough on all stands.

A new Labrador was showing great potential. Carefully following his training programme, Heather had become very responsive to her master's commands. A keen swimmer, she was blessed with an excellent nose and was retrieving rabbits and pigeons with ease. A few retrieves of mallard would be the icing on the cake.

Late that August evening, he gave the gun an extra good clean. The cartridge belt was filled. Heather was acquainted with the importance of her

forthcoming tasks. Father was urged not to be a morning grouch, while Mother was simply asked to leave him alone. On this night she was politely informed that he cared little for either the French Revolution or William Shakespeare. He cared even less for his new music teacher who, by sheer bad fortune, was his mother's best friend. Wisely though, he kept this particular thought to himself.

Opening Day Arrives

Opening morning finally arrived. Michael, his father and of course, Heather were on the river bank at 5:00 am. The landowner, Tom Fenton was a life long friend of Patrick. This life long bond had been forged in their late teenage years, when their favourite quarry species were rabbits and women. Tom had tipped off his good friend that mallard had been feeding on the adjoining stubble fields from mid-August onwards.

High in expectations, the party submerged themselves in reed beds. Heather though was curiously restless. It was as if she knew that this was not just another training session. Near total silence was interrupted by the occasional rising trout. Michael reflected on his intensive preseason preparations. He wondered how Stephen and Tom would do. Stephen had abandoned the gun for the fishing rod all summer. Unforgivably, in Michael's eyes, Tom had abandoned gun, rod and dog for a new girlfriend. Consequently, Tom's golden retriever Lucy was at best half-trained. Michael wagered that Stephen and Tom would return home empty handed. More to the point they deserved an empty bag. Such a casual approach was considered deviant by Michael. Tom even had the temerity to visit both Michael and his father on the eve of opening day. He had only two cartridges left since last season and needed to borrow a few to tide him over for the morning.

Michael's pre dawn dreaming was interrupted by a wood-pigeon bursting from a sycamore on the far bank. A tinge of light was appearing in the valley. It will not be long now he mused to himself. And then he heard the first whistle of mallard wings. "On the move early," his Dad whispered to him. It was only 5.15 am. Silence returned and that tinge of light was fast becoming a fully fledged dawn. Then, up river the first shot of a new



A few retrieves of mallard would be the icing on the cake.

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Save for the swans, it seemed no flight would develop on that part of the river.

season rang out. At last both father and son glimpsed their first mallard of the season. In the distance a flock of five took refuge in the stream on Wyse's stud farm. A volley of shots rang out down river. Behind them, Old Casey's pond was proving to be a good choice for one gun. "Ah, Casey's eldest son is home. A decent shot but he has been in London for years," explained Patrick. Michael was becoming impatient. No flight was developing on their part of the river. Their only hope now was that they were obviously between two sets of guns. Surely a few would come their way. And come they did but all high and well out of range having received a rude awakening either up or down river. Michael and Patrick decided not to abandon ship. "One flock might just get a little bit careless," suggested Patrick. With forty years of experience under his belt, Michael bowed to his father's judgment. Actually, two flocks got careless. A flock of ten attempted a landing directly in front of Michael. As Michael raised his gun, Heather bolted and plunged into the river and chaos ensued. Noisy quacking and the shouts of a frustrated master deterred a second flock just as they approached Patrick. "I thought that bloody dog was trained," growled Patrick. Demoralised, Michael returned to the reed beds. A third flock, five on this occasion came over Michael. No more than twenty yards up, he rose with confidence. Mounting and swinging, the flock proceeded unscathed.

Coming of Age

Father and son strolled back to the car empty handed. Patrick took the morning's events in his stride. Michael was demoralised and Heather seemed ill at ease. Hardly a word was uttered on the journey home. That is until they were passing Old Casey's farm. Sure enough Casey's son was striding towards the farm house with a gun in one hand and a pair of mallard in the other. "London has not affected his shooting,"

muttered Michael. Patrick just smiled. A mile from home they spotted a smiling Stephen and Tom coming out of Butler's pond field. Stopping the car, Patrick greeted the pair and inquired of their morning's shooting. Two bulging game bags were produced. "Our best ever dawn flight," boasted Stephen. "Twelve mallard and an unlucky single teal for good measure," added Tom.

Michael sulked in the passenger seat. Patrick though was completely baffled: "Sure lads that pond is always as dry as the Sahara until November." "Dead right Patrick," replied Tom, "but for some unknown reason those underground streams which cause late winter flooding at the front of the farm filled the pond in late August. Old Butler and the wife can't figure it out." "How did you find out?" snarled Michael. "Sure my girlfriend is Butler's youngest daughter! She spotted the pond full of mallard just two mornings ago whilst out riding her new mare. "By the way, how did ye get on?" asked Stephen. "Not great, a blank opening morning but the season is long," replied Patrick. "And how did, Heather work?" Tom interjected "A bit of an off morning," Michael muttered resenting the question. "Strange thing, Lucy was in great form and I hardly gave her one training session this past summer. Maybe she is just a natural," added Tom with undiluted glee. "Must admit that I liked Lucy's temperament from the beginning," said Patrick.

"Michael you better get a move on, it is already half seven and you surely must get the bus at by 8.30," exclaimed Stephen. "We had better hurry too," said Tom. "The girlfriend is preparing breakfast for Stephen and I up at the farmhouse. Mallard and breakfast what more could any man ask of his girlfriend?" "Have a great day in school Michael and thanks for those cartridges Patrick," teased Tom as father and son headed home.

Michael had indeed 'come of age' on that 1st September 1986.

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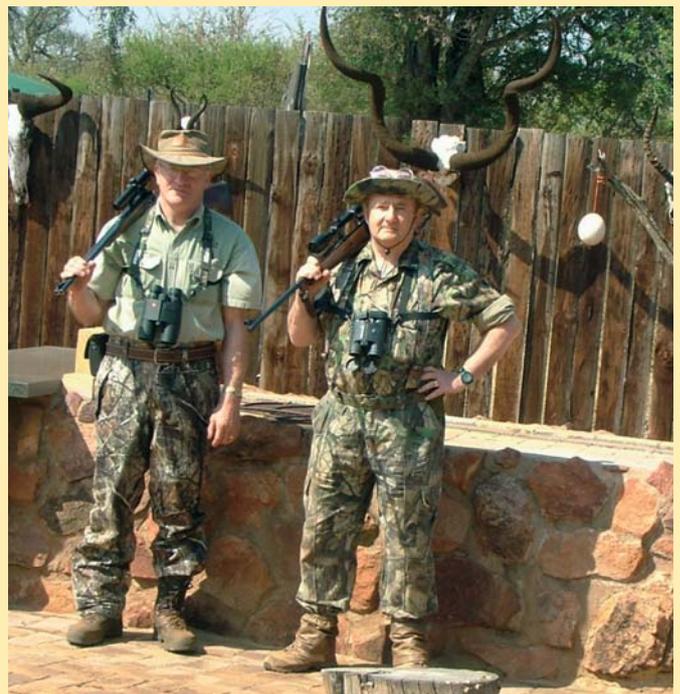
A recent African hunt and a surprising legal development

(L-R) The Hunting group of PH Louis Fouche, Dave, Pat, Norman, the Author, Marie, PH Marius and Mark.

This particular hunt turned out to be quite a difficult one for all concerned. Our group visited South Africa's Limpopo Province as we do regularly. On this occasion we were quite surprised at the level of growth and greenery in the bush-veldt. A recent drought had been followed by extremely heavy rainfall, which in turn was responsible for the accelerated growth across the area.

Hunting turned out to be a bit of a nightmare. We left camp at 5am each morning in our separate bakkies (4 X 4s) for the assigned districts and the best we could do was look for recent tracks crossing the sandy lanes. Tracks were plentiful, kudu, hartebeest, zebra, gemsbok, waterbuck, impala, etc. They were all there, but catching a glimpse of any species was almost impossible. In over two dozen African safaris I had never seen anything like this! Once we had identified specific tracks, a decision was taken: whether to pursue them on foot or move on. When we decided to follow-up impala, kudu, or whatever, it involved difficult long walks through and around dense undergrowth. Equipped with spare water, we spent hours trekking around on spoor that frequently led us to even thicker undergrowth which was

impossible to penetrate. Often we got within a reasonable distance of animals without actually seeing any, only to spook them and then have to start all over again.



Pat and Frank on safari with their large calibre rifles

It wasn't all doom and gloom. One morning, Pat and



Pat taking the shot.

I volunteered to go out together on foot along with PH Louis and Tracker Franz. Louis and Franz led, followed

by me, with Pat bringing up the rear. I was carrying my .375 H&H Sako, while Pat was armed with his nice 500/.416 Krieghoff double. A black-backed jackal appeared from nowhere approximately 100 metres ahead and Louis whispered "shoot!" I squeezed off a shot and clearly hit the jackal which ran into the thick undergrowth. Seconds later, a jackal ran into the track 150 metres ahead and, thinking it was the same one that I had shot at, I prepared to fire again. The jackal was running away from us and presented a difficult target, but I managed to get off a decent offhand shot. Louis and I went forward to retrieve the jackal and were surprised at the lack of evidence of the first shot. Just then Franz appeared out of the bush behind us holding another dead jackal. I had shot two, within two minutes! An African farmer's delight!



PH Louis and Frank with one of the jackals.

We all went to ground

As the morning wore on, we were still trekking around on foot, heading in the general direction of the camp. Franz suddenly froze and whispered: "wildebeest." We all went to ground as Louis again whispered, asking if I wanted to hunt one. Having taken two shots already I shook my head and asked Pat if he was interested. A good wildebeest bull was on Pat's shopping list, so when he nodded in the affirmative I crawled back to allow him get a view of the group of animals which for once was clearly visible about eighty metres away.

The shot was taken from the sitting position and Pat bagged himself a mighty trophy. The bull was an old



Pat's old Wildebeest bull.

fellow with an interesting broad head.

We had not seen one like this before. Soon it will adorn his trophy room. Throughout the week we had limited success. I added two impalas to my total, as did Dave and Norman. They were the easiest to track through the difficult conditions – their large numbers usually ensure that some will be hunted successfully. Dave was using a 7 X 57 Mannlicher and Norman, who lives in Canada, brought his bow. Despite the dense undergrowth we enjoyed what was a tough week – the craic was mighty in the evenings and as always we were well looked after by our hosts. This year's safari is well into the planning stage.

Good news for 2013

The good news in 2013 is that for the first time ever we will have had some practice with our rifles prior to leaving Ireland. Following the three year High Court struggle in which the Garda position on pistols literally fell asunder, we had intended to pursue the 'outside the jurisdiction only' condition on our larger calibre rifles to a final conclusion. A small number of rifles and some pistols were involved in this particular action with my .375 rifle being the lead case as I had taken a High Court

action in 2003 which finally yielded its certificate in 2008. Various papers and statements were being assembled for what we foresaw as another protracted legal struggle in which the State would use every possible angle to stall and delay – a standard tactic! However it may finally have dawned on someone somewhere in authority that it's not a good idea to continually run up legal costs in situations that are clearly indefensible, because the white flag was waved in early December 2012. A letter from the Chief State Solicitor's office to Solicitor William Egan, the NARGC's legal representative, conceded in all cases and accepted liability for the costs.

It all came as a bit of a shock, albeit a pleasant shock. The dramatic exposure of senior Garda officers in the High Court in January 2012, coupled with flawed advice that the State appears to have adopted as a basis for legal argument may have triggered (sorry) this final collapse. Dare I suggest that, costs apart, basic logic that in the long run we are all on the same side may have finally sunk in? The bottom line is that at this point the legal actions are over – we were right and the Garda/State position was wrong! Once more, democracy has come through with it's head held high.

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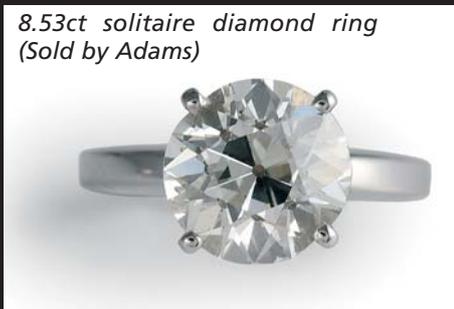
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Art and Antiques

Ireland's major auction players in Ireland are still in business and all are hoping that the months ahead will carry them through successfully until the end of another financial year. So it would appear the sales scene during the past year has not really been a tale of doom and gloom.

James O'Halloran, Managing Director of Dublin-based ADAMS says: "Sales of quality items were strong across all categories of sale in 2012 and we have expectations that this will continue in 2013 as investors

*8.53ct solitaire diamond ring
(Sold by Adams)*



begin to diversify into art and antiques due to the perceived good value in the marketplace.

"It is very interesting that

the top five artworks we sold during the year were all by different artists which is a first for us in recent years. It illustrates too the range and diversity of high quality art that we have been consigned over the last twelve months.

"It is good to see Le Brocquy heading the list as there was a feeling in some quarters that his light was dimming but the strong price achieved for 'Procession with Lilies' has returned his name into the bright lights. Works by Paul Henry and Jack Yeats have fared consistently well in all our Irish art sales thus demonstrating the demand for blue chip artists in today's market.

"Purchasers are rightly cautious at present particularly when the market is presenting so much choice as was seen in the pre-Christmas sales. Yet again this year we have seen that virtually everything offered with even a 20% too high estimate is tending to struggle so it is vital to get the estimate right. Our sold rates have remained solid throughout 2012, at an average of 80% which is virtually the same as the last three years. This is a very comforting statistic for us as it indicates a strong level of demand and purchaser participation in our auctions. The total hammer receipts for Irish Art Sales in 2012 is €4.36m. 2011's figures were skewed massively upwards by the remarkable €1m paid for Yeats' A Fair Day, Mayo so when that exceptional figure is stripped out our revenues in this sector are just ahead of the last two years' figures.

"We are heading through the new year with a good

stock of new-to-the-market Irish artworks already consigned, including a major Achill period Paul Henry which has never been seen at auction before. We are optimistic about the middle to high end of the Irish art market but expect the lower end to continue to struggle. Irish art buyers are still predominantly Irish residents and that demographic is unlikely to change to any appreciable extent anytime soon. The introduction of a Residential Property Tax is also likely to have a bearing on the market as homeowners may seek to enhance their properties by purchasing art and antiques as opposed to adding value to their homes upon which they will have to pay tax. Time will tell."

Here is a sample of how things were selling at ADAMS during the past year.

Jewellery:

€85,000 - A 8.53ct solitaire diamond ring, €30,000 - A 4.31ct solitaire diamond ring, €25,000 - A Cartier 'Crash' ladies wristwatch, €15,000 - A Cartier 'Tank Americaine' ladies wristwatch.

Memorabilia:

€100,000 - A 1916 Proclamation of The Irish Republic, €90,000 - The Wyse Family Document Archive.

Furniture:

€26,000 - A George 1st giltwood Pier Mirror by Gumley and Moore, €18,000 - A George II inlaid walnut secretaire tallboy chest, €17,000 - An Edwardian inlaid satinwood metamorphic dressing table.

Silver:

€15,000 - An Irish mid Georgian silver salver by Jeremiah Morgan of Clonmel, €13,000 - A silver trophy cup known as The Westmeath Cup, London 1834, €12,000 - A George II Irish oversized Hash Spoon, Dublin 1754 by Thomas Miles of Waterford.

Porcelain:

€30,000 - A large Chinese 18th Century blue and white porcelain Jardiniere or Fish Bowl, €6,600 - A large



A George II inlaid walnut secretaire tallboy chest (Sold by Adams)

Chinese 19th Century polychrome porcelain moon shaped flask vase, €5200 - A 19th Century Meissen enamelled porcelain vase in the manner of Leuteritz.

Paintings:

€320,000 - Louis le Brocquy, "Procession of Lilies," sold 26th Sept 2012, €200,000 - William John Leech, "Interior of a Cafe," sold 30th May 2012, €180,000 - Jack B. Yeats, "Good Evening Men," sold 30th May 2012. €160,000 - Paul Henry, "The Bog at evening," sold 26th Sept 2012, €140,000 - Richard T Moynan, "The Travelling Show," sold 4th Dec 2012.

BELFAST AGREEMENT SELLS

Whyte's History, Literature and Collectibles January auction in Dublin attracted a large crowd and of the 655 lots 80% sold with some items selling for 200-300pc more than their estimates. The top-selling lot was a Belfast Agreement memo signed by many of the participants at the talks which made €9,000 (€3,000-€5,000) and it is believed the buyer was from Northern Ireland.

Among other highlights were a Celtic revival silver replica of the Ardagh Chalice, €8,000 (€4,000-€5,000); a 1929 Ulster Bank £10 note, €4,400 (€2,500-€3,500); GAA medals, €3,800 (€4,000-€5,000); and, a Spanish silver crucifix, described as 'possibly from an Armada ship,' made €2,600 (€400-€600).

UP NORTH

Bangor auctions which has been successfully in operation for just over twenty years continues to stage at least three general sales, a bed sale and a fine antiques sale



A silver trophy cup known as The Westmeath Cup, London 1834 (Sold by Adams)



A large Chinese 18th Century blue and white porcelain Jardiniere or Fish Bowl (Sold by Adams)



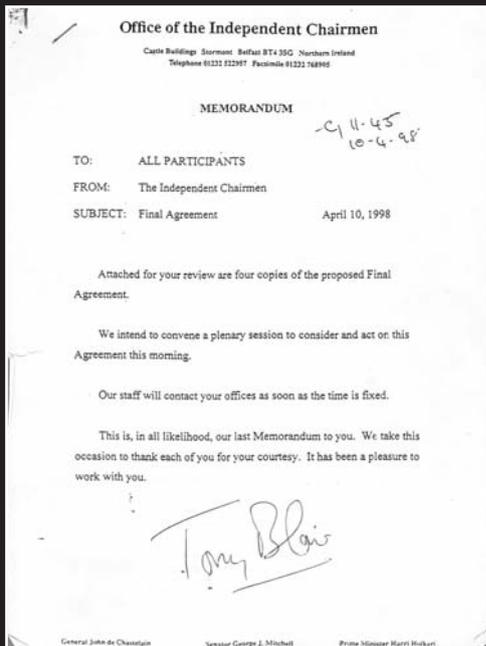
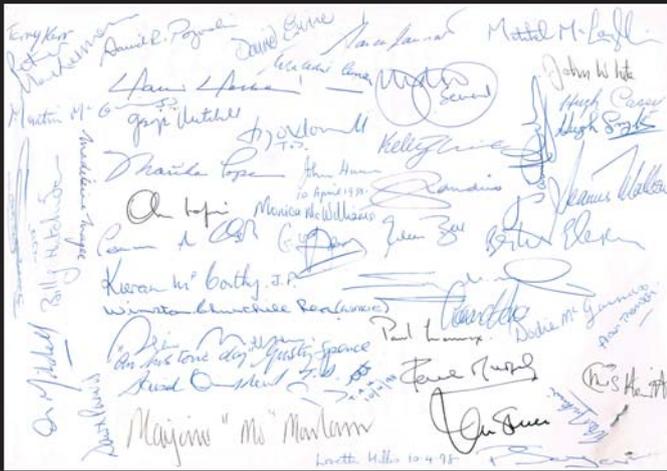
William John Leech, "Interior of a Cafe," sold 30th May 2012 (Sold by Adams)

each month. Gerald Holden-Downes, who runs the sales room with business partner Grahame Hull is also the senior auctioneer and puts thousands of items under his gavel each year. From his position on the rostrum he can gauge on a sale-to-sale basis how things are going and he says: "I have to say things were down a bit last year on the previous twelve months. But surprisingly this year has started off much better than last year. Normally January and February are 'flat' months and you are doing little more than operating to pay the wages. This year we have been pleasantly surprised by the way things have gone and hopefully we have come into a new trend which will continue during the coming months. There is confidence in the trade but during the past year are so I think the climate has been affected by fewer people moving house and not changing as much furniture."

While he agrees 'brown' furniture has been in the doldrums for several years he believes there is still a reasonable demand for good quality modern furniture: "On the antique side again it is good quality lots that are selling well but sadly Irish art has been somewhat deflated. The other side of the coin is

that it is a buyers' scene. So collectors who are looking for Doulton, Carlton and other ware are able to buy at prices which are a lot lower than they were five or ten years ago. As I've said we have started off better this year than we had anticipated. So we are hoping this trend will continue for the benefit of the trade, the public and of course the auction world."

Oliver Gormley of Gormley Fine Art which have galleries in



Belfast Agreement memo signed by many of the participants (Sold by Whytes)

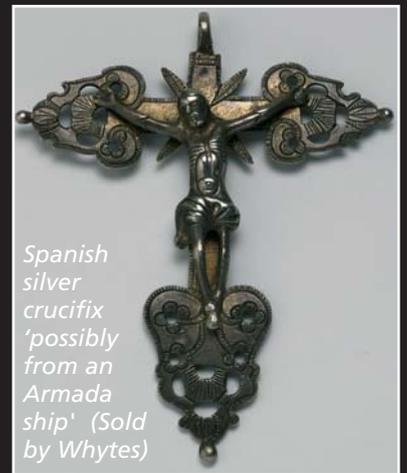
Omagh, Belfast, and Dublin, says: "Prices are all down by about 40% over the past two years so, if you have a few pounds to spend, now is a good time to buy. Auctions are doing well on works of art priced between £200 and £700 for first time buyers who are the collectors of the future. In the gallery, the market is still good for good quality pieces of art. Artists realise only good work will sell. We also find now that around 70% of our business is Internet-related."



Celtic revival silver replica of the Ardagh Chalice (Sold by Whytes)

BELFAST SCENE

In ROSS'S, the long-established auction house things were quieter than usual during January and early February according to auctioneer Daniel Clarke. Whether this was part of a seasonal trend or a



Spanish silver crucifix 'possibly from an Armada ship' (Sold by Whytes)

consequence of the almost nightly street protests taking place over a flag-flying issue is debatable: "But we had a very slow sales scene and I'm afraid this was reflected in other business outlets across the city," he added.

According to Daniel, jewellery and silver continue to sell well on an extremely buoyant market and paintings have also been selling quite well.

He said: "However, there is a lack of furniture coming to market and this no doubt is a consequence of the lack of mobility in the house market and until that market improves this will have continue to have an effect on



sales. I must say, however, we have been very encouraged by the dozen or so on-line art sales we have held to date. These have gone from strength-to-strength and are helping to engage people who are now comfortable attending a sale in front of their computer. No doubt people enjoy this and we are also encouraged by the level of international response these on-lines sales are attracting."

(Left) Richard T Moynan, "The Travelling Show" sold 4th Dec 2012 (Sold by Adams)

Liz & Lucky Phil's Shooting Adventure

Wind, hail sleet or snow, once you've got a love for shooting, none of the elements will stop you. That's what I had to tell myself in December when I decided there was no better time to go to shooting, not only that but to Scotland of all places. Our drive up to Montrose nearly half destroyed my confidence, with snow falling all around and lying in the fields, I even remember at one stage following a snow plough! The sight that continued to spur me on was the many fields full of geese from Auchterarder onwards and the few roe deer which could be easily spotted against the white backdrop.

I'm convinced that women really do feel the cold in comparison to men and was extremely thankful to another lady friend of mine who gave me a sniper suit (which in all truth looked like a big onesie) to use when lying out in the fields and ditches. Not only that, but I made sure I had packed all my heart shaped hand warmers, something the guys loved to tease me about but I guess that's 'lady glamour.'

When we arrived at Montrose and checked into our hotel 'The St Cyrus' we were shortly greeted by John and Rob, who organise and run the shooting. We had gone to

John the previous year for goose shooting and had a great time, as we got plenty of geese, roe and great rough shooting. This year they had taken on a new estate 'Arbuthnot', so we were eager to see how it compared. Philip and my brother Mark were so eager to get shooting they asked if they could go out for roe as soon as they arrived and Rob was more than willing to oblige. The rest of us sane people stayed in to unpack and get organised for the next few days ahead.

Later that evening we received a phone call while we were having a game of pool, saying they had got three deer. Next thing you know, they both traipsed in with big smiles on their faces, but little did we realise Mark had shot all three. Apparently every time Philip got his scope on a deer it fell in front of him, so he was coined with the name 'Lucky Phil' for the rest of the holiday.

We had an early start the next morning as we were off to the geese. They were supposed to be hitting the Calabrese fields pretty hard (to you and me Calabrese is another name for broccoli fields). John had been watching them every day and they were going to the same place as Mark had got the deer the evening previous. Before they went out they were warned not to disturb any geese because it could affect our morning flight.



Decoys ready we waited for the flight to start



A high skein overhead

Once we had set up our hides and decoys, the geese were soon to follow. From where we were, on the top of a hill, we were overlooking the Montrose basin, so you could see the geese lifting in their skeins and follow them as they flew towards us, it was quite a clear day.

Our hides were quite luxurious compared to what we are normally used to. We had crates to sit on and plenty of room to move, we were hidden from the wind in gorse bushes, I was toasty in my suit amongst the snow and John even remembered the flask of coffee, although he ended up with half the field in his cup from the amount of times he had to get up and run to collect geese.

We had great shooting, because the geese came in small skeins and decoyed well, so we were each able to pick a bird and take it out, each time they came in.

Lucky Phil again got to see birds falling in front of him without even having to pull the trigger, although he did get his fair share. We agreed to stop shooting after one last skein but, as is always the way, it never arrived, so we finished about 9.30am with 21 pink foot geese between 5 guns.

After breakfast we went to the local gun shop where Jim treated himself to some new Harkila gear and my Dad Richard and Mark had to get gloves as both had forgotten them and suffered that morning. As soon as we got back to the hotel we were straight out to more shooting, Dad and Mark both went out pigeon shooting, while Jim, Phil and I all went out for roe. We were each placed in high seats and Phil was given the favoured position. My high seat was placed in a wooded area, with a river behind me and an open field in front of me. The hour I spent up that metal high seat in the snow, with a freezing wind had to be the longest hour of my life! When Rob and I came down he had to laugh because the seat never stopped shaking the whole time. Never will I ever venture up one of them without my suit again! We then collected Lucky Phil who, as you might guess, never saw anything, but heard plenty of shooting.

It was getting quite dark by the time we went to collect Jim and as we were driving up the field to the forest where his high seat was, roe deer were springing out of everywhere in front of the headlights. Jim was standing at the edge of the forest and to look at him you would have thought he was standing in the Caribbean, wearing just a T-shirt. He had a big smile on his face but

The Author (right) and shooting party with the bearded John Bailie.



was shattered after bleeding and dragging three deer to the edge of the forest. I happily volunteered to gralloch one of the deer for a bit of experience, not only that but to warm my hands! Mark and Dad ended up getting ten pigeons.

Overnight the snow had started to thaw, something we were worried about because first thing that morning we were to head out for more geese but John had warned us that if it thawed the geese would be likely to head to potato fields instead. Where we set up our hides, we had a river flowing behind us, a coast close to our right and grazing fields in front of us. While setting up, John mentioned that if we saw any ducks flying up the river we were allowed to shoot them, so we all had our guns at the ready. We actually had a brilliant morning flight, shooting teal, mallard, widgeon, pintail and snipe, all coming off the shore and flying up the river. You had to be careful with your shots though, because we had no dogs to do any water retrieves. Jim shot his first pintail but couldn't pick it because it

landed in the water. As predicted, the goose flight didn't quite go to plans considering the weather, but we managed to shoot seven geese, which mainly came as solitary birds.

In the afternoon we went out for some rough shooting on the estate. I had mentioned how my favourite thing to shoot was woodcock, so we covered quite many wooded areas. While walking through some dense cover, a few roe deer took us by surprise, but it was nice to see them close up. We then divided, Mark and I were sent to the end of two woods while they flushed them towards us. At this stage a big covey of partridge took to flight out of my range so I started moving up the field towards them to try to get a shot but had no luck. Fortunately it pushed them to Mark and he was able to get one. Coming to the end of the shoot I was shattered and we had to walk across rough ground to get to the road. A woodcock rose in front of me, I mounted the gun pulled the trigger but nothing happened... safety! Again another one rose, I pulled the trigger again.... delay...bang, bird down. How

could I do that twice with everyone watching? Lucky Phil who was to my left was a real gentleman and let me shoot another woodcock which he had the opportunity to shoot.

We ended the afternoon with six pheasants, two partridge, four woodcock and a dram of sloe gin.

That evening was to be my final chance to get roe deer, as it was for Philip. There was a field we had been watching close to a wooded area, which was teeming with deer the night before. We both went out with Rob, but were placed in different areas.

Phil went for a quick stalk with Rob, and I managed to spot one through the binoculars. They stalked in and Philip shot it cleanly. He dragged it back to me and gralloched it there and then. It was getting late by now and I knew the pressure was on, so Rob and I went for a final look and spotted one in a field below us. Time was running out, so I quickly took a heart/lung shot and again got another clean kill. In total we had managed to stalk and retrieve eight roe deer for eight shots.

Some excellent shooting was available.



Jim, Dad and Mark spent the evening shooting ducks at a pond John rarely shoots. My Dad could not claim to have the best eye sight but he can be quite cunning. When he went out, instead of facing the pond like the rest he turned and faced away from the wind to spot the duck coming in before it got too dark.

Two ducks came, bang.. bang was heard, Dad shooting both, so the other pair weren't long to twig on to where they should be looking. They said they had some of the best wild duck shooting they ever had at the pond but stopped shooting early with a total of 34 ducks between three guns; I think they were getting too close to John and Robs record!

All in all we had great shooting holiday and I can't wait for the next time as we'll definitely be back. My Dad ended up shooting 10 different species and maybe next time lucky Phil won't have to do all the driving there and back again. I think I was also lucky because the following week Montrose was predicted to have minus 18 degrees.

If anyone is interested in some shooting next season

Dad getting in the hide before the light faded.



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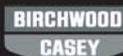


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Plus Twos Nil Desperandum

The mystery of who might be taking a pot shot at Plus Twos still wasn't solved and, to be honest, I couldn't quite see that the good Supt. Farlow was really making much effort but, as often happens at Woodless, events soon overtook this worry with yet another one! The master of the Woodless Harriers had called while I was out inspecting the new release pen with its stock of pheasant poults and word had been sent from Esso to get myself back to the house ASAP. 'Word,' such as it was, arrived in the form of Tierney on one of his mounts from the stable yard and he always gets excited when the master turns up looking for The Master. Now Esso has a very fine and elegant seat but she isn't too keen on the current master of the Harriers, as she thinks he pays far too much attention to that seat whether on or off a horse and, as a result, all communications have to be dealt with by Plus Twos. Usually it is just a matter of him looking for a few more quid to see them through to the next AGM when he can start squeezing the members for their subscriptions, but I sensed this had a greater sense of urgency than usual.

It appeared that there was a government minister visiting the area on the next meet day and the blighter hunted with some rag, tag and bobtail outfit in his home constituency and would like a day with the Woodless Harriers. I'm never that keen on visitors who invite themselves and, when they make noises that they should also be fed and watered at Woodless, it makes my blood boil. I don't mind the Rector or Farlow trotting round for a bite and a glass or two of the Elixir but damned politicians? One has to draw the line somewhere and he belonged to the party that Aunt Irene had said should all be shot, well the good ones that is, while the rest should be hanged, drawn and quartered. The only thing to do was grin and bear it in the cause of local pride and, no doubt, Mrs. Reilly

would manage to concoct some dish suitable to the palate of a government minister with a panache for hunting. A suggestion from Purdey, who also dislikes such people, was devilled fox to suit his reputation as the normally devious politician, and Dixon was not much help either with his thoughts on using one of the Major's old Indian Army curry recipes which normally burns its way through the plates. Of course, impressing on Mrs. Reilly that this was important for the hunt as well as the local community fell on deaf ears, as she is a firm believer that the hunt and its master, as well as the local community, can take a running jump and the sooner the better!

We had just over a week to get everything together and finding a suitable mount was the start of it. When the government minister is a bit short in the leg and thick in the waist, there can be certain difficulties, but Tierney said that he would see to it and not to worry. When Tierney says not to worry, Dixon always does and I follow Dixon's actions like a devout disciple. Esso thought it might be nice for the twins to ride out with the hunt and show the minister what a 'family' sort of outfit we were, but then Esso rarely sees the possible disasters that anything involving the twins brings to pass. There was some sort of photo opportunity for the minister while he opened Matty O'Connor's new 'supermarket' and not surprisingly, Matty is a fully paid-up card carrying member of the minister's party. Farlow was just as peeved by the visit as it would involve him in all sorts of alarms and exercises with his men and ruin his day's hunting which he normally could enjoy in reasonable peace. It also meant that we would have to delay the meet until the minister had finished waffling about whatever politicians waffle about at these events. A late start often ends up with all and sundry hacking home in the gloom of a winter's evening with the steady drizzle of the Irish Midlands dripping down the back of your



Purdey was not over fond of the Woodless Harriers.

neck, unless you have been unfortunate enough to end up walking home in tight riding boots with a lame horse when you have pain at both extremities. However, the minister had to be appeased so that we could bend his ear for some grant or other that the county needed for whatever crazy scheme Matty and his county council friends had devised.

I should have spotted it!

Well, the day finally arrived and all the possible disasters had been thought of, discussed and hopefully circumnavigated and we were promised a really good mount by Tierney so what could go wrong? Every single man, woman and child around Woodless had been dragooned to make a show and Purdey had allowed his precious Landrover to be used to tow a borrowed horse-box with the minister's mount. I should have spotted it when Purdey arrived with a grin like the proverbial Cheshire cat, but I was too preoccupied with entertaining the blighter with a well stiffened drop of jumping juice and watching Farlow directing traffic in the general direction of 'away.' Now, as you know, Purdey is not over fond of the Woodless Harriers or any 'crowd of dressed-up cowboys' as he refers to all mounted hunters who scatter his beloved birds and disturb his coverts, but he was sweetness and light and even respectfully tipped his tweed grouse helmet to the master. He is a fine cut of a man and, while he doesn't ride, he can lead a horse with

some style and he proceeded to do so. Round the back of the horse-box he went and reappeared leading the most bedraggled piebald nag I had ever seen and although the minister made the best of it, Tierney started to splutter and almost choked on a mouthful of Elixir while he muttered that that certainly wasn't the horse that Purdey was meant to collect for our guest. I think it was the roach back and the strange gait that amused the twins most, either that or the thought of a government minister astride something that looked more like a cartoon than a horse. There was nothing for it but to set off and hope for the best and sure wasn't Tierney going to try to save him from any further pitfalls?

He went at it like a real 'thruster'

Out across the first field was fine and we all made the fence without mishap and into the long meadow which has a nasty double oxer on one side and where did the hounds go?— straight for it, of course! Now I know that the better part of valour, especially on horseback, is to let some other idiot deal with the fresh thorns and knock a hole or two in any obstacle before I reach it. Tierney didn't want to lose contact with the minister and the minister certainly wasn't going to show fear in front of a pack of farmers and other rural hunters. He dug in his heels and went at it like a real 'thruster.' It was a pity his mount shared neither his faith nor his ambition and there was a resounding crash as branches flew through

the air and the minister flew towards the ground. There was a sickening thud and that was only the horse until the minister fell on top of it embedding it in a grave of muddy bog which Westmeath is justly famous for, with the adhesive quality of top quality contact glue. The horse disentangled itself and headed for Mount



He dug in his heels and went at it like a real 'thruster.'

Leinster at speed with one of our best saddles but could we extract the minister? Not a hope in Woodless never mind anywhere else! The only thing to do was find a JCB, or a decent tractor with a set of forks, but getting it into this particular field is impossible.

The nearest road that would not require a vehicle fitted with water wings was at least a mile away, so the whipper-in headed back towards the main road and got Farlow involved. Farlow is not a man to be bested by anything involving a chance to get his revenge on an annoying politician and this was his chance to really show what modern police work could achieve. He ordered the whipper-in to flag down a passing car and head for the telephone with instructions to phone the ambulance and the nearest army unit with a suitable vehicle while he headed across country on his newly requisitioned charger.

Perhaps a Garda Superintendent's best uniform is not all that suited for cross country horse riding, but Farlow's blood was up and he took the double oxer in fine style even without his usual well tailored whipcord riding breeches or his spurs. Chin strap down and teeth gritted, he wheeled around and assured the minister that despite looking like a leftover from The Black and White Minstrel Show, due to his solid coating of Midland bog, he would probably get the Ministry of Agriculture in the next cabinet reshuffle. How Farlow gets away with it I'll never understand, but when your only hope of rescue is a comedian on a horse, well so be it!

Purdey had the cheek to arrive as guide to the tank recovery unit from the nearest barracks astride our spluttering quad bike, which he used to spray as many of the hunt as he could with a generous portion of County Westmeath as he skidded to a halt complete with a flamboyant turn. You could still hear his raucous laughter as he headed back with the minister clinging to the carrier and screaming for his driver to take him back to the safety of Dublin and his plush office.

Matty O'Connor could only see his grant disappearing with the retreating minister and how was he going to face party headquarters? Needless to say, the opposition politicians had a field day and didn't even mind when the hunt stuck them for a substantial whip-round to refurbish the kennels. I was afraid

that I would get it in the ear from Mrs. Reilly as well as Esso, both of whom had spent several days concocting a number of dishes to tempt the visitors' palettes which were now on their way back to the Big Smoke and probably some top restaurant to recover their dignity. Dixon saved the day, as he usually does, with the suggestion that we should turn it into a farewell banquet for our distinguished non-appearing guests.

Well, what a night that turned out to be as Griff Penny and McGlinchey had turned up with a few musical friends from the wilds of Donegal and could they play! The old pile rocked to all sorts of fiddling, bone bashing and tin whistle blowing until well after dawn with several surprises along the way. I never imagined that Farlow ever let his hair down, but you should have heard him recite 'The Hottest Wee Widow in Larne' and when he broke into "I'm livin' in Drumlister, and I'm getting' very oul,'" you could hear a pin drop. Not to be outdone, Purdey obliged with "The diagonal steam trap" and Dixon brought the house near to tears with his rendering of "The green eye of the yellow god" complete with all the hand movements and grimaces to match. All we were short of was 'Mad Carew' turning up in person. Plus Twos, however, tries to avoid doing party pieces as his memory is quite likely to let him down just at the moment when he reaches the punchline with enormous embarrassment all round, mainly to his immediate family as well as the old retainers.

Well, all good parties have to come to an end and, soon enough, it was back to the normal drudgery of Woodless but without any more government ministers upsetting our quietude. As Dixon, sagely muttered as the last guests were tottering down the avenue, Nil Desperandum, never despair!

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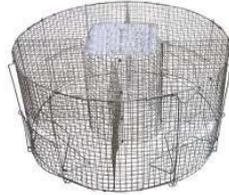
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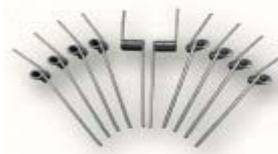
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Hunting Roundup



Declan Feeny with the East Down Foxhounds at Loughinisland.

Around the meets

East Down Foxhounds

December was with us as was the cold, bright weather for the East Down Foxhounds' meet at Loughinisland, in the centre of some picturesque countryside, but it had not escaped the recent heavy rains so some heavy ground and residual water pools lay in wait. Huntsman Declan Feeny had on a 19 ½ couple mixed pack and a small, but hardy, field was already feeling the cold as he lead them to the first draw on Cloughey Road in Tievenadarragh townland.

He drew as far as Danny Savage's at The Rocks without success so he moved on down Cloughey Road and I noticed that substantial whins on both sides of the road had been extensively thinned out leaving less coverts than is normally the case here. At this stage Craig Caven MFH proudly pointed out Planter 04, now in his ninth season. Sired by Saracen 00, one of a number of home bred Stradbally Champions, he is out of Passive 99 and is still going well as he approaches double digits. Testament to a good breeding programme!

Declan Feeny drew around Loughinisland Lake which has a plethora of bird types around it and always proves a certain find but again, despite hard work by huntsman and hounds, there was no one at home.

Drawing right across Peter Fitzpatrick's saw Declan fare no better. As he moved on to Gerard Higgins's a

hare rose and the huntsman didn't even have to tell his hounds to ignore it. A move to some forestry brought no better luck so the huntsman, reluctantly, blew for home in mid afternoon to bring this blank day to an end.

Speaking to him afterwards, Declan Feeny said that this was the first time, in his fifteen years here, that the Loughinisland meet had proved blank adding that the bogs, which normally hold foxes, were absolutely wet through leaving us both to hope for an improvement in conditions soon rather than later.

Iveagh Foxhounds

A dry day, albeit one with biting cold and some wind, saw the Iveagh Foxhounds visit Redhill outside Dromore, Co Down, a longstanding meet in the prime of



A family group with the Iveagh – Elizabeth Mackey (centre) with her daughter Rebecca and son Jason.

their Hunt country. The Byrne family have held the licence for the Red Hill Bar for some two hundred years and many a good day's hunting (and partying!) have been enjoyed there.

After a warm reception huntsman John Porter MFH, with a 13 ½ strong mixed pack moved off. Mr Porter was assisted by kennel huntsman Neil Keery and by Mr Gary Hylands. I was being driven by honorary secretary Linda Graham, who had only just had a plaster cast removed from her leg while her other passenger was Mr Bob Wilson MFH, himself now in a plaster cast after a recently broken arm sustained while turning a horse out. They have both had good value out of the NHS! Mr Wilson's incapacity meant promotion 'in the field,' as it were, for Mr Mark Maguire who now found himself fieldmaster to a well mounted, twenty strong, field. Even though it wasn't raining today the marks of recent very heavy rainfall were to be seen everywhere.

A series of draws across Redhill, Lisnashanker and Boatter all proved negative while a move to Lurganville and then on to St John's proved no more productive. These townlands all abound with good coverts and it was generally acknowledged that this was a poor scenting day.

John Porter is nothing if not persistent and he has an equally keen pack of hounds so they drew steadily across this townland too. At Forthill Road some car followers saw a fox afoot but hounds could not make anything of it.

However, almost immediately they put another fox

afoot from the old railway embankment. He initially left covert then went back into it only to re emerge and hounds settled on him to give a good hunt towards Magherabeg. This fox proved to be the (post) three o'clock one which so often gives some welcome sport. Horses and riders also settled to their task right around Mazeview Road and down to Magherabeg Orange Hall.

With light fast fading the day's sport came to an end when our pilot, having covered just about all of Magherabeg went to ground and was given best, allowing home to be blown in time to return to the meet safely.

County Down Hunt

Cold, bright and dry weather in December greeted the County Down Hunt at Katesbridge, where scent seemed to be at an absolute premium throughout the day. Huntsman Steve Collins had on an 11 ½ couple mixed pack and had amateur whippers-in Ossie Jameson and Ross McCandless assisting him while a mounted field of some forty riders included two joint masters, Wilson Dennison and Robert Steele.

A hack from Manse Road to Closkelt was rewarded when an outlier went afoot. Hounds were quickly on to him and worked hard in poor scenting conditions.

Our pilot went across Doyle's Rocks towards Kilkinamurray then turned on Kilkinamurray Road and ran back towards Katesbridge as we car followers watched from Shanagan Gospel Hall. This vantage point afforded us an excellent view as he ran down behind



*Some of the
Iveagh
Foxhound
Field at
Redhill, Co
Down.*



Mrs Rita Keenan with the County Down Hounds at Katesbridge.

Kernaghan's farm to Kilkinamurray River which runs into the Bann. An interesting historical footnote is that Katesbridge is named after Kate who had a toll bridge and some of the car followers could remember the old toll house but not, as they were quick to point out, the collection of tolls!

Matters now moved across the main Castlewellan to Banbridge road, about one mile from Katesbridge, as our pilot ran towards McArdle's Meadows from where he continued towards Ballyrone and entered the Bann to become unsighted to us. Hounds could make nothing of this as what little scent there had been seemed to have now gone completely. After an almost circular tour of Ballybrick, from Murray's Meadow, hounds were lifted on Seafin Road and home was blown in late afternoon.

Fermanagh Harriers

The Fermanagh Harriers' meet at Munville, between Brookeborough and Lisnaskee, took place on a dry day which, late on, even offered sunshine though the heavy going reminded everyone of just how much rain had fallen recently.

Joint master Mr Johnny Vance had on a 12 ½ couple mixed pack, including some of the new entry having their first day's hunting. He was assisted by his sisters Susan and Claire and by Mr Michael Bevan while Mr Edward Pearse was field master to some twenty mounted followers.

Johnny Vance is now sole huntsman as his father, Billy, is no longer riding due to head injuries sustained during the close season. I was therefore delighted to be a passenger in the same vehicle as Billy, who proved that he has lost none of his hunting savvy, keeping driver John Savage and myself on our toes with predictions about where hounds were going

The first draw, at John Patterson's, saw a hare rise almost immediately to provide a half hour hunt, albeit a slow one, across Patterson's and into Vinnie Smith's. This hare actually crossed the road, above Moat School, in front of your correspondent during a lull in this hunt. As I was about to holler I was beaten to it by the octogenarian Billy Vance!

This hunt continued into Maguire's but the hare was then lost leaving Johnny Vance to draw John Lynch's adjoining property. Almost immediately, what the huntsman and whippers-in opined was the same hare rose and was hunted back into Maguire's where it was lost after a shorter, quicker hunt.

The huntsman then drew Norrie Johnston's but it was blank as was William Wilson's. However, William's brother Irvine's adjoining farm held a fox which quickly went afoot.

Hounds hunted him hard, back into William Johnson's then into a small plantation at Mickey McNally's. After a short, sharp hunt around this plantation hounds accounted for their fox in the open.

A draw across Tommy Cassidy's saw a second fox afoot and hounds hunted him from there right up to Clarke's Quarry where he took them across the top of the quarry then back into the plantation where he was lost.

At this stage Johnny Vance, in deference to ground conditions and goodwill to farmers, blew for home in mid afternoon to end a better than expected day's sport where a lot of ground had been covered and no serious falls had occurred.

Peter Little wasn't the only person to remark that he had expected a text message to say that the meet was off right up until the last minute. How delighted everyone was that no such message was sent.



THE IRISH WORKING TERRIER FEDERATION

The I.W.T.F. was formed to give an independent voice to terrier-men across Ireland. Where many other field sports disciplines have representative organisations in place to be watchful over their member's best interests, independent terrier-men did not.

As a new federation of fellow hunters the I.W.T.F. is actively seeking to reach out and build bridges, alliances and grass roots support with fellow hunting groups, associations and fellow field sports enthusiasts. A process which is well underway, with much success to date and which will continue as the federation grows in maturity. The I.W.T.F. is already the single largest representative organisation of terrier enthusiasts in Ireland. Thus proving the I.W.T.F.'s necessity and vindicating the Federation's well overdue development as indicated by its fast growing support and membership.

According to its constitution, the I.W.T.F.'s primary aims and objectives are:

- To promote the best, most humane and efficient practices in relation to the use of working terriers for pest control purposes;
- To improve public awareness of the manner in which properly conducted terrier work is carried out;
- To encourage new participants to join a recognised working terrier club and to learn from more experienced members;
- To assist, advise and educate the newcomer or less experienced person;
- To unify the working terrier clubs under one

umbrella organisation and provide a single reference point and centre of excellence on matters relating to terrier work;

- To counter the activities of those who by their actions, or intent, would bring terrier work into disrepute; and
- To protect both the working terrier and its owner from all forms of harmful legislation.

Terrier enthusiasts and terrier work form an integral part of many field sports activities such as working in conjunction with hound packs, independent pest control services for the rural community and predation control for gamekeepers and those involved in gun clubs protecting game birds. All services happily provided at no cost by dedicated terrier-men and their able companions and the I.W.T.F. is actively seeking to provide our services to other interested organisations.

Indeed many I.W.T.F. Affiliated Working Terrier Club Members are also members of other shooting, hunting, fishing and coursing clubs or organisations. We all wear different hats for different occasions while carrying out various duties, but in general all with the same goal being the successful promotion of field sports.

The I.W.T.F. is mirrored in many ways to the very successful National Working Terrier Federation (N.W.T.F.) in the United Kingdom and has adopted the N.W.T.F. Code of Conduct which has helped to maintain terrier work in the U.K. to this very day. The adoption by the I.W.T.F. of the N.W.T.F. Code of Conduct for terrier work is one of the foundation stones of I.W.T.F. methodology. The Code of Conduct provides a framework for terrier men to work in a professional and sensible manner and all times ensuring the welfare of

the quarry and working terriers within current and any future legislation. Of course terrier men have been doing this already for many years, but the I.W.T.F. have put a documented framework and representative organisation in place for those who choose to be members. Each affiliated Working Terrier Club is obliged to accept the I.W.T.F. code of conduct as a condition of membership.

Being aware of the required privacy of the I.W.T.F. clubs and their members, we structured the membership to protect both the affiliated club members and Federation. Each club representative must ensure their members are kept informed and comply with the code of conduct. Each club's member receives an individual membership card which is renewed annually.

At the time of writing the I.W.T.F. is in its inaugural year and substantial progress has been made to date. During the summer of 2012 the Animal Health and Welfare Act was put into law in Northern Ireland and enforcement was being applied by the new powers of the Authorised officers. On the horizon in the Republic of Ireland was a draft Animal Health & Welfare Bill (AHWB-2012) similar to the U.K. and Northern Ireland really focused the minds of terrier-men and demanded immediate action.

The initial decision was whether the law would be interpreted for Hunt terriers only and would the committee follow other associations' lead. Our alternative route was that the law could be addressed and that the new Federation would represent the best interests of independent terrier-men and hunt terrier-men. This course would have had its own risks but the reward would be that all terrier-men could continue to work their terriers and maintain their way of life. Some parties would like to try to drive a wedge between independent terrier-men and hunt terrier-men. The I.W.T.F. consists of both, and strongly represents all terrier-men under its membership.

Others would have been happy to let the existing organisations dictate the negotiations with the Government Department. The founder members believed that who better to defend our sport than terrier work practitioners. Fortunately, enough terrier-men understood what the I.W.T.F. was about. The N.W.T.F.



RISE Rally June 2012.

model was successful, terrier work was still legal in the U.K. where other hunting activities were lost.

An ad hoc committee was formed at a meeting in Cork with direct involvement with men from the North. All agreed that the I.W.T.F. should strive to defend our beloved interest and not sit back and leave it to others. The drive was on to open up the I.W.T.F. to Irish Terrier-men. A constitution was drafted and a membership structure developed. Committee members directly signed up clubs and we worked through many teething issues that would be encountered by any new organisation. We also agreed our strategic approach to dealing with upcoming Government legislation.

In early June the R.I.S.E (Rural Ireland Say's Enough) Campaign Rally in response to the AHWB-2012 was held in Cork. The commitment of the founder members of the I.W.T.F. to travel considerable distances to this rally is to be commended and this dedication is what the I.W.T.F. is all about. This was the first time the federation logo and banner was seen in public.

RISE Rally June 2012

At the conclusion to this Rally a number of discussions took place that night but the upshot was that the seed had been sown and was beginning to blossom. Most of the men present that night are members today or their Club membership is pending. These are the type of men who had the foresight to join the I.W.T.F. over the recent months and understand its necessity and role to protect our way of life.

Sunday 24th June was selected as the date for the inaugural meeting of the I.W.T.F. Certain members of the

Ad-hoc committee knew for the federation to be successful it needed a countrywide support and an expanded versatile dedicated committee. This meeting was a positive step to select a committee to bring us through the passing of the AHWB-2012. The draft constitution was put in place and a provisional committee was elected. Our concept was simple, we would adopt the N.W.T.F. Code of Conduct as our own and put structures in place to show that once conducted properly terrier work was a selective and humane form of pest control.

During September the Website was brought on line and a WEBtext service was in operation. A committee meeting was held late September and a refocused strategy and "united committee" was put in place. This was the point when things started to move forward quickly. The Irish Foot Harriers Associations gave us their written support in September; this was a milestone for the I.W.T.F. in its quest for affiliations, from such a strong association. Credit should be given to such organisations for such a pioneering gesture and understanding the need for a united front from the pro-field sports movement. In early November an opportunity to attend a "European Hunters Day" celebration became available to the I.W.T.F. We saw this as a chance for the established Hunting groups to meet members of the I.W.T.F. in a social setting. The I.W.T.F. attendance at this day of celebration turned out to be purposeful as the goodwill towards the I.W.T.F. and terrier work from the grassroots members in established field sports organisations was fantastic.

By the end of 2011 we had received the welcome written support of Countryside Alliance Ireland, Country Sports Ireland and the N.W.T.F. (UK). A much needed boost to the Federation.

November was also an anxious time for the Federation, the Animal Health and Welfare Bill had progressed through the Irish Parliament (Dáil) with Terrier work and Digging out with hounds receiving more attention than we would have wished for. The I.W.T.F. had kept a strategically low profile to a point, but certain events and rumours during November triggered the committee into direct action to ensure our members' best interests were being upheld.

All through November and into December the AHWB-2012 was being debated by the Irish Parliament (Dáil) select committee and the I.W.T.F. committee were actively monitoring these meetings. On 5th December the proposed ANTI hunting amendments were voted down by an overwhelming majority. The strategic I.W.T.F. intervention was successful. The I.W.T.F. is now successfully in place and a government recognised organisation for those who choose to work terriers.

It is important that terrier-men realise that their continued support is necessary against the consistent threat we will all face in the future. We cannot afford to be relaxed in our efforts to ensure we provide positive and correct information to those who can legislate on our behalf. Amazing progress has been made to date and our work will continue.

Written & Approved by the I.W.T.F. Committee. For more detailed information please go to our website www.IWTF.ie



As the I.W.T.F. Logo states "United We Stand."

**IRISH WORKING
TERRIER FEDERATION**

**AFFILIATED CLUB
MEMBERSHIP CARD**

CARD NUMBER: 12-0001
EXPIRY DATE: 24-06-13

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Northern Ireland: 0044-7955375482

Email (ROI): iwt2012@gmail.com
Email (NI): i.w.t.f2012@hotmail.co.uk
Website: www.iwtf.ie

UNITED WE STAND

IRISH WORKING TERRIER FEDERATION - Code of Conduct for Terrier Work.

1. The prime objective of properly conducted terrier work is to provide a pest control service which is humane, efficient and selective.
2. The conduct of those engaged in terrier work should at all times reflect the above objectives.
3. Particular care should always be taken to minimise any risk of injury to either the quarry or the terrier.
4. Terrier work must always be conducted with the permission of the landowner/agent, whose wishes and property should be respected at all times.
5. Quarry should at all times be treated with respect and dispatched in a humane and proper manner.
6. In some locations it may not be practicable to dispatch the quarry immediately. Therefore if any quarry is taken alive, transported elsewhere and subsequently dispatched, due regard should always be paid to its general welfare, safety and comfort.
7. Any quarry which is injured should NOT be released, but should always be dispatched at the very earliest opportunity.
8. The practice of blocking off all entrance/exit holes while a terrier is below ground is actively discouraged. Note in certain circumstances it may also be viewed as contrary to the "Protection of Animals Act 1911" and result in prosecution.
9. Upon completion of any digging operations, all excavations should be backfilled, the earth and surrounding area reinstated to as close as possible its original condition, particular attention should be paid to the safety of livestock etc. and the earth's future use.
10. Membership of a terrier club which offers a rescue/insurance service and which is a member of the I.W.T.F. is strongly recommended.
11. The use of locator collars to assist in quickly locating the quarry and reducing any likelihood of terriers becoming trapped underground is strongly recommended.
12. Terrier work must be confined to legal quarry species only and must at all times be conducted in a proper legal manner.
13. The IWTF and its member clubs reserve the right to withdraw membership from any individual or organisation deemed by the relevant committee(s) to have brought terrier work into disrepute.
14. Any individual convicted of an offence under the WILDLIFE ACT, (1976) will be brought before the relevant committee(s) in accordance with (13).
15. The IWTF, its member clubs, affiliated organisations and individual members, recognise and endorse the above code of conduct, which has been approved by the Independent Supervisory Authority for Hunting (ISAH Ltd) and understand that this is a condition of membership.

Club Members Signature

Four and Twenty Blackbirds....

By the time you read this spring will have sprung and the season will be gone. My rabbiting work has almost finished apart from a few ferreting days still on the calendar, and a couple of nights ago I had what will probably be my last night of lamping, as it appears the rabbits have begun breeding in this area at least. In some places I hunt they will breed a little later, and in other areas there will have been squeakers (young rabbits) on the ground for a few weeks now. It's that great mystery of rabbits. Here one year, gone the next, numbers rising and falling like Wall Street prices. They are questions and only Mother Nature knows the answers. By all accounts I have thoroughly enjoyed the rabbiting this year, although I ferreted probably less than I have in the past few years and had perhaps one day a week as opposed to two and three days per week as was the norm. I upped my lamping activities however and my last night out was by far the most enjoyable of the season. I had my young protégé Fudge with me and we drove to some ground about an hour away. I wasn't holding out much hope for a good night, but I was in for a surprise.

By this time of year the rabbits are well educated, or what we call 'lamp shy' knowing full well that a beam of light means trouble and striking so much as a match within 100 yards of them sends them flying across the fields at full speed. I won't bore you with the details but we had a right old do and arrived back at the truck two hours later with 15 rabbits and some exciting runs to look back on.

We walked a few miles and only caught a few before getting onto the good ground, where we really had some fun! This field was where young Fudge caught her first rabbit, and that was the last time I lamped it. Tonight we got over the gate and a quick flick with the lamp revealed numerous amber eyes looking back. Fudge quickly tore up the soaking wet ground in hot pursuit of one of the many, it went straight through the hedge and she went through after it. I had no choice but to shine the lamp through the hole as she went and could just about make her out coming back

with a rabbit by the scruff as she likes to carry them. But it wasn't over yet. As I relieved her of her catch I swung the lamp round and there were several squatters dotted over the field; she missed the first and caught the second, I then realised I hadn't dispatched the first I was so busy lamping and ended up holding both rabbits in one hand as she chased a third across the field. As she returned with it I could see another squatter sitting just out of the light and tried my best keep it there as I knew if it got up Fudge would drop the one in her mouth to chase it. I just about managed to get the third from her and quickly lit up a fourth squatter which she also caught. Now my trouble really began! Two rabbits in my hand, a lamp in the other, a rabbit below my arm and Fudge with another at my feet! I set the lamp down and dispatched the pair in my hands while carefully keeping one below my arm and my foot on Fudge's rabbit. I then dispatched the third and fourth and sat down with Fudge a minute or two as whatever rabbits were there had long gone. What a crazy couple of minutes it was. I was sure these rabbits had never seen a light since our last foray.



He bounced off the net.

Eventually we moved on, walked another few miles and caught another seven, getting good runs in nearly every field. But we missed plenty of rabbits as well. Of course it would be easy for me to sit here and tell you I caught 20, 30 or even 40, but what would be point? The only person I would be kidding would be myself. I have plenty of days and nights when I catch little or nothing, but I don't write about them because it wouldn't make much of an article.



Gotcha! But the poacher will be freed in time for The Irish Game Fair, at Shanes Castle on 29th and 30th June.

The night before Fudge and I caught those rabbits, I was out with my other bitch, Molly, who ran very badly for whatever reason. We only caught five rabbits in four hours and she ended up tearing her ear very badly, covering herself, me, the van and the utility room in blood and it was 2 o'clock on the morning before I got her sorted out and cleaned up. So it's not all big bags and great nights! The ferreting is much the same, good days and bad.

We dropped in the pugs and the bolting was thick and fast

One of the most memorable this season was an afternoon with Kieran and Paul on their ground further up the country. We had a pretty poor morning nearby on an area a farmer had asked me to have a look at, and Paul took us to a bit of land about 15 minutes away. He

said he was sure of a few rabbits about and he wasn't wrong. After netting both sides of a hedge line about 200yards long, we dropped in the pugs and the bolting was thick and fast for the next 45 minutes. Molly and Fudge worked hard pushing the rabbits into the nets and holding them and catching one or two that slipped out. It was a great afternoon, the weather was nice, the rabbits were plentiful and the sport was great, what more could you want on a dry and sunny Saturday. We packed up with well over a dozen along with the few we had caught in the morning and moved on to some more ground again where we had a few bolts and a bit of a dig to one of the ferrets which resulted in two very unusual blue coloured rabbits, the first I have ever seen of that colour before. Of course that was a good day and, as I said, there are others not so good as well.

A week or two before I was out on a new spot where, although it started off well, we had a ferret that refused to reappear and spent almost three hours below ground. The ferret was wearing a collar, but someone forgot to switch it on (ok, it was me!) and we had no choice except to wait and wait some more. I don't think Seamus will ever let me forget that I forgot to switch on the collar and hold up the entire day!

What else does a rabbit enthusiast get up to when he isn't rabbiting? Well my activities don't stop at rabbits: I enjoy everything including a spot of hunting with my good friends from the Sunnyland Beagles. I don't get out as much as I would like as the meets are usually quite far for me, but I always manage to make a few and this season made it to Tuam in Galway with them for a couple of days. I set off 4.00 am away back in early October and arrived literally just in time for breakfast. After a few cups of coffee to wash down a great fry up, we made for our hunting ground for the day. It was a sunny morning as we arrived and despite the heat the hounds didn't take long before rising Sally out of the bog. The action was nonstop all morning and a few locals arrived along with some other followers throughout the morning. A fox broke cover at one point and the hounds got onto his line pretty sharp, but sly as ever he slipped away before they got too close!



Sallying forth with the Sunnyland Beagles.

We arrived back at the house in the early evening and Ally, Phil, David and I gathered around the fire for a few beers and plenty of craic before dinner and were soon followed by Liz, John Shaw and Jill who had been following the rugby on the radio. Phil whips in to the Trinity Foot and South Herts and was over for a few days. I always enjoy catching up with him since I met him at the kennels a couple of years, a great fellow and always full of stories and such an enthusiast Beagler too.

The following morning, the lads donned their frozen socks and cold blazers for another meet at the Doctor's house. With quite a turn out and the arrival of the Limerick-based Pallaskenry Beagles, we were in for a good days sport. Before the meet, the Doctor said a few words about the recent and very sad death of John Pickering. Described as: "One of Irish foxhunting's witty raconteurs and colourful characters. In his career, he hunted the East Down Foxhounds, the Golden Vale Foxhounds, the Oriel Harriers and was whipper-in and huntsman to the legendary Master of the Birmingham and North Galway Foxhounds, the late Lady Molly Cusack-Smith." (Taken from *Fox Hunting Life*) Originally from Warwickshire, John settled in Tuam and was very well known there both in the hunting and wider community.

The hunt got underway and I thought I had déjà vu as the hounds put up a hare in the same field, on the same patch of cover as last year and it ran the exact same way; probably the same hare! Round and round

until she lost them good and proper, and eventually they got back onto the same field and put out a fox right out of the same cover. He was trotting along ahead in no great rush and coming right towards me until someone behind on the road called out and he swung left, over a wall and away. It would have made a great photo if they had kept quiet, because he couldn't see me where I was. The sport continued all morning and I got talking later to another retired huntsman from England who now lives in Tuam. What a character he was. I can't remember his name or who he hunted with and wish I had written it down. I had almost two hours of stories of fox, otter and stag hunting of

yesteryear. The day rolled on and I had to leave for home. Unfortunately I couldn't stay to Monday, much as I wanted to, so it was back on the N17 with filling station coffee and beagling memories.

The next meet I attended was only a few days ago and my better half tagged along for the first time. I had not been to this particular meet before and it was in a well known private estate in Northern Ireland. Due to the woods and trees, we couldn't see a lot of action but we could certainly hear it and, as we stood on a long lane adjacent to some trees, a very nicely marked hare walked up to us, and stopped for a good look before slipping below the gate and zig zagging her way across the field, at a leisurely pace. Hares always look so relaxed, like there not even trying. We saw a few more and I caught up with a few faces I hadn't seen in a while and probably spent more time talking than anything else. I heard on the grapevine there was a certain boy who's name we won't mention who didn't turn up as he danced so many young ladies round the dance floor in Ballymena the night before his knees were sore! That's an excuse if ever I heard one!

Just recently I was reading about rooks and rook pie and I have heard so much nonsense about this business that I am starting to think nobody ever ate rook pie! Someone always knows someone, whose granny used to make it, but nobody I know has actually told me truthfully that they have eaten it. Well, I have a story for you!

Brancher day arrives

It was a warm old day back in 2012, 12th May to be exact and this by chance is the traditional rook shooting day. That sounds a little unusual but the Victorians were fanatical about rooks and had a day on which everyone would go out and shoot for the table which was 12th May. It was called 'brancher day,' being the term for a young bird a little too big for the nest but not ready to fly and sitting out on the branches of the tree. Branchers are very good eating, unlike older birds and it is these that they cooked. Some weeks before a neighbour contacted me and asked if I could do anything with the rooks on her land which had become a serious problem. Their preferred diet of wireworms and leather jackets, or click beetle larvae and daddy long legs larvae as they are better known, is usually a help to the farmer but they can also be serious crop pests and this was the problem on this particular ground. As well, some animals were held in the same field as the rookery and the droppings from above were coming down in such quantities there was fear of infection from ingestion.



Rook pie fresh from the oven.

The old rook isn't all bad however, provided he is kept in check and they are quite nice to see in the countryside. It is said that a rookery on your land means good luck, but if they leave it is a bad omen. As well as this, you must tell them if there is a death in the family or it will annoy them. Many moons ago, a young lad would have got a half penny for three young rooks or their eggs, such was the population size and the necessity to keep it down. My neighbour of course did not want to eradicate the birds, but simply thin them a little and reduce the possibility of their increasing mess harming any of the livestock. After some pheasant work at home that morning, I screeched to a halt outside JR's house to collect him and we made for the rookery about 45 minutes away. As we walked towards it, the noise really

struck me, so much noise was unbelievable. I had my 12 gauge shot gun and my .410 which has proven to be a very effective little gun, and today it would really come into its own. We had a quick scout and it soon became apparent that this was a serious population of birds; the mess on the grass just had to be seen. In some areas it was literally inches deep. We could spot young birds dodging and weaving above in the branches and before long we had knocked down over a dozen. The older birds were now circling above in their hundreds and we made our way outside the trees and managed to shoot quite a few before they moved further back. Inside the trees again and we took a side each, my 12 gauge with trap shells was perhaps a little overkill, but JR had the .410 which was proving very useful. JR took two birds with one shot and then several in succession as we circled around and around the trees playing catch up with the branchers, straining our necks by constantly looking up. Soon we had shot a considerable number and I set about collecting them. JR had counted every bird shot as only JR could. I couldn't remember how many I had shot but I knew it was plenty. Aside from the branchers we had accounted for plenty of older birds and it could only help the situation the landowner was facing. We called on the way out and she was most pleased with what we had shot, and asked if we might have another day it at.

I loaded the birds into the truck and JR asked me what I was going to do with them. I asked him had he ever eaten rook pie and he burst out laughing. He told me that I may be sleeping with the dogs if I attempted to make it back at the house and he might let me sleep at his if that was the case, and he wasn't far wrong! It took a little explaining when my better half arrived home from shopping to find the kitchen a little untidy, with a few black feathers here and there! I breasted the birds, soaked them in milk overnight and cooked them in the pan with a large onion before putting into a pie and baking in the oven. And so it was that I put an end to the mystery. With twenty four (or should that be four and twenty) rook breasts baked in a pie with some onions and a little gravy, I can now say that I have walked the walk, I have eaten rook pie. So did JR and Brian the Blacksmith and we are in agreement that it was indeed a dainty dish to set before the king! What did it taste like? Exquisite would be a good word, like pigeon but better, pigeon tastes rather poor in comparison. And, as for four and twenty black birds that actually were rooks - that just didn't fit the rhyme but it fitted the bill for dinner. See you at Shanes Castle.

Dog Shows and Game & Country Fairs of 2012

As we enter new beginnings and make well meaning promises for 2013, let me turn my attention back. Let's revisit the dog shows and game fairs of 2012 and have a peep at the highlights, happy times, some sad times and general happenings in the canine world during the year. The weather was not good to us but, despite the rain etc that descended upon us with a vengeance, no dog show, country fair or game fair in Ireland had to be cancelled due to bad weather.

The beginning of 2012 was tinged with sadness when, in March, we lost one of the canine world's true sportsmen, Eddie McKinstry was a true gentleman and a big loss to the canine world, where he will be sadly missed. A cup was donated by the McKinstry family in memory of the late Eddie, who was a founder member of the Sporting Whippet Club NI. Michael Quinn, a keen young sportsman, was the very worthy winner of this beautiful cup. Well done Michael, Eddie would be very proud of you keeping his memory to the fore.

As we moved into April, the first show of 2012 was on the horizon. Fiona Devlin's show kicked off the dog show year and it came up trumps and what a turnout. I believed very early in 2012 that this was going to be a great summer for dog shows and country fairs and this show lived up to all my great expectations. There was a very large turnout and very high standard of terriers, lurchers, whippets, strong dogs, and a fresh crew of pups in the ring on show day. A great start to the season and a good warm up for shows to come.

As the summer came along, or what we had of it, the

shows progressed one by one and I noticed a sizeable increase in crowds and families attending. Young and old, male and female came out in their grandeur, all with a dog or two on the lead walking beside them. It was evident and a joy to see so many young children taking part in the children's handling classes. These have become very popular classes now at all dog shows up and down the country. Long may it continue. These wee people are our sportsmen and women of tomorrow and will be organising shows of the future long after we have gone. Hopefully they will pick up the tricks of the trade when they are young at heart and carry on our traditions into the next generation.

Large turnout

As the bee hit the window pane, Ballywalter Game and Country Living Fair appeared on the horizon. The highlight of the Game and Country Living Fair for me was the Miss Country Living contest sponsored by Sunday Life Newspaper, and judged by Paul Pringle he selected three worthy young women to go forward to a readers' poll in Sunday Life The winner was Miss Eirin Corbett, a very beautiful girl and a very worthy winner. (Editor: And the canine world's Rose McCoy was the very worthy runner up.) Having such a relaxing fun day out on Saturday, visiting all the stands and picking up some bargains along the way, I just could not wait to get back up to Ballywalter on Sunday for the Dog Show with my husband John and our whippets. Definitely a labour of love. There was a very large turnout in the show ring and racing afterwards. The weekend flew by so quickly leaving some wonderful memories of Ballywalter. Overall Ballywalter 2012 Show Champion Graham Meek with Merlin and Reserve Show Champion Dessie Mackin with Soda.

'Where the Mountains of Mourne Sweep Down To The Sea,' along the stunning coastline between Newcastle and Kilkeel, we arrived at the venue for the annual Mourne lurcher, terrier, whippet and strong dog charity show on Sunday 20th May. Mourne was truly brilliant, a day to remember and will be strongly etched on my memory as one of the best dog shows and family days out of the year. I met up with so many old friends and made some new ones. There was a real buzz of excitement when the digging competition was announced. Shirts and tea shirts were ripped off, thrown in the air, then with shovels and pickaxes in hand, digging



Fiona Devlin's Charity Show kicked off the season.



Pictured at the Gifford Lurcher & Terrier Club show.

started. As the large crowd cheered on their favourite teams, these guys showed no mercy to the ground beneath them. With the sweat running down their brows, they dug ferociously to the whistle blew signalling the end of the dig. The winners were Peter Morgan and his team mate Damian Maguire.

Charities helped

Charities that benefited from the proceeds of this great show were Macmillan Cancer Support £700 and Mourne Community Rescue Service £200. This money means a lot to these charities, and what an achievement in itself.

We also had the Sporting Whippet Club of NI who ran several shows in 2012 at Dunsilly. These shows give a platform to the increasingly popular of the whippet breed in Ireland and further afield. As a whippet owner, I am really looking forward to these shows again in 2013.

As the summer months progressed, so did the shows and game and country fairs come on stream. We had Florencecourt / Donemana / Shannagh / Dessie Mackin's / Moira / Minerock Harriers / Man O' War / DWTC / Clondulane / Westmeath Fox Hounds / Co Limerick Foxhounds / North Sligo / Borris Co Carlow / Feile Camlough / Farney Harriers / Tully Castle and of course the big one, Shanes Castle.

Shanes Castle Co Antrim was the venue for The Great Game Fairs of Ireland's 50th 'Golden' Anniversary Game Fair. Friday morning of the show weekend saw the launch of the fair carried out by the deputy First Minister Martin McGuinness in the presence of Mr. Roy



Proud dogs and owners at the DWTC Dog Show.



Feile Camlocha Show with some worthy winners.

Thompson, Mayor of Antrim, and The Hon. Shane O'Neill, Shanes Castle Estate, Irene and Albert Titterington and Co Directors and a host of sporting enthusiasts from all areas of country sports, north and south of Ireland and further afield. This great occasion was followed on Saturday by the Game Fair, and the Master McGrath Championship and Racing. On Sunday the brilliant fair had the added highlight of the day, the Dog Show where Dessie Mackin's dog won Supreme Champion and Best in show. It was lovely to see the pride in Dessie's eyes when he won this prestigious award.

Finally, I attended the last Game Fair of 2012 on a beautiful day at Birr Castle, Co Offaly. God was good to all on Sunday, with the weather being brilliant for most of the day, except for a few small showers in the late evening. This Game Fair hosted the final of the digging competition, and what entertainment that brought on the day. The worthy champions were Paddy Gilmore, and Shane Larkin. Overall Show Champion Birr Castle 2012 was Declan Wallace and Reserve went to Mark O'Neill

The Big One - The Five Nations Championship

And then came The Five Nations Championship, the big competition of the day. The seven qualifiers at Birr Castle were Graham Brennan with Gypsy; Fiona Devlin with Maverick; Steven Dummigan with Dash; Michael Quinn with Paddy; Kieran Lynch with Storm; Michael Hicks with Mo Chara; and Eimear O'Meara with Heidi.



Birr, Co Offaly was the venue for the Irish Game & Country Fair's super show and racing.



The Irish Game Fair, Shanes Castle - top dogs and lots of fun for everyone.

The winner was none other than our own Fiona Devlin with Maverick, who hails from Dungannon in Northern Ireland. Fiona, we were so proud of you, a very worthy

winner. It is great to see females taking our place among the greats in the canine world. Congratulations and well done. Reserve went to Graham Brennan with Gypsy from Dublin. A big congratulations Graham. Gypsy has done you so proud on so many occasions throughout Ireland. A great weekend was had by all at Birr.

The last show for 2012 was Dessie Mackin's Christmas show at Halls Mill Inn on the main Banbridge/Portadown road. There was a great turnout and Overall Terrier Champion went to Janet Duke with George; Overall Whippet Champion Tracy Gill with Finla; and Overall Lurcher Champion Fiona Devlin with Maverick

More of the same please in 2013

Looking back on some of the dog shows and game fairs of 2012, the only thing I would change if it were possible would be the weather. I would like to thank all show organisers for all the joy and banter which we enjoy at your shows, and highlight the work done to raise funds for charity. I am looking forward to more of the same fun and companionship at the fairs and shows in 2013. I could not finish without thanking our resident photographer 'Bluebell' Deirdre McCoy for all the lovely photographs which she took at the shows during the year. Deirdre, you are a star and I look forward to seeing you again at the events in 2013.

Some Dog Show dates for 2013 compiled by Margaret McStay

Dessie Mackin's Show (rescheduled date)

Saturday 6th April 2013 Old Banbridge Road Gilford.

Drangan Harriers Working Dog Show

14th of April 2013

Rockview Harriers Annual Hound Terrier and Lurcher Show

5th May 2013

The North West Terrier Lurcher and Whippet Club

12th May 2013 venue to be confirmed. All profits going to Macmillan Cancer Care.

Second show is on 14th July 2013 venue to be confirmed with all profits going to Foyle Hospice? This show will be a qualifier for the Countrymans Weekly Champion of Champions subject to confirmation. All Racing will held under NILRC rules.

Mourne Lurcher and Terrier Charity Show

19th May 2013 Glasdrumman Co Down. There will be all the usual classes for lurchers, Terriers, Whippets, Strong Dogs and Hounds with top prizes as always. Weight pulling and of course the first qualifier for the Mourne All Ireland Digging Competition. There will be racing after the digging. All dogs must be muzzled and all dogs will be measured. There will be stalls, hot food, and kids entertainment also on the day.

Annual Florence Court Sporting Dog Show & Country Fair

26th May 2013 under Northern Ireland Lurcher Racing Club (NILRC) rules.

This show will be the first qualifier for "Mick the Miller Elite Golden Coat Challenge",

Gilford Lurcher & Terrier Club Annual Show NI Countryside Festival Moira 25th & 26th May 2013

The Great Game Fairs of Ireland - Irish Game Fair 2013 Saturday 29th and Sunday 30th June 2013 The largest ever Irish Game Fair will take place at Shanes Castle Co Antrim on the 29th & 30th June 2013, when the Ballywalter Game Fair and the Irish Game Fair will combine to form a Super Fair under the title of 'The Irish Game Fair & Flavour Fine Food Festival.'

There will be many more attractions, three arenas & new international competitions, Lurcher, Terrier & Whippet Dog Show & Racing - Master McGrath Challenge Final plus All Ireland Championship Terrier, Lurcher & Whippet racing on Saturday: On Sunday - the All Ireland Terrier, Lurcher and Whippet Championship Show. Two days not to be missed for all the family.

DWTC Dog Show

Sunday 28th July 13 at the dog track at Feaghbridge Coalisland Co Tyrone. This show will be run under NILRC rules.

Shannagh Working Terrier, Lurcher & Whippet Club

Sunday 4th August 2013. There will be all the usual classes for Terriers, lurchers & Whippets and are we waiting confirmation about strong dogs. This show will have the annual digging competition, and will be a qualifer for the Mourne All Ireland Digging Competition. As an added attraction, there will be a 4 man Tug-Of-War competition, if there is enough interest. Hot food will be available in the field, and entertainment for the kids. A great fun day out for all.

The 32 County Champion of Champions Show

18th August 2013 venue is yet to be confirmed

Irish Game and Country Fair, Birr Castle, Co Offaly

31st August & 1st September 2013

Birr Castle Irish Game and Country Fair all the fun of the fair including the annual Lurcher, Terrier, and Whippet Dog show and Race Day. Red Mills Five Nations Championship day for both Terrier & Lurchers on Sunday. This year an extra activity day will be held on the Friday 30th August at Birr Castle. (Full Details Later)

Sporting Whippet Club NI

Dunsilly Kennels, Antrim

Provisional 2013 dates: Sunday 21 April, Sunday 02 June, Sunday 23 June, Sunday 21 July, Sunday 11 August, Sunday 15 September.

Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure Leisure Salmon Conservation Measures

It is widely acknowledged that stocks of wild Atlantic salmon are in serious decline. Southern stocks, including some in North America and Europe, are threatened with extinction. Long term monitoring of the survival of salmon during the marine phase of their life cycle at the DCAL Bushmills Salmon Station shows a decline from around 30% returning from the sea prior to 1997 to less than 5% today. It is therefore imperative for those with the responsibility for the regulation and management of fisheries exploiting salmon to consider the need for further conservation measures to be introduced.

The Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure is responsible for the conservation of salmon and inland fisheries in the north of Ireland, with the exception of those in the Foyle and Newry areas which are the responsibility of the Loughs Agency of the Foyle, Carlingford and Irish Lights Commission.

In light of the perilous position of this iconic species, the Minister, Carál Ní Chuilín has called for a range of voluntary salmon conservation measures to be

implemented in the 2013 season by commercial fishermen and recreational anglers. This has been widely supported and will help to minimise further exploitation of stocks.

The following steps are being taken to protect wild salmon stocks:

The voluntary catch and release for recreational angling remains in place with a further restriction on the number of salmon carcass tags issued and no commercial netting in the 2013 season.

The current regulations on bag limits and methods remain in place for the 2013 season. These will be enhanced by the issue of only a single salmon carcass tag at a time and anglers will have the option to waive their right to take a carcass tag.

Legislation will be introduced during 2013 to impose a mandatory cessation of all commercial wild salmon fisheries to take effect from the 2014 season. This would remain in place until such times that scientific evidence confirms a sustainable surplus of fish over conservation limits over a number of years.

Legislation will be introduced during 2013 to impose mandatory catch and release for anglers across the DCAL jurisdiction with effect from the 2014 season. These measures will also remain in place until such times that scientific evidence confirms a sustainable surplus of fish over conservation limits.

Angling in
Northern Ireland

Department of
**Culture, Arts
and Leisure**
www.dcalni.gov.uk

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What's stopping you?

Salmon, spates and novices!



Arriving early evening I quickly unpacked in the lodge and went to find Jim, the fishery manager. A short chat about all things piscatorial and sensing my growing anticipation he pointed me in the direction of beat 9. I didn't require being asked twice if I wanted to fish! The light was just starting to fade (for me always a good salmon taking time). With the tide filling the sea pool it started to twitch into life. Fish boiled just under the surface whilst their more expressive brethren leapt into the warm dark air only to then crash back into the water. I cast the fly out into the increasing gloom. On what must have been the fiftieth or so cast, middle of the stream a salmon grabbed the 'Apache shrimp.' Why after so many casts? Who knows!

The electric shock of the connection was unfortunately brief. Line seared off the reel as the fish shot up the pool, but after only 20 seconds the line went slack. I continued casting for another five minutes or so until all the adrenaline had left my system. With the loss of this 'adrenalin hit' I found my enthusiasm drained. Anyway, now it had got a little dark for salmon, so I sat on the bank and changed my cast putting on sea trout flies. With bats flying in near full darkness I started again. The sea trout were more cooperative than the salmon had been. After an hour or so, catching half a dozen fresh, plump white trout $\frac{3}{4}$ - 1 $\frac{1}{2}$ lbs (all returned), I went back to the lodge.

I was at Aasleagh Lodge on the River Erriff to run a beginner's salmon fishing course, primarily aimed at women. It has always been an anathema to me why more 'girls' do not fish. I do not believe that it is a male orientated sport, just for some reason women do not get the same opportunity to try the sport, but when they do, they prove as enthusiastic and skilled as their male counterparts.



Something told me I was at the right place.

The River Erriff or in Irish 'Abhainn Oirimh' is one of the renowned west of Ireland fisheries. The fishery comprises of the River Erriff plus four loughs, Tawnyard, Derrintin, Glenawough and Lugacollivee. Along with Delphi this was once part of Lord Sligo's portfolio.

As with all Connemara rivers the Erriff is a spate river. It fishes best on a falling spate holding its water better than most giving anglers more time to fish in optimum conditions. Also in this area of the world, rainfall events are not infrequent. The Erriff flows through a glacial valley cut between the Partry Mountains and the Murrisk group draining areas of county Mayo and Galway. It has long slow stretches, turbulent rapids, deep pools and just above the tide the impressive Aasleagh Falls. Below the 'Falls' the river empties into Ireland's only fjord, the Killary Harbour to the west of Leenane.

The fishing covers 8 miles of water, divided into 9

Aasleagh Lodge



beats. The river is uncrowded with two rods on most of the beats, three on the remainder, all rotated on a daily basis. The largest lough is Tawnyard (250 acres) in the hills to the north west of Ben Gorm. Grilse and sea trout get to Tawnyard from June supplementing the resident stock of brown trout. The remaining loughs are natural brown trout loughs, beyond the reach of migratory fish. The result they are rarely fished due to inaccessibility (only reached on foot) and they are the natural habitat of a voracious predator - the midge.

As part of the Marquis of Sligo's Estate, the original Victorian style country house was built above the famed Aasleagh Falls, with impressive views over Killary Harbour and the surrounding mountains. Like many other Irish county houses it was burned down in 1921, to be rebuilt in 1926 but on a smaller scale. Over the last few years the Lodge has been fully modernised now consisting of 9 comfortable bedrooms, eight en suite. Initially fishing was but one activity carried out on the estate. But from 1951 - 69 the Lodge and fishery were leased by Mrs. Alice Marsh. A skilled, enthusiastic fly angler, she was only interested in the fishing. She left numerous records of prodigious catches, including numerous 'springers' a day including three one morning from the 'Holly Pool' before

Fishing Beat No 4.



breakfast. In 1969 following her death, the Lodge and fishery were purchased by Lord Brabourne. A prodigious but private fishery at this time, visiting anglers included the likes of Lord Louis Mountbatten of Burma and Graham Hill the F1 racing driver.

In 1981, the Central Fisheries Board acquired the fishery. It was later transferred to the Western Regional Fisheries Board and then on to Inland Fisheries Ireland with the amalgamation of the Fisheries boards in 2010. Since 1985 the fishery manager has been Jim Stafford.

Salmon returns for Erriff fishery											
2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	10 year average	
292	293	250	400	270	185	107	374	528	320	302	

The spring run (mainly in the 8 - 10 lbs bracket) show up from April onwards. Early grilse can appear in June (averaging 4 - 6 lbs) the run peaking in late July or August.

Fish could be seen teasing in the Sea Pool

I was there to run the course in early July. But unbelievably in such a wet summer the river was on the low side. Whilst the rest of the country drove through



This is the view from the Lodge.

floods we looked out of the lodge challenging the clouds to rain. The first day was a traditional start for novices, casting bits of wool on the lawn. Mid afternoon it was time to put the casting techniques learnt into practice. Tooled up, we went to beat 9 to have a go! Though not down to its bones the river was lacking water. Fish could be seen teasing people in the Sea pool - but we started in the Garden' pools. We did not see salmon but the river appeared alive with sea trout. As with most west coast fisheries the sea trout went into a decline in the late 1980s due to problems with 'salmon farms.' Fortuitously over the last few seasons numerous fisheries including the Erriff have shown some signs of recovery. The run usually starts toward the end of June, peaking in July. And they were certainly in the river now!



A fresh grilse.



Pretty as a picture - an Erriff grilse.

The river is easily fished with a single handed 9ft 6in AFTM 7 / 8 rod and floating line. Long casting is generally not required. We caught at least a dozen sea trout (with many more 'hits' and fish lost) all on salmon flies! The occasional grilse showed in the river but it appeared most were still partying in the Sea Pool waiting for the rain.

The ladies' abilities improved as time was maximised on the river bank. Evening and after an excellent lobster dinner we relaxed in the lounge, practiced tying knots and talked about flies, finally retiring to bed to dream of fish to come. The second day passed without a salmon being hooked and even the sea trout had lost their enthusiasm to grab the fly. We fished a variety of beats; saw plenty of fish and even more midges.

Final day - still no rain but expectation and enthusiasm remained high. After a hearty breakfast once again down to beat 9. The Garden pools were given a workout and then on to Aasleagh Falls. Fish could be seen swirling at the edges of the pool as well as trying to jump the Falls. This famous waterfall was one of the key locations for Jim Sheridan's 1990 film version of 'The Field.' A film adaptation of John B. Keane's play, starring Richard Harris, John Hurt and Tom Berrenger, the Falls were the backdrop for a pivotal scene in the film. As such they attract camera wielding tourists. Fishing the Falls you understand the pressure imposed by the paparazzi!

Barbara was first to start and within a dozen casts or so her Cascade was ambushed - fish on! Skillfully played,

10 minutes later I netted her prize - a 5 lb grilse. This proved a great finish to the course. Though we had caught a good number of sea trout only the one grilse had come our way, but that's the joy of fishing spate rivers. To see fish, all course members had to do was stand and watch the sea pool as the tide filled - all we needed was rain! The Erriff is one of those rivers that are under fished. So its catch returns are not a true reflection of the run of salmon the river experiences. It is a charming river with a very comfortable, welcoming lodge set in majestic scenery. Non fishing partners or friends will find it a comfortable entertaining lodge to stay in. And once fished you will return to the Erriff (as did all the course members before the end of the season)!



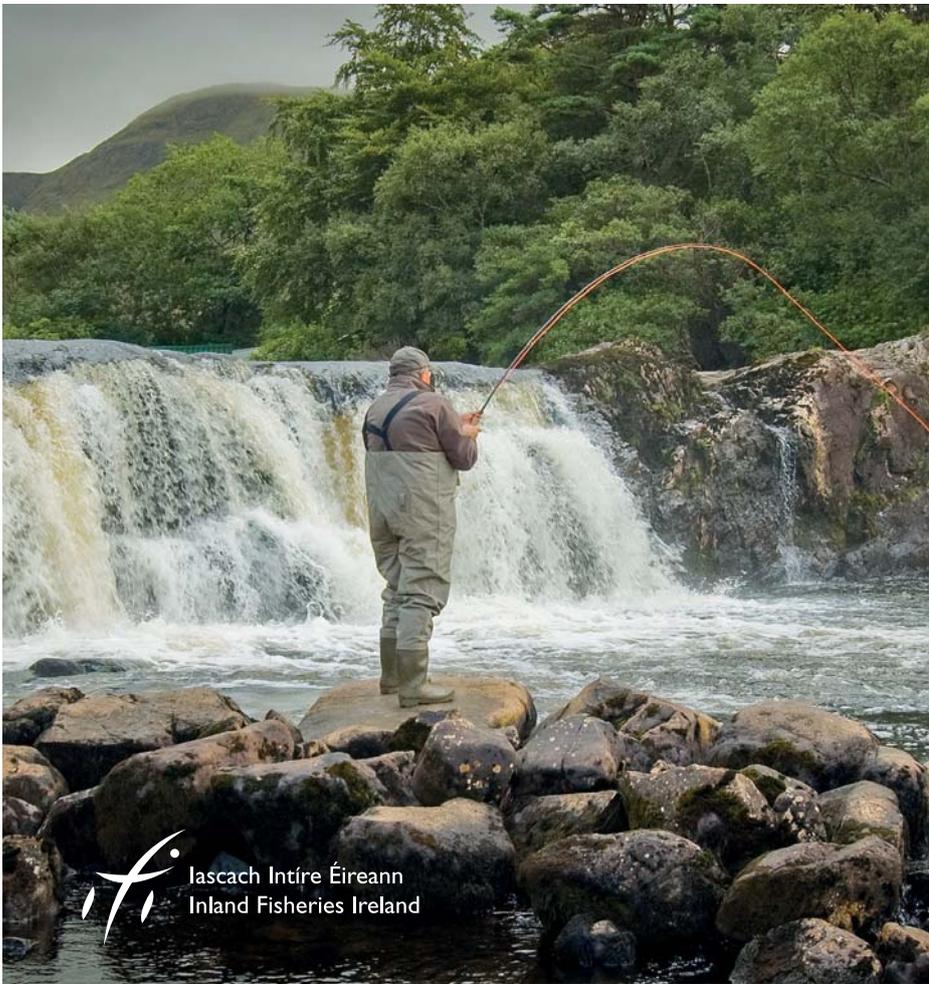
One of the sea trout which obliged.

Fishing a pot.



The season runs from 1st April to 30th September, sea trout mid-June to 30th September (mandatory catch & release) Methods - fly fishing is the norm. Rates - from €45 - €70 per rod daily

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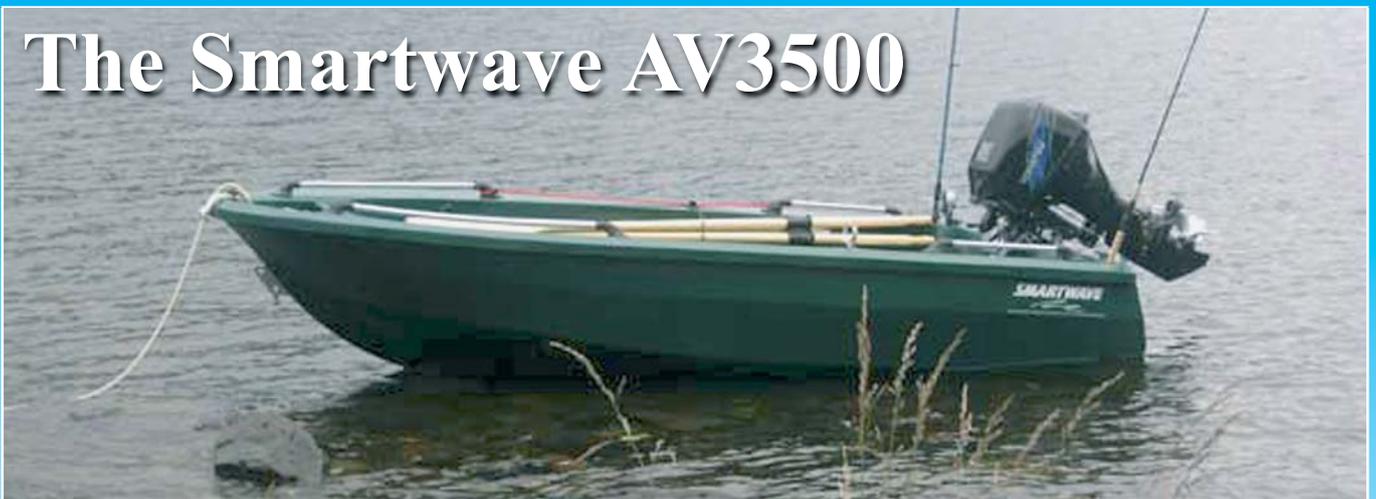
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By Andrew Griffiths

Through a glass darkly

Cabin fever provokes an outbreak of piscatorial intolerance in Andrew Griffiths. It's raining - again. It's going to be like last season, I know it, I can feel it in my bones. Rain, rain, rain, and not two minutes since they were banging on about a bloody drought. My fishing days are limited enough at the moment and have to be booked well ahead. I can hardly remember the last time it hasn't rained on a day off and I just end up sitting and staring out of the window at the stream. Look at it. High, not quite over its banks, but not far off and way too coloured to fish.

My focus switches to the raindrops tracking down the window then back to the swollen river. I'm tapping the glass with the backs of my fingernails so they quietly clatter, without really thinking about it. Mind you, I have a friend who would fish it now, this river. He's not a fly fisherman of course, he's a coarse fisher. Trotting is the method he uses, with maggots as bait. I always say to him that's not proper fishing, I mean 'fish eats food' - where's the story? But, fish takes a little bit of fur and feather tied on a hook and is fooled into thinking its food, now that's a story. That's proper fishing that is.

I remember a freezing December day I went out on the river with him. I left him, rooted to the river bank 'trotting' while I went off wading and long-lining a tiny gold-head hare's ear, tied on a #22. I blanked. When I got back, Ian was gleefully reeling in fish after fish. After the

last he'd chuck in a great handful of maggots (he has big hands) send his float 'trotting' off down the stream, then whoops! The float would slide under and his rod would be bending again. It was really all rather irritating, not least because I didn't know there were grayling as big as that in this river. "How did you get on mate?" he asked, with a hearty emphasis on the 'you.' "Er - bit quieter than usual," I replied. But it was going to be, wasn't it? There is very little life in the river at that time of year - I know, because I'm a proper fisherman and I've sampled it - and there's him on the river bend, chucking in bucketfuls of maggots and creating an unseasonal larval bonanza? They were probably coming from three tributaries away. "I'm going to put a sign up here," I said. "Please don't feed the fish." He just smiled at me with that smug smile he's got. "Fishing is about catching fish," he said.

Ok, he might have been catching fish but it's not proper fishing, is it? Not like fly fishing. He may as well have slung a net across. That distant memory, 'when I'm fishing...' The wind is starting to blow and the rain is hard enough now to hear hitting the glass. No, fly fishing is the only sporting way to fish. Mind you... salmon fishing - what's that all about? OK, it is catching fish with an artificial fly, but nobody even knows why they take them, they're not taking them for food because they are not feeding and do salmon flies look like anything you've ever seen in a river? Do they heck! Oh yeah, yeah, the flies are very beautiful, superb craftsmanship and all that etc etc - OK - so go hang it in a gallery! Just don't go



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chucking it in a river then try to tell me you've fooled a fish into taking anything other than something that hacks it off because it shouldn't be there. No, it's not proper fly fishing, not in my book. I'm sorry, but tying those flies is crafting, not hunting. They are a complete misapplication of human talent. Go make some jewellery and hang it around a beautiful woman's neck, or a beautiful man's neck if you prefer, that doesn't bother me.

This river is going to come over before the day's out if the rain carries on like this. Temperature is dropping too, I can feel the chill air on the side of my face that is nearest the window. I really should get double glazing if it wasn't so bloody expensive.

It has to be wild fish, taken on artificial flies

Reservoir fishing, now that does bother me; technically it is fly fishing I suppose. But fishing a fly that is so garish that it looks like something that's fallen off the top of a Christmas tree and stripping it back as fast as you can through the spot where you know the fish are because you put half a dozen barrel-loads of the damned things in there the week before, that's not fly fishing, it's spinning with a flimsy rod and lightweight lure. Plus it depends on the fact that the fish are genetic mutants without a natural instinct in their bones which is the only reason they are stupid enough to take that clump of marabou you've strapped on to a #8 hook-shank in the first place. No, if it is proper fly fishing, it has to be wild fish, taken on artificial flies that they think is food.

The mug of tea on the window sill has left a column of condensation on the glass. I move my head so that I look out at the river through the steamed up bit, then back so that it all looks clear again. It is still raining. Actually, I might have to qualify that 'wild fish' thing, issue a caveat. I once fished Lough Derg, height of summer. I tackled up, went down to the shore, then looked out over that vast expanse of water. Nothing, no sign of insect life, no fish rising, metal-flat. Nothing. "Where the hell are you supposed to cast?" I thought. "This isn't fishing, it's a lucky dip!"

I blanked. Day after searing-hot day, employing all my cunning, I blanked. I was staying with a friend, and her ten year old daughter even made up a fucking dance about me blanking, where she'd mime me casting, then shielding her eyes while looking forlornly out over the water before sadly reeling back in and casting again. That's not proper fly fishing.

After a week, a local guy told me I didn't stand much chance without a fish-finder. And a boat. A fish finder, excuse me, but how exactly does that tap into our hunting ancestry? We'll no doubt soon all be using our electronic fish-finders to find our fish then sending down some mini robotic submarine to harpoon the poor buggers and bring them back while we get on with

something far more important like studying for some banal qualification because some bimbo in Human Resources tells us it will further our progress in some pointless activity we laughingly call a career.

You may as well be fishing with a broom

No, if it is proper fly fishing, then it has to be a river. One that's small enough to read, learn to understand and work out where the fish are. But not Czech nymphing. OK, it catches fish. And OK, it passes the 'a fly tied with artificial materials that fools the fish into thinking its food' test. But it's the weight I have a problem with - like having three lumps of musket shot tied on to the end of your line. How do you properly cast three big lumps of lead? Answer - you don't. You swing them. A few feet at a time. Three hundred quid's worth of rod in your hand, a beautifully crafted precision instrument, and you may as well be fishing with a broom handle. Where is the elegance? The grace? No, the artificial fly has to be gossamer-light, expertly cast and land as gently on the water as would the natural. That's proper fly fishing. But not a dry fly. The 'up stream, dry fly only purists' who seem to think they've got some kind of moral superiority over the rest of us make me laugh. By sitting the fly just on the surface of the water they are trying to copy the newly emerged up-wing dun drifting downstream while its wings dry sufficiently to enable it to escape to the air. This is the most vulnerable time for the fly. But here's the thing, this is how evolution works: those that sit high like that must have a better survival rate i.e. less chance of being eaten by a predator - that's our own quarry, Mr Trout. So, spiffing idea Caruthers, let's try to copy something the fish is less likely to take! Fly fishing purists my eye.

Proper fly fishers study the habits of the river and know that the best place to have your fly is in the surface film, with enticing bits wiggling down. Exercise: you are a fish and you have a choice: something sitting high on the water which you've learned sometimes disappears just as you get there and you've wasted your energy? Or something stuck in the film that ain't going anywhere and your effort is always rewarded? Hello? Wake up and smell the coffee!

The sound of the rain. The smell of coffee. That's not a bad idea, had enough tea. The wind is really getting up now and the crack willow opposite is bending and flexing and dipping the tips of its long leaves into the thick, peat-stained flow of the river. The window is steaming up and I'm looking through it and the light is going and the whole scene is beginning to fade, becoming as distant as the memory of my last fishing day. Still, the time has not been entirely wasted - at least we've got a few things sorted, eh? Oh - one thing before I go - please do feel free to reread and insert prejudices of your own choosing, won't you?

Federation of Irish Salmon & Sea Trout Anglers

Conaidhm na Slat Iascairí Bradáin agus Breac Geal

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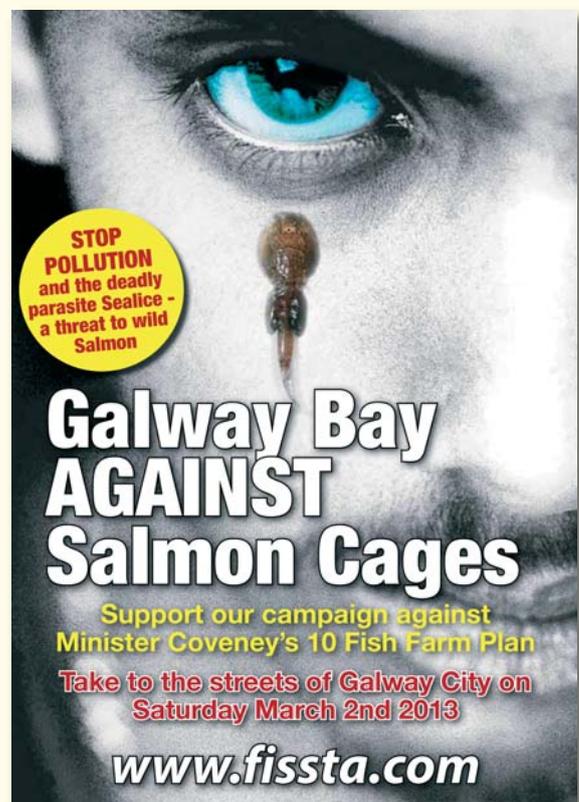
"If I knew I was going to live this long, I would have taken better care of myself," said the great actor and comedian and writer George Burns, who appropriated the quote from the jazz pianist Eubie Blake on his 100th birthday. That is the way many anglers feel as hindsight now tells them that we should have lobbied harder to protect our wild Atlantic salmon and sea-trout when they were much more abundant than they are today.

We are always lulled into a false sense of security by the state bodies that are set up to protect our rights only to find that they fail miserably to protect anything only their own jobs and that can often mean sacrificing our angling and fish.

Many are already familiar with a new book called 'Overkill,' penned by retired marine scientist Edward Fahy who worked his entire life for the state institutions including Irish Marine Institute and Bord Iascaigh Mhara. This new book is causing a major upset among politicians and serving civil servants who see the honesty of the author as a lifting of the lid on the very institutions who employed him. For those of us that campaigned against it all, there is really nothing new or surprising in this new book, except that the message comes far stronger from someone so highly respected as Fahy. He uses his unique position to draw all the strands together over his years on the pier to highlight the short sighted policy our state had for protecting our sustainable resources.

Recently, FISSTA came under fire on a certain social media site for not getting the political world to end fish

farming when it was getting a foothold in the mid 1990s. We defended ourselves by explaining that the most recent fish farm application is the fourth wave of attack on wild salmon by the aquaculture industry since the early 1980s when Fanad Fish first introduced open cage farming. The last three waves in 1983, 1993 and 2003 were opposed and beaten back into submission thanks to our successful campaigns at the time. However, this latest initiative by Minister Coveney to build a massive 15,000 ton salmon farm in Galway Bay is huge task and one that we must use everything in our power as it will be our Alamo. If we lose this battle, our wild fish will die offshore on their way to their feeding grounds in the North Atlantic.



Protest march - Galway Bay Against Salmon Cages

FISSTA Chairman Paul Lawton writes that following on from our very successful protest march to Minister

Coveney's office on 15th December in Carrigaline, the campaign moved on to Galway City for a major rally starting from Eyre Square on Saturday 2nd March at noon.



Speakers at the FISSTA protest, Carrigaline

The protest was organised by the local GALWAY BAY AGAINST SALMON CAGES and supported by all the national federations who attended our meeting to unite the lobby on 13th January in Richardson's Bar in Eyre Square. All protesters gathered at Eyre Square and continued through the city to Salthill where the BIM supported Skipper Fisheries Expo was taking place.

Should the Galway Bay licence for 15,000 tons be granted by Marine Minister Simon Coveney, TD we are likely to see nine more locations off the West coast as detailed on page 30 of the EIS (www.bim.ie) and this confirms our worst fears. The next two sites are Inis Turk off Mayo and Gola Island



Gerry Kenny from Ennis supported us at a recent protest.

Ministers continue to let their Departments and state bodies slug it out in the press

IFI v Marine Institute

The Galway Independent called it correctly when they reported they were at 'loggerheads' as IFI and BIM confront each other in open conflict as we, the customer-angler look on in amazement at the spectacle.

It all started in a most unlikely way as John Gibb reminded us last month when he wrote: "Back in 2010 a committee in Oslo awarded the Nobel peace prize to Liu Xiaobo, a Chinese civil rights activist. Immediately China ceased trading with Norway. But in order to satisfy their insatiable demand for fish, the Chinese quickly started to court Alex Salmond and, before we knew it, we had gifts of Pandas at Edinburgh Zoo and the First Minister announcing his desire (with no consultation with anyone in the wild fisheries world) to double Scottish salmon farm production by 2015." So, when the IDA set up a similar trade visit in 2011 to China our energetic Minister, Simon Coveney, saw the potential for farmed salmon as a means for creating jobs and decided our coastline could take a tenfold increase without any consultations with the wild fisheries and anglers.

In a previous column we were complimented on the 'Doctors Differ, Salmon Die' headline which many have used and replicated over the past few months. If there is anything positive to be taken from this massive sea cage plan it is that the government must decide now do they want a clean marine environment supporting an angling tourism industry or will the 'pollute to produce' salmon farm industry win out.

In most press statements Inland Fisheries Ireland claim they are supportive of the development of a sustainable aquaculture industry and welcomes all advances in research that will underpin the sustainability of this industry and safeguard wild salmon and sea trout stocks into the future. But the meaning of the word 'sustainable' has a different meaning depending on who pays you or what kind of food you produce.

We have been some good exchanges in the press about the issue and at last the Inland Fisheries Ireland have come out

GALWAY BAY AGAINST SALMON CAGES

PROTEST MARCH

against

Salmon Cages in Galway Bay

2nd March 2013

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Recent Reaction to Marine Institute Press Report.

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fighting with some facts that are welcome albeit a bit late. The Irish Times have reported IFI on yet another recent study that explains how fragile our salmon are when they pointed out: "A one per cent reduction in salmon returning to their native rivers because of sea lice mortality may be the crucial tipping point between having an open or closed fishery, according to Inland Fisheries Ireland (IFI) following a Marine Institute publication, which notes that sea lice emanating from aquaculture facilities can cause mortality in wild Atlantic salmon.

To put this in context, if 3,000 salmon return to a river and this represents a 5 per cent return rate, a further reduction of one per cent means that 600 fewer adult fish return. This, says IFI, has the potential to curtail commercial or recreational salmon fisheries and impact on river conservation limits.

The study identifies that approximately 40 per cent of released juvenile salmon show a significant difference in return rate between sea lice 'treated' and 'non-treated' groups, indicating that mortality from sea lice is significant in 40 per cent of releases in the study.

If wild salmon stocks are not to be adversely impacted, the location of salmon farms in relation to salmon rivers also comes under scrutiny in the publication, as does the critical importance of sea lice control prior to and during migration. Development of resistance to chemical treatment of sea lice and other fish husbandry problems, such as pancreas disease and amoebic gill disease, are likely to make sea lice control even more difficult in future years, the study deduces.

As one of the world's largest producers of farmed salmon, Norway is seriously concerned about the impact of sea lice arising from aquaculture facilities on wild salmon stocks and the issue of escaped farmed salmon. In its strategy portfolio, the Norwegian authorities point out that if delousing in fish farming fails to yield the desired effect on lice figures for wild fish, it may be necessary to consider a reduction in the biomass of farming facilities in the worst-affected areas.

On the issue of escaped farm salmon, they say scientific comparisons of wild and farmed salmon, and their crossbreeds, has shown that gene transfer from farmed to wild salmon can reduce the latter's ability to survive. The IFI is keen to echo these views from an Irish perspective. Inland Fisheries Ireland is supportive of the development of a sustainable aquaculture industry and welcomes all advances in research that will underpin the sustainability of this industry and safeguard wild salmon and sea trout stocks into the future.

The FISSTA Campaign for Fish Safe Hydro Power

Renewable energy is by far our cleanest means to harness the wind and water potential we have on the island of Ireland. Every month we see new planning applications for new hydro and wind power proposals that will take over the rivers and mountains completely to the detriment of all who use and enjoy these resources.

The new application on the Mill River at Bunrana in County Donegal has been granted by the authorities and another in Convoy on the River Deele which we hope will

be fought against before that river falls to so called progress but will wipe out any recovery of salmon and sea-trout in those rivers forever. So the good people of Bunrana have lost another piece of our environment to private industry or fight to preserve the very reason tourists are attracted to this seaside town where textiles and employment collapsed a decade ago. Nearby, like the Mill River, the Crana River runs into the Lough Swilly where their migrating smolts and sea-trout are infested with sealice before they get a chance to clear Malin Head out into the Atlantic. The Crana is very well managed and protected by Bunrana Anglers Association who have led by example to other clubs as their excellent angling centre stands as a testament to their hard work and dedication down the



This picture of Mulroy Bay is from a collection taken around 1890 when the Rawros ferry was in operation and long century before the salmon farms were introduced and resulted in the controversial damage to that marine environment of the lough.

years. However, they are fighting a battle that only the politicians can win for us all over the country and EU. They must decide whether to permit and encourage a clean protected environment for our wildlife and fish or sacrifice the very thing that will attract tourism revenue in the future. FISSTA were founding members of the EAA (European Anglers Alliance) campaign to protect the wilderness from killing our goose that has laid the golden eggs for generations.

With regard to Hydro Power projects, not just the Buncrana one, FISSTA are unhappy with many of Ireland's existing hydro power stations, because they prevent salmon and sea-trout migrating to and from their spawning grounds upriver. Hydro Power owners have resisted or ignored our attempts to discuss new means to resolve this problem as many plants urgently need modification to reduce the fish mortality problem. FISSTA are also extremely worried that in the near future there will be a greater increase in investment in what all political parties term 'green energy.'

The FISSTA experience to date as we have learned on the rivers of this island and in the UK and mainland Europe is that the turbine, whether it is driven by water or wind to generate electricity, continues to have a very serious impact on the salmon and sea-trout populations. Why? Because of the barriers put in their habitat to prevent them spawning. However, environmental commitments must include the

necessary fish passes and guidance systems to protect and enhance the fish stocks.

What we Want

The Joint South North Ministerial Body should develop a consistent and harmonised policy on hydropower stations, taking into account all EU and national legislation regarding water management and the conservation of (migratory) fish species. FISSTA notes in this respect that the EU has agreed on eel emergency measures and a long term eel management plan, which will have consequences for about 125 European river basins. Both plans take precedence over other EU policies, like energy policies. So an energy development plan cannot be forced through while sacrificing objectives or measures of the EU plans regarding the eel. So we hope the same will apply to the salmon.

Having regard to (and respecting) the implementation of the Water Framework Directive and the Liability Directive, we foresee that some hydropower stations may have to be closed. In Ireland. That is why we ask state agencies for a comprehensive environmental and economic impact assessment be conducted on all proposed hydro power plants. Such an assessment should be required as a consequence of the above mentioned directives but also the Commission Resource Strategy of December 2005.

All existing hydro power plants should be provided immediately with a proven effective fish guidance system (for downstream migration) and a fish passage (for upstream migration). The functioning of both systems should be evaluated. If they do not function, adjustment of the system, compensation of the damage, or closure of the plant should be considered.

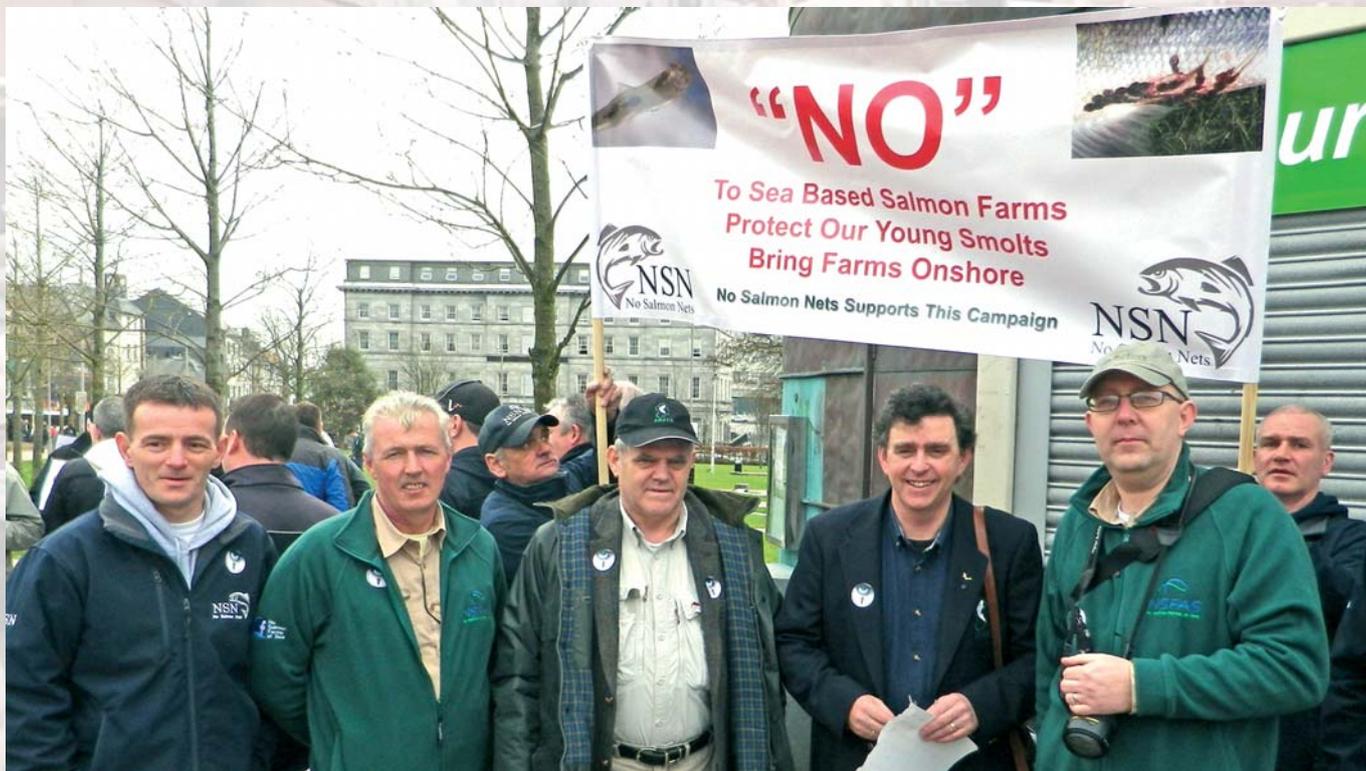
No new hydro power plants should be built, unless it can be proven that the new to be built hydro power plants have no negative effects on the sustainable management of the fish stocks in the system. Because of their low energy production, their low cost-efficiency in relation to the enormous damage they cause to fish stocks and the virtual impossibility to equip them with effective fish guidance systems, small hydropower stations should have extra attention of all parties involved. In principle, no new small hydropower stations (< 10 MW) should be built in rivers that (could) have runs of migratory fish.

All planned new hydro power stations (on the above mentioned terms) should be provided with a proven effective fish guidance system (for downstream migration) and a fish passage (for upstream migration). Consequently, national and European subsidies should only be awarded for the construction of hydro power stations if these conditions are met.



Tommy Lowes from Friends of the Irish Environment

Galway Rally against Coastal Salmon Farming a huge success



United we stand: Angling organisations, clubs and bodies unite to oppose Coastal Salmon Farm project l-r Mark Tierney Chairman of NSN , Paddy Keenan (NSFAS), Orri

Vigfusson, Noel Carr (FISSTA) and Damien O'Brien (Chairman of NSFAS.) In background a strong team from NSN.

Irene and I, representing the GREAT Game Fairs of Ireland and Irish Countrysports and Country Life Magazine, were delighted to join the protest march which assembled in Eyre Square, Galway on Saturday 2nd March to proceed to a rally at the Spanish Arch.

The initial build up was slow and at 11.30 when we arrived there were mainly only the stalwarts from FISSTA and Galway Bay Anglers and the teams from NSN and NSFAS. But we had hardly time to chat and

take a few photographs as representatives from club after club, and busload after bus load arrived to impressively swell the crowd.

And as colourful banner after banner was unfurled and a wide range of placards hoisted I realised that the rally was going to be a colourful spectacle which would send a message to the government. My estimate of the numbers in the well disciplined column of protesters which stretched for two streets was between two and two and a half thousand BUT as these were representing



Irene and Albert Titterington demonstrating the support of Irish Countrysports and Country Life magazine and the Great Game Fairs of Ireland.



Seeing old and new friends: Peter O'Reilly in the March and Eamonn Walsh one of most loyal readers who has all the copies ever printed of ICS&CL.



Irish angling interests must harness the support and enthusiasm of all Irish anglers and the support of the international bodies into a united body of opposition. Galway was indicative of what can be achieved but next time, if it is needed, we need up to double the numbers and placards indicating how many anglers are represented by each delegate.



Stark Choice for Galway? - Tourism or Fish Farms.



International Flavour: Irene Titterington ICS&CL magazine, Marc Adrien Marmacellier from Paris, NASF FRANCE director, Orri Vigfusson, Jim Haughey UAF and Noel Carr FISSTA.

FISSTA SAY A BIG THANKS TO ALL ANGLERS AT GALWAY RALLY – Noel Carr reflects on the rally



Noel Carr and Chairman Paul Lawton raise the FISSTA banner.

virtually every club and organisation in Ireland and many international bodies, this was just a token demonstration of the many thousands who oppose this proposed scheme. Many very articulate speakers made a compelling case and it was heartening to see these included the political supporters Thomas Welby, Mayor of Galway and Independent TD Noel Grealish, TD.

The No Salmon Farms at Sea (NASFAS) group and FISSTA were both there in strength and it was good to see these and other bodies standing united in their determination to stop this potential environmental disaster happening. But if this project is to be stopped

After many months of planning, the date of Saturday 2nd March 2013 will stand out as the day the island of Ireland both north and south shouted STOP to fish farming. The papers and TV reported a figure of 'up to 2,000 people' but many locals say it was far more than the recent trade union anti austerity march which also reported 2,000 people on roughly the same route.



Crowds assemble in Eyre Square



The march heads off led by a lone piper and Martin McKenna (ex of Downpatrick) with the Galway Bay banner.

Whatever the number, the messages were clear on the waving placards and banners proclaiming “Ireland against salmon cages or Save Galway Bay,” with many of the names of FISSTA angling clubs and protest groups, marched through Galway city at the weekend. The march, which made its way from Eyre Square to the city’s Spanish Arch, was organised in opposition to Bord Iascaigh Mhara plans for a 7 million fish capacity salmon farm to be located on a 456 hectare site in Galway Bay about a mile from Inis Oírr.

Addressing the rally at Spanish Arch, Icelandic Chairman of North Atlantic Salmon Fund and wild salmon conservationist Orri Vigfusson said the proposed farm of 15,000 tons could destroy migrating salmon smolts from Ireland the UK and Europe.

SEALICE FROM FARM WILL DAMAGE EU SALMON MIGRATING TO NORTH ATLANTIC

Mr Vigfusson who has brokered many deals to buy out salmon nets on both sides of the North Atlantic, said the proposed fish farm was not just an Irish issue but a wider EU issue. The Government had a duty to “give salmon smolts safe passage through Irish waters,” he said.



Marc Adrien and Irene taking photos halfway up the column in William Street & The head of the column in William Street passing through to the Spanish Arch.



Young and old attended the march and for some it was a ‘family affair’



The gathering was chaired by FISSTA’s Galway Regional member Billy Smyth, who introduced speakers including the mayor of Co Galway Thomas Welby, who called for politicians to “get off the fence” on the issue. Other speakers included, Brian Curran of the Federation of Irish Salmon and Sea Trout Anglers, Derrick Hambleton of An Taisce, Michael Canney of Save Galway Bay, Niall Greene of Salmon Watch Ireland, Enda Conneely of the Aran Islands, Martin Kearney of the National Association of Rod Anglers and Independent TD Noel Grealish, TD.





Councillor Thomas Welby, Niall Greene and Billy Smyth led off the speeches.

Tommy Casserly, Vice Chairman of Galway Bay Against Salmon Cages, asked where the faeces of the salmon were going to go. Mr Casserly said he was part of a group which had restored salmon numbers in tributaries of the River Clare, a tributary of the Corrib.



Speeches by Orri Vigfussion and TD Noel Grealish were well received.

SEA CAGES WILL CAUSE WIPEOUT OF WILD FISH

“Now they want to put a toxic cloud containing seven million caged salmon with all those faeces and chemicals and lice, between the Atlantic and 15,000 wild salmon which come through these waters,” he said.

Later a delegation attempted to hand in a letter of protest to Bord Iascaigh Mhara personnel at a stand at the Skipper Expo in a nearby hotel. However, the delegation once again were confronted with a complete refusal by anyone on the BIM stand to accept safe delivery of the letter to BIM CEO Jason Whooley. Organiser Billy Smyth said it was symptomatic of the authority’s approach, while Mr Vigfusson said he would write an international letter of complaint against the conduct of a state board.

“Today they came from the four corners of Ireland and were supported by FISSTA international angling colleagues from France, Norway, UK, Germany and many other EU countries. Overall, it was a momentous day in our long history of salmon conservation and I thank Galway Bay Against Salmon Cages and to everyone for making the rally such a success,” said FISSTA Chairman Paul Lawton.



FISSTA banner in the marching column.

NO SALMON FARMS AT SEA- NSFAS - A formidable lobbying force



A good display of banners and support from the NSFAS.



NSFAS Assembling in the Square.

One of the most determined, committed and enthusiastic group present were the team from NSFAS who have the support of the very successful NSN No Salmon Nets group who did such good work on the nets issue in Northern Ireland.

We have spoken at length to this team at their stands at the angling shows and invited their Chairman Damien O'Brien to not only say a few words in this article but submit an article to the next edition of the magazine. We have also committed to helping them fundraise.

Damien supplied a great range of photographs of the group at Galway and stated:

"Saturday the 2 March was a momentous day, not only in the fight against salmon farms, but also for No

Salmon Farms At Sea. Amongst the thousands of protesters present on the day, were hundreds of supporters of NSFAS who answered the call and travelled great distances from all parts of this island. A determined and formidable group of people for sure and all with a common purpose. NSFAS and its supporters went to Galway not only to support the local people in their fight to stop the development planned for Galway Bay but also to show the Governments, both North and South, that the future of our wild salmon and sea trout entering all rivers around this island, is not for sale at any cost. We are committed to working towards achieving our aims, and look forward to a day when we have secured the future of our marine and inland waterways to ensure the continued existence of our wild stocks." www.nosalmonfarmsatsea.com"



Paddy Keenan and Damien O'Brien with Orri Vigfusson and Billy Smyth.



NSFAS Prominent in the column.



NSFAS Heading in to the Spanish Arch.



Protect this Bay.



GLENNOO

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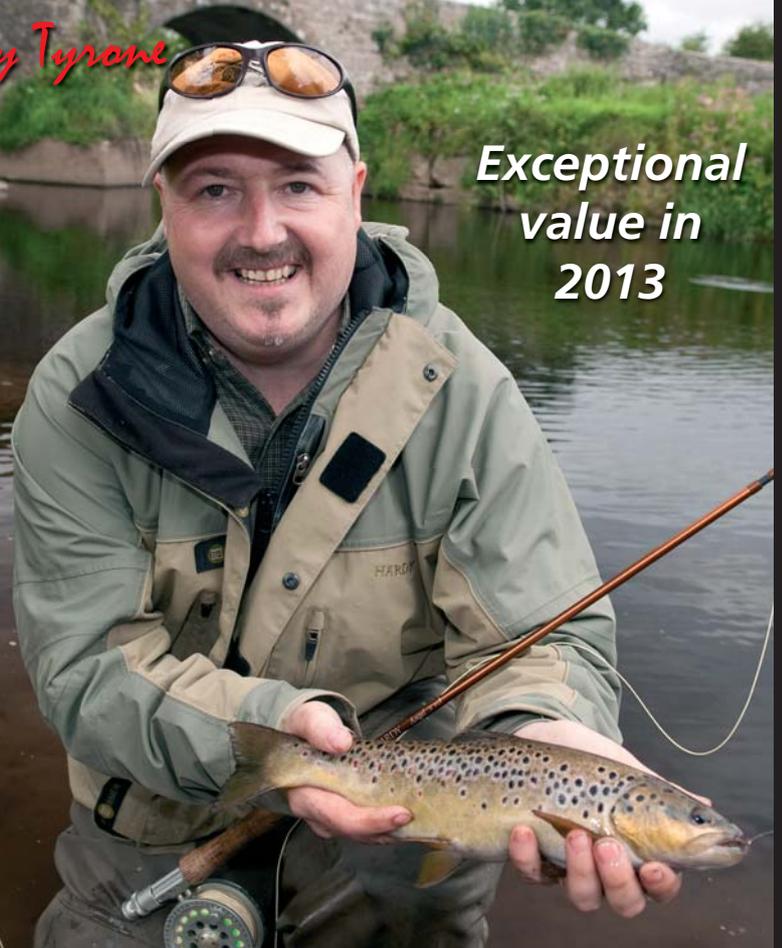
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No Salmon Nets!

Salmon fishing, as many of us will know can be the most rewarding, yet also the most frustrating of sports. The anticipation for that slow pull as the fly or lure swings around in the current of a swollen spate river becomes a powerful draw and before we know it, we become well and truly hooked! I too found myself caught by this 'salmon bug' and have spent many long and enjoyable hours in pursuit of this iconic species, in both the 'frustrating' and 'rewarding' categories I hasten to add! I enjoy the whole experience, visiting new rivers and places, meeting old friends and making new ones and enjoy what for me is the ultimate challenge of catching a salmon on a fly tied by my own hands.

Yet I never really stood back and looked at the bigger picture, I took it for granted that there would always be salmon in our rivers. Salmon conservation was what other people did, and sure that is why clubs paid their dues to groups like the Ulster Angling Federation.

So it was to my surprise one evening in early June 2011 while on an online forum that I read reports of a two mile commercial salmon net being licensed for the north Coast of Co. Antrim. This was I first heard of 'The Net.' Over the next few days the topic was discussed in depth by the regulars on the forum. Eventually, after a lot of comments regarding the legality of this net I asked the question: "Are any of you guys going to do anything about this?" After more deliberation and discussion back and forth, it became clear that, while there was widespread support against the net, no one

was actually prepared to do anything about it. This was my first introduction to what is sometime called 'keyboard warriors' and I resolved myself that I didn't want to join those ranks, I wanted to do something about it.

I decided I needed to find out more, so the first step was a couple of phone calls to DCAL to seek clarification around the commercial netting on the north coast. I was assured by the DCAL officials that at no time had the much talked about two mile net ever been licensed. However, this created more questions than it answered - what about the nets that were licensed and were in operation, what impact were they having? With further investigation and research it became clear that there was a bigger issue at play and the commercial nets were having a big impact on returning salmon. I decided to organise a meeting to get as many people together as possible, to discuss the issue and how we might start to address the situation.

We needed to do something about the Atlantic salmon's decline.

So in August 2011 a small group of people first met: although they were from different places, different backgrounds and walks of life, they were united by a strong desire to do something about the decline of the iconic Atlantic salmon. It soon became clear that the continued commercial exploitation of salmon was the single most pressing and serious threat to the future of our salmon. These coastal nets intercepted salmon returning to the rivers of their birth, effectively cancelling out any other conservation measures.

The group made the removal of these coastal nets



NSN meeting (left to right) Philip Maguire (Moyola Anglers Chairman) Mark Tierney (NSN Vice chairman) Seamus Donnelly (NSN Chairman) Aaron Watton and Darren Bell, both NSN committee members.



MLAs at one NSN meeting included Oliver McMullan, Robin Swann, Jim Allister, and Sandra Overend, along with top journalist and Irish Country Sports & Country Life contributor, Dan Kinney.

their core objective and so ‘No Salmon Nets’ was born. We also managed to find a Chairperson at the meeting, to my surprise it turned out to be me!

Over the next few monthly meetings the group grew stronger, we had representation from FASTA and the UAF. And Noel Carr from FISSTA made the two hour journey every month to update us on what was happening at European level. We had mustered support from angling clubs from across the province and beyond via the Facebook site “No to Salmon Nets in Irish Waters” which Mark Tierney had taken on board to look after.

Another significant early milestone for the group was the attendance of six MLAs at one of our meetings. We had also received valuable support from Robin Swann MLA, which we built upon so we could develop full cross party support from all of the main political parties. The NSN had now taken on a sense of structure and direction, and this was cemented with the election of an executive committee with Seamus Donnelly as Chairman, Mark Tierney as Vice Chair, Willy Darragh as Development Officer and Andrew McGall as Secretary/Strategist.

The next key milestone was a full NI Assembly debate on the future of indigenous fish species in Northern Ireland. This was tabled for February 2012 and, in advance of this, an information day was organised and hosted by Robin Swann on 23rd January 2012. The aim of the day was to raise awareness among MLAs about the decline of Atlantic salmon and of the issues impacting on them. NSN were invited to attend and exhibit at the information day.

NSN’s strategy gets underway

In the run up to the debate and

information day the newly elected chairman attended a strategy meeting to look at ways to advance the nets and wider conservation issues. For NSN the main actions coming out from the meeting were to develop an online petition and also have hard copies printed and distributed to NSN area co-ordinators. Another tactic discussed and agreed at the meeting was for our wider membership to send letters to DCAL outlining our concerns, and in this way demonstrate the level of widespread support the group had among the angling and wider community across NI. These proposals were taken along to the next meeting, adopted and then rolled out. At the information day, a NSN team went along and successfully lobbied over forty MLA’s in preparation for the debate. Meanwhile the petition had



Taking the message to government: (left to right) Francie Brolly, Sinn Fein MLA, Frank Curran, Chairman Foyle Association of Salmon and Trout Anglers (FASTA), Willy Darragh (NSN Development Officer) Mark Tierney (NSN Vice Chairman) Seamus Donnelly (NSN Chairman), DCAL Minister Caral Ni Chuilin and Andrew McGall (NSN Secretary).

gathered over 6000 signatures and over 1500 letters were posted to DCAL.

In the run up to the debate, the group continued to campaign tirelessly, receiving widespread support and encouragement from the wider angling community, conservation groups and locally elected representatives. We had at this point got our message across to Oliver McMullan MLA who had attended meetings regularly. He asked us to trust and work with the Minister and her department as he believed there was a lot of common ground and a common purpose. This was brought before the wider group, voted on and adopted by those present at the monthly meeting.

When the debate took place at the end of February we saw at first hand how politicians had really listened and taken on board many of the arguments and points that we and other groups had presented. One after another, members stood up and quoted these same facts and arguments from the information day back in January. It soon also became clear that the momentum had shifted, with unanimous support for the motion and recognition that real action was needed to protect and safeguard all indigenous fish species, including the Atlantic salmon. This was a watershed moment for the

Anglers. The Minister reinforced once again that salmon conservation was a priority within her department. This was obvious during the meeting, with the Minister keen to hear at first hand more about the work of the group and our call for an end to commercial netting. We were impressed and heartened by the Minister's knowledge and understanding of many of the key issues and her commitment to take them on board in her future plans and consultation.

News of our campaign had spread and we were very pleased to be considered for a lifetime commitment award by Albert Titterington from the Great Game Fairs of Ireland. This was duly presented to the group at the Shanes Castle Game Fair in July 2012. The encouragement and goodwill shown by people like Albert really typified the level of support that the group received right across the country, and this was a big factor in keeping the momentum of the group going.

The last major area which NSN worked on was the public consultation on the future of salmon conservation and management. This was rolled out in late April and lasted three months. The responses pointed to an overwhelming need and support for the ending of commercial exploitation of salmon along the Coast of Northern Ireland.

On 11th December 2012

the DCAL Minister announced that from 2014 there will no longer be any coastal commercial netting for salmon. This was fantastic news for NSN and all those who had supported and encouraged the group along their journey. While in many ways it is the culmination of the NSN campaign, it is ultimately an even more significant 'result' for our salmon. NSN will continue to follow with interest the Minister, and her staff as they draft and bring forward legislation to



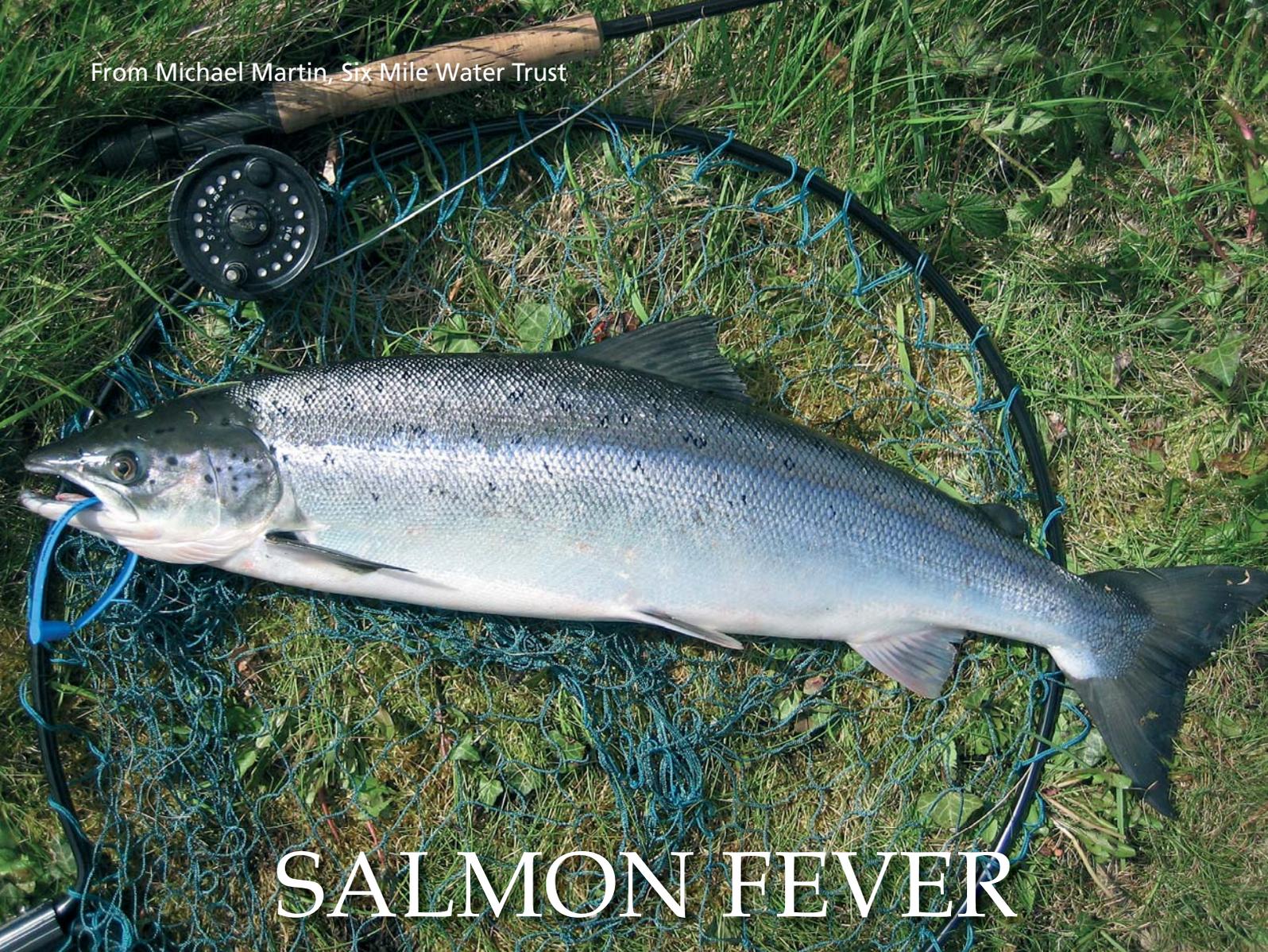
Seamus Donnelly with Game Fair Director, Albert Titterington at Shanes Castle.

group and we were really beginning to see the campaign bearing fruit.

Our next significant milestone was a meeting with the DCAL Minister, and this was facilitated by the Moyola Angling Club who have been unwavering in their support for NSN. The group was represented by the executive committee, along with Frank Curran from FASTA and Philip Maguire, Chairman of the Moyola

make this a reality. However the group believes that 11th December was a great day for salmon conservation and represents a big step forward in securing the future of salmon for this and future generations.

Seamus Donnelly and Andrew McGall have now passed on the reins to Mark Tierney and Willy Darragh. You can keep up on date on the group at their Facebook page No To Salmon Nets in Irish Waters.



SALMON FEVER

As the memory of all the excitement of Christmas passes and the shooting season draws to a close, many of us will be experiencing the first signs of a persistent condition that recurs every year and which has several symptoms, which range from spending lonely hours in front of the fly tying bench and scanning angling publications for the latest killing patterns, to an inability to walk past a fishing tackle shop without calling in. It can even in extreme cases manifest itself in very strange behaviour such as eavesdropping other people's conversation in those same tackle shops for snippets of information. Many anglers will be very familiar with this distressing condition and it's a hard one to shake. It has led to normally very sane individuals getting involved in such behaviour as converting their perfectly good work vans into makeshift camper vans, and spending hundreds of pounds and days searching for something which may not even exist in the river they are fishing. I have been a victim of this condition myself and spent several seasons studying maps, reconnoitring promising rivers and searching for information as to the presence of the 'ultimate' game fish. Other symptoms include problems concentrating at work and visions of the huge silver shadows stealing through the dark depths in our dreams. Of course I'm talking about the search for that most elusive of game fish, the Spring Salmon.

The problem of fishing for 'springers' is locating them. You must be there at the right location and at the right time. If you can find them when they are running, then

they tend to be very 'free taking' fish but, as the days and weeks wear on, they become progressively more difficult to tempt until in the summer heat it's virtually a waste of



This fish was spotted surging through the shallows before gliding over the lip of the pool.

time to try. The spring salmon fishery is also not always as obvious as you might expect and, as the spring salmon do not jump or 'show' as the summer fish do, then it's difficult to know if they are present at all.

In Ireland we are blessed with a multitude of salmon fisheries, some of which get an early run of fish; in fact I believe that in some rivers the salmon run virtually year round. Usually the first decent run of springers will begin around St. Patrick's Day with numbers building up from then on. Not all the rivers which contain spring fish are typical salmon streams and some would be a waste of time to fly fish, whilst others would be a better

proposition with more flow to work a fly.

Fishing for these spring fish can be a skilled and demanding experience, as the lure must be presented close to the salmon as they will not be inclined to move far to intercept a bait; the difference between success and failure may lie in your ability to present a lure accurately. It is also essential to double check every item of tackle before starting, as you may spend many hours or days before getting a take and to have knot pull or a poor quality hook straighten at the critical moment can leave a real bad taste in the mouth! These powerful fish will test rods and reels to the limit and cheap tackle will invariably be a false economy.



Geordie Thomas released four fish before holding on to this beauty.

One day I'll never forget

Some of the rivers I have fished look much more of a coarse fishery than any salmon river with deep, sluggish flows and beds of weed with lily pads. I'll never forget one day when I had just landed a lovely Springer which had been lying close to a bed of lily pads and next cast I started to retrieve my rather large float when an enormous pike came up and engulfed it. I played the specimen pike or rather hung on as it charged about the pool until it bit straight through the twelve pound line and took off with my float. About half an hour later the float popped up slightly upstream of me like a scene out of Jaws. I'd love to have brought a pike angler to the location but unfortunately most of the spring salmon locations would be far too precious to be sold out!



Just coming on dark can be a great time to tempt a salmon.

The early salmon are also unpredictable in the way they progress through some river systems though this may have something to do with temperature and the obstacles to be surmounted. In some rivers the fish seem to run as hard and fast as they can, right up into the highest tributaries in the system. In other rivers the fish will stay in the lower reaches for some time before migrating upstream. On the Moy system the fish can be found way up in Deelee and Ballyvary tributaries from early in the year, while on rivers which have more barriers, spring fish may hold in pools within a few miles of the estuary for some time. As mentioned before,



With current pressure on stocks it could be prudent to release all hen fish

these spring salmon can be very free taking fish and, where numbers are in decline, they must be protected from unscrupulous anglers as they can be very vulnerable to exploitation, especially as a good spring salmon is a very valuable black market commodity in hotels and restaurants. Strict regulation and bailliffing is

essential and indeed this is the case on the Moy with the Deelee, Ballyvary and Pontoon Bridge being protected by Western Fishery Board officers.

Little pods running off the back of the tide

Water levels may not be so important to runs of fish as you might think when it comes to spring salmon and, on one of the rivers which I fish, the little pods of salmon run off the back of the tide, even when water levels are relatively low. This is tremendously exciting as they pass through a series of shallows before slipping into the first holding pool and often those big black tails send up little spouts of water as the powerful fish surge through the shallows with their backs half out of the water. There are a number of lies where the fish rest in the pool above and these running fish usually succumb to a skilfully placed fly within a few casts. Anyone who tells you that he can cover one of these lies after watching a huge silver fish slide quietly into it without his hands trembling and heart thumping is a liar!

So there you have it, the terrible affliction that affects so many of our angling brothers and sisters is explained. As the days lengthen, we become distracted by thoughts of huge grey shapes with dark backs and bright silver flanks as they run off the salty tide and quietly take their place in the pools we love to fish. Once you've experienced the solid draw of one of these fantastic creatures as it confidently engulfs your fly, you just become addicted and if there's a cure then I haven't heard of it. It's just a case of managing the condition as best you can, but please remember to show some restraint as we don't want to kill the goose that lays the golden egg! Also if we don't sign up to the petitions against the salmon farms and give all our support to organisations like FISSTA, then there won't be any wild fisheries left to enjoy.



Cocker and the springer - Pepper stands guard over a hard earned fish.

Men with lamps - more threat than predators!



Will we ever see packs of grouse like this again on Northern Irish moors?

Things do not seem to be getting a lot better - anywhere. I look back over the past 80 odd years and what I see is layer upon layer of incompetence, criminality, greed and lack of honesty, integrity and hard work. Where should we start? Well, the top is as good a place as any to look for the first signs of rot. You see, it does not seem to matter what walk of life you are in; all you have to do to cling to power is to proclaim at every opportunity how great everything is around you - how great parliament at Westminster or elsewhere is, how great are our security forces, how great is the National Health Service, particularly in the hospitals and how great is your staff.

Several BBC departments seem to have forgotten what they once stood for and you had better not start me on RTE. Woe betide the man foolish or courageous enough to call a spade a spade in sporting clubs or counties. Everywhere you look, cesspools of rubbish, stupidity and offensiveness seem to be accumulating at a disturbing rate.

Who is going to stand up and cry 'Enough' before decent people are buried in the morass? I am afraid it will not be the MPs or TDs. They have votes to consider and the pygmies who are happy with the status quo in these islands far outnumber those with long and proud memories.

But there is no harm in looking back - in anger or otherwise. When I was at primary school in the Glens of Antrim nearly 80 years ago there was very little money around, but all seemed right with the world. The Parish Priest Canon Rawe and the RUC sergeant, Dan Connell, simply had no crime to report - apart from the odd cyclist found without light on his bike or the over eager young Romeo needing to be told to cool it.

Parties of guns were attracted then to local hotels

At that time all the rivers in the Glens had great runs of salmon and sea trout from mid July onwards. There was a lot more natural cover on the ground then and every farm within a mile of our home had a small moor with excellent heather cover and more grouse on them than are in the whole of Ireland now.

There were no State forests in the Glens at that time



Grouse have to face all sorts of predators - four footed, winged and even two legged!

and moors, such as Cushleake, Ballypatrick, Glenshesk, Beaghs, Slievenorra, Oona, Parkmore and the Bay Mountain had enough grouse to attract parties of guns to the hotels in the area every year for two or three weeks.

I was about 16 when I shot my first grouse - a fine russet coloured cock of real Irish stock. For another 10 or 12 years I could be sure of a few grouse every week during the season, usually on a Sunday after a match. I didn't have very far to travel then.

Cartridges were hard to get during the war and it was mostly a case of turning for home when the cartridges, rather than the grouse, had run out. That was all done in a circle no more than a quarter of a mile from my home.

The first fox I saw in the locality was in 1943. A neighbour, the Late Jamie McKay and I went down to check after reports of foxes in the low braes near the sea. I would say it was in the month of June and cover was very thick. We saw a fox all right but I had no gun and Jamie did not get a shot at it. Never mind, I set a snare where there was a lot of padding and there was a young fox in it in the morning.

It was about that time that the late Frank Healy was appointed fox control officer, a joint project by the Ulster Farmers Union and the Department of Agriculture. As far as I can recall he accounted for five dens of foxes on or near our farm in his first year. No wonder the grouse had been harder to find near home.

Before I went to work in London in 1961, I and a couple of friends experienced the delights of grouse shooting on Dunurgan Tops, above our house and on Slievenorra about six miles away. We needed a car for that and more often than not the car was left unlocked at the side of the road, while we tested the heather and its denizens.

Slievenorra, like the rest of the moors in Ireland suffered badly in the great snow and frost of 1947 which lasted from early February until St Patrick's Day. How any wildlife survived out there while the heather was covered in three or four feet of snow with drifts up to 10 feet is beyond imagination. But survive they did and I can recall seeing 10 or more 12-bird coveys in what we called the Big Hollow in Slievenorra. There seemed to be no gritting or heather burning so far as the eye could see and the heather was more than a foot tall. I do not wish to underestimate the value of burning and gritting but I know from personal experience that neither gritting nor burning by themselves will bring grouse back where they have declined drastically in numbers over the years.

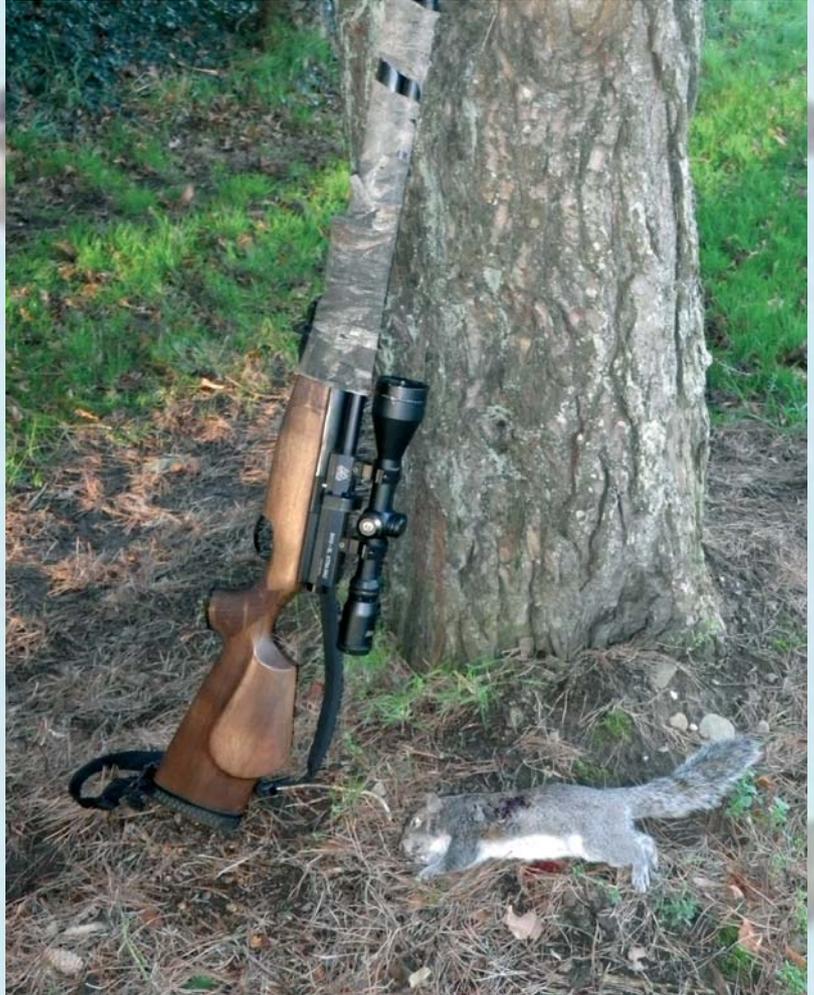
When I came home from London in 1965, the Forest Service had moved in on Slievenorra with its men and machines and you would walk a long way to see a grouse, hare, meadow pipit or lark, But there were plenty of foxes, hoodie crows, peregrine falcons and hen harriers. In fact I saw my first hen harrier near Slievenorra in around 1966.

What is needed to restore grouse numbers is a combined cross-border campaign involving sensible moor management and predator and raptor control. But I feel that we will need to restock and to root out the scoundrels who have made a nice wee earner out of the theft of grouse and grouse eggs. The culprits must be put behind bars before there is any question of releasing grouse. Since I took over management of several moors in North Antrim in 1971, I have demonstrated that it can be done with coveys of up to 12 strong grouse in the right conditions, but the men with the lamps at night pose a bigger threat than either natural raptors or predators.

Squirrels and East Coast Pigeons In The Bag

While I don't claim to be a pigeon shooter, I know that many regard them as their main target if not after pheasant and, this winter we have seen a big number of wood-pigeons arrive to feed on our fields from the continent and from the UK. For the past number of years a friend of mine and I have been controlling the grey squirrel population in a local Golf course, having been asked if we could possibly shoot a few with air rifles. The first year the place was overrun with them and we got in the region of thirty squirrels, then the following year we got about twenty, last year the numbers were down again and this year we have had a number of trips when we have not seen one at all. Remember we can only really do this for the short few months when the leaves are gone from the trees, but happily this coincides with the pigeon season, so when sitting in the woods for a squirrel to show itself, we get the odd shot at a pigeon coming in to roost. The members of the club have noticed the reduction in squirrels and are happy to see the numbers kept to a reasonable amount as they had been killing off songbirds and destroying nest boxes. We won't eliminate the squirrels but we have made a large dent in their numbers.

The pigeons are a welcome bonus, but are very wary and fly off at any sign of movement and are a real challenge. My friend Damian also targets them on farmers' fields with the shotgun, and I have in the past sat under a sitty tree near these fields with the air rifle and bagged a fair few. This year has seen a huge number of wood-pigeons around the East coast of Ireland, with shooters coming from far and near to target them. I have heard of several bags of two hundred or so taken from the same field on successive days. A few decoys (dead pigeons preferably) work great to get the flocks within range. However there is such an array of devices now



Air rifles can be very effective weapons.

such as 'flappers' and pigeon magnets all available to try but, while all seem to work on their day, the dead pigeon is very reliable.

One of the tastiest meats

When I hear of bags of two hundred, I often wonder what happens to the dead birds. Are they picked up to eat or to sell to game dealers? I certainly hope so because fresh wood-pigeon meat is one of the tastiest meats out there. It's also a lot more organic than any domestic meat. Damian gave me a large bag of dead birds after his first trip and I asked a friend who happens to be a chef if he would like some. He was delighted to try some fresh game, as he was not familiar with cooking it. I gave him a bag of breasts next time I saw him and he asked if I had any legs so next time I saw him he got a bag of whole birds to try. Many shooters won't bother to take the meat off a pigeon as they think its too much fuss but it could



Our target once the squirrels had been controlled.

not be easier; it took Damian and me less than ten minutes to take the breasts off about forty birds. In the woods I sometimes take the whole breasts off as a crown with the breastbone, to make it easier to carry a large number of birds home and local foxes, other predators and scavengers appreciate the leftovers. When still warm it's easy to push your thumb under the point of the breastbone and pull it off, but cut through the base of the wings first to cut the tendons joining the wings to the breast. I take the breast meat and vacuum pack it, then freeze it and it will keep for over a year like this. Not that I ever get to store much as I give most of it away to friends who love it, or eat it myself in curries, casseroles or just grilled wrapped in a rasher.

Over penetration is a problem

We get a decent number of birds from the woods while trying for squirrels and have been experimenting with new pellets. Often you can hit a bird well and it will fly off to drop out of the sky about a hundred yards away. Over penetration is a problem. Flat headed pellets are not accurate enough at the distance we shoot at, so this year we tried a new pellet, the

H&N Hunter Extreme and we found that this will drop a squirrel very quickly but can still go through a pigeon. It's better than a round headed pellet, but loses accuracy after about fifty yards compared to the pellets we usually use. We are looking forward to using them on rabbits when we get the chance. I am amazed at how the pigeons and squirrels can run or fly off with a pellet clean though their chest only to fall out of the tree or sky dead in a few minutes. Of course, if we can possibly manage it we try for a headshot for while a broken wing will also drop a pigeon we always try for a clean kill.

This year we also got a bit of a job clearing out a multi story car park of feral pigeons. On the first trip Damian killed over a hundred birds, Subsequently we get about fifty on each visit and already numbers are keeping down. However, feral pigeons we don't eat, nor would I advise anyone to do so. They are often riddled with parasites and can carry about sixty diseases so best not even to touch the bodies without gloves, so we dispose of the bodies in bins. While it could hardly be called sport, I believe its better than poison. Air rifles work well, being quiet and low powered. No damage is done or disturbance caused and they get the job done to everyone's satisfaction.

(Left) The H&N pellet on the right showing some flattening on impact.

(Below) Some of the birds ready for preparation for the table.



AJ's Angst

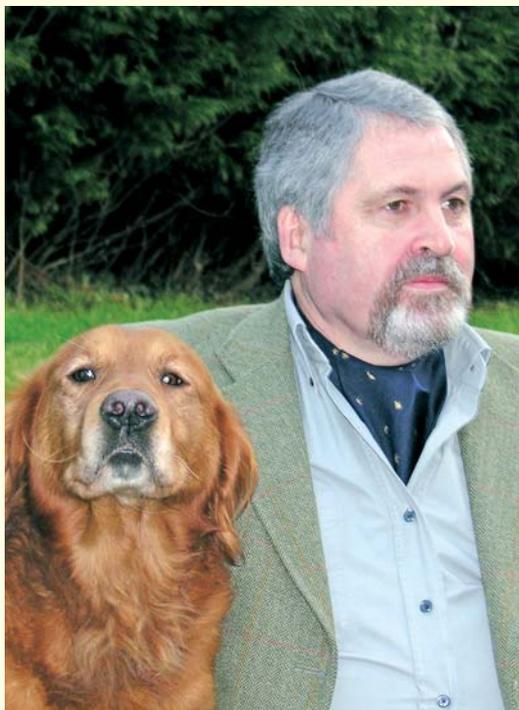
Frank opinion on the issues facing the Irish country sports scene

When Paul Pringle took over as editor of the magazine, I granted him editorial independence, save for this column in which I could put forward my own personal views/perceptions and those of readers who telephone, email or speak to me. Although it is largely my own viewpoint I put forward, I try not to put it in a personalised fashion unless I consider it to be totally necessary, or that I or the magazine receives a threat and/or that someone or somebody acts in a fashion that we consider to be totally inappropriate. Amongst any criticism that I might offer I also make suggestions how the situation could be improved. In fact I hope that readers consider the 'Angst' to be a positive vehicle that stimulates constructive debate.

Last time I gave my own personal perceptions on the organisations that claim to represent us in Northern Ireland and highlighted what I perceived to be the strengths and weakness of them. This was in general well received except by one person who took a personal affront at what I had said and responded by issuing a threat against the magazine. I offered him the opportunity to make a response to my comments in the Angst and a sight of this one for his comments.

An offer to respond to my last Angst or this 'refused'?

Last year with the entry into the market place for sporting membership of Ronan Gorman's Countrysports Ireland organisation, I thought it timely in my Angst column, to review the current state of the marketplace and give my personal perspective on the Northern Ireland organisations that represent us and those that claim to represent us. Basically my conclusions summarised were: we should wait and see if there is a place for another organisation; and that, but for CAI not holding an AGM to elect its committee, etc. CAI ticked most of the boxes for me and was currently my organisation of choice, although I am



also a member of BASC, which also does not hold a local AGM. Our editor in his overall approach takes a broadly supportive stance for CAI, also his organisation of choice. But readers will have noted that our editor tends to tell it like it is when either praise - or criticism - is warranted. In the absence of any of the local shooting organisations staging regular AGMs we see our role as being one of raising readers' concerns privately or publicly. Thus while we are supporters of most of the organisations, and are very much in favour of having the greatest unanimity of purpose amongst all of the organisations, we do not see that we should be simply cheer leaders for them - we

feel we should, on occasions, offer them not only praise but also independent and constructive criticism.

In my last 'Angst' I went on to state my regret that in a country of the size of NI we had two trade organisations claiming to represent the gun trade and I hoped they could come together to reform a fully functioning organisation truly representing the trade and the trade/sporting interface.

I also stated my regret that the Gun Trade Guild NI, once with around 30 very active and enthusiastic members, now appeared a shadow of its former self. I know this because I was not only a founder member, but I was very pleased to be able to assist it in various ways including drawing up the constitution, which was adopted without opposition at a properly constituted AGM. I stated in my 'Angst' that - regrettably - the GTGNI now appeared virtually a 'one man band.' I made no criticism of the person I perceived as being 'virtually the one man band' - indeed in the past I have praised some of the work he carried out, I merely stated my regret that there was not one unified body for the trade in order that the trade could speak with one voice. Now who on earth could possibly think it better for there to be two bodies? Possibly only the 'one man band'?

I was astonished to hear a claim by a person, who assuming he was the aforementioned 'one man band,' alleged that I had 'stabbed him in the back,' that I had 'thrown in my lot with Countrysports Ireland' and that was why I was attacking him, CAI and BASC, and because of this he would 'belittle' the magazine. He indicated that he

would not wish, under any circumstances, to join up with the other organisation which claims to represent the gun trade. This is in spite of the fact that in the submissions on the Draft NI Marine Bill, the other organisation, the NIFDA, claimed to be 'the largest gun trade organisation in Northern Ireland with members in all six counties,' while in his submission to the same Bill, this person simply claimed to be 'Chairman of the GTGNI.' It would appear he recognises the primacy of the NIFDA but is more interested in being a 'large fish' in an apparently diminishing pond, rather than working to unify the trade in NI.

He also claimed that if I was making criticisms about anyone I should let them see the criticism and let them comment on it. Now we consider that to be slightly unrealistic and we of course, have always offered the right of reply in the magazine. I had felt my wish to see ONE truly representative trade organisation in Northern Ireland was more of the nature of a constructive suggestion to see things done properly than a criticism of anyone. Therefore I was so stunned that anyone could consider that my wish to see ONE gun trade organisation, working to a proper constitution and truly representing the trade and the trade/sporting interface was a criticism or a 'stab in the back' that I did offer him not only the right of reply but sight of a draft of this Angst for his comments and to give him an opportunity to prove my perceptions wrong.

I also asked him the following questions:

1. How many fully paid up members are there currently in the GTGNI?
2. What is the current membership fee?
3. When did he last call an ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING and seek re-election? How many people were present at this meeting? Were accounts tabled? How much in cash & kind has he been paid out of membership fees/donations since he took over as chairman? What % of membership fees was this?
4. Who are the officers and members of the Guild – when were they elected? When did the GTGNI last have a quorate committee meeting?"

Now to date, I have not had a response to these questions from him – except for an email to say that, as I am not now a member of the GTGNI, he is not answerable to me. To this, I have responded by advising him: "I ceased being a member of the GTGNI when it appeared to cease to operate properly within its constitution and it appeared that virtually all donations and membership fees were going to you." Now it is my perception that it would appear that for some time the GTGNI has not operated within the constitution which I drew up and which was properly adopted at an AGM. The fact that the person who claims to represent the guild has failed to address the questions has not persuaded me that my perception is wrong.

Now he claims he is working on behalf of the gun trade and exerting great personal influence on behalf of the trade and the 60,000 FAC holders in NI – I wonder on what basis he claims to represent the trade never mind the public.

I would repeat my own opinion that the trade and the trade/FAC holder interface would be better represented by one trade body rather than two and if the NIFDA represents the majority of the trade then should this person not simply be better to leave such trade representation in the hands of 'the largest gun trade organisation in Northern Ireland with members in all six counties' - or at least work to unify the trade within one fully democratic and functioning organisation.

Am I worried about him, in an apparent fit of pique, apparently issuing a threat to 'belittle' our magazine which through its readership reaches the vast majority of country sports people in Ireland? The simple answer is – NO! In fact it saddens me that he considers himself such an important person that he should be so immune from constructive suggestions that he will resort to threatening those who offer such suggestions. However we will not be bullied into silence by such threats and he is likely to find the task of talking down this magazine with c 80,000 readers a little more testing than simply 'huffing and puffing.' If I get answers to the questions I have raised with him, I shall share them with you in the next edition of the Angst or in the online update due at the end of March. If such answers indicate that my perceptions about his operation of, or role within the GTGNI were wrong then of course I shall be very happy to admit this and apologise. And if he is genuinely interested in the trade being properly represented and either falls in behind the NIFDA, or demonstrates a desire for a unified body representing the trade then he will have our full support and I am sure that of the majority of the 60,000 FAC holders. In the interim, in the words of the Anti Iraq War Marchers – I have one message to him – please feel free to put forward your own personal views on firearms to whoever you like but please – **'Not in Our Name!'**

AND I offer the prize of a good day's shooting to anyone who can show me where in my last ANGST column I stated anything that was not factually correct, a reasonable assumption to make, a reasonable or balanced criticism/suggestion or anywhere that indicated we had 'thrown in our lot with Countrysports Ireland.' Our position on Countrysports Ireland is very simple – we have worked positively with Ronan Gorman in the past and found him to be an able and articulate spokesperson for country sports. BUT in answer to the false allegation as to the motivation behind my last 'Angst', I am sure Mr Gorman could confirm that we have not 'thrown in our lot with him' or indeed had any meaningful discussions with him. In fact the simple constructive criticism (not 'an attack') that I proffered to CAI and BASCNI about how I thought their service to their members could be improved by holding local AGMs could obviously currently apply to CI – although I would hope that ultimately it will not.

Our representative organisations...

My piece stimulated a bit of interest both 'in house' and amongst several readers about how much we/they actually

know about the organisations to which we pay our subscriptions to represent us. Things such as how the organisation is governed, how officers are elected /appointed; how executive staff are appointed; how many members they have and how they acquire members views, etc. It stimulated the idea of doing a series on organisations and their elected and appointed officers/staff. In this issue our editor interviews Sean Doris, Chairman of the NARGC, the largest Irish country sports organisation. We will take suggestions from organisations and readers for follow up interviews.

Now on to a couple of slightly controversial subjects – the threat posed to people by the urban fox and the threat posed to other wildlife and cattle by the ‘cuddly badger!’

Fox Attack – was it through fear?

It has been reported that a fox dragged a one-month-old baby from his cot and mauled his hand, biting the child’s finger off. The child was left seriously injured after the animal crept into his bedroom in Bromley, southeast London. The child’s mother was alerted by his screaming and rushed into his room to see his hand in the animal’s mouth.

After a short struggle, the mother managed to free her child, but his finger had been ripped off. Plastic surgeons were able to reattach the boy’s finger and he is said to be recovering well at home.

A Metropolitan Police spokesman said: “We were called at 1638 on February 6 by staff at St Thomas’s Hospital to reports a baby boy who had been admitted to hospital after being attacked by a fox.

“Police attended to find a four-week-old baby with a hand injury. The baby was admitted to hospital after the attack at its home address in Bromley.” The animal had got into the family home through an open backdoor.

London Mayor Boris Johnson said more needs to be done to deal with the problem of urban foxes. “My thoughts are with the boy and his family,” he said.

“Thankfully this sort of attack, though terrible, is rare, but we must do more to tackle the growing problem of urban foxes.

“They may appear cuddly and romantic but foxes are a pest and a menace, particularly in our cities.”

Rather unbelievably it is reported that an RSPCA spokesperson said the only reason a fox would attack is due to fear!

“It’s extremely unusual for foxes to attack young children or anyone,” she said. “It’s not typical fox behaviour at all. Foxes will come closer to a house if there are food sources. Then they can become quite bold, but they usually do back off and run away when there’s people around.”

Readers will recall that another such ‘rare occurrence’ happened in June 2010, when twin baby sisters Lola and Isabella Koupparis were **attacked by a fox** while sleeping in their cots in east London.

Isabella was found with deep cuts to her arm and Lola’s

face was covered in blood. Both underwent surgery at the Royal London Hospital.

In spite of the animal rights lobby attempting to portray the fox as some sort of cuddly animal that should be protected against the ‘nasty hunters,’ foxes as livestock keepers know, are opportunist predators who will often be extremely aggressive in their attacks and especially with chickens or other fowl will attack not simply out of hunger but with a sort of blood lust. Does the RSPCA claim that when they slaughter virtually every bird in a frenzied attack in a chicken shed that this is done out of fear! Wary of humans yes - fearful of them no!

No one, and certainly not me, would like to see foxes systematically wiped out but they are an animal that needs to be controlled in both urban and rural settings.

Do you prefer to see badgers or hedgehogs?

Most people would state they like to see both but in scientific reports published recently it would appear that we might soon have to make a choice if the badger population is allowed to continue to grow without any sort of control.

It would appear that the hedgehog population has plummeted by 25% and while foxes do manage to eat the odd hedgehog, it is the wily old badger with its long sharp claws and strong jaws that has been blamed for the sharp decline in the spiky little creatures described as the gardeners friend.

But what about the defensive spines? Apparently rolling up into a prickly ball is no defence against a hungry badger – against foxes yes, but not against a badger attack. The Mail reports that badgers use their long claws to prise them open even when they are curled up tight. “Once a badger has a hedgehog pinned down, it swipes its victim with its 1.5inch claws, pulls it open and bites it to kill it before pulling the flesh from the prickles..... Badgers have an exceptionally string bite for their size.”

It has been estimated that hedgehogs can make up to 10% of a badger’s diet and as they also compete with badgers for food the implications of the badger population experiencing massive uncontrolled growth are extremely serious for the hedgehog population. It is estimated that there are less than 1 million hedgehogs in the UK and around 300,000 badgers so one does not have to be a mathematical genius to work out the implications. With a fast dropping hedgehog population and a rapidly rising badger one with an apparently highly developed taste for hedgehog flesh, it is obvious that the hedgehog is the animal that should be protected from ‘old Brock.’

Apart from the threat that badgers pose to cattle from carrying TB, this is just another reason why the badger’s protected status must be reviewed. There is now a very good case for controlled humane culling to reduce the imbalance that has been created through allowing their population to explode without any restraints.

As we go to press we hear that Agricultural Minister



Some of the excellent taxidermy display by Ingrid Houwers.



Richard & Liz Edgar with the punt Richard built which is now operational.

Michelle O'Neill has announced plans for a badger sett survey in the Banbridge and Rathfriland area where there is a high concentration of badgers and a high incidence of TB in cattle. I wonder how the hedgehog population is doing in this area?

Successful Wildfowling Exhibition staged by the Woodgrange Cultural & Historical Society

A very successful wildfowling exhibition and series of talks was staged in Woodgrange Orange Hall, Downpatrick over the weekend of 8/9 February.

The exhibit covered the history of fowling and puntgunning on the Downpatrick Marshes and Strangford Lough and include a great range of fowling pieces and punt guns. Two days of fascinating exhibits and very interesting talks had a huge input from the Edgar family who provided many of the exhibits, while taxidermist Ingrid Houwers also exhibited a fine range of her work and also gave a couple of talks on taxidermy.

Local historian Albert Colmer gave an interesting overview of the Downpatrick Marshes and local area from the ice age up to the more recent history of the anti flood measure put in place to prevent the flooding of Downpatrick, prior to a quite simply fascinating talk on their punt gunning experiences on Strangford Lough and further afield by Sam Cunningham and John Pringle.

It is rare to find three (counting Ingrid four)! such knowledgeable speakers who can put their subject across in such an articulate, fascinating and compelling fashion – this truly was the stuff of 'living history' which should not be lost to future generations of shooters and country sports people.

I have suggested to Richard and Liz that they should repeat the exercise next year in a larger venue that can accommodate greater crowds.



Two men in a boat' - Sam Cunningham and John Pringle spoke of their punt gunning exploits on Strangford Lough.

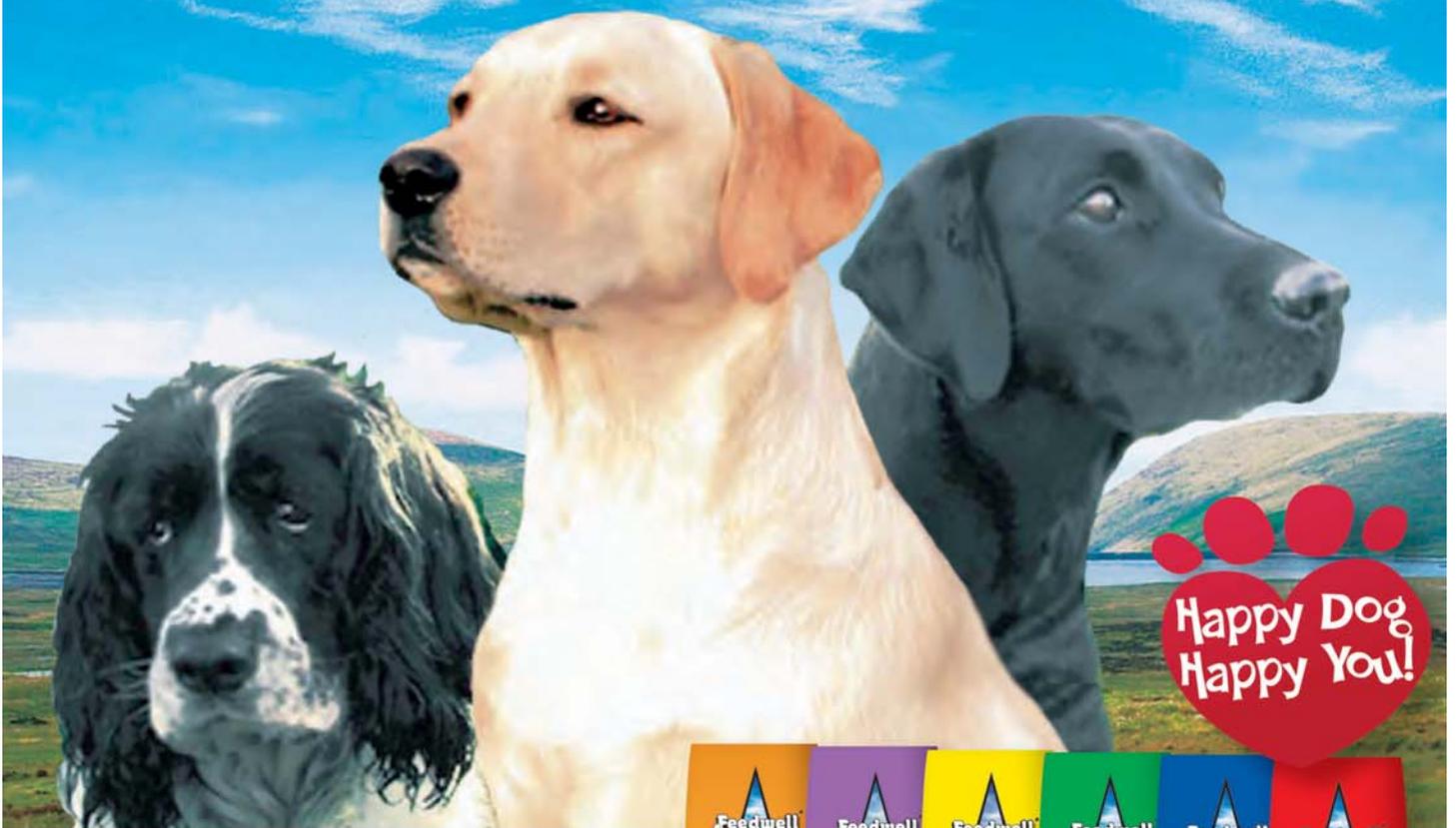
2013 Retriever Working Tests

These dates are accurate at the time of going to press

Date	Venue	Organisers	Contact	Telephone
9 March	TBA	Ulster Select	Johnny Rea	028 2589 8428
16 March	TBA	UGL	Richard Johnston	07825 760 164
23 March	Larchfield	BASC	Amanda McCallion	028 9260 5050
1 April	TBC	Fermanagh	G Wilson	07779792186
6 April	Lakes Craigavon	NIGF&SS	Philip Turner	028 9261 1845
13 April	Delamont, Killyleagh	Killyleagh W/S	John Wilson	028 4482 8697
20 April	Craigavon Lakes	Craigavon	Noel Doran	028 3832 5272
27 April	Shanes Castle – Please Note tests will be held at the Randalstown end of the Estate. All entrants get a FREE ticket to the Game Fair at Shanes Castle sponsored by FEEDWELL.	Prelim, Novice and Open Tests UGRC – Selection test for Shanes Castle Int.Team	URGC Joe Johnston	028 8673 6432
4th May	Rademon	UGL	E. McIlwaine	028 3755 2549 07799 718963
11 May	Dobbs Estate	Lab Club	Joe Morrison	07739 515200
18 May	Greyabbey Estate, ROSEMOUNT	Comber W/S	William Harpur	028 9187 3534
25 May	Moira Demesne	NCF	Noel Doran	028 3832 5272
26 May	Moira Demesne	NCF	Noel Doran	028 3832 5272
1 June	Cleggan Lodge	Moyola	R Kane	028 7946 8585/ 07900180005
8 June	Drumcairn	Mid Ulster Gundog	R. McGregor	028 77729690
15 June	Castlewellan	Meningitis Charity	Eddie Moore	028 9062 7664
22 June	Clandeboyne - All entrants get a FREE Ticket to the Game Fair at Shanes Castle.	Lab Club	Joe Morrison	07739 515200
29 June	Irish Game Fair Shanes Castle	FEEDWELL Dog & Gun Preliminary & Novice Retriever Tests: RED Mills Spaniel Tests & Spaniel International	Joe Johnston	028 8673 6432
30 June	Irish Game Fair Shanes Castle	Feedwell International Retrievers team event/Open Test and Run Off for the Game Fair Top Dog between top 2 spaniels and top 2 retrievers for a prize of a c £2,000 KM Dog trailer.	R. McGregor	028 77729690
21 July	Dundrod	NI Minor Breeds Club	Larry Lee	0759259835
3 August	Gosford Castle	Inter Club Test	Noel Doran	028 3832 5272
10 August	Craigavon lakes	NIGFSS	Philip Turner	028 9261 1845
31 Aug	Irish Game & Country Fair Birr Castle	International Spaniel Team Event/ Spaniel Tests	Albert Titterington	028 44839167
1 Sept	Irish Game & Country Fair Birr	International team event/Open Retriever Tests. Run Off for the Game Fair Top Dog between top two spaniels and top two retrievers for a prize of a c £600 voucher towards a KM Dog trailer.	Albert Titterington	028 44839167

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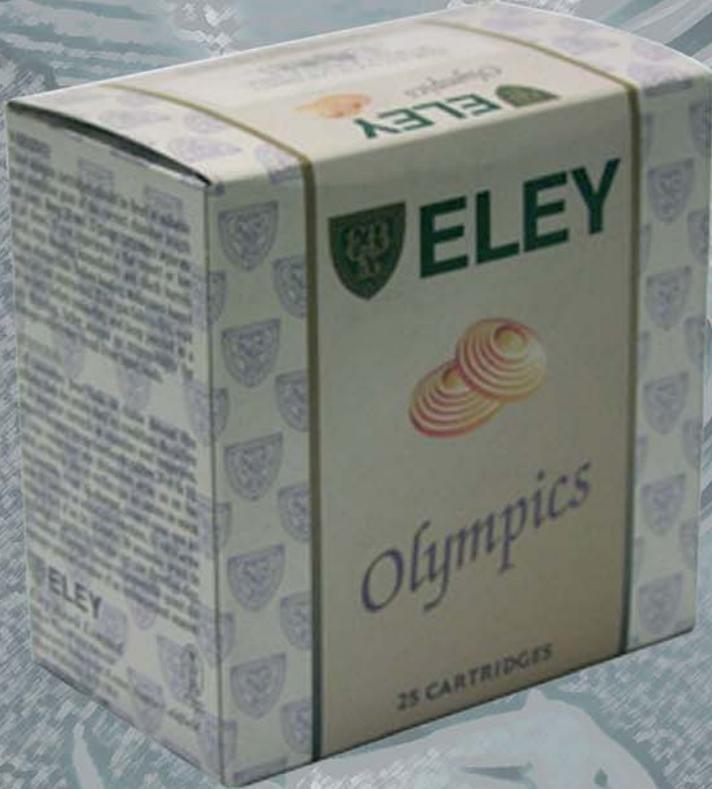


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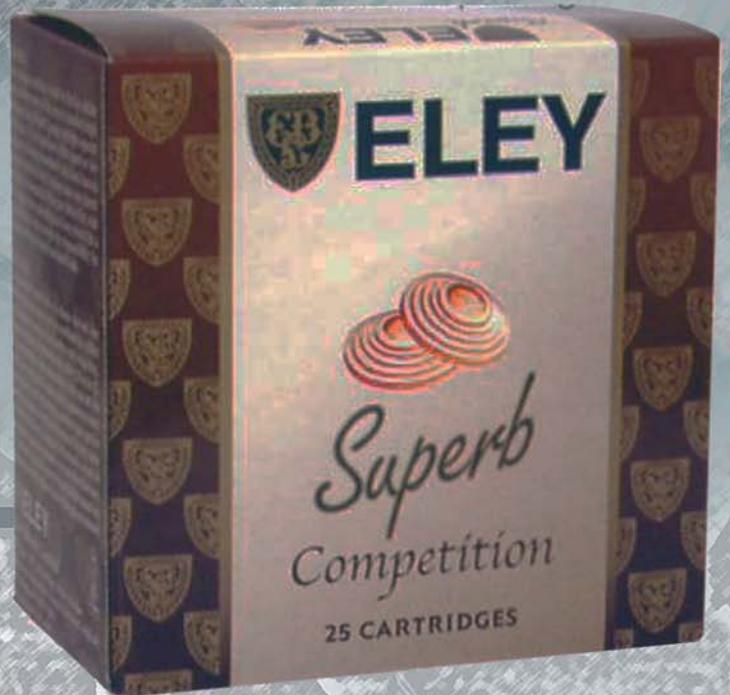
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