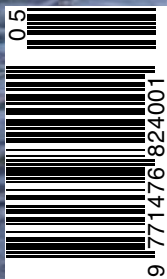


# Irish COUNTRY SPORTS and COUNTRY LIFE & IRISH GAME ANGLER MAGAZINE

ON SALE  
To 14th May 2016

Volume 15 Number 1 Spring 2016 £3.00 / €5.00



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Champion



IKC Spaniel  
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IGL Retriever  
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A person wearing a grey tweed cap and a green and yellow plaid scarf is shown from the side, aiming a wooden shotgun. The background is a clear blue sky with some light clouds.

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**Front Cover:** 'A Delicate Cast' - Glenda Powell on the beautiful Blackwater River.



**Irish Game Angler cover:** Top fly casters Charles Jardine, Glenda Powell and Stevie Munn will be appearing at the NI ANGLING SHOW - at the IRISH GAME FAIR, SHANES CASTLE, ANTRIM on the 25th & 26th JUNE.

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# Country Sports and Country Life Northern Comment

**Your copy of the country's leading countrysports and country lifestyle magazine is packed to the brim with a huge variety of articles and news features.**

On the cover we have highlighted salmon fishing on the River Blackwater and the winners of the IKC Spaniel and Retriever Championships and the IGL Retriever and KC Spaniel Championships.

We have some great travel articles to tempt you, such as fishing in the North West of Canada and the Calgary Stampede, to a luxurious holiday destination in Switzerland.

Our regular fishing columnist Stevie Munn goes fly fishing in Norway on the Tysil River as well as other stunning big rivers, including Glomma and the Rena. Czech nymphing and more take some serious fish for Stevie. In another special feature Michael Martin recalls some memorable fishing adventures, some closer to home and one in Canada. Sturgeon feature son the catch list and for one very surprised angler it was a massive eight footer which fought for forty-five minutes before being released back into the Frazer River. Not your average catch and release!

While we are on the subject of memories, readers have clamoured to read more from local writers about their countrysports experiences. And naturally we were delighted to do just that by introducing Ronnie Mack of the Mid Ulster and North Down Shooting Party (with whom I have had the pleasure of shooting on more than one occasion over the years).

Ronnie's story tells of the fun and camaraderie to be had on a shoot day closer to home in Northern Ireland in wonderful natural surroundings. Cleggan in Antrim is one of the best known in the country and further afield and Ronnie tells the story of his meeting with Shoot Manager Joe Taylor, in the lead up to one of the shooting party's early forays. Very, very testing birds, excellent beaters, dogs of the highest quality and a superbly organised shoot — it's all there says Ronnie.

If other readers are inspired to let me have their own recounts of days in the field, or along a riverbank in pursuit of trout, then please do feel free to send in your words and photos for consideration. Look inside the cover for full contact details.

A world about how we like to get the stories: Please send it typed as a Word document (up to 1200 words) by Email along with your full contact details. Photographs to accompany the article should be full resolution JPEGs (not made smaller for the Internet) and you should caption them for us in your Email. Please give the number of the photo i.e. JPG or ING 4567 etc and not photo 1, photo 2 etc (they may not land on our desk in the same order your sent them) along with your caption. And thats all there is to it. Get your article to us and we'll be in touch.

We have seen several of our writers snapped up by other publications in the UK, one such being Andrew Griffiths who now writes regularly for a number of leading UK fishing magazines and other outlets. Who knows where your story could end up after we publish it!

As always we bring you detailed reports of gundog championships here and in the UK and by special request we include the cocker championship as well as the others which you expect to see.

In gundog circles, few will not have heard of the name of John and Sandra Halstead. In our regular Nigel Carville Red Mills Interview, Nigel talks to them about how they began on the road to competitive superstardom and their achievements. Which was the dog they rate as their 'best,' what they look for in gundogs, nutrition and their breeding blueprint — it's all covered in the Red Mills Interview!

Readers' favourite Billy Lewis sets you down and talks turkey about global warming, the old times and well....it wouldn't be



Country Chat without a surprise to two written in Billy's own special way. He says he wouldn't be bogged down in a 'small stock quagmire.' Let us know what you make of that one!

We also have classic writing from the late Michael Twist and visit the Auction World with Michael Drake in Art & Antiques, as well as paying a visit to see why Elite Guns in Newry is bang on target if you are into shooting sports or the latest airsoft craze.

On to other matters. Readers may have read my comments in the last edition about poaching on our rivers and I am delighted to say that, in the Republic of Ireland, law enforcement and punishment when appropriate is to the fore.

A case was heard in at Ballina District Court and the Judge convicted a Ballina man of illegal fishing. The man was found guilty of possession of a net at Cloonslaun on the River Moy on 9th June last year.

Judge Gibbons heard that Fishery Officer Eddie Doherty was on patrol with Officer Brian Flannery when he observed a person swimming in the water. The judge was told that when approached, the man escaped into a nearby field, while a second man ran off and was not found. The defendant was found hiding in a bush, wearing a wetsuit, and a buoyancy aid was also found nearby. The court heard that the man admitted to possession of the net in the river, which was retrieved, as well as a bag containing a second net on the bank.

The Judge heard from the defending solicitor, pleading for leniency, that poaching had been ongoing for years and had a minor impact on fish stocks compared to other factors such as seals, and that the defendant was of limited means. However, the judge rejected this argument.

After examining the nets seized, and observing that the defendant had worn a wetsuit to carry out the offence, he said that the defendant was well prepared and the poaching was obviously planned. The judge outlined the importance of protecting fish stocks, and convicted the man of illegal possession of a net, fining him €1,000 with €500 costs. Both nets were also ordered to be forfeited.

Commenting on the case, Inland Fisheries Ireland (IFI) commended the Fishery Officers involved by saying: "Protection of fish stocks is vital to maintaining an extremely valuable natural resource for the benefit of local and tourist anglers. Recreational angling in Ireland is worth over €750 million to the economy and supports over 10,000 jobs. IFI staff are committed to protecting that resource, working in difficult conditions and bad weather to do so, and their vigilance and dedication is highly valued."

IFI noted that environmental crime such as this is unacceptable. They said that they cannot stress enough to those who may be tempted to take fish illegally, including buying a wild salmon from a dubious source, that such activity is impacting jobs and the ability of rural areas to be sustainable and support communities. "IFI urgently needs the assistance of the public who can support fisheries staff, and their own communities, by reporting all instances of illegal fishing or pollution on the IFI confidential hotline number at 1890 347424."

It may well be that similar strong measures are taken elsewhere, but I have not seen it so clearly reported in Northern Ireland. I only hope it is happening here as well.

Finally - Instamold Custom hearing protection earplugs (my personal hearing protection of choice used all the season just ended) is my Personal Shooting Product of the Year. A superb fit, does what it says on the tin at a very reasonable price. What more would you possibly want. A great product - and yes - I did pay full price for mine!

Tight lines for the new angling season.

**Paul Pringle, Northern Editor**



# Country Sports and Country Life Rol Comment

As I write this, the hunting seasons are in full swing and due to a series of Atlantic storms the seasons for many have been a mixed bag, with more cancellations than desired. This has certainly been my experience and, on a number of occasions, the foot packs I like hunting with cancelled the day because of the adverse weather.

It's always irritating to hear the hunt's been called off, because it's such a big and important part of our lives. Some of us try to make up for the lost days by adding more days later in the season. Thus far I've been out on ten occasions. Normally, by this stage of the year, I would have enjoyed about 20 hunts.

However, the days I did get out were all really excellent and it was great to be amongst fellow enthusiasts enjoying healthy outdoor exercise. In this world of gadgets, computers and social media many of us are not getting as much healthy outdoor exercise as we should be, and our lives are imbalanced as a result. Hunting redresses the balance and we return to the workplace, to the world, after our weekends devoted to the chase, feeling physically tired, but happy and ready to tackle with full enthusiasm the demands of life.

I was recently chatting with Des Crofton, Director of the National Association of Regional Game Councils, and he told me about a couple of issues which are currently exercising the minds of shooting lovers. The big story was the news that the EU Commission is seeking to reopen the Weapons Directive and make amendments to the document. This development has arisen out of the terrorist atrocities in recent months, including the appalling, horrific massacre of innocents which a group of very evil men meted out on the citizens of Paris in November.

As with many of these knee-jerk responses, the issue is more complex than at first meets the eye and it could inconvenience the lives of law-abiding, decent citizens. FACE Europe has drafted a position paper in response to these new threats.

As it stands, the Weapons Directive permits the free movement of sportsmen with sporting firearms between countries, if they have a firearms passport. The Weapons Directive, as it currently stands, has nothing to do with terrorism. Indeed, none of the firearms used by terrorists are included in the EU Weapons Directive.

There is also a desire in the EU Commission to increase the legal age for owning a firearm to 18. At the moment in Ireland the legal age is 16. Again, we feel that this is creating a problem where no problem at present exists. It has the whiff of anti-shooting ideology, masquerading as concern for citizens' wellbeing.

The Commission wants to make firearms less accessible to terrorists and criminals, but this is not the way to go about it. The terrorists who perpetrated the Paris atrocity used illegal weapons, which were either smuggled in from active or past war zones, or were illegally



reconditioned from insufficiently decommissioned weapons. The Commission's proposal isn't concerning itself with either of these two types of weapons. Some fear that its implementation will lead to the growth of a Black Market, which in turn could play into terrorists' hands.

The threat of terrorism and rising crime levels has led many European citizens to purchase firearms for self-defence. Shotguns have been selling extremely well in Austria, and many of the purchasers are women. Shotgun sales have also risen significantly in the Czech Republic. In order to legally obtain firearms, gun owners in Europe are obliged to undergo a number of background checks and licensing procedures, and all firearms must be registered.

This is the second attempt by the EU Commission to tamper with the Weapons Directive. The first attempt occurred two years ago. It failed because it was predicated on a whole raft of wrong assumptions. For example, the Commission's proposals for change didn't meet the EU standards of public consultation. Now, they also want to ban guns which resemble semi-automatic guns. This is another murky, ill-thought-out concept because they have set out no criteria and we are not certain what they mean by the word 'resemble'.

Many shooting bodies see the merit in some of the Commission's current raft of proposals. For example, they want to introduce the proper deactivation of firearms. This is a sensible suggestion as terrorists at the moment can reactivate firearms which are inadequately decommissioned. The Commission also wants to ensure that all firearms are marked, which is another laudable idea.

However, many are opposed to the idea of limiting the magazine capacity of semi-automatic weapons. The Commission wants to reduce the magazine capacity to two rounds. However, the vast majority of semi-automatic owners are law-abiding, respectable citizens, not criminals. This is another ill-conceived proposal which will, if implemented, inconvenience the innocent and law-biding.

**Derek Fanning**  
ROI Editor



## Food NI Chief Executive Michele Shirlow Announces Strategic Partnership With Great Game Fairs of Ireland

**S**upporting the growth of rural communities across Northern Ireland by promoting local produce is a key objective of Food NI.

We are delighted, therefore, to be collaborating with Great Game Fairs of Ireland and Irish Country Sports and Country Life magazine. This will provide a significant opportunity to our growing membership of local food and drink producers to showcase the very best of Northern Ireland food and drink during the hugely successful Irish Game Fairs and in the magazine.

This important collaboration is in line with our strategic commitment to develop opportunities for our member companies to reach as wide an audience as possible with their award winning food and drink. As well as coverage in the popular magazine, the collaboration will enable Food NI and our members to take part in the Game Fair and thereby reach the many thousands of visitors it attracts.

### First Ever 'Year of Food And Drink'

The collaboration comes at a time when we are celebrating our fantastic products in the first ever Year of Food and Drink. It's immensely encouraging to see the Great Game Fairs of Ireland organisation engaging with the year-long promotional campaign which is designed to help accelerate the growth in tourism by showcasing our fantastic food and drink internationally, as well as to a local audience.

### Game Fair Boosts Tourism

The Game Fair attracts visitors from outside Northern Ireland and is playing its part in efforts to boost food and drink tourism here. The major marketing drive was launched at the start of the year by

Tourism Ireland and Tourism Northern Ireland here and in London and New York to increase visitor numbers and their spend on food and drink.

### Year of Food and Drink

The aim of Year of Food and Drink is to bring many thousands of visitors here to enjoy the many attractions, including events such as the Game Fair, community festivals and markets, and other superb locations to be found across the region.

Food and drink already generates £5 billion a year to the local economy, much of it going to rural communities, and employs 100,000 people throughout the 'farm to fork' supply chain.



The focus on this hugely important industry at events such as the Game Fair and in the Irish Countrysports and Country Life magazine, I am confident, will produce worthwhile economic benefits in Year of Food and Drink 2016 and well beyond.

### International standing

Great Game Fairs of Ireland Director Albert Titterington expressed his delight at the formation of yet another strategic partnership which, he said, would further



enhance the international standing of the fairs.

Albert said: "The Irish Game Fair at Shanes Castle can now claim to be the world's oldest game fair, a position once held by the now defunct CLA event in the UK. It is now widely recognised as Ireland's premier country sports event, a position which has resulted through a continuing process of improvement and development. This new Strategic Partnership will help to further underpin our process of continuous improvement and consolidate our leading position."

### Fine Food at the Fair

Albert said: "We are constantly trying to find ways to make sure that the Shanes Castle event has something for everyone to enjoy, and have been building up the Fine Food Festival facet of the fair. In fact, we feel certain that there will be nothing similar in NI with such a selection of fine food to make your mouth water.

"We are looking forward immensely to working closely with Food NI to further enhance this very important part of our event."

**The Irish Game Fair & Fine Food Festival, Shanes Castle, 25th & 26th June 2016**

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## CAI Meet NI Environment Minister to Discuss Snares

Countryside Alliance Ireland (CAI) together with the British Association for Shooting and Conservation (BASC) met with NI Environment Minister Mark H Durkan on 19 January at Stormont.

The meeting follows the Minister's controversial decision not to introduce the draft Snares (Northern Ireland) Order to the NI Assembly in the latter part of 2015 and both CAI and BASC NI were keen to reiterate the need for the use of snares in the countryside and to urge the Minister to reconsider.

Having been fully involved together with other stakeholders and the Department Officials for a number of years in drawing up the guidelines in advance of the draft Order, we are keen that a common sense approach is adopted and the Order is progressed.



Meeting with Environment Minister - Robert Crofts, Ashley Graham CAI, Mark H Durkan (Environment Minister) & Tommy Mayne BASCNI

At the meeting the Minister was briefed on the importance and effectiveness of snares, which are a valuable countryside management tool, used by farmers, gamekeepers and land managers to prevent predation by foxes. Those opposed to the use of snares, have publicly stated that snares cause horrific injuries to thousands of animals each year in Northern Ireland. However no evidence has been produced to support such a claim. Robert Crofts, a professional gamekeeper was in attendance at the meeting and he gave an insightful first-hand practical perspective on the use of snares.

The Minister has given assurance that he will fully consider the information presented and made available to him but it is unlikely the Order will be introduced to the Assembly prior to the May elections. We shall keep you updated.

## NI Firearms Licence Increases

PSNI FEB has asked us to inform our members about the increase to the existing fees which comes into effect from 22 February 2016. This will minimise inconvenience to those who inadvertently submit applications with the incorrect fee, causing applications to be rejected and returned. It will also reduce the administrative burden on FEB in rejecting such applications.

To clarify — further grants for certificates expiring on or after 22 February will be required to pay the new fee. Therefore, there is no benefit to be had by certificate holders submitting 'early re-grants' — the fee due will be based on the expiry date of the current FAC. In respect of other applications (grants/variations) the fee due will be based on date of receipt of the application at FEB ie prior to 22 February £50/£26 and after 22 February £98/30. To view the new fees table visit the PSNI website.

## Sunnyland Beagles Celebrate Centenary

Autumn 2015 saw the Centenary of the founding of the Sunnyland Beagles by Major G. A. Burgoyne of the Royal Irish Rifles, who was recuperating from war injuries at the Sunnylands Camp near Carrickfergus in autumn 1915 and,



SBHC Masters at Centenary Dinner

# COUNTRYSIDE ALLIANCE IRELAND

Love the countryside



Major G A Burgoyne

as a keen hunting man, recognised the benefits of fitness and field craft presented by following a pack of hounds.

In 1916, Burgoyne returned to the Western Front and his hounds were sold, the bulk of the pack transferring to Hollywood where they were hunted by firstly William Grainger, and later his nephew Terence. Despite having to disband at the outbreak of the Second World War, Terence Grainger reformed the pack in the late 1950s, using descendants of his original hounds. The pack, kennelled back in County Antrim since 1992, continues hunting to the present day and has enjoyed remarkable continuity, having had only a total of 9 Masters through its 100 years, of whom 4 Joint Masters are currently in office.



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*Sunnyland Beagles wreath laying group.*

The hunt marked its important anniversary in two ways. A celebratory dinner, held in October, enabled many former and present members of the hunt club, together with guests from other packs, to remember happy days across the seasons and to toast the future of the pack.

Then on 11th November, in a more contemplative atmosphere, a poppy wreath was laid at the County Antrim War Memorial (the Knockagh Monument) to remember Major Burgoyne and those men of the Royal Irish Rifles who had hunted with the Sunnylands Hounds in their first season.

From this Memorial the panoramic view encompasses 5 out of the 6 sites at which the Sunnyland hounds have been kennelled through their 100 year history.

## Sad Passing of Billy Vance

The Fermanagh Harriers' senior master, Billy Vance, of Scarva House, Clones, passed away peacefully on Saturday 16th January, aged 84. He was one of the best known and most deeply respected country sportsmen in Ireland and the huge turnout of fellow huntsmen, farmers, friends and neighbours at his funeral service bore witness to the great affection in which he was held.

Billy was huntsman and master to the Fermanagh Harriers for over 50 seasons and was hunting right up until his death on his brilliant mount, Sonnet, who he bred 24 years ago. Billy was also a well-respected point to point rider who rode in excess of 20 winners in the 1970's. He has had some significant racing successes, both in riding and training and the family have had some special horses over the years.

Countryside Alliance Ireland would like to extend sympathy to his wife Maeve, children Johnny, Andrew, Susan and Clare and to the wider family circle, and feel privileged that we were able to know Billy.

## The Importance of Point to Pointing in Ireland

With the Spring season of the point to points now fully underway, it's time to get out there and enjoy some local racing. For any uninitiated people, point to points are horse races held by hunts in their local vicinity. They are usually run over 3 miles and incorporate fences. Whereas before many hunt members rode, it has now become substantially more professional with both the talent of riders and horses improving every decade.

The racing is usually highly competitive, with these races being used by the majority of registered trainers in Ireland to introduce young horses to racing life and to provide older horses and local trainers with a valid chance to compete. This makes the day's fun very entertaining for spectators, professionals and beginners alike.

Volunteers and hunt members predominately run these meetings and in this way a unique atmosphere is acquired and the whole community becomes involved. Not many sports are predominately volunteer run, produce such community spirit and still showcase remarkable talent.

In addition to the social advantages, point-to-pointing provides a substantial injection into the economy and are vital for the breeding and

hunts throughout the country. From this we again go back to the absolute need to protect Ireland's country sports.

Countryside Alliance Ireland can only ask our members, and all country sport enthusiasts, to remain proactive in the rally against the threats that are constantly facing our rural way of life, in order to ensure we have them to enjoy for future generations and many, many years to come. Enjoying an afternoon's racing at a local point to point is definitely one of the pleasant ways of supporting Ireland's country sports.

## RARE BIRD VISITS BANGOR

**Look what arrived in the Editor's garden in January and is still here in Early February - a Turtle Dove!**

The turtle dove, one of the latest migrants, rarely appears in Northern Europe before the end of April, returning south again in September. According to the experts, it's a bird of open rather than dense woodlands and frequently feeds on the ground. It will occasionally nest in large gardens, but is usually extremely timid, probably due to the heavy hunting pressure it faces during migration. The flight is often described as arrowy, but is not remarkably swift.

It certainly has the upper hand as far as feeding is concerned as it chases off collard doves and even wood pigeons to get at the seeds from our feeders.

It's mainly a bird of southern and eastern England, although it does reach as far as Wales, arriving in late April and May, leaving again between July and September. If you are in that part of the world it's best looked for in woodland edges, hedgerows and open land with scattered bushes.

The species is now included on the Red List of conservation concern.



*The Turtle Dove (centre) chases off a collard dove to get at the birdseed*

training aspects of Irish racing. Many horses that start their racing life at point to points graduate to the highest echelons of National Hunt, both in Ireland and GB. Out of the last 13 Cheltenham Gold Cup winners, 9 have emerged from Irish point to points. This is a tremendous record and adds strength to the fact that point to point horses are important in terms of the continuing worldwide reputation of Irish horses.

For these reasons and many more, it is imperative that we nurture this sport. This involves looking after the people who run the point to points; the individual



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Every vehicle marketed by Subaru UK Ltd, excluding with STi, is covered by a 5 Year/100,000 mile whichever comes sooner! Limited Warranty which comprises of a standard 3 Year / 40,000 mile (whichever is lesser) Manufacturer's Warranty (bumper to bumper, excluding clutch, driver's seat and an Extended Warranty applies for powertrain only) provided by the importer. OTR price includes VAT, delivery, number plates, 12 months road fund licence and first registration fee. Vehicles shown are an XV 2.0i SE Lineartronic with a superior specification including 17-inch aluminium alloy wheels and optional special paint finish OTR price of £25,995.00. A Forester 2.0D XE Premium with optional special paint finish OTR price of £27,995.00. Without special paint finish £27,495.00. And an Outback 2.0D SE, manufacturer's OTR price £28,495.00 with optional special paint finish. Without special paint finish £27,995.00. EyeSight® and X-Mode are only available in All-New Subaru Outback Lineartronic models. Finance options available at participating dealers, subject to status.

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†Price shown is an Isuzu D-Max Fury Double Cab £19,999 CVOTR with manual transmission available only in Magma Red. Automatic transmission also available at £20,999 CVOTR. Commercial Vehicle OTR price includes delivery, number plates, 12 months road fund licence and first registration fee, excludes VAT. \*3.5 tonne towing capacity applies to all 4x4 models. \*\*5 year/125,000 miles (whichever comes first) warranty applies to all new Isuzu D-Max models.



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## New Bass Angling Regulations Aim To Improve Bass Stocks

**T**he Agriculture and Fisheries Council, one of the configurations of the Council of the European Union, recently agreed the proposed Council Regulation 559 (with some amendments). The adopted final version will be published in the Official Journal of the European Union in the coming days.

The regulation sets out fishing opportunities and fish quotas for EU fishing fleets, and also sets out new rules for recreational bass fishing throughout northern Europe, including Ireland. Implementation of this regulation will require new legislation in Ireland.

In the interim period, pending legislation, Inland Fisheries Ireland (IFI) is requesting anglers to recognise the need for conservation and to fish according to the regulations that are expected to be introduced shortly i.e. to fish on a catch-and-release basis up to and including June 30th, 2016.

A one fish bag limit will apply from July 1 to December 31. It is envisaged that the introduction of new legislation for Ireland will incorporate elements of the National Bass Policy and will be introduced in advance of the close season for bass angling.

The new EU regulation on bass fishing was introduced as an emergency measure to address declining bass stocks, as scientific advice indicates that stocks in northern Europe are in a perilous state.

Dr Ciaran Byrne, CEO of IFI stated "Bass is a valuable and important sport angling species which has been managed as an angling species since 1990. It is a valuable resource, contributing €71 million to the Irish economy annually and supporting over 1,200 jobs. The new measures here and restrictions on commercial fishing outside Irish waters will help improve bass stocks and ensure they continue to provide quality angling for local and tourist anglers alike into the future, sustaining and growing the important economic and social benefits."

While there is no commercial fishing for bass in Ireland, commercial fishing elsewhere has been severely curtailed, particularly on spawning stocks, which should help Irish stocks. New measures for recreational angling are also being imposed on an international level.

Inland Fisheries Ireland (IFI) has a confidential hotline number to enable members of the general public to report incidents - 1890 34 74 24 or 1890 FISH 24. This phone line is designed to encourage the reporting of incidents of illegal fishing, water pollution and invasive species.

For more information, visit [www.fisheriesireland.ie](http://www.fisheriesireland.ie).

## Durkan announces ambitious plans to improve our local rivers and lakes

**M**inister Durkan has announced ambitious plans to improve our local rivers and lakes.

He also announced the first programme of measures from his Marine Strategy for Northern Irish waters to ensure that our marine waters progress towards good environmental status by 2020.

The Minister launched the second set of River Basin Management Plans for Northern Ireland and hopes to secure significant improvements to our water bodies so that up to 70% will meet the European Commission's standards for good ecological status by 2021, which would make us among the best in Europe.

### Measures in the plans include:

- planned multi-million pound investment by NI Water in sewage infrastructure to increase capacity and effectiveness of waste water treatment in NI;
- the multi-million pound agricultural Environmental Farming Scheme to improve water quality and the wider environment;
- a new Nitrates Action Programme with training and support from CAFRE for farmers to help reduce diffuse pollution from agricultural sources;
- the development of Catchment Improvement Projects in partnership with stakeholders and local communities.

Mark H Durkan said: "River Basin Planning is about taking an integrated approach to the protection, improvement and sustainable use of the water environment, from source to sea. We all depend on our water environment, whether it is the source of our drinking water, or for agricultural or business purposes, for recreational use or to attract tourists. These plans aim to provide a clean and healthy water environment and will help us to achieve better water quality, less pollution and more fish in our rivers. This will deliver considerable benefits for everyone."

Referring to action on our marine waters Mark H Durkan continued: "I am pleased to announce our first programme of measures to protect and ensure the sustainable use of our marine area. It includes measures to protect marine life and habitats, deliver improved water quality while addressing the problem of marine litter and noise. The programme marks the development of an integrated, cross-departmental approach to managing our marine area which has been a major step forward over the last five years."

## Four new Marine Conservation Zones for consultation announced

**E**nvironment Minister Mark H Durkan today announced four new Marine Conservation Zones (MCZs) for consultation.

MCZs are proposed for Rathlin, Waterfoot, Outer Belfast Lough and Carlingford Lough.

In calling on the public to voice their views on protecting our marine environment, Mark H Durkan said: "Marine Conservation Zones conserve the diversity of rare and threatened habitats and species in our waters. Designating Marine Conservation Zones will be an important step towards protecting and enhancing the biodiversity of our seas, helping protect important marine habitats and species."

"As well as protecting nationally important marine wildlife, the Zones will also protect geological features in these waters. We all have a stake in preserving and protecting our marine environment for future generations so I urge people to let us know their views on these proposed sites and species."

The habitats and species proposed to be protected at each site include:

- Rathlin – Deep-sea bed, Black guillemot and Geological/geomorphological features (Submerged lagoons and Sea arches).
- Waterfoot – Subtidal (sublittoral) sand with subtidal seagrass beds (*Zostera marina*).
- Outer Belfast Lough – Ocean quahog (*Arctica islandica*) and associated habitat Subtidal (sublittoral) sand.

associated habitat Subtidal (sublittoral) sand.

• Carlingford Lough – Subtidal (sublittoral) mud containing sea-pen and white sea slug.

Rebecca Hunter, Northern Ireland Marine Task Force Officer, said: "Northern Ireland is home to some of Europe's most unique and vital marine wildlife; we believe that Marine Conservation Zones provide a real opportunity for the recovery of our valuable seas."

"In January and February we will be visiting communities across Northern Ireland to engage with schools, community groups, businesses and political audiences on the proposed MCZ's and how we believe they will help protect the natural resources of our seas for a richer future for all."

"We hope MCZs will have the support not just of nature and wildlife lovers from across Northern Ireland but from every citizen who values all that our seas provide; we would encourage all interested parties to support our campaign and respond to the Department's consultation."

The Minister concluded: "I would like to thank the Northern Ireland Marine Task Force for supporting the proposals. This is an excellent opportunity to raise awareness and appreciation for our important marine environment."

The consultation will be open until 11 March 2016 and can be accessed at: <https://www.doeni.gov.uk/consultations/marine-conservation-zones-consultation>





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Official fuel consumption for the all-new Volvo XC90 in MPG (l/100km) ranges from: Urban 23.8 (9.8) - 45.6 (6.2), Extra Urban 40.4 (7.9) - 52.3 (5.4), Combined 35.3 (8.0) - 134.5 (2.1). CO<sub>2</sub> Emissions 186 - 49g/km. MPG figures are obtained from laboratory testing intended for comparisons between vehicles and may not reflect real driving results.



## Schools, Clubs, Charities Benefit — €5 Million Raised At The Dogs in 2015

**T**here was excitement all-round as it was announced that €5,000,000 was raised at Irish Greyhound Board stadia in 2015 for charitable organisations such as schools, clubs, healthcare charities & community projects.

The money was raised through Fundraising / Benefit Nights hosted at the venues in conjunction with race nights. Fundraising or Benefit Nights are a familiar scene at Irish Greyhound Stadia and thousands of charitable organisations have benefitted from them over the years. Among the events in 2015 were:

- A fundraiser in Kingdom Greyhound Stadium, Tralee, which raised €75,000 to help a Co. Kerry man return home from hospital after an accident.
- A Dubs at the Dogs event in Shelbourne Park which raised funds for the All Ireland Football Champions, Dublin, to enjoy a team holiday, and brought both fans and players together in a night of celebration.

Colin Walsh, Director of Commercial Operations at the IGB said: "The concept is a tried and tested one which has proven to be of great value for schools, clubs and charitable organisations in need a financial boost. Locally, our staff have many years of experience in organising and supporting these events, with many now much-anticipated annual occasions.



*Huge success - IGB raise €5,000,000 for charity*

"Aside from donating to the fundraising efforts, supporters of fundraising events at their local Greyhound

Stadium get to enjoy a night out with family

and friends. It's also a great way to reward teams and volunteers for their hard work."

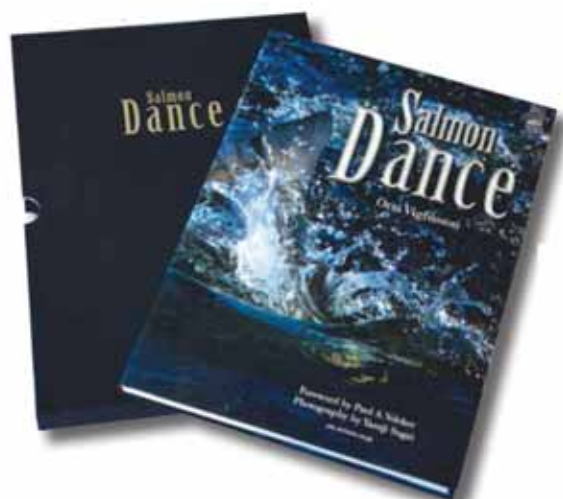
For more information on fundraising opportunities visit [www.gogreyhoundracing.ie](http://www.gogreyhoundracing.ie).

## Salmon Dance

A new title in support of North Atlantic Salmon Fund  
*22% of sale proceeds will go directly to NASF*

*Salmon Dance* is an artistic interpretation celebrating the life of the Atlantic salmon, its conservation and the culture of fly fishing. This stunning new book showcases the remarkable photographic skill of Yasuji Sugai whose dramatic imagery illustrates a series of personal essays by a select group of life-long angling enthusiasts.

It expounds the role that art and aesthetics play in the very act of fishing for the 'King of Fish', whilst helping to raise awareness of the species's struggle for survival.



"A visionary book which portrays the artistic allure of the Atlantic salmon and why we must help save it."

**Orri Vigfússon**

Orri Vigfússon, editor and chairman of North Atlantic Salmon Fund (NASF), hopes that this visionary book will inspire readers to continue to help save salmon stocks from further decline by supporting commercial netting agreements, and encourage anglers to return all their catches safely.

In his engaging forward, the eminent American economist, Paul A Volcker, also stresses the need to support and enhance the work of the NASF in order to help protect the Atlantic salmon, now and for future generations.

Other contributors include Øystein Aas, Roy Arris, Vladimir Rybalchenko, Gísli Sigurðsson, Þór Sigfússon and Gylfi Pálsson.

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## NI Handlers Take Two of Top Three Places at the KC English Springer Spaniel Championship 2016

**T**he 86th KC Springer Spaniel Championship was held on Thursday 21st Friday 22nd & Saturday 23rd January 2016 at Stowell Park Estate, Gloucestershire, by kind permission of Lord and Lady Vestey.

Judges for the event were Will Clulee, Tim Crothers, Jeremy Organ and Jeff Rayner. Reserve Judge was Wesley Thomas.

Fifty-seven English Springer Spaniels had qualified to compete in the Championship and Northern Ireland handlers took two of the top three places in what is considered by many enthusiasts to be the annual Blue Ribband event for Springers.

The Northern Ireland duo were Louis Rice, who took top honours in what has been a superbly successful year for him with Int FTCh Sliabh Treasure, while third place went to Damian Kelly handling Ms Maria Gallagher's FTCh Lisgarvagh Verde. Many congratulations to you both and to all the handlers for making it such a very exciting championship this year.

A full list of the results of this top event is given below.

### Results

Winner: Int FTCh Sliabh Treasure - Owner/Handler: Louis Rice  
 2nd: FTCh Dawsonlee Domino - Owner/Handler: Richard Wells  
 3rd: FTCh Lisgarvagh Verde - Owner: Maria Gallagher / Handler: Damien Kelly  
 4th: Pitrahh Dirty Angel - Owner/Handler: Richard Wells

### Diploma's of Merit

Surefly Sassy - Owner/Handler: Terri Siwek  
 FTCh Broomfield Annie - Owner/Handler: Eddie Scott  
 FTCh Rheastmoor Fizzy - Owner/Handler: Jon Bailey  
 Moonreed Amethyst - Owner/Handler: Mark Light  
 FTCh Springervill Rosie Girl - Owner/Handler: Chris Thurston-Woolnough  
 Int FTCh Hollydrive Sally - Owner/Handler: Handler: Mick Walsh  
 FTCh Rothievale Larch - Owner/Handler: Jim Adamson  
 FTCh Churchview Chimes - Owner/Handler: Jon Bailey  
 FTCh Helmsway Heath - Owner/Handler: Andrew Bennett



Louis Rice

FTCh Balmuir Skylark - Owner/Handler: Michael Huitson  
 Bucklawren Krusoe - Owner/Handler: Simon Jones  
 FTCh Kilhopemoss Mafioso - Owner/Handler: Mark Whitehouse  
 FTCh Kilhopemoss Minder - Owner/Handler: Andrew Cunningham (Guns' Choice)  
 FTCh Bucklawren Brodie - Owner/Handler: Simon Jones  
 FTCh Buccleuch Honey - Owner/Handler: Duke of Buccleuch

Bryngwrhyd Bruno - Owner/Handler: D Dugay (Best Newcomer)  
 FTCh Biteabout Conquest of Wrenmarsh - Owner/Handler: Mark Watson  
 FTCh Marshwood Rhona of Carkees - Owner/Handler: Margaret Cox  
 FTCh Bishwell Black Magic of Breckmarsh - Owner/Handler: Lee Cooper  
 Edwardiana Minstral of Halwin Ryston - Owner/Handler: Mike Hoskins  
 FTCh Murrayeden Apollo of Nederscot - Owner/Handler: Eric & Jane Smith

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## Record catch for thriving UK fishing firm

**A** British-made range of fishing seat boxes and accessories is enjoying a bumper catch of new customers after investment in new and updated product lines.

Established in 1988, the Octoplus brand is well respected in the angling fraternity for the quality and durability of its Made in Britain products. Beginning with a fishing seat box designed and developed by keen fisherman Mel Wilde, Octoplus now has several seat boxes to suit all budgets, plus accessories including a huge range of tackle organiser boxes. The final four months of 2015 saw Octoplus enjoy its highest ever sales. September saw sales for the Lancashire-based company 10% higher than any previous month while figure for October were up by 26% year on year. The trend continued into November and December, with increased sales reflecting the Christmas gift market.

Helping drive the growth has been a popular new range of Octoplus Infinity bank seat boxes, made from a new virtually indestructible plastic and offering great value for money to anglers on a budget. The range includes a bank seat box with extending legs, a multi-use seat box with carry strap and a strong and versatile carryall toolbox with removable insert tray.

The new Bank Seat Box with extending legs has an RRP of just £79.99, making it an appealing option to anglers at all levels. And in terms of quality, there is nothing cheap about it. The main body of the box is made from a super-tough newly developed material which is virtually indestructible, even in cold temperatures. With a close fitting snap-shut lid, the box has been strength tested to 400kg. Available in an attractive Mocha colour, the 62-litre box is big enough to hold enough tackle and bait for a full day's fishing, with room to spare. It measures 58cm long by 39cm wide and 38cm deep.

Inside, buyers will find the heavy duty carrying strap with shoulder pad and extending legs - simply attach the strap and insert the legs into the



*The new Octoplus Bank Seat Box combines hardwearing practicality with great value for money.*

pre-fitted brackets and you're ready to go. All four legs are easily adjustable, making it a doddle to set up the Octoplus Bank Seat Box level on uneven ground.

Lesley Henderson from Octoplus explains: "Because Octoplus products are designed, developed and manufactured here in the UK we can also provide a fast service to our network of retailers and online customers. With new products constantly being developed we're looking forward to continued growth in 2016."

For more about Octoplus products, including where to find your local stockist, visit: [www.octoplus.co.uk](http://www.octoplus.co.uk)

## Inland Fisheries Ireland launches public consultation on National Strategy for Angling Development

**Joe McHugh TD, Minister with responsibility for Natural Resources, has launched the public consultation on the National Strategy for Angling Development (NSAD).**

The NSAD, prepared by Inland Fisheries Ireland (IFI), is the first comprehensive national framework for the development of our angling resource. It is intended that the strategy will deliver a wide-ranging set of investments, innovations and promotions over the coming years. This will ensure that our fish stocks and angling infrastructure are protected and enhanced for both their economic value and their recreational benefit to the communities and visitors they serve across Ireland.

Minister McHugh said: "This Strategy is necessary and timely to protect our wonderful inland fisheries and sea angling resources in their own right but also to safeguard and grow further the 11,350 jobs supported and €836 million contributed annually to Ireland's economy by recreational angling."

Dr Ciaran Byrne, CEO of Inland Fisheries Ireland, thanked all those who took part in the initial consultation process and noted: "The inputs from stakeholders have been invaluable to Inland Fisheries Ireland in the preparation of the National Strategy for Angling Development. We look forward to working with all of our stakeholders in progressing the strategy."

### Inland Fisheries Ireland has prepared:

- A Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) Environmental Screening Report of the likely significant effects on the environment of implementing the Strategy, in accordance with Directive 2001/42/EC of the European Parliament and Council of 27 June 2001 on the assessment of the effects of certain plans and programmes on the environment as transposed into Irish law by the European Communities (Environmental Assessment of Certain Plans and Programmes) Regulations 2004 as amended; and
- A Habitats Directive Screening Statement for Appropriate Assessment (AA), pursuant to Article 6 of Council Directive 92/43/EEC of 21 May 1992 on the conservation of natural habitats and of wild fauna and flora as transposed into Irish law by the European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations 2011.

The National Strategy for Angling Development, screening reports and supporting documents are available for viewing and download from [www.fisheriesireland.ie/NSAD](http://www.fisheriesireland.ie/NSAD); at IFI, 3044 Lake Drive, Citywest Business Campus, Dublin 24, D24 Y265; or at IFI offices countrywide; please see [www.fisheriesireland.ie](http://www.fisheriesireland.ie) for addresses and maps.

## Salmon Conservation Fund – Request for Applications 2016

**Inland Fisheries Ireland (IFI) is now inviting applications for suitable qualifying salmon conservation projects under the Salmon Conservation Fund. The deadline for receipt of completed applications is Thursday, 31st March 2016.**

Qualifying projects include: fish passage improvement; spawning enhancement; instream structures; river bank protection; fencing;

riparian zone improvement; removal and control of exotic invasives; feasibility studies (which lead to future projects under the above headings to a maximum of 50% funding or €2,000 whichever is less); and screening for appropriate assessments.

Further details can be obtained on the IFI website at: <http://www.fisheriesireland.ie/Salmon-Management/salmon-conservation-fund-application.html>.





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## Busy start for Active Clubs Officer, Angling, Gary Lavery

**A**ngling NI is the body set-up to support **A**game, coarse and sea anglers in Northern Ireland. Its aims and programmes are to increase the number of anglers fishing for fun and to help support angling clubs.

Here, Gary Lavery outlines his first nine months as Active Clubs Officer Angling

I began my new role as Active Clubs Officer Angling in March 2015 and I have thoroughly enjoyed my experience and the people I have met working in angling. The following is a review of the areas I have worked on during the first 9 months of my new post with Angling in NI.

Over the past 9 months I have been involved with and attended various meetings with the governing bodies of Angling in NI which has included; Ulster Angling Federation, National Coarse Fishing Federation for Ireland, and the Irish Federation of Sea Anglers. I have met with various personnel in the governing bodies and attended their monthly meetings as and when it has been required.

I have attended meetings with the key stakeholders for Angling in NI and these have included; Sport NI, DCAL, Loughs Agency, the Angling Trust and the British Disabled Angling Association. I attend meetings of the NI Angling Forum which has key stakeholders from the governing bodies of angling and representatives from angling bodies which include; Sport NI, DCAL, Loughs Agency, Tourism NI, and Waterways Ireland. The development of several new "community angling hubs" at locations in NI is an area that I have been heavily involved in during 2015 and this will continue in 2016, with further planned meetings with local authorities and stakeholders responsible on their progress.

I have met with numerous Angling Clubs and local authorities in NI and their officers during my initial 9 months in post and I will continue to do so in 2016. There are currently 80 Angling Clubs in NI with 3 new Angling Clubs in formation and the feedback I have received from those Angling Clubs has been very positive and constructive as my new role in the development of Angling in NI progresses.



### [www.anglingni.com](http://www.anglingni.com)

The development of a new website for Angling in NI was a project that I have been involved in during 2015. The new website allows new customers to the sport of angling access information on wherever their nearest club is located and how to get in contact with them. The website has been designed to be a "one stop shop" for angling clubs both current and new, with information and documentation that they can access for their clubs use. The website also provides guidance on; Safeguarding, Coaching and Club Development. The website went live in October 2015 and the number of users to the site from October to December 2015 has been 925 with over 2812 page views. The website will have additional developments during 2016 which will include; a new online booking process for coaching and training workshops.

### 2nd NI Angling Conference 2015

The 2nd Northern Ireland Angling Conference was organised by myself with support from the NI National Angling Forum stakeholders. The conference theme for 2015 was focused on club development in NI. Robbie Marshall, the UAF Development Officer was also involved in pulling together the programme for the conference and a great support on the day along with Madeline Kelly Director of the Ulster Angling Federation.

### Strategic Review of Angling in Northern Ireland

The strategic Review of Angling in Northern Ireland published in February 2014 highlighted thirty-three recommendations that could help to progress the development of angling,

through the provision of better governance, improved facilities and increased awareness and participation.

One of these was to hold an annual angling conference which was held at the Craigavon Civic Centre and over 82 delegates from 21 different angling clubs including 2 newly formed clubs; MUVE Angling Club and Rectory Angling Club were involved in the event. The programme was split into two sections: the morning consisted of four speakers Odhran Doherty, Disability Sport NI, Mike Duddy, Salford Friendly Anglers Association, Denise Hayward Volunteer Now and Mark Tierney, Loughmacrory and Murrin's District Angling Association. In the afternoon the conference consisted of three optional workshop sessions and they included: Club Mark and Club Leaders – Alan Curran, Accessing Funding for Your Club – Mike McClure, Safeguarding and Your Club Members – Paul Stephenson. The conference was opened by Seamus Connor from DCAL Inland Fisheries group and closed by Kevin Wilson from Loughs Agency.

### Safeguarding

The development of "Safeguarding" and safeguarding procedures in Angling has been one of the key areas that I have been involved in since I started the post of Active Clubs Officer. The process which is now in place since November 2015 allows all angling clubs to have free Access NI "enhanced" applications processed and completed using Angling NI for volunteers working with young people and vulnerable adults in the sport.

Since the new process for Access NI applications went live in November 2015 there have been over 30 applications received and completed to Angling NI from various clubs and their officers in NI. Ongoing development in this area will be completed in 2016 for clubs which will include safeguarding training and workshops.

### Coach Education

The growth of coach education in Angling is a key area of the sport that I have been focusing on during my initial 9 months and the development of workshops for new and existing coaches to the sport. There is a massive need for new qualified angling coaches as identified in the Strategic Angling Review 2014 into the sport and the development of Level 1, Level 2 and Coach Educators training courses has been a key focus. In 2016 there will be more new coaches qualified to allow more new users enjoy the sport and become new club members. Currently across all 3 angling governing bodies in NI there are: 58 Level 1/Level 2 Coaches and 4 Coach Educators. In 2016 my aim is to grow this figure to have another 30 Level 1/Level 2 Coaches.

### Angling Events

I have been engaged in or involved in the development of new opportunities in Angling during 2015 with various angling clubs and bodies involved in angling. These have included "Coaching Days" "Open Days" and events were new and existing users have had the opportunity to "Try Fishing". One such event



Catching 'em young.



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SUNDAY 1st & MONDAY 2nd MAY 2016

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**TUESDAY 5th APRIL 2016**

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was the annual Irish Game Fair and Fine Food Festival at Shanes Castle in Antrim in June 2015 were over 400 people had the opportunity to give angling a go for the first time. (A huge number of young people came to Shanes Castle to try their hand at angling and quite literally 'got hooked' on this marvellous pastime. Editor)

## My goals for Angling in 2016

- Further development of the [www.anglingni.com](http://www.anglingni.com) website to allow users to book coach education courses online and the addition of new coach education courses and club resources for clubs to access.
- Introduction of new Level 1 and Level 2 coaching courses for new coaches in Angling.
- A new "Schools Angling Programme" to encourage new young people into the sport with links to their local angling club.
- The development of new angling clubs and further support and engagement to existing angling clubs in NI.
- Ongoing Safeguarding awareness and the process for vetting volunteers via Access NI and Angling NI.

For more information [gary@anglingni.com](mailto:gary@anglingni.com) or visit [www.anglingni.com](http://www.anglingni.com)



Angling is for everyone

## Inland Fisheries Ireland launches report on fish monitoring programme

**Inland Fisheries Ireland (IFI) has launched a summary report on the findings of fish stock surveys undertaken in all water bodies (lakes, rivers and transitional waters) during 2014. The report, 'Sampling Fish for the Water Framework Directive', also outlines the current ecological status of fish stocks in each water body.**

IFI has been assigned the responsibility by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to deliver the fish monitoring requirements of the Water Framework Directive (WFD). The fundamental objectives of the WFD are to protect and maintain the status of waters that are already of good or high quality, to prevent any further deterioration, and to restore all waters that are impaired so that they achieve at least a good ecological status.

The fish monitoring programme has been conducted annually since 2007 at specified locations. The second year of the third three-year cycle began in 2014 with an extensive surveillance monitoring programme; 70 river sites, 26 lakes and seven transitional water bodies were surveyed throughout the country.

Dr Cathal Gallagher, Head of Research and Development in Inland Fisheries Ireland, said: "I would like to congratulate all who have contributed to the significant level of work which was undertaken in 2014. This work provides information on the ecological status of fish species present in selected waterbodies as well as information on their abundance, growth and population demographics for fishery managers,

legislators, angling clubs, fishery owners and other interested parties."

### 2014 Report Findings

During 2014, 26 lakes were surveyed with 19 fish species and two types of hybrids identified. A total of 12,205 fish were recorded. Eel was the most common fish species recorded (96 per cent of lakes surveyed) followed by brown trout (81 per cent), perch (65 per cent), roach (42 per cent) and pike (38 per cent).

In general, salmon, brown trout, sea trout and Arctic char were the dominant species in the north, west and south-west of the country. Perch were recorded for the first time in a lake in Donegal. This introduction was illegal and the source is unknown; further investigation will be undertaken by IFI.

Experimental hydro acoustic surveys were carried out on Loughs Caragh, Allen, Melvin, Beagh and Leane to complement the routine surveys. Initial results show that Lough Allen has a large population of pelagic fish, dominated by pollan and juvenile perch; Lough Leane continues to sustain a good population of Killarney shad; Lough Beagh has a healthy Arctic char population; and Loughs Melvin and Caragh continue to sustain small Arctic char populations.

According to the report, 62 per cent of lakes were classified as 'good' or better status, with three sites having improved in status since they were last classified. The geographical variation in ecological status

reflects the change in fish communities of upland lakes with little human disturbance versus the fish communities of lowland lakes subject to more intensive anthropogenic pressures.

A total of 14 fish species and one type of hybrid (roach x bream) were recorded in 70 river sites (or 50 water bodies) during 2014. A total of 13,480 fish were counted. Brown trout was the most common fish species recorded (96 per cent of sites), followed by salmon (77 per cent), eel (56 per cent), stone loach (50 per cent), minnow (39 per cent), and three-spined stickleback (39 per cent). Sixty per cent of river sites were classified as 'good' or better status, with two sites having improved in status since they were last classified.

A total of 50 fish species (or 40,362 individual fish) were recorded across two transitional waters (seven transitional water bodies). The highest number of species recorded in a water body was 29, in the Lower Shannon Estuary. Flounder and sand goby were the most widespread species, while sprat was the most abundant. Some important angling species documented during these surveys included brown trout, European sea bass, salmon, sea trout, pollack and conger eel. Overall both waters achieved 'good' status.

The report is available for review and download at [wfdfish.ie/wpcontent/uploads/2010/05/WFD\\_Report\\_2014\\_FINAL.pdf](http://wfdfish.ie/wpcontent/uploads/2010/05/WFD_Report_2014_FINAL.pdf). An interactive fish survey map is available at [ifigis.ie/wfdfishmap](http://ifigis.ie/wfdfishmap).



# Obituary

## William James (Jim) Edgar



*Jim receiving his trophy for the 'Best Shot in County Down' from Minister of Home Affairs, Bill Craig.*

The death occurred on the 7th January of William James (Jim) Edgar at his home in Comber, Co Down. Jim was well known in the country sports world as a wildfowler, punt gunner and marksman.

He grew up on the family farm on the shores of Strangford and he went straight from school to working on the farm growing vegetables for the local markets. This was not only a job to him, but a real interest and he won many competitions for his vegetables at several shows and was in demand as a judge at others.

Living on the shores of the lough provided him with exceptional opportunities for punt gunning, particularly in the 1950s and 60s when wigeon were plentiful and often offered him, not only one, but sometimes two shots per outing. When recounting tales of those days, he often remarked that today's wildfowlers would never have the opportunity to see the great numbers of ducks that he had seen in

his lifetime.

Also in the 50s and 60s, he was a member of the Ulster Special Constabulary and was very successful in various shooting competitions winning a large number of trophies.

On leaving his home he always requested you to do him a favour — to 'keep her between the hedges.'

Jim was very well liked in the local and sporting communities and his funeral on Monday 11th January 2016 was very well attended.

It was a privilege to have known Jim and I extend my sincere condolences to his immediate family, friends and wider family circle.

**Richard Edgar**



*Jim punt gunning on Strangford Lough in 1969.*





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# Great Hunting In Tipperary And Kilkenny Between The Winter Storms



*I find that once I'm into the swing of things I look forward with keenness to each Saturday or Sunday's hunt and if it's cancelled feel a sense of frustration, like a child who's been denied his favourite sweets in a sweet shop!*

## *The Ballydine Beagles.*

Despite the gales of the past months, I still managed to get out several times during the stormy season for some fantastic days with the Ballydine Beagles and the Rockview Foot Harriers. The Ballydines were reformed in 1976 and hunt in the Cashel region of Tipperary. Their huntsman is Cormac Browne who is maintaining the high standards set by his predecessors Matt and John Wade.

On a Saturday in mid-November, our day began high on the slopes of Ring Hill in the Slieve Felim hills between Thurles and Cashel. We walked a short distance up the hill and into a pasture field and within a minute the pack of ten couple were latched onto scent and speaking in that special music which is one of the pleasures of hunting with beagles. For the next six hours they hardly ceased speaking.

Hares are thankfully abundant in this part of the Slieve Felims, a situation which is sadly not replicated in other parts of the county which were once known for having hares. Overhunting and irresponsible people have taken their toll on the hare population (in Tipperary at least) and I was told the forestry plantations are now a refuge

for them. On Ring Hill there are great swathes of forestry plantation and the hares led the hounds on an endless merry-go-round through the trees.

## ***Hunting in the old tramping ground of the outlaw Eamon an Chnoic***

Above us stood several giant wind turbines and beyond there were fine views of the Slieve Felims. It was a beautiful, clear day and in the distance we could see Slievenamon. Beside Ring Hill is Knockalough which contains a lovely three hour looped walk, if you are ever in the region and are looking for a walk. The hills we were hunting through were once the tramping ground of the outlaw Eamon an Chnoic, who was a sort of Irish Robin Hood. Edmond O'Ryan, or Eamon an Chnoic or Ned of the Hills, was a member of a small group of rapparees who perpetually caused problems for the English settlers, and favoured the cause of the poor and the dispossessed locals. We have no way of knowing how much of the stories about them are true or folklore, but there are many marvellous tales about him, representing a dramatic tapestry which would make an excellent film.

As we enjoyed a very fine hunt through the plantations and slopes there wasn't a cloud in the sky and we could see many miles to the south of our position, including the fine view of Slievenamon, which is an impressive hill and which gets its name from Irish mythology. According to the story, Fionn mac Cumhaill was desired by many young women, but he said he would accept only one lover. The matter was decided by a footrace to the top of the mountain. Standing on the cairn on the mountain's top Fionn gave the signal for the race to begin, which was won by Gráinne.

Reflecting on heroes like Eamon an Chnoic or Fionn mac Cumhaill can inspire us to act with nobility and decency in our own lives. Hunting is also strongly associated with both men. Eamon had to hunt in order to survive, and Fionn and his band of warriors spent a great deal of their lives devoted to the chase.

## ***Days of great fun, excitement and camaraderie***

A couple of weeks later, after another beagling cancellation caused by yet another winter Atlantic storm, I



joined the Ballydines in low-lying pasture land near Cashel. This was a super day with a lot of running over five hours. In the distance were superb views of the Galtee Mountains and a lovely view of the Rock of Cashel. We were in a place called Deerpark which is quite popular with local hunters. Sure enough we came across a small group of people who were also hunting hares with hounds, and a mounted drag pack with a field of about 25 horses. As always this made me reminisce fondly about my 20 years of mounted hunting, days of great fun, excitement and camaraderie. After breaking my arm and shoulder in a fall from a horse a couple of years ago, I decided to give up mounted hunting. I miss it, but the foot hunting is a good substitute and doesn't possess the same danger quotient.

In mid-December I joined the Ballydines at a bog and plantation near



*Cormac Brown (left) and the Ballydine Beagles near Cashel.*

a crossroads several miles from the nearest village or town. The crossroads is a very quiet place with just a couple of houses and a pub. One of the whips, Don, told me that 40 or 50 years ago a

pub here used to be filled with 100 to 200 people who enjoyed dancing late into the night, following a day's hunting with the Ballydine Beagles. The number of followers of the hunt at the time might have been 20 to 30, but many more non-hunters turned up for the revelries in the evening. The Ballydines are a considerably more low-key affair nowadays.

Yet again, Cormac's beagles were excellent in that they found scent soon after the Ballydine Crossroads hunt started and rarely stopped speaking until evening. We progressed through a plantation after the fourth hare of the day and out onto a picturesque bog bathed and coloured beautifully by the afternoon sunshine. As we traversed the bog we regularly sank up to our knees in the soft ground, our boots filling with water. Sometimes we lost our balance in the very soft, uneven ground and fell over. When I said goodbye to the others the pack was making lovely music in a large deciduous wood.

In mid-January, I got out with the Rockview Foot Harriers, a great pack in Kilkenny, with whom I hunted nearly every weekend last season. They are led by Rory Dicker, a fine huntsman who once hunted mounted packs including the Laois Foxhounds and the Golden Vales before resorting to shank's mare.



*Rory Dicker, Huntsman of the Rockview Foot Harriers.*





*The Foot harriers hunting in South Kilkenny.*

### ***This is really good hunting country***

The Rockview start early and we met at 10 o'clock at a pub called Ennisnag pub which is located in a picturesque spot several miles south of Kilkenny City. From here we drove to our hunting area, known locally as Tinker's Hill, near the hamlet of Hugginstown in South Kilkenny. This is really good hunting country, often gently undulating pastureland, but sometimes becoming surprisingly hilly and providing a good workout.

As we walked the hounds to the first cover, we discussed the decrease in popularity of beagling in Ireland and the significant rise in popularity of Foot Harrier packs. Whilst it's great to see more people out with foot harrier packs, it's sad to witness this decline in beagling's popularity, a sport which can provide huge enjoyment. Hopefully the rot will come to a halt and things will begin to look up again.

There were ten people out with the Rockview, all the same regulars as last year. They remembered my name but to my shame I had forgotten some of

theirs. When this happens to me I fall silent and listen, hoping that eventually someone will say the person's name that I don't know!

Rory had 11 couple out, a handsome looking pack, consisting mostly of foxhounds, but with a few harriers and a couple of large beagles. He drew a large swathe of conifer, densely planted forestry and soon the woodland was alive with the sound of hound-music and hounds having a super time tearing through the trees in pursuit of Rénard. We couldn't follow as the terrain was too unforgiving, and therefore stood outside the plantation, listening. Sometimes, a few hounds would emerge into the field where we stood, scent the ground eagerly and after a short while head back into the trees.

After an hour or so, Rory blew the hounds away and took them to another cover nearby. Here they found again, and now we were able to follow for a while rather than simply standing, watching and listening. We jogged over the very wet ground, scrambled over stone walls and vaulted over wire fences. Someone said there were four foxes in the cover. I

saw one of them, a fine-looking creature, who came to within ten paces of me before noticing my presence and taking an alternative route. Rénard got the upper hand and escaped capture and at five o'clock we called it a day.

The next morning, I rallied myself and set off to the hamlet of Rossmore near Holycross, not far from Thurles. Here I met Cormoc Browne and the Ballydines once again. We hunted the same territory as a few weeks previously, on the slopes of Ring Hill, and the weather was beautiful with fabulous views of the snow-covered Galty Mountains and Slievenamon. The beagles performed splendidly as usual and we hunted a couple of hares. Then the pack took us on a long demanding route across the steep countryside, following what was probably a fox. After three hours we were all very tired and decided we had had enough.

As I drove home that evening, I reflected on what had been an excellent weekend, providing me with a sense of satisfaction and enjoyment, a feeling which will be familiar to all those who love following hounds.



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3rd Mrs Coulter's Irish Setter Ir Sh Ch  
LURGAVON RINGLEADER

4. Mr S Loughlin's Welsh Springer Spaniel Ir  
Sh Ch Int Sh Ch WALDHEIM DRAIG COCH



## NI GUNDOG of the YEAR



1st Mrs Brennan's Cocker Spaniel  
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2nd McClarnon's Irish Setter GWENDARRIF  
NUTS ABOUT GLEN AVNA

3rd Reynolds Clumber Spaniel WYCLYDOS  
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Tim has won the IKC Spaniel Championships twice; 3rd twice and 4th three times; 2nd in the British Championship twice and many diplomas; and has been a member of the CLA team and won Top Spaniel many times.

Damian has won the IKC Retriever Championship twice, won and been placed in trials with cockers and springers and has been a member of the winning CLA team

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**From Derek Laverty:** "My 3 month old Jack Russell Marnie – she certainly puts life into an old dog like me."

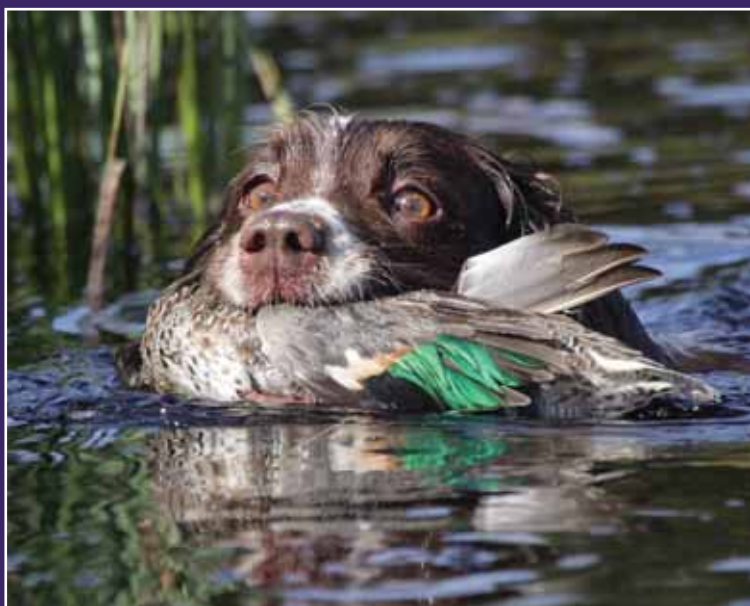


**From Andrew Rooney:** A man who loves his Labradors and runs them in tests and trials.

**From Andrea Cowan:** "Rex - I failed as a first time foster, but I failed in the best way ever. I fell in love with this huge hairy slobbery black lab."

He hadn't had a good life, locked in a pen, massively overweight, and perhaps the hardest thing to grasp was that he didn't know his own name, he hadn't been talked to in such a long time that he had forgotten what his name was!!!

This boy is now a huge part of our family and the standing rule is that when you open the door and he's there you must shout "incoming," which lets everyone know that a black tornado is on its way. Thank you Gundog Rescue and Rehoming for bringing him into our lives."



**From Robert Marshall:** "My girl Hannah taken a year before she was taken with cancer. The picture was taken and given to me by my friend Greg Knight."







**From Susan McCann:** : "Photos of Bella. This little dog has surpassed and exceeded everything we ever expected in her life so far being that she is still only two and a half years old. We did not set out on this journey for Bella to race, it was something that happened by chance. However it is a great honour that she has done so well and we couldn't be more proud of her. Bella won All Ireland Racing Champion 2015; Whippet Qualifier for Five Nations; Sporting Whippet NI Racing Champion 2015; and N.I.C.F Whippet Racing Champion 2015."



**From David Campbell:** "Photograph of Max my Spinone Italiano in training. Slow to mature but those working them other countries swear that there is no better HPR."



**From Leeroy McCullough:** I've attached some pictures off Tizer my whippet. He's won the 5 nations whippet show.

Won overall pup racing champion at sporting whippet club; Won overall pup champion at Dessie Mackin's show. Also winning pup race that day; Won working whippet show then went on to win overall whippet at Dessie's friday night show.

Won overall whippet at Tullylish show; won pup race at Tom Barry's show; won pup race at Shannagh show; won hand slip race at Drumbo show; won overall in show at Drumbo (which was his qualifier for 5 Nations); won pup race at Combined Clubs Show.

Won pup race at Michael Quinn's charity show. He's now working away for me. Great dog for in and out of cover during the day and taken to the lamp like duck to water. He's had 2 rabbits during the day now and 43 on the lamp. This is his first season and I am very happy with what he has achieved in racing, showing and working. Great wee all rounder!"



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I always recommend your dog food when talking to other dog owners and can't speak highly enough about it. Such a high quality dog feed and a really reasonable price.

So thank you very much for a great food (if I hadn't found it I would have had to consider giving up my lovely Archie). Keep up the good work and I will continue to sing your praises."



# IRISH KENNEL CLUB RETRIEVER CHAMPIONSHIP 2015

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## ***Mr Jimmy Black Wins Irish Kennel Club Retriever Championship In Glenarm***

After 30 years of competing at the highest level and making up six Field Trial Champions this hugely popular competitor finally won his most coveted and elusive prize.

He came close on a few previous occasions and remarkably in the year when he decided to retire from serious competition, Jimmy and his Black Labrador Dog F.T.Ch Abhaile Taite Bui, claimed the highest prize of all by winning "The Irish Kennel Club Championship for Retrievers".

The 2015 IKC Retriever Championship was held in Glenarm Estate, Co. Antrim on the 29th and 30th December 2015 by kind invitation of Mr John Cunningham, who in his welcoming address wished everyone good luck and hoped we would have a very enjoyable two days sport.

Once again the main sponsor for our annual event is Connolly's Red Mills ENGAGE premium dog food. We are deeply indebted to them for their

generous and continued support. Not only do Connolly's Red Mills sponsor the IKC Retriever Championship but they sponsor many Field Trials and Working Tests for retriever clubs throughout the country. Red Mills premium dog foods are widely used by successful handlers and as has been the case in previous years, the winner of this year's IKC Championship along with the majority of the prize-winners and competitors feed Red Mills.

Mr Tommy Murphy from Wexford has been involved in retriever field trials for over 30 years, he is also Secretary of Wexford Retriever Club.

He qualified and competed several times in the Championships. This was Tommy's third time to judge.

Mr Harry Gillanders from Monaghan was judging the Championships for the first time.

Harry has made up three dogs to FTCh status and served on the Championship Committee for several years. He qualified several times for the Championships and was awarded a Diploma of honour on two occasions.

Mr Mark Bettinson from Wales was also judging the IKC Retriever Championship for the first time, Mark has judged the British Championship



*The Judges this year for the IKC Retriever Championship fell to this very experienced team:*



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(IGL) twice. He has made up four champions and has been an A panel judge for the past 25 years.

Mrs Jane Coley from England got her first lab pup 33 years ago and since then has made up nine champions and bred several others. She also judged the IGL in 2011.

Like Mark and Harry this was Jayne's first time to judge the IKC Retriever Championships.

Throughout the year 37 dogs qualified to run in this year's IKC Retriever Championship with 33 going to post. The line-up comprised of 32 Labradors and 1 Golden Retriever, 26 Dogs and only 7 Bitches. Very bad weather was forecast with Storm Eva threatening to spoil proceedings. Although the storm raged at night both days were excellent and we couldn't have hoped for better weather for both man and dog.

### **1st Day**

On the first morning competitors made their way in convoy for the very short journey from the headquarters to the beautiful grounds of Glenarm Estate. After collecting their armbands, from our Chief Stewart Mr Paul Mc Guirk, the competitors gathered for the official photo shoot beside the Red Mills Engage Premium Dog food banners.

In her introduction Lady Waterford welcomed everyone to the Championships, she wished all the competitors the very best of luck. She introduced Mr John Cunningham who in turn introduced his team of guns. He

reminded them of the **"Guns Choice"**. **This Prize is kindly sponsored by Mr Albert Titterington "Irish Country Sports and Country Life"** and is selected by the guns. The Judges Stewarts Mr Noel Doran and Mr Thomas Brady then outlined the running order for the day.

The drives for the IKC Championship had been arranged in advance between the head keeper Mr Barry Kelly and members of the committee. Barry was very amenable to all of our requests and to say that he went above and beyond would be a gross understatement.

To emphasise this, the 1st drive was set up especially for the Championships. This drive had never been done on the estate before. Here we were treated to a spectacular drive of pheasants and the guns were in top form. The retrieves were from a mixture of white grass and ferns. The majority of dogs excelled and a very high standard was set from the start.

Mark and Tommy were on the left hand side of the hill with the odd numbers while Jayne and Harry operated on the right hand side with the even numbers.

After some delightful work and testing retrieves the judges decided to move to the next drive with 31 dogs making it through from the first drive. At this point the picking up team moved in to sweep the area for any remaining birds which were unused by the judges.

At the 2nd drive, which is called the "Water Falls", the birds again flew

superbly and it seemed that the flush of pheasants would never end. The handlers on the right hand side, in particular, were very glad when the horn blew for the end of the drive. The judges decided it was time to stretch the retrieves and the spectators were treated to some brilliant dog work. Such was the volume of birds shot at this drive there was no need to shoot anymore and the first day finished here. There was some excellent dog work throughout the day which was befitting the IKC Championships. The following dogs and handlers were still very much in contention. Jim Carnegie with Rosenailis Enzo, John Williamson with Gortons Gaelic Prince, Peter Colville with Skerryview Elisha at Annaloughan, Paul O'Brien with Lurriga Cedar of Corrib, Jimmy Black with FTCh Abhaile Taite Bui, Liam Dolan with Celtic Wild Cat, John Barr Jnr with FTCh Willowmount Regal Rose, Declan Boyle with Int FTCh Millar Mc Duff, Nigel Carville with Int. FTCh Apollobay Apocalypse of Astraglen, Tony Rodgers with FTCh Autumn Willow Kaiser, Gary McCutcheon with Camgart Tomo, John Barr Snr with FTCh Derryad Moss and Tadgh Kelly with FTCh Carrick View Holly.

When we returned to the shooting lodge everyone, guns, competitors, judges and spectators alike were treated to a bowl of hot stew, followed by dessert with tea and fresh mince pies to finish, courtesy of Mr John Cunningham and his staff.



*Competitors and spectators gather on the first day*









Day 2 competitors with Bill Connolly from the sponsors Red Mills.

## 2nd Day of the Championships with 13 dogs left

After a very stormy night day two began wet and windy but it quickly cleared up and remained bright and dry for the remainder of the day. Thirteen dogs made it through to the 2nd day. At this stage the Chairman reminded the guns that they had “a job to do” in selecting the dog who would receive the **Irish Country Sports and Country Life magazine’s Guns Choice Trophy which is presented to the handler of their chosen dog and is sponsored by Mr Albert Titterington.**

The 1st drive produced some fine pheasants and a few ducks. All dogs were successful here and we moved off to the 2nd drive of the day which is called “The High Hollow”. Mr Barry Kelly the Head keeper had promised that this drive would produce a lot of birds, and should enable the judges to set up some challenging retrieves. This was indeed the case and the spectators had great viewing. Initially the dogs were sent for birds that had fallen into dense rushes and long grass with the judges being very specific, at all times, as to which bird they wanted. The judges stayed apart for a further two rounds of retrieving. Good casting, crisp control and good game finding ability would be the key to progressing further. Unfortunately we lost a few dogs that having failed to reach the mark picked birds from outside the given area. At this stage it was a very close competition with no one dog having an obvious advantage.

The remaining dogs continued to perform excellently and in fact their work improved as the competition

progressed. Mr Jimmy Black’s Lab dog FTCh Abhaile Taite Bui was putting together a very fine run as was Mr Tony Rodgers Lab dog Autumnwillow Kaiser and Mr John Williamson with the only golden retriever in the competition Gortons Gaelic Prince were doing all that was asked of them. Mr Peter Colville and Mr Liam Dolan who were competing in their first Championship were having a dream run and both were very nicely poised.

Others who were still in contention after round five were Mr Paul O Brien,

Mr Declan Boyle, Mr John Barr Jnr and Mr John Barr Snr.

The judges came together for the final two rounds of the competition. They continued to set up very challenging retrieves which were executed superbly. Unfortunately another few dogs were lost, who despite having completed their retrieves, the judges deemed their work to be below par and were subsequently dropped.

On completion of round seven the judges conferred and with just five dogs left they concluded that they had seen enough and the 2015 Championships were now over. After the customary handshakes between judges and competitors and sighs of relief at having crossed the finish line everyone made their way back to the shooting lodge where the presentation would take place. As usual there was much speculation among the gallery as to the placings but it was clear to all that this was a close contest.

Once again the entire gathering were treated to the same excellent fare as the previous evening. It must be said again that the hospitality which was bestowed

on us by our host Mr John Cunningham was incredible.

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the presentation of prizes and congratulated those that had finished the competition. He paid tribute to Mr John Cunningham and all involved with the shoot in Glenarm Estate and thanked them for their help during the months leading up to the IKC Championships and for their hospitality over the past two days. A presentation was made by Lady Waterford to Mr Cunningham. At this point he announced the winner of the “Guns Choice” prize. The recipient of the “Irish Countrysports and Country Life” Perpetual Trophy this year was Mr Tony Rodgers with FTCh Autumnwillow Kaiser. Mr Cunningham said that he would like very much to take this dog home and congratulated all the prize winners.

The Chairman thanked the head keeper Mr Barry Kelly and spoke of how he and his team of beaters and game keepers had contributed to the success of the Championships.

Mr Kelly was asked to come forward and a presentation was made to him on behalf of the committee. He also thanked the catering staff for putting on such wonderful and welcoming food at the conclusion of both days and invited Annie to come forward. Amid huge applause Lady Waterford presented her with a gift.

The Chairman spoke of how indebted we all are to Connollys Red Mills for their continued support of our sport. In particular their support of our Championships which cannot be over emphasised and he urged everyone to



support Red Mills by using their products. In his address Mr Bill Connolly said how much he enjoyed the Championships and congratulated those who had finished in the awards. He also remarked on how it was so nice to meet and chat with so many of his customers. He congratulated Mr. Cunningham and all in Glenarm for putting on such a wonderful display for the Championships. Mr Connolly was

then presented with a gift on behalf of the committee.

The Chairman expressed sincere thanks to everyone who volunteered and helped out in any way, the judges stewards, markers, number boards stewards, game carriers, photographer, reporters etc. and said how much an event like this depends so much on the backstage help. He also thanked Eddie Moore and Johnny Rea who are part of

the picking up team on the estate and who were so central to the planning, staging and success of the Championships.

He finished by thanking the Championship Committee and in particular Mr Declan Boyle Secretary, Lady Waterford, Treasurer and the entire committee for their hard work, support and co-operation throughout the year.



Bill Connolly from sponsors Red Mills presents winner Jimmy Black with the Red Mills Trophy.



Host John Cunningham presents the runner up Tony Rodgers with the Irish Countrysports and Country Life Trophy for the 'Guns Choice'.



Lady Waterford presents John Barr (Snr) with his trophy for third place.



Bill Connolly from sponsors Red Mills presents John Barr (Jnr) with his prize for fourth place.



**The following are the results of the 2015 Irish Kennel Club Championships for retrievers:**

- 1st Mr Jimmy Black's F.T.Ch  
Labrador dog "Abhaile Taite Bui"  
2nd Mr Tony Rodgers's F.T.Ch  
Labrador dog "Autumn Willow Kaiser"  
3rd Mr John Barr's (Snr)  
Labrador dog F.T.Ch. "Derryad Moss"  
4th Mr John Barr's (Jnr) Labrador  
Bitch F.T.Ch. "Willowmount Regal  
Rose"

5th Mr. Declan Boyle's Labrador  
Dog Int. F.T.Ch "Millar Mc Duff"

**Special awards went to:**

The Fred McGuirk Perpetual Cup for the highest placed bitch was awarded to Mr John Barr (Jnr)

The Sam Jennet Raughlin Perpetual Trophy for the breeder of the winner of the Irish Retriever Championship was awarded to Mr Jimmy Black on behalf of the breeder Mr Michael Martin

The Ballyfrema Perpetual Cup for the breeder of the highest placed Irish Bred dog/bitch in the IKC Championship was awarded to Mr Jimmy Black on behalf of the breeder Mr Michael Martin

The Irish Country Sports & Country Life Perpetual Trophy for Guns Choice was awarded to Mr Tony Rodgers

Trophy to be kept by the Winner and a cheque for £50 was sponsored by Irish Countrysports and Country Life magazine.



*l-r The prizewinners - John Barr (Jnr) 4th; Bill Connolly (Red Mills); Jimmy Black (winner); Tony Rodgers (2nd); John Barr (Snr) 3rd; Declan Boyle (5th); Hesd keep Barry Kelly and Jim Ferguson (Red Mills).*

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# The Nigel Carville Red Mills Interview

In this issue Nigel interviews John & Sandra Halstead

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*Sandra and John with four of their Champions.*

**Q: Can I take you right back to the start and ask you what was your first breed of dog and when and how you acquired it?**

A: John: I mainly had Lurchers until I got my first lab, that was in the early sixties. I bought it from a wildfowler at eight weeks old, it was called Ribblesdale Randy.

Sandra: I had dogs from a very early age, can't remember which was my first I think it may have been a West Highland White, then a Samoyed, then a Rough Collie, these were all before I was married.

**Q: When did you purchase your first Trial Dog?**

A: We didn't buy our first Trial dog, we bred it.

**Q: What was their breeding and names?**

A: The Sire was CH Sandylands Tandy. Dam Ribblesdale Randy, my wildfowling bitch.

**Q: What is your prefix and why did you choose it?**

A: DRAKESHEAD: - I was interested in wildfowling so I chose a combination of my sport and part of my surname DRAKE -- HEAD.

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

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

A: John: it was the Three Ridings Labrador Retriever Clubs Novice Stake,

1968 and I came second.

Sandra: it was the Yorkshire Retriever Clubs Novice Stake, 1969 I was placed third.

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

A: John Snr: It was with Drakeshead Reanacre Shanie, the Trial was in Sugar Beet, Pheasant and Hares were shot. It was the Three Ridings Novice at Wykeham on 14th Oct 1969

Sandra: I think it was with Westead Tan of Drakeshead, on 24th Oct 1975 Yorkshire Retriever Club. (This was Shot's litter sister they both made FT Champions and Shot won the Championship in 1979.

**Q: How many trials have you won?**





*A very rare occurrence - two Championship winners in the kennel at the same time FTCh Breeze (black) & FTCh Pete.*

A: This is a question neither of us can answer, we have NEVER counted, it will all be in the Stud Books from 1968 to 2015 inclusive.

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

A: John Snr: Initially 22, but some of these will be made up time and time again, like Breeze who won the Championship three times in succession, also Sandra ran some of these dogs after me and again won qualifying Trials.

Sandra: Initially 9, but like John some of these went on to win again and again.

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

A: John Snr: Many people would say Drummer, but because Breeze came along when Drummer was still young and I like to run young dogs, if they are good enough (and Breeze was) so Drummer's career was cut short. Both dogs ran in the Championship at Stratfield Saye in 1984, both got placed, Drummer was a FT CH, so who do I run next year? It is down in the History Books.

Breeze of Drakeshead won the Championship in 1985; 1986; 1987; he retired undefeated before his 6th

birthday.

Sandra: How do I follow that? I have had some wonderful dogs over the years, but I think one of the best (and there are several) has to be Gillie. FT CH Levenghyl Silver Cloud of Drakeshead, she ran in four Championships with me and was placed in three. She was a joy to run, always tried her best. In her only litter with me, she produced several winning dogs and bitches, we have two dogs from her one is FT CH Vodka the other FT Winner Vince.

**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: John Snr: I have watched and learned from many handlers in the past (we are always learning) but they like myself are has beens, if you want to progress learn from the current talent, the game is always moving on, you must keep up with what is required from both you and your dog.

Two Trainers who are always ahead of the game at this moment in time are Ian Openshaw and John Halstead Jnr. I have known and trained with Ian for many years and I can tell you his knowledge is second to none. John H

Jnr qualified 5 dogs for this year's Championship 2015, this has never been done before, he then went on to win it. Top Field Trial handlers from all over this country and Europe go to him for tuition, if you want to learn, learn from the best.

Sandra: I agree with the above.

**Q: Other than your own dogs which Retrievers have you seen that you would rate as some of the best you have seen or judged? What impressed you about these dogs?**

A: John Snr & Sandra: in our opinion FT CH Ulster Style was the complete dog. He was by far the most consistent dog of his era. He was awarded three seconds in the Championship, how unlucky can that be.

**Q: What do you look for when judging a dog?**

A: Natural Game finding ability, drive and style, responsive on the whistle and only requiring the minimal of help from the handler.

**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: John Snr & Sandra: The game has moved on and you must produce the type of dog that the Judges require, e.g. when we started it was 80% ability of the dog 20% ability of the handler. Now dogs are trained to perfection over very great distances. They are the same dogs just trained for a more specific purpose. In many trials dogs are not allowed to show their natural hunting ability to work an area out for themselves, so we now think that the roles have changed to 80% ability of the handler and 20% ability of the dog. Also in past years there wasn't a price on every bird's head, dogs who reached the run off may get 9 or possibly 10 retrieves in a one day trial. If you make the slightest slip you are gone, and sometimes the best dog is lost through something very minor, you do not get as many opportunities to show your dog's worth.

**Q: How important is nutrition in conditioning your dogs for trials?**



### What food do you use and why?

A: The most important time for the dog is when it is growing; it needs the best of foods up to about 15 months. What and how it is fed then depends on the type of dog and the work it is doing. I would not feed a hyper dog on a high protein high energy food (that is not to say feed it rubbish), it needs a good quality well-balanced diet. But you do need to control their weight. We never weigh our dogs but we monitor their weight by looks. We find that if they are doing lots of training or picking up we need to boost them, once the main working season is over they need to be cut back.

We always feed our dogs twice a day, their first feed is a mug full of Skinners Salmon and Rice. This is the meal that we can adjust easily; if they are looking a little slim we give them extra, if too fat we give them half a mug. The second meal is an uncooked chicken carcass. They have a full one each every day when they have finished work (after this meal you must not run them out or work them, let them rest and digest it).

Skinners Dog Foods is an excellent firm; they put a lot back into working dogs and we feel that if a firm supports your sport you should support the firm, their food and service is excellent.

**Q: As well as handlers 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: John Snr & Sandra: First and foremost both the Sire and Dam have to be quality, they also have to have had the health screening tests that we require. We then research the background breeding, we are looking for lines that are constantly producing game finders with plenty of drive and style,



*John out shooting with Breeze after winning the Championship for the third time.*

also looks are very important to us.

Since we started breeding we have always used the BVA. KC. Schemes, we think these schemes have a sliding scale of importance. We do the DNA tests for GPRA and CNM. Then, between 12 and 15 months old, all our dogs are tested for hips and elbows. All our young dogs have the annual eye test, unfortunately this test only states that the vet can or cannot detect any defect at this moment, it also does not tell you if the dog or bitch carries the condition.

**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? (b) Your biggest disappointments?**

A: John Snr: Obviously the highlight of my career in dogs was when I was presented with the winner's Trophy by Her Majesty the Queen after

winning my third consecutive Championship with Field Trial Champion Breeze of Drakeshead.

Sandra: When you run dogs you have many highlights, even a working Test or a Novice stake is so good when you go up to collect a trophy and all your hard work has paid off. My top highlight has to be when I won the Championship with Field Trial Champion Westead Shot of Drakeshead.

One disappointment we both agree on, is that we no longer have the energy to compete at top level with our dogs.

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

A: John Snr and Sandra: First natural game finding ability, then trainability, it is all down to teamwork, the dog must be 100% responsive to the whistle and instructions.





*FTCh Shot Retrieving to Sandra in the 1979 Retriever Championship which he won.*

**Q: Do you prefer handling dogs or bitches?**

A: John Snr: I have trained and handled both sexes I have no preference, except that a bitch comes into season twice a year this is a disadvantage. I always say a bitch is in season twice a year, a dog is in season all the time.

Sandra: I also have trained and handled both sexes and have no preference, you can get an injection to stop the bitch coming into season during the shooting season, I did this with Gillie and it was fine.

**Q: Have you trained any other breeds?**

A: John Snr: I have trained and professionally handled in Field Trials Labradors, Flatcoats, Golden Retrievers and Spaniels. Also in my profession as a trainer I trained Pointers, G.S.P. Guard Dogs, and every type shape and size for obedience.

Sandra: Had many dogs as pets or show dogs, but only trained Labradors for competition.

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

A: The Labrador is without question the most successful of the retriever

breeds. I also like spaniels to shoot over; I have trialled both breeds but found it difficult to put enough time to doing both successfully. I would say that I prefer the Labrador as a trial dog and as a picking up dog.

**Q: On what grounds do you train and what do you like about them?**

A: I pick up on a pheasant duck and partridge shoot on the edge of a grouse moor. I like this type of picking up because even when a bird is wounded and comes down at a great distance, as it is mainly hills and valleys, the handler can see where the bird lands and with a very good trained dog he will be successful in retrieving the bird.

**Q: What is your favourite Trial ground and why?**

A: When I was younger I preferred natural moorland and heather, but now I would have to say sugar beet or fodder beet - I have to leave the moorland to the younger handlers.

**Q: What sort of quarry do prefer trialling on?**

A: Grouse, partridge rabbit, pheasant, duck in that order.

**Q: What are your current roles within the Drakeshead team?**

A: I like to bring young dog on train them, then take them on to finishing school, (picking up). Then Sandra puts

the final polish on the ones she intends to trial.

**Q: Name your current team of stars – which ones are at stud?**

A: All our dogs are at stud; our current stars are Vodka, Thunder, Vince, Bosco, Alfie and Adell our bitch.

**Q: What are your ambitions for the future?**

A: Hopefully we shall continue training young dogs and occasionally breeding the odd litter. Sandra will still be trying to qualify for the Championship if she feels up to it.

**Q: What really is the formula used for the Drakeshead success?**

A: A really selective breeding programme, we like to bring all our dogs on from puppies. If a dog is not good enough it has to go, and we always say all your winning is done at home. By this we mean that the amount of groundwork you put in at home directly relates to the awards you win in the future.

**Q: When not judging, training or breeding what do you like to do outside of country sports.**

A: We don't go on holiday, sometimes it's nice to just stay at home. I would say maintaining the garden, the lakes, the woods, but I do really enjoy days shooting.



**Q: Can you list your FT Champions please?**

A: This is a list of the dogs and some have been made into champions twice and three times over. Quite a few have been handled by us as well.

**Q. Anything you would like to add?**

Over the last 50 years dogs have dictated our lifestyle. Our friends from home and abroad are mostly dog people.

I cannot think of many sports where male and female, young and old, can compete on an equal footing, providing they put the training and time into the sport. We think everyone should put something back into their sport, we have done this by sitting on committees, Judging, giving seminars and demonstrations. We also have two DVDs on the market, The Drakeshead way (basic) and The Drakeshead Way (Advanced)

To contact Drakeshead: See our web site at [www.drakeshead.co.uk](http://www.drakeshead.co.uk)

## **Below is a list of the dogs we have made up to Field Trial Champion**

**Some of these dogs have been made into  
Champions twice and three times over.**

**Quite a few of the dogs have been handled by both of us.**

### **List 1**

#### **1996 to 1991**

FT.CH. Drakeshead Swift  
FT.CH. Westead Shot of Drakeshead  
FT.CH. Westead Tan of Drakeshead  
FT.CH. Drakeshead Tinker  
FT.CH. Drakeshead Anna  
FT.CH. Glencoinn Drummer of Drakeshead  
FT.CH. Brenjon Dirk of Drakeshead  
FT.CH. Drakeshead Luke  
FT.CH. Drakeshead Lace  
FT.CH. Breeze of Drakeshead  
FT.CH. Haretor Mark of Drakeshead  
FT.CH. Haretor Shadow of Drakeshead  
FT.CH. Inka of Drakeshead  
FT.CH. Glencoin Dean of Drakeshead  
FT.CH. Raughlin Pete of Drakeshead  
FT.CH. Spioncop Rum of Drakeshead

### **List 2**

#### **1991 to 2015**

FT.CH. Middlegate Dexter of Drakeshead  
FT.CH. Staindrop Mint of Drakeshead  
FT.CH. Laughacasla Sam of Drakeshead  
FT.CH. Drakeshead Abba  
FT.CH. Drakeshead Garth  
FT.CH. Millbuiies Magnum of Drakeshead  
FT.CH. Drakeshead Treacle  
FT.CH. Broadlaw Elder of Laggengill  
FT.CH. Drakeshead Indiana  
FT.CH. Greenbriar Glencoe of Drakeshead  
FT.CH. Drakeshead Logo  
FT.CH. Greenbriar Viper of Drakeshead  
FT.CH. Levenghyl Silvercloud of  
Drakeshead  
FT.CH. Drakeshead Vodka  
FT.CH. Greenbriar Thunder at Drakeshead



*Sandra, John and son John out training.*



# In Pursuit of Excellence

*My question is this — what progress in quality has been made in gundogs?*

In the 1960s and 70s towards the end of the great post war period of manufacturing expansion, great change came through the enthusiasm of prominent management gurus for the inclusion of quality as well as productivity into our goods and services. The great light which originally shone from the East, became a penetrating laser which ensured that every process, however seemingly insignificant, became subject to a quality test. Today we have a Quality Institute operating to British Standards and Business and Services continually seek improvement whilst staying competitive. It is fair then to pose the question — what progress in quality has been made in Gundogs ?

At this three day Retriever Championship those dogs and handlers who have qualified will be tested in an environment “as nearly as possible to an ordinary day’s shooting” and a worthy Champion will emerge. Let us consider some of the vital elements which will be present in both the dogs and personnel which make this the thrilling spectacle that it is.

Most dogs will be superbly bred for the purpose. Over time we have become much more adept at reading pedigrees and understanding breeding lines. Technology also helps us to be aware of and understand the complex breeding which contributes to success. But we still have a parochial attitude to breeding and can be reluctant to admit failure. It would be to our credit if dogs have become more trainable, and less subject to some of the harsher treatment needed to correct errant behaviour, but this is not unfortunately universally true.

Genetics is often not well understood and perhaps we have much to learn

from other organisations. Guide Dogs for the Blind for example have developed a very successful breeding program over the last sixty years. Health factors are also now a big issue, which whilst we undoubtedly have more dogs, hence greater theoretical choice, those who are entirely healthy or ‘clean’ seem in short supply. Rules and Regulations, not guidance, need to be tightened up in this area if we are to achieve consistency. The original idea that we are producing better dogs for the “shooting person” also does not survive surgical scrutiny because needs have produced divergent end products.

Health and welfare are no longer subjects to which the serious trialler pays lip service. A quick examination of the car park at the Championship will reveal something more like Ascot or Cheltenham than the car boots and leaky trailers of yesteryear.

## ***Training of this type is no longer an optional extra***

Trial preparation has also become a big factor for those seeking quality performances. Trial days where training takes place under controlled conditions to replicate conditions expected in competition are now a business in themselves. Training of this type is no longer an optional extra — those who aspire to head the leaderboard put in endless hours of quality training of this type and undoubtedly put themselves in a position to benefit from it.

Overall then, our dogs are better equipped for the competition facing them, there are many more of them, and the overall standard is higher than it was 30-40 years ago. We have therefore, perhaps unwittingly, recognised the need for quality

improvement to achieve success.

One vital part of the qualitative process of our Championship will be the Judging. Producing a winner from the 50 plus entries, within the confines of available ground, whilst applying the rules of The Kennel Club Schedule J, is no easy task. An immense amount of time and effort is devoted to the maintenance and improvement of Schedule J, some of it driven by affiliated Societies, while applying good shooting common sense can supply many answers.

The appointment and selection of Panel Judges is always controversial, but it appears that only in recent years has any significant thought been given to improving the situation. There are still problems to overcome, because we can never forget that honesty of mind, together with moral and intellectual candour and subject knowledge are primary virtues desirable in Judges.

## ***The best grounds for selecting?***

The principle that a good handler by definition becomes a good Judge is now seen to be unsound. Parallels with other sports can be drawn with Soccer or Rugby Union being obvious examples. Outstanding players there may be, but do they have the personal characteristics of honesty and integrity, rule knowledge or organisational ability to run and judge an event, let alone referee one? Some proponents of progress suggest that unless a person is currently successfully running in trials, then they are unfit to judge. Should such narrowness be applied a very small caucus of individuals will emerge with a detrimental effect on the quality of trials. Ernest Bevin, famous wartime





leader made this very apt observation “Age and long service may be, and unquestionably are, good reason for respect and gratitude, but they are not by themselves the best grounds for selecting the firing line”.

Progress has been made with the introduction of the Rules Seminar, which under the original Terms of Reference to improve participant knowledge of Schedule J has been successful. Unfortunately, those who emerge from such seminars brandishing a “pass certificate”, consider themselves

immediately capable of judging trials and lecturing other handlers and Panel Judges on their newly acquired knowledge and status. Corrective action from The Kennel Club and Society Committees is needed to protect quality and legitimacy in this important area.

We should have no concerns with Judging at this, our premier event. The International Gundog League has over the years scrupulously applied their own “quality rules” to the selection of the four A Panel individuals who will decide the 2015 Champion. The IGL

are to be congratulated on their consistent stand on quality and all other matters affecting our Championship and have obviously followed Sir Winston Churchill’s wartime edict that: “responsibility is a wonderful agent when thrust upon competent heads”.

On balance, the winner in 2015 will be a better bred, managed and prepared Champion than in times past, but we must never forget that we have a responsibility always to strive to continually improve all aspects of quality within our sport.



# The I.G.L. Retriever Championship 2015

*Jackie Crew sends her Golden Retriever Echobrook Dexter for a partridge.*

***The Retriever Championship returned to Drumlanrig Castle on 30th November and 1st & 2nd December 2015 after a gap of ten years since it was last run on the Duke of Buccleuch's Queensberry Estate, in Dumfries and Galloway, Scotland.***

This will be the last three day stake to decide the Retriever Championship as from 2016 onwards the stake will revert to a two day event with a tighter entry criterion to reduce the size of the field to more manageable numbers. As IGL Trial Secretary and Chief Steward Philip Wainwright explained to me, it is becoming increasingly difficult to find estates that have the time, the infrastructure and the game to host a three day event: something that is evident in the tremendous amount of work that is required from the organisers and the estate staff in order for such a huge undertaking to run smoothly and efficiently.

The principal players – apart, obviously, from the 54 retrievers and their handlers – were the Judges: Neil Black, Nigel Rowson, Mike Tallamy and Steven Polley and the Guns: Zander Aitken, Peter Fawcett, John Bailey, Eddie Scott, Ian Openshaw, Andy Skinner, Steve Commer and John Palmer plus Head Keeper Rab Clark and Buccleuch Estates Gundog Manager David Lisett who were both shooting. The trial was sponsored by

Roger Skinner Ltd and run by the International Gundog League Retriever Society.

The Duke of Buccleuch welcomed us all to the trial and we set off in good time and a long convoy for the first day's competition on the Morton Mains beat a few miles from the castle. With the exception of two Golden Retrievers all the runners were Labradors with dogs outnumbering bitches by thirty-four to twenty. The Guns were mostly handling spaniels – not surprising given the presence of Ian Openshaw, Eddie Scott and Jon Bailey in the line as well as David Lisett who was handling six cocker spaniels himself as well as shooting and organising his side of the line. Who says men can't multi-task?

## ***Some tricky retrieves where birds fell into thick cover***

The first day was rather damp and gloomy as we started out working through rushy ground on either side of a small loch which yielded several snipe and the odd pheasant. The last two Retriever Championships that I attended

made use of cover crops with a high density of game for the first day but Rab Clark had opted for ground more typical of a proper rough shoot with bracken and rushes interspersed by little stands of oak and beech that held what were effectively wild pheasants plus rabbits, woodcock, snipe, the odd hare and an occasional partridge. It made for an interesting day for competitors, Guns and spectators alike with some tricky retrieves where birds fell into thick cover. (It also gave me and the other photographers covering the event a much better chance of getting some half-decent pictures, though the steady rain did its best to spoil things for us.)

With the Judges aiming for each runner to make two retrieves in the first round (unless eliminated in the attempt) it was as well that the Guns were in good form and that the supply of game was more than adequate. It was around two-thirty when the last dog had been seen and the Judges stopped briefly for a mug of soup and to compare notes before calling back thirty-two dogs for a second round and, with the weather forecast for the next day





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A black dog, possibly a Labrador Retriever, is standing in a grassy field. In the foreground, there is a branch with small, reddish-orange flowers. The background is a soft-focus landscape with trees and a blue sky.

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*Second placed Andy Latham with FTCh Rimrock Hurricane.*



*FTCh Brockweir Daisy on her way to handler Di Wiggan with a cock pheasant.*



*Kirsty Cousins' Willowyck Muchly clears a fence in grand style as she retrieves a rabbit watched by Judge Neil Black.*



*Sally Richardson's Golden Retriever Frizelwood Odan of Hartleyjean with a hen pheasant.*



*David Latham's FTCh Beileys Aguzannis of Fendawood retrieving a snipe.*



*Winning dog Lady Celina Carter's FTCh Asterix Aguzannis of Chatsworth bringing a partridge to handler John Halsted.*



*Martin Bagg's Magbar Tamora retrieving a pheasant.*





*The Winners: John Halsted with Lady Celina Carter's FTCh Asterix Aguzannis of Chatsworth.*



*Paul Parkins hand a partridge to Steven Polley after FTCh Maldrake Livie had completed a retrieve.*



*Cherry Finlan's Ragweeds Trigger with a partridge.*



*The Guns were John Palmer, Steve Commer, Rab Clark, Zander Aitken, Ian Openshaw, Peter Fawcett, Jon Bailey, Andy Skinner, Eddie Scott and David Lissett*



*The Judges: Mike Tallamy, Neil Black, Nigel Rowson and Steven Polley.*



*The Duchess of Devonshire and the Duke of Buccleuch were among the spectators.*



*The Garroch beat at the end of the final day.*



sounding ominous they pressed on into the gloom until all the dogs had had a chance for a third retrieve. It was then a long walk back to the vehicles and pitch dark by the time we slithered our way out of the field to return to homes and lodgings for the night.

There were twenty-four dogs still in contention on the second morning, which got off to a slightly unfortunate start when most of the convoy took a wrong turn and ended up stuck in a single track lane pointing in the wrong direction. Cue high stress moments for the organisers, but we all eventually made our way to the Scud Law beat in the hills above Durisdeer and climbed high up above the village to the steeply sloping hills covered with heather and bracken that are home to the partridges and the odd rabbit that were to be our quarry for the day. Unfortunately, although the threatened snow had not materialised, there was a thick mist clinging to the hills that hung

around until lunchtime and made things difficult for everyone.

Partridges gliding over heather and bracken are hard enough to see on a clear day and it took some excellent shooting from the Guns to provide a supply of game for the competitors to retrieve. It was hard luck on the large gallery as they would have seen little or nothing of the trial during this second morning, but by afternoon the day had brightened somewhat and they were able to watch some great dog work as partridges were sent whistling along the valley by Keeper Keith Cotterill's hard working beaters and dropped high on the slopes above the competitors to provide some really testing retrieves. After the delayed start it was once again approaching darkness as we made our way back to the parking area with six of the dogs still needing a retrieve to complete the fourth round.

### ***Steeply sloping ground mostly covered in bracken and rushes for the final morning***

The final morning saw seventeen dogs left in with a chance of winning the stake including the six held over from the previous evening. Our ground for the final morning was the Garroch beat, the best part of an hour from the castle, though we reached our destination this time with no navigational errors. We were again looking for partridges, plus the odd rabbit and woodcock, on steeply sloping ground mostly covered in bracken and rushes. The Guns were widely spaced on either side of a steep little valley with slopes covered thickly in bracken and the remaining runners were given some really testing retrieves.

For some the challenge was simply too much and we had lost seven dogs within half an

hour of starting out leaving just ten still in the running. Four of the ten were called up for a final retrieve and then the Judges called 'Trial over' and we made our way back to Drumlanrig Castle while the Judges decided their final placings. The Duchess of Devonshire, who had not missed a moment of the action over the three days, thanked everyone involved before handing the microphone over to Chief Steward Philip Wainwright to announce the results.

### ***Results***

The Winner was Lady Celina Carter's Labrador Dog FTCh Asterix Aguzannis of Chatsworth handed by John Halsted with the runner-up spot going to Andy Latham's Labrador Dog FTCh Rimrock Hurricane. In third place was Peter Goddard's Labrador Dog Carltonstar Toby and there were seven Diplomas of Merit for Annette Clarke's Labrador Bitch Garronpoint Avoca, Nigel Carville's Labrador Dog Int FTCh Waysgreen Apollo, Stephanie Smith's Labrador Dog FTCh Snowdell Spender, The Duchess of Devonshire's Labrador Dog FTCh Emannygan Ramble handled by John Halsted, Sinead MacMillan's Labrador Dog Amancio Falcon, Jayne Coley's Labrador Dog FTCh Waterford Ganton and Di Wiggin's Labrador Bitch Brockweir Daisy.

Despite rain, mist and a couple of very late evenings this was a Championship to savour with some brilliant dog work on view among the spectacular scenery of the Dumfriesshire hills. Apart from the slight hiccup on the second morning the Championship ran remarkably smoothly given the sheer number of competitors, spectators and vehicles needing to be shepherded around this rural area of narrow roads and, apart from at the castle itself, lack of parking facilities. That it did so was thanks to a great deal of often unseen effort from keepers, stops and beaters out in the mist and rain, from the Guns who shot brilliantly under testing conditions and from the Judges who kept the trial moving along steadily throughout the three days, not to mention all the work behind the scenes by the IGL committee. If this is to be the last three day retriever stake then it will be remembered for all the right reasons.



*The Winners: John Halsted with Lady Celina Carter's FTCh Asterix Aguzannis of Chatsworth.*



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FTW:  
Waysgreen Apollo

Hips: Single Digit

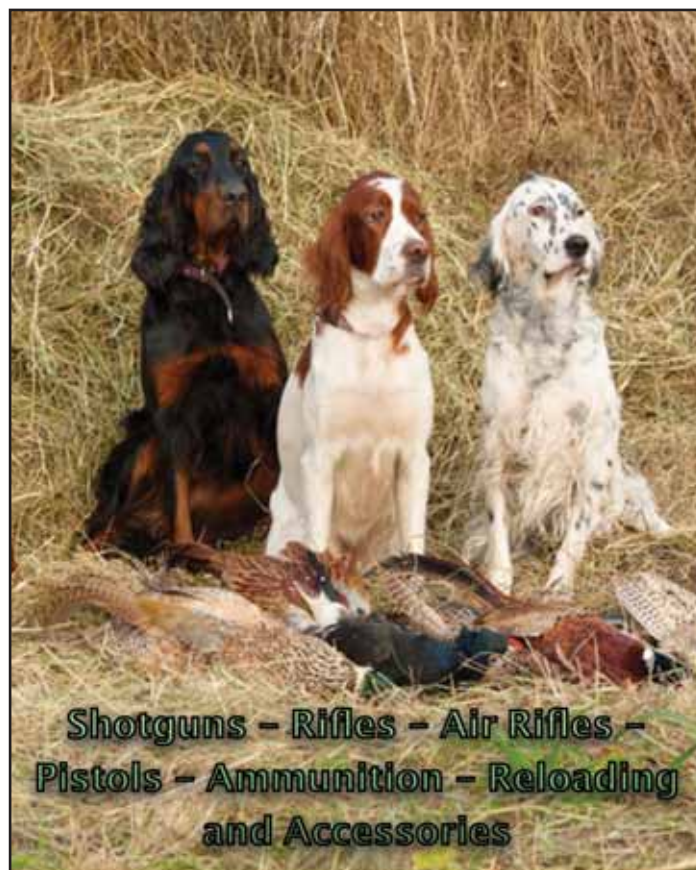
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CPRA/CNM: Clear

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# Cocker Spaniel Championship 2016 at Dunira Estate

*The superb ground was absolutely ideal for impressive cocker spaniel work.*

The Dunira Estate in Perthshire, owned by the Enggaard family from Aalborg in Denmark, was the venue for the 2016 Cocker Spaniel Championship on the 12th & 13th January. I was here two years ago, when the Estate hosted the Springer Championship and it was a real pleasure to be back on this superb ground which is absolutely ideal for spaniel work. The ground has been planted with a mixture of trees with roe

deer in mind, but for the moment, with the trees still relatively small, it is ideally suited for rough shooting and spaniel work.

Of the thirty-nine dogs qualified for the Championship thirty-five actually took part. Last year's winner, Ian Openshaw's FTCh Mallowdale Xfactor was not defending his title and three other qualified dogs were owned or had been handled by one of the Judges.

That left nine dogs and twenty-six bitches to come under Judges David Anderson, Will Clulee, Roy Ellershaw & Mark Whitehouse and once Jon Kean had welcomed us all to Dunira and made the usual introductions the trial was quickly underway.

The Guns on the first day were John Dickson, Brian Dickson, Paul Anderson and Colin Scott: Chief Steward was Nigel Dear and Dunira Estate Head Keeper Doug Stewart was Steward of the Beat while Shooting Agent Stuart Waugh worked hard to ensure that the competitors made the most of the ground available.

And what brilliant ground it is for working and watching spaniels. Situated in a wide valley between steeply rising hills, the Kingarth beat has been consists of a series low hills and valleys dotted with a number of little copses containing a mixture of

oak, beech, birch, Scots Pine, larch, rowan and alder. The ground rises and falls quite steeply in places and there are numerous little lochans in the lower bits with mallard on most of them. There are bracken banks and stretches of white grass, wet, rushy hollows, brambles and sere stalks of rosebay willow herb. Though the cover is generally thick enough that the dogs have to work hard for their game it is also sufficiently open for the gallery to get a clear view of all the action.

## ***Mainly pheasants with a sprinkling of woodcock***

It was raining as we started out and the early dogs had to work hard for their birds, none more so than Tommy Brechney's Rocket Ruby who was down in front of the Judges for a good three-quarters of an hour, working non-stop without flushing game. Inevitably, when she was finally picked up the next dog found a pheasant almost at once. The rain eased off about now and for the rest of the day it was dry, if somewhat dull and game – mainly pheasants with a sprinkling of woodcock – was available for every runner. The pheasants were sometimes sitting very tightly under the bracken and it was a real pleasure to watch the little cockers bashing through the cover and pushing their birds out for the Guns.

Generally, as would be expected in a Championship Stake, steadiness was not a problem, though we lost one or two runners when they moved to flush or shot. We also lost one of the Guns when Brian Dickson fell and twisted his knee, but reserve Judge Wes Thomas took over shooting duties for the rest of the day and performed with distinction.

Shooting game over spaniels is often said to be 'easy' compared to driven



*The winners: Richard Preest and FTCh Centrewalk Sweep.*





*Ready for action as Simon Blackman's Killylin Lace hunts through the bracken.*

birds, but when a woodcock is flickering through the branches of the trees or a pheasant swinging across and down the hill it is all too easy to miss – particularly with an anxious handler and a couple of hundred spectators watching every shot. Despite the pressure our Guns shot well on both days and there was a steady supply of pheasant, woodcock and the occasional mallard for the dogs to retrieve.

### ***Some very impressive work and, inevitably, some mistakes***

Short winter days mean that the

Judges needed to make the most of what daylight there is, and they worked steadily though the card with no break for lunch. By mid-afternoon all the entrants had been seen once and those that had not been eliminated switched sides as the Judges began working through them.

There was some very impressive work and, inevitably, some mistakes, but by the time the light began to fade and we started the long walk back to the meet the Judges had seen about half the remaining runners leaving a dozen or so still to run in the morning. Sponsors Eukanuba were ready with

rolls and soup when we finally got back to the meet at Ballindalloch, then it was back to the lodgings for a much needed rest after a full eight hours on the hill.

The second morning was bright and sunny with a sharp frost, fresh snow on the tops and a skim of ice on the lochans. Birds were sitting well and game was plentiful right from the off. Jon Bailey, winner of last year's Springer Championship, had joined us as a fifth Gun as we crunched our way through the frosted bracken and grass.

A sunny day is always welcome, especially after the constant rain of this winter, but the low sun made things difficult for the Guns and impossible for the camera at times when birds flew directly into it. Even so, the shooting was impressive especially when birds were flushed among the young trees and required snap shots to be taken as they were barely glimpsed through the branches.

### ***Pheasant and woodcock keep the Guns and cockers busy***

Progress through the remainder of the card was steady with pheasant and woodcock keeping the Guns and the cockers busy. A strong runner was too



*Andy Robinson and FTCh Meadowsedge Shooting Star with Guns Jon Bailey and Brian Dickson pause beside a frozen lochan.*





*FTCh Mallowdale Midge fetching a hen pheasant to handler Ian Openshaw.*

much for Jud Lascelles' FTCh Misselchalke Frantic: we saw the cock pheasant fall, then race away out of sight over the top of a hill and it was left to picker-up David Logan to collect it with his Labrador.

Wendy Openshaw's Mallowdale Euro also had trouble on a pheasant that looked to have dropped stone dead into a bracken patch but must have also run because neither the dog nor the Judges were able to find it.

Andy Platt had a long run with FTCh Rollafields Redbud at Naxshivan when game was briefly in short supply to complete the card for Judges Will Clulee and David Anderson while on the other side of the line Roy Ellershaw and Mark Whitehouse still had a couple of runners to go.

The last runner, Mike Forbes' FTCh Ffynonlas Ebony of Omachie was unlucky when sent to pick a hen pheasant that had dropped into thick cover. She went straight to the fall where a hen rose and flew off making us all suspect that it was the shot bird that had recovered enough to take to its wings again.

Unfortunately, when the Judges went forward to check, the original bird was lying dead just where the second bird had lifted. A brief discussion followed with all four Judges, then, satisfied with what they had seen and with no need for a run off they announced 'Trial over' and it was back for lunch and the results.

Lunch over, the skirl of the bagpipes rang out and Working Party Chairman Jon Kean took the microphone to thank all those who had worked so hard to stage the Championship. Steve

Croxford, Vice-Chairman of the Kennel Club presented Shar Norton, representing the Enggaard family, with a clock and Head Keeper Doug Stewart with a silver cup, then it was time for the results to be announced by Chief Steward Nigel Dear.

#### **Results**

Winner - Richard Preest's FTCh Centrewalk Sweep

2nd - Andy Robinson's FTCh Meadowsedge Shooting Star

3rd - Mr J Heeley's FTCh Mallowdale Georgi, handled by Ian Openshaw

4th - Mr & Mrs M Wills' Priorsmeadow Shina, handled by Stuart Morgan.

Peter Avery with Deepfleet Decus was the Guns' Choice and also won a Diploma of Merit, as did Ian English's FTCh Broadmeafarm Beau, Steve Winspear's FTCh Kiltonbeck Cooper, Wendy Openshaw's Mallowdale Euro and Jud Lascelles' FTCh Misselchalke Frantic.

This was an excellent trial with some outstanding spaniel work to enjoy over ground that is perfect for rough shooting. A very big thank you must go to the Enggaard family for their generosity in making this superb ground available for trials and to their staff, especially Head Keeper and Estate Manager Doug Stewart and Shooting Agent Stuart Waugh for all the work that ensured the trial ran smoothly. The Judges always kept things moving along at a good pace and there was the maximum of dog work and the minimum of time spent in discussing it. Richard Preest was clearly a popular winner and deservedly so after some hard, fast hunting and good, clinical retrieves. All that remained was to start for home with the forecast snow thankfully not affecting the roads to any extent.



*Jason Croft takes a pheasant from FTCh Wrenmarsh Sweet Lady with Judge Will Clulee and Gun Paul Anderson looking on.*



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1. Anita Jones' FTCh Centrewalk Willow of Episcopi retrieving a woodcock.

2. Jud Lascelles' FTCh Misselchalke Frantic retrieving a pheasant.

3. The Guns: Jon Bailey, Paul Anderson, Brian Dickson, John Dickson and Colin Scott.

4. The Judges: Will Clulee, David Anderson, Mark Whitehouse and Roy Ellershaw.



3



9

5. Gun Paul Anderson and Judge David Anderson look on as Eddie Scott takes a pheasant from FTCh Chyknell Golden Eagle.

6. Spectators and competitors following the first day action.

7. The winners: Richard Preest and FTCh Centrewalk Sweep.

8. Waiting to run: Winners Richard Preest and FTCh Centrewalk Sweep.

9. Lee Cooper's Tiptopjack Ajay retrieving a cock pheasant.

10. Simon Blackman's Killylin Lace retrieving a hen pheasant.



4



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# Illaun Mor Welcomes The Irish Kennel Club 40th AV Spaniel Championship

*The 2015 IKC 40TH AV Spaniel Championship, sponsored by Gain Dog Food, was held on 18th & 19th of December at the beautiful Illaun Mor on Lough Derg in Co. Tipperary, by kind permission of Michael Manke.*

The judges were Dermot Dunne and Dermot Cahill, the Referee Mark Stewart and Chief Steward was Ivan McAlister. The Guns were Gordon Blakeney, Damian Kelly, Fintan (Capt) Kelly jnr and Sean Moriarty.

It was obvious that the Championship committee led by IKC CEO Mr. Pat Kiely and ably assisted by IKC Hon. Secretary, Marion Campbell, committee chairman, Sean Moriarty and assistant secretary, Jon Binley, had worked with the Illaun Mor team to reach unprecedented levels of organisation. Their well thought out plans were executed with 'military precision and calmness.'

Head keeper Vincent Kyne did everything to ensure the event was a success. Steward of the beat William White needs a special mention. Willie knows what is required to put on a good championship and left no stone unturned to ensure Illaun Mor was up there with the best. Michael Minehan and committee member Brendan Ryan also put in a big effort in helping Vincent and Willie.

## **Some statistics**

26 dogs had entered, however, dog No.10 Hollydrive Abbey owned by Des Donnelly was forced to withdraw prior to the event leaving 17 English Springer Spaniel bitches and 8 English Springer Spaniel dogs.

The honours of top sire were shared by FTCh Tearsol Flash and Int.FTCh Hollydrive Theo. Both of these dogs had three offspring competing. Int.FTCh Skronedale Romulous also



*Winner Barry Caffery & FtCh Anninn Thunderbolt.*

had three of his entered to run, however with the withdrawal of Des Donnelly's Hollydrive Abbey only two competed. The quality of Tearsol Flash and Hollydrive Theo as sires is evident as both of them had one of their offspring finishing in the top four and all three of Tearsol Flash's, that competed, received an award. FTCh Clodahill Annie was top dam for a second year in a row, with three offspring competing and finishing in the awards. Nine dogs were

eliminated on day one, with 16 being called back for day two. Of the 16 called back, 11 received awards.

## **The Championship gets underway**

Committee chairman, Sean Moriarty, welcomed everyone and we made our way to the start point. We spent the morning in the game crop throughout the middle of the island, moving to the woodland on the shoreline. Retrieving





*1st - 4th place winners with GAIN DOG FOOD rep Ian Maunsell L-R David Maher, Winner Barry Caffery, Ian Maunsell (Gain), Ian Blair and Louis Rice.*

throughout was testing, with a number of dogs having to retrieve from the lake. Early morning rain on both days quickly cleared and allowed us to enjoy mild, cloudy, mostly dry conditions with a slight breeze which led to ideal scenting conditions. Senior judge Dermot Dunne took the odd numbers on the left hand side while Dermot Cahill had the even numbers on the right.

First in line under Dermot Dunne, was No1 Louis Rice's ESSB Island Snipe of Sliabh. This bitch worked the upwind beat in the game crop well, however she seemed to lack top drive. She was brought across to the opposite line to try for a hen bird which number 2 had failed to retrieve. Snipe quickly got to the fall and collected the bird with ease. A good find on a hen bird and a yoyo retrieve of same completed her first run. This bitch's second run was the last run of day one. She quickly found a cock bird in a heavy briar hedge, but moved a little too far after flushing and was eliminated.

No 2 Barry Caffery's ESSB Gortnacor Daffodil was first to run under judge Dermot Cahill. Failing to retrieve a loose hen bird shot some 25/30 meters out and on the right hand side of her beat and the subsequent eye-wipe by dog No.1, Island Snipe of

Sliabh, brought an abrupt end for Daffodil.

No 3 Tommy White's E.S.S.B Bess So Smart was sent for a runner but seemed to struggle to get to the fall area and although she failed to collect this bird the judges having tried the dog on the other side and having searched the area, Tommy and Bess were asked to hunt on. The remainder of this run was in ivy bottom woodland where she found and retrieved a wounded hen bird. She then found a cock bird in some light cover, which was shot and upon completing the relatively easy retrieve, she finished her run and made the cut for round two. Her second run on day two was in woodland. Bess hunted with a nice flowing style, found a rabbit which was shot, completed the retrieve and finished her second run.

No 4 Mikael Rasmussen's ESSD DK FTCh Windarra Josh of Blackmoor, fresh from his win at the Danish championship, this dog's owner made history by being the first Danish handler to compete in the Irish Spaniel Championship. Mikael ran three dogs in this year's championship and a huge welcome was extended to him and all our Danish friends. Josh began working the linseed crop with nice pace and style, however he seemed to hunt predominantly to the right hand side of

his beat. Soon after he had begun, the judge appeared to be unhappy with his ground treatment and Josh was eliminated.

No 5 Noel Smith's ESSB Sliabh Gipsy of Swifthill, this nice stylish bitch hunted with top pace however, in both her runs the volume of game running ahead of her seemed to cause her to pull forward and require quite a lot of whistle to hold her. In her second run she required a lot of handling to complete the retrieve of a loose bird that was shot into heavy briar and this eventually led to her being eliminated by judge Dermot Cahill.

No 6 Adrian Doris' ESSD Clodahill Pele started in the game crop and from the off, showed excellent ground and wind treatment. Pele was tried second dog on the running hen bird that dog No.3 had failed to gather. He quickly got to the fall area and immediately took the line of the bird into the wood. Pele appeared from the wood but minus the bird. As he was second dog down and having made a very good effort on the line, Pele was not penalised. He completed his first run in ivy bottom woodland where he found an extra gear of drive and pace. An excellent find on a cock bird and completing a blind retrieve in the adjacent field had him through to round two. He was the first dog to run under judge Dermot Dunne on day two. Starting in open woodland he was quickly into his stride. Working a downwind beat, he found three rabbits which were not shot. A blind retrieve of a cock bird in a grass field, successfully completed his run.

No 7 Ian Blair's ESSD Clodahill Nofler of Carnteel in his first run was tried second dog on a running bird that dog No.8 had failed on. He got to the fall but was unable to locate the bird. The judges were also unsuccessful in locating this bird. He then found a hen bird which was shot and Nofler made the retrieve look easy, getting to the fall in one cast. While he was on this retrieve another bird had been shot, and once again one cast had him to the fall. In his second run along the shoreline,



Nofler demonstrated that he can mix it in any type of cover. His huge drive and pace had everyone talking, with some describing it as the run of the championship. Driving into cover hard he found a cock bird and a rabbit. He then flushed a hen bird and his sharp marking and gun sense had this bird back to hand with ease which completed a super run.

No 8 Willie Edgar's ESSD Greenbush Iced began his run in woodland where he found and retrieved a rabbit. He was then moved out into a field of linseed. He maintained a nice hunting pattern in this crop and showed good drive and pace. A hen bird was shot and fell behind near the gallery. This bird ran instantly. Iced didn't mark it and despite Willie's best efforts he was duly eliminated.

No 9 Louis Rice's ESSB FTCh Sliabh Cusla had to negotiate a heavy blackthorn hedge in her first run. This young bitch had a super season, having started it as a novice and gaining her title of FTCh by late November, what an achievement! Her performance in this championship did not disappoint. She hunted her cover with drive and pace putting the wily birds under the pressure required to put them in the air for the guns. Multiple finds in the hedge along with retrieves of two loose birds had her and Louis anxiously waiting on day two. Her performance on day two was of a similar standard. Two finds and sharp retrieves, one of them from the depths of lough Derg, completed her second run and had everyone thinking, she must be a top spot challenger!

No 10 Dessie Donnelly's ESSB Hollydrive Abbey did not compete.

No 11 Ronan Gorman's ESSB Bronze Beau of Commonshall, this very stylish bitch with her low sweeping action started her first run in a heavy blackthorn hedge. We then moved to woodland where she found a bird in a stick pile which was shot 20 meters out and made easy work of the one cast retrieve. She quickly found another bird that was shot blind to her and came



*Top dog FTCh Anninn Thunderbolt awaits instruction.*

down amongst a lot of live game. She made an excellent cast to the area and collected the bird without fuss. In her second run she maintained her excellent pattern and nice stylish action, however, she seemed to lack the top pace and drive of her first run. A find on a hen bird and subsequent retrieve completed this run. Unsteadiness at the water test saw eliminated.

No 12 Louis Rice's ESSB Int.FtCh Sliabh Treasure, who had just recently qualified to run in the upcoming British championship, hunted in linseed with good pace. However, she was deemed to have passed a bird on her beat and was eliminated.

No 13 Mikael Rasmussen's ESSD DK FTCh Buncranna Flyer of Blackmoor had multiple flushes and a find and a sharp one cast retrieve of a partridge which came down a short distance into the lake, which would later gain him retrieve of the championship. Unfortunately, in his second run he gave chase after a rabbit he had flushed and was eliminated.

No 14 Conor Kelly's ESSB Kirstzo Wiggle of Miskern hunted in a very

effective manner with white grass to his left and a heavy briar hedge to his right. Two very good finds and successfully completing both subsequent blind retrieves had Conor through to round two. In his second run he failed to retrieve a bird which had been shot on his beat and his championship came to an end.

No 15 Jamie Cahill's ESSB FTCh Clodahill Nell hunted with top pace and drive in both runs. In her first run she had multiple finds and her steadiness was really tested, which she handled with ease and showed her experience and maturity. A find on a bird and a one cast retrieve from the lake, completed her first run. In her second run she had multiple finds. A rabbit was shot but when the judge moved the handler and dog for the retrieve it seemed to break her mark and take away her opportunity to take the line from where the rabbit had been flushed. She still completed the retrieve with minimal handling and this completed her run.

No 16 David Cairn's ESSD Dromore Earl, was going well but the temptation of a bird cornered against the chicken





*Ft Ch Clodahill Nofler of Carnteel in full flow.*

wire fence in the pheasant pen proved too much and his first championship came to a sudden end.

No 17 Christy Murphy's ESSD FTCh Churchview Chunnel had just started his run in nice woodland when a rabbit that was flushed by the gallery outside of his beat, ran straight towards Chunnel and practically jumped into his mouth. Chunnel did not release on command and was eliminated.

No 18 Mikael Rasmussen's ESSB Skaerskavens Heart Of a Champion of Blackmoor showed decent drive in a thick blackthorn hedge. She flushed a cock bird and retrieved to hand. Another bird shot later in her run would prove too difficult for her and when the dog from the other line picked the bird and Heart of a Champion's first visit to the Irish Championship ended.

No 19 Paul Cassidy's ESSB Bryngwrhyd Mulberry started well in her first run. She found a rabbit but this was not shot and was then brought out to try for a retrieve, however, when the judges walked forward to the fall area the bird was found to be hung up in the heavy briar hedge. A short hunt and a good retrieve on a loose bird completed her first run. In her second run, again, she maintained a nice pattern but, may have lacked a little bit of top drive. An excellent find on a rabbit and a one cast retrieve, completed her second run.

Dog No 20 David Maher's ESSB Bridge Abbey Poppy was a very pacey bitch, which hunted with a low stylish action, always hunting to find game. A find and retrieve on a cock bird completed a very good first run. In her second run she found a bird in a clump of blackthorns which she flushed and moved to the edge of the cover to mark. This bird was not shot, but a bird that

had gone in the opposite direction was shot. Sent to retrieve the bird that had been shot, she went in the direction of the bird she had flushed and required some intervention from David to redirect her. She collected this bird eventually, but not as cleanly as David would have liked. This completed her run.

No 21 Ed McCauley's ESSD Lisgarvagh Jet, hunted very well and his ground treatment was excellent. He found a rabbit in heavy blackthorn and this was shot at the far side of the adjacent field. Jet picked this rabbit with ease. In his second run, he found a bird and, with just a little bit of help from his handler, completed the retrieve. However, a loose bird, shot by the right hand gun, that he did not mark, proved too difficult for him to collect and, when Fintan Kelly's Bramley Girl picked, Ed and Jet were out.

No 22. Peter McKearney's ESSB Blackspool Delightful was tasked with hunting a blackthorn hedge and a parallel strip of turnips, which she did well. Unfortunately, she moved after flushing game and was eliminated.

No 23 Fintan Kelly's ESSB FTCh Bramley's Girl hunted well but her hard going nature, mixed with a lot of game running ahead, had her tending to pull forward and break her pattern at times. She pegged a wounded bird and

delivered this to hand. She then found another bird that was shot a short distance out into the lake. She completed the retrieve but did require some handling and input from Fintan. In her second run she was brought in to try for the bird dog No.21 had failed to retrieve. She picked this bird with ease. She then hunted on in the low bramble, white grass and bracken, found a rabbit that was not shot but Bramley Girl had done enough and so completed her run.

No 24 Robin Patterson's ESSB Annie's in the Pink showed passion in her approach to cover in both runs. She also was very much at one with her handler Rab, requiring a minimal amount of whistle. A good find and retrieve completed her first run. Her second run was similar. But the beat did not allow her to show her full potential and ability. However, she found a bird, and completed an excellent one cast retrieve from the cover. She then went on to find a rabbit which was shot in the adjacent field and made easy work of the blind retrieve on this rabbit and she was back on the lead.

No 25 Barry Caffery's ESSB FTCh Anninn Thunderbolt really can fly! A vast build-up of game by the water's edge tested her steadiness and Barry's nerves, but both came through with flying colours. She flushed a bird and it came down some 5 meters out in the lake. Although this was a short retrieve, Thunderbolt had to swim and climb through fallen sticks that had gathered on the water to get to the bird. She made light work of these and had the bird back to Barry in no time. Her second run was quite short, but full of action. Again she ran at top pace. She



*The Gallery*



found a bird in light cover which was shot very close to her and she completed the relatively easy retrieve without fuss. Following another short hunt and a find on another bird she was back on the lead.

No 26 James Casey's ESSB FTCh Blackguard Ivy in her first run really showed top drive in cover. Hunting with her usual excellent ground treatment, she pushed two rabbits from a small pile of withered pine branches. An excellent find, this would get my vote as find of the championship if there was such an award, perhaps there should be! One of these rabbits was shot and Ivy made easy work of the short retrieve. A hen bird was then shot and came down a runner. Ivy needed some help to get to the fall and was unable to collect the bird. Both judges and the dog opposite also failed to locate the bird meant that Ivy stayed in. Her second run was in a heavy briar hedge, which was "contaminated" with game. Holding on with such a build-up of game is never easy but James did very well and maintained good contact with Ivy. A retrieve at the end completed her second run and secured her a place in the awards.

### ***The run off***

The following dogs were called for a run off: No 7 Ian Blair's ESSD Clodahill Nofler of Carnteel; No 9 Louis Rice's ESSB Sliabh Cushla; No 20 David Maher's ESSB Bridge Abbey Poppy.

Ian Blair's Clodahill Nofler and David Maher's Bridge Abbey Poppy were first to run against each other. Nofler's experience, pace and ground treatment appeared to have him winning this contest with ease. Then Louis' Sliabh Cusla was called to run against Clodahill Nofler. This was a more even contest with both dogs going well. However, again, Nofler appeared to maintain a more consistent pattern, and pip Cushla at the post.

Following the run off and the compulsory water test, the trial was declared over and all made their way back to the launch point to get the boat

back to the mainland and onwards to the headquarters for the presentation and prize giving.

### ***Awards Ceremony***

The Chairman of the Championship Committee, Sean Moriarty, thanked host Michael Manke for the outstanding hospitality and generosity extended to all. Sean added that as Michael has been a major supporter of Spaniel trials for a long time and provides his Illaun Mor shoot ground to various clubs to run trials throughout each year, it was only fitting that the spaniel championship should be held on such excellent ground.

He then thanked the following: Gain dog food for their very generous sponsorship of the championship; Albert Titterington of Irish Country Sports and Country Life Magazine, for his generous sponsorship of the keepsake trophies; Head keeper Vincent Kyne and his team for their hard work; and Willie White as steward of the beat and his help to Vincent and the Championship committee; Paul French Video; the organising committee; the stewards, including the stops; Lars Meincke and Lars Steenson for photography; Eddie Kirk for his help with the press articles; Damian Kelly for the DVD commentary; Tom Lowry for acting as picking up steward; handlers and spectators who had travelled for far and near to be at the championship. He also thanked Pat Kiely (CEO IKC) and Marion Campbell (Hon.Sec. IKC) for the leadership and support.

### ***Presentation of Prizes***

Jon Binley (Championship Committee Assistant Sec.) then announced the awards:

1st and Top Irish dog No 25 Barry Caffery's ESSB FTCh Anninn Thunderbolt.

2nd and Gun's Award No 7 Ian Blair's ESSD FTCh Clodahill Nofler of Carnteel.

3rd No 9 Louis Rice's ESSB. FTCh Sliabh Cusla.

4th No 20 David Maher's ESSB

Bridge Abbey Poppy.

### ***Diplomas Of Honour***

No. 3 Tommy White's ESSB Bess So Smart

No 6 Adrian Doris' ESSD Clodahill Pele

No 15 Jamie Cahill's ESSB Ftch Clodahill Nell

No 19 Paul Cassidy's ESSB Bryngwrhyd Mulberry

No 23 Fintan Kelly's ESSB Ftch Bramley's Girl

No 24 Robin Patterson's ESSB Annie's in the Pink

No 26 James Casey's ESSB Ftch Blackguard Ivy

### ***Other Awards***

Best Retrieve of the championship was awarded to No.13 MF Rasmussen's DK FTCh Buncranna Flyer of Blackmoor; Andrew Duncan received The Eastern Region Army Game Club Perpetual cup as breeder of Anninn Thunderbolt, the highest placed Irish dog at the championship; Fintan (Capt) Kelly jnr. received The Dermot Cahill perpetual trophy as the gun the handlers most enjoyed shooting over their dogs; Roger Shoer's Glengoole Ripple took the honours of Spaniel of the Year for 2015; gaining the highest number of points in I.K.C field trials and working tests throughout the year and was presented with the Duisk perpetual cup.

It was very encouraging to see a number of new handlers, nine in total, competing for their first time. Four of these nine finished in the awards and should be very proud of their achievements. Two pieces of history were made at this year's championship. For the first time ever the championship was held on an island and we also had for the first time a competitor from Denmark taking part in the championship. An interesting point to note is that for the second year in a row Dog No 25 had won the IKC AV Spaniel Championship. Could next year be three in a row for No 25? Watch this space!

*Pictures courtesy of Lars Meincke & Lars Steenson*





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1. Jamie Cahill's FTCh Clodahill Nell on her way back with a rabbit

2. 4th placed Bridge Abbey Poppy checks back with Handler David Maher

3. DK FTCh Buncranna Flyer with the partridge that gained retrieve of the Championship.

4. FTCh Sliabh Cusla Returning with a hen bird.

5. L-R Dermot Cahill (Judge) Sean Moriarty (Chairman) Dermot Dunne (Judge) Ivan McAlister (Chief Steward) Kevin Sommers (Judges Steward).



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6. Championship Guns Fintan (Capt) Kelly jnr Sean Moriarty Damian Kelly & Gordon Blakeney.

7. Dermot Cahill (Judge) Mark Stewart (Referee) Dermot Dunne (Judge).

8. Steward of the beat William White & Championship committee Ass. Secretary Jon Binley



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# NUTTS

## about pets ltd



## Meet the Winning Team!

L to R, Business Owner, Basil Thompson and Louis Rice, Ambassador to the Nutts Speedrite Field & Trial Ireland Dog Food Range. Louis and his bitch FTCH Sliabh Treasure won the 2016 English Springer Spaniel Championship. A huge congratulations to Louis on his achievement and we look forward to working with you in the future.



L to R, back row: Nutts Speedrite Field & Trial staff, Ger Flannery, Sales Manager ROI, Joe Fagan, Field and Trial Sales Executive congratulating Matty Lambden on his winning success in 2015. Also a huge welcome to Matty for joining the Ambassador team to promote our Nutts Speedrite Field & Trial Ireland dog food range throughout Ireland specialising in the Labradors.



L to R, Business Owner, Basil Thompson welcoming Mick Walsh on board as another Ambassador for Nutts Speedrite Field & Trial Ireland products throughout Ireland focusing on the Springer Spaniels. We are delighted to have you on board and shall look forward to working with you.



L to R, Basil Thompson, Business Owner is delighted to be introducing Tadhg Kelly as another Ambassador to Northern Ireland for the Labradors. The Nutts Speedrite Field & Trial Ireland team wish to welcome you on board and we very much look forward to working together.

**Contact: Nutts about Pets Ltd,**  
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**[www.nuttsaboutpets.ie](http://www.nuttsaboutpets.ie)**





# SpeedRite Field & Trial Ireland Range

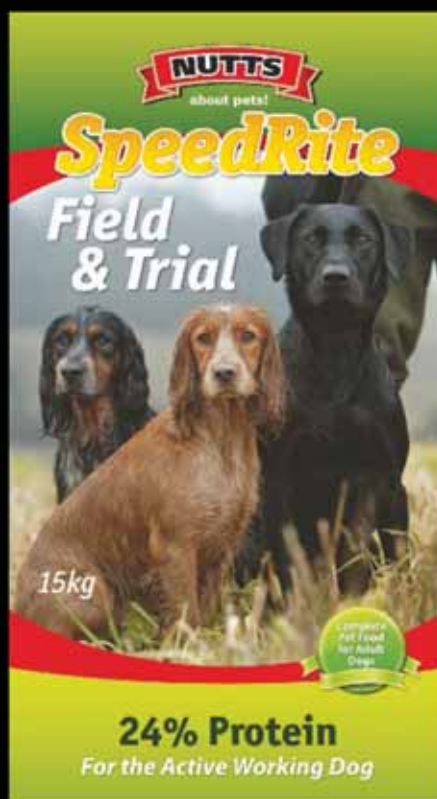


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# The Redmills Retriever Working Tests Calendar 2016

These dates are accurate at the time of going to press

Date	Venue	Organisers	Contact	Telephone
26 March	Aughentine, Fivemiletown	Fermanagh Gundog	Shauna McGroarty	07526527488
2 April	Ballydugan Estate	NIGF&SS	Philip Turner	028 9261 1845
9 April	Delamont, Killyleagh	Killyleagh W/S	John Wilson	028 4482 8697
16 April	Dobbs	Lab Club	Richard Johnston	07715 039956
23 April	Shanes Castle. All entrants get a FREE ticket to the Game Fair at Shanes Castle sponsored by FEEDWELL.	Prelim, Novice and Open Tests. UGRG- Selection test for Shanes Castle Int. Team	Geoff Peoples Joe Johnston	02893342604 07886377306 07788 927014 028 8673 6432
30 April	Cleggan Lodge	Moyola	R Kane	028 79468585 07900180005
7 May	Rademon	UGL	Tbc	Tbc
21 May	Castledillon	NIGF&SS	Philip Turner	028 9261 1845
4 June	Blakiston Houston Estates Altarichard Road Armoy BT538XT	All proceeds to Alzheimers Charity	Derek Anderson	derekfanderson0@gmail.com
11 June	Tbc	Craigavon Gundog Club	Noel Doran	028 3832 5272
18 June	Clandeboyne All entrants get a FREE Ticket to the Game Fair at Shanes Castle.	Lab Club	Richard Johnston	07715 039956
25 June	Irish Game Fair Shanes Castle	FEEDWELL Preliminary & Novice Retriever Tests: RED Mills Spaniel Tests & Spaniel International ,	UGRG/ MUGA Geoff Peoples Joe Johnston	02893342604 07886377306 07788 927014 028 8673 6432
26 June	Irish Game Fair Shanes Castle	Feedwell International Retrievers team event / Open Test and Run Off for the Game Fair Redmills Top Dog between top 2 spaniels and top two retrievers	R. McGregor	028 77729690
30 July	Gosford Castle	Inter Club Test	Noel Doran	028 3832 5272
6 August	Craigavon lakes	NIGFSS	Philip Turner	028 9261 1845
13 August	tbc	URC	G Murdoch	07768670022
20 August	Lendrums Wind Farm, Fivemiletown	Fermanagh Gundog Club	Shauna McGroarty	07526527488.
27 August	Irish Game & Country Fair Birr Castle	International Spaniel Team Event/ Spaniel Tests	Albert Titterington	028 44839167
28 August	Irish Game & Country Fair Birr Castle	International Team Event/Open Retriever Tests. Run Off for the Game Fair Top Dog between top 2 spaniels and top two retrievers	Albert Titterington	028 44839167
24 Sept	Ballynahinch Game Fair, Montalto Estate	Retriever Tests with top prize funds	R. McGregor Joe Johnston	028 77729690 07788 927014 028 8673 6432
25 Sept	Ballynahinch Game Fair, Montalto Estate	Spaniel tests with top prize fund.	Albert Titterington	028 44839167



# Irish Game Fair and Fine Food Festival (inc the NI Angling Show)



**Shanes Castle, Antrim 25th & 26th June 2016** [www.irishgamefair.com](http://www.irishgamefair.com)

Ireland's largest Game Fair and international countrysports event featuring action packed family entertainment in three arenas; a Living History Festival including medieval jousting; a Fine Food Festival; a huge tented village of trade stands and international countrysports competitions and displays.

## Irish Game & Country Fair and Fine Food Festival



**Birr Castle, Co Offaly 27th & 28th August 2016** [www.irishgameandcountryfair.com](http://www.irishgameandcountryfair.com)

The ROI's national Game Fair featuring action packed family entertainment in two arenas; a Living History Village including medieval jousting; a Fine Food Festival; a huge tented village of trade stands and international countrysports competitions and displays and all the attractions of the beautiful world famous Birr Castle Demesne.

## Ballynahinch Game and Harvest Festival

Ireland's most stylish game fair and country living event uniquely based around the Carriage Rooms, Barns, Lake and Stableyard in the beautiful grounds of Montalto Estate. This really is a country lifestyle extravaganza featuring music, fashion shows, a superb fine food festival including a stylish medieval banquet and featuring historical re-enactments of the Battle of Ballynahinch, medieval jousting and top class countrysports competitions and displays.



**Montalto Estate, Ballynahinch, Co Down 24th & 25th September 2016**  
[www.ballynahinchharvestfestival.com](http://www.ballynahinchharvestfestival.com)

**Irish Countrysports and Country Life magazine (inc The Irish Game Angler)**

Available as a hard copy glossy quarterly or FREE to READ online at  
[www.countrysportsandcountrylife.com](http://www.countrysportsandcountrylife.com)

For further details contact: Great Game Fairs of Ireland:

Tel: 028 (from ROI 048) 44839167 / 44615416 Email: [irishgamefair@btinternet.com](mailto:irishgamefair@btinternet.com)



Fairs at Shanes Castle and Montalto supported by

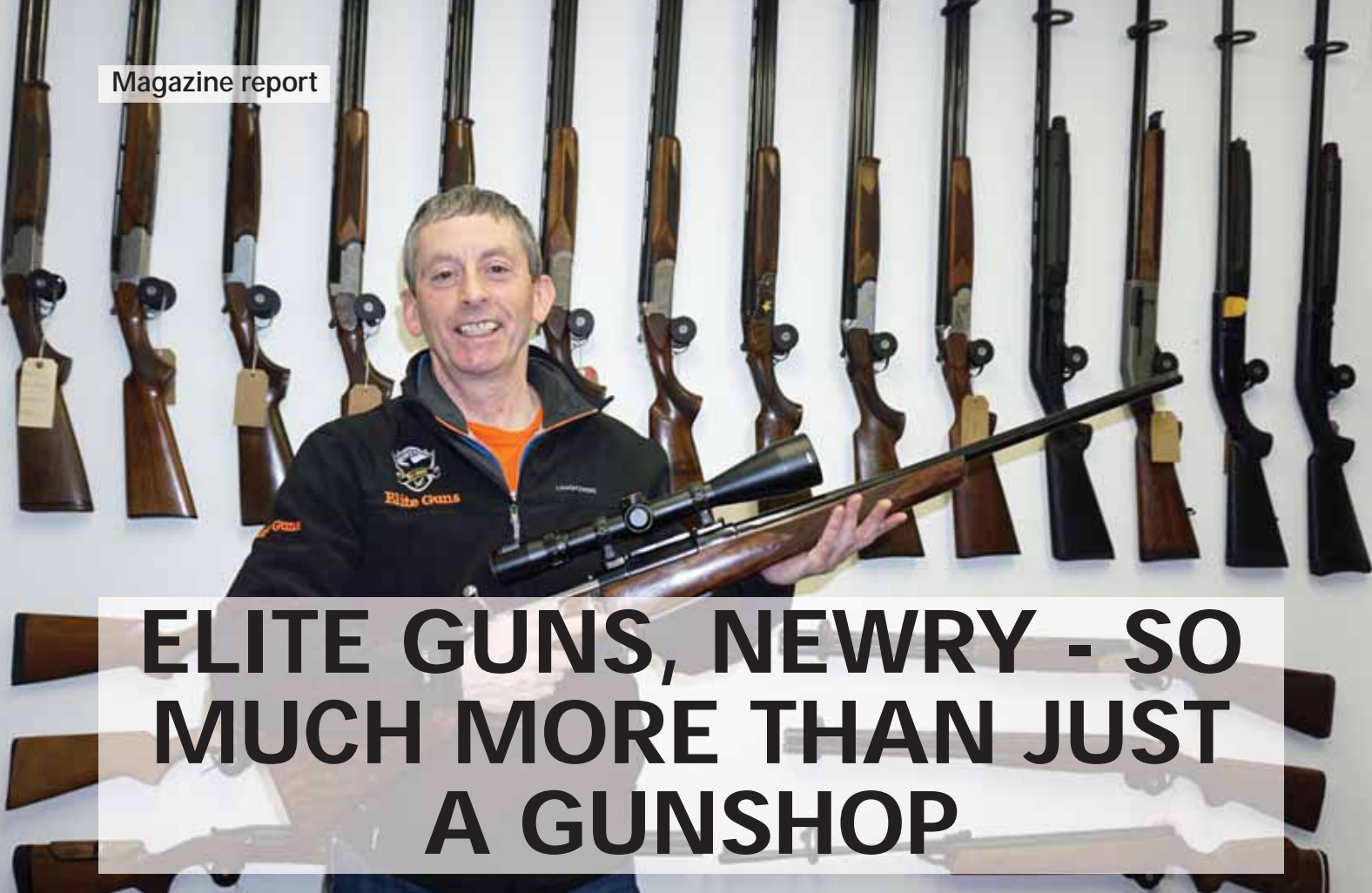


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Northern Ireland  
Year of Food  
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# ELITE GUNS, NEWRY - SO MUCH MORE THAN JUST A GUNSHOP

*Proprietor Peter O'Hagan with some of the fine selection of guns.*

*Building a fine reputation for quality products and first class customer care, Elite Guns of Newry is rapidly becoming a 'must visit' for enthusiasts everywhere.*

The steady stream of customers to their stands at Shanes Castle Game Fair and also at the Fair at Ballynahinch, and the buzz in the shooting world, north and south, told us we really should pay a visit to their premises at 21 Corn Market, Newry.

From the outside, we were reminded of a traditional gunmakers behind well-stocked windows, hinting at what lay inside and Proprietor Peter O'Hagan took us inside to find out more.

Peter said: "We have been in business for 7 years and I have had a personal interest in shooting, particularly rifles and pistols for many years before that. I was employed in another profession at the time and saw a real opportunity here to start a new business based around what were at the time, my hobbies. Many people would have considered that our timing was questionable, due to the downturn in many sectors of business but I knew what I wanted and drove ahead with my plans."

He smiled when asked to what he attributed the business' success: "I call it determination but some might just say stubbornness, I suppose. Seriously, I was very determined to get it 'just right' and don't forget I had been a fieldsports customer myself all my life and - let's face it - I knew as a customer what I required and how I would like to be treated.

"Our approach at Elite Guns is simple: For example once a customer comes in to purchase a gun, I don't just try to sell them the first thing that comes to mind. We broaden out their request and chat about the type of shooting he or she wants it for, getting a bit more detail about the type of sport and their experience. That way we can tease out the most appropriate weapon



*Whatever your sport Elite Guns are on hand to offer expert advice.*





*Pictured at Shanes Castle last year - Elite Guns will be a major presence at Shanes in 2016.*

so that they can make a final decision. Sometimes customers may have no real idea of what they want themselves and that's why the chat helps. They might have read up about the gun on the Internet, but have never seen the gun in question in real life. It's all about making the right choice and still be happy even some time later when they have had a bit of time with the gun."

"Apart from advice, another way that Elite Guns helps customers is by putting them in touch with local shooting facilities where under supervision they can try things out with clays. When you couple that with my experience in rifle and target shooting, as well as stalking, that's a formidable reason to come to us to choose your weapon as well."

### **Airsoft Action**

In tandem with the sale of guns, clothing and accessories, Elite Guns have other aspects to the business, that include the rapidly expanding hobby of airsoft, which sees enthusiasts use imitation military-style weapons, AKs, M4s firing plastic BBs at Elite's Airlift site. The guns are strictly restricted in power to one joule so they cannot penetrate the skin and avoid any chance of injury. The game is set up like Call of Duty where two teams oppose each other and try to capture the other's flag.

"This all happens in the open air in a 17-acre quarry about 3/4 mile from the shop, which adds to the realism. We run the game every two weeks and it is proving immensely popular with private parties, stag parties etc. We also have it running club-style and we automatically give anyone who purchases a gun one year's free membership. We take great



*Some of the pistols at Elite Guns.*

care to explain the law to our customers and make sure that if they are under 18 that we have signed permission from their parents. Individuals as well as club members can also have a chance to join in the excitement as all protective clothing is supplied. The site is also marshalled to maintain strict safety at all times and monitor the rules of the game, which can be enjoyed at a hugely reduced rate courtesy of Elite Guns," said Peter.

### **Airsoft at Shanes Castle Game Fair**

Elite Guns had the airsoft facility at Shanes Castle Game Fair for the first time last year where it attracted tremendous interest and intend to bring a much bigger and better layout in 2016, so individuals and even families can find out more from the experts and actually try shooting airsoft pistols at targets.

We looked briefly at the workshop tucked away at the rear of the shop before looking at the fine display of all types of guns. Peter told us: "We sell all the major brands and if a customer has

something in mind that may be out of stock we can easily source it for them. With our customers being mainly interested in game or vermin control, as well as clays, we keep a good stock of shotguns on hand, including Sabatti, Beretta, Churchill and many more.

### **Spoilt for choice**

Rifles as well are very much in evidence, with customers spoilt for choice with examples from CZ, Tikka, Zoli, and many others along with a variety of telescopic sights. And of course Elite Guns offer a good range of airguns as well, from a starting price of around £70 to whatever the customer wished to pay for something exotic.

With the in-house workshop carrying out minor repairs and major work sent out to specialists, customers can rest assured that their weapon will receive first class service should they require it.

### **Protective coating and firearm refinishing**

Another aspect of the business is concerned with customer firearm refinishing with everything from customised stocks made to suit an individual's personal requirements, to applying alternative protective coatings to barrels and action. We can make a new stock, or modify an existing one along with using a unique coating process for metal parts.

Leigh Malcolmson looks after another side of the business under the banner of LM Refinishing: Leigh said: "I've now been refurbishing firearms for 5 years, mostly using DuraCoat® which is imported from the USA. DuraCoat® is a two part chemical





*A typical stock just oozing quality.*



*Guns, guns, and more guns to tempt the buyer.*

coating and unlike some other firearm finishes, DuraCoat® was created specifically for firearms. It is air cured and reaches full hardness in 2-3 weeks.

“The other paint system I offer is Cerakote Firearm Coatings. Having completed Cerakote's factory training package, I am proud to say I am Northern Ireland's only factory-trained Cerakote Applicator and can repair externally any firearm, even taking it back to base metal if required taking it from matt to gloss or even to cammo finish.

“Cerakote firearm coatings is a ceramic based finish, which can be applied to metals, plastics, polymers and wood. The unique formulation used for Cerakote ceramic coating enhances a number of physical performance properties including abrasion/wear resistance, corrosion resistance, chemical resistance, impact strength, and hardness.





Each of these properties is rigorously tested to guarantee that Cerakote products remain at the forefront of the ceramic coatings market. Cerakote ceramic coatings utilise state-of-the-art technology to out-perform any competitive coating in both laboratory settings and real world applications."

### **Custom stocks and more**

The final aspect of work which is carried out comes under the title of 308 Precision, operated by Clive Camlin who can totally make a huge range of accessories and stocks for customers.'

As he explained: "I offer a particularly specialised service, manufacturing custom stocks, stock repair, hydrographics, F Class bipods and all types of custom work to meet the requirements of the most specialised and discerning customer."

We were very impressed with our visit to Elite Guns, and really enjoyed talking to the enthusiastic folk there.

With its huge stock of guns to choose from, the service facilities and specialist work available and the fine stock of accessories and clothing, and the real customer care from the company, there is little doubt that the shooting public will hear much more about Elite Guns of Newry

For more information:  
Visit

Elite Guns, 21 Corn Market, Newry  
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*A very warm welcome at Elite Guns, Newry from Peter (right) and Leigh.*



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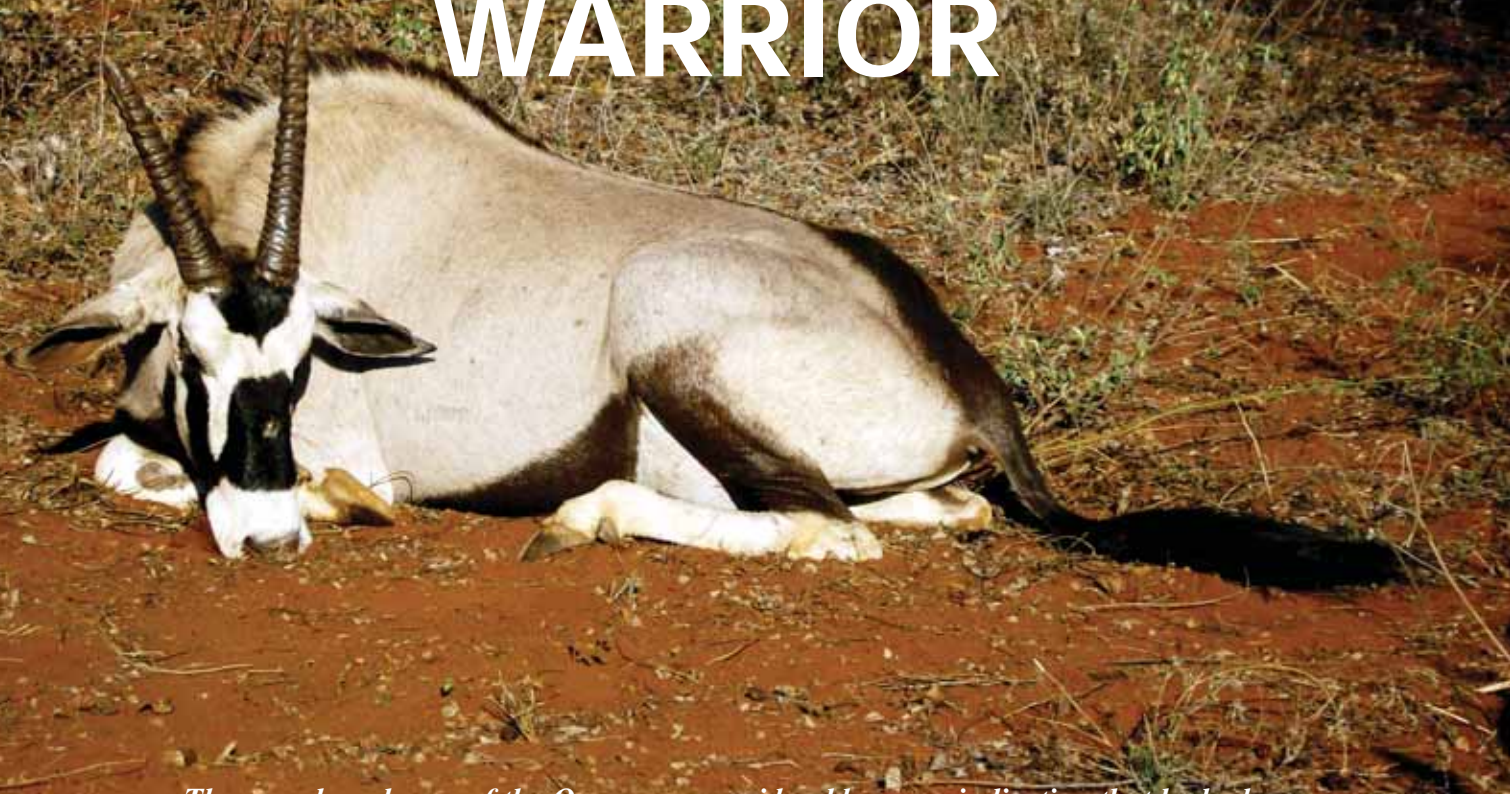
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# ORYX – THE DESERT WARRIOR



*The once long horns of the Oryx were considerably worn, indicating that he had put in a lifetime of fighting, earning his right of passage for feeding and females.*

Oryx is one of the more interesting species inhabiting sub-Saharan Africa. The dark face mask and long horns make them immediately identifiable – usually requiring binoculars because they primarily inhabit wide open spaces. Males and females carry rapier-like horns and frequently the greater length adorns females. Fawn-coloured, both sexes have a dark stripe along their lower flanks and a long black bushy tail.

Known as the Desert Warrior due to the ability to survive and thrive in hot waterless expanses, they can exist without access to surface water for many months. They are also courageous and extremely aggressive if cornered. Many a four-legged predator has come to grief at the end of those long sharp horns. A similar fate has befallen a number of two-legged hunters too.

Mention of the name Oryx usually brings a quizzical look from the African hunting fraternity as these animals are

better known as Gemsbok – a direct lift from the Afrikaans language. I picked up some of the lingo over the years which led to occasional amusing situations when someone thought that I was not aware of what was being said. Hunting Gemsbok is an arduous task because they will cover great distances on a whim, making it difficult to get within safe shooting range. They are constantly alert, have sharp eyesight, hearing, and an excellent sense of smell.

## ***A well-placed shot will bring down a Gemsbok humanely***

Standard recommendations from outfitters for hunting include a good pair of sturdy boots, powerful binoculars and a flat-shooting rifle. They often omit to mention a good supply of drinking water. Lots of range practice is most essential. Despite their strong sturdy build, a well-placed shot will bring down a Gemsbok humanely

and this is one of those situations where the .270cal rifle takes its place as a reliable minimum.

Normally, a .270 rifle is criticised as not being up to the mark for tough African species and there's a modicum of wisdom in this. It's a suitable calibre for smaller antelope, warthogs etc. Anything larger, such as Zebra, Wildebeest or Eland requires a larger calibre rifle/bullet combination. The .270's relatively flat-shooting round in the hands of a good marksman works when a long shot is involved. Back in the days when we could only license a maximum of .270cal in Ireland I made a point of using 160grain bullets for African hunting. The best all-rounder is normally a 150grain round but swapping target shooting accuracy for 1" grouping at 100 yards is not a critical issue when hunting. A firearms dealer in a remote African town – can't remember its name - that we once passed through had .270cal ammunition





*Looking over the terrain.*



*African Scoops-Owl - keeping an eye open.*

in stock with 180grain bullets. Having purchased the last of his stock it turned out that this weight would not stabilise in a .270's barrel, so it ended up in the PH's gun-room. Prior to having the availability of a .375mag rifle, I used the .270 hunting gemsbok in Limpopo, Eastern Cape, Bloemfontein, Kimberley and the Great Karoo.

Only one gemsbok fell to the .375mag and that shot was an act of mercy. Walking through the bush with a tracker in the Limpopo area one afternoon we came across an old male lying down. He didn't make any attempt to rise or run as we approached and it was evident that he was literally on his last legs.

### ***Time had finally caught up with him***

The once long horns were considerably worn indicating that he had put in a lifetime of fighting, earning his right of passage for feeding and females. It was some time before we discovered the spear-like wound in his lower regions which was ebbing his life away. Time had finally caught up with him probably in the form of a younger male asserting his dominance. Nature's way in Africa dictates that this animal's death would contribute to the ongoing life-cycle of other species if it wasn't first attacked and eaten alive by Hyenas. The Tracker was of the opinion that the latter was most likely because these marauders were common in the area.

I put-down the old fellow and waited until the tracker brought up transport to take the carcass away. Hyenas are reputed to be Hermaphrodites, indicating that both male and female can bear young. This is disputed by some but majority opinion favours the claim that each has male and female sex organs. Hyenas are generally despised by one and all — their insane nocturnal laughter-like cackling has caused many a sleepless night. Robert Ruark wrote back in the 1950s that they are one of God's jokes; with lion's jaws, dog's face and a bear's body with crippled



spine, unable to kill their own meat. That information directly influenced the decision to put the dying Gemsbok out of its misery. Rightly or wrongly hyenas are frequently shot on sight.

Several years ago I dallied briefly with a Ruger rifle in 30-06 calibre because this calibre discharges a 180grain bullet. I wanted to try it out with iron sights only — no telescopic sights. The slightly lighter .270 calibre round is based on the 30-06 case necked down to fit the marginally smaller .270 bullet. There's little difference in muzzle velocity or terminal energy between the two. The first African animal shot with this firearm was a male Gemsbok — we don't shoot females — and while the rifle performed admirably, I was too attached to my .270 to consider parting with it. Fortuitously a colleague took a shine to the Ruger and is still using it today.

A large number of Oryx exists in the Kalahari Desert. Mainly straddling

Botswana and Namibia, a huge swathe of desert is also within South Africa's border. It has been populated for approximately 1000 years by Bushmen who are unsurpassed anywhere as trackers. One of South Africa's leading firearms/ballistics experts generously offered to take me to the Kalahari on a Gemsbok hunt. He had leased a major hunting concession there which included decent accommodation. Exciting descriptions of riding quad bikes over the sand dunes in search of Gemsbok made this an invitation that couldn't be refused and a plan was put in place for six months hence.

Unfortunately Dr. Lucas Potgieter passed way suddenly three months later. Renowned as "The Doctor" in hunting circles, his vast experience included directorships of South Africa's Denel Industries and Armscor — Defence Armament Manufactures plus allied companies. Many an Irish hunter has



*Hunted with a 30-06 Ruger.*

visited The Powder Keg (Die Kruitvat) — Johannesburg's largest hunting and firearms shop. This vast and thriving business was owned by Lucas Potgieter and the Irish were particularly welcome there. It's run by strangers now and I have no inclination to go back. Hunting Gemsbok in the Kalahari will have to wait for another day.

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# Hunting Roundup

## AROUND THE MEETS

### *The Meath Foxhounds*

The Meath Foxhounds' meet at Ardmulchan Castle, kindly hosted by Edward Galvin, enjoyed mild, bright weather and, most importantly, lots of foxes.

Brothers John jr. and Kenny Henry share hunting the hounds and field master duties so today saw John take a 20½ couple bitch pack to the first draw while Kenny had charge of 70 riders including all four joint masters, Andrew Boyd, Richard Trimble, Patrick Dillon and Norman Williamson.

Hounds put two brace afoot in the estate and thence into Phil Smith's. Phil is a noted Hereford bull breeder and we had one particularly impressive specimen keeping his beady eyes on everyone as hounds flew after their pilot, who eventually went to ground at the old railway line.

A move to Rory McParland's saw hounds put another fox afoot and he gave a sharp hunt right around the property before going to ground.

John Henry moved to Harristown  
*Huntsman Barry Jones with the North Down at Crawfordsburn.*

where hounds had got into their stride and were in good voice as they put another fox afoot. This very sharp hunt also ended with the fox going to ground.

A hack to Kentstown saw another fox afoot and the flying Meath bitches pushed him across the top of Dean Hill towards Brownstown and then towards Yellow Furze. This hunt also ended with the quarry going to ground, this time back in Kentstown. The rain, which had come on earlier, now cleared but the breeze increased as a draw off the Kentstown to Duleek Road saw another fox go afoot. He crossed the road and was hunted back towards Yellow Furze as the rain restarted, before he was lost.

A move to Hayestown saw a brace afoot and one went through some sheep on Crowe's land so hounds were stopped and John Henry blew for home.

### *The Tynan and Armagh Hunt*

The Tynan and Armagh Hunt's meet at Brennan's Cross outside Castleblayney, Co. Monaghan, saw huntsman Keith McCall produce a 12½

couple mixed pack, of nearly all Old English hounds with some Hurworth breeding among them, with whippers-in Philip Singleton and Andy Philips assisting him.

Joint masters Brian Dougan and Wilson Faloon had charge of a twenty strong mounted field on this cool day which never really saw the threatened rain arrive.

Local man Paddy McDonald, who also follows several other nearby hunts, both by car and mounted, had put a lot of organisation into this meet but he did warn the huntsman that the area was 'very heavily shot and lamped and they were here last night.'

The first draw, Paddy Brennan's at Whinney Bank, proved blank as was the entire area behind him so Keith McCall drew the Willows at John Loughran's but fared no better there, which was also the case right around Milltown Lake. Keith McCall then drew the area behind Kevin McKearney's scrap yard where hounds put up a hare so they were stopped and Keith McCall blew for home.

With a lot of sheep and quite a







*Jockey Keith Donoghue with the Ward Union Hunt at Summer Hill, Meath.*

number of cattle out adding to the activities of the previous night this was always going to be a testing day for the huntsman and his hounds and, sadly, all their efforts came to nothing.

### ***The Ballymacad Foxhounds***

The Ballymacad Foxhounds' meet at Crossakeil, Co Meath, was a lawn meet hosted by Anthony and Jan Farrell. Jan, a former master of the Meath Foxhounds, had really pulled out all the stops, a fact gratefully acknowledged in his speech by Tosh Kellet MFH, before huntsman Kevin Donohue, with whippers-in Maurice Quinn and Thomas Moran, took a 15 couple mixed pack to draw the Farrell lands.

A thirty strong mounted field, including Jim Stevenson MFH, was under field master Ken Farrelly and the recent heavy rain had left a lot of lying water as they watched Kevin Donohue draw right around Farrell's.

Hounds then drew Billy Connell's at the Christmas trees which, like Farrell's, was blank. A move to Andy Dunne's saw a fox go afoot and hounds were soon on terms, pushing him hard and in good voice, as far as Jeremy Finnegan's. At Williamstown House hounds sounded even better in the trees, pushing their fox hard before going unsighted to us car followers.

At Snow's Quarry, a fox was seen to leave covert by car follower James Carroll, whose daughter Jennifer was in

the mounted field. Hounds were quickly on the scene and onto his line but feathered before apparently losing the scent as the fox disappeared into the quarry.

Kevin Donohue was now on his feet but could not assist his hounds so a hack to the back end of the covert ensued but without success from several draws. This had been an 11am meet so home was blown in late afternoon to end a good brisk, but wet, day.

A feature of the Ballymacads is the number of children who are active in the Hunt and today was no exception, with some very good horsemanship being displayed. Talking of horsemanship, Kevin Donohue was on a four year old from which he had never previously hunted hounds and with which he was now extremely satisfied. Whoever buys it will have a "made hunter" on his hands.

### ***The North Down Foxhounds***

Despite the weather the North Down Foxhounds' traditional New Year's Day meet, at the Old Inn Crawfordsburn, went ahead with a large crowd of spectators to greet and see off the participants. Host Danny Rice and his three sons Paul, Gavin and Girvan had laid on their usual excellent Hunt breakfast as a precursor to a day's hunting which was, mainly, rain free though the ravages of recent heavy rain

were evident everywhere.

Lesley Webb MFH had charge of a thirty-nine strong mounted field while huntsman Barry Jones had on a 12½ couple dog-hound pack, with Charlie McPoland whipping in to him.

Having been seen safely over the main Belfast to Bangor Road, by police, Barry Jones first drew George Cheatley's. Almost immediately, hounds put one customer afoot from the bottom of a covert and this fox ran through Cheatley's and into Gomes's in what appeared to be patchy scenting conditions. This short hunt ended beyond Gomes's so the huntsman moved to Johnston's but a series of draws here all proved blank, even in the normally productive woods. This also proved to be the case at Jim McCann's.

Hounds moved into the Waterworks, at Tweed's, where they put up their second pilot, hunting him right around the Waterworks and into de Montmorency's. They hunted him, hard, back to Jeremy Hughes's, where scent appeared to disappear altogether. At this stage the rain returned so home was blown in deference to the landowners. Back at the historic Crawfordsburn Inn the Rice family had a very welcome stew laid on.

### ***The Ward Union Staghounds***

The Ward Union Staghounds' meet at Summerhill, Co Meath, saw a mild day which was damp under foot, leaving the going heavy for this traditionally hard riding field, which included our generous host Michael McNally.

Hunt members had met a very tricky gate, in a ditch, but this now presented no problems for a forty strong mounted field, under joint masters Gerry Reynolds and Stephen O'Connor. However, this euphoria did not last long as several riders could not negotiate the Summerhill River and had to take the long way round. It did, though, present no problem to huntsman Pat Coyle or his whippers-in Peter Reynolds, Con Kennedy and Keith Donoghue.

After a lengthy hack matters moved



to Boylin's at Killmoon, then Ryan's and on towards Spillane's at Culmullen. This hunt proceeded at a good pace with the heavy going leaving any fallers dirty but uninjured! From Darragh Reilly's they moved on towards Brady's at Culmullen and continued over the Culmullen to Drumree Road as far as Jimmy O'Rourke's. From Cultormore House they moved into Pelletstown and then on to Tom Sheridan's at Curraghtown.

Light had now started to fade slightly, near jockey Barry Geraghty's home, so Pat Coyle blew for home to end a good cross country day which had shown excellent horsemanship, happily without any untoward results.

As usual with the Wards there were English visitors among the car followers. In this case Rupert Andrews, joint master of the Devon and Somerset Staghounds and his wife, Tess, maintained a knowledgeable view of events all day.

## ***Second Visit to the Wards***

My second visit to the Wards, in December, was to their meet at the home of huntsman Pat Coyle and his wife Deirdre which was, as usual, a very generously catered for event.

Pat Coyle was assisted by whippers-in Kieran Ryan, Darren Campbell and Colm Dwyer while joint masters Seamus Fitzsimons and David Baker had charge of a forty strong mounted field, which included some visitors from South Africa.

The first fence, an open ditch behind the meet, accounted for Colm Dwyer and a lady member who is now known as Slattery's dismounted foot! Happily both they and their horses were able to continue after being reunited.

Matters moved on to Meade's Brook and joint master John Duffy's property at Moore Park at a fast pace on this mild day. This pace continued across Raymond McGrath's and Duffy's of Malhide Inn then through to Priestsfields at Ardcaith Chapel, before continuing into James McGrath's and then right through Ardcaith village. The



*Huntsman Keith McCall with the Tynan & Armagh at Castleblaney.*

going was heavy, to say the least, with quite wet ground remaining the case at Seamus Burns's, through Michael Walls's and into Brendan McCaffery's, an honorary life member of the Hunt.

Moving into Nicky Connors's they crossed the main road towards Duleek then turned back towards Bellewstown Racecourse. As light was likely to soon fade Pat Coyle blew for home, at Bellewstown, to allow the drying process to begin.

## ***Tynan and Armagh Hunt Annual Charity Event***

Tynan and Armagh Hunt used their New Year's Day children's meet, in Richhill, as their annual charity event.

Eight young thrusters ranging from

nine to thirteen years were there at the end of the day and deserve great credit, as does the Normandy Inn, for providing the venue and hospitality.

The event generated £700 for the Riding for the Disabled (Armagh Branch) and the presentation of the cheque took place at the next meet, hosted by whipper-in Andy Philips and his wife Denise at their home outside Richhill.

On leaving Philips's the first draw, at Smith's, saw a fox afoot but after a short, sharp hunt it went to ground and was given best. The second draw, at George Walker's (joint master of the Armagh and Richhill Beagles) saw a hare rise and be hunted for two miles before hounds were stopped. At the



*Presentation of cheque by Tynan & Armagh Hunt to Riding for the Disabled, Armagh Branch.*



host's orchard the third draw saw another hare rise to run over Hutchinson's, McVittie's and Starrett's then on to Stevenson's where a fox also went afoot. Hounds continued on their hare over Jenkinson's and then Allen's before losing it at Fulton's. Another fox was put afoot in Black's planting, which ran over Nicholl's, at the old railway, before crossing Moffatt's, Pillow's and on to Matchett's, where he was lost. As it was now 5.30pm home was blown to enable everyone to test the ladies of the hunt and their culinary skills, which were not found wanting!

### **Death of Billy Vance MH**

The death, at 84 years of age, of Billy Vance came as a great shock to the Monaghan and Fermanagh communities but to the hunting and point to point sections in particular.

Having recovered from very serious head injuries, after a fall from a young horse, Billy had enjoyed a renaissance on his return to the hunting field after a two year absence. This return was due in no small measure to the care and attention of his younger son, Andrew, who is a Doctor in Lancashire.

Billy was Master of the Fermanagh Harriers from 1963 until his death and hunted hounds until that fall. For seventeen seasons he did so from his marvellous grey mare 'Sonnet,' who was out of his famous point to point winning mare "Annie Sue VI".

I saw Billy, on Sonnet, days after his 84th birthday giving others a lead at the Opening Meet and will remember forever his stentorian tones saying: "Follow me, I'll give you a lead." Sonnet and he did not just cross country, they glided over it.

In an age when the terms 'legend' and 'icon' are all too cheaply bestowed I think that other words should be used in Billy Vance's case. He was once pressed, at very short notice, to ride in a Hunt Chase and was given a tabard bearing the

number 75. On completing a very impressive round the announcer said: "Number 75 ladies and gentlemen, Billy Vance, that is not his number it's his age." The resultant ovation said everything about the affection in which he was held. That 75th birthday coincided with the death of his very good friend Michael Hicks and that fact occupied Billy's every thought, rather than his own milestone.

His horsemanship was exemplary. I remember presenting him with an award, on behalf of Irish Countrysports and Country Life magazine saying that watching Billy on horseback was like looking at Ernie Wise and his wig – I couldn't see the join!

Equal to his horsemanship was Billy's hound management and it was fitting that he was preceded to his grave by two of the last hounds that he bred, 'Jester' and 'Joyful,' which were led by Caitriona Conlan, a dedicated puppy walker. Billy's joint master Richard Trimble led Sonnet alongside them.

A hugely well attended funeral in the Presbyterian Church, Clones, Co Monaghan, now moved to the Presbyterian graveyard a mile or so outside the town. Here, Johnny Vance

MH blew 'Going Home' for his father then Bobby Kellet (Ballymacad Foxhounds), Patrick Murphy MH (Fermanagh Harriers) and David Rodgers MH (Sunnyland Beagles) blew 'Gone Away' in tribute to this truly iconic and legendary hunting man.

I will leave the last word to Bill Montgomery, Chairman of the Northern Ireland Masters of Hounds Association, who, when I rang him to tell him of Billy's death, said: "I can say that we will never see his like again."

Billy is survived by his wife Maeve, his sons Johnny and Andrew and by his daughters Susan and Clare, who both whipped-in to him and, most importantly, by his grandchildren Daniel, Arabella and Chloe who are already keeping their grandfather's standard flying on the hunting field.

Everyone in hunting extends their most sincere condolences to the Vance family on their very great loss.

*The incomparable M.J. Vance, MFH  
Fermanagh Harriers at Newbliss.  
(Photo Tom Fulton)*





# Terrier, Lurcher & Whippet Show Roundup

## *The Talk Of The Town Raceday, Old Leighlin, Co Carlow, Sunday 1st November*

Historians have documented the importance of Old Leighlin and its antiquities in a number of important sources over the years. For the canine fraternity, the most important date on the calendar was to make a trip to The Talk Of The Town Race Track, in the beautiful countryside of Old Leighlin, Co Carlow for a good day's racing. The Talk Of The Town is run by the McGrath Family, with Pat McGrath, himself being an avid sportsman.

This was my first visit to this track and I was very pleasantly surprised. A great location and I was so impressed with the whole set up. The track distance was excellent, the track was flat and grassy, and the view of the dogs from the start line to the finish was superb. The racing organisation was impeccable, with no delays between races. Stewards were situated in the correct positions to verify the winners, resulting in proceedings running like clockwork.

It was nice to talk to so many old friends and one two the first I met were Karen and Peter Cummins. Billy Craig was there with his winning dogs and his brand new dog transporter. Billy, congratulations on your wins and the best of luck with your new trailer. My good friend Jed Donagh was also there and as usual was always ready to give a helping hand. Mickey and Michael Quinn came all the way down from Lurgan Co Armagh, just out for a good day's racing and a bit of craic. The field was full of keen sportsmen and women from north and south of the border, too numerous to mention.

### **Results**

Under 21" - Nigel Greer with Kildrum  
Under 23" - Darren Kenny with Mouse  
Under 25" - Martin Kenny with Pam  
Hairy Dog - Darren Kenny with Corrs Light

### ***The Jim Clarke Memorial Cup - Nicole Smith with Scooby***

It was good to see Anna Clarke presenting her late Dad's Memorial Cup to the very worthy winner Nicole Smith and her winning dog Scooby. Many thanks to everyone who made the day such a success. I am already looking forward to more of the same in 2016.

### ***The Combined Clubs Christmas Dog Show 19th December***

A former Manor House, the Bannvale House Hotel is a beautiful Old World Hotel set in 13 Acres of private woodland in the County Down countryside and sits off the main road between Gilford and Banbridge.

The annual Christmas dog show is always a welcome break from the trials and tribulations of Christmas shopping, and all the razzmatazz that goes with the festive season. Although there were no snow flakes falling, the atmosphere was full of Christmas cheer. It was nice to see such a large turnout to join in the festive fun .

### **Results**

Children's Handling Class Taylor Oliver with Lucky; Adam Hughes with Nellie; Liam Campbell with Susie  
Overall Champion Puppy - Stephen Ross with Toby  
Overall Champion Whippet - Nicky Robinson with Barney  
Overall Champion Lurcher - Sean Burke with Jack  
Overall Champion Terrier - Billy Craig with Carlow  
Overall Champion Strong Dog - Nicole Cunningham with Leo  
Overall Best in Show and Show Champion - Billy Craig with Carlow  
The Combined Clubs always have a few surprise presentations on Christmas show day and this year was no exception, with the following awards being presented:  
Country Sports Personality - Albert J Titterington  
Champion Elite Racer of the year - Billy Craig with 007  
Champion Whippet - Janet Duke with Oscar  
Champion Lurcher Pup - Michael Quinn with Hoss  
Champion Racing Whippet 2015 Susan McCann with Bella  
Champion All Rounder - Leroy McCullough with Tizer  
Congratulations to all the recipients, all very well deserved indeed. Many thanks the following: Judges - Whippets Leroy McCullough; Lurchers Jonny Wilson; Terrier and Strong Dogs Martin Foy and to all the organisers and helpers. I look forward to more of the same in 2016.



# Talk of the Town Raceday



(Above) (left to right) Under 23 Winner Darren Kenny, Under 25 Winner Martin Kenny with Pam, Jim Clarke Memorial Cup Winner Nicole Smith with Scooby, Hairy Dog Winner Fran Kenny with Corris Light.



(Right) Under 21 Winner - Nigel Greer with Kildrum.

## The Combined Clubs Christmas Dog Show



(Left) Overall Champion Terrier and Overall Show Champion and Best in Show - Billy Craig with Carlow.



(Right) Overall Champion Whippet - Nicky Robinson with Barney.



(Left) Overall Champion Lurcher - Sean Burke with Jack.



(Right) Overall Champion Puppy - Stephen Ross with Toby.



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# The Irish Game Fair at Shanes Castle hosts Ireland's largest and most varied international canine event



*Real excitement and agility on display*

Dog lovers will be in spoilt for choice with canine attractions on both days of the Irish Game Fair planned for Shanes Castle on the 25th & 26th June.

There simply is no event in Ireland that can compete with the variety and prestige of the canine events at the fair, which include very serious international gundog and terrier, whippet & lurcher action; lots of have-a-go fun activities and displays, and even practical advice on how to train your own dog — plus a huge range of stands with all sorts of products for the dog owner.

## *International Gundogs*

The fair hosts Ireland's largest international gundog event with teams from England, Scotland and Wales competing with the top handlers from the ROI and NI in the Feedwell International Retriever Tests and the Red Mills Spaniel Tests. There are, of course, other tests open to all.



*A stylish retrieve in the gundog competitions*

International Terrier, Lurcher and Whippet events in the 29th Annual All Ireland Championships

The fair host the largest and most prestigious All Ireland Championships in racing and showing open to all and two pre qualified championships — the Feedwell Five Nations Whippet Championships and the Red Mills Master McGrath



Challenge — both with qualifiers throughout the UK and Ireland.

*A tight finish to the Master McGrath.*

## *Canine displays, dog shows and good causes*

The main arena hosts a huge number of canine displays including a training master class by the International Dog Guru Keith Mathews, assisted by his son Cole (the Mini Guru); horse and hound displays; the Victorian Poacher with his lurcher and whippets; dog agility competitions; international gundog handling displays; and - new for this year - Derek Davidson with his Terrier Racing Roadshow.



*Two Dog Gurus for the price of one.*

Add in a KC group dog show (including Irish Wolfhounds); a dog agility show and the SACS Gundog Scurry in aid of gundog re-homing and you can see that nowhere in Ireland will you see as many different kinds of dog in such a wide range of scenarios.



*The Gundog Scurry helping gundog re-homing.*



# Up, up and away!



*I began my day at the foot of the mountain accompanied by a lurcher and a teckel, but little did I know that I would be transported back to a time long ago.*

I had a small bag over my shoulder with a flask inside and a shotgun with me. This was the third or fourth day I had done this since October and, while not in the habit of mixing lurchers and guns, doing it this particular way works well.

The ground where I have permission is flat and is criss-crossed with purposely dug drainage ditches which due to the two days of heavy rain were full to the brim with water and hopefully ducks. Along the drains are

rabbit warrens, not big ones, but plenty of them with many rabbits feeding out in the sometimes damp fields among rushes and whins. To walk for either rabbits with the dogs, or ducks, can be a hard decision, so for a day in October I tried both.

Most of the time it has been one or the other, but occasionally we have had a mixed bag. I squelched through puddle after puddle as the rain bucketed down. The lurcher walked with her head down and the teckel ran alongside

looking very serious and trying to keep up! If you ever watch a teckel running, imagine a xylophone playing two notes very quickly in the background and you will smile.

We crossed a fence and quickly arrived at our destination, although looking at the dirty brown water I didn't hold much hope for a duck. It seemed that while rain would help us, too much rain had washed away all the feeding and our ducks had switched location. This was going to be a



*Archie crossing the stream.*





*Fudge on early lookout.*

tracking day. Ducks are always in the locality but, depending on the weather, it can be a job to find them. Some days the first drain will be full and you could easily fold a half dozen in less than a mile.

Other days, I could walk the district and end up with only one for my troubles, but if it was easy everyone would do it. Two young bullocks had broken from the field and in their obvious childlike behaviour had decided that the drain was much more fun and were enjoying themselves just walking up and down and drinking from it, caring little for myself or the dogs as we passed.

### ***As the teal sprang into mid air — two shots and one bird fell***

The rain continued and we were now a few miles from the truck and our first drain. It was getting a little difficult to see when, as they always do when my mind is wondering over this or that, several teal sprang into mid air! I fired two shots and one fell. I kept an eye on the remaining birds and marked them down several hundred yards ahead. Now, when this happens I make a note of where they landed and then adjust accordingly. Sometimes they paddle ahead, sometimes back. So when I follow on and approach the area I get ready to shoot.

There have been plenty of times I passed them thinking they were ahead and other times I thought I had passed

them, only for the flock to spring once again. This is the joy, the excitement and magic of drain shooting for ducks. You just do not know what is going to happen. For a mile or more it is empty, I'm careful to keep back far enough that they don't see me approaching, but close enough that I stir them; with an 'up, up and away' they seem to lift vertically and disappear while I am still getting the gun up!

As winter passes, the birds get more wild and the slightest noise, even a twig breaking under my boot, sends them flying into the air and zooming off down a drain, where once at a safe distance they will drop down. This is when I find they paddle most and seem to use this as a method of evading a keen gun. Hitting the water a few hundred yards down and then paddling back, like an old fox doubling back on hounds.

I followed on, kept well out and kept the dogs at my heel. The teckel was looking at me for reassurance as he is not too keen on the gun and as, I was about to kneel down to offer him what he wanted WHOOSH the Teal sprang! They were now banking right, I swung and two shots later saw one bird go down but suspected two.

The field was in winter barley and although short and neat the bird was hard to find, but as I did so the lurcher was sniffing at another. Quite unusually she will retrieve pheasants and snipe, but will not pick up ducks, woodcock or even look at magpies. I stopped and

tucked the birds in beside my flask, sat in under a little bridge for a few minutes out of the rain and considered my next move. To go towards the shore could be a bad choice, as the rain was getting worse and wouldn't be any better. I decided to make a diversion and try another drain closer to my old home; there may be a chance of a rabbit too for the dogs in the fields either side.

### ***Half a dozen sprang from the 'empty' drain***

I trudged on the three miles or so and, as I approached, I peered over the hedge and directly up the drain to see if it held anything. I saw nothing but walked on anyway and it became quickly obvious that there were a few rabbits about. Sand spilled out from the sides of banks, there were runs here and there and little Archie was going back and fourth as the Xylophone went full speed. WHOOSH - half a dozen teal sprang from the drain that was 'empty' and I fired two haphazard shots in their direction. The birds flew up and over the hedge and then circled higher and higher.

I quickly realised that I was watching just three birds but thought more than that had sprung. I loaded another two cartridges in the gun. I found a teal on the ground and as I went to pick it up three came at full speed from left to right. They took me by surprise, I didn't even see them properly and simply fired as they passed, two falling with a thud on the far side. I grinned to myself and felt like a skilled shot even though it was a mere fluke. I crossed the railway and got up a few fields when I had to sit down. I was soaked outside but dry inside, with a boot beginning to leak and it was then I realised I was somewhere I hadn't been in years.

Hazel trees had been torn out and stripped away

The narrow wooden bridge had collapsed and fallen away, replaced by four concrete beams covered in wet sloppy mud. The little wooden fence





*A few for the pot.*

had gone and the stream was overgrown and thick with rushes and weeds. I looked to my right and up the hill and the next field was visible and it shouldn't have been. The hazel trees had been torn out and stripped away, replaced by new straw-coloured posts

covered with tight shiny wire. The hill was overgrown too. What once looked like three giant steps grazed by sheep was overgrown and covered in brambles and whins. I looked left and saw the little wood and like they always did, a wood pigeon broke out and

headed uphill.

The large moss covered stones stood as they always had and the hazel still grew in an arch and still looked like an inviting entrance to a world of excitement inside. A world full of rabbit holes, pigeon nests, hidden streams and most of all peace from the outside world. But I didn't enter the wood because my heart wouldn't let me.

It was bad enough standing at the foot of the hill and almost hearing the joyful cheer of young boys and dogs, of almost feeling the summer sun on my face or the winter snow on my nose. It was bad enough that the hazel had gone and the field had overgrown, that the bridge and its clear water and sticklebacks and newts were no more. And worst of all, that my old house still stood above it all. In that moment, I wanted it all back: my ferret hutch on the hill behind, the spaniels running loose, the tree houses, the smell of cut grass and freshly dug soil, the feeling of childhood freedom and happiness. Looking around me I thought of a poem 'All that's Past,' by Walter De La Mare:

Very old are the woods;  
And the buds that break  
Out of the brier's boughs,  
When March winds wake,  
So old with their beauty are.

And it goes on to say:

Very old are we men;  
Our dreams are tales  
Told in dim Eden  
By Eve's nightingales;  
We wake and whisper awhile,  
But, the day gone by,  
Silence and sleep like fields  
Of amaranth lie

I took in a breath of air, regretted coming up that far and decided I had enough ducks, soaked up enough rain and walked enough for today. As I crossed the railway and back down the fields, I turned and looked back and realised that those days, just like the teal, were 'up, up and away.'



# Cleggan Shoot - up there with the very best!

*The Cleggan Shoot at Cleggan Lodge in Co Antrim ticks all the boxes for this roving syndicate in search of top quality shooting days throughout Ireland.*

The Cleggan Shoot is situated just four miles or so outside the village of Broughshane on the road to Carnlough. I heard about this shoot from one of my shooting friends whose glowing enthusiasm for it indicated that we needed to make some enquiries to see what was on offer.

I am a member of a shooting party of good friends and colleagues mainly from the Lurgan - Portadown area but many of our members also reside in the North Down.

We have been shooting together now for approximately 15 years and we all enjoy a good days shooting and of course the good craic, so I decided to have a closer look at the shoot and the possibilities of a few days shooting for season 2015/2016.

Cleggan Lodge is the home of Hugh O'Neill, the third Lord Rathcavan, who started a partridge shoot in 2000 on some of the old Cleggan grouse moorlands, adding to an already fine pheasant shoot along the steep banks descending from the mountain.

And so it was, on a very warm day in August, that my wife and I travelled to the shooting grounds by arrangement with the estate manager Mr. Joe Taylor. As we entered the estate I was amazed at the quantity and quality of young pheasants. They were everywhere, on the driveway and in the many fields approaching the shooting Lodge. I have never seen as many birds in all my shooting life which is now approaching 40 years and I was impressed.

At the shooting lodge I met with Joe

Taylor and the keeper, John Johnston. What immediately stuck me was the relaxed, friendly atmosphere and the very warm welcome we received. I had an immediate feeling that this shoot was of very high class and that we would be all made so very welcome.

## ***Mountain ranges and large wooded areas***

After a cup of tea, Joe drove us around the estate and covered every inch of the vast expanse of this shoot. Pheasants and partridges in their thousands and absolute wonderful scenery, combining mountain ranges and large wooded areas where pheasants were in abundance.

What a venue for a days shooting: I have been shooting in Scotland and in Ireland on many famous estates but for quality of what I had seen and experienced so far, I thought that this shoot must be up there with the best, so I booked some sport for our team.

## ***The Day arrives***

Our first 100 bird pheasants and partridge, was in early December and at 7am or so I began to load my vehicle with all my equipment, guns boots, etc., and of course the adrenaline was beginning to flow as I looked forward to what lay ahead. Despite my early rise, the traffic was very heavy going into Belfast from North Down and I had to sit in long queues getting through Belfast City. But, on the M2 motorway to Ballymena, the traffic eased and my drive to Cleggan was quite a pleasant trip, but What a different day to my earlier visit in August, with the rain was teaming



*Lord Rathcavan meeting Guns from the Mid Ulster and North Down Shooting Party at Cleggan Shoot.*





*Gerard in customary action as he takes on a downwind partridge.*



*Guns spread waiting at View Rock Drive.*

down and the wind howling. Was this going to spoil our days shooting, I wondered?

I arrived at around 8.45am and most of the Guns had assembled and were

having a cup of tea or coffee. The beaters with their fine dogs had all collected in the courtyard and the atmosphere was building up. My adrenaline always flows in this

atmosphere and with the excitement of a good day's shooting foremost in my mind. After almost 40 years of shooting this feeling never leaves me; I love my shooting.

The Guns assembled and we all had the pleasure of meeting John Johnston the keeper, and Laurens Wells, the new under-keeper. Laurens has previous experience working on a very large shoot in the Midlands in England.

After the usual very important gun safety chat from Joe, we selected our pegs and looked forward to a good day's shooting. This was to be a mixed day of partridge and pheasants. At Cleggan there is very little walking for the guns as we were taken from drive to drive in a very impressive mini bus. The only walking you have to do is to your peg, so it suited us all very well.

### ***View Rock Drive - partridge***

This drive was beyond belief. The wind was blowing a howler, as the guns were placed along a valley covering approx 250 yards with high ground facing. The horn sounded and within a few minutes with the strong wind behind them, the partridge began to fly over the guns at a speeds I have never before witnessed. I heard many shots being discharged but saw very few birds falling. Gerry McCluskey, one of our finest shots, was on the next peg to me. He downed two of three very high birds. I fired approx 10 cartridges only to be rewarded by one very high partridge. One of our Guns asked Joe if he was feeding the partridge on rocket fuel - I would not have been surprised if the answer had been yes.

### ***The Valley Drive - partridge***

A very similar drive to View Rock with partridge in abundance. These birds were in their hundreds and very, very testing. The Guns were in fine form and had great shooting as the birds were in full flight, aided by a gale force wind behind them.

### ***Elevenes in the field***

We all assembled for a short break



when some drinks were served including tea, coffee and a nice glass of Port if desired. At this point we were greeted by his Lordship, Lord Rathcavan. I had never met him before and had the pleasure of introducing myself and the team of Guns to him. He made us so very welcome and hoped we would be returning in the future.

At this point, the partridge bag was around 26 birds. Everyone talked about the speed of them and the difficulty of shooting such high and testing birds. Little did we know what was coming next.

### ***The Return Drive - partridge***

Joe Taylor advised us to get well stocked up with cartridges as the next drive, known as The Return, would be some of the most difficult shooting imaginable. How right he was!

Again we were on the side of the mountain, with ten pegs spread over approximately 300 meters. The horn sounded and we had at least a five minute wait until, suddenly, the sky filled with high flying partridge, many at the limit of the Guns' ability. Despite this, birds were downed as well learnt the real meaning of what we had been told about 'giving it lead' and difficult shooting. I was using my Wesley Richard side by side with 30 inch barrels, improved cylinder and quarter, with number seven shot in the quarter chamber and took a couple of very high birds but cleanly missed a lot as well. Despite our best efforts, this drive only produced 16 birds in the bag.

At this point we returned to the shooting lodge where we were joined by the beaters and dog handlers and all enjoyed a very nice lunch together. This is a great idea as you get to know the beaters by name and new friendships are made. After lunch we were driven to Drive 4, known as Mann's Cottage.

### ***Mann's Cottage Drive - pheasants***

This drive is more on lower ground within the estate and in a wooded area. The wind had died down a little and as



*Some excellent dog work was by the beaters and pickers up.*



*A springer in action at Cleggan.*

we were away from the mountainous area, we expected the pheasants to be flying well. Again, we were not disappointed.

The horn sounded and the Guns awaited anxiously. The pheasants came over in a testing manner but birds were being shot in abundance. The Guns were certainly in form!

Some of the team had the pleasure of rights and lefts and I saw some very high and testing birds being shot. With nine really great high and fast pheasants to my own gun on this drive, it was probably my best shooting of the season. A double sounding of the horn signalled the end of the drive. Everyone

had good shooting, the total of 62 pheasants being added to the bag.

The light was getting poor and the rain was again beginning to pour and after totalling the bag at 102 birds we decided to call it a day — not just a day, but a most enjoyable day for all of us.

One or two important notes: The beaters and dog handlers were of the highest order, with no shouting or screaming as you sometimes can hear on other shoots. Just quiet tap, tapping and the occasional noise of a flapper to rise the birds. Speaking of dogs, I saw some very well trained gundogs working to the whistle and picking up



— a real pleasure to see on the day. Joe Taylor has a springer spaniel, the like of which I have never seen, what a well trained spaniel, working to perfection.

In conclusion, The Cleggan shoot is blessed with great grounds and a massive amount of game birds which

will test the very best guns. It is well organised by experienced people and the entire day ran like clockwork. Most importantly, we were made so very welcome by Joe, John and Laurens and of course Lord Rathcavan. We will definitely be back to this great shoot for years to come.

I can highly recommend Cleggan to anyone in the UK or Ireland as it's a really fine sporting shoot which is run by friendly, helpful and professional folk. It was a pleasure to have been there.

For more information please visit <http://clegganshoot.com>



*Another Gun swings onto a high bird.*



# Old Magic

*If you spy a small brown bag tied to the top rail of an aged wooden gate, don't touch it, especially on Saint Bridget's Eve.*

Liam McGlynn was not the kind of man you would choose for a neighbour. In fact, most people would cross the street to avoid him if they saw him approaching. Invariably clad in a grimy combat jacket and exuding a habitual air of menace, McGlynn had the pitiless eye of a raven perched on the gallows.

For years a thorn in the side of his local community, he had little respect for either game laws or age-old boundaries, and had, with the aid of his lurcher Meg, poached rabbits and hares from half the farms in the county.

Those who possessed sufficient courage to challenge McGlynn whilst illegally taking game, soon learned to fear the heavy blackthorn stick which was his constant companion. Having once suffered violence at his hands, few, if any, were prepared to repeat the process. Endlessly frustrated by their

*A whitewashed farmhouse stood close by.*

failure to secure a prosecution, the Garda Síochána implored those who had fallen foul of McGlynn, to give evidence against him, and thus bring to an end his reign of lawlessness. Fear and intimidation however, were more than enough to ensure widespread silence, and inexplicable amnesia in the witness box.

Always able to find a butcher who didn't ask awkward questions, McGlynn easily managed to convert poached game into ready cash; money, which invariably, travelled the short distance across the polished bar top, at O'Brian's in the high street.

So it was that on a fine morning on the very last day of January, McGlynn found himself with Meg at heel, wandering a maze of sunken lanes miles from town.

With drinking funds running low, he

fully intended to take as many rabbits and hares as he could, from this previously unexplored farmland. If any cow man or landowner attempted to stop him, they would soon feel the weight of his blackthorn stick, and learn that Liam McGlynn was not the man to tangle with.

Flushed from a clump of leafless brambles, a well grown rabbit bolted out across the sunken lane, as it attempted to reach the safety of its burrow. Swift as the coney was, the jinking creature was no match for Meg, as the young lurcher caught and killed her quarry with the speed of an adder's strike.

With soft brown eye and a coat the colour of mountain mist, the young bitch possessed a gentle nature, and could be little blamed if her master was as violent as he was intemperate. A victim of circumstance, coursing was her instinct and inheritance.

***The farmer's presence was indicated by a plume of sweet smelling turf smoke***

Working the hedgerows in this fashion, McGlynn took half a dozen rabbits, until eventually, the green lane ended at an aged wooden gate. Leaning on the top rail, Liam surveyed the field beyond and noted with delight, that the grazing pasture held an active warren at its upper end. The fact that a whitewashed farmhouse stood close by was of little concern to him, as was the farmer's obvious presence, indicated by a plume of sweet smelling turf smoke, rising unhindered into the morning air. If he were challenged by the landowner, he would simply give them a hiding they would never forget, and then continue adding to his already weighty game bag.

Vaulting the gate, McGlynn strode





out toward the distant warren with Meg at heel; curious cattle snorting and tasting the air with their tongues as he passed by. Although rabbits were not in evidence, Liam's experience told him that the warren was both active and well established, for tracks littered the mouth of every burrow.

Scanning the field for potential quarry, McGlynn noticed a diminutive figure making towards him from the direction of the gateway. Much to his surprise, Liam noted that his challenger was female! Caring not a jot whose land he may be upon, McGlynn cast Meg out across the field in search of rabbits, choosing simply to ignore the approaching figure.

### ***The 'wise woman' showed not a sign of fear***

"This is my land, and you do not have permission to be here," called out a voice, and Liam turned to face his accuser. Now only a few yards distant, he saw before him a white haired old lady, who stood little over five feet tall. She showed not the slightest sign of fear, despite his habitual scowl, and met his glare with the most piercing green eyes he had ever encountered. Referred to locally as a 'wise woman,' the old lady would have carried a less sympathetic title, but a few generations before — witch! The old woman repeated her earlier statement, but McGlynn scornfully continued to watch Meg quarter the ground.

"Permission is it missus?" retorted Liam with a derisive snort. "And what exactly are you going to do about it — throw me off?" The old lady looked at him, but did not answer. "I will go wherever I like, whenever I like, and neither you nor anyone else is going to stop me. Have you got that?" added McGlynn with a sneer.

The old lady placed her hands in her coat pockets, and said in a voice quite unwavering: "I am asking you to leave, now." Raising his blackthorn stick so that it was clear the old woman could see it, Liam hissed: "You can't make me leave you auld bat, so scram, before

I give you something to complain about."

Pursing her lips, the old woman regarded him for a moment, then in a voice which was little more than a whisper, uttered: "I may not be able to make you leave; but I can make you stay." Hearing this, McGlynn snorted: "What?" but the old lady had already turned and was making her way back to the gate.

Running the dog on, Liam paid no heed to the old woman, failing to notice that she paused momentarily on reaching the weathered, wooden gate. Had McGlynn been more observant, he might have noticed that at this point the old woman took from her coat pocket, a small, brown, cloth bag, tied at the neck with a length of black ribbon. He may also have been surprised to see her tie the bag to the gate's topmost rail; but

he did not. Had he known what the bag was, and that it contained seven, short, sharpened, hazel sticks, his blood would have run cold, for the brown pouch was nothing more than a piseog, a charm capable of fixing the most powerful curses known to man. If his heart had not been gripped by fear at this realisation, then it would surely have turned to water, when he noted that the date was in fact the 31st of January, or Saint Bridget's Eve; a day known as 'Imbolc' to the ancient Celts, and a time when dark magic and spells cast, reached a terrifying potency.

Still working the edge of the warren with Meg, Liam stopped and raised his head, as a piercing whistle came from the direction of the nearby farmhouse. To his astonishment, Meg reacted instantly, by streaking across the field and vanishing through the hedge in the

*McGlynn had little respect for either game laws or age-old boundaries.*







*He fully intended to take as many rabbits as he could.*

direction of the rising chimney smoke. No amount of threats or calling would bring her back, so in anger and frustration, McGlynn headed toward the field gate, determined to retrieve his errant dog, and to give the old hag the back of his hand. With head down he marched across the pasture, seething with rage, and gripping the shaft of his blackthorn stick ever tighter. Imagine his bewilderment then, when upon reaching the gate, he looked up to find that he was faced not with a means of exit, but by a solid hawthorn hedge over seven feet high.

Momentarily baffled, he spun around to see that the gate he sought, was in fact over a hundred yards away in the middle of the opposite hedge! In his fury he must surely have become confused, and headed off in the wrong direction, only now realising his mistake. Even more determined than ever to teach the old woman a lesson she would never forget, McGlynn once more set out across the pasture toward the gate.

Liam had never been a nervous person, or one to doubt his own sanity, but when for a second time, he found himself faced with an impenetrable hedge where a gate ought to be, he felt mildly disturbed, and wondered if this could be the start of madness?

Throwing down his game bag, McGlynn turned once more to discover that the gate toward which had had been walking, was in fact fixed firmly in the opposite hedge, over a hundred

yards away. This was ridiculous!

### ***For the first time in his life Liam McGlynn was afraid.***

Fixing his eyes firmly on the gateway, Liam strode toward the point of exit with considerable purpose, and without ever once taking his eyes off the gate's top rail. He knew that he had done this, but still couldn't explain why it was, that having crossed the field to its edge, he was again confronted with seven feet of thorn rich hedge! Bathed in a cold sweat, the panicking poacher turned to see that once again, the field gate was standing boldly on the opposite side of the field, where it gleamed in the morning light, over a hundred yards away. For the first time in his life Liam McGlynn was afraid.

Without once lowering his eyes, the frightened poacher ran with all the speed he could muster, straight toward the cursed gate. Despite not having deviated one yard in his course, a wheezing McGlynn crashed face first into claw sharp thorns, where only moments before he knew a gate had been!

Face streaked with blood and lathered in sweat, McGlynn hardly dared turn around, for he knew what would greet him. Sure enough, in the opposite hedge, and no more that a hundred yards away, stood the implacable wooden gate.

I could continue to record here, how driven half mad by his inability to leave the pasture, McGlynn raged around the

field in pursuit of the bewitched gateway. I might also note how, gibbering like a thing possessed, he wore out the very soles of his boots, as day upon day he ran himself to a shadow in his attempt to escape the field. All of this would be true, as would the fact that his hands were reduced to bloody shreds, from desperately clawing at the ever thickening hawthorn.

If you happen to be wandering along a sunken lane many miles from town, and come upon a high hedged field, you may yourself hear McGlynn's cries of despair, as reduced to a shambling and ragged figure, he stumbles along to this very day, on feet worn down to the bone. You might, if you are particularly observant, even spot a small brown bag, tied to the top rail of an aged wooden gate, and feel the urge to remove it. Might I strongly suggest that you resist this desire; especially if you happen to be afoot on Saint Bridget's Eve.



*A few yards distant stood a white haired old lady.*



# Country Chat

*Bogged down by global warming, Billy has a hankering for the 'owl days' when it was battery powered TV as you tried to keep 'er lit.*

I have started this article on yet another very wet day and unfortunately it seems to be a regular occurrence now. I am beginning to believe that there are as many wet days as there are dry days throughout the year. If I had nothing better to do, I would join those odd folk who seem to have the time and the mindset to record everything — one lady even records when the first leaf falls off a particular tree in her garden and its seasonal changes throughout the year. I am sure she is not alone in this. I would count how many days it rains from the first day of January to the last day of December, with some sort of fancy graph up on the wall, indicating in colour, heavy rain, light rain or just a skip. Yes, I know, that sort of information is probably forthcoming at nothing more than a touch of a button, but I don't trust them. They tell you one day that an apple is bad for you, the next morning they say sorry, we meant an orange!

At present I have fourteen dogs in kennels, two of them are school dogs, or to be more precise one in for gundog training, the other for general obedience as a family pet. There is one in for boarding, because she is an ex-school dog and the other two I am looking after for a friend who's on holiday, well he does the same for me. But what with this constant wet weather, training and 'walkie-poos' is virtually impossible,

especially the training. What dog in its right mind would want to 'sit and stay' with the water coming down like stair- rods and bouncing off the poor cratur's head. Even the ducks and hens don't stay out too long, they grab a quick feed and its back to the coop, hens on the upper deck, ducks at floor level. The entrance into the back garden is in gutters, not the fowl to blame, but by me coming and going.

I have always described the climate in this country as the sort of climate where you couldn't leave a pair of socks out overnight - at any time of the year that is. One lady I know goes to her family in Australia every winter and comes back home in the springtime. Oh how I wish! Weather-wise, it must be just as depressing on her return as it was on her departure. On her way out of the country she must be passing the migratory geese on their way in and on her return, passes them again on their way home. Although I am certain that they fly that little bit quicker when they are leaving than they did on their way in.

I seem to be bogged down in some sort of a 'small-stock' quagmire. I can't travel that far because of the dogs, ducks and hens. In fact, if I am away for the day I have to get back before darkness sets in, in order to close up the fowl, especially as they are all free-range, or they will without doubt

become fodder for the many foxes that patrol the area. Last year, in March, when I left home to go to the grouse pair counts in Scotland, I forgot to tell a friend that I was away. I told him a month or so earlier when I was going, but forgot to remind him. I let the ducks and the hens out that morning before I left to catch the ferry. Around about two in the morning at my hotel I awoke as if someone had just hit me a smack. I sat bolt upright in the bed with that awful feeling like I had a breeze block in my stomach. When I phoned my friend later, by the time he was able to do something about the situation, I had lost three ducks, a mother and two of her offspring, one of which was a cute little black duck, completely black and of miniature size. Some of the ducks are well over ten years of age and I have often thought of giving them away to someone else but, at the risk of appearing a little quirky, I would be very fussy as to where they ended up. Unbelievably, nearly all of our club shoots, which are held every Saturday fortnight, were verging on either being cancelled, or we quit at lunchtime because it was just too wet. Tweeds old and new were covered up by an assortment of waterproofs, the majority of which - top and bottom - never seem to match. I have often thought it would be more fitting if we all threw our waterproofs on the ground and started again.

Now here is an interesting thing: an owl lifted out of the marsh in broad daylight and later from an embankment of white grass. It was larger, at least in flight than the barn owl, it was resting or roosting on the ground and had a white or buff coloured underside, brownish with streaks of grey and black on the upper body and broad wings in flight. I contacted all those who had



*Team Billy on parade for the grouse counts in Scotland.*





*The chucks take in some rare unseasonal sunshine.*

seen it a day or two later to confirm its colours and all of them thought the same as I have just described. I think it was a short-eared owl as it is the only owl that roosts and nests on the ground, especially on marsh and heather. I once saw one on the Mournes, but either way it is a rare sighting indeed and made our day.

I will be the big 60 this month and, as you read this, will be officially retired from all things work-related. I have no regrets, from past to present, well none that I can do anything about now anyhow.

Born in the fifties, I still reminisce of what I like to think of as the good old days. I remember, back in the sixties, calling for my friend very early in the morning to go wildfowling. I would tap lightly on his bedroom window of his

parent's little cottage. Then still outside, follow him from one room to the other as he moved about inside by torchlight. There was no electric to the cottage, the only means of light was by a paraffin Tilly lamp, lowered from the roof by a rope on a pulley. Now and then we would have had time for a boiled egg and a round or two of toast. Whether it was the gas cooker, the bread, the egg or all three, the taste was such, albeit ever so simple, that I can still fondly remember it.

The television was run off a twelve volt battery and many times during an important programme, the battery would run low, although in those days every programme was important. So off we went to the village by bicycle to get a recharged battery. I loved those days, maybe not the hard times that our

parents experienced, but nonetheless a lovely time to live through as a child growing up. His mother could make pigeon soup like no other. Many a day I would be absolutely frozen when I arrived back to my friend's little cottage from a combination of remaining motionless beside those who did the shooting and inadequate clothing, and I would be seated beside a roaring fire and handed a hot bowl of pigeon soup. Delicious!

Finally, finishing as I started on the constant wet days of our present climate, as you were probably aware, back in November last year, one hundred and fifty leaders gathered in Paris to discuss climate change and of ways to curb the problem of global warming and the so-called greenhouse gas emissions. There is no doubt that something odd is taking place with our weather, for a start there is the unusual appearance of both flora and fauna, where and when it is least expected. In the days of my youth there was a distinct difference between the winter and the summer months.

My late brother and myself were reared in short trousers, our dear mother bless her, found it a lot cheaper to alter the longer version from the knee up, removing everything from the knee down. We must have been the only two children in County Down that would be building snowmen in December still wearing shorts. Mind you, in today's present climate, if you sent your children out to play in short trousers in the summer months, let alone December, you would have a fleet of social workers at your door, before you got your 'Kindle Fire' lit up!



*Hazy sunshine for Declan Feeny and son exercising the East Down foxhounds at Seaforde.*





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# A CHRISTMAS DINNER

*Johnny was undoubtedly the most knowledgeable and likeable rogue I ever met.*

It was my good fortune to have grown up on an agricultural estate where my father was resident Land Agent for some thirty years, enabling me to indulge my love for all country pastimes from a very early age, which included riding. It was whilst riding in the old beech forest that adjoined the northern end of the estate, which although open to the public, still retained large areas that were seldom disturbed, that I first made contact with a family of gypsies, true Romanies, clean proud people who fairly regularly passed through the district.

They were camped in a secluded dell, their three horse-drawn caravans both picturesque and spotless, their horses looking well cared for. I stopped to chat, admired a very nice young skewbald mare and asked if she was for sale? She was, as I well knew, for it was obvious the gypsies did a bit of horse-coping from the number around the camp. Later in the day, I went back with a friend, who owned several riding

and livery stables, and after much haggling a deal was struck and my friend bought the mare. This earned me the friendship of Johnny, who was obviously the leader of the group and that of his wife Tilly.

Johnny was of medium build, dark, wiry, with a nose that gave him a somewhat raptorial look. He had a great sense of humour, albeit at times somewhat bizarre, for there was nothing that he enjoyed more than baiting the local bobby, who ponderously cycled around the area. He was something of a loner, for he and Tilly had no children and often travelled without the company of the rest of the group.

I always felt slightly guilty when in their company, it was like fraternising with the enemy! I knew perfectly well that Johnny would not hesitate to set a snare along a roadside hedge, or knock a pheasant from its roost with a well-aimed shot from his catapult, but he was a fund of information on country lore, things both legal and illegal. He

owned three brindle lurcher bitches, like peas in a pod. Any time I came across Johnny, when he was in the area, they were never far from his side. They always reminded me of two lines from a poem, written back in the thirties, by Patrick Chalmers.

'A poacher to the eyelids as all the lurcher clan follows silent as a shadow and as clever as a man.'

I tried to make friends with them, but they treated me with almost supercilious disdain — they depicted the perfect example of 'the one man dog', they even ignored Tilly.

What, also, fascinated me was the fact that Johnny had two Old English Game cocks — truly magnificent birds. They roamed freely around the camp-site, totally unrestricted. I asked Johnny why he kept them on many occasions? The answer was always the same: "Maybe one day I'll show you."

***Never try to take it from behind, as the hare's reflexes are too quick***

It was Johnny who told me how to take a hare without using, net, gun, dog or snare, just using ones own hands. He assured me that all you had to do was to spot a hare in its form, well out in a field and start circling it, probably beginning at least 100 yards away, moving in towards one's quarry with ever decreasing circles. The hare, Johnny assured me, would become so mesmerised that, eventually, you could fall on it and grab it for the pot, but, under no circumstances, never try to take it from behind, as the hare's reflexes would be too quick. However, he was adamant that a hare's forward sight was slightly impaired, which gave the hunter that fractional advantage. I pooh-poohed Johnny's theory on this, but some years later found it confirmed in Bryan Vesey-Fitzgerald's delightful





book, 'It's My Delight.'

It was about six days before Christmas 1937 and I was on my way home around nine o'clock in the evening, from The Crown, a pub I was particularly fond of, only a few hundred yards from the estate boundary, taking a different route to return to the one I'd use going. As I rounded a bend on to several hundred yards of quiet straight country road, the headlights of my car picked out a horse tethered on the wide grass verge, then several more and finally a caravan that I knew well. As I drove past I saw Johnny, sitting on a stool by the dying embers of a wood fire. I had not seen him and Tilly for several months, so pulled up and walked back, greeting my gypsy friend warmly, just as Tilly came out of the caravan. She offered me a cup of cocoa, which I accepted. Johnny threw some more wood on the fire, disappeared momentarily into the darkness and returned with another stool. It was obvious that he was in a sour mood and I asked him what was wrong.

The answer came quickly and with some venom: "That so-and-so Bill Yeoman (head gamekeeper on the estate) was along here on his motor bike, about an hour ago. He had the cheek to stop and tell me to move on. I told him, quick, what I did on the public highway had nothing to do with him and to clear off." Johnny gave a laugh: "He did too when I walked towards him. He's a gutless devil anyway, but I'll have the last laugh come tomorrow morning." "What are you going to do?" "Why get our Christmas dinner of course." He sat quietly for a couple of minutes, then he turned to me and smiled: "You've always been wanting to know what I keep my gamecocks for. Well, if you're here around 6.30 tomorrow morning I'll show you. That is if you promise not to dob on me."

"Before I promise anything, what are you going to do?" Johnny was again silent, then laughed. "Either of my two cocks, I call them David and Goliath, will kill a cock pheasant in seconds. I

wait before dawn by a feed-ride and when an old cock flies down from his roost, I let one of my boys go and you know how an old pheasant will spar and try and see off any intruder, but with either of my boys it will be for the last time. It's really no contest, for I fix fighting spurs on my lads. Would you like to see them in action?"

### ***He's not going to miss a couple of cock pheasants***

The answer to that was. 'yes', but, as I explained at some length to Johnny, how could I knowingly condone his poaching pheasants off the estate my father managed? I finished up by saying, "It'd look good wouldn't it, if the agent's son was 'nicked', in the company of a gypsy, illegally taking game?" Johnny sat back and truly chortled. He was obviously feeling better. "There's no fear of that happening, my three 'girls' (his lurchers) stand guard at various vantage points and will be back and warn me at the slightest hint of trouble. Then I just lie low until the danger is over, or scarper." "That's all very well, but it'd still be poaching."

"So what? Your dad's governor is not going to miss a couple of cock pheasants out of the hundreds he's got. I bet he'll have a right good feed on Christmas Day, so why shouldn't Tilly and I?"

I got up, thanked Tilly for the cocoa and told Johnny I'd think about it and that's what I did for most of the night. I hardly slept at all. I longed to see David and Goliath in action. However, if I succumbed, it would truly be a case of disloyalty, but the thought of seeing the gamecocks in action fascinated me. I reasoned with myself that whether I went or not Johnny would almost certainly get his Christmas dinner

By around 5.30 am youthful curiosity had won. I quickly dressed, went downstairs, out to the garage and took out my bike. Minutes later I was speeding past one of the farms and out to where Johnny was camped. I still wasn't sure whether I'd go with him or

try to stop him, but I knew what I wanted to do. I left my bike in a field about a hundred yards from the caravan. As I approached, I was just able to see the three lurchers appear from underneath it — the silence with which they moved was eerie. I turned - I'd go, this wasn't right. Suddenly a voice from the complete darkness that shrouded the trunk of a nearby oak, only a few yards away, said: "You've come then." I nearly died - I hadn't realised Johnny was anywhere near. I gulped: "Well, yes, I thought I ought to try and stop you."

Johnny gave a chuckle, he was obviously in high good humour: "Not a hope, unless you tell on me and by the time you've been able to do that it'll be all over. Anyway, it's not as though I'm going to clear the covert, which, with the moon there was last night I could easily have done. I only want a couple for our Christmas dinner."

### ***The three lurchers appeared like wraiths out of the darkness beside him***

After further heart searching I succumbed to temptation. Johnny laughed: "Fine, once we leave the road no talking — understood?" At that moment I heard a muffled cackle and looked down. I could just see that Johnny appeared to be holding a box. He must have sensed where I was looking, rather than seen, for he quietly said: "That's Goliath, I'm only taking one this morning. As soon as dawn breaks, I don't reckon we'll be more than ten minutes, fifteen at the most. I had a thorough scout round about 3.00 am, when the moon was at its height and know exactly where we're going." With that he started off down the road the three lurchers, appeared like wraiths out of the darkness to fall in beside him.

When we'd crossed the field, keeping to the hedgerow and entered the wood, Johnny must have given a signal, for his three 'girls' silently disappeared in different directions, presumably to stand guard. Johnny was right, he knew



exactly where he was going and within minutes we were behind a clump of snowberry beside a ride. Johnny signalled to crouch down, took Goliath out of the box, who happily settled in the crook of Johnny's arm. Two owls called to each other, apart from which there was an uncanny quiet throughout the wood. Silently we waited until dawn was heralded by the flute-like call of a blackbird, quickly joined by a few hesitant calls from other birds - December is not really the time of year for 'a dawn chorus'.

Within minutes, as the sky lightened in the East, the wood became alive and very much so, when a few minutes later, with a clatter of wings, a cock pheasant landed on the ride not ten yards away. Johnny, who was squatting on the ground, quietly pushed Goliath forward. He strutted out to the centre of the ride, flapped his wings and crowed. The pheasant immediately responded, advancing aggressively, feathers ruffled. I saw little, just a flurry of feathers, then the pheasant fluttering on the ground and Goliath standing over his kill giving a triumphant crow. Johnny, silent as a mouse, left our cover and scooped up his 'gladiator', plus the pheasant and was back within seconds.

The light was by then such that we could see some distance along the ride, where a number of pheasants were already feeding, but all hens. Then a cock came winging down the straw covered track, to land right in front of us. Johnny again pushed Goliath forward, he needed no encouragement. He swaggered out, head high and threw out his challenge. There was more preliminary sparring than before. The pheasant even attacked, but it was no contest. The gamecock went in for the kill and it was all over. Johnny gathered up the victor and victim, the latter he put into a sack with the first half of his Christmas dinner.

***I'd seen something not witnessed by too many folk who aren't Romanies***

He stood stroking the colourful

plumage along Goliath's back, talking to him in a crooning voice. As I watched it was obvious that Johnny was filling his mouth with saliva. Then, to my surprise, he held the cock up to his lips and the later quite clearly drank from them. When he seemed to have had his fill, Johnny put him back in his box. I asked why he'd let Goliath do what he did? He gave me a rather pitying look: "Because he was thirsty of course. He'd had two fights and can you see any water around? Anyway it's all part of the bonding process with my lads. Come on, we'd better go!" When we reached the edge of the wood he gave a long low whistle and, in a matter of seconds the three lurchers were back, gazing up adoringly at their master. Johnny turned to me: "Right off you go." He grinned wickedly and added: "You don't want to be seen in the company of a poacher. You may not realise it, but you've seen something not witnessed by too many folk who aren't Romanies. Off you go, have a good Christmas - Tilly and I will."

When I'd collected my bike I rode on up the road beyond the caravan and

back past the keeper's cottage. He was standing at the open door drinking a cup of tea and clad in a nightshirt! He didn't see me and I certainly needn't have worried about him catching us, or as Johnny would have had it, finding I had caught him poaching.

That afternoon I drove past where Johnny had 'camped.' It was clean, no mess, even the embers from the fire had been spread around on the grass. My conscience was eased just a little when the owner of the estate remarked, at the end of the Boxing Day shoot, that there were far too many damned cocks left and an extra shoot would have to be arranged to thin them out. I never saw Johnny and Tilly again for I was away at University, then the war came. But Johnny was undoubtedly the most knowledgeable and likeable rogue I ever met.

*Editors Note:*

*The illustrations are from paintings by John R. Moore from Cullybackey. John is an exceptional artist of all wildlife including sporting subjects. His work can be viewed at:*

[www.johnrmooreart.com](http://www.johnrmooreart.com)





By Margaret Annett

# Summer Sensation in Switzerland

*If you are thinking about a summer trip that could well be the highlight of the year, why not head for a perfect time in Switzerland. In summer the mountains are monumental, the complete antithesis of winter, they are alive with colour and a perfect place to explore.*

As the countrysports seasons come and go, and enthusiasts enjoy their hunting, shooting and fishing passions, comments often come from the household about 'being left behind' (or so some have told us). With that in mind, we asked Margaret Annett to tell us about one of her highly recommended locations to holiday and what might be on offer for the discerning readership of Irish Country Sports & Country Life magazine. What we were looking for was something really extra special and - as always - Margaret obliged by describing her recent stay in one of the most beautiful parts of Switzerland

I stayed recently at the 'Gstaad Palace Hotel' — what a memorable experience it was, and certainly one which I would heartily recommend. The season at 'Gstaad Palace Hotel' commences late June and continues until early October. During this period

there is a wealth of events happening and things to do from Swatch Beach volley ball — yes beach volley ball in Gstaad — to The Menuhin Festival. You could hike up the mountains or choose to drive an Audi A6 Avant through its stunning passes.

From the moment you start your journey on the airport train to Montreux, the landscape is animated with shades of green as the pine trees rise tall above the grass. You skirt around Lake Geneva with the mountain rising tall on its other side and vine yards green in bloom growing on the near side.

At Montreux you change trains onto the Golden Pass Train for the most picturesque part of the

journey, past rippling lakes and fields with brown and white cows grazing, through villages with baskets full of flowers and more colour than you could imagine. In Gstaad, the scene continues

with an Alpine resort full of tradition and perfect in every way. It is like a butterfly emerging from its chrysalis with all its jewels shining.

During these four months, 'The Grand Dame' opens the 'Walig Mountain Hut,' and tennis courses commence which are tutored by Roy Emerson, the only male player to have won all four Grand Slam events in both singles and doubles. The camp comes complete with a cocktail party, a mountain picnic and a relaxing sports massage to soothe your exhausted muscles. Young guests have their very own camp with canoeing and climbing among their extras.

The Swiss Open even comes to Gstaad in July, there is a Jazz Festival in Montreux, the Davidoff Saveurs for gourmet lovers, Hublot sponsor a Gold Cup Polo tournament in August and there is a Classic Car Rally for enthusiasts and much more.

*The beautiful Gstaad Palace has an idyllic backdrop.*





*The luxurious Spa Lounge*

### ***The road snakes through the mountains with hardly another car in sight***

If classic cars are not your forte, you could hire an Audi A6 Avant with its pioneering quattro technology, 'exhilaration with traction' and explore the amazing mountain passes. From Gstaad you will drive along the Simmental Valley to Boltigen, from where you continue across the breathtaking and picturesque Jaunpass, the road snakes through the mountains with hardly another car in sight. You can be Michael Schumacher for 35 minutes, but do stop for a moment to savour the delight of the musical tones rendered by the surrounding Swiss Cows with their beautiful shiny brass bells; this only happens on a Swiss summer mountainside and is sheer bliss.

En route you can pass by Gruyères, home to Switzerland's best known cheese, but don't just pass. Visit this stunning 12th C medieval town with its castle upon a hilltop, surrounded by castellated towers and walls, at an altitude of 850 m it is one of the most prestigious in Switzerland. After a golden age, the Gruyeres' came in 1554 with Michael, the last of the family, reached his Waterloo and unceremonious bankruptcy and his creditors from Fribourg and Bern shared his earldom. Since then the castle has seen its ups and downs until

the 1900s when it opened its doors to the public.

The courtyard is lined with wooden galleries and there is a tower with a staircase that bears the coat of arms of the Gruyeres - Seyssel. Wall decorations recount hunting scenes, with the count riding his white horse and the Belle Luce as shepherdess. In the Baroque Room, there is heraldic stained glass windows from Verey, and Flanders tapestries depict forest scenery and bronze statues adorn 17C furniture. In the Furet's Room rustic paintings hang alongside portraits by August Baud - Bovy in particular the most enchanting oil of a young boy in black velvet upon his donkey. Like everything inhabiting this castle, it is exquisite. Back on the road and the second half of

your drive leads you through the Lavaux Wine Region before crossing to one of the most exhilarating and challenging roads in the region, the Col de la Croix.

### ***An enchanting paradise***

While residing at the Palace, why not spend a night at the Walig Hut, set 1700 m above the village of Gsteig. This award-winning Alpine retreat so impressed Conde Nast Traveller they named it Best Wilderness Hotel, which is no surprise, A former summer home to a local farming family, it exudes charm and completely encapsulates the motto 'come up and slow down.' An enchanting paradise where the mountain peaks rise up around you and



*Original oil painting - there were many such heirlooms to be seen.*



*One of the Walig bedrooms*



the gentle sound of flowing water from the cow trough, with air so clear and fresh it will make you feel quite dizzy.

Echoing the Grand Dame, the Hut is furnished to the height of luxury of course in Alpine style, beautifully embroidered bed quilts and cushions, loads of reindeer fur rugs and a view to die for this is the only location for a fondue prepared by your very own chef — sheer bliss!

On Sundays, when you look out of your room, in the Big Hotel, upon the lawn the mini me Palace is inflated below you just for the enjoyment of your family. With Sunday brunches — like no other — on the terrace, the

gourmet dishes are mouthwatering, and simply a must.

Here your every need is taken care of and with us all focusing on better ways to look after our bodies, a Pilates session is the essential way to realign your bones and muscles then you could head to GreenGo night club and dance the night away, another special spot with unique decor and an exciting environment. Words are inadequate to describe your mountain home, you will simply have to visit, see and enjoy every detail.

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*The magical sight and sound of Swill cow bells filled the air.*





# Art & Antiques

## *The 'real' meaning of provenance*

Many years ago, an experienced Belfast auctioneer gave me a bit of advice which has stood me well on countless occasions when I remembered to use it. It was Joe Morgan who said: "Always look for something that has provenance, background, or a bit of breeding, no matter whether it is a painting, a piece of furniture or anything else."

And while I may have taken his words lightly at the time, due to either arrogance or ignorance, I learned later, from the unsatisfactory sale of various items how true was his advice. Experience and the bite of the sales room sharply brought it home to me that an item with 'something' behind it is more valuable than one which may look good but never knew where it came from.

What I am saying was well evidenced just before Christmas, when an auction of items from the sale of the late Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher really raised the roof. Yes, everything that came under the hammer had 'provenance' and the end result in each

case certainly bore it out. Everyone with a knowledge of sales knew lots would sell well but not to the high ceiling levels they achieved. The sale took around six hours to complete and when the dust settled after the last gavel fall it had raised more £4.5m.

A model of an American bald eagle, awarded to the late PM by former US president Ronald Reagan realised an astounding £266,500. A red Morocco dispatch box, embossed with the cipher of HM Queen Elizabeth II, the words, 'Prime Minister' and numbered 1 was sold for £242,00 while the top lot in the online sale was a pearl necklace, which sold for £62,500 which was well above its maximum estimated price of £800. A Raflo handbag, which she used on her last visit to No 10 made £47,500 while a signed typescript of her famous speech in which she quoted the words of St. Francis of Assisi, "where there is discord, etc" went for £37,500.

CHRISTIE'S Head of Sale Adrian Hume-Sayer said afterwards: "The market's response to these historic

sales, both the online only sale and the traditional auction, was remarkable with the overall result for the Mrs Thatcher collection far exceeding pre sale expectations. Clients from all over the world seized this once in a lifetime opportunity to acquire items which gave insights into both the public and private life of Britain's first female prime minister who was a political giant on the world stage."

Of course, to put it in a nut shell, it was the solid provenance which accompanied each lot which allowed the sale to gross the receipts it did.

Just think, a chewing gum wrapper is worthless. But should it carry the thumb print of someone like Elvis, or David Bowie, would we say the same? That is the real meaning of provenance.

## *Around the sales*

### **SHEPPARD'S**

While there were many memorable sales last year it could be difficult to top the story that came out of SHEPPARD'S two day auction of the contents of Capard House in Co Laois where a couple travelled all the way from China to Ireland to bid successfully for a pair of large 'Qing period' vases and they were prepared to pay €560,000 for their purchase.

### **ADAMS**

Dublin based auction house ADAMS had a fine series of sales in December to end the year on a high note.

In their art sale they sold a fine Roderic O'Connor for €48,000 followed by a Jack Butler Yeats at €36,000 and another by Yeats at €35,000. A Mainie Jellet oil sold at €27,000 while a Dan O'Neill made €21,000 and a Frank McKelvey went at €14,000.



*This Mainie Jellet oil sold at €27,000 (ADAMS)*





An Allegra necklace by Bvlgari went at €11,000 (ADAMS)

ADAM'S fine jewellery and watches sale saw diamond rings selling at €17,000 each, a pair of diamond earrings at €15,000 and a gentleman's Oyster day-date wristwatch by Rolex making €14,000. An Allegra necklace by Bvlgari went at €11,000 while a diamond pendant by Boodles made €10,000 and a pair of Boodles vintage diamond earrings €8,000.

The Richard S. J. Clarke sale which ADAMS also conducted was an exciting one too, with a John Rocque chart of Dublin Bay Bay selling for €12,000 while one by Robert Dudley made €7,000.

ADAMS top furniture pieces at a pre Christmas sale included a George 1 carved giltwood side table in the manner of Benjamin Goodison which made €9,000, a George 11 walnut tallboy chest realised €7,000 and a pair of early Victorian giltwood mirrors which went at €7,000.

## WHYTE'S

WHYTE'S had a major Irish art sale towards the end of the year and

achieved some fine prices for equally fine lots. As ever the interest in Ulster artist William Conor was there and his 'On the swings', an evocative children's playground scene made €14,000 while another, 'Sallywag' realised €6,600 to exceed its high estimate.

But the affection for Paul Henry was stronger and saw his 'Connemara' sold for €66,000 but was bettered by a Louis Le Brocquy which went at €78,000 and another at €25,000. A Donald Teskey work made €30,000 while a Gerard Dillon portrait of Dan O'Neill made €21,000 and a William John Leech realised €18,000. A third Conor, 'Study of Belfast Shawlie' sold at €4,000 while a portrait, 'Brigid' made €1700. A Jack Butler Yeats portrait of John Millington Synge sold for €4,800 while another from the same hand made €5,200. One by Margaret Clarke, 'Airman of Inisheer' realised €7500 while a James Humbert Craig landscape made €3,400.

Others included: Basil Blackshaw, €13,000; Patrick Colling, €10,500; Daniel O'Neill, €6,400; Nathaniel Hone, €4,200; Markey Robinson, €4,000; George Campbell, €3,600; and Hector McDonnell, €5,800.

(Below) Jack Butler Yeats' 'An Old Woman Stirred the Cauldren with a Large Iron Spoon, 1934' went for €5,200 (WHYTE'S)



William Conor's 'On the Swings' sold for €14,000 (WHYTE'S)



'Sallywag' by William Conor made €6,600 (WHYTE'S)







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# Bushmills Salmon and Whiskey Festival

*DCAL Inland Fisheries Group is currently preparing for another successful Salmon and Whiskey Festival in Bushmills, County Antrim.*

DCAL has had a team of Fisheries Officers based in the Bushmills Salmon Station and Hatchery for some years. They have played an integral role in the Salmon and Whiskey Festival since its inception in 2012, when the local Council, Bushmills Traders Association, the famous Bushmills Distillery and DCAL came together in a combined effort to put on two days of varied activities in the picturesque North Antrim town.

The idea is simply to combine two well known aspects of local life, both the world famous Bushmills Whiskey and the renowned River Bush salmon river, and bring people, both locals and visitors, together to find out more about these brands, the town itself and also enjoy a weekend of festivities.

The Salmon and Whiskey Festival has brought thousands of visitors to Bushmills to enjoy the street entertainment, radio road shows, vintage car rallies and local craft sales which are on offer throughout the town. Activities consistent with the theme of the festival have also been on offer at the Salmon Station and Bushmills Distillery sites.

Inland Fisheries Group at DCAL has opened the Bushmills Salmon Station to the public on each Saturday that the Salmon and Whiskey Festival has been held. Inland Fisheries Group officials, in a combined effort by administrative and



*Visitors learning about the hatchery's work*

technical staff, organise a day of both educational and fun events, and offer the public an oversight of what goes on at the site which has monitored the salmon runs on the River Bush for many years.

Learn about the hatchery, salmon trap and much more

Organised tours of the salmon hatchery, the salmon trap and the salmon breeding process are available to the public and this sharing of information, assisted by information boards and literature, have been enjoyed by a growing number of people over the years. Children's activities, refreshments, promotional goods and fly fishing demonstrations have also been offered by DCAL in previous years.

Seamus Connor, head of DCAL Inland Fisheries and a former manager at Bushmills Salmon Station, told Irish Country Sports and Country Life: "The Salmon and Whiskey Festival provides the Department with a great opportunity to open our doors, engage with the public and give people a clearer idea of the vital salmon conservation work which goes on at Bushmills. It's also a

chance to interact with visitors and provide information on the Public Angling Estate which is provided by DCAL across Northern Ireland and show that angling is a good value, accessible and healthy outdoor activity. The growing numbers of visitors each year at the Salmon and Whiskey Festival shows that DCAL participation is popular and worthwhile."

Figures retained by Inland Fisheries Group show that numbers of visitors to the Salmon Station during the Festival have increased, from around 1,000 at the outset to almost 1,700 in 2015. As preparations continue for DCAL's participation in another successful event, officials have already met with Causeway Coast and Glens Council representatives and local traders to set out plans for the 2016 events.

It is thought that this year's Salmon and Whiskey Festival will be held earlier than the September dates of the previous occasions, perhaps in late May or early to mid June.

Potential visitors are advised to check the websites of Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council - <https://www.causewaycoastandglens.gov.uk/> and the DCAL Angling Website [www.nidirect.gov.uk/angling](http://www.nidirect.gov.uk/angling) where full details of dates and events will be posted as soon as they are known.

Past experience has shown that those interested should have a most enjoyable time if they make it along to the Bushmills festivities!



*So much to see and do at Bushmills Salmon and Whiskey Festival.*



# Federation of Irish Salmon & Sea Trout Anglers

Conaidhm na Slat Iascairí Bradáin agus Breac Geal

VISIT US AT [www.fissta.com](http://www.fissta.com)



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

## GOVERNMENT DEFERS 'ALAMO STAND OFF' UNTIL AFTER GENERAL ELECTION

*Firstly, on behalf of our new National Executive Council, may we wish all club members a very prosperous and successful 2016 season. This coming year will bring a new Government and changes that will impact on our angling and waters over the next five years. So it is vital we all play our part together to improve the lot of the anglers and our wild salmon and seatrout.*

We celebrated Christmas early with the announcement by Minister Coveney's BIM on the scrapping of the BIM Galway Bay application — the first of the ten mega fish farms plan which he first announced in June 2011. We wrote in this column back in 2011 that this battle would be our 'Alamo' and in cowboy parlance, the standoff was deferred by applicants BIM on behalf of Minister Coveney.

Thankfully, our campaign 'IRELAND AGAINST SALMON CAGES' continued to gain momentum in conjunction with our

local pressure group, Galway Bay Against Salmon Cages, who worked hard with us by winning the hearts and minds of both politicians and the general public. Last July, a new CEO of BIM was appointed and while change of policy or attitude was slow to come, we are glad that common sense has prevailed.

We are concerned that this new withdrawal is only a temporary lull in the process to allow parking of the issue until after the general election, but this will allow us more time to redouble our efforts

against a polluting salmon farming policy that has long been unsustainable. We will publish and distribute our election campaign literature in the coming weeks for you to approach candidates standing in your constituency.

The work of every club starts now and while most of our rivers do not open until later, it is important all your members are registered and all insurance cover is in place from the month of January.

### OPEN ALL OUR CLOSED RIVERS

Sadly, only 53 rivers are now classified open, and we have gone from 87 rivers last year to over 90 this season that will be closed to taking a fish, with the remaining rivers completely closed. The new NSAD or National Strategy for Angling Development is their response to our appeals for urgent state action, but IFI say they need an additional €25m over 5 years to 2021 especially for to assist the clubs already working hard to get their waters back to normality.

### END ALL COMMERCIAL NETTING NOW

We continue to lobby hard (ESPECIALLY AT NASCO) against all commercial netting including draft in the estuaries and drift in Castlemaine and Feale and other estuaries. Thankfully, the mixed stock nets off the North Coast of Antrim under DCAL remain on a 'stood



2015 the year of the floods - this is Salmon Leap on the Glen River.



down temporarily' status, as are the Foyle nets under the Loughs Agency authority, but we will continue to keep the pressure on our 3 state authorities until the political will ends the nets once and for all.

### **FISSTA STEP UP CAMPAIGN AGAINST OPEN CAGE FISH FARMS**

The withdrawal of the BIM application is a victory to all who campaigned, but be certain they will be back as it is still the policy of all the political parties to support the unsustainable salmon farming industry. We remain on a war footing with weapons at the ready in the form of election literature to be handed to all candidates knocking on the door of the angler.

### **BEST INSURANCE COVER AVAILABLE TO PROTECT YOU AND YOUR OFFICERS**

Once again there is no increase on our improved insurance cover that further protects you and your club. There is an optional extra to extend the cover of nominated officers which some clubs have asked us to offer for 2015. So, registering your club is the most important task to undertake in the year and it is better to do it as early as possible to avail of cover now. Please be wary of any broker or body that will only provide evidence and quality of cover only after premium is paid.

### **MORE HELP NEEDED TO ASSIST CLUBS ORGANISE**

We will as always depend, on the more established clubs to lead the way by carrying the neighbouring weaker fledgling clubs get organised as our stocks still face serious threats. It is your support as always that will determine our success on issues such as sea-lice and stocks for 2016 onwards.

### **COVENEY/BIM WITHDRAWAL – COULD IT HERALD NEW ERA FOR WILD SALMON?**

As our politicians lay out their stall for the General Election of 2016, we must welcome the BIM announcement that the application for a 15,000 tonnes open sea system of over seventy-five net cages is now withdrawn.

As FISSTA were the very first to mobilise the opposition to the plan of ten mega salmon farms back in 2011, we take comfort from our ability to conduct another successful campaign against the odds. Success will have many fathers once again, but we are satisfied the huge body of opposition built up from the Galway Bay Against Salmon Cages marches of 2013 coupled with the recent legal notice



*FISSTA enthusiasts out & about - Ronan and Dermot Cunningham at the Hooked Seafood Festival in Killybegs.*

served on Government was the final straw of objection that prompted the rethink.

By then, BIM's Galway Bay application had become politically toxic in every sense of the word. The application was not making any progress due to weekly public outrage surrounding it, and had become an embarrassment to the government internationally as we and our NGO colleagues raised it repeatedly at such fora as NASCO and EU meetings. Moreover, it became an impediment to BIM and the Department for a series of new licenses planned such as the Shot Head one already granted which we have lodged our objection to once more.

The national headlines such as "Campaigners say BIM may submit smaller scale fish farm application for Galway Bay" summed up our feelings that a small battle was won, the war on wild salmon still rages on, as government policy still has plans for 43,000 tonnes by 2023 as published in the national seafood strategy plan of last June. Of the ten licenses chosen for the 15,000 salmon farms, Galway Bay had to be the first application due to the proximity of underground fresh water supplies which no other location could provide.

The new limits were cited to convince us, the general public, that the ambitions of Minister Coveney and BIM were now

moderated as if they are going to apply for smaller salmon farming licenses in future. But we all remain on guard as a c can now be approved for what is termed "standing stock/biomass" or annual production.

A standing stock/biomass license means that the total amount of fish weight (standing stock or biomass) is limited to a given figure and that this is a very different way of limiting a licence. Sadly, it does not mean that future salmon farms are going to be smaller. In many cases it may actually result in larger farms. For example, a 5,000 – 7,000 tonne standing stock license will likely result in at least 15,000 tonne of final production to the detriment of our marine environment. The rearing process could now be manipulated to produce 3,000 tonne of salmon every two months, which would potentially give an annual production of 18,000 tonne.

In reality, the entire four and a half years of political effort along with the huge financial and human resources have been invested in this license application which Minister Coveney first informed us of in the summer of 2011. Later that year, Minister Coveney increased BIM's current expenditure budget by €2 million per annum, specifically for the work on the ten new mega salmon farms. This €2 million per annum was taken away from the capital expenditure budget which would



have benefited Irish SME's in the aquaculture industry but instead transferred it to a large multinational organisation worth billions of Euro.

### **Should BIM be allowed to spend more taxpayer's money on another application?**

The question now is: should BIM be allowed to spend more taxpayer's money on another application that will fail and who is at fault here. While the buck must stop with the top line minister and Taoiseach, they (including BIM) can claim they were following expert scientific advice from a DAFM impeded Marine Institute.

As the Inisturk application is now being processed by BIM, I expect the MI will have no significant problems with it, just as they found none (not even escapee impact) with the Shot Head license for Bantry Bay. The Marine Institute will again conduct expensive and extensive analysis of the application and EIS and will no doubt arrive at a positive recommendation in line with the wishes of the Fisheries Division of the DAFM which holds the Marine Institute by the throat. If this seems overly cynical, please consider again the conflict of interest that is built into the licensing system by the DAFM. So it is fair to assume that the killing off of Galway Bay was just a necessary house cleaning exercise to clear the way for the strategic plan to develop and sell off five or six major deep water open net cage sites which will wipe our wild Atlantic salmon in their natal rivers from Donegal to Kerry.

To combat this very worrying development, it will take every bit of lobbying by Irish anglers and our colleagues in the 250,000 strong sports

coalition who have been canvassing all the prospective candidates since last autumn. Our clear objective is to convince a new Minister to sever the conflict of interest link between the Marine Institute and the Fisheries Division of DAFM. Only then, will a new era in unfettered scientific research emerge which may end the squandering of DAFM/BIM resources, as the Marine Institute staff would be free of influence from what is the development branch of the DAFM and by extension, the industry lobby. With such new thinking from a new Minister, more productive options would be considered on their merits. Ireland could then become a world leader in environmentally friendly produced fish in land based systems rather than making the same net cage mistakes again and again.

### **FISSTA CHAIRMAN'S STATEMENT ON BIM WITHDRAWAL**

Chairman Paul Lawton said: We welcome BIM's announcement to withdraw their Inis Oir/Galway Bay application for the first of ten mega salmon farms along the West Coast of Ireland. We called for and therefore expected the withdrawal ever since the new strategy was published last June but the wheels of BIM move very slowly.

The reason BIM gives relates to the new strategy which reviews the size of future licence applications, but the real reason is the public objections emanating from our public awareness events such as our successful protest marches held in Galway City, Castlebar and Carrigaline. Our Galway Bay Against Salmon Cages refer to it as people power, but because the plan was unsustainable and created huge

national and international controversy.

The process for awarding the licence was further obstructed, following FISSTA's notice of legal action to the Government which delayed the decision and put political pressure on the minister to review his ill thought out mega farms plan of 2011.

This announcement by BIM now ends the long wait of the Attorney General's response to FISSTA as the application is now withdrawn. FISSTA is delighted that the BIM board have decided to scrap the ten mega farms plan following our national campaign, which saw thousands of anglers and supporters of the wild salmon on the streets over the past five years.

FISSTA will continue the campaign against the Government's open net sea cage salmon farming policy which Minister Coveney granted a licence for in Bantry Bay in October, and which we have currently an objection lodged. FISSTA now calls on the Minister to further review such damaging polluting cages and bring them onshore to be managed under the current more stringent EU waste management directives.

While no war has been won, FISSTA acknowledges that the first of many battles has ended with the announcement below. We thank all who supported the campaign to save Galway Bay from the impending disaster that is the BIM application for 15,000 tons of farmed salmon that would have wiped out our wild fish resources on the West Coast. Thanks especially to our colleagues in the Irish Sports Coalition and NARGC who stood with us at this crucial time and to all our angling federations who work together for the good of our sport and stocks.

### **FISSTA SUBMISSION ON THE NATIONAL STRATEGY FOR ANGLING DEVELOPMENT (NSAD)**

This submission is in response to National Strategy for Angling Development (NSAD) launched last November in Athlone in which the Minister Joe McHugh, T.D, Minister of State at the Department of Communications, Energy and Natural Resources pledged his full support as published in his foreword. We feel this is a premature pledge, not uncommon with politicians who are directed and advised by their department to state such sentiments despite realising the implications, as the document lacks aspirations and vision in line with the incredible TDI product study revaluation. Furthermore, there is little or no positive acknowledgement of our angling structure and the huge voluntary time and finance contributed by the private angling sector who are not employed by the state.



*Typical pool enhancement job on a Donegal river.*



FISSTA will ask IFI to consider our issues raised and redraft a large part of this NSAD in accordance with the product as it exists at present. Specific goals are identified for which IFI must be held accountable for, given the massive budget allocation awarded each year.

We note that IFI do not have the business acumen to raise and spend the five year projected €25m as outlined in the NSAD plan. That is why FISSTA will be proposing a different model to deliver the goals of this developmental project which will recognise the need for more than double the present allocation, in order to bring our fisheries including the FISSTA194 salmon designated rivers back to recovery status.

We also note that while the IFI do not have an aquaculture brief, we view their failure to acknowledge what the huge impact of open net sea cages are having on the development of wild Atlantic salmon which negates much of the IFI limited aspirations. For example, the impact of the cages on rivers running into Donegal Bay has decimated the fishing and the river economy of tourism in the locality to such an extent that the highly successful Wild Atlantic Way promotion is not of any benefit to the Bunduff River catchment despite the neighbouring Drowes River doing reasonable at this juncture.

Inishowen is in a similar state of decline due to the licensing of cages in the Lough Swilly and it is worth noting that the Crana River has been closed albeit to Catch and Release for 2016. One member of the Buncrana Anglers Association publicly stated to the Minister that if this trend continues, the only salmon that people visiting the town will see, will be on the sculpture located at the Mill roundabout. FISSTA is clear that if there are no constraints placed on salmon farmers in this sector that the very survival of the wild salmon is in question. We have seen inaction on the part of the IFI in arresting the decline of the sea trout, which acts as a reminder of the need to reform the management structure.

We note a team comprising of Kevin Crowley, Myles Kelly, Markus Muller, Shane O' Reilly and Paul O' Reilly were working on the formulation of the NSAD and as we have worked with these people in the past and regard them as diligent colleagues that with the necessary support, are capable of bringing our fisheries to their potential. This group reported to Head of Business Development and the CEO where a series of undue delays were permitted despite our lodgement of three (September 2013, 2014 and 2015) budget submissions to the Minister of Finance. While we are grateful to the management team for progressing the publication of the NSAD, we view it only as a first stage in

the ongoing development plan of the angling product.

### ***Obvious from our subsequent meetings that no briefing file was read***

FISSTA met the Minister in September 2014 in Gaoth Dobhair and raised ten points on the development of our angling product that required his attention. Nothing, even an acknowledgement of our meeting was received since that day and it was obvious from our subsequent meetings, (5 at least) that no briefing file was read despite our persistent requests for answers. This is the way business is done and will continue to be done unless something changes very soon. FISSTA is saddened that the Minister lost so much time and the golden opportunity to serve angling by concluding this consultation process which is now unlikely to happen.

Such an incredible loss of three years since the launch of the TDI Socio Economic study convinces us that the IFI have failed to recognise the high degree of commercial urgency that was necessary in 2013, as all three budget funding opportunities have been lost in the interim.

We note that while a range of qualifications by the team include the impressive list below, we are aware that none include the hard core experience of marketing a related fishery or angling product. We also note that no fully qualified executive has ever been appointed to an IFI marketing department in compliance with their IFI statutory brief as yet. We note that the compilation of the NSAD involved the tourism marketing body rather than any progressive IFI vision. It states on the IFI website that Failte Ireland had been consulted. "IFI have invited external expertise from Failte Ireland" possibly in the form of advice and direction which would be in line with a Failte Ireland tourism agenda rather one with than an angling tourism advantages.

While the IFI staff may claim to have as much as "over 50 years of angling marketing, promotion and product development experience..... have angling experience in excess of 140 years" the very basics of marketing have been omitted from the strategy. We cite product development and in particular the omission that about only 50 of the 194 salmon rivers are open in 2016 to taking a fish by angling as publicised by the Minister last week.

This is the measuring stick of progress by which all IFI plans and strategies will be assessed by us the clients and to date the failure graph is falling off a cliff. The omission to designate or include Irish brown trout in the Annex 1 or 11 species list of the EU Habitats directive is indeed another lost opportunity to ensure the

game angling fisheries have EU recognition and protection. The failure to introduce an angling standardisation of the fisheries as per the recent development of an environmental green label similar to Origin Green in the food sector is an initiative that could reclassify and enhance the foreign angling visit to our Irish rivers in a coherent fashion that would increase revenue to over a billion by 2017.

The loss of diversity in terms of sea trout especially, has meant that those in our angling communities have lost a valuable resource as well of course, the damage done to angling tourists to a region which has suffered generational unemployment and decline.

### ***FISSTA comments on the four IFI goals***

Goal 1: To improve the protection and conservation of the resource

FAILED – FISSTA claim that the failure to make a case for more funding based on the new €750m angling value, compared to the IFI valuation of €150m approximately explains why our protection and conservation of the resource has not improved but diminished greatly. The expertise is within the Department to analyse this professionally.

Goal 2: To develop and improve wild fish population.

FAILED – FISSTA claim that the failure to protect our wild migrating smolts from sea-licenced salmon farmed cages in our estuaries explains why our wild salmon and sea trout populations have continued to decline.

Goal 3: To have more anglers

FAILED – FISSTA claim that the policy reject partnership and to prosecute local anglers in the Gweebarra case has alienated clubs and prevented them from supporting the IFI staff and many as a result have given up angling in disgust as recorded in the decline in salmon licenses over the years.

Goal 4: To generate a better return for Ireland from the resource

FAILED – FISSTA claim that the failure to increase the national income from angling has cost the state billions of euro in lost revenue from overseas anglers. Again, the failure of IFI to engage with anglers and especially FISSTA means that the lessons are ignored and the loss to the state continues.

We note that as usual this and other submissions received will not be responded to on an individual basis with the now familiar proviso that 'they will be taken into consideration by IFI in its final report.' This very rarely happens as anglers, the main stakeholders who contribute more voluntary time and funds to IFI fisheries are quite simply ignored.



# Privileged Access

*Remoteness and exclusivity are part of the attraction, that and the fact the loch holds a good head of big pike in prime condition, and fishing venues don't get much better than this.*

The security gate opened, as if by magic, using the marvels of modern technology.

As the vehicle swung round a corner, the view of the loch opened up ahead of us. Across the water, tied up against her wharf was the vintage steamer that runs tourists up the loch to see the magnificent sight that is one of the most prestigious pike waters in Great Britain. It is also one of the most difficult to gain access to and here I was, sat in the passenger seat of the fishery lease holder, with a full day ahead of me in the presence of the man who was responsible for reopening the fishery after two years of arduous negotiations.

I had heard of Loch Katrine in the past, and whenever she was mentioned it was in hushed, revered tones and I had longed to cast a line on the crystal clear water but every avenue of enquiry had lead to a dead end. For 15 years or more I had been trying to obtain access and then one day, talking to my friend Alex who runs The Craggs Hotel in Callender, about fishing and he just happened to drop into the conversation that I should contact Mike who has the fishing on Loch Katrine. After all these years, the key to unlock the door was there all the time, he had just failed to mention it. I rang Mike there and then and he couldn't have been more welcoming. A date was arranged for me

to be his guest, and that day was today.

As we drove along the private access road, the only route to get to the boat house, some 40 minute drive alongside the loch from the security gate at the visitor centre and quay, Mike told me of the trials and tribulations he had to get round to be able to fish the loch. It had cost him dearly in time, travel and effort and that was before a single penny had been spent on the boats.

The loch belongs to Scottish Water and because it is one of the main water supplies for Glasgow it is very strictly managed. For instance, bank fishing of any description is forbidden, not by the fishery leaseholders, but by the owners, Scottish Water. That makes policing the

*The author with a fine pike.*





fishing much easier, because anyone fishing from the shore must be poaching.

With the historic steamer plying the loch, the fishing is limited to the northern end of the water for safety, away from the route the steamer runs. Various operators have tried to run a commercial fishery on Katrine in the past, but because of the remote access and the fact the loch can cut up very rough, very quickly they have all fallen by the wayside. One boat rental company lost all their boats in one sudden, summer storm.

### ***Passionate about fishing for wild fish***

So it was against all the advice of locals who had firsthand knowledge of trying to run a viable business Mike got a plan approved. The difference being the current fishery operators are not trying to make a living from the enterprise. Far from it, they are all passionate about fishing for wild fish, and pike fishing in particular. They were quite prepared to put the money up themselves just for the opportunity to fish such an iconic venue, so that is what they did.

A proposal was drawn up and put in front of the management committee at Scottish Water. That proposal addressed



#### *Easing the pike back gently.*

every one of the owners concerns, even down to the propane powered outboards, rather than electric ones, so as to be running totally pollution free boats, one of the major stipulations from Scottish Water. Electric fishing outboards, from past experience, were not considered suitable for operating on the open waters. Several times in the past boats had to be rescued due to the electric outboards not being man enough to propel the boats against the strong winds that the loch seems to generate.

We pulled into the car park beside

the boathouse and I could see the bottom of the loch, even

through the slightly peat stained water, some 10 feet down. The clarity is incredible. With the gear loaded Mike motored us up the loch and we began to fish against the backdrop of magnificent mountains with a neatly kept, whitewashed house called Glengyle at the foot of the hill, the house built by the McGregors and where Rob Roy was born. Fishing venues don't get much better than this.

I have not had a pike tear off on a 40 yard searing run like that before

Mike put me over the old river bed, he has mapped this water in detail and knows the favoured features and lies. I cast various successful flies and covered the water thoroughly at various depths, but it was obvious after a couple of hours of flogging the water, in a very stiff breeze, that the fly was not stimulating the fish today. I switched to the spinning rod to fish even deeper and within the first few casts we got a hit. I was winding slowly, the home made hardwood lure wriggling from side to side enticingly 6 feet deep making the modern carbon blank vibrate to every change in stability. Suddenly everything went tight and I felt the thump as a pike hit the lure, my vintage Abu Ambassadeur 3600 still runs as smooth as silk, it



*The crystal clear waters of Lough Katrine.*





*Coaxing the big fish towards the net.*



*A Katrine 18 pounder.*

purred as the fish took line. Boy do these pike fight! I have not had a pike tear off a 40 yard searing run like that before. It wasn't a big fish either, pulling the scales down to 12lbs. Mike says the best fighters are those from this size to about the 20lbs mark. The bigger fish are less athletic and use their shoulders in a more dogged, heavyweight struggle. Regardless, I was happy, I had caught a fish from this hallowed water that I had dreamed about fishing for so many years and that fish will live in my memory for a long time.

However, this was just the start. We now had a gauge on where the fish were to be found. They weren't in the

shallows, they were lying in water around 20 feet deep and so this was where we concentrated our efforts. Mike set us on a drift across a rocky point with deep water either side of it. He fished his usually successful patterns, but they weren't waking the pike up today. After my second pike, another one of similar stamp to the first I offered him one of the successful plugs. It is a homemade design by Paul Fennell and he only makes them in small batches as a hobby.

### ***Within seconds a fish smashed into the lure***

Mike was intrigued by the fantastic action these lures have at very slow

retrieve speeds. Being made of hardwood they are fairly heavy for their size and cast really well. His first cast landed close to a steep cliff into the water with a rowan growing just above the waterline. Within seconds a pike smashed into the lure and had Mike's rod bent into a full hoop. This was a bigger fish that was taking long runs and putting up a great fight. I eased the net under her and lifted her into the boat, a lovely looking pike that pulled the scales down to 18lbs. Mike has caught literally hundreds of big pike and much bigger ones from this water, but the sheer pleasure these fish give never diminishes, as evidenced by the look of delight on his face.

We went on to catch more big pike, Mike had three big fish, 18lbs, 21lbs and 23lbs. I had to make do with smaller ones with my best going 15lbs. I was on cloud nine though. The thing is, the quality of the Katrine pike fishing is not merely measured by weight or centimetres, it is the superb condition of the fish, the magnificence of the surroundings and the sporting qualities these pike display, it is not unheard of for a pike to make 80 yard runs into open water, which is unusual in itself. When you put all those facets together the result is something very special indeed and that is why the fishery group got together to revive the fishing on the loch.

The entire day left me with an experience to treasure and it is all down to the hard work that Mike and his fellow fishery members have put in. Two years of unstinting negotiation and jumping through corporate hoops to be allowed to run the boats and manage the fishing. They had to concentrate on deterring poachers, many of whom were big names in the pike fishing world who were willing to risk public humiliation and the stigma of prosecution, to say nothing of the confiscation of their gear. This is something Mike feels very strongly about and the fact that they were, without exception, fishing against the regulations laid down by the loch





*The grin says it all - fantastic fishing!* owners gave strength to case. It took a year of perseverance and education, but largely these uninvited visits are a thing of the past and the local Police are prepared to back up calls for prosecution. The effort has been rewarded and generally the poaching problem has gone away.

For those prepared to go through the legitimate route there is the opportunity of being able to fish the loch, but it has to be arranged to fit in with the 8 season ticket holders who have first option on the seats in the boats. The fact the fishing pressure is kept very light with a maximum, at the moment, of only four anglers on the water at any one time, due to there being only two boats available, has ensured the quality of the fishing is maintained as being some of the best in Europe. Mike will take guided days as does one of the other regulars, but it is possible to book a boat for the day and for the future the feasibility of adding to the fleet is being explored.

For me, the remoteness and exclusivity are part of the attraction, that and the fact the loch holds a good head of big pike in prime condition, which points to the health of the water. I hope to be invited back, Mike did mention top water pike action in the spring, which on the fly rod would be



*The homemade hardwood lure was effective.*



*A big fish is returned unharmed.*

magnificent sport, worthy of the price, but the wild brown trout fishing is also

some of the very best. That is a story for another day.



# Grumpy Gamekeeper Goes North

*On the 6th July, Alastair 'grumpy gamekeeper' and good friend Trevor Martin (one of the more sensible people from the Castle Dobbs shoot) set off on our epic journey to Canada.*

The day started off like a normal shoot day, with everyone totally confused. Instead of flying to Toronto we were informed that we were going to St. John's in Newfoundland - news to us. On approaching St. John's visibility deteriorated to virtually zero. Eventually at less than 300 ft some trees and buildings came into view. Thankfully the pilot decided that it wasn't a very good idea to land on these, the engines roared and up we went again to 30,000 ft.

We landed at a small airstrip on the far side of Newfoundland. The plane was refuelled and, as visibility at St. John's had not improved, a decision was made to head for Toronto, making Trevor, two other passengers and me very happy. Unfortunately, the other 134 passengers wanted to go to St. John's. We left them arguing with the airline staff while, with five minutes to spare, we made our connection to Calgary.

On arrival we were met by good friend Chris McDonagh. We were joined by Derek and Danielle, friends of Chris's who were kindly putting us up for a couple of nights while we attended the Calgary Stampede. Sides

of ribs were quickly demolished before we retired for a good night's sleep. The following morning there was a fairground atmosphere, with lots of food stalls and entertainment laid on. The 'Stampede Committee' organise these breakfasts in different areas of the city every morning for the duration of the event - everything is free!

Cowboy hats were purchased and off we went by train to the massive stadium for the rodeo. The atmosphere was great - mad horses, mad bulls and even madder people riding them made for an exhilarating day.

Next morning, we were off again to Chris's girlfriend Barb's farm about 40 miles from Edmonton. It's a beautiful property, well out in the country. One of Barb's hobbies is barrel racing (slalom on horseback) so there were quite a few horses around the house. After dinner, we watched red-tailed hawks hunting the freshly cut hayfields and deer grazing at the side of a nearby copse (out of season unfortunately). A couple of coyotes strolled across the track as we made our way to the North Saskatchewan River.

Thursday morning and at 0600 hrs we were joined by Ed Rodgers, better

known as Teddy when we grew up together in Carrickfergus. Ed travelled a good part of the world before settling in Canada with his wife Jasmine 35 years ago. Chris had planned the next part of the trip to include salmon and sturgeon fishing on the mighty Fraser River in British Columbia. Onwards to Calgary and then to Banff, and along the route we spotted a black bear ambling beside a small stream and a nice bull elk graced us with his presence a short distance from the road.

After booking into the Douglas Fir resort, we drove into Banff hoping to dine at the Grizzly House. It's a tribute to the popularity of this eatery that we were unable to book a table until 1030 pm. Raw strips of everything from duck to bear are brought to the table, where you cook them to your personal taste on hot rocks smeared with a favourite sauce.

On Friday, we travelled down to Hope in British Columbia on the Coquihalla Highway (featured as highway to Hell on our local television). It's not hard to see why as even in mid-summer the bends and steep gradients need some careful negotiating. We eventually arrived at





*Hats purchased, we take in the Calgary Stampede atmosphere.*

Hope after a few detours – Ed was supposed to be following Chris’ black truck but, as we travelled down yet another side road, he soon discovered that there’s more than one black truck in Canada. On the bright side, at least we saw some more of the country.

### ***We realised that he was stark raving mad***

After booking into our accommodation, we drove into the town situated on the banks of the Fraser River (where the first Rambo Movie was made) making our way to Hope Outdoor Store, which supplies everything you would ever need for a fishing trip. The store is run by the lovely Lily Lin, who was able to sort out our permits, a general permit for BC and a sturgeon conservation licence. The salmon season was unfortunately delayed due to low water. As we completed the purchase of our permits a little man appeared (a cross between a leprechaun and Santa Claus). “Hi guys,” he said. “Going fishing?” He then proceeded to inform us that sturgeon hunt in packs and would pull us out of the boat to devour us (second part nearly true). After telling us that he was Rambo’s best mate and that he caught 600 lb. sharks in the Saskatchewan River, we realised that he was stark raving mad.

We chartered a boat from STS who cater for salmon fishing on five

different rivers, sturgeon fishing on the Fraser and salt water fishing from Vancouver. High-thrill jet boat adventures are available through Hell’s Gate to name but one. If you want more info try sts@guidebc.com. Braden, our guide, arranged to meet us at Mission, about an hour’s drive from Hope, the following morning. He had offered to pick us up but, as Barb wanted to pick blueberries after the fishing trip, we decided to drive down ourselves. Due to Ed’s suspect navigational skills, we decided to do a trial run to Mission that afternoon.

The boat was fantastic and equipped with everything we needed to hopefully land a large sturgeon. Four rods were baited with lamprey, salmon strips, roe

(tied up in a small bag) and the fourth with a small fish called a ‘hooligan.’ Rod tips were watched and one after another strikes were missed.

### ***Twice the leviathan jumped completely clear of the water***

Eventually Trevor and Braden decided that the rest of us were too dozy to strike quickly enough and relegated us to the cabin. Sure enough, the next three strikes were successful, the first hooking the best fish of the day. Ed was summoned from his slumbers to play the fish. On the first run, the ‘little man’s’ prophecy almost came true. Ed’s belt came to his rescue, as Trevor held him on the boat. I have to say that the sturgeon completely surprised us, putting up a fight which would have done a marlin proud. Twice the leviathan jumped completely clear of the water. After twenty-five minutes, with Ed moaning about pain in every part of his anatomy, a beautiful fish, 6 ½ feet and 140 lbs, was brought to the boat. Braden would not allow us to lift such a heavy fish clear of the water, so into the river we all got to pose for photographs. Lying in the cabin, Ed now exhausted from his endeavours, texted everyone in the world that he knew, or thought he knew, recounting his struggles with this dinosaur of the fish world. Two further sturgeon of 60 lbs and 30 lbs were landed before we



*Touchdown at Point Lake just south of the Arctic Circle.*





*We were told to be on the lookout for bears.*



*The merest glance in our direction came from a passing elk.*



*L/R rear - John Milner (guide), George Kimmel (family friend ), Tanya (cook) and Trevor. Front - Alastair (Grumpy Gamekeeper), Teddy and Jasmine.*

headed back to port. As Braden and some of the locals told us, this was only the very start of the sturgeon season.

On our return journey, we decided to head for Mount Robson, the highest peak in the Rockies. Although shrouded in cloud, our disappointment was more than made up for by the

dozens of humming birds using the sugar water feeders around the visitor centre. Seems strange to see these small birds, more associated with the tropics, below a snow covered peak. Later in the day we stopped off at Jasper before driving along the Athabasca River on our way back to Ed and Jasmine's

home in Spruce Grove close to Edmonton.

A few hours' sleep, then up at 0300 hrs to get to Edmonton airport for our flight to Yellowknife on the northern shore of the Great Slave Lake in the NWT, where we were met by Margaret Peterson ([Peterson@ssimicro.com](mailto:Peterson@ssimicro.com)) for the next leg at Peterson's Point Lodge about 400 miles further north and almost on the Arctic Circle. Margaret and Tanya who was to be our cook for our stay at the lodge booked us into our hotel before taking us for lunch in the Black Knight Pub and then giving us a guided tour of the town. Yellowknife is a mixture of old and new, my favourite part being the old town down by the Wildcat Café and the Ragged Ass Road. Some of the locals choose to live in houseboats on the lake which, by the way, is the same size as Ireland.

Just to digress for a moment — on our last visit to Yellowknife five years ago Ed, who had worked in the N.W.T. for a number of years on the McKenzie River and in open cast mining, was heard to remark: "You can't get lost in this town, one road in and one road out." After driving for some time in what was obviously the wrong direction Ed discovered that in his absence some dastardly swine had managed to build a few new roads!

We met Margaret's old friend, Grant Beck, in Yellowknife and on entering Grants yard we were met by an amazing sight — rows and rows of kennels full of huskies and husky crosses — about 170 in total. Grant races dog sleds all over the world and judging by the hundreds of trophies is very successful — indeed he has won the world championship. He also runs Aurora Wonderland tours taking parties on sleds over the frozen lakes and surrounding countryside. Check out his website [gbeck@ssimicro.com](mailto:gbeck@ssimicro.com). Apparently the northern lights in this part of the world have to be seen to be believed.

Early morning and down we went to the lakeside where our float plane, a twin engine Otter, awaited us. A



champagne breakfast was served at the dockside before we boarded. Our party consisted of me, Trevor, Ed, Jasmine, Tanya and Carston, a German gentleman from Munich. The take-off was smooth as we flew over tens of thousands of lakes, some small, some large, some isolated and some joined by river systems.

An hour and a half later, Point Lake, 80 miles long and over a mile wide just south of the Arctic Circle, came into view. Following a smooth landing we taxied towards the shore — had I not known we were in the North of Canada, the beach looked much like Portrush Strand, sand dunes included. We were welcomed by Chad Peterson (Margaret's son), John Milner (our two guides for the week) and George Kimmel from El Paso Texas (more of George later). After lunch in the lodge we were shown to our cabins, where on each door, a personalised welcome had been carved and painted. Looking down to the beach I could see Carston assembling a canoe in which he intended to travel solo for hundreds of miles. As Chad said: "If he doesn't have any mishaps, he might see someone in around three weeks; either brave, mad or both."

### ***Arctic grayling- very obliging on a dry fly!***

That first afternoon we fished for a couple of hours fairly close to the lodge. I hooked a couple of lake trout but managed to lose them both — then back to the lodge for a tasty steak dinner. At the rear of the cabins is a delightful little lake stuffed with Arctic grayling, very obliging on a dry fly; bug suits and plenty of spray for this part of the trip.

We set off the next morning in beautiful weather and began trolling. The line tightened and a nice fish of around 4 lbs came to the boat. "It's a box fish," John informed us. "What on earth's a box fish?" I asked to be told it's a trout small enough to fit in the box for lunch. Another few 4 to 5 pounders were quickly added.



*A fine trout for Alastair and Trevor.*



*Teddy admires one of Jasmine's many excellent fish.*



*Bug hats were the order of the day.*

Trevor at this stage still hadn't had so much as a nibble — over the side went a couple of dollars (payment to the fish gods). The coins hadn't reached the bottom before his rod doubled in two and after a good scrap a beautiful 22 lb fish was landed. Photographs posed for, the fish was returned to the water. Apart from a few 'small fish' kept for lunch, it's the policy to return

everything else. More fish from 7 to 12 lbs were landed before retiring to one of the numerous islands on the lake for a shore lunch cooked by Chad and John. Ed and Jasmine, who had been fishing with Chad, had caught quite a few fish up to 20 lbs. Chunks of fresh trout, with a few accompaniments, were prepared over an open fire and flavoured with lemon pepper and



Montreal spices — gorgeous. In the afternoon I caught my biggest wild trout, a nice fish of 12 lbs, while Trevor continued to land fish up to 15 lbs.

Back at the lodge a substantial loin of pork was demolished along with a few glasses of Bushmills to celebrate a very successful day. George began washing up — one of his many chores of the day. In fact George does all the work around the lodge (George's own words). He even writes weather forecasts (very accurate as they are written the next day) and wildlife reports on the various species of birds and animals around the lodge and reported to him by guests. George's other main pastime seemed to be searching for Chad's stocks of beer. George has been coming to the lodge since 1989, initially as a client for hunting and fishing but now as a family friend.

### ***The 'bottom' began to fight back***

Venturing further up the lake to Carter's Bay and Falcon's Nest, I continued to spin, while Trevor used a light Sage fly rod and a sink tip. Fish immediately obliged on both rods. Thankfully the largest fish hooked on the fly rod was around 8 lbs — I don't think it would have taken much more. Watching Trevor play another nice fish and not concentrating as usual, I managed to catch the 'bottom'. The 'bottom' began to fight back and I realised I had hooked something substantial. After much huffing and puffing, a nice 24 lb fish was landed. More posing and then onto Sand Island for lunch. Jasmine and Ed had continued to land more good fish, up to 20 lbs, both on the fly and spinner.

After lunch, as I brought a 'small' fish of 4 to 5 lbs to the net, I couldn't believe my eyes, a monster appeared from the depths and attempted to swallow it. Now whether it was coincidence, we'll never know but a few seconds later Trevor's line tightened and he was into what was to be our biggest trout of the week, a

beautiful 29 pounder — more posing. Needless to say another bottle of Bushmills was required before dinner.

Later on, we heard Ed's screams of fear (he says it was shouts of excitement) a grizzly had wandered down to the lodge. A pump action shotgun was produced and smoke cartridges were fired in the vicinity of its posterior. Off it ambled, only to return ten minutes later. Another volley of smoke cartridges, much closer this time, and off it went rather more quickly down the edge of the lake.

After this incident the grayling lake didn't seem so attractive and a bucket replaced midnight excursions to the outside loos. For the next couple of days we continued to fish in beautiful weather at Fish Haven Bay, we were all posed out at this stage, refusing to have our photos taken with anything under 20 lbs.

Wednesday saw us pulling into Wolf Bay to fish for grayling in the Saggyback Creek. As we neared the shore it erupted with hundreds of young mergansers still unable to fly — a fantastic sight. Bug suits were a necessity here. The creek was low and although we rose a few grayling nothing was landed. The beautiful scenery more than made up for the lack of success.

The party due to replace us the next day had messed up their travel arrangements which meant we got an extra morning's fishing. So, down the lake to the 'river' where the water had

warmed up dramatically recently. The 'river' was just a short stretch of turbulent water between two lake systems. Numerous fish were landed and as the water was crystal clear we were able to watch some of them hit the lures close to the boat. It's hard to believe but, as I was playing another 20 pounder, we could see two bigger fish attacking it. To cap a brilliant morning, Ed and Jasmine were able to film a large bull caribou swimming the lake. The migration was just beginning with the large bulls crossing first followed by the cows and calves. Large numbers come ashore beside the lodge.

All good things come to an end and eventually the plane arrived to fly us out. One of the new arrivals was a bit perturbed as the first thing he saw was a nice set of grizzly prints on the sand. Goodbyes were said and I think I can speak for all of us when I say a few tears were shed. If you're a fisherman, photographer or just like the wide open spaces and you want a preview of what Heaven might look like, then book yourself a holiday on Point Lake — you won't regret it!

The trip home prepared us for more confusing days at Castle Dobbs, with another unscheduled trip to Newfoundland before flying on to Dublin. The pheasants had arrived and the holiday was already becoming a distant but not forgotten memory. If you are an angler with a 'bucket list' my advice is to add Canada to it. You won't regret it.



*We all help to slip back one of the sturgeon.*



# Blackwater Salmon Fishery & Glenda Powell Guiding

*Acknowledged worldwide as a master angler and instructor, Glenda Powell has secured personally some of the finest fly water to be found anywhere on the River Blackwater for guiding and angling tuition.*



Glenda is one of the very few women anglers around and has achieved the top accolade of World Casting Champion. She was described by internationally recognised leading angler, artist and writer Charles Jardine, as: "...as good as it gets in terms of casting instruction. Always enthusiastic, always professional, and cares passionately about what she does. The consummate lady fly fishing guru."

Glenda has taught fly casting and angling for 23 years: "I began fishing at the age of nine on my local River Inler in Comber, Northern Ireland. Leaving home at 18, I moved to Scotland telling my parents that I was going to fish and teach fishing for the rest of my life. I qualified as a fly casting instructor and fished in the Scottish Ladies International Flyfishing team,

eventually managing the Irish Ladies team."

Other major successes followed and Glenda became World Champion in 2006, winning the Overhead Salmon Distance Casting Competition for women at Carton House. She is one of the highest qualified female salmon fly casting instructors in the world having achieved the APGAI-Ireland both Double (salmon) and Single handed certifications to the highest levels.

Watching her instructing on the Blackwater River and at the Great Game Fairs of Ireland, it's obvious that Glenda is a natural teacher with a gentle approach.

## ***An idyllic location for the gentle art of fly fishing***

Blackwater Salmon Fishery consists

of five beautiful beats, which can cater for up to 14 rods per day. Three are located on the lower river below Fermoy and two are located on the middle river above Fermoy.

Glenda explained: "This location affords our clients the best possible opportunity of sport throughout the fishing season, in both high and low water conditions. Every beat contains the fantastic streamy glides and runs for which the River Blackwater is renowned. Coupled with the stunning scenery of the valley, it makes for a fishing trip to be remembered long after the rods are put away."

## ***The best tuition***

Glenda teaches all casts from the Basic Overhead Cast to the most advanced Spey Casts, using a simple, jargon-free style of teaching.

Glenda explained that tuition is on a one to one basis, or friends can come along as well with a group maximum of four people. Tuition is in single and double handed casting from beginner to advanced level:

"Everything will be tailored to suit each individual needs, however all tuition sessions are structured around fishing safely; understanding the equipment; the principals of casting; and analysing and correcting faults."



*Any age can learn to cast - even to exhibition standard.*





*A very nice fish for one of Glenda's anglers.*

### **Guiding with Glenda**

Glenda offers some of the best guided fishing in the country on her Blackwater beats:

“A day or half day’s guiding includes a mixture of fishing tuition and guiding, and I can even supply equipment if required. A riverside lunch is included as part of the full guided day and a light snack is part of a half guided day. Tea, coffee and water are always available.”

These guiding sessions address safety around water; life cycles of salmon or trout; fly fishing/spinning tuition; watercraft and how to read a river; assembly of tackle, knot tying; and fishing techniques.

Glenda guides primarily on the Blackwater Salmon Fishery in Ireland and well as other waters and can be booked to come to you, wherever you may be fishing.

### **Tackle Tips for Salmon Fishing on the Cork Blackwater**

Angler’s comfort is the first requirement for choosing tackle: “If the rod is too long or heavy for the person’s size or ability, then it can make the day unpleasant and learning difficult, said Glenda. “But I’m always at hand to help match equipment to the person using it, and I can offer many different

kit combinations to ensure that everyone is comfortable.”

Glenda is an expert in balancing equipment to suit your personal requirements and has an extensive range of tackle that can be purchased during your trip including fly lines, leaders, tippet materials, flies, spinners and you can even buy a presentation box of flies to take home with you as a memento from Blackwater Valley.

### **Fly Fishing Gear**

For her waters, Glenda said: “A 12’-15’ double handed rod is ideal for spring and autumn fishing when large flies and tube flies may be the order of

the day. Smaller double handed rods are generally used during the summer months. A 9’-10’ # 7/8 single handed rod can also be used and is ideal for low water conditions with smaller flies. A lot of fun can be had with the Switch rod too.

“Floating lines with various tips work well for most of the year, however when the river is cold or high then the Skagit line and sinking shooting heads work better. Leader length and breaking strain vary with the size of fly being used and whether you are using a sinking or floating line. Generally in the spring we use a leader that comes to a point of 15-18 lbs. In summer we can go down as low as 8lb tippet, using very small flies.”

### **What pattern works best?**

Fly patterns and sizes vary greatly depending on the water height, colour, temperature and what is the ‘new must have fly.’ “The fly that is most likely to succeed is the fly that you have the most confidence in,” she added.

The most successful patterns over the years have been all types of hair-wing flies especially Ally’s Cascade, Shadow Cascade, while the original Ally’s Shrimp and Silver Grey remain popular. Irish Shrimp flies especially Bann Special, Foxford Shrimp, Apache and Silver Shrimp have proved themselves over the decades and old favourites such as Stoa’s Tail, Silver



*Ideal runs and streamy glides await you.*



Stoat, Munro Killer, Thunder and Lightning, Hairy Mary, Blue Charm and Garry Dog are always worth their place in your fly box.

In recent years, flies such as the Snaelda, Frank N Snaelda, Black and Red Francis, Bombers, Scandi-Style Tubes, Mirco trebles, Intruders, Hitch flies and Surface Skaters have proven themselves to be very successful on the Blackwater.

### ***Spinning, worming and shrimping***

For spinning, Glenda advises a 10'-12' rod: "It is important for giving you a good casting range and recommended lines for spring and autumn fishing is 15-20 lb breaking strain. In low water or summer conditions 10-12 lb breaking strain is ideal.

"Favourite spinners include Flying C's, Silver Bullets with rubber tails, Blair spoons, Devon minnows, Lane Irish minnow, Toby's, Mepps Aglia and smaller spinners in lower water.

Worming will be restricted in the early season when Kelts are still to be found in the system and also in late autumn as the fish approach spawning time."

### ***Rates***

Salmon Fishing (Per Person per Day - not including State Licence)

February	€15	June	€60
March	€25	July	€70
April	€45	August	€80
May	€50	September	€80

### ***Tuition & Guiding with Glenda Powell APGAI-IRL Salmon & Trout; Emerald World Masters Ladies Salmon Distance Champion***

Fly-casting lessons from beginner right up to the most advanced Spey casts.

All equipment provided if required.

1-4 people: €50/hour

Recommended maximum time: 2 hours for an individual, 4 hours for a

group.

Guided Days with Glenda (Mixed instruction/guiding - 4 rods max.) €300/day or €175/Half day.

### ***For more information:***

Blackwater Salmon Fishery, West Street, Lismore, Co Waterford, Ireland

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www.blackwatersalmonfishery.com

**[www.glendapowellguiding.com](http://www.glendapowellguiding.com)**  
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**Prime Salmon Fishing on the famous Munster Blackwater River in Ireland**



# Memorable Fishing Adventures

*In the dark days of winter, an old faded photograph can suddenly make a happy memory seem like yesterday.*

Many years ago, we were exploring the rivers of the west coast from Donegal down to Ballina. We'd caught a good share of summer grilse in the various rivers and found a river which had a good run of spring salmon. It didn't take long for salmon fever to take hold and we spent hours walking miles of river searching for the elusive springers. We knew where to catch them lower down, but we wanted to know where they were holding further upstream.

I had noticed some really nice trout rising to early season hatches of Large Dark Olives and the little inky Iron Blue Duns. Still. But there were salmon to be chased and we ignored the brown trout until one day I brought the trout rod. It was May, and the Black Gnat were hatching at the Boghill Dam and Six Mile Water at home. I had seen a few fish moving in a tributary of the salmon river and decided to have a go.

A gusting wind was making casting almost impossible with the little four weight rod and there was hardly a fly or trout to be seen. My friend Phil had spotted a trout rising to Mayfly in the tail of a big holding pool. The trout was tucked under the branches of trees on the other side of the river. There was a gap of two feet under the branches and about five feet upstream branches from another tree reached right into the water, so any cast would have to be tucked into the gap. Every few minutes a Mayfly would drift down the river and the strong winds would blow it across the surface under the trees into the gap where a quiet 'slurp' would see it disappear.

A battered Grey Wulff was tied on and I tried several times to deliver it



*A faded memory - Phil's nice fish caught when the breeze dropped.*

across the pool, but the upstream wind proved too difficult. I lengthened line but the wind would blow it up against me or the rod. The soft little Hexagraph Whisker was a great rod but it didn't have enough backbone to deliver a long cast with a big fly in this wind.

We decided just to wait until the wind dropped sooner or later. The trout continued to engulf every Mayfly that drifted down, safe in its dark haven under the branches. The sun broke through the clouds and momentarily the wind hesitated, Phil was waiting and the Grey Wulff sailed across the river in a tight loop, just under the branches.

## *Maybe the fly had caught a snag*

There was a bit of loose line on the water and as Phil tried to take up the slack our Wulff dragged about three inches in the current. I suppose the trout had been watching flies blown about by

the wind all morning and last thing I remember was the fly settling after being dragged. Suddenly it vanished. Philip struck hard but nothing happened. Maybe the fly had caught a snag or the fish had taken it around a sunken branch,

Phil just hung on for a few long seconds then all hell broke loose as a large trout thrashed about and tried everything to shake the hook. It then bolted down the river, line fizzed out of the little lightweight reel and Phil raced along the bank to keep up with him.

The big trout stopped in the neck of the next pool and raced back up under the branches again, Phil using as much side-strain as the 4lb leader could take and the rod bent double as the shook its head violently. How was the hook staying in after such a long fight? We thought that sooner or later the trout would snag or break, but gradually Phil started to steer him closer to our side





*Dad's success - one big fish to celebrate a birthday win at Lough Sheelin.*

and then the trout would race back to his lie under the trees. Gradually the runs became slower and weaker until the trout rolled over on its side and I ran down to land him on the shingle.

The net caught in a tangle of branches half sunk in the river bed but somehow we managed to get him on to the bank. We were amazed at the beauty

of this lovely trout, close to four pounds and with a buttery gold body, big dark spots and powerfully built with a big tail - no wonder it gave such a battle.

That trout was a match for the pristine spring salmon we had been catching and on the light tackle had given huge excitement. Immediately we realised the quality of the trout which

we had been ignoring over the years and the opportunities which we had walked past in our quest for the salmon.

### ***Ospreys, bald eagles, black bears and monster white Sturgeon!***

Several years ago, five of us went on a trip to Vancouver to fish for Pacific salmon and the mighty white sturgeon with Vic Carrao of STS Guiding.

Based in Mission we wanted to target the Spring or Chinook salmon and that season the salmon run was a little late so the first week was a bit slow. The problem seemed to be locating where they were holding up, so we drove into the mountains and knew we were in the right place when we started to see cars parked along the lay-by and groups of anglers 'Combat Fishing' side by side. It's a social thing I suppose but doesn't appeal so we struck out along camp and logging roads and eventually came to more remote areas.

A Canadian angler explained how to get to a quiet part of the river and it was a matter of hiking through the trails, and finding the pools the salmon were in.

The scenery in the mountains was



*Treasured moments recalled from just one snap.*



stunning, the rivers were pristine and the wildlife included Ospreys, Bald Eagles and Black Bears - we were in our element! We found a deep pool on the bend of the river just below a chute of rapids, a perfect place for the salmon to hold up before negotiating the white water and this pool was packed with huge Chinooks. You could peer into the depths with the polaroids and see the fish resting in the clear blue water.

Big Jackie Childs who tragically passed away last year, was with us and the highlight had to be his monster White Sturgeon, which live for many years and achieve huge weights. We got the news that the salmon were thin on the ground which wasn't a good start, so Vic sent us out on the mighty Fraser River with one of his STS guides. There were quite a few Sturgeon present and occasionally one would leap into the air and crash back down into the water, impressive to say the least.

We used heavy sea angling gear and the baits include Lampreys, soap and stink-bait. Stink-bait is just decomposing salmon carcasses and is absolutely rank. We had been out a few hours and everyone had caught a fish or two; I was quite pleased with myself having caught one of five feet long. The guide decided to try somewhere else, a huge tidal pool with a back eddy which would deposit dead and dying salmon where the Sturgeon could mop them up.



*Further afield - Phil having fun in Vancouver.*

We had been fishing for a while with no action so decided to have lunch. No sooner had we cracked open the beers than Big Jackie's rod tip suddenly drew over and he hit it an almighty strike — seconds later a massive eight foot long Sturgeon erupted out of the water beside the boat, coming down in a huge splash then boring down deep into the Fraser River, almost pulling Jackie down with him.

For the next forty-five minutes Jackie battled that incredible fish until eventually we slid it up a sandbank, photographed, measured and unhooked it before letting it recover and gently releasing it back in the Fraser River.

The power of the fish was incredible, pure muscle overlaid with bony armour

plates and with many thousands of dead salmon drifting into the Fraser from all the tributaries it's easy to see why they grow so huge. A chart on the boat put the fishes' weight around 450lbs and its year of birth to around 1945, truly the fish of a lifetime! We were so delighted that Jackie caught that fish, especially with his failing health, it's hard to imagine that he's no longer with us, such a big character with a big heart.

### ***This was going to be a memorable trip***

A few years ago, my old man hit his seventieth birthday, so I decided to devote our annual club trip to Lough Sheelin to guiding him and maybe locate a big trout or two. As the car pulled into the little village of Finea that May evening, turf smoke curled up into a calm blue sky, swallows hawked up and down the river taking Spent Gnats, Chaffinches picked Mayflies from boats returning from the Lough and my heart beat a little faster. I knew these were the perfect conditions to bring a big trout to feast on the easy pickings of dead and dying Mayfly littered over the surface. All my instincts were telling me this was going to be a trip to remember and so it proved.

That first evening we stalked sipping trout out in the open water, a barely perceptible breeze created long slicks which concentrated the flies and the



*Silver fish and golden memories.*





*The late Jackie Childs latched on to this eight foot monster.*

trout just cruised these lanes, mopping up the feast. We caught and released a fine trout of about six pounds that first evening and the following evenings brought more great fishing and ideal conditions, fine high skies, little breeze and high temperatures.

Daytime conditions were far from comfortable, the wind blowing hard, sun beating down. Flies were hatching in numbers but the trout were nowhere to be seen and the boat was tossed about making angling uncomfortable. We spent most of the days tucked into sheltered bays, waiting for the wind to ease in the evening.

Each year, the Mallusk Angling Society has a club competition for Sheelin Trophy. It's a hotly contested competition and as we stage it during the day there are normally few fish caught which suits us as the club has a largely catch and release ethos, in fact now we release all fish in competitions. I one trout would probably win it in these conditions and wouldn't it be great for the old boy to win in his seventieth year and also as he was Chairman of the club that year.

Sunday morning dawned bright and calm, everyone was eager to get away. We were the last boat out and as we pulled up the River Inny, Lough Sheelin opened up in front of us, a beautiful panorama stretching before us on a sunny morning and hardly a crease on

the surface. I tried to think where the Mayfly would have been concentrated, because that's where the trout would be and I remembered that the wind had been blowing huge waves along the shore from Bog Bay to Sailors Garden, pushing the fly between a little island and the shore.

### ***A faint breeze ruffled the surface***

I rowed quietly, pushing the boat into the rushes by the shore and sat and watched. After a few minutes a good trout jumped clear of the water behind the island and we marked the position. The sun beat down and Dad greased the fly line, tied on a Grey Wulff Spent variant and checked the knots, while we waited and eventually a faint breeze ruffled the surface and I carefully pushed out behind the island.

Remnants of the Spent Gnat fall lay about, not really enough to inspire a rise but maybe enough to keep the odd cruising trout occupied. I pushed over to the point where the bottom drops off into the deep water and the ripple tailed off into the calm. If there was a fish anywhere it would be here, I just didn't expect it to happen so suddenly!

Dad flicked his fly to the edge of the ripple. It had barely landed when it was snatched from the surface. The trout had already turned down before Dad had time to react and, as he tightened,

the hook secured a hold in the scissors. In the bright sunshine and clear water we could clearly see the big trout thrashing away deep down in the depths. It didn't jump or run so it wasn't tiring and the fight went on and on. All the time we were thinking about the light cast and the hook hold and this fish would definitely win the competition if only we could bring him to the boat. Initially Dad was quite composed but, as the fight went on and the realisation dawned on him that this would probably be the only chance of the day, nerves started to kick in. By the time the trout was ready for the net I could see him shaking. The net went down and over came a beautiful golden-flanked Sheelin beauty, the only fish caught that day and five pounds exactly. Out came the hip flask for a quick toast and then we lit a cigar.

We stayed out until the afternoon and enjoyed the day immensely. The sun grew hotter and angling became a waste of time, our work was done and all we had to do was enjoy this beautiful day and turn up for the weigh-in. So that's how my old Dad won the Sheelin Cup, while chairman of the club in his seventieth year, quite an achievement!

Such are the fond memories of people and places over the years whilst fishing, brought to life by just a simple snap. Here's a toast to the new season and a nod to seasons past!





# The Honourable The Irish Society

## Lower Bann Fishing: still going strong

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# What next?



*Pointing out the bluefin.*

## ***A report on last season's angling could be summed up as 'must try harder!'***

When it comes to angling, each season has its own goals and species to target. Pike angling is largely a winter sport, but salmon and trout anglers are almost ready to go and will have their gear in order soon. Some rivers open early and others have to wait. Rainbow trout fisheries do not have a closed season so they can keep going all year. Coarse fishing tends to be a springtime activity but we have no closed season in Ireland.

As for sea fishing, well boat anglers will be making sure their gear is ready so they can get out once the weather permits. Beach anglers are facing a bit of a lull this year, as there is only catch and release for bass until July. I truly have not heard an Irish angler complain about this. One fish a day limit again not contested in Ireland where we have had a two a day limit for years.

In my position attending the European discussions as an environmental NGO representative, I have heard that industry is happy to point to recreational anglers as being just as harmful to bass stocks as the commercial fishing industry. In many European countries anglers have had it easy with few having a daily bag limit,

some, having a huge bag limit. Size limits also increase in Ireland from July, to 42 cm, and again I have not heard an angler complain about this. This size limit applies to commercial fishing too, and they don't like it. Smaller bass which you will find in restaurants and shops are farmed fish from the Mediterranean.

The scientists working on bass stocks agree that there could be a total collapse if radical action is not taken immediately. The fishing industry hates to hear words like 'radical action,' and concerning bass, the French industry is particularly vocal and influential. But bass is not the only recreational stock in trouble by any means. A hundred years ago, bluefin tuna were fished by anglers off Sweden and the East Coast of England, but following the collapse of the North Sea Herring stocks they all but disappeared from that area. Stocks of bluefin tuna continued to decline right up until very recently, when radical action was taken and commercial catches were reduced to almost nothing. It's going to take a long time for these magnificent fish to recover.

We are lucky in Ireland that bluefin

visit our waters most years. This was suspected for many years and the late Kevin Linnane together with Derek Davis and others spent many days at sea in the seventies, trying to establish if a recreational fishery for the bluefin was possible from Ireland. He knew that the big boats targeting smaller albacore tuna far off our south west coast occasionally caught a bluefin. It was one of these that I saw on the floor of the old Dublin fish market around that time, and I was very impressed by it as was everyone who saw it. Kevin had no luck but, shortly before he passed away, the first bluefin was caught off Donegal by a rod and line angler, in the late nineties. There are very few places in the world where an angler can target this iconic species. Unfortunately, the numbers of bluefin left in our seas mean that they must be strictly protected.

## ***Recreational fishing means we do not sell the catch, so why have a quota?***

My position has allowed me the opportunity to ask directly both the Minister and the head of the Sea Fishery Protection Authority (SFPA) if





*A fine Donegal Bay cod.*



*Early luck - a couple of whiting on the line.*

allowance could be made for a catch and release recreational fishery off Ireland. While the head of the SFPA agreed that it could bring employment and a certain status to Irish sea angling she was adamant that it could not be allowed. Note that the EU does not set quotas directly for tuna through ICES, but relies on the

International Council for the Exploration of the Sea, and the International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tuna, which are mostly industry led.

However, as some are caught accidentally in other fisheries, a certain by-catch is allowed to industry. I asked if some of this could be allocated to recreational fisheries but got a sound 'No.' Of course recreational fishing means we do not sell the catch, so why have any sort of a quota? I believe a limited tagging programme is being sought for Ireland for this year, so I assume skippers can apply to be part of this.

Anyway, leaving the bad news aside, last year was a great year for bluefin around our coastline with them being seen off the West and Southwest Coastlines earlier than in previous years, possibly due to the big El Nino event last year. Having seen photos of bluefin taken by charter skippers in Donegal Bay, I was delighted to be invited by friends to go to Killybegs for a day's charter fishing, as I hoped I might get to see the bluefin.

Our target was not to be bluefin, but any of the many reef fish to be found in Donegal Bay. We were booked with Smith Campbell out of Killybegs and a more helpful skipper you could not wish for. It saddened me to see the size of the pelagic fleet tied up in that harbour — what must they be doing to the fish stock! We jigged for some mackerel bait beside one of these huge vessels. Many times I have wondered why the fishing industry keeps going on about their traditional industry. How traditional are these monsters?

With Smithy on the helm it was not long before we headed out to try the reefs off Teelin for pollack, wrasse and



possibly a cod. As I was putting on a trace to my line on the way, one of the lads shouted “Did you see that?” I looked around and all I could see were some big splashes about two hundred yards away. He said that he had seen a huge fish leap clear of the sea. I had asked the lads to let me know if they saw any bluefin about and we were barely a mile out of Killybegs. In past years I know the tuna were mostly found far out around Rathlin O’Byrne Island at the mouth of Donegal Bay. I kept an eye out for the rest of the day.

### ***A glorious day and I had seen bluefin tuna in the wild***

We anchored up and soon were catching a variety of fish: cuckoo wrasse, pollack and large pouting. A few small ling followed, then Anthony caught a nice cod. All the time we could see bluefin splashing in the distance. At one point, I saw one lunge across the surface and it looked like a horse, but in general they were too far away from us to even try to get a photo. It was a glorious day and I had seen bluefin tuna in the wild. I really did not care if I did not catch another fish all day as at times the tuna were breaching well within sight of the land. I thought that if there was a commercial quota for them in Ireland the Killybegs’ boats would have them gone in days. They would not have to travel far.

As I said, last year was unusual for bluefin and two were caught accidentally by lads shark fishing off Wales. After a four-hour fight the tuna were released at the side of their boat. I had not heard of bluefin in the Irish Sea before. They were also spotted off the SouthWest coast of Ireland. I was thrilled to have seen them off Killybegs because I really don’t know if my kids will ever get to see

them in years to come. They could be extinct in a few years time. A horrible thought, but the fishing industry still wants a share of any out there, as they sell for big money.

Personally, I believe a catch and release recreational fishery could and should be allowed. But it must be enforced. We saw a few boats while we were out that looked to me like they were after the bluefin but that is officially not allowed. I know myself that greed is powerful whenever fish are at stake and poachers will find buyers. We brought home a nice bag of mixed fish each and some great memories. If they show up again next year I will bring my kids to see them.

My other big day out was off Wicklow with Wicklow charters and Kit Dunne. An excellent skipper operating out of Wicklow town. I only went out for a half day, I have fished with Kit before and as usual he had great success last year with smooth hound and tope, with many specimens and an Irish record smooth hound into the bargain.

Anyway, things started off quietly until something took my bait and swam away. It did not run like a tope, it just swam away. I could not stop it, and did

the worst thing anyone can do in the circumstances - I locked up the new reel. My excuse was that it was a new reel and I was not used to the drag on it. The rod then broke and when the line was grabbed by another angler trying to help, it parted. I was very embarrassed I don’t have to say. I fished through my shame as if it was nothing, but lessons were learned; still no idea what swam away with my hook. Kit told me that there used to be skate in the area, but I think he was trying to be nice.

I had better luck off my usual stomping grounds with several decent huss and thornback ray, along with an occasional smooth hound. I like mackerel anyway and they were around in numbers this past year too. Although I did not get to use my fishing kayak yet for hanging but hope to do a bit this year.

Overall, if it was a school report, I would probably have got something like a B+ but like my old school teacher used to say: ‘fishing - there are worse things you could be at I suppose,’ even if the catch seldom matched hopeful expectations. The other comment on my reports used to be ‘must try harder’ - maybe I’ll do just that for my fishing too. Tight lines everyone.



*Pelagic boats in Killybegs Harbour.*



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# Fly Fishing in Norway

*I host fly fishing trips to some stunning destinations, none more so than last year to Norway's River Trysil for fabulous wild grayling and glorious trout.*

*(Photo: Marc Light)*

Last year, I was booked for two overseas excursions, one to the Skeena River in Canada's northern British Columbia, a paradise if you are a salmon angler looking for large hard aggressive Salmon and Steelhead. Believe me, I cannot tell you how exceptional the Skeena is. It is considered by many game anglers as one of the places you must fish before you die, if it is within your budget; it's as simple as that, just go. I will write about this mighty river at another time.

The other trip was a lot closer, so no jet lag, a lot more affordable and definitely a place to put on your bucket list, although it's not for salmon which is often what anglers think when you say that you are going to fish in Norway's wilderness. This time we fished Norway's River Trysil for fabulous wild grayling and glorious trout and, like the Skeena, there was a stunning a backdrop, making it one of the most beautiful places for fly fishing in the world.

It is a big country, with big rivers and we were based on the biggest, the River Trysil. The Trysil lies about three hours comfortable drive north east from Norway's capitol Oslo, close to the Swedish boarder in vast wilderness areas with plenty of angling

opportunities for keen, novice and expert anglers alike.

I adore this region and I am lucky to have fished this area many times now, with one of the best guides, Espen Eilertsen. I met him many years ago at the Dutch fly fair and he is a regular at our Irish Fly Fair in Galway in November. He is not only a talented fly angler, but also a great fly dresser, caster, cook (which any who have stayed with him will know) and a true outdoorsman. He also helps train the Norwegian Army in survival skills and on top of it all, he is really good company and speaks perfect English. This year we will be hosting another holiday in September, so I will tell you about last year's trip to give you a flavour of the trip and the place.

After landing with our guests, Pat McGuckin, from Northern Ireland, Peter Bass from England and Marc Light a good friend from Scotland (I know... it sounds like an old joke about the Irishman, Scotsman and Englishman). We were met by Espen and were soon on our way to our new home, driving north through spectacular scenery.

We stayed in a lovely, comfortable wooden lodge, set on the banks of the awesome river, where you could almost

cast from the front door. It's a fabulous setting looking out onto the wide, crystal clear river with the majestic mountains rising above, watching the fish rise. This is somewhere that makes me feel good about the world, a place not only to fish but also just sit and relax and enjoy the magnificence of the setting.

As anglers we sometimes forget how lucky we are, to just be somewhere so beautiful; fly fishing should be much more than catching fish. A wise angler once wrote: "I fish for trout because they live in beautiful places," and trout and grayling certainly do live in exceptionally beautiful places.

## ***It was wonderful, catching these magical fish***

Normally my task on a hosted trip is to help the team with casting lessons, river-reading, wading, fly choice, or tactics but on this trip they were all pretty experienced anglers and I only had to help with casting occasionally, just some distance and Spey casting, so with Espen and myself sharing the work, I also got a chance to fish. I love fishing new places, the different tactics and with grayling not being native to Ireland, it was wonderful to catch these magical fish. I have always adored





*The author with a nice grayling.*

grayling fishing, from the very first time I caught one many years ago in Scotland on the River Tummel.

The Trysil River has also some lovely wild brown trout with fantastic markings, but grayling are the main quarry. The fish we got were all sleek,

stunning fish designed to live in big fast rivers, with beautiful markings, not massive but a nice average size, with the occasional big one among them. We used mostly heavy nymphs with short line Czech and Polish nymphing techniques, but we also had them on

dry flies, with caddis and wood ants being the best patterns. I was amazed at the size of the wood ants' nests, some many feet high.

Espen knew the river well as he grew up fishing it and he drove us from one location to another, Driving though



*Watching the leader carefully*





*A beautiful wild brown trout in the net.*

*(Photo: Marc Light)*

this part of Norway is a joy in itself, rarely seeing many other cars. In fact Marc joked when we got held up by a small herd of wild reindeer that we'd just been stopped by a Norwegian traffic jam. We also fished some other stunning big rivers, including Glomma and the Rena.

### ***Gear required***

I normally bring two rods: a Hardy rod for dry fly fishing around 9 feet that

casts a five line, and a longer nymph rod of 10 feet for a 4 line. Greys make a 9'6" in the Streamflex range with the patented extension section that allows the angler to change from a fast action dry fly rod to a longer 10' deeper action nymphing rod without the need to change reel and line. This is very useful for this type of fishing and Marc and I both used these matched with floating lines. You will also need sunglasses (useful not only on bright days but

when also when wading stony rivers) and good waders and a jacket. I would also bring a wading staff and a range of flies, mostly caddis pupa patterns for Czech nymphing and a selection of dries, small mayflies, caddis and ants.

### ***Techniques***

The basic method of fishing with Czech nymph is the so-called short nymph, or rolled nymph. When using this method we were catching fish practically under the rod tip. After casting upstream we let the flies sink to the bottom gradually and followed their movements downstream with the tip of the rod. We kept the rod in the hand with the arm stretched in front of us all the time and when the flies reach the area just below us, we lifted them from the bottom with an upward rod movement and cast again.

With this short nymphing it is essential to keep in permanent contact with the flies. A take can show up a movement of the leader/fly line upstream or to the sides, or just like a short 'stop.'

There are several things that can help us to keep our contact with the flies. First of all it is, proper leading of the



*Marc bent into a nice fish.*





*Slipping back a grayling into crystal clear water. (Photo: Marc Light)*

flies and "copying" the movements of the real thing in the water, while trying to keep the leader extended. Using a short leader, keeping good contact with the flies is easier than with a long one. Keeping contact with heavier flies is much easier than with lighter ones but lighter flies, behave more naturally in the water.

Czech nymphs can be used with similar success in the "long" way, casting flies farther and laying the line on the water. Then we identify the takes by movements or stopping of the line tip. In this way we can fish upstream, across the stream and downstream as well.

### **Dry Fly Fishing**

Traditional dry fly fishing works with upstream presentation the obvious choice for several reasons. Firstly, you are in the trout's blind spot or right behind it. Secondly, you are less likely to have 'cross-flow' drag to contend with; and thirdly, you can pick the fly off the water without disturbing the trout that you have covered. The disadvantage of upstream fishing is that if you don't fish your way up to your target, you can easily line and spook unseen trout when you finally cast. That said, interestingly, on these big Norwegian rivers, casting dry flies downstream is a normal tactic and

downstream presentation works well if some slack line is given between you and the target fish, by mending or learning to make 'parachute' casts. When it is done properly to a confident feeder, you will rise more fish than you might expect. You can also stop the rod at the vertical on your forward stroke, and the line and leader will fall short of the front. Let the flow take the fly and leader as they straighten out down to the feeding fish, lowering the rod to feed the remaining slack onto the water. If you got your range right during the false casting, the fly should float down to the trout's or grayling's nose, before the taut line checks its progress. Espen Eilertsen is a master at this sort of fishing and a joy to watch.

Fishing this part of the world is wonderful, I recommend it to anyone that loves wild fishing on big wild rivers. The River Trysil flows through a typical Norwegian forest — long, still-flowing sections ideal for classic dry fly fishing and faster riffles that are quintessential nymph stretches; the river enjoys an extremely rich insect life. The River Glomma has excellent dry fly and small nymph sport throughout the year for grayling and trout. The Rena is probably Norway's most famous fly fishing river for trout and grayling and is known for its big fish, picturesque and varying stretches together with prolific hatches throughout the season. If you are interested in fishing there email me at



*A Norwegian traffic jam.*





*Stevie nets a large grayling as the light fades.*

anglingclassics@aol.com or  
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*Hardy ProTeam member & Partridge Pro team member and Game Angling Consultant Stevie Munn works full time as a fishing guide, writer and qualified game angling instructor in fly casting*

*and fly tying. He has also appeared in many angling books, magazines and DVDs and gives casting demonstrations at angling events. He has fished many places in the world and grew up fishing on rivers and loughs of Ireland where he often guides. He runs teaching*

*courses in Ireland and host groups to fish in BC Canada, Norway, Argentina and other parts of the world. You can contact him via email [anglingclassics@aol.com](mailto:anglingclassics@aol.com) and for more information visit [www.anglingclassics.co.uk](http://www.anglingclassics.co.uk)*



*The view that greeted us from the lodge.*



# TO: READERS, ADVERTISERS and SPONSORS

## 2016 - AN EXCITING YEAR IN PROSPECT

There were a number of significant achievements for us in 2015 and as planning is well underway for 2016 we would like to thank you for your valued support.



### In 2015:

- **RECORD PUBLISHING** - We celebrated 30 years of continuously publishing the Irish Countrysports and Country Life magazine (and its previous title Irish Hunting, Shooting & Fishing).
- **SOARING READERSHIP** - Our combined readership of the hard copy glossy and online versions of the magazine passed the magical figure of 80,000 readers per issue – making the magazine the most read ever Irish hunting, shooting, fishing and country living magazine.
- **INTERNATIONAL DYNAMIC** - The Shanes Castle Game Fair & Fine Food Festival introduced a new international focus for Irish game and country sports fairs and posted a record attendance and a record number of quality trade stands.
- **TOURISM SOARS** - The Birr Castle Game Fair & Fine Food Festival also posted a great attendance and a large number of quality trade stands and probably the largest influx of visitors to the Mid Ireland region ever.
- **DIVERSITY & EXPANSION** - Both fairs further extended the range and variety of their Fine Food Festivals.
- **MARKETING & PR DIVIDENDS** - Both fairs received the greatest amount of PR coverage ever within a hugely successful multi media campaign including the use of radio, TV, general consumer printed media and online features. As such they once again stressed the fact that, with this magazine, they form the greatest vehicles for the promotion and defence of our country sports in Ireland. Vendors and advertisers reap the benefits as well.

### Our plans for 2016 include:

- **HOT NEWS:** A new fortnightly news section in the online version of the magazine at [www.countrysportsandcountrylife.com](http://www.countrysportsandcountrylife.com) with details of events, special offers etc.
- **IRELAND'S INTERNATIONAL GAME FAIR:** The Irish Game Fair & Fine Food Festival, Shanes Castle, 25th & 26th June – see [www.irishgamefair.com](http://www.irishgamefair.com)
- **The ROI'S NATIONAL GAME FAIR:** The Irish Game and Country Fair & Fine Food Festival 27th & 28th August 2016 [www.irishgameandcountryfair.com](http://www.irishgameandcountryfair.com)
- **IRELAND'S MOST STYLISH COUNTRY SPORTS EVENT:** The Ballynahinch Game Fair and Harvest Festival, Montalto Estate, Co Down 24th & 25th September [www.ballynahinchharvestfestival.com](http://www.ballynahinchharvestfestival.com)

The year ahead will be very exciting as we put our magazine and Great Game Fairs scheduled programme and development plans into operation.

We trust that you will continue to give us your much valued support in the exciting year ahead.



Paul Pringle

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