Irish COUNTRY SPORTS and COUNTRY LIFE



Irish Game Fair 25-26th June SPECIAL



The Irish Game Fair & Fine Food Festival Sponsored by CASTLEWOOD WHERE TOWN & COUNTRY MEET

Shanes Castle, Antrim Saturday 25th & Sunday 26th June 2022

The Irish Game Fair & Fine Food Festival celebrates its 42nd anniversary as an ALL IRELAND SHOWCASE for IRISH COUNTRY SPORTS, the Irish countryside and the rural way of life.

COUNTRY SPORTS enthusiasts can enjoy an action packed Game Fair programme of international country sports competitions and displays with lots of 'have a go' activities and fantastic prizes including Stevie Munn's new Antrim Fly Fair www.antrimflyfair.com

And the huge array of FAMILY ENTERTAINMENT including a great range of country orientated trade stands, a huge Living History Village with Encampment & Displays; a superb Fine Food & Craft Festival including game & fish cookery demos and non stop entertainment for the whole family in three arenas.

Keep up to date with Fair news on www.irishgamefair.com or www.thevirtualgamefair.com or call

028 (from ROI 048) 44839167 E: irishgamefair@btinternet.com



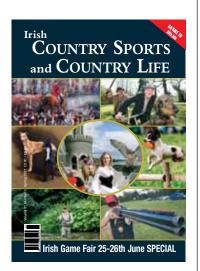




tourism norther<mark>ni</mark>reland



Irish COUNTRY SPORTS and COUNTRY LIFE



Front Cover:

Some Irish Game Fair highlights caught on camera

- **4** Editorial
- **5** Countryside News

Contents

- **14** The 'Irish Country Sports A Heritage' Book -Paul Pringle 'Reviews the Reviews'
- **18** SUPPORT COUNTRY SPORTS AT THE IRISH GAME FAIR, SHANES CASTLE
- 24 A Sea Fishing Trip & Conservation Realities -By Johnny Woodlock
- 28 Inland Fisheries Ireland -New Book Brings 'Long-Lost Treasure' of Irish Angling to New Generations Worldwide
- **31** Looking to the Future -By Michael Martin, Six Mile Water Trust
- **36** FISSTA's News & Views
- 40 Hunting Roundup With Tom Fulton
- 44 'Thoughts on Hunting'' by Peter Beckford - Book Review By Derek Fanning
- **49** Terrier, Lurcher, & Whippet Show Review -By Margaret McStay
- 51 Never Doubt the Dog -By Steven McGonigal

- 55 The Way I see It! -By John Toal
- 59 Driven Snipe Shooting In Devon - By Simon K Barr
- 64 A Good Dog's Tracking Saves the Day - By Larry Taaffe
- **66** The 2021 IGL Retriever Championship -Report By Peter Smith
- **70** Feedwell Dog Food Celebrates its 60th Anniversary
- 74 45th IKC Spaniel Championship -Report By Ivan McAlister
- **76** The 54th Irish Kennel Club Retriever Championship 2021 -Report By Peter Smith
- 82 Irish Kennel Club Cocker Spaniel Championship 2021 -Report By Mark Stewart
- 87 Review of Field Trial Results for Pointers and Setters in 2021 - By Hugh Brady
- **96** The Best Calibre for Deer -By Frank Brophy

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Country Sports and Country Life

elcome to the warmer weather, more outside activities, more fishing, more conservation and - of course - welcome to Game Fair Season at the Irish Game Fair, Shane's Castle.

The 'Blair' Bill that sought to ban hunting with dogs was lost. Well, we won that battle but perhaps not the war. I have no doubt there will be similar coming on stream in the future.

Many consider that the Bill was 'beaten.' Maybe so, but then John Blair's MLA's Facebook page in January, launched a petition in an apparent attempt to gather support for another go. He said: "Disappointed that efforts to ban hunting with dogs in NI were thwarted by Sinn Féin & most DUP MLAs last month. I intend to reintroduce my Bill to ban the 'sport' in the new mandate. Please sign today & show your support for a ban."

Then on 1st April the Antrim Guardian reported that John Blair has unveiled plans to re-introduce his Bill to ban hunting wild mammals with dogs in Northern Ireland at the 'earliest opportunity.'

Mr Blair says he now plans to reintroduce his Private Members' Bill to outlaw the practice - if he is elected in May, of course.

And all this against the background of his own petition which only attracted just over 3,000 signatures supporting a ban. In other words, only c 0.1579 % of the NI population wished to support his call for a ban. Now that seems to me like a minuscule minority of support for his proposals. Is this not a case of the tail wanting to wag the dog?

Saturday 25th June and Sunday 26th of June are the dates to remember for this year's extravaganza Irish Game Fair at Shane's Castle, Antrim.

After a two year layoff due to Covid, the Irish Game Fair is very much alive and well. In fact the team behind the celebration of the countryside and country sports will run at its natural home of Shanes Castle over what has become known worldwide as the 'Irish Game Fair Weekend,' in June.

With such a layoff, traders are keen to get the show on the road without delay and we have had a large number of new bookings from across Ireland and the UK which means a huge selection of goods not seen before at the Irish Game Fair at Shanes Castle.

For the very first time the Game Fair will host STEVIE MUNN'S FLY FAIR AT SHANES CASTLE, ANTRIM - and it is free of charge to everyone at the Game Fair.

The Fly Fair is set amidst the Game fair's extensive range of trade stands and non stop entertainment, and will feature Fly Dressing, Fly Casting, Trade Stands, and a Put & Take Fishery.

This will be an amazing specialist fly fishing and angling extravaganza based at the wonderful old Railway Station the perfect Fly Dressers' Pavilion, with a huge floored marquee for trade stands and a casting area on site so you can try before you buy. See www.antrimflyfair.com for more details but here's a snapshot:

FLY FAIR FLY DRESSING SPECTACULAR watch some of the finest fly dressers practice their art.

FLY CASTING demonstrations and casting workshops designed for all casting skill levels.

KIDS CAN LEARN TO FISH with Bobby Bryans and the fantastic members of the NSN who operate a Put & Take Fishery. Youngsters have a real chance of catching their first ever trout. What a memory and what a snap for the family album!

Meanwhile, the Irish Game Fair will have Main Arena acts to entertain all day long, with two other Arenas where you can watch and learn from top acts.

Country sports enthusiasts and their families can enjoy an action packed Game Fair programme over both days, with International Country Sports Competitions and lots of 'have a go' activities with fantastic prizes.

Living History will be in action in

Editorial Comment

the Main Arena and you can also wander around the Living History Village with its historic encampment and 'history in action' displays.

If you're hungry, why not pop into the Food & Craft Festival for food to tickle every palette, alongside game and fish cookery displays.

Explore the Old Ruined Castle and watch exciting gun dog competitions from a vantage point on the Castle Ramparts. Why not try you own dog in some of the friendly competitions running at the Fair?

And don't forget the terrier, lurcher and whippet showing and racing competitions.

I'm told racing will be the tightest ever this year at Shanes Castle and it would be a brave man or woman who could predict the winners of the Master McGrath and Mick the Miller races. Or indeed which dogs will emerge as Five Nations Show Champions. Again high stakes events for big prizes and prestige.

All that and a stroll around the 150 plus trade stands with some special game fair prices - whew!

If you want to know more then make sure you watch the press and log in to the Irish Game Fair website at http://www.irishgamefair.com/

I'll be on the magazine stand as usual, so please come along and say hello. Free issues are available as usual.

A final thought: wouldn't it be wonderful to see a REALLY massive attendance at Shanes Castle this year, right in the constituency of the aforementioned MLA. Thousands of country sports enthusiasts and their families, alongside thousands of other folk, who perhaps neither hunt, shoot or fish, yet enjoy the rural events featured at the Irish Game Fair. Perhaps they too feel that these country pastimes, like the Irish Game Fair itself are part and parcel of our traditional way of life

A really huge turnout - now what a message that would give!



Barbour South Shields, Monks Way, Bede Trading Estate, Jarrow, NE32 3HL 0191 4284707 factoryshop@barbour.com



Countrywear collection ... flattering and functional



This season, Barbour's Countrywear collection for women is inspired by the beautiful pavilions and glass houses of Britain's historic stately homes. Celebrating the beauty and tranquility of nature in an indoor space, the colour palette features natural earthy tones. Country prints featuring delicate florals, butterflies and insects inspired by Victorian botanical illustrations are used as linings in outerwear, t-shirt motifs and as an all over print in flattering shirts and dresses.



Barbour Carpel Jacket RRP L199.00, Barbour Es me Top RRP \pounds 69.95 available at Barbour.com



Barbour Milton Wax RRP \pm 199.00, Cotton Twist Nelson Crew RRP \pm 74.95 available at Barbour.com

Offering the very best in men's country style, the Barbour Countrywear collection is designed with functionality in mind. A choice of outerwear from waxed jackets, quilts and waterproofs to classic patterned shirts to build a practical and stylish wardrobe for those who live, work and enjoy the outdoors.

For further information, please visit your local stockist or barbour.com

The Young Shot

From Victor McDevitt comes a heart warming story of a keen young country sports enthusiast.

Young Cormac Skeffington aged six has been picking up at Caledon with his father Barry for two years now. In his first year he did half days being carried between drives sometime but he walks now, never misses a day, knows what's going on around him and loves his dogs

He walks all day tirelessly with his dogs marking successful shots and leaving nothing un picked. His skills extend from doing well at school to collecting forgotten spent cartridges, directing cars between drives even to congratulating guns on good shooting. He loves every moment of his day is a credit to his father and a great benefit to the shoot.

Hopefully if there are others like him growing into our countryside sports then our sporting traditions are ensured.



Caption caption caption

Young Shots help put something back

Now that the season has drawn to a close it is time to restock birds back to the land and water. We at Kilkishen Gun Club, may be one of the smallest area gun clubs in Co. Clare, but it is a club with a big heart when it comes to field sports and conservation. At the start of March, we released over a hundred duck and pheasant back to the land around the village with another 100 being released the following weekend.

We often get messages from members in other clubs asking what's the secret about running a good club? The key is to have the most active members on the front table.

We are re lucky to have such a good interest from the youth which is rare in a lot of clubs but we put plenty of effort into the up and coming members. You have to make them feel wanted and appreciated and involve them in all facets of the work of the cub.

The real work associated with releasing starts now setting trap lines around the area for both fur and feather. We always supply the young people with traps and let them know their job is hugely important, after all they are the future. All the lads here know their job and they do it well. It is great known when you go to bed that lads are out in the field taking care of business. To us it's very important to keep the youth coming through so we do look after them. Free membership, plenty of traps and advice provided to them and they know they can call on us for any help or advice. We release plenty of game every year to keep the interest going for both man and dog and we have a lot of active members. Just like the old days it's out with the 'gang' for a few shots and back to the local afterwards. You never hear of the ones that are got but you'll always hear about the ones that got away - good comradeship. We're very lucky to have such great sponsorship from the local villagers who always supported us greatly.

One highlight of the year was having young Evan side by side with us and it was great to see him take a few birds. I saw one cock flush to 3 guns and laughed when they all missed but just down the field came the clatter of the 410 and down the cock went, its great to see the excitement on his face and brings back great memories for us and makes great memories for him and his pals.

Noel Kearse: Kilkishen Gun Club



Evan and friend release birds in Spring



And a social side too - the guys in the pub after the shoot



Evan harvesting a few birds in Winter



The Club has a wide range of members

Irish Spring Angling Fair Ardaire Springs, Mooncoin, Co Kilkenny 30th April – 1st May 2022

Following a two-year absence of angling fairs across Ireland Ardaire Springs are delighted to be able to host the very first Irish Spring Angling Fair and to welcome anglers from across Ireland to the Southeast for a great weekend.

The Southeast of Ireland boasts some amazing and diverse angling for all to enjoy. With river catchments such as the Nore, Suir, Barrow and Blackwater flowing through neighbouring counties and fantastic sea angling along our Coastline. Game angling in this area is among the best throughout the country. The sea angling experience along this coast is exceptional and is world renowned for beach, estuary, and rock angling. Coarse angling is also popular in this region with the River Barrow and several coarse lakes in the area providing anglers with some excellent locations to apply their skills. With this abundance of angling in our region the decision to host this event was an easy one and with the initial response being so positive, an angling fair in this part of Ireland has been long awaited.

The Fair will be hosted at Ardaire Springs Angling Centre, located just outside Mooncoin, Co Kilkenny. Situated in the heart of the southeast Ardaire Springs is an ideal venue. This angling centre is located just a few minutes from the bottom of the M9 motor way and is around ten minutes to the centre of Waterford city. Ardaire Springs has large green spaces surrounding a lake that is well stocked with rainbow and brown trout. There will be ample and free car parking over the weekend, and a host of outdoor and indoor angling activities for all to enjoy.

The Fair will represent all disciplines of angling including Game, Sea, Coarse and Pike. There will be over 20 top fly tiers from around the country tying flies for trout, salmon, sea bass and pike. Also, there will be a host of demonstrators over the weekend sharing their skills and knowledge through fly casting, lure angling, and coarse fishing methods on the lakes to talks in the seminar room. Experts in sea, coarse and pike angling will be on hand to offer their advice on improving your angling skills and how best to use the latest hot products on the market. An array of tackle trade stands and exhibitors will be based in the exhibitor marquee for those who are looking for a bargain or want to browse through some fishing tackle.

Tickets are on sale on the website www.irishspringanglingfair.com or you can simply pay at the gate on the day. There are two ticket options available for the weekend. Daily tickets costs ≤ 12 per day and a two-day ticket is discounted to ≤ 20 . Children under 14 are free. The fair will open for parking from 9am every day and the shows will start at 10am each morning till 5pm in the evening.

Many of the children fishing at the 'Put and Take' Fishery at the Game Fair at Shanes Castle have been fortunate to catch a glimpse of a 'lucky leprechaun,' Paul Smith. Now he has published his own book 'Fishing with a Leprechaun' is dedicated to the memory of Sam Glenn a dear friend who sadly died of PMR (Polymyalgia Rheumatic) on the 20th Aug 2020. Sam owned a Butcher shop on the Shankill Road in Belfast since 1992 and was a well known and respected local figure in the community and within the Irish fishing fraternity.

The concept for this fun book was



You just might catch sight of the Leprechaun himself at the Shanes Castle Game Fair this year in June

The Leprechaun

brought about when memories and stories where being shared about Sam by his friends. It became evident that 'Whit!' was a word used in a comical way by him and his close circle of friends to explain most situations and rebuffs, so using the word 'Whit' for the book seemed fitting and something Sam would have known and would have put a twinkle in his eye and a smile on his face.

This led to the idea and concept of the book 'Fishing with a Leprechaun'. The Leprechaun angle for the book is solely down to Paul Smith a close friend of Sam's who at the 'drop of a hat' adorns the Leprechaun outfit, which was always great sight of amusement and fun for Sam and literally hundreds of children at the Game Fair.

The book is split into six chapters, each chapter describes a stage of catching a Salmon. Every page and chapter, and their lengths, were considered when creating the book so as to try and represent the duration of the stages of catching a Salmon, but with only using the word 'Whit!' throughout the book. The book is a bit of fun with the sole purpose to raising funds for PMR in memory of Sam and showing how much Sam's friends cared about him and acknowledging his wonderful sense of humour.

All proceeds raised from the book are being sent to PMR&GCA UK in the memory of Sam. The PMR&GCA



Fishing With A Leprechaun each chapter describes a stage in a salmon in a hugely funny way.

Foundations investigates these little known conditions and looks for possible causes and cures. PMRGCA UK, and its work, is funded via charitable donations.

This is a link to their website: www.pmrgca.org.uk The book can be bought on Amazon The book can be bought on Amazon here: www.amazon.co.uk/Fishing-Leprechaundeepest-secrets Leprechaun/dp/B09M5 L3Z61/ref=sr_1_1?

IRISH SPRING ANGLING FAIR

30th April - 1st May 2022 Ardaire Springs Angling Centre

- Lots of Trade Stands
- Celebrity Anglers
- **EXAMPLE 7** Fly Tying Exhibitions
- Talks & Demonstrations
- Casting competitions
- Onsite catering
- Eree Parking

E

Game, Sea, Coarse and Pike



Book Tickets Online Pay on the gate or buy online info@irishspringanglingfair.com www.irishspringanglingfair.com Tel. 00353 (0) 868128937

Ardaire Springs Angling Centre Arderra Mooncoin C0. Kilkenny X91XTY7 Gates open at 9am Fair Times 10am - 5pm



Support those who have supported us

I am sure we would all rather be enjoying a day in the countryside either fishing by the river or going for a walk with the dog. However, at the start of May we will once again be heading to the polls to elect our next political leaders.

It is not for CAI to tell you where to put your "X" in the box and we fully understand Health, Jobs and Housing are top of most people's priority list, however we would strongly ask you remember those who supported us in the fight against the recent Hunting Bill. Without their support we could be in a very different position.

As our politicians drop off leaflets or knock on your door, don't be afraid to challenge them on their stance on country sports, as they are now in listening mode as they seek to gain your vote. The more they hear of your passion for country sports, the benefits to the economy, health, protecting livestock, biodiversity and your discontent at the shambles of the Hunting Bill, the less of an appetite they will have to revisit the subject.

Please don't think for a second that the arguments against one country pursuit can't be twisted against another. The emotive language used against a hound chasing a fox can easily be used against a spaniel putting up a cock pheasant for the pot or an angler reeling in a fish. Once an MLA attacks one country pursuit it will be hard to see how they won't be backed down the rabbit hole against the other country activities.



Let the politicians hear our voice

If we vote for someone who does not have a passion and enthusiasm for the countryside and our way of life as we do, then we cannot complain when they try to take it away. Now is the time to ensure our political leaders hear your voice and get on with the real challenges our rural communities face.

How they voted

Mr Allister, Dr Archibald, Mr Boylan, Mr M Bradley, Ms Brogan, Mr K Buchanan, Mr T Buchanan, Mr Buckley, Mr Clarke, Mr Delargy, Ms Dillon, Mrs Dodds, Ms Dolan, Mr Dunne, Ms Ennis, Ms Ferguson, Ms Flynn, Mr Frew, Mr Gildernew, Mr Givan, Ms Hargey, Mr Harvey, Mr Hilditch, Mr Humphrey, Mr Irwin, Mr Kearney, Mr G Kelly, Ms Kimmins, Mr Lyons, Mr McGuigan, Mr McHugh, Miss McIlveen, Mr Middleton, Ms A Murphy, Mr C Murphy, Ms Ni Chuilín, Mr O'Dowd, Mrs O'Neill, Mr Poots, Miss Reilly, Mr Robinson, Ms Rogan, Mr Sheehan, Ms Sheerin, Mr Storey

Tellers for the Noes: Mr Boylan, Mr Harvey

Help prevent fuel theft with these useful tips

With the prices of oil continuing to rise to record levels and the as cost of living crisis takes hold, rural crime will undoubtedly rise. We urge you to remain vigilant against fuel theft in the countryside. A 1,000-litre tank can be drained within minutes and a tank that's not properly protected will make an easy target for thieves looking to make some quick money.

Statistics show that of all the items available on a farm, fuel was the eighth most likely thing to be targeted by criminals. This means that thieves stand a higher chance of stealing these liquids instead of horses and tractors.



Rural fuel theft set to rise

Fuel thieves traditionally target farms during the longer winter nights as the extended cover of darkness gives them more opportunities to get away with the theft unnoticed. These criminals often use just a basic tube to siphon away the fuel but more sophisticated apparatuses – such as pumping systems – have been reported by police.

There are several measures which farmers can use to minimise their chances of suffering the effects of fuel theft. After all, with some tanks costing thousands of pounds to refill, a successful criminal could put their victims into financial hardship:

Keep it locked Invest in good lighting Employ CCTV Fence it off Invest in an Alarm System Keep a regular inventory

There is no fool-proof way to prevent yourself becoming the victim of fuel theft but these measures should help make you a harder target.

Report any robberies or suspicious behaviour to the PSNI on 101.

Land-based jobs are a true vocation and should be valued

Land-based jobs have a really important role to play in the future of our countryside not only in landscape management, creation, and enhancing biodiversity but also for the contribution

Obituary Lyall Plant

t is with the greatest of sadness to learn of the passing of Lyall Plant, former Chief Executive of Countryside Alliance Ireland on 28 March 2022

Firstly, on behalf of Countryside Alliance Ireland and our members North and South, I would like to take this opportunity to express our sincerest condolences to his wife, Pauline, and their three children. Our thoughts and prayers are with them and the wider family at this very difficult time.

As many of you will know, Lyall had been battling a long-term illness. however, this did not stop him fighting for our members up until his retirement earlier this year.

He worked tirelessly at all levels, lobbying and negotiating with decisionmakers in relation to a wide range of controversial issues impacting on the rural community.

Lyall was also involved in PAW NI from its very beginnings. He provided a lot of expertise and support to the antipoaching campaigns and chairing the Poaching Subgroup for a number of years.

His work frequently involved liaising

with other representative organisations to provide a united front, organising support for the RISE campaign in ROI and facilitating a protocol for hunts between the UFU and the Northern Ireland Masters of Hounds Association. to name but a few.

Lyall also did a lot to support grass roots members and clubs through the provision of advice on Firearms issues, local lobbying, risk assessments, club constitutions and the practical implications of sporting & environmental legislation.

We are deeply saddened by his passing and will remember Lyall as a true gentleman who was devoted to his family but also devoted much of his life to the promotion of country sports in Ireland.

John Clarke, former chair of CAI said: "I am so sorry to learn of Lyall's passing. He bore his long and debilitating illness with great fortitude and dignity. Lyall was an inspiration to many with his determination and resilience. He was a great servant of Countryside Alliance, greatly respected by all who knew him or had the pleasure of working with him. My sincere condolences to his wife Pauline and the family circle at this sad time."



Lyall Plant received a coveted Lifetime Commitment Award at the Irish Game Fair, Shanes Castle, Antrim

Gary McCartney, Regional Director CAI, said: "Lyall's record shows the true passion he had for country sports and our rural way of life. His determination and enthusiasm was infectious and despite his illness, nothing stopped him working hard on behalf of our members. Lyall was a man highly respected by all those he came in contact with across Ireland. My sincere and heartfelt condolences to Pauline his wife, his three children and his grandchildren whom he very much adored."



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

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



In addition, with the NARGC you have:

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

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

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



they make to the local economy and creating sustainable communities.

The Countryside Alliance has long recognised that gamekeepers are one of the custodians of the countryside, and they play a crucial role in managing and enhancing it. This is why back in 2016 when we learned the framework for apprenticeships was changing, and that the one for gamekeepers would no longer exist in 2020 if the necessary action was not taken to replace it. We knew we couldn't stand by and let this happen. We worked alongside employers to create a standard that ensured those apprentices employed by estates would have the skills and behaviour required of an underkeeper; the professional registrations that might be required; and those skills that apply throughout the industry. However, we didn't just want to focus on the traditional skills, we also wanted them to become ambassadors of the countryside, understand social media so they can tell their important stories, and the work that they do managing the countryside, in an educative and informative manner.

It is with this experience and background of developing the Underkeeper Standard that we have been invited to contribute to the Habitat Management T level. T levels are a technical qualification developed in collaboration with employers and businesses. Speaking with the relevant Government Departments and stakeholders we have ensured that certain aspects of the Underkeeper Standard are incorporated into the Habitat Management T Level. We recognise this is an important qualification for those looking to work in landscape management and is a potential introduction to the career of gamekeeping.

Land-based jobs are ever changing and there is a need to keep up with new legislation and conservation practices. This is why the Countryside Alliance is 100% committed to ensuring that land-based jobs are recognised for the important role they play in the countryside and are truly valued as a vocation.

General Licence Consultation

As you will be aware just before Christmas NIEA unfortunately had to issue interim General Licences in response to the threat of legal action from Wild Justice.

CAI have heard that the new consultation is almost finished and while no date has been given, we anticipate it to be launched over the next month or so.

Please engage with the Department on the public consultation process on contral of pest species

We feel the Department made the right call and the public consultation allows them the freedom to reintroduce species of Gulls (for example) should they feel there is enough evidence to do so.

It is therefore imperative that you engage with the Department to support the control of pest birds and we would encourage taking part, to provide any detailed evidence or constructive comments you may have as to why species like gulls and rooks need to be controlled and their continued presence on the General Licence.

CAI hope there will be various ways to respond to the consultation - online survey, by email or post. It may be worth considering responding by email including any photo evidence you may have.

We would also encourage you to include anything else you may wish the Department to consider this could be the use of electronic callers, being able to control of pest birds on a Sunday or the addition of other birds to the list. Remember everyone in your household can respond however where two responses are the same, they may only be counted as one response.



North Antrim Gundog Club (NAGC) Test

North Antrim Gundog Club (NAGC) will be holding a retriever working test at Shanes Castle Estate, Antrim on Saturday 16th July 2022. Contact Paul Allen 07863330786

Gundog Events at the Game Fair

Red Mills Spaniel Tests: 25 June organised by the Antrim & Down Springer Spaniel Club

Top Spaniel £250 Top Cocker £50

Feedwell Retriever Tests: 26 June organised by the Labrador Retriever Club of NI

Top Retriever £250

COUNTRY SPORTS IRELAND

Country Sports Ireland is a leading provider of training and expertise for those people involved in all aspects deer hunting, and springtime marks the commencement of delivery of an extensive annual programme of industry-leading courses throughout Ireland.

NI Deer Stalking Training Course 19th & 20th February

Our first training event of 2022 was the NI Deer Stalking Training Course which took place on 19th & 20th February in the ideal surroundings of Creggagh Field Target Club, Co. Derry.

The experienced Country Sports Ireland team treated learners to detailed presentations and practical demonstrations covering every relevant aspect of deer hunting and deer management. This included a detailed practical session on deer carcasses and a Trained Hunter game meat hygiene award which is now unique to the Country Sports Ireland NI Deer Stalking Training Course. The Police Service of Northern Ireland also approve the Country Sports Ireland NI Deer Stalking Training Course.

The Country Sports Ireland NI Deer Stalking Training Course is unique in terms of local content and it's popularity continues to go from strength to strength with every course normally booked up with a few weeks of being advertised.



Learners and Country Sports Ireland team at the NI Deer Stalking Training Course on 19th & 20th February

Trained Hunter Course Large Wild Game 26th February

The next event in our busy training calendar was the extremely popular Trained Hunter - Large Wild Game (Deer) meat hygiene



Practical session on gralloching, carcass handling & inspection on freshly shot carcasses at the Country Sports Ireland Trained Hunter Large Wild Game meat hygiene course, hosted by Premier Game Ltd

course, on 26th February in Kilbehenny Community Centre, Mitchelstown, Co. Cork. This event also includes an interesting practical session on gralloching and carcass inspection on freshly shot deer carcasses hosted by nearby Premier Game Ltd.

The Country Sports Ireland Large Wild Game (Deer) meat hygiene course enables learners to substantially develop their knowledge and confidence in areas such as gralloching, carcass handling & inspection, parasites, disease recognition, food safety and all relevant legislation. The practical session on freshly shot deer carcasses is always greatly appreciated by learners and a very effective form of training.

The Country Sports Ireland Large Wild Game (Deer) meat hygiene course recognised by all appropriate Competent Authorities throughout Ireland (Food Safety Authority of Ireland, Department of Agriculture, Food & Marine and Local Authority Veterinary Service) which means that successful learners will be approved to sell deer carcasses to Approved Game Handling Establishments.

Deer Stalking Training Course 12th & 13th March

The first Country Sports Ireland Deer Stalking Training Course of 2022 and indeed in the new 2-day format took place on 12 & 13 March at the Midlands National Shooting Centre of Ireland, Tullamore, Co. Offaly.

The Country Sports Ireland Deer Stalking Training Course is approved by National Parks and Wildlife Service as meeting the requirements for mandatory training and certification and is also acceptable to Coillte for any person hunting deer under licence on Coillte lands.

Following detailed review, NPWS requested that we move to a two-day format from 2022 onwards to provide learners with a bit more time to absorb information and ask questions.

Course content covered all relevant aspects of firearms, wildlife, and animal welfare laws. There is also substantial content on deer biology, species recognition, wild deer management, safe and accurate shooting, carcass handling & inspection, common parasites and diseases found in wild deer species in Ireland.

Access to a unique online training manual specifically designed to accompany the Country Sports Ireland Deer Stalking Training Course is provided FREE of charge to all learners upon registration.



Learners at the Country Sports Ireland Deer Stalking Training Course undertaking the shooting assessment at the Midlands National Shooting Centre of Ireland.

Further information and/or booking for forthcoming Country Sports Ireland training courses is available via the Country Sports Ireland website using the link:

https://countrysportsireland.org/trainingDstc.php

The 'Irish Country Sports – A HERITAGE'

 Paul Pringle reviews some of the excellent reviews the book has attracted.



n 21 November 2021, Stormont's Long Gallery was the venue for a landmark event, the launch of 'Irish Country Sports - A Heritage.'

This magnificently produced, heavyweight book, with heirloom quality binding and a multitude of fine photographs, has already found its way into the homes and libraries of country sports enthusiasts all over the world.

Experts write on a wide range of country sports topics, each one being eminently qualified to write on their specific subject.

Feedback from purchasers has been extremely positive, and we are delighted with some really excellent reviews in the media, just some of which are printed below.

Interestingly, many readers have clearly stated that it should be in every Irish country sports enthusiasts home, so future generations can appreciate the rich history of our sports and what could be lost if the present and next generations do not defend them.

Will there be another volume written in another generation? Will we still have each and every country pastime as we have now? In a world that is seemingly intent on blending us all into some sort of woke population based on what they see as an urban ideal perhaps the question is will there be any sort of country sport left at all?

I think the answer lies squarely with us all. Everyone who participates in hunting, shooting, fishing, working dog trials and tests should be defending ALL our sports. It must not be a case of 'well I don't hunt/shoot/ or fish so that legislation or whatever doesn't concern me.' We all must stand together and in this I include the shops and traders whose business manufactures or sells the relevant clothes, clays, tackle, guns, decoys, cartridges etc. etc.

Many of us attend the Game Fairs and here too it is vital to have thousands there to show support for this flagship for all things country sport related.

We are all in this together - or should be. Numbers and votes are the only way to show our politicians who we want and what we want to continue - not be whittled away, bit by bit. The launch at Stormont brought together several 'elder statesmen' of Irish Country Sports and it stimulated Victor McDevitt, well known in the shooting and gundog worlds throughout the country sports world to write a letter to the magazine:

"I was privileged to be invited to attend the launch of the book "Irish Country Sports - A Heritage" at Stormont in mid November. A quality production covering all our wild sports, everyone should own.

"I met up with many prominent country sports people I hadn't seen for a number of years. There were folk from all regions of Ireland and all walks of life all representing the various sporting associations and country life activities. All were united in their individual concern for the traditional wellbeing of the countryside and its diverse lifestyles, indeed for the welfare of its inhabitants both human and animals, (petted and wild), fish and fowl. We were also there to support Albert Titterington's latest publication.

"A common interest being expressed

over many years in both Conservation and in traditional lifestyles. Our sports demand that we protect and conserve our country heritage for the generations to come.

"How has this unity come about? Who or what created the platform? Who has above all prominent people, above all countryside organisations raised our profile, who initiated the opportunity for the public to flock to country events such as Game Fairs? Who published our first country magazines? Who has defended our cause against the oppressor, be it misguided, class conscious local councillors or groups of "antis" who just want to unbalance the countryside with reared predators?

Why I hear you cry, it was Albert, Albert Titterington, his family and his team. Correct.

I was there when Albert and The British Field Sports Society raised the banner all those years ago. Looking back I have been astonished at the changes that have come about as a result of that meeting. We now realise the importance of showcasing our activities in the best possible way. We alert the public to the danger of wellmeaning people who do not understand that our modern management of the country is a finely balanced approach both creating and protecting the habitat that organically benefits all sorts of wildlife.

Other groups and people have hung onto Albert's coattails while he innovated and laboured on our behalf.

We as individuals, our clubs, our associations, our activities, our Irish countryside and our local conservation efforts have all benefited tremendously from his dedication.

I truly believe no one has done so much for us and for the countryside than Albert Titterington. I raise my hat high and down a glass in honour of him and his achievements inviting you to join me in saying loudly, Thank you Albert.

Victor McDevitt

Arguably the top UK country living magazine – The Field- was among many UK publications to publish an impressive reviews of the book.

"This excellent book has more than 50 contributors, who pay tribute to Ireland's

magnificent sporting legacy. It is a must for any lover of British fieldsports. But whilst commemorative and celebratory, there is also a stark warning to those who misunderstand the critical part played by fleldsports for both the countryside and rural communities.

In his prologue, Titterington asserts that should such pursuits be further curtailed, 'our native habitats, species, ethics and way of life will be profoundly and perilously diminished'. His words are echoed in a joint foreword by landowner Bill Montgomery and Jim Shannon MP, which extols the part country pursuits play in conservation.

The 13 chapters are thematically arranged and feature a rich array of photographs, covering everything from dog breeds to falconry and taxidermy, angling to stalking, hunting to gunmakers. It finishes with an index of suppliers."

Ettie Neil-Gallacher, The Field

Rob Collins, a well known UK author and broadcaster, also gave a very positive review of the book and this magazine.

Sending out a massive thank you to my very dear friend Albert of The Irish Game Fairs. I received this wonderful book, The Irish Country Sports - A Heritage and WOW simply Wow! This book is of the highest quality and wonderfully illustrated with eloquence of words and full colour photographs, I have been glued to it, there's something for everyone, also with this book came a wonderful magazine Irish Country Sports and Country Life, truly a quality magazine again with something for everyone, I am especially enjoying the article The Ancestor of Every Hunting Dog on page 23, even Goose my Cocker spaniel wants in on the book and magazine, my first Cocker Spaniel and he is sure some character, Albert and team it's a cracking book and magazine please let us know the best way real Sporting Folk can get hold of them, see you at The Irish Game Fair my friend.

Rob Collins www.theolehedgecreeper.co.uk

Charles Fitzerald, the vastly experienced Arts, Literary and

Theatre critic penned the following eulogy in his inimitable style:

Albert...I started a comment then lost it...heck Albert I'm still reading it your supervised at every moment...such sense and imagery from people I know, and from people WHO KNOW!

So much sense, such a lot to make one proud to have been involved a wee bit in so many pastimes but most important, so much love and expert knowledge that puts whole gamut of Field Sports in its (vital) perspective at the heart of natural Northern Ireland.

Above all, you've made one hell of a job of editing what must hence forward be the true voice of field sports in our time.

I will, I hope, scribe something more if and whenever, I manage to finish reading it. For I barely managed to lift it over the doorstep ...so that's likely to be a long time ahead. It is open at one page or another on my table throughout all repasts...I near toppled over picking it up from where Postie, a stout fellow, seemed to have dropped this heavyweight of very special testament to an ongoing yet ancient heritage: on the doorstep.

You've gathered a simply amazing clatter on knowledgeable contributors. I was especially pleased by my old friend Bill Montgomery's (an MFH in the great tradition of Surtees) tribute to those in the past who created our heritage. It is an important point and equally important, a riposte to those ignorant philistines attempting to uproot and destroy such threatened heritage as all lovers of field sports are (or should be) striving to preserve.

So much of the hatred directed at Country sports seems to me to derive from envy and to have its roots in jealousy and a willful refusal to understand nature the role of conservation and sport in the natural order.

Just let me say again thanks to yourself, Paul and everyone, for I well know how much work by so many is involved in a work of publishing art which this is so thank 'really, one and Uncle Tom Cobley an' all!

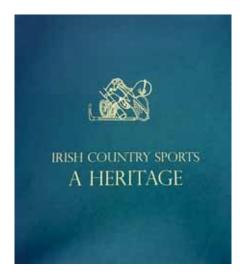
It joins my Surtees, jaunting John Jorrocks, the Irish RM and by art library as the most treasured of all my books.

Award winning Journalist Michael Drake, a former Agricultural Editor of the Belfast Telegraph and someone with a long connection covering the Game Fair, wrote this more detailed review:

Over the years country sports in Ireland have given inestimable pleasure to the many thousands of people who follow them. For the deer stalker, angler, gamekeeper or humble poacher the land and the wildlife that inhabits it have had a magnetic attraction.

Now Albert Titterington, the well known and deeply respected co-founder of the Irish Game and Country Fairs has excelled with his most recent publication, "Irish Country Sports - A Heritage." An acknowledged expert in country sports Albert has, with a dedicated editorial team, done exemplary service to the scene he loves so deeply.

Throughout the publication, a well chosen team of writers, selected for the knowledge and the passion they hold for their own individual pursuits and rural passions, has given us a chronicle of the country sports scene as it stands today and how it existed in the past. They have dug deep into their memory banks, their personal experiences and of course their labours of love to take us into a world, well worthy of exploring.



Here we are given an important insight into game shooting in Ireland, followed by a journey through many of Ireland's loughs and rivers in pursuit of angling adventures.

A short history of hunting sharply puts into perspective a valid case for this sport to continue. Without a doubt Ireland's oldest sport, its origins stretch back to a time when it was necessary for survival, hunting continues to play its part, not only in wildlife conservation but also in breed selection for the dogs that are used today.

We are also introduced to many of the outstanding personalities who made up the current scene from the legendary George Briscoe who, at the time of his passing, was considered to have been the longest serving master of hounds in the world. He is said to have served no less than 73 years which is some achievement. But it is worth noting too that Craig Caven of the Seaforde based East Down Foxhounds was a joint master from 1978 until 2013. That in itself is quite an achievement.

For those who have heard of the Irish Kennel Club but don't profess to know much about it then the section devoted to this august body is well worth a perusal. So too are the various other sections on the various gundog breeds ranging from English Springer and Cocker Spaniels, retrievers, pointers, setters and HPRS. Mention too is made of legendary Irish greyhounds, lurchers and terriers.

And who can forget the Irish gunmakers who over the centuries have contributed so much to the scene.

But that's not all. Within well over 250 pages of what is no lightweight publication is a plethora of information about many subjects qnd a lavish compilation of excellent photographs, no doubt the product of many excellent photographers also grace many of its pages.

There too, you will find whatever you want to know about deer and deer stalking, falconry and taxidermy and even the heritage of game and fish food.

And to complement this, one will find many mouth watering recipes for the preparation of everything from smoked herring to potted char and tempura of wood pigeon to wild boar.

There is even a recipe for the traditional oaten bread which in earlier days was always to be found on the country table.

Yes, this mighty tome will without doubt become the established 'bible' of country sports for a long time to come. It will fill the serious vacuum which has existed for too long concerning what country sports are, what they stand for and the calibre of people who passionately enjoy them.

There is much in this book too for those who know little or nothing about country sports.

Within its pages one finds only those who know what they are talking or writing about. And the information they impart shines a brilliant light on the countryside, those who live in it and those who make a living from it.

In weight it is not a light book. This is no throwaway paperback. But its contents are informative, enlightening and enjoyable. But beware. It is not something one would read in a day or a night. It is a definitive exercise in all that is good about the countryside and the sports to be found in it. It is a book to be cherished for at least a generation or even longer. Michael Drake

Publisher's Note

As highlighted in the 'Irish Country Sports - A Heritage,' at an earlier time in our history country sports got a good objective press review. This was from people like Michael Drake, in his position as Agricultural Editor of the Belfast Telegraph; Walter McAuley, Pictures Editor of the Telegraph; Dan Kinney, Deputy Editor of the Newsletter and others in the media who had a good connection with the countryside and its people. Unfortunately, the recent anti hunting bill coverage demonstrated that currently many in the media and indeed many of our politicians, appeared only too willing to be misled into believing that the majority of people in NI are anti hunting ..

What can be done? You can contact your local paper with good news of country sports charity fundraising events/competitions/conservation projects, make good use of the 'Letters to the Editor' pages to rebut 'anti' misinformation; and email your public representatives - very important now with an election upcoming.

And to make a very public stand and 'show of strength', country sports folk can also make an effort to 'turn out' to the largest demonstration of support for country sports in Ireland - the Game Fair at Shanes Castle, Antrim on the 25-26 June. Ideally you should also purchase the Heritage book to hand down to your children and grandchildren!

A UNIQUE OPPORTUNITY to ACQUIRE the Country Sports publication of a generation with the BONUS of a FREE ticket to the Irish Game Fair, 25-26 June, Shanes Castle, Antrim

'Irish Country Sports - A HERITAGE' is the first major publication to chart and examine the traditions, history and development of country sports across the whole of Ireland. With country sports facing a variety of threats, this impressive volume is a celebration of hunting, shooting, fishing, gundogs, terriers and lurchers and rural crafts and pursuits, and the contribution they make to Irish rural life. However it also provides a warning of what could be lost through ongoing threats to our sports. The Field magazine described the book as 'a must have for any country sports enthusiast.'

You can enjoy hours of reading, own a prestigious publication that can be handed down generations, and enjoy a day out in the company of your fellow country sports enthusiasts at the Game Fair at Shanes Castle. There are limited quantities available so if you want to avail of this very special offer you need to act now.



Admission to the Game Fair 2022 is Adult £10, Child 6-15 £5, Family (2A+4C) £25. Tickets can be purchased in advance see www.irishgamefair.com

Please supply copy(ies) of the book at the special price of £40/€50 to include P&P and a FREE ticket to the Game Fair at Shanes Castle, Antrim 25-26 June 2022. I enclose my cheque for made out to Country Lifestyle Exhibitions Ltd* I will pay by PAYPAL to irishcountrylifestyle@btinternet.com or phone (UK) 028 4483 9167 (ROI) 048 4483 9167 to pay by credit/debit card

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Show the strength of support for country sports by helping the Irish Game Fair break all attendance records



he team from the Great Game Fairs of Ireland have reached a fantastic milestone of having organised SEVENTY game fairs in the 42 year history of the Irish Game Fair.

With threats to our sports ongoing they call on ALL Irish country sports enthusiasts to demonstrate their commitment to promoting and defending ALL country sports by simply coming and enjoying a 'day out' with their family at the only Irish Game Fair this year. A huge attendance at Shanes Castle on the 25th & 26th could well make politicians think again about legislation which could curtail our sports.

Top country sports and rural displays

Apart from all of the usual international country sports competitions - gundogs, clay shooting, terriers and lurchers – with their excellent prize funds the fair features all sorts of other facets of rural life including horses and donkeys, falcons, horse and hounds, ferrets, game displays and rural crafts including wood turning and stickmaking.

A New Fly Fair from Stevie Munn the organiser of the Galway Fly Fair

The angling section of the fair has been greatly enhanced with a new fly fair based around the old railway station with dozens of fly dressers, great tackle stands, fantastic casting displays and a 'put and take' fishery for children. See www.antrimflyfair.com



A huge tented village of trade stands Trade stand bookings have been excellent featuring a

18 Spring 2022 Irish Country Sports and Country Life

unique range of country living products including everything you need for your canine companions. Plus the largest ever Fine Food & Craft Festival, including game and fish cookery demos, to be seen at any Irish country Fair.

Living History Festival and Encampment

The evocative setting of the old castle on Lough Neagh will 'come alive' with a tented village of costumed reenactors from historic timelines from the VIkings who sailed up the Bann to give rise to the legend of the 'Red Hand of Ulster and the O'Neills; the Battle of Antrim in 1798 and even the two World wars. We hope to have an actual Viking ship on display!



Non stop entertainment in three arenas

There is a huge range of continuous displays going on throughout the day in three arenas plus a unique shopping experience provided by the huge range of retail outlets all taking place in the beautiful and historic setting of the Shanes Castle Estate. We consider there is no more spectacular or value for money 'days out' for the whole family.

Admission: Adult £10, Child 6-15 £5 and Family (Two Adults and up to 4 children) £25. Programme & Parking FREE. Tickets can be purchased in advance and programme downloaded from www.irishgamefair.com See videos of the fair on https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCZwsE_EUmvu. 2xZvmwuq5CzA

rish Game Fair & Fine Food Festival Shanes Castle, Antrim 25-26 June 2022



Fine Food

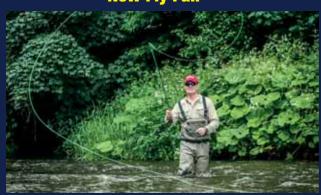
Re-enactments



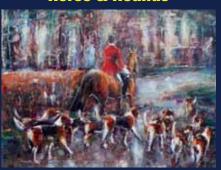
New Fly Fair



Gundogs



Horse & Hounds



Terriers & Lurchers







★ NEW Fly Fair by Stevie Munn - fly dressers, quality tackle stands, top casting displays and Put & Take fishery

The Game Fair (www.irishgamefair.com) is supported by





Antrim – the home of the Game Fair and a great place for a 'staycation'

ntrim and Newtownabbey Council area is not only the host and sponsor of the Irish Game Fair and many other events including the Steam Rally and the Garden Show but with its unique location 'touching' both Lough Neagh and Belfast Lough has a huge range of attractions and a fantastic range of accommodation choices for those who wish to visit the Game Fair and combine it with a short break.

Apart from the attractions of the great pubs and restaurants in Antrim and Randalstown including the famous Ramble Inn, there is The Junction Outlet centre and of course Antrim is within easy reach of the shopping opportunities and attractions of Belfast including the Titanic centre which is celebrating its 10th anniversary. Obviously its central location in NI also makes it an ideal base to visit the Glens of Antrim, the Giants Causeway and Derry CIty. To see some of the attractions in the area including angling opportunities see visitantrimandnewtownabbey.com.

There is a wide range of accommodation available from caravan parks to luxury hotels.



Castlewood Holiday Park- the Game Fair's main sponsor and situated in the Shanes Castle grounds.

Blair's Holiday Parks is delighted to announce that their brandnew holiday park based in Antrim will open this summer

Blair's **#happystay** ethos will be transported to one of Ireland's most historic castle grounds and the team cannot wait to welcome you!

Castlewood Holiday Park is nestled in woodland bursting with local wildlife from deer to pheasant. The new development not only has views of Shane's Castle, with the beauty of Six Mile Water just next door- there is even a very majestic Redwood Tree greeting new customers as they explore Blair's new setting.

The first phase at Castlewood Holiday Park will boast 10 touring caravan pitches, 7 luxurious hire-vans with hot tubs, as well as 10 camping cabins also accompanied with hot tubs! Visitors to the Game Fair can avail of all of these facilities at very special prices.

Of course, visitors will also have the exciting opportunity to buy their very own holiday home located at CastleWood Holiday Park.

Over the next few years and development stages, the company will be adding more touring pitches, holiday home sites, as well as developing their very own high ropes course!

For further information on how you can buy your own holiday home at CastleWood holiday park, or when you can book your very own #happystay in our glorious woodland setting, please just visit



Cabins with hot tubs available to hire for the Game Fair blairsholidayparks.com/stay or contact us on telephone 028 7082 3537

To check out other places to stay when you are visiting the fair visit www.thevirtualgamefair.com/exhibitors/holiday-tourism-pavilion/

The Game Fair acknowledges the support of Antrim & Newtownabbey Council and TourismNI.

The McKeever Group

The McKeever group of hotels has several hotels in the area including their 'flagship' hotel the recently refurbished Dunadry Hotel. They invite you to experience true tranquility on the banks of the Six Mile River this Spring, as you explore the 4 Star luxuries of Dunadry Hotel And Gardens, County Antrim.

"With history dating back to the 1600s, there is an abundance of stories of times gone by waiting to be discovered, from the original wooden beetles of the Linen Mill it used to house, to the Tree of Peace and Unity, symbolic to Northern Ireland's troubled past.

During your visit you can unwind at our Health & Fitness Club, whether that is dipping a toe in our indoor heated pool, blowing off some steam in the fully equipped gym or simply relaxing in our thermal areas. Or take a moment to explore our beautiful setting as you stroll through our award-winning gardens, including the calming river walk.

Finish your day with an exceptional dining experience in the AA Rosette Mill Race Restaurant where you can indulge in the best of local produce from our seasonal menus.

Book your getaway to County Antrim now by visiting dunadry.com."

Other hotels include the Dunsilly Hotel which has a special 'Game Fair rate.' https://www.mckeeverhotelgroup.com/our-hotels/

Other hotels and guest houses also offer special Game Fair rates.

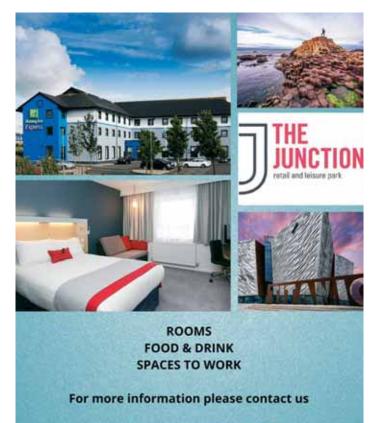


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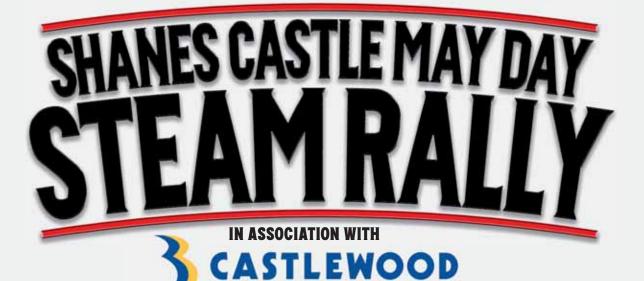
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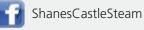
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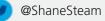
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Plan your visit today: www.visitantrimandnewtownabbey.com





A good day out!

Dan takes the strain

ore and more these days we see personal agendas on show with no regards to heritage or country traditions and ways. Some people in the media are happy to try to raise their profiles by berating fieldsports and playing to the lowest hanging fruit without thought. I see this often. As as a board member of the Irish Seal Sanctuary I have been considered a conservationist and even as an 'anti' at times.

I am happy to support field sports, I shoot and fish. I was delighted to be able to tell a large group of environmentalists that I have been to a bullfight to see what actually happens. I also travelled on a boat exporting live cattle to Belgium. I would rather live and die like a Spanish fighting bull anytime. I otter hunted as a kid and beagled, enjoyed the days and yet never saw a hare or otter killed by hounds. Banning the importation of hunting trophies is popular move, but a bit of thought shows that trophy hunting supports jobs and also the very animals hunted. If an animal has a value it will be protected. I quote the Southern White Rhino as an example. In south Africa they can be hunted for trophies so are a valuable resource, Unlike the Northern White Rhino where trophy hunting is banned. The northern variety is now functionally extinct, with only two females left alive. Southern White rhino are now doing very well.

Now I hear that these 'personalities' are targeting lead shot as a means to get an end to shooting. If public health is their concern, I would point to more direct influences such as farmed salmon which is still marketed as a healthy food. This heavy metal approach was tried in the US and rules were introduced to have certain lead free zones, such as areas where waterfowl gather. They were picking up lead shot as grit to help with digestion but some died of lead poisoning. A lot of work has been done in the States trying to find a replacement for lead tungstun and stainless steel shot among others. I think if lead was such a problem there would be direct evidence of the harm it does to the environment long before now. How long has lead been used - hundreds if not thousands of years.

What I find most irritating about a lot of these people is their ignorance of what actually happens and few would accompany a hunt or a shooter to see the truth. Also they are happy to forget that some of their heroes like David Attenborough and Gerald Durrell started out hunting wild animals for zoos, and Peter Scott who founded WWF was a keen wildflower who used plenty of lead shot in his time.



Nothing beats a cuppa in the fresh air for this author

Some antis think that they are always right

There are plenty of mobs out there happy to try to sabotage hunts or even angling events. The idiocy of some of these so-called "animal lovers" reached new heights when a group bought a load of live lobsters from a seaside fish shop and promptly released them back into the sea. They had not taken the effort to know that these were American lobsters imported for sale and now they have released them into our waters, to compete with our native lobsters. God knows if they brought diseases with them like the signal crayfish and grey squirrel did. Mindless acts, but again these animal rights folk think they are always right. They had 'saved the lives of innocent lobsters.'

On the other hand, I did get out fishing late in 2021 with Kit Dunne in Wicklow and we had a great time as usual and many might think I was an ejit for going out for the day and putting my rod away after about three hours. We reached the area we were fishing just before high tide and slack water. We fished away and caught plenty of bullhuss and the odd spurdog, but nothing huge. After a time, the tide started flowing and to be honest I was happy to sit and watch the others fishing. It was a lovely day and I did not see the fun in hauling two and a half pounds weight, that was needed to keep the bait on the bottom, up from over two hundred feet each time you got a bite. I had caught a few fish and was happy to watch the others strain themselves. There were seabirds and porpoises about and the banter was good. Kit also makes a fine cup of tea.

Having a blank day can usually have other benefits

Anyone who has fished for wild salmon will know that you are not going to catch one every time you go out trying. My ex-wife thought me mad to spend money going salmon fishing every year when I rarely caught one. I did, but catching a fish is always a bonus to a day's fishing. Someone once said that salmon don't live in ugly places. Standing in a river fishing for a



day is worth every penny and there is always the chance of a fish. When going fishing I promise my friends I'll try to bring them some fresh fish. But I always add if you want fish go to a fishmonger as they will have it. I might or might not catch.

You really cannot beat an evening sitting in a wood with an air rifle after squirrels. Again, they may or may not show themselves, but sitting there with your back against a tree is a great way to relax and you also get to see things you might not expect, such as being checked out by a sparrow hawk, curious to see what you are. You might get to help native wildlife by killing a grey squirrel, and you can eat it too.

I find it fascinating and dangerous that the so-called animal lovers simply cannot comprehend that anyone would spend a day hunting or fish and enjoy the day without a catch or firing a shot and that I think is the great conflict. Fieldsports and those who practise them are supposed to be bloodthirsty killers, not happy unless something is dead.

Or maybe it's just that I'm not very good at fishing or hunting or shooting but I enjoy them - and as I have often said to others: "There are worse things you could be doing"

As for hunting with dogs, all I can say is that I have often gone out with a friend just to see the dog working. The dog knows his job and loves to do it well, You can almost see the disappointment on the dogs face if he flushes a bird and the shooter misses.

The face that says 'you missed again after all my hard work'.

Irish Country Sports and Country Life

Worming for salmon





New book brings "long-lost treasure" of Irish angling to new generations around the world

raditional Irish salmon flies, commissioned one hundred and twenty years ago for the Cork International Exhibition in 1902, now feature in a new historical picture book from Inland Fisheries Ireland.

Did you know?

Fly tying involves the 'dressing' of a fishing hook to create an artificial fly, which is then used by anglers at the end of a rod and line to catch

fish. It's a little-known part of Ireland's heritage but many angling shops in the late 1800s and early 1900s employed 'fly dressers.' Some were considered masters of their craft, thanks to their skills, creativity and the traditional methods that they used.

1902 Cork Collection of Salmon Flies

In recognition of the cultural importance of this craft and to

record examples, a collection of traditional fly dressings was commissioned in 1902, with specific sets of flies collected for each of the twenty fishery districts throughout the country. The current custodians of this important collection, Inland Fisheries Ireland, has published the '1902 Cork Collection of Salmon Flies' picture book online, making it freely available to new generations around the world.



Shane O'Reilly, Inland Fisheries Ireland project manager.

'Fiery Brown' from the Letterkenny district, tied by M Rogan



'Jock Scott' from the Dublin district, tied by Flint & Co

'Blue Grey & Brown Coiner' from the Cork district, tied by W Haynes & Sons



'Cinnamon Fly' from the Sligo district, tied by M Rogan and Son



'Black Macaw Wing' from the Limerick district, tied by John Enright & Sons



'Black Purple' from the Wexford district, tied by O Donohoe





Expert fly-tyer Peter Kealey with Suzanne Campion & Shane O'Reilly of Inland Fisheries Ireland

The manager of the project, Shane O'Reilly of Inland Fisheries Ireland, said: "This new book offers a unique glimpse into Ireland's past, showcasing the detail and beauty of traditional Irish salmon flies and the wide range of materials and techniques used by Irish fly dressers at the time. Many of those fly dressers are now revered around the world for the quality of their craft, so this collection is of significant cultural importance too, and is now available for the next generation to discover."

"Long-lost treasure of Irish Angling"

Over a hundred years after the Cork International Exhibition took place, interest in the collection was reignited by angling author, the late E.J. 'Ted' Malone, who described the collection as a "long lost treasure of Irish Angling". Malone worked alongside Peter Kealey and Peter Dunne, all fly-tying experts, to meticulously examine, photograph and record the various fly dressings. Sadly, Ted Malone passed away in 2017 and the book is dedicated to his memory.

380 individual salmon flies, such as the 'Fiery Brown,', the 'Golden Olive' and the 'Thunder and Lightning' have been catalogued for this project, representing twenty fishery districts such as Galway, Ballina, Killarney, Dublin, Lismore, Ballyshannon and Coleraine. These flies were often 'dressed' for use on specific rivers or lakes, with subtle differences in hue and colour to reflect what was believed to be the best pattern on that fishery, at a particular time of year.

Suzanne Campion, Head of Business Development with Inland Fisheries Ireland said: "As a species, wild salmon have very strong cultural connections to Ireland, featuring in Irish folklore, myth and legend. These flies remind us of the importance of salmon stocks socially, economically and particularly as part of our natural heritage and biodiversity. A hundred and twenty years after they were first displayed in Cork, Inland Fisheries Ireland together with anglers and local communities, continue to work to protect and conserve Ireland's precious wild salmon and their habitats for the benefit of future generations."

Inland Fisheries Ireland is exploring ways of putting the original collection on display once more and members of the public are being encouraged to contact the state agency with any suggestions they may have.

Where to view the book

'The 1902 Cork Collection of Salmon Flies' is now available to view from the Inland Fisheries Ireland website

at **www.fisheriesireland.ie** and from the Fishing in Ireland website at **www.fishinginireland.info**



Looking to the future

A hint of spring arrives with this beautiful sunrise

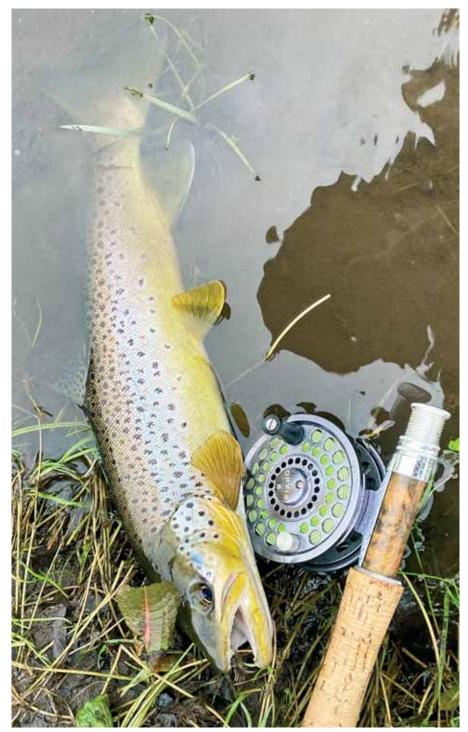
here comes a time in our lives when we have to step back and take stock, a time to decide what is important in our lives above and beyond the banalities of work, and day to day worries and stresses. To me, the activities in which we participate can define our lives, angling for example has so many dimensions that infuse into aspects of our character - it gives us relaxation, exercise, an awareness of the countryside and the wildlife that inhabits the environments where we are privileged to indulge our sport. We are given an insight to the most beautiful and remote areas of this island and spend time with likeminded folk who share our passion for the craft of fly fishing and love of the environment. As winter nears an end the anticipation of another season builds and we can look forward to the adventures that lie ahead.

Having just endured storm Dudley, Eunice and, as I write, Franklin is driving sheets of sleet and hail against the window panes on the back of gale force winds. It's hard to imagine that soon the fishing rods will be dusted down and the talk will be of the spring trouting.

There are two variations of springtime – the metrological springtime which lasts from March 1st to May 31st, and the Solar (Celtic) season which lasts from February 1st until April 30th. During the Vernal (Spring) Equinox, days and nights are approximately twelve hours long. Variations on names reflect how the springtime can be viewed, blackthorn or blackberry winter looks back at the retreating cold season, and look forward to warmth and sunshine, as we march through the days toward summer.

For the ancient Irish, the first day of spring fell on February 1st and was known as Imbolc, significant for marking the midway point between the

winter solstice and the spring equinox. Imbolc (translated as 'in the belly' – referring to pregnant ewes) offered hope that the harsh reality of winter would not last forever. It was now that cows and goats would begin to produce milk and when daylight hours were growing longer seeds were planted, as frosts began to thaw. Imbolc is one of the four Gaelic seasonal festivals — along with Beltane (May 1st), Lughnasadh (August 1st), and Samhain (November 1st). Traditionally, this day was one of celebration of a goddess of pre-Christian Ireland, Brigid. The feast day of Saint Brigid falls on February 1st every year, the tradition is still celebrated in Ireland and making of 'Brigid's crosses' is still widespread in Irish primary schools on this date, they are often hung on the front door to welcome St. Brigid for protection and good fortune in the coming year. Britain however celebrates spring on 1st of



A wonderful springtime trout

March, along with many regions of mainland Europe – that fact speaks to their conquest by the Romans who saw the thaws of March as an opportunity to resume military actions and domination.

March is named for their god of war, Mars. It is said that the Romans never made it to Ireland because they feared the weather as much as they did the Irish warrior. Their name for Ireland was Hibernia, which is thought to mean 'land of constant winter.' For most anglers, March is the season to begin their campaign, apart from those intrepid souls who go out in search of the spring salmon.

Spring trouting

By St. Patricks Day new life will be evident along the river, the gorse has bloomed and snowdrops have already been up for a while but the primroses, daffodils and wild garlic will just be starting. The bright yellow stars of lesser calendine appearing at the foot of hedgerows bringing colour to a barren landscape.

The dawn chorus starts with robins

and blackbirds, joined by wrens and warblers as the days grow warmer. Midday approaches on an overcast March day, dark clouds scud above a bleak landscape, threatening showers but the biting cold wind has gone as the angler steps into the haunt of otter, moorhen and heron. Yellow-green alder catkins hang from the branches but the willow has yet to bud and the landscape seems stark and barren.

Below the river's surface, the milder weather has stimulated activity amongst the aquatic invertebrates and the Large Dark Olive (Baetis Rhodani) nymphs are becoming active in preparation for emergence from the fronds of weed and debris in the shallow runs. The wagtails are first to notice, dashing up from a branch as they intercept the flies on their maiden flight, little dippers catch the nymphs and emerging flies in the water. The hungry trout soon cotton on to the activity, first eagerly taking the nymphs but in the damp conditions, the emerging duns struggle to hatch and are carried downstream, vulnerable and easy prey for waiting fish. The little trout and parr feed greedily, splashing and turning ,but the better fish position themselves to access the best feeding, just below the runs and in the eddies where the trapped flies accumulate.

The water is clean and clear so the angler incorporates a stealthy approach to get within casting range. They imagine that they'll put the trout down. Then the next little flotilla of duns drifts downstream the trout resume feeding again, more intensely this time, they are hungry after the rigours of spawning and the long winter. The angler oils his fly and degreases the last couple of feet of the leader again, he has selected his target – a trout is taking flies in the deep eddy under an old willow tree, he quietly sips down the trapped duns but occasionally a large whorl betrays his size as he turns on a hapless dun.

The large trout always seem to feed near a feature, somewhere to flee if danger threatens. By now, the flotillas of olives are becoming more regular and the trout are more preoccupied with their



Bill 'Chopper' Chapman with the first salmon caught in Northern Ireland this year, from River Bush

feeding so the angler eases closer and crouches low for the cast to deliver the Greenwell's Glory across to the eddy.

Dropping a little short on the first cast, the following cast delivers a longer line, the rod tip halted early to introduce a series of wiggles into the line – this allows enough slack for the fly to drift quietly along the side of the eddy, the fly sits cocked on the surface for a long moment, then up comes a dark neb and the fly is gone.

On striking ,the angler must work hard with side strain to stop the trout taking refuge in the roots of the willow. He can feel it pulsing deep in the back eddy and fears for the fine tippet. Occasionally he can see a gleaming flash below the surface as the trout lunges and turns in the depths. Eventually the trout yields to the pressure but jumps several times as the angler eases it across from its lair. The sparkling prize is lifted over the rim of the net and the angler beathes a sigh of relief, slides the hook out and, keeping the fish in the water, takes a quick photo, admiring the beautiful golden flanks, the red and black spots of a pristine Irish river trout, fully two pounds weight. Lifting it from the folds of the net, he slips it gently into the current to revive and after a few moments it regains strength and streaks across the stream to its holt under the willow tree.

Perhaps the angler will meet the fish again, the season has just begun and as it unfolds there will be hatches of black gnat, Hawthorne fly, Blue Winged Olives and Sedges, by then the iconic Dollaghan will be joining the trout in some rivers.

The elusive Spring salmon

For some the greatest prize in angling is the spring salmon. These are the

epitome of the gamefish, famed for their fighting ability, their scarcity and the beauty of their blue, pink silver hues, their broad black gunmetal backs. Angling can start early for these fellows, sometimes more in hope than expectation, January and February can see intrepid souls on the banks of the rivers searching for that elusive early fish. Certain rivers are famous for their spring fish - the 'Drowse, Lackagh, Lennon, Slaney, Flesk, Boyne, Dee, Delphi, too many to mention and as the days lengthen the silver shadows will be slipping through the estuaries and quietly negotiating the falls and weirs to find a place to rest in the cold spring river. Spring salmon generally don't show or hurl themselves from the water as the exuberant summer grilse do, so finding one can be a matter of instinct and experience. Although they may be scarce they can also be free taking fish



The greatest prize in angling is slipped back to continue it's mission to populate the spawning beds

and a once located, a well presented fly is often seized aggressively. The solid take of a spring salmon is a heart stopping experience, the throbbing energy transmitted down the rod is a prelude to the first powerful run and the angler can expect a fight on his hands as he engages with a powerful and muscular adversary. The spring runs begin in earnest from St. Patrick's Day with mid-April considered to be the height of the spring run on many west coast rivers.

The Irish Lough fishing

By St. Patrick's Day, the Irish lough angler has the cream of the season to anticipate over the coming months, already the duckfly will be hatching during settled weather and April sees the olives and buzzers. Maytime introduces Ephemera Danica, the mayfly, then June caenis, summer has sedge and buzzer fishing.

Early season lough fishing can involve searching the shallows for trout foraging for shrimp and hoglouse but when the duckfly begin to hatch, tactics change and buzzer fishing around the duckfly holes becomes the tactic. Weather conditions dictate angling on these vast sheets of water, they influence fly hatches and angling tactics. Settled mild weather allows insect hatches and trout feeding patterns to become established, a colleague of mine won't make the effort to go out until the wind has settled in the same direction for a couple of days but those of us who with work commitments must take our chances and hope for the best!

For me, nothing beats drifting around an island or rocky headland in May, waves lapping the side of the boat, birds in full song, swallows and terns skimming the lough surface intercepting hatching mayfly, or pulling the boat into a quiet bay amongst the limestone boulders and reedbeds to scan the surface for feeding trout. It's another world, drifting above the white marled bed of the lough, we are lost in our surroundings, using all our instincts to find that elusive feeding trout. The abundant fly life attracts a plethora of birdlife to gorge and flourish, from swans, grebes and dabchick to sedge warblers, reed buntings and cuckoos. All around are the unique plants that thrive in this alkaline environment, marsh orchids, helleborine, bee orchids and yellow iris, purple loosestrife and water mint. We are immersed in the extraordinary richness of this unique

environment. Angling is just one element of the Irish lough experience, we anglers are privileged to gain an insight to some of the most pristine and untouched environments that the island has to offer, a glimpse of nature that few get to experience.

Good news came before Christmas that Inland Fisheries Ireland have started an initiative to develop a management plan for the iconic Western Limestone loughs including loughs Corrib, Mask, Carra, Cullin, Conn, Sheelin and Arrow.

To quote the Chief Executive of IFI, Francis O'Donnell: "These lakes are among some of the last remaining wild brown trout fisheries in Western Europe, so it's critical that the plan is subject to rigorous environmental governance and that it takes ecological and socioeconomic impacts into account. Inland Fisheries Ireland is now looking forward to developing the detail of the plan and delivering the actions outlined, working in close partnership with the Department and all relevant state agencies and stakeholders."

IFI also announced a €1 million Habitats & Conservation Fund to restore fisheries habitats. Angling clubs, fishery owners and stakeholders may work in partnership with IFI to initiate enhancement works, this is an ongoing initiative and from 2016 over 250 projects have drawn funds of more than 5 million euro so far.

Positive results have been demonstrated in spawning redds on the midlands loughs tributaries during the winter where numbers of large trout availed of the enhanced spawning habitats which should translate into great recruitment this year, obviously the abundant feeding in these loughs will sustain a huge head of trout but lack of suitable spawning habitat and angling pressure can severely reduce the potential of these fisheries so these key areas must be addressed, hopefully a more enlightened attitude from anglers as regards killing of larger brood fish can permit these fisheries to improve.

Every angler should endeavour to contribute something to the restoration of our angling resource, whether it's fencing buffer strips, planting trees, stopping pollution, habitat enhancement projects. We have an amazing resource, let's protect and cherish it for our grandchildren and their children. As previously mentioned, sometimes our sport can define our lives, let us leave a fine legacy to those who come behind us, those trees, spawning streams, clean waters and pristine trout will remain long after we have gone, we must look to the future.



Planting trees in buffer zones, indigenous Irish oak, alder and hazel, leaving a legacy for the future

Federation of Irish Salmon පි Sea Trout Anglers

Conaidhm na Slat Iascairí Bradáin agus Breac Geal

VISIT US AT www.fissta.com



THE SEASON IS UNDERWAY WITH MANY EARLY SALMON RIVERS PRODUCING WELL

The 2022 salmon and seatrout season is now well underway with the first salmon of around 12 lb landed on the Drowes River on January 13th by Dalkey angler Garret Byrne. Many first river salmon have now been landed and we say congratulations to one and all as we face our beloved waters with the same hope and enthusiasm we had in our youth. Our National Executive Council wish your club members a happy, prosperous and successful 2022 season.

Once again, this past season has been the most challenging one due to the COVID-19 pandemic, we are hopeful that new scientific research and vaccine news will bring normality back as soon as possible. So, the new salmon regulations have just been published by the Minister, and we now embrace the returning of our sport with an optimism that rejuvenates us all at this opening time of the season as we make the important preparations for our members once again.

HAPPY TO ANNOUNCE NO INCREASE OR CHANGES ON COVER POLICY FOR 2022

We are fortunate to have sourced our upgraded insurance cover once again at the same price and without the bureaucracy that some quotes are seeking on health and safety assurances on a river by river basis. The cover once again complies with state bodies who may give grants and seek indemnifications for such works on habitat enhancement or access development projects that your fishery may need.

THIS COMING YEAR WILL BRING MORE CHANGES THAT WILL IMPACT ON OUR ANGLING AND WATERS

It is vital that we all play our part together and that all your members are registered and the necessary insurance cover is in place from now onwards. Our AGM has once again, been deferred until further notice due to the pandemic, but we are meeting virtually to keep progressing the lot of the salmon and seatrout angler and to protect our sport and our stocks. But we have succeeded in lobbying our Government Minister Eamon Ryan TD and CEO of the Inland Fisheries Ireland, Francis O' Donnell who have been open to our representations to introduce change on a number of issues.

We still have many challenges in that we have lobbied IFI annually to substantially reduce the cost of our rod licence for this pandemic season as many lost their angling season last March. Sadly, the response from IFI was to increase it to which we have objected strongly to being the low hanging fruit once again. We will pursue these issues and more at the coming NIFF which we campaigned for and we expect to be convened in February.



Glenbay Sunset Glencolmcille West Donegal - whatever the location angling takes you to some magical locations

WE WILL LOBBY HARD TO FIGHT HARDER FOR OUR FISHERIES BY HALTING THE RIVER CLOSING PLANS THAT CONTINUES EACH SEASON

We have received assurances from IFI that they agree to our proposals for a return to the old salmonid habitat development programmes of the 1990's will take place in this new year and we await an announcement on the detail very soon. FISSTA will continue to campaign for the opening of these rivers once again, if only to confront the upsurge in poaching, which we are glad to see evidence of IFI tackling last year for a change. Along with these major issues, the protection of our stocks has taken a huge hit in their migration out of our sea lice infested bays, in the feeding grounds and on their return to our natal rivers. We acknowledge the commencement of the IFI defence for the habitat as the recent announcement to protect Shot Head against Mowi who attempted to put salmon cages there last September. Our actions to defend the habitat has clearly influenced others to support the conservation of our wild Atlantic salmon and we will continue to use every legal weapon to do so. On all three areas of the habitat there was only hand wringing by the state until now, citing climatic problems that were outside our territorial limits to take any action.

We will as ever, continue to campaign for some of our rod license revenue to finance the protection of our salmon in the feeding grounds, as this buyout in the North Atlantic has proven in the last two seasons that greater numbers of salmon in good condition are returning. This is due to the 2018 private buyout agreement kicking in between the Greenland and Faroese nets men and the formidable North Atlantic Salmon Fund – NASF programme, of which FISSTA are a founding member.

If we are to see this progress continue, we must all convince our Minister in the coming season to support this scheme as previous ministers have sadly refused to in the past. Thankfully, we are now benefiting from a good contract that was agreed on our behalf by ASF and NASF in 2018, so we must acknowledge the generosity of NASF in paying Ireland's share in the meantime, until we get our Minister on board. We will continue to lobby the IFI to conclude its legal challenges against our anglers on the River which IFI use our rod licence funds to pursue. We will keep fighting to protect our angling rights and fishing as long as your valued support is forthcoming.

APPEAL TO THE MINISTER

It is now well over a year since our Minister for Environment, Climate



The Meenan cottage nestled at Slieve League on Yellow River where angling is open but limited to a salmon quota for 2022 season

Change and Communications (and salmon) published a notice telling us that his Department (or DECC) "were focused on developing a comprehensive and modern policy framework for inland fisheries in Ireland." It went on to state the many objectives, all laudable such as realising the true economic potential of the sector which incidentally they had done through IFI back in 2014.

At that time the value on angling to the economy was over €750m and should be almost double by now had anyone in the Department believed or planned to consolidate or develop the sector further. There are many reasons for why this has yet to happen and one very clear piece of evidence was printed in the Connaught Tribune some two years back, that stated the wild salmon resource would be extinct due to global warming and suggesting that it was not worth investing in despite the policy by the Department saying otherwise. We have yet to get a response from anyone, as the then Minister Sean Canney stonewalled our Dail questions by refusing to confirm or deny probably in the hope it would go away. We are still awaiting the response of Minister Ryan TD to clarify whether his policy has changed.

At this stage of the document titled "Towards a Policy Framework for IFI - A Roadmap" announced last January 27th 2021 we were supposed to have already responded to a publication roadmap, Draft statements on policy, and undertake public consultation on that very same draft policy around last summer before publishing the final statement in December 2021 when the Minister had taken it to Government and got consideration for it. None of these deadlines have been met to date, as we understand it. But all is not lost. as we are know according to the DECC calendar in the implementation and review stage is to be completed by the end of Quarter 2 of 2022.

Within this roadmap plan, we must acknowledge that this Minister has

achieved much in Climate Change at COP 26 in Glasgow, which must have allowed his change of priorities, but the list of actions are building up and it is now time for him to get some of these boxes ticked once and for all. We can help him with some of these issues by listing the following nine in order of priority - although the DECC may not agree.

- Reject salmon farming as a coastal employment and economic Atlantic development policy and publish your letter to Minister Mc Conalogue of DAFM that states your reasons for such a change of government policy. IFI has done this in their application to the High Court for a Judicial Review which we in FISSTA commend.
- 2. Publish your impending High Management Level Plan to IFI for our salmonid waters which will inform on the future application of bye-laws 806 and 809 of 2006 to the western lakes especially.
- 3. Reconvene National Inland Fisheries Forum which many felt had fallen into a lapsed state.
- 4. Publish a policy document on the evaluation of Hydro Power Plants in view of the promise of 'so called' green energy that causes massive mortality of migrating smolts - can we afford such salmonid and eel losses? We await the outcome of the cross border inter agency workshop on the Erne in March which will clarify if this government is serious about confronting the ESB dominance (which is under your brief) of power generation at the expense of the fishery potential of not just the Erne, but also the Deel, Clady, Liffey, Shannon and Lee.
- 5. Review and increase investment in IFI Protection and water quality policies in view of the recent changes in management where mobile support units have resulted in increased seizures of poaching equipment and prosecutions arising

out of poaching reports from FISSTA.

- 6. Approve an increase in investment to IFI on staff expansion into habitat and water quality development which has long been campaigned for by FISSTA and our colleagues in salmonid fisheries.
- 7. Convene a workshop to review the follow up to the public consultation on the tagging and licenses charges which has impeded development potential of our angling tourism for many years.
- 8. In the wake of the Derrybrien judgement last month in which over 70 turbines erected in 2003 may have to be removed now, we ask you as Minister to announce a new policy that bans the erection of any turbines on upland areas causing mudslides such as the Meenbogs in Donegal Tyrone and Kerry.
- 9. While the Gweebarra River issue remains tied up in the courts at the pace of a snail. Since 2006, many anglers are asking what the Minister is doing, as distinct from DECC who have managed to keep the legal advisers engaged in such a futile exercise that deprives the fishery of development and badly needed revenue to the local and organised clubs of Fintown and Rosses Anglers who will assume the management of this great river eventually.

FISSTA ROD LICENCE AND TAGGING PUBLIC CONSULTATION

From the outset we wished the new IFI regime under the CEO Francis O' Donnell well and welcome the opportunity to move forward with an agreed programme of tagging and rod licence measures, which we hope the Minister will encourage and approve in the coming 2022 season.

FISSTA have lobbied hard for the inequity of the rod licence and tagging system to be overhauled in line with other countries that operate a wild Atlantic salmon and seatrout fishery programme. The most obvious and successful one that generates massive angling tourism revenue to the state is Scotland, where our government could learn much and earn more than what they are achieving at present.

Figures from the 2020 Wild Salmon and Sea Trout Statistics Report show that 14,138 salmon and sea trout licences were sold to recreational anglers, which were a mixture of virtual licences sold online and hard copy licences sold over the counter in shops. In addition, 78 public commercial licences were made available to commercial fishermen in 2020. Inland Fisheries Ireland announced a review with short notice on 20th of October and to close on December 1st 2021 which they called a public consultation. They referred initially to reviewing the "whole tagging system, to see how it can be made more user-friendly in the future and to ensure that it can provide the agency with real-time, accurate data to assist with the protection, management and conservation of wild salmon and sea trout."

This announcement sounded like it was to accommodate new technology until later in the press release IFI stated that the rod licence system was also under review for the future management of the sport.

It said: "The Wild Salmon and Sea Trout Tagging Scheme was first introduced two decades ago and since then, we've seen a seismic shift towards buying and selling online, with many technological advances along the way that we'd like to harness. As we're undertaking a review of the tagging system, we see this as the perfect opportunity for the public, especially those involved in the angling sector, to have their say on the management of how licences, tags and logbooks are issued and distributed in the future. In other words, how can Inland Fisheries Ireland make the tagging system as user-friendly as possible in the future and a better service for all."

No mention was made of addressing the inequity of the system which salmon anglers have been paying for over decades to the benefit of other angling species who have never paid to finance the management of our wild fisheries. The FISSTA submission was lodged to IFI in time for the deadline and while we have not received any constructive response as yet, we are very anxious the hear what they think of our proposals to scrap the rod license in its entirety as has been done in Scotland and replace it with a registration that embraces the needs of all anglers no matter the species. It has not gone unnoticed that five days after our submission was received by IFI, the rod licence fees increased, up to 38% for some.

FISSTA WELCOMES IFI POLICY TO UPGRADE FISHERIES DEVELOPMENT SERVICES

FISSTA and our colleagues have been campaigning to rectify the damage done to in-stream habitat conservation in our over 200 salmonid rivers and tributaries over the years and especially on the Boyne River system along with the Dodder River in Dublin city which this column highlighted many times.

FISSTA members have always scrutinised and sought accountability



This picture of the Dodder is a good example of what can be achieved with a good weir removal plan that was conducted under the considerate management of contractor Alan Sullivan.

for the justification of funds being allocated to the various project on the basis that they were approved and overseen by people that knew the best work-plan for our fish habitat.

The work of Martin O' Grady RIP and his legacy lives on in his many publications, designed reports and proposals for fish spawning and migration which people like Alan Sullivan are thankfully engaged to repairing and overseeing now – an example being on the Dodder as outlined below at Ballsbridge.

We must acknowledge the changes for the better that have been introduced

since the appointment of Minister of Environment and Climate Change (and salmonid habitat) Eamon Ryan TD and Francis O' Donnell CEO of Inland Fisheries Ireland were appointed.

Their new policy to engage once again means they have harnessed the cooperation and valuable support of the Office of Public Works which had been neglected and ignored in the recent past. The conservation works that are now thankfully to be resumed, along with inter agency cooperation with ESB, National Parks and Wildlife Service, Irish Water and Waterways Ireland.



Left is a picture of the River Deel on the Boyne system that the OPW and IFI undertook together which brought good numbers of fish back to spawn which our Federation welcome.

Hunting Roundup

NEW CHAIRMAN OF THE IMFHA

David Lalor MFH, having been in office for over five years, has stood down as Chairman of the Irish Masters of Foxhounds Association. His term of office has seen hunting beset by a number of issues, including the pandemic and the ongoing insurance difficulty which, at the time of writing, are both unresolved.

David has put a lot of time and effort into confronting these issues and deserves great credit for the leadership he has provided.

He has been succeeded by Lord Waterford MFH of the eponymous Waterford Foxhounds.

Ward Union Staghounds huntsman stands down

At the Ward Union Staghounds huntsman Pat Coyle has stood down after some forty years in the post. No other Hunt has undergone more changes to its position within the law as the Wards and Pat Coyle has been in the forefront of dealing with these changes while maintaining good sport for demanding, hard riding fields.

Pat took over from his uncle, Eamon Dunphy, who had hunted these hounds since 1969. As his health declined Eamon Dunphy handed over to Pat, initially temporarily, before Pat became the huntsman in 1984.

Over the years Pat built up a very strong relationship with farmers and other land owners, which has been of vital importance in the efforts to keep the Hunt's position as strong as it is. Not least, the most important factor in this relationship is the very successful knackery business which is so beneficial to the farmers and thus keeps the Hunt in their minds. In addition to his management of the kennels, hounds, horses and the knackery Pat also had a deer herd to oversee which is another area where he has become an acknowledged authority. Pat tells me that despite no longer hunting hounds

he will remain involved as he will be engaged with the knackery and general kennel business.

He is immensely proud of the fact that his youngest son, Joseph, is now whipping-in at the Duhallow Foxhounds in Co Cork, though Joseph tells me that between Covid and the insurance difficulties he has not seen any hunting.

Even cursory examination of Pat Coyle's general workload and overall contribution to the Wards shows that, if any man deserves a long and happy retirement then that man is Pat Coyle. He takes with him the very best wishes of everyone at the Wards and far beyond for that long and happy retirement.

AROUND THE MEETS

The Iveagh Foxhounds met at the Gall Bog Inn, outside Kinallen Co Down, then hacked from there to Mount Ida after sampling the McCusker family's hospitality.

The mounted field of fifteen included guests Pat Hayes MFH (Duhallow, Co



Pat Coyle (I) has stood fown as huntsman of the Ward Union Staghounds.



North Down Foxhounds huntsman Barry Jones with Lesley Jones MFH at Carrckmannon

Cork) and Bea Smyth from the Avon Vale Hunt in Wiltshire, who was trying a horse which Sarah Dawson MFH was selling. Sarah and her joint master, Alexander Mills, were also mounted on this mild but very poor scenting day.

Huntsman Declan Mulcaire had on a ten and a half couple mixed pack and was assisted by whipper-in JD Devlin.

We all thought we were in for a bumper day when the first draw, at the covert known as Mary Martin's Forest, saw one and a half brace go afoot. A series of short sharp hunts ensued but none came to anything with all three customers believed to have gone to ground. Robbie McCracken, who was in the mounted field, was disappointed when the whins at one of his farms proved blank as was the case at the second of his properties the Oaks. A series of draws across Brian Cromie's and Oliver Reid's also failed to yield anything. Matters moved to Flough Bog and the shooting range but there was no better luck and Declan Mulcaire blew for home. This had been a bright, dry day which, despite being half way through January had almost spring like weather which did nothing for sport.

The North Down Foxhounds' meet at Carrickmannon, between Saintfield and Killinchy, was held on a bright, dry but cool day which had their now customary accompaniment of a dozen antis in attendance.

Huntsman Barry Jones was assisted by his brother Philip and by Robert Campbell while Lesley Jones, had charge of the mounted field.

The first draw, at Flynn's, proved blank which set the tone for the day as every covert at Hazlett's also proved blank. A series of draws at McVeigh's put one customer afoot to give a sharp hunt as far as Hanna's where scent appeared to literally evaporate so Barry Jones blew for home in late afternoon.

The Tynan and Armagh Foxhounds opened their season at O'Toole's Bar, at Ballymacad, on the main Armagh to Newtownhamilton Road.

Some forty five mounted followers, including masters Brian Dougan and Wilson Faloon, were under the charge of fieldmaster Andy Philips. As huntsman Keith McCall is still 'off games,' with a knee injury, hounds are being hunted by Oliver Little MFH (Dunganon Foxhounds) who had Philip Singleton and Samuel Philips whippingin to him and the 14 couple mixed pack.

Oliver drew right around Ballymacad townland and from the beginning it seemed obvious that there was not a bit of scent for hounds to follow at either Gray's or Dickson's. Elaine McCrea, among the car and foot followers, viewed a fox away on Kyle McCall's land with some good hound music to accompany him. This fast, but brief, run



towards Red Rock came to nothing. We had seen this fox cross Shillidays and I was not surprised to learn that Mrs Shilliday was Jennifer McCall before her marriage.

We had spent so much time, throughout the day, on McCall family land that I thought that this part of Armagh should be renamed McCall county. Hounds drew steadily across country towards Seagahan Dam but fared no better even as they drew towards the kennels, on Keith McCall's farm so Oliver Little blew for home. Back at O'Toole's the hospitality was not found wanting.

Tynan and Armagh Foxhounds Children's Meet

Tynan and Armagh Foxhounds held their Annual Charity Event, the New Year's Day Children's Meet in Richhill. The event saw a great turn out of horses and ponies with over 140 participants.

The event generated £2500.00, which was donated to NI Air Ambulance and Riding for the Disabled, Longstone, Armagh. Brian Douglas MFH with the Tynan and Armagh Foxhounds

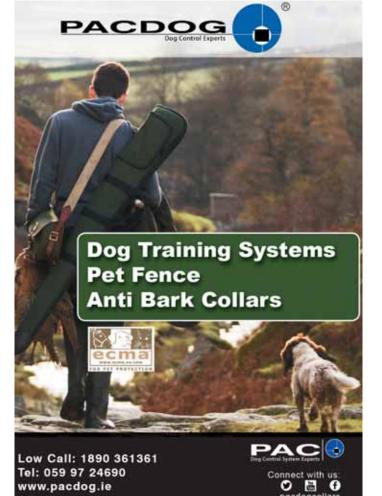
Cheque presentation to NI Air Ambulance 2022 (Photo: Mark Joseph McCall)





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A look at the hunting classic "Thoughts On Hunting" by Peter Beckford

A late 18th Century hunting scene

Peter Beckford lived from 1740 to 1811 in the small parish of Iwerne Stepleton in Dorset. On the death of his father he inherited Stepleton House and its estate and is easy to see why his book, "Thoughts on Hunting," has remained popular since it was published in London 241 years ago. The book is written in an accessible and elegant style and it also has many insightful passages which outline the reasons why people love fox hunting.

Towards the end of the book Beckford points out that "the ways of the countryside" are an antidote for the stressful and unpleasant aspects of human existence. For him the ways of the countryside incorporate a broad spectrum, including ploughing the fields, sowing the land, looking after livestock; as well as taking part in the pleasures of hunting; or simply relaxing, taking your ease, in the midst of the beauties and peace of the fields, streams and woodlands.

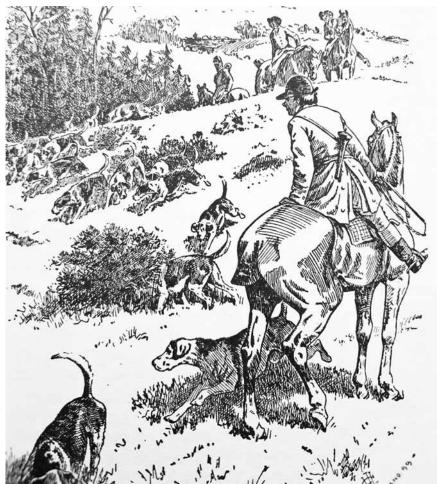
The countryside, its heritage and its practices, is like a medicine for our minds, whether we are hunting people, farmers or weekend escapees from the Big Smoke. Beckford turns briefly to Virgil and Horace who wrote beautifully about this topic. He quotes Virgil, who wrote, "O fortunatos nimium, sua si bona, norint, agricolas!" This sentence, if written in contemporary English, would translate as, "The farmers would count themselves lucky, if they only knew how good they had it." Virgil knew full well that being a farmer was not an easy life, but he also knew that it had compensatory beauty and charm. He points out that while the farmer's life can be demanding and hard work it is certainly better than life in the city, where there's squalor and filth, as well as the temptation of getting involved in the ugly, cynical machinations of politics and power games. He also points out that for many ex-army veterans suffering from black moods the tranquil mood and the loveliness of the countryside can be a soothing balm -"far from the din of war the kindly earth pours forth an easy sustenance."

Beckford's quote from Horace is the famous "Beatus ille qui procul negotiis", which translates (in the full quote) as "happy the man who, remote from busy life, is content, like the earlier race of mortals, to plough his paternal lands with his own oxen, freed from all borrowing and lending." An overly busy life and the excessive burden of debts are problems which of course remain very strongly with us. We hunting people in the 21st century share a bond with these ancient Roman poets and with this 18th Century English aristocrat because we all turn to the countryside to soothe our minds when faced with these anxieties.

He represented the best qualities of people of the Enlightenment period. These cultured, philosophical people wanted to bring the world out of the



Peter Beckford



An illustration from an early 20th Century edition of Thoughts on Hunting

ideological darknesses that it was floundering in. They believed that reason was the primary source of authority and legitimacy, and they advocated the ideals of liberty, progress, tolerance, fraternity, constitutional government, and the separation of church and state. These ideals are still highly relevant today and sadly / tragically are frequently flouted. He was very cultured. He loved classical music, so much so that he became the patron of Muzio Clementi. Clementi was one of the 18th Century's greatest composers and lived on Beckford's estate for seven years, where his musical education was sponsored, until he was 21.

Beckford admired the writings of great men like Voltaire and Rousseau. He met both of these men in Geneva and enjoyed their company. After Geneva he hunted with the King of Savoy. For Beckford, hunting was a very appropriate accompaniment to the pursuits of literature, music and philosophy, and he saw no contradiction between these pursuits.

A friend wrote about Beckford that he was a brilliant conversationalist and an excellent linguist, adding: "Never had fox or hare the honour of being chased to death by so accomplished a hunter; never was a huntsman's dinner graced with such urbanity and wit. He would bag a fox in Greek, find a hare in Latin, inspect his kennels in Italian, and direct the economy of his stables in excellent French."

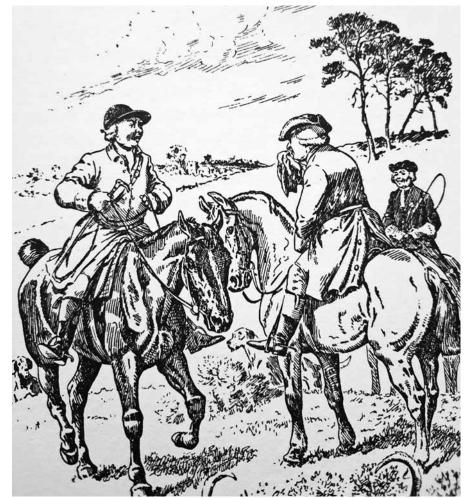
One writer, the famous John Otho Paget, described Beckford in the introduction to a 1930 edition of "Thoughts on Hunting", as being "humane, kind-hearted and fond of animals...still, when he found a fox he was never satisfied until he had run him to ground or killed him. It would be hopeless to try and explain these things to those outside the craft, but we know that it is impossible for a good sportsman to be cruel. A fox-hunter may love the fox, but he loves the hound more, and he cannot spare the life of one without being cruel to the other." Paget adds that "Thoughts on Hunting"

is an "accurate, informative and instructive text" on the art of kenneling, breeding, training and hunting a pack of hounds. Paget also asks what is the primary reason that we hunt? To enjoy ourselves, he answers, which may sound overly simplistic but is as good an answer as any.

The book was a huge success

On the date it was published, 1781, Beckford's was the most comprehensive "how to" text on the sport of fox hunting up until that time. His book clearly fulfilled a big need because it was immediately and hugely successful. Four editions were published between 1781 and 1796. Paget loved it so much that he wrote that nobody should be allowed in the hunting field until they had read it. The book is written in an epistolary form, where Beckford addresses various fox hunting topics in a series of letters to his friend. I am not sure if the friend was real or not but I think it's likely that he was imaginary. There is a vast amount of decent practical advice, which would still be relevant today. But some of it is outmoded, such as Chapter 8 which looks at the diseases of hounds and the remedies. Needless to say, veterinary medicine has come on quite a bit since the 1780s!

In the first chapter the author lists some famous hunting people of the past. This includes the second century AD Greek physician Galen: "I find there will be no necessity to say much to you in commendation of a diversion which you professedly admire: it would be needless, therefore, to enumerate the heroes of antiquity who were taught the art of hunting, or the many great men (among whom was the famous Galen) who have united in recommending it...In most countries, from the earliest times, hunting has been a principal occupation of the people, either for use or amusement." Later in the same paragraph he writes beautifully -"Hunting is the soul of a country life: it gives health to the body, and contentment to the mind; and is one of



Another illustration shows a typical scene of the period



Thrills and spills

the few pleasures that we can enjoy in society, without prejudice either to ourselves or to our friends...Hunting originates in Nature itself; and it is in perfect correspondence with this law of Nature, that the several animals are provided with necessary means of attack and defence."

Beckford is not afraid of writing honestly about the character of some huntsmen he heard of or met over the years. These huntsmen, he says, were frequently "greater brutes than the creatures on which they rode." However, as well as these unpleasant individuals he also came across plenty of decent huntsmen. Some of the qualities which a good huntsman has, he remarks, include a "clear head, nice observation, quick apprehension, undaunted courage, strength of constitution, activity of body, a good ear, and a good voice."

In the second letter / chapter he advises readers on what constitutes a kennel and how it should be run. He thinks two kennels are better than one (because the hounds can reside in one while the other is being cleaned out). Kennels should be sunny and airy. The feeding trough should be wide at the bottom and should have wooden covers. Kennels should be near one's house. Hounds need warmth after work; damp is prejudicial. Whitewashing the walls keeps a place healthier. The people working in the kennels should be goodtempered. The kennels should be kept as clean as possible.

In Chapter 3 he writes about hounds and their upkeep. Grass is the dog's best emetic, he says, i.e. it induces vomiting. (In fact this is mostly not true. Only 10% of dogs use grass as an emetic. Grass is a source of roughage / fibre, and most dogs don't vomit afterwards.) He believes that hounds of the middle size are the best because they have the best endurance. An important consideration is to think of what hound will best suit one's country. He describes the preferred type of hound: "Let his legs be straight as arrows; his feet round, and not too large; his shoulders



Peter Beckford's house, Steepleton, in Dorset

back; his breast rather wide than narrow; his chest deep; his back broad; his head small, his neck thin; his tail thick and brushy: if he carry it well, so much the better." The colour of the hound doesn't matter. Amplitude rather than length, in the nose, correlates to the hound's scenting powers. You should take nine to ten couple for a day's hunt. The hounds should be steady and of an equal speed. If you have 40 couple in your kennels you will be able to hunt three to four days a week. Feed should include barley and oatmeal (Barley is commonly used in dog food in a variety of forms. Once cooked it is easily digested by dogs and provides abundant nutrients). Medicine should be administered twice a year. Hounds should be walked out every day in the summer.

Beckford points out that a big problem on hunting fields and in kennels is the excessive and inappropriate use of the whip. He felt strongly about this topic and frequently returns to it in the book.

In Chapter 5 there's a very helpful and long list of hound names. The chapter begins with the point that it's in our nature to be constantly trying to improve ourselves and our performances. Perfection is the goal of many. The same holds true for the breeding of hounds. We strive to breed the perfect hound but never reach the goal - there are always imperfections perfection is never reached. However, in 18th Century England, he believes, the breeding of hounds has come close to perfection! He adds that the hounds to avoid are those which are "babblers and skirters" on the hunting field. Babblers make music when it's not appropriate; and skirters are not good at holding the line of scent.

Some practical advice on hounds

After young hounds' first season Beckford advises breeding from the young hounds which performed better than others. He adds that crossing a beagle with a fox hound produces an excellent hound. Bitches in heat should be separated from the others "in case of bloody civil wars". Hound play unfortunately too often ends "in bloody broils and death" - when this happens he thinks of it as a symbol of "man's degen'rate race." Even after being spayed some bitches will go into heat. The advice for quarrelsome hounds in the kennels is: "If you find that they take a dislike to any particular hound, the safest way will be to remove him, or



The kennels at Steepleton, now converted into cottages

it is probable they will kill him at last" (which is probably good advice for human relations as well!) A summer seldom passes without the hounds attacking, injuring and killing one another.

In Chapter 6 he talks of methods to wean hounds off attacking sheep, after they have got a taste for it. Some of these methods are nonsense, he comments. For example, there was the theory of placing sheep-chasing hounds into a kennel with a ram: "A late lord of my acquaintance, who had heard of this method, and whose whole pack had been often guilty of killing sheep, determined to punish them, and to that intent put the largest ram he could find into his kennel. The men with their whips and voices, and the ram with his horns, soon put the whole kennel into confusion and dismay; and the hounds and the ram were left together." The lord and his friend (who is a compassionate man and pities the hounds) return to the kennel after a while to see what has transpired. They open the kennel door and see neither

ram nor hounds. "The ram by this time was entirely eaten up, and the hounds, having filled their bellies, were retired to rest."

There is good advice on ways of introducing the young hounds to the sport (which, he advises, should be during the autumnal, cub hunting period). Normally, they will pick things up quickly. The older hounds' example will prove advantageous - "instinct prompts and example guides." Nature teaches a hound to hunt; and human skill prevents them from hunting what they should not. Every foxhound will hunt hare or deer unless he is chastised for doing so.

On the hunting field Beckford admits that he's often guilty of "hollering for no good reason except high spirits." He thinks hunt servants should be given whistles to use, instead of hollering. Whippers-in should only speak when chastising hounds or putting the pack on to the huntsman. The tricky topic of scenting conditions is touched upon. "Scent generally lies well at the close of day," comments Beckford.

In Chapter thirteen he brilliantly describes a hunt in full swing, and how the emotion of it fills us with energy and vitality: "How musical their tongues! And as they get nearer to him, how the chorus fills! Hark, he is found! Now, where are all your sorrows, and your cares, ye gloomy souls! Or where your pains and aches, ye complaining ones! One holler has dispelled them all. What a crash they make! And echo seemingly takes pleasure to repeat the sound. The astonished traveller forsakes his road, lured by its melody: the listening ploughman now stops his plough; and every distant shepherd neglects his flock, and runs to see him break - what joy, what eagerness, in every face!" He quotes from William Somerville's famous 1735 poem about hunting, "The Chace."

"How happy are thou, Man, when thou'rt no more

Thyself! When all the pangs that grind thy soul,

In rapture and in sweet oblivion lost, Yield a short interval and ease from pain."

Terrier, Lurcher & Whippet Show Roundup

Brea Rooney's Charity Dog Show Sunday 30th January 2022 in Aid of Autism

In the heart of Orchard County on the southern shores of Lough Neagh, with its rich tapestry of Lakeland, Parks, golf and Ski Centre, lies the beautiful Silverwood Equestrian Arena. This was the magnificent venue for Brea Rooney's Charity Dog Show in aid of Autism.

The atmosphere in the field was electric with the sound of barking dogs, breakfast wafting in the air, and Brea Rooney putting the finishing touches to what was to be a most memorable event.

The good canine folk of Ireland made Brea's dream come true and came out in force to support this very special cause. I have said it before and I will say it again, the generosity of our country sports fraternity knows no bounds when it comes to charity events, and many charities have benefited from our dog shows down through the years.

Results:

Overall Champion Puppy Seamus Harte with Pip

Reserve Natasha Truesdale with Pocahontas

Overall Champion and Best in Show William Lynch with Turbo

Reserve Suzanne Addis with Poppy Now a special word for Brea Rooney. Along with Brea's dad Neil and your brilliant back up team you pulled together a great sporting event with super efficiency. Brea, you and your family have faced Autism first hand. While your little brother encounters difficulties and challenges on a daily basis in different areas of life, we all must remember that no two autistic individuals will share the exact same pattern of difficulties. At the tender age of 16, through your Charity Dog Show you have raised the excellent sum of £2,800 for autism. What a great start to the show scene of 2022 - very well done Brea.

Below are the results of the **Christmas Show held on 12 December** for those who may have missed them:

Puppies: Ian Taggert with Chase, Chelsea Lee with Trixie

Under 21: Rose Mc Coy with Loxie, Patsy Mc Coy with Dallas

Under 23: Colin Mc Donald with Copper, Rose Mc Coy with Texas

Over 23: Colin Tucker with Fletcher, Darren Bradley with Diesel

Hairy Over: Seamus Harte with Ned,

Shane Brett with Rose

Hairy Under: Johnny Hunter with Jess, Sophie Brooks with Evie



Brea Rooney who organised the event in aid of Autism and raised an excellent total of £2,800

Bull: Jed Donagh with Jess, Scott Brooks with Zeus

Whippets: Barry Chambers with Jack, Barry Chambers with Alfie

Whippet Pups: Barry Holland with Pebbles

Terriers: Jed Donagh with Thug, Sam Kirwan with Thor

Overall Champion Puppy & Best In Show Harry John Digging with Galaxy, Reserve Susan Mc Cann With Penny

Overall Champion & Best In Show Jed Donagh with Ace, Reserve Harry John Digging With Storm

Very well done to all the prize winners.

Pictured at the Christmas Show



Champion Whippet went to Matthew Devlin with Kenny



Overall Champion and Best in Show Jed Donagh with ACE



Terrier Champion Niall O Cloghan with Nan & Reserve Danny Maxwell with Charlie alongside Judge Matt Lee

Pictured at Brea Rooney's Charity Dog Show



Overall Show Champion and Best in Show William Lynch with Turbo

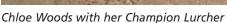


Sheamus Harte with his Champion Terrier



Helen Rose McBride winning the Children's Handling Class with her dog Pablo







Joanne Smith with husband Nigel, winning Ladies Handling Class with the beautiful Gibson



(Above) Champion Whippet Suzanne Addis with Poppy



(Left) The McShane Family with their Champion Frenchie Venus

Never doubt the Dog

Cider tracking a wounded deer

S pring is here and I'm glad to see it. When I was a little younger, I never looked forward to the end of winter as it brought with it and end to winter sport. However, times change and people change with it and these days I look forward to a little down time as spring arrives. It is most welcome after a busy winter and gives me the time to knock a few jobs off the list and get on with dog training and the likes over the long evenings.

This spring I have a young teckel bitch to work on. She has completed most of what I had intended for her, but now will require just a little more to get over the line. Eyka was bred from my German bitch Cider and sired by a brother to my other bitch Poppy. A smallish bitch, she is very much her mother's daughter, with her nose always down and a busy keenness about her. She is looking like she'll make a reasonable blood tracker and has completed quite a number of laid tracks and assisted in a live one over the winter. A likeable and easily managed little bitch, there is simply no fuss with

her and even at only 5 or 6 months old, she kept up with the others when we were raking about on Saturdays over the winter and got under fences, crossed drains and climbed through cover without a problem.

I find blood tracking a most fascinating subject, the 'mystery of scent' discussed, argued and pondered over by dog men and hounds men in particular, since time immemorial. Wouldn't it be amazing if we could, just for one day, have the olfactory powers of a hound or dog. Imagine being able to see for ourselves how they scent. Or indeed, what exactly it is like for them to hold the scent of a fox or hare, or even an injured deer, which holds most fascination for me. And that takes me back to a cold October evening in 2021, when my good pal Nigel and I were out stalking as the light fell.

I had been with him since early morning and we had been hunting a few pieces of cover here and there with the teckels and later, a fine brace of beagles brought along by another guest. I have always loved beagles or jelly dogs as they were known by the Victorians.

I followed the beagles for many years and found nothing more satisfying than hearing them in full cry across a field or bog. Many people prefer the deep bay of the English foxhound and it is true that there is nothing can make the hair stand on your neck like a dozen couple of fine foxhounds in full cry. However, for me, there is something special about beagles that I could never place; their keenness and enthusiasm for the chase, their kind nature and quiet temperament, I always liked.

Beagling is a fine sport and it is such a shame that it is misunderstood. In my years of following them I have never known them to catch a hare, of course there are occasions when they do but it is often a sick or elderly hare that would likely befall a worse fate anyway. The hare is an athlete and reaches speeds of up to 30mph. One only has to see a hare opening up in full speed to really appreciate their ability. The beagle certainly never was a match for them, a little 12/13" high hound running with its nose to the ground is never going to do much harm. Certainly the beagle will stick to hare scent like glue and go on forever, but the point was always the pursuit rather than a kill, a point that is always missed.

We awaited the arrival of some the sika deer spotted earlier

The light was falling and Nigel and I were in a small hide on a hillside awaiting the arrival of some sika deer he had spotted regularly in the area over the last few days. Sure, enough they arrived, and I watched closely as they cautiously made their way down the hillside, stopping now and then to scent the wind and take a look in every direction. I love nothing more than watching deer, they are constantly on alert, far from nervous or wary, just alert and bright eyed. Any change in scent or a sudden noise and they pick it up instantly.

It quickly became apparent these deer weren't going to go where we wanted them to go and they almost seemed to know we were there and stayed almost within 100yards of a safe shot. We made a last-minute decision to go to them and left our hide and stalked carefully uphill and down a lane to get within reach.

As we hid behind some gorse bushes a hind winded us and the entire group looked up and froze – I had to make a decision to take a quick shot or just leave it. Nigel threw the sticks up quickly and I was too hasty and inevitably missed what should have been a straight forward shot. I kicked myself, you know how it is with these things. If we had of waited longer, if we had come in the other way - all the ifs and buts were going through my mind.

We slipped out of the land rover, leaving the doors open and crept along the hedge line

We headed back to his Land Rover and with only a few minutes of light remaining, all hopes of a deer for the freezer were gone. We rumbled quietly



Poppy's mallard retrieved from water along the lane and the only thing I had on my mind was a good warm coffee to take the chill out of my bones. All of sudden Nigel eased up the vehicle and knocked the ignition off and let it roll to a standstill. That only meant one thing! "Theres a few to the right and it's a safe shot" he whispered. We slipped out of the Land Rover, left the doors open and crept along a hedge line.

Nigel had the binoculars and after looking over the field gave me the thumbs up. I set up the sticks, placed the rifle, got the stag into my sights and squeezed the trigger. There is always that split second when the firing pin strikes and the bang goes off when it seems to be just black until you see what happened. I saw the deer go down, but when my eye left the scope he was nowhere to be seen. Nigel saw it go down from his position, but it appeared he had gone over the crest of a small hill behind.

We left it a few minutes and he checked the shot area but could not see the animal anywhere. We assumed because of his initial drop that he had not gone far so after 15 or 20 minutes went back and fetched Cider from the land rover and slipped on her tracking collar and lead. The tracking collar is one that should only be ever used for tracking and the only time the dog



Remy after an early start

wears it is in a tracking situation. Cider who is well schooled in the tracking business now, knows that when the collar goes it's time for business!

We walked her to the shot area and after licking the ground she proceeded in a straight line to hedge with a small stream running behind. She immediately marked some blood on a Hawthorne hedge and pushed on through and began to bark. Behind the hedge, laid up on the far side was the stag. Nigel approached him as I held Cider back, but he took off, obviously injured. I now questioned my shot, what had happened? Following a an injured deer when it has just taken off is best avoided as you will only push it further and further. It is best left to let the deer settle and perhaps expire and you will ultimately increase your chances of recovery.

'Always trust the dog,' Nigel reminded me

We returned an hour or two later and Cider was very keen on the original strike area, she follow the exact same path as she had before, and headed north along a broken fence line, before ducking through and taking me to a large clump of rhododendrons on the bank of a very deep ravine. It was maybe ten or twelve feet down, with fast running water below and a steep climb up the other side. Nigel and I checked up and down the bank but found nothing. I doubted the teckel, but Nigel didn't! "She knows he said." We took her back to the shot area and for a second time she took us back to the Rhododendrons.

Climbing down the ravine and up the other side, I passed Cider over and Nigel's little Lurcher bitch Trouble who we'd also brought with us. They very quickly found blood on a post on the far side and as we entered a small rushy field Cider's body language changed completely, as did the lurcher's. Both were scenting the air and Cider was pulling hard on the line. She went down the field and doubled back, with Trouble ahead of her. Nigel called to me he had found the deer and as Cider and I approached, Trouble was standing beside it.

The dogs had done well and without either I doubt we would have found the carcass and I certainly would not have crossed the ravine had Nigel not suggested we did. We wasted no time and got the animal gralloched and extracted back to the Land Rover. "I told you never to doubt the dog" said Nigel and that summed up a great ending to a very memorable day.

The teckel is very much a multipurpose dog, a sort of hound / terrier, but very much a unique breed and suitable for many tasks. Although an individual dog rarely does it all they usually excel at one or two things. Some of my tackles excel at tracking, some at working with the gun and fetching birds etc and others at simply flushing vermin to the gun or bolting from an earth.

Remy was imported from Germany from the breeder Doreen Klaus, owner of the well-known Vom Alten Friedrich kennel in Dresden. Remy has really found his feet here and is a sure and steady blood tracker, but has also really taken to flushing vermin to the gun. He isn't an overly large male, but powerfully built with a bay like a mastiff and stops for nothing when on a line. Although he was a little more difficult to train, he will happily sit, stay, retrieve and has good recall for at. As he arrived as a young puppy in late October 2020, it was to be the season just passed before before he matured. He has established himself well.

On the many days we have been out either stalking a deer or just out and about about with the gun, when he has flushed woodcock. I have never had a teckel flush them except accidentally, although it seems that he can perhaps scent them but I can't be sure.

Remy took to scent trails well which surprised me, as usually a teckel that is busy and keen around cover has not got the patience to work out a blood trail. However Remy does so, working quickly up to 1000 metres laid 24hrs before, which is not bad going. However, this all changed after his first encounter with a fallow pricket over the winter and he has absolutely zero interest in laid trails now.

2022 will see the return of the Irish Game Fair at Shanes Castle and I for one am really looking forward to it. I think the phrase "don't know what you have until it's gone" springs to mind for us all.

The fair has been sorely missed by us all the last two years. It is our thing, a celebration of our way of life, and it's more important than ever that we work to protect it. If the last 12 months is anything to go by, there are individuals and political parties who want nothing more than to pull the rug from under us. We stuck to our guns (no pun intended) and didn't let it happen and we must continue to do so. I hope to see each and every one of you at Shanes Castle over the 25th – 26th June. Let us make it the most memorable one ever.



The task completed with this fallow pricket for Remy

The Way I See It!

Hello again readers of the Country Sports and Country Life magazine. I have been reporting to you for a few years as PRO of the NARGC but my tenure in that role has ended with Keith Foran succeeding me. I look forward to reading Keith's reports. I received a kind invitation for me to continue to contribute in an independent role to this marvellous publication. I was more than delighted to accept this offer. In future then my articles will be less newsy with a more personal and slightly whimsical vent.

Louth over these last few years. With the aid of the local Louth Leader organisation, I have received training in Small Stream Classification and currently am engaged in a training course in identifying invasive species (Flora and Fauna). Truly, even as we get older, every day is still a school day.

Green issues are currently to the fore with political parties tripping over each other, each trying to be greener than the other. This newfound environmental awareness may disappear like scotch mist with the next emerging trend but we, country sports people, have always cared for nature and all the diverse plant and animal life that we are blessed with on this island.

We have 'skin in the game'

The NARGC slogan "Carers of the Countryside" rings as true today as it always has. Gun Clubs and Fishing Clubs have engaged in environmental and river improvement projects as long as I can remember. Then as the Americans will say "we have skin in the game."

Ours is not an airy-fairy approach to conservation but rather the practical



A traditional brace for the table



The Author in 'thinking mode'

As a now retired person, time to pursue a more varied range of interests and hobbies is now available to me . My interest in our environment, our rivers and streams, bogs and catchment has been sparked anew.

I have become involved with ORCCA (Oriel Rivers, Catchment and Coastal Association) here in County application of knowledge gained, and tradition handed down, to establish the conditions where fish and fowl can thrive. The outcome is that all species benefit from our efforts, not just those quarry species that we pursue for the table.

I am often lectured to by 'conservationists,' anti-shooting bodies and by well-intentioned vegetarians and vegans on the evils of shooting the poor little birds and animals. Now, in my personal experience, these people do extraordinarily little to protect our environment, to prevent global warming, or to prevent the rising water levels other than to occupy the high moral ground. Oh yes, they support carbon taxes, they believe in the bicycle, they support electric vehicles, they want to ban turf harvesting and how dare we lust after a traditional open fire, we cretinous polluters of their precious air. Shame on us.



The traditional 'long tail' winner

The real impact of going green

Shame indeed when we point out the carbon footprint of electric car batteries and the environmental time bomb that awaits us when these same electric vehicles come to end of life disposal. Shame when we look at the carbon footprint of importing peat moss from Latvia or Lignite briquettes from Germany. Shame when we suggest that the small amount of lead we release into the environment in shooting, is infinitesimal when compared to the carbon footprint of producing steel shot in dirty, coal-powered China, shot that is toxic to animals (humans included) when it comes into contact with blood resulting in sepsis infection. These people profess to be animal lovers!

Here in the Republic, hunting and fishing, along with other country pursuits, are overseen by the Department of Heritage and in particular the NPWS. The National Parks and Wildlife Service is currently in the charge of a Green Party Minister (himself a self-declared Animal Rights Activist) !

Now in this circumstance it is hardly surprising that the Minister has commissioned a panel of experts to advise him on the Open Game Seasons Orders. I understand that these experts, in line with the EU Birds Directive and local bird population counts, will advise the minister on what curtailment to the open seasons is required.

I recall the very dubious science that was applied in the attempt to curtail summer wood pigeon shooting. It is no great leap of imagination to suggest that this new expert group may perhaps see only what they want to see. It is equally probable that they will not see what they do not want to when it comes to counting snipe and woodcock.

Am I just being cynical? I think not! To my mind such people are expert only in failure. The Birds Directive has failed totally. All songbird and gamebird populations have declined. Meantime Corvids are on the rise and reintroduced raptors prosper. When these Raptors were reintroduced what did they think they were going to feed on? Perhaps the answer there lies in the proposed newly protected wood pigeon in the summer months when raptor chicks are hatched and then in the autumn, pheasants and partridges newly released so as to acclimatise to the terrain ahead of the open season. Cynical, maybe so, but I have lived long enough to see the wood from the trees.

Recent developments have seen the rise of the Hunt Saboteurs here in Ireland. These so-called lawless bandits delight in the destruction of vermin control equipment, the release of trapped crows and magpies and in disrupting the perfectly lawful activities of crop protection and game and fox hunting.

Many of these activists have been before the Courts but that does not dissuade them as they carry the convictions as a badge of honour and to date the Judiciary have been incredibly soft on these idealists.

Dodging the bullet on the lead shot issue!

The recent announcement from the Irish Government that the percentage of the landmass defined as wetlands falls below the 20% that would have brought in a total national ban on lead shot caught many hunters by surprise, me included. As best I can see, the RAMSAR Convention defining wetlands, has been abandoned. Many media outlets reporting on this development see this as a reprieve for gun owners and farmers in particular.

My own take on this is different. I see laziness at work here. To date, the NPWS has not mapped the wetlands, so none of us can be sure if we will be breaking the law when we take to the fields in pursuit of game. As yet, we have no Proof House in the ROI, so we will have to export our guns to the UK (a non- EU country) for re-proofing, with alterations to chambers and chokes that will make them capable of handling steel shot.

How many gunsmiths operate in the Republic who are equipped to conduct the modifications that will be needed? What scrappage scheme is there in the pipeline? Who will carry the cost of modification or replacement? There is less than a year left before the new law and regulations come into force.

Most worrying here is the total lack of engagement between the NPWS and the representative bodies of the shooting and fishing public. These representatives appear to have been side lined and the only conclusion that I can come to is that the Green Minister in charge, believes he can ignore the shooting lobby. In a changing political environment, green power rules! The tail wags the political dog, and we are paying the price. Much needs to change and soon.

I will continue to track this and other relevant issues. Of course, I will report to the readers of Irish Country Sports and Country Life as things develop. Closing for now, as we look forward to tight lines and crop protection duties.



Two lads after a hard's days hunting



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Driven snipe shooting in Devon

aybe it's down to the difficultly level? Perhaps it's because they are totally wild? Or maybe it's the feeling of sporting nostalgia? Either way, shooting a wisp of common snipe is a lifeaffirming pastime.

It is wholesome, testing and gratifying. And it is something that has been done for hundreds of years in this remote corner of Devon. The Tamar Valley welcomes a huge number of the waders each season due to numerous herds of cattle creating a perfect habitat for them. It is not uncommon to see 100 snipe lift from a pasture field with a few rasps of a flag.

Managed by life-long gamekeeper Jeff Reynolds, the season opens in August but he does not start harvesting until mid-November onwards in a bid to target only migrating snipe – not the



The day started with the team of six Guns congregating outside the hotel's historically listed cock-fighting pit

resident breeding stock. "Wild snipe are a precious natural resource and need to be managed sensitively and carefully," explains Jeff, adding: "A week before Guns arrive, I rally the troops to conduct a count by walking the ground and gauging numbers. We are careful to manage Guns' expectations and are proud to welcome those that see the merit in shooting small, hard-gained bags."

To put numbers into perspective, in the UK there are 80,000 breeding pairs, with one million birds wintering here. Jeff manages 25,000 acres of farmland and bogs, flight ponds and tussocky moorland and shoots just 150 for the season.

More snipe are shot at than hit

The term snipe hunt, when used figuratively, means a fool's errand, a hopeless cause, the pursuit of something that is unattainable. With a flight speed of up to 60mph and an erratic, jinking flight path they are tricky gamebirds to connect with. A great many more are shot at than are actually hit. Shooting snipe is a rite of passage and Guns need to be experienced with lightning-fast reactions. However, hard-earned quarry is what we all seek, so a day of driven snipe for a team of six friends when restrictions were temporarily lifted in December provided ideal escapism from the monotony of quarantining.

Shooting in the west West Country is appeased by staying at iconic sporting hotel "The Arundell" in Lifton, Devon. A 300-year-old coaching inn, the 27bedroom hotel was acquired by dynamic duo Simon Village and Arabella Monro in July last year. Having undergone a seven-figure restoration, the historic building has had new life breathed into it. Fanatical about wild bird shooting and fishing unmanicured rivers, Simon's new focus is now The Arundell.

With a career focussed in Africa, largely mining and finance, the pair were looking for a new adventure, with a lifestyle element to it, and on being approached by a fishing and shooting friend and learning that the hotel could be for sale, they approached the Fox-Edwards family that owned it.



The one-of-a-kind Land Rover Defender was specially customised with Rigby features and bespoke details

"The Arundell has only ever been owned by two families in its 90-year history so this was a very rare opportunity, which we jumped at," he revealed adding: "of course, this all happened during the first national lockdown which we used to our advantage to undertake the work that most hoteliers cannot embark on with an operating hotel, and completely gut the inside. There were around 25



We moved from field to field

contractors on site for six months. We replumbed, rewired and totally refurbished the hotel. A lot of people raised their eyebrows when I told them of our plans to buy an old hotel in the middle of a pandemic, but with a background of undertaking interesting and risky projects in Africa, including financing and building the first gold mine in the Congo after independence, and his ongoing involvement in hotels in Zimbabwe, the risk of buying the top field sporting hotel in Devon appeared a perfectly natural one."

This is fieldsports done properly!

The duo, with six children between them, have a very clear vision for the hotel and the sport they provide. As well as winged-game shooting and deerstalking they own rights and have access to some 22 miles of the river Tamar which is full of wild brownies and sea trout, and salmon when they do run in the English rivers. "This is fieldsports done properly. It is not pretentious or staged. It is authentic and genuine. We do not want the offering to feel commercial in any way. Every outing is special. We do not want guests to feel like they're are on a conveyor belt. We want staying at The Arundell to be an annual event and for fieldsports to be accessible to newcomers. We have tried to design the hotel so that it



The cocker made a very smart retrieve of the snipe

appeals to everyone, from hardened shooting and fishing stalwarts to complete novices, in fact even a place to learn the etiquettes and skills of shooting and fishing itself. We have modernised and brought the hotel into the 21st century. There is now eight Tesla electric super charging points in the car park, the last in and first out of Cornwall, which we hope will help attract a new crowd. Little touches like this show that we're progressive. We are not superficial or overly glossy, our offering has depth."

Hold fire and wait for the bird to stop jinking

There is a knack to shooting snipe. You'll need to complete your apprenticeship in the field before tackling them. To get your eye in, practice on helice ZZ clay targets which fly in an erratic zig-zag way and mimic the tricky flight line. When shooting snipe, many Guns let off a shot too soon usually trying to judge whether the bird is going to zig or zag. Sometimes this works, but most times it does not. Far better to hold fire for a few seconds and wait for the bird to stop jinking and straighten up. Easier said than done, however.

The day started with the team of six Guns congregating outside the hotel's historically listed cock-fighting pit. The weather offered ideal conditions: overcast, a little drizzle and chilly. My good friend Marc Newton, managing director of John Rigby & Co. London gunmakers was one of the Guns in the party and he had brought along the new Rigby Land Rover for us to admire. It was certainly every fieldsports



The first two shots with 28 gram No. 7s haplessly missed their mark

enthusiast's dream 4×4. Forged from a unique partnership between John Rigby and Co., Kingsmen Editions and Traditional English Guncases (TEG), the one-of-akind Land Rover Defender was specially customised with Rigby features and bespoke details. Finished in Keswick Green, the Rigby Land Rover was kitted out with a bespoke twin drawer system; one for Rigby guns, where Marc's stunning Rigby Rising Bite shotgun was housed and the other for hospitality, with bottles of bubbly and glasses, which we availed of at the end of the day.

After loading up into the Rigby Land Rover it was only a short drive to nearby farmland, where Jeff placed the Guns behind huge hedges. Incredibly boggy, the empty dairy cow fields stay wet all winter, making them ideal habitat for snipe. Snipe always want to fly into the wind, so Guns are positioned with the prevailing on their back, tucked in behind dense, leafless hedges. A typical day is made up of nine to 12 drives. "It is tricky to drive snipe, as they are very sharp. Funnelling them to Guns is a bit of an art, but we are an experienced team," says Jeff.

My heart was pumping as I heard the distant team of beaters gently navigate the ground. Pressed into a thorny hedge, finding cover, I heard the distinctive sound of a beaters flag cracking. A cloud of over 100 snipe lifted and flew into the wind as predicted. The flush was short and sweet lasting less than a minute, with a few stragglers shortly after. These diminutive birds gained height so quickly, my first two shots with 28 gram No. 7s haplessly missing their mark. No idea whether I was in front, behind or offline, but this was about as wild as shooting gets and how wonderful it was.



Snipe showing the colours of autumn



Tim managed to royally wipe my eye with a bird

A memorable - or lucky - shot after lunch

Moving from field to field then hedge to hedge, we shot on average a brace per drive and saw literally hundreds of snipe as we enjoyed the characteristically charming views of rural Devon with long views out to Dartmoor. The highlight of the day was watching two towering snipe making a getaway on the drive after our field lunch. Without a glimmer of hesitation, the Gun to my right connected the muzzle to the first bird's flight line, then moved to the second and felled both. Two remarkable, or possibly lucky shots, but highly memorable none the less. Also, my fellow Gun Tim Hill managed to royally wipe my eye with a bird that had flown directly, but in my defence, at some height, over my head. For me, I missed a tricky shot, for him, he made up for shooting a pigeon on a previous drive before the snipe had come over.

The shooting was some of the most enjoyable wild shooting I have had.

Unpredictable and dynamic, driven snipe is at the very finest level of fieldsports the UK has to offer. I shall be taking an annual pilgrimage to The Arundell with a team that I know will appreciate not just the sport but a good old fashioned shooting party at a hotel that understands what makes it so. With no two pieces of ground shot on consecutive days, the snipe are never over-shot and when the temperature drops for a number of consecutive days Jeff calls off the shooting, and rightly so.

Back at the hotel it is their custom to place the bag on a huge silver platter and parade the birds through the hotel to the kitchen, where head chef Steve Pidgeon then turns them into bitesize canapés. One of only 80 Master Chefs in Great Britain, Steve left The Arundell three years ago after 15 years' service – until the pair lured him back.

Measuring just 25cm long, the elegant wader provides only a few bites but is distinctly tasty particularly when eaten the traditional way, trussed with its own beak. "Food is a real focus for the hotel," confirms Simon, adding: "As well as gamebirds, we only serve wild fish and venison which comes off the moors and local estates. Provenance is key." The Arundell is a unique proposition, there are few sporting hotels left that can offer so much on their doorstep in such an authentic way.

KIT BOX Rigby custom Land Rover johnrigbyandco.com

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Swazi Wapiti XP jacket swazi.co.nz



It is their custom to place the bag on a huge silver platter

Mag's Tracking Skills Save The Day

his morning I received a call from my stalking partner to suggest we go for a stalk in the afternoon. I reminded him of the weather forecast but we decide we could get a few hours in the 'dry' before the rain, which was forecast arrived.

Alas, as we drove in the gate of the forest the promised rain began, just what we needed.

Martin went to the low ground and I began a slow climb to the top of the forestry. Within 100 yards of my stalk I spotted a stag, his backside to me so I could not make out his antler structure. Unfortunately, at that point a change in the wind direction as I prepared to get into position alerted him and away he went at speed..

As always when I go stalking for Sika, I bring my Bavarian Hound with me. She was fully aware of my change of attitude when I had begun to close on the stag, she is now beginning to read my body language. This is a vital mental connection between dog and handler. deer came along the forestry track. My position was looking up a forestry roadway, forward visibility of about 200 vards before the track turned a corner.

I was now tucked in, with a Sitka spruce behind me to break my outline and with the wind in my face. I was waiting for the possibility of a wandering hind. Rain was still pouring down. My dog had positioned herself under me to get some shelter from the rain, but not completely. Ten, twenty, forty minutes went by still raining. The dog gave an occasional shake to remove the rain dripping from me on to her coat.

The stag stopped and looked in my direction

Then, just as I was about to call it a day, I spotted a movement at the furthest end of my visibility and peering through the binoculars, I saw a sika stag walking in my direction. Steadily he approached my position, a nice young six pointer, ideal for venison for my table. I now had him in my scope; 'just turn broadside please,' I heard my self say. But at that exact moment my dog gave herself a shake. The stag stopped and looked in my direction, but did not appear to be upset at the sound - even ignoring it. Then he turned broadside, but kept walking but slowly. My brain was in overdrive: I reckoned he would soon disappear into the young forestry in that short distance - but would he come out again...?

I decided that wouldn't be very likely, and promptly sent a 6.5x55 in his direction. A solid impact sound told me I am on target but apparently no reaction from the stag as he went forward into the cover, but almost immediately he was out again and running back down the road. He went 100, then 200 yards and was out of sight. He was gone! Several words were uttered by me, not for printing here and my dog did not understand any of them!

So we waited, as best practice is to wait when the deer has been shot in the heart and lungs area, commonly called

'Mags' the author's Bavarian Hound is used for tracking

Stalking on for another hour or so with no other sightings, I decided to retrace my steps. Rain was now spilling out of the heavens and I was getting wet. After a few hundred meters, I decided to stand and wait, just in case a



A solid impact brought no reaction

the engine room. Deer will usually make for cover; the plan was to let this animal do just that, make cover and lie down and bleed out.

Body hair meant an exit wound

Waiting for 20 minutes my dog and I then walked to the shot site, it was still

raining heavily by the way. At the shot site there was plenty of hair. It was body hair, so that meant that the deer had sustained an exit wound. But there was no blood or tissue visible, possibly because of the heavy rain.

My dog reacted instantly as she hit the shot site, but she was still on her stalking lead. I calmed her down with a



few commands and removed the tracking gear from my backpack, and then fitted her with her tracking collar and lead. That sorted, I gave her the tracking command and off she went at a pace and, unlike her normal pedantic rate, she almost ran the track showing signs of great enthusiasm.

After 200+ yards or so she slowed down and began to concentrate on the right hand side of the track. Hunting with great urgency, she was indicating great scent - but finding nothing. I decided to release her tracking lead from my grasp and this would allow her to be tracking free from me.

She went back up the road we had come down by about 10 yards or so, still hunting with urgency.

She then entered the forestry on the opposite left hand side of the road. I could see the long lead sliding into the young plantation and watched it begin to disappear into the trees. Then it stopped moving!

It was necessary to get down on my hands and knees to gain access to the ground level under the young trees, and I followed along after the long lead, to find my Bavarian with the expired stag. The shot was good, straight through the lungs.

This stag had run about 250 yards and then turned into the tree line, but was another 30 yards inside the tree line itself. I believe I would never have found the stag without my BMH. At the shot site the constant rain had washed away all traces of blood, but the dog's ability to find some tiny trace was enough to find my stag. Full marks to my dog: she always gives me total confidence in her ability to find her quarry, even in really poor scenting and tracking conditions. Yes, I firmly believe that deer would have been lost, especially in those conditions, without my tracking dog.

Mags had found the stag despite the wet conditions



By Peter Smith

fter a break due to Covid restrictions, it was a great relief to gather in Suffolk for this year's IGL Championship, which was held on the Ampton Estate on 29th, 30th November and 1st December, by kind permission of the Turner Family and at the invitation of Mr Peter Rushbrooke. The main sponsor was Roger Skinner Ltd.

Despite restrictions fifty three dogs had qualified and fifty two took the field. There were three Golden Retrievers and forty nine Labradors, and for the first time in many years a chocolate labrador had qualified. There was also a strong representation of European qualifiers, mostly with home bred dogs.

In 2006 a yellow dog was born whose name is behind no less than twelve of those dogs to have qualified for this year's Championship. He is the sire of two previous winners, FTCh Asterix Aguzannis of Chatsworth (2015) and FTCh Beiley's Aguzannis of Fendawood (2016), and he is Int FTCh Ragweeds Travel of Craighorn.

Bracken as he is known, is the sire of FTCh Riverview Farm Finalist, bred by Stephanie Latham, owned by Orin Ingram and handled by Kevin Haynes, and this dog makes history as the first American bred British FTCh. Of the Irish contingent, Declan Boyle, Kieron Coey, and Tony O'Hare (latterly of The Burren), each ran two dogs. Tony also bred the dog being run by Marlene Edvinsson from Sweden, and the two dogs Kieron Coey qualified are father and son. Declan is the defending Champion with Int FTCh Miller McDuff and also runs FTCh Jake of Blackburn who won three two day stakes in a month. John Dawson also qualified but did not run.

The Judges for this year's event were Kevin Doughty and Mark Demaine on

THE 2021 IGL RETRIEVER CHAMPIONSHIP AT AMPTON



The winner, Gary Wood, with his trophy the left, and Jamie Bettinson and Gary Ford on the right. The Steward of the Beat was Mr Peter Hammond.

Day 1

Day 1 and early starts being the order of the day, and after all the

preliminaries, the line stretched into a field of mustard and the first shot was fired at 8.50am. Birds came readily to hand, being pheasant and partridge, but early scent was indifferent, in very cold but dry conditions. First retrieves where practical, were in front of the dogs, but



Second place went to Fraser Forbes

thereafter stretched across a long line. As is usual, any use of the whistle on a marked retrieve was severely punished, and handlers and dogs had to be very precise in mustard which at times was knee high.

The first casualty was the unfortunate Kim Jinks, whose Golden, despite having found a bird, proved camera shy, and would not deliver in full view of video coverage. Good work was seen from Kirsty Cousins with Westerkames Rigline of Brodgenview and Laura Hill with FTCh Stauntonvale Lemon Posset. By 10.00am five dogs had been eliminated.

Three further dogs were to follow when failing to pick a cock pheasant shot some distance behind the line. The Judges picked the bird without difficulty. Louie Robertson with FTCh Mitforton Onour had some smart work on a runner and eye wiped two dogs. Previous winner of the Championship David Lissett was running FTCh Buccleuch Bowhill of Sandringham, a dog bred by the Duke of Buccleuch and owned by HM Queen, and was making steady progress through the early rounds. Unfotunately Kieron Coey with Tyrrellison Jafar and Declan Boyle with FTCh Jake of Blackburn were eliminated early on without retrieving a bird, being eyewiped by Gary Wood with Millbuies Ghillie.

After a break for lunch, during which the freezing weather was felt by all, the first part of round one with two birds moved to a close with Mike Rolland, Ronnie Laughton, Declan Boyle with the current Champion, and Marlene Edvinsson all having clean work with their dogs, and the day ended at 2.30pm. Back at the much appreciated Chuck Wagon, IGL Field Trial Secretary Mary Jane Opie, announced that thirty three dogs were required for the second day.

DAY 2

Day two was held entirely in sugar beet, but with a line that extended to 180 yards cross retrieves were now expected, with good dogs making eye catching retrieves, others struggling,



Award winners line-up l-r Kirsty Cousins, Jason Mayhew, Nathan Laffy, Gary Wood, Ronnie Laughton, Tony O'Hare and Fraser Forbes



The Author up with the line at the sugar beet



The winning dog pictured in action

with much whistle work, and paying the price with elimination.

Early to go were Jo Rollinson with FTCh Bellspaddle Otto and Tess Lawrence wit FTCh Hawksgarth Sirocco. Making consistent progress were Liz Taylor with FTCh Tagabea Loganberry and Fraser Forbes with FTCh Omachi Colonel of Carnochway. John Halsted, who had suprisingly qualified only one dog was still there with Emanygan Spring of Chatsworth, which is owned by the Duchess of Devonshire. Gary Woods Millbuies Ghillie was again very eye catching when taking a long partridge downhill and at pace, with the wind at his back, proving not only great style but also a superb nose. At the end of a number of single retrieves, the first round ended and there were twenty six dogs remaining.

Towards the end of the second day there were some interesting Judging decisions made, which provoked much post trial controversy. The first involved four dogs on a partridge where none was found, but the bird was seen lying in beet by the Judges. The dogs were tried again and a relieved Kirsty Cousins eventually picked. The second involved a dog hunting short on a marked retrieve and being called up. The second dog picked the bird further



Competitors for the duck drive out. In both cases, all dogs were kept in the stake, the explanation given apparently being "bad mark".

The unluckiest competitor of the two days was undoubtedly Marlene Edvinsson, who finished the day with a very smart marked retrieve of 160 yards with no handling and at great pace, and to much spectator applause, only to be eliminated after her fifth retrieve for poor delivery/not giving up the bird. At the end of an eventful day two, the Secretary announced that seventeen dogs were required for the final day.

Day 3

Day three saw the line assemble in a field of cut rape which was to thoroughly test all dogs. Good early work was seen from Fraser Forbes,

Kirsty Cousins, David Lissett and Declan Boyle with Int FTCh Miller Mcduff who eyewiped John Cardno with FTCh Etomanni Comanche. Unfortunately Declan suffered being eyewiped subsequently by Ronnie Laughton with FTCh Wytonruss Finnigan who was going well. Ronnie Laughton also picked a bird over the brow of a hill which eliminated Liz Taylor and Mel Brooks. A horrible mark for the girls, but a good memory for Ronnie. The leading contenders were now staking their claim, none more so than Gary Wood with Millbuies Ghillie who was called across the line to execute a double eyewipe on a snipe, which eliminated Laura Hill and Mike Tallamy. Nathan Laffy with the remaining Goldie FTCh Think Twice



Last day competitors



Kirsty Cousins at the water Zero to Hero was still there, but with nothing to give him a lift .

At the end of this round with seven retrieves completed, the Judges dropped Lee Hartiss and eight dogs were called to the water/duck drive. Giving nothing away, the Judges sent the dogs in numerical sequence into or over the water for a nominated bird. Unfortunately Annette Clarke was eliminated at this late stage, and we were left wondering in what order the seven remaining competitors would be placed in the awards

To a highly expectant gallery the awards were announced by Mary Jane Opie as follows:

RESULTS

1st Gary Wood with Millbuies Ghillie Lab dog born 18.02.17 Sire FTCh Beileys Aguzannis of Fendawood

Dam Waysgreen Chanel of Millbuies 2nd Fraser Forbes with FTCh Omachie Colonel of Carnochway Lab dog born 02.03.16 Sire FTCh Beileys Agazunnis of Fendawood Dam Labdom Mandarin of Omachie 3rd Nathan Laffy with FTCh Think Twice Zero to Hero Golden Retriever dog born 21.05 17 Sire Kaliture Finn Dam Think Twice Go Get It 4th Ronnie Laughton with FTCh Wytonruss Finnigan Lab dog born 06.10.14 Sire FtCh Leacaz Ricky of Caytonfell Dam Emannygan Vogue **Diplomas of Honour** Kirsty Cousins with Westerkames Rigline of Brodgenview

Jason Mayhew with Berryshot Bernie Tony O'Hare with FTCh Burrendale Ace This was an exceptional Championship with a very worthy winner, who showed all the characteristics of a very good dog, pace and style, looks and nose and handled superbly by a very proud owner. The first two in the awards were sired by FTCh Beileys Aguzannis of Fendawood, owned by David Latham, which continues a remarkable breeding line.

It is said that the three day Championship will always find a good winner, but equally will cruelly expose those with any weakness or fault, and so it proved at Ampton 2021. In this trial we had it all, the expected brilliant work from the award winners, but also poor delivery, blinking, refusal to lift wounded birds, refusal to cast and dogs which needed too much handling. The winner had no such troubles and I am sure the return journey to the Highlands was much more pleasurable than the journey south four days previous. Handler and dog deserve their acclaim and a hearty well done!!!!

My thanks as always goes to the IGL for organising such a superb Championship, and in particular to Clare Wood for her expert handling of a petulant Press Corps.

Additional material for this article was provided by the irrepressible Gilly Nickols, and the photographs were provided by the very kind Angie Cooper.



The guns for the Championship

Feedwell celebrating a 60 year dynasty of pet food excellence



Roger Clegg Chairman of Feedwell

Vi**c**ky Dobbin Finance Director Jamie Clegg MD Feedwell

The late Jimmy Clegg Founder of Feedwell.

Photographs by Jim Masson – History by Jim Masson and Albert Titterington

ounder of the company and brand Jimmy Clegg was not only a far sighted entrepreneur but he was a 'character' with whom one could enjoy a bit of 'craic'. From his early days working in the pet food industry to founding his own company he built up a fairly unrivalled knowledge of pet nutrition within his commitment of delivering his customers a top quality food at the best possible price. As son Roger said and grandson Jamie endorsed " My father's primary objective, which remains mine today, was and is, to provide the finest possible feeding regime for dogs at the best possible price through the use of top quality ingredients blended with the most up to date formulation. I like to think our brand name clearly states what we deliver Feedwell feeds dogs 'very well'.

In 1962 he left his job as area sales manager for Scotland, North of England, NI and the Isle of Man to start his own company manufacturing and selling dog food. The Feedwell brand was born in an old train engine shed on the Belfast Road in Bangor based on a biscuit baking plant from the Ormeau Bakery where he and his old friend and workmate Frazer Duncan assembled the whole production line themselves.

In 1972 there was a major disaster in the fortunes of Feedwell when the factory was

blown up but not deterred from his ambition to develop a top Irish dog food brand In 1975 he journeyed to USA and visited Anderson International who were one of the pioneers of manufacturing Pet Food using the extrusion process. Jimmy was convinced that this was the way forward and bought an extrusion plant. This was the first of its kind in Ireland and Feedwell was reborn in the old Mill in Annsborough. This historical building was originally the first wet Scotch linen mill in Ireland and was even used as a school once the mill closed down and for 50 years has been synonymous with the Feedwell brand. The planning and the construction of the plant so impressed the top brass of Anderson International, that it was seen as a showcase for others wishing to set up a small plant.

Jimmy had wide sporting interests including shooting (he and his brother Moore had the gun shop in Newtownards), rugby, and motorcycle racing. He also had an interest in horses and greyhounds having success in the showing ring and the show jumping arena with his horses, and qualifying for many greyhound racing finals including the Greyhound Derby at The White City in 1972. He was a former chairman of the Northern Ireland Greyhound Breeders Association and was also on the committee of the Show Jumping Association of Ireland. In fact some of his first products the original 'egg and wheaten' biscuit meal and 'Racewell' brand are still remembered and talked about fondly by old greyhound owners and trainers.

Jimmy was very proud when his son Roger, after a career in teaching and merchant banking joined him in 1979. But being Jimmy he required Roger to start at the bottom, "getting his hands dirty" maintaining the machinery and driving the delivery lorry around an increasing customer base while his father concentrated on sales and marketing.

Roger also shared many of his father's interests including playing rugby for Ireland and Ulster and of course shooting and gundogs. Under Roger's direction the company continued to modernise and develop.

Prior to him taking a back seat in the business Roger reflected that he was passing on the business to Jamie in good shape within a settled location, on a company owned site, with in-place preventive maintenance, excellent staff producing a highly regarded product range. As Roger said, " I am delighted to have carried on and extended the traditions started by my father. To keep in personal contact with our customers and to put something back into





Computer control of production

The Old Mill



Jamie checks wet pellets



The Drying Chamber







(Above) Factory Manager Sean Croskery

(Above Right) Vincent Bannon gets outer ready for despatch

(Left) Gerard Sloan checks quality

(Right) The sales team l-r Austin Kavanagh, Jeff McMaster and Micky McCullagh



their and our sporting interests through dedicated sponsorship. Few if any clubs or events in Ireland organising greyhound racing, gundog tests and trials or dog shows have not benefited from Feedwell sponsorship."

Jimmy would be very proud to know that the business he founded has been passed on a third generation with Jamie, as Managing Director assisted by his sister Vicky as Financial Director, taking over the reins of the next chapter of the 'Feedwell' story. Roger still sits as Chairman of the company on the board of Directors.

From a rural family, Jamie has been surrounded by dogs (and horses) and his interest in country sports has always been a keen one. He has also followed in the family tradition of playing rugby and regularly turns out for Bangor RFC. Jamie graduated in Business Studies from Edinburgh University in 2011 and before joining Feedwell worked in the French Alps for a year in the hospitality industry. He had a good grounding in sales and customer service with Feedwell before taking over from his Dad as MD.

Jamie's main aim for the business is to continue to further develop Feedwell as an all-island business and he is concentrating efforts in expanding the company's presence in the ROI and UK markets.

"My main emphasis on the business will be on marketing and sales and production improvements. We've been doing work on improved bag design and working on even better customer service so we can continue to meet the expectations of existing and new customers. "

"We are still servicing customers we had back in 1962 when the business started off. We take a pride in our customers and the people who work for us. We have managed to extend our business into the ROI and into the UK market and have glowing recommendations from our happy customers."



Jamie and Vicky with the current Feedwell range of quality products

Jamie also explained that Feedwell has made some recent technological improvements to the business. In January 2020 just at the beginnings of covid they invested £700,000 in new production systems, with a new extruder, dryer and fats coating system all improving the process. The plant is now heavily automated ensuring an improved finished product and excellent quality control systems.

He said: "This investment has now doubled our capacity and we have seen an increase in sales of over 30% since we installed the new plant. Originally the dog food was baked in my grandfather's day in slabs in an oven and broken up, which for it's day was an excellent product. Today, we are incredibly proud to be the only manufacturer of dried dog food in Northern Ireland and one of only two or three producers in Ireland. We aim to continue our investment in manufacturing over the next few years to continuously improve our product and processes."

Jamie places great importance on the fact that the business has grown through having a dedicated team of employees and pays a deep personal tribute to the current Feedwell team of 13 employees in the following roles: Vicky Dobbin – Finance Director Jeff McMaster – Sales Manager Austin Kavanagh – Sales Representative ROI Micky McCullagh – Sales Representative NI and ROI Willeen McCartan – Office Sales Administrator Pearse Brogan – Office Accounts Administrator Stephen McCavery – Van Sales Paul Smylie – Van Sales Sean Croskery – Factory Manager Vincent Bannon – Production Operative and Van Sales

Jamie Clegg - Managing Director

Gerard Sloan – Production Operative Ruari Toner – Production Operative

He concluded by saying "We are a tight knit group and we are all committed to the success and future growth of the company."

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



The Feedwell team looking forward to the next 60 years.







"Feeding generations of dogs throughout Ireland Since 1962"



45th Irish Kennel Club Spaniel Championship

Introductions by Championship Chairman Tom Brennan

he 45th Irish Kennel Club Spaniel Championship was held at Baronscourt Estate on December 28th & 29th 2021 by very kind permission and invitation of Lord Hamilton.

and the second second

This Championship was very welcome and long awaited, as with many other events Covid 19 caused the cancellation of the Championship in 2020.

Judges for the two days were Ronan Gorman and Gerry Meehan, with Robin Young taking up the role of Reserve Judge.

Head Gamekeeper Stephen Pollock and his team did a brilliant job, having a fantastic supply of game on the ground for both days, which gave every dog equal opportunity to impress the Judges.

As has been the case for the last number of years, the Championship was again very kindly and generously sponsored by our good friends Feedwell Dogfoods.

There was a card of 34 dogs entered and there were two non-runners. Due to a lower number of qualifiers than usual being run during the season, the IKC Field Trial Committee gave permission for dogs awarded with just one second to qualify for entry into the draw. This year's Championship also attracted 8 entries from the U.K.

Over both days all dogs were able to give a good account of themselves in a mixture of briar and rhododendrons and when game was produced it was dealt with by the first class team of accurate Guns who were Mark Clifford, Willie Megaughin, Justin Shepperd and Ivan Wilson.

Stephen Pollock and his team at Baronscourt Estate are renowned for producing quality trials and on this occasion all expectations were met, with one of the most memorable Championships being run in recent years.

On day two, when the Judges had seen all the dogs and after making up their books, they called 14 dogs to water for the completion of the 45th IKC Spaniel Championship.

Before the presentation took place, Acting Championship Secretary

Anthony Smyth thanked numerous people for their help and involvement, starting with the Host, Lord Hamilton for inviting the Championship into Baronscourt. He thanked Stephen Pollock, his team of Keepers and Agent for the Estate, Matt Stuart for the work which had been done to make this event the success that it was. Anthony expressed our gratitude to Feedwell Dogfoods for their continued support. He went on to thank the Judges and Guns and also Chief Steward, David Doherty and all the Stewards involved over the two days and everyone who took out adverts in the programme.

Anthony then moved onto the presentation.

RESULTS

Www to

1st:- Gardenrath Mistletoe.
Sire:- Echobay Leonardo.
Dam:- Lisgarvagh Nina.
Owned and handled by Mr. Des
Donnelly.
2nd:- Ftch Meadowbeat Neala of
Greenbrush.
Sire:- Ftch Belvden Collingwood.



Winner Des Donnelly & Gardenrath Mistletoe



2nd place FTCh Meadowbeat Neala of Greenbrush owned and handled by Raymond Wilson



3rd place and Guns Award Shiftwell Dazzler of Sealgaire owned and handled by Seamus Neeson



4th place Noserettap Amber owned and handled by Mick Walsh

Dam:- Llangatock Luna. Owned and handled by Mr. Raymond Wilson. 3rd:- Shiftwell Dazzler of Sealgaire. Sire:- Millshot Holt. Dam:- Ftch Ainninn Thunderbolt. Owned and handled by Mr. Seamus Neeson. 4th:- Noserettap Amber. Sire:- Ftch Hollydrive Defoe. Dam:- Aine's in the Pink. Owned and handled by Mr. Mick Walsh. **Diploma of Honour** Kilhopemoss Harlequin - Mr. Raymond Wilson. Sliabh Aoife - Mr. Louis Rice. Sliabh Henry - Mr. Gary Wilson. Muggleswick Missy - Mr. Jim Warren. Handled by Mr. Damian Kelly. Ftch Sharmar Lukaku - Mr. Murt Walsh. Birdrowe Crocus - Mr. Tim Crothers. Broomfield Abel of Sliabh - Mr. Louis Rice. Ftch Broomfield Adam - Mr. Eddie Scott. Ftch Broomfield Eve - Mr. Eddie Scott. Saxonvale Axis - Mr. Andrew Cunningham. **Guns Award** Shiftwell Dazzler of Sealgaire. -Mr.Seamus Neeson. **Best Retrieve** Flaxdale West - Mr. David Cairns. Spaniel of the Year Freecrow Piper - Mr. Gavin McAteer. The Irish Kennel Club Spaniel Championship Committee are very pleased to announce that the 46th IKC Spaniel Championship will be held at Dundarave Estate by very kind

permission of Dr. Peter and Mrs.



Nuailin Fitzgerald on 28th & 29th December 2022. Judges for the event will be Mr. Paul Carragher, Mr. Louis Rice, Mr. Aled Jones and Mr. Dave Rayner

Headkeeper Stephen Pollock & Chief Steward David Doherty

The 54th Irish Kennel Club **RED MILLS** SINCE 1908 Retriever Championship 2021

he Irish Kennel Club Championship Stake for Retrievers (AV) and Irish Water Spaniels was held this year on Saturday and Sunday 11th and 12th December2021, on the Coollattin Estate, Co Wicklow, by kind permission of the Dowling Family. The Judges were Ronnie Farrelly and Michael Cronin on the left and Richard Johnston and Declan McCarthy on the right. The principal sponsor was Red Mills Engage Premium Country Dog Food.

There were thirty five dogs, all Labradors, which had qualified under Irish Kennel Club rules, and only seven of those running were bitches. Sadly there were no Golden Retrievers, Flatcoats , or Irish Water Spaniels. Fourteen of the starters had achieved FTCH status before the closing date for the event. Five other Labradors had qualified for the event, but for whatever reason did not run.

THE CHAMPIONSHIP BEGINS

The Competitors and Judges gathered at 8.30am on the first day, to hear the announcements from Willie Forde, who expertly guided proceedings as Chief Steward. All competitors were then lined out in a valley of stubble, which sloped from a wooded ride known as Browns, from which birds were to be driven. The ground from which the birds were to be retrieved was

76

uneven in places, with plenty of undulations and hillocks to test the drive and honesty of all dogs. Anyone expecting a short starter was in for a massive surprise.

When everyone was in place, the drive started and a steady stream of birds flew over an expert team of guns, and they flew in their hundreds. Early nervous tension from dogs and handlers resulted in much moving of headdress, movement of hands, and soft shoe shuffles, to try and prevent hyper dogs moving. The experienced Judges were not so easily misled by such antics, and unsteady dogs were eliminated, as were a couple who made noise.

The drive lasted for twenty five minutes and I estimated that over one hundred birds had been brought down in this one stubble field. I was on the left of the line, and therefore able to get a good view of the odd numbers being put through their paces by Ronnie and Mike. It was obvious that dogs were being sent for specific birds at distances over two hundred yards, and therefore pin point accuracy in the cast, and the ability to run straight, irrespective of the fall or camber in the ground, were a prerequisite to surviving the round. Inevitably dogs which could not handle the conditions would wrong bird or switch, and so it proved.

Early dogs to catch the eye were the defending Champion Int FTCh Miller

McDuff handled by Declan Boyle, but at eight years old, he was entitled to be slow on the return with a large cock pheasant. Harry Gillanders with Astraglen Calton did good work and showed what was possible. Matty Lambden and Tamrose Aragon was also going well. This a nice dog who performed well at a previous IGL Championshp, and maintained his form with some smart work. Also on on the left was Ellena Nunneley, who had travelled from England to run her two qualified dogs. Ellena is better known to me as a reporter on gundog events for the Shooting Times. Unfortunately for her, Swiftland Dora wrong birded, then swapped, and her other dog Swiftland Austin suffered a similar fate. Undaunted she vowed to be back, and very much enjoyed her first "Irish". Towards the end of the odds there was a quick succession of eliminations, including Peter Colville, Sean Diamond and Paul Toal.

The surviving even numbers then started arriving on the left, and some good work was seen from Michael Corr with FTCh Ringbarn Fletching, Paul O'Brien with FTCh Corrib Fern, Andrew Rooney with Sarnesfield Midnight Run and the evergreen Billy Lundy with FTCh Drumgoose Ironman., One dog which really caught the eye was Sean Kearney with FTCh Kelmarsky Ash, and Thomas Hughes

Competitors at the 54th Irish Kennel Club Retriever Championship



Lining out on Day 1

and FTCh Outlaw Apache really impressed, the dog going like an arrow on one command to a white spot in the distance, which was his nominated bird.

At the end of the first round fifteen dogs had been eliminated, and the remaining twenty moved to another drive, where game was again in abundance, but largely shot into cover. Here again, accuracy was required as the Judges sent dogs from an open hillside into nominated areas of cover where it was known birds had landed. We again witnessed some good work, but after one retrieve each, a further five dogs had been eliminated and fifteen dogs were carried through to the second day.

DAY 2

From the same meet, we moved to Mossy Stone drive, where again a new team of guns excelled. After a slow start with a couple of no bird decisions, the Championship produced a decisive moment. John Dawson and Declan Boyle were both tried on a bird which lay down a clearing, and to an unseen area to the left of some conifers bordered by a pen fence. Both dogs failed by hunting back towards their handlers and were called up. Michael Corr with FTCh Ringbarn Fletching was given the same area and in short order produced a lively cock pheasant to a delighted handler. A two dog eyewipe which would prove crucial. The trial stayed in this area because of the

Competitors for day 2

abundance of game, and gradually the top dogs started to assert themselves, as others fell by the wayside with over handling or lack of control. Continuing to make good progress were Paul O'Brien with FTCh Corrrib Fern, who eyewiped Declan Boyle with FTCh Jake of Blackburn, having lost Corrib Jasper when wrong birding, and Sean Kearney with FTCh Kilmarsky Ash who just could not get the lift he needed with an eyewipe. Also there and maintaining a season of good form were Kieron Coey with FTCh Crosstone Trickster.

Having now reduced the field to six dogs, and after seven retrieves each, the Judges and remaining competitors headed to the water, where dogs were sent in numerical order for their mandatory water retrieve. No hint of a result yet but speculation was rife.

Back at the meet, at 3.00pm, Willie Forde made a generous speech thanking all involved, and Keith McNamara announced the result as follows:

RESULTS

1st Michael Corr with FTCh Ringbarn Fletching

Labrador Dog born 5.9.2016 Sire FTCh Drakeshead Vodka Dam Cynhinfa O'Blackquill of Ringbarn

2nd Paul O'Brien with FTCh Corrib Fern

Labrador Bitch born 28.5.2016 Sire Int FTCh Waterford Galahad of Tasco Dam FTCh Lurriga Cedar of Corrib 3rd Sean Kearney with FTCh Kelmarsky Ash

- Labrador Dog born 12.4.2018 Sire FTCh Kelmarsky Crow Dam FTW Astraglen Pearl of Kelmarsky
- 4th Matty Lambden with FTCh Tamrose Aragon
 - Labrador Dog born 18.3.2016

Sire FTCh Waterford Ganton Dam Bridgepoint Penny

Diplomas of Honour

Kieron Coey with FTCh Crosstone Trickster

Andrew Rooney with Sarnesfield Midnight Run

This was a magnificent trial worthy of the status Irish Kennel Club Championship Stake. The Dowling family could not have been more accommodating and the Judges produced a just and fair result. The importance of this event should never be understated, it is our premier stake for Retrievers, and should continue to be so. The Committee, which was elected only one month before the event, did a fantastic job ensuring it took place, and a small but active core of the Committee led by the indefatigable Willie Forde, produced a Championship to remember, despite the difficulties. It was fitting that Bran O'Hara of the Irish Kennel Club should be present to endorse its importance and success. Let everyone look forward positively to 2022, and congratulations to all!

Action at the 54th IKC Retriever Championship













54th IKC Retriever Championship Award Winners



Michael Corr with FTCh Ringbarn Fletching



Paul O'Brien with FTCh Corrib Fern



Sean Kearney with FTCh Kelmarsky Ash



Matty Lambden with FTCh Tamrose Aragon



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2021 Irish Kennel Club Cocker Spaniel Championship Report

Copeland Island was the unique setting for the IKC Cocker Championship

The 3rd Irish Kennel Club Cocker Spaniel Championship took place th on Thursday 16 December 2021 on the Copeland Island, Co. Down by kind invitation of Stevie Marsden. The Copeland Island has been an iconic spaniel trial ground for decades with ground consisting of rushes and laid bracken interspersed with a healthy population of rabbits and pheasants providing ideal conditions for game finding dogs to showcase their ability.

Weather on the day was dry and bright, with a cold but gentle breeze which although ideal for the gallery and sea crossing meant that scenting conditions were difficult at times for competing dogs.

On arrival on the Copeland Island, committee chairman, Christy Hasson welcomed competitors, judges, guns and introduced our host and master of the beat for the day, Stevie Marsden. He also welcomed Jenny Crozier who was representing main sponsors Redmills and acknowledged the great help and support that they have provided for the club over many years.

Judges for the day were the very experienced and capable pairing of Robin Young and Louis Rice with Christy Hasson acting as referee. As senior judge, Robin took the odd numbers on the left side of the beat for the first round and Louis looked at the even numbers on the right. Christy was never far away from the line throughout the day and contributed to a well-run championship.

There were a total of 20 entries with 3 withdrawals so number 5 would be first dog down on the right and number 2 first dog down on the left.

First round

No. 2 UK visitor John Robertson with Perija September Song (Crowdyslack Costapacket x Pinfold Fudge) hunted well on the left, but had not encountered game when another dog (no 7) failed to pick a rabbit on the left-hand side of the line. He was brought across but unfortunately, he also failed to pick and when judges walked out and collected it themselves, it ended his championship. An early indication of challenging scenting conditions for competitors.

No. 4 Tiptopjack Firebug (FTCh Tiptopjack Dime x Endowood Epicof Tiptopjack) handled by the highly experienced and successful Ian Openshaw, delivered a demonstration of hunting power and technique combined with style and flair. She had a find and retrieve on a pheasant followed by several pushes of the same rabbit under bracken before it broke cover and provided the opportunity for a quick,



Winner Ian Openshaw with FTCh Tiptopjack Firebug

clean retrieve. Firebug had thrown down the gauntlet with a spectacular first run.

No. 5 Bootstrap Bill of Greenbrush (Gardenrath Picasso x Kentixen Clever Clover) handled by Willie Edgar was straight into game with a loose bird shot and quickly retrieved. Hunting on, 'Boots' found a rabbit which was shot out in front, and he finished his run with a clean retrieve.

No. 6 Matrixglen Penelope (Buccleuch Ingram x Lindrob Jet) was handled by Sarah Fallon from Scotland. This bitch was nice over the ground, hunting between rushes and bracken with pace.The bitch had a find on a cock bird which was shot at a long distance and up a steep bank,but she made the retrieve look very easy. Her delivery was also commendable with this small bitch carrying a huge Copeland Island cock bird with little fuss. Louis had seen enough, and Sarah was happy to have completed the first run.

No. 7 Clentohill Jorgi (FTCh Tiptopjack Ajay x Jerminlodge Jolly) handled by inaugural Irish Cocker Championship winner, Adrian Doris hunted with lots of style and pace. It was clear that this classy bitch had plenty of experience on the 'island' as she was getting under the bracken at every opportunity and displaying classic rabbit finding technique. Jorgie had positive finds on two rabbits with the second being shot a good distance out on a rocky bank covered in bracken. Unfortunately, Adrian failed on this retrieve with the combination of difficult scenting conditions and a tricky 'lie' for the retrieve being his undoing. Lady luck just wasn't smiling on Jorgi today - but she will have other big days in the future.

No. 8 International FTCh Mallowdale Quin (FTCh Kingcott Robson X FTCh Mallowdale Urika) handled by the very successful Mick Walsh, has been the most consistent cocker in Ireland in the last few years. A nice, chocolate dog, he started with lots of drive and style covering his ground with little or no handler input. This little dog knew what he was hunting for and had a good find of a cock pheasant followed by a straight out and in retrieve. He continued with more topclass hunting, and another find on a cock bird which was offered across to the other side. Quin had delivered a performance of high quality.

No. 9 FTCh Mallowdale Dame (FTCh Malllwdale Quad x FTCh Endowood Faith) owned by Orrin Ingram from the USA and handled by Ian Openshaw had a long run, lasting around 30minutes but hunted with the same pace and style throughout the entire run. She started with the quick collection of a bird offered from the other side before finishing on a find on retrieve of another bird. A nice, neat, and tidy run.

No. 10 FTCh Mallowdale Shine (FTCh Endowood Cork x FTCh Mallowdale Georgi) was another quality cocker handled by Ian Openshaw. This one also possessed lots of pace, drive, and style. She found and retrieved a cock pheasant along the shore. Hunting on with same pace, as we came to the end of a patch of bracken, she pushed a rabbit but pegged it, which ended her chances. Pity as she looked like a real contender.

No. 11 Clentohill Jessie Jay (FTCh Tiptopjack Ajay x Jerminlodge Jolly) was a fast, stylish bitch handled by the experienced Damian Kelly. This bitch was another that knew how to find rabbits on the Copeland Island and was very quietly and capably handled. She had 3 finds and clean retrieves before Robin decided he had seen enough.

No. 13 Ardcaein Jitterbug (FTCh Mallowdale Gun x ArdcaeinFunnybunny) was a nice black cocker spaniel dog handled by Ieva Gregaite. He was hunting a bracken bank with commendable pace when a loose cock bird was shot. Unfortunately, the retrieve was a bit messy, and this ended his run.

No. 14 Dakotagun Elena of Rowston (FTCh Rowston Samson x

Dakota Arwin) handled by Domnall



Ian Openshaw with The Queens FTCh Wolferton Drama 2nd and Guns Award

Creamer was next up. This bitch hunted well and made a good effort 2nd dog down on a running cock bird, taking a line out over 150yds only to be recalled as a lot of game was flushing wild from the beat. Judges decided to have a look, but no bird found so she continued. Shortly after she was cast off again, she found a rabbit which when shot close to her proved too much of a temptation and so ended her and Domnall's championship.

No. 15 Sperrinside Petal (FTCh Heollybwach Denman x Sperrinside Ellie) handled by Paul Cassidy was fast and stylish over the ground and a real eye catcher. She found a wounded cock bird and when asked to pick, retrieved cleanly to hand.

She continued at pace before moving to another piece of ground where she unfortunately passed game which closed the books for her.

No. 16 FTCh Wolferton Drama (FTCh Endowood Cork x FTCh Mallowdale Diamond) was a very pretty, gold coloured cocker bitch handled by Ian Openshaw. She delivered a very polished performance, finding 3 cock birds in rushes and complimented this with straight out and



Clentohill Jessie Jay retrieves to Damian Kelly

in retrieves. Drama was making the difficult look easy as only the real good ones can do and was staking a real claim to win this championship.

No. 17 Drumnascamp Osita (Wyndhill Becks x DrumnascampZelda) handled by Eamonn Cunningham hunted her ground well with Eamonn quietly walking behind. She had 2 finds, one of which was shot out in front and quickly retrieved which finished her first run.

No. 18 Mallowdale Emu of Commonshall (FTCh Mallowdale Quad xFTCh Endowood Beatrice) handled by Ronan Gorman's was the youngest competitor in this year's Irish Cocker Championship. He hunted with nice pace and style and was another dog that clearly knew how to find game. He retrieved a loose bird well and finished a long run, of approximately 40 minutes with a find and clean retrieve of a tight sitting rabbit. A good run full of positive qualities such as stamina, pace, and game finding – but just a bit too long to be a winning run.

No. 19 Dendorbys Girl (FTCh Ardcaein Chance X Ginger Dolly) Owned by Joe

Proctor and handled by Andy Spillane started with her usual fast pace and style.

She quickly found a bird which was shot she but put the bird down when on her way back with the retrieve so ending her and Andy's championship.

No. 20 Colin Titley's Jackshea Benny (FTCh Poolgreen Diesel x Cragglands Eartha) was the last of the first-round dogs running in the 2021 Irish Cocker Spaniel Championship. Hunting some heavy rushes, he had a nice find on a rabbit but unfortunately it proved too much temptation and Benny was eliminated for moving. Colin took this with his usual smile and good sportsmanship.

Second round

Having seen all first-round dogs judges brought a total of eight dogs across for the second round and of course swapped numbers with Robin now taking even numbers on the left side of the beat and Louis looking at the odd numbers on the right.

No. 4 FTCh Tiptopjack Firebug built

on her excellent first run with some more positive work. She was fast over the ground and found on a cock bird which was shot out over a bank. When sent, she quickly got to the fall and hunted the area before her handler, Ian Openshaw allowed her to take a line – which she did and collected the bird which had run close to 100yds through the bracken. She hunted on, finding another bird which wasn't shot, and this finished another clean run for Firebug.

No. 5 Bootstrap Bill hunted as well as he could in some really heavy rushes. He had finds and retrieves which were completed without complication and handler Willie Edgar was no doubt relieved when judge Louis Rice finished him up in this minefield.

No. 6 Matrixglen Penelope and Sarah Fallon had a long hunt in bracken before coming into heavy rushes. She had several finds and retrieves before finishing on a loose rabbit out in the grass field.

No. 8 Int FTCh Mallowdale Quin had an actioned packed second run. With Mick Walsh at the wheel, 'Billy was finding rabbits for fun and retrieving cleanly. All in all, another neat, tidy, and quality run.

No. 9 FTCh Mallowdale Dame under Louis, in very thick rushes had plenty of finds and action. We were now seeing the natural game finders coming to the top and anyone who knows the island will tell you it isn't as easy as it can look at times.

No. 11 Clentohill Jessie Jay was finding rabbits, but shooting was proving impossible in thick cover. Moving to more open rushes Damian Kelly's bitch hunted with commendable pace and finished a good championship with a positive find and nice clean retrieve.

No. 18 Mallowdale Emu of Commonshall and Ronan Gorman were quickly back in line after a long first run. This exciting young dog produced several rabbits straight off the lead but unfortunately, they weren't shot. After another long run Emu found a tight sitting cock bird that was quickly retrieved to hand. This finished a satisfactory championship for Ronan and Mallowdale Emu of Commonshall.

No. 16 FTCH Wolferton Drama was last dog to run in the 2021 Irish Cocker Championship. Drama got a nice piece of ground to hunt and in fairness made the most of it. Following some fast, stylish,hunting she had 3 finds and retrieves on rabbits. Robin Young had seen what he needed to see and called an end to her run.

With all dogs having been seen by both judges, they went to their books after 10 minutes or so, called Mick Walsh's International FTCh Mallowdale Quin and FTCh Mallowdale Dame handled by Ian Openshaw for a run off.

Following a straightforward water test which all 7 dogs who were called to



Robin Young and Louis Rice with Christy Hasson acting as referee pictured centre

water successfully completed the results of the 2021 Irish Cocker Championship was announced as follows:

Results

1st. FTCh Tiptopjack Firebug (Tiptopjack Dime x Endowood of Tiptopjack) - Ian Openshaw

2nd. FTCh Wolferton Drama - Ian Openshaw

3rd. FTCh Mallowdale Dame - Ian Openshaw

4th. Int FTCh Mallowdale Quin - Mick Walsh

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Bootstrap Bill of Greenbrush -William Edgar

Clentohill Jessy Jay - Damian Kelly Mallowdale Emu of Commonshall -

Ronan Gorman

Other Awards

Top Irish Dog - Int FTCh Mallowdale Quin - Mick Walsh

Guns Choice - FTCh Wolferton Drama - Ian Openshaw

Bootstrap Bill of Greenbrush, owned by Willie Edgar was also awarded 'Cocker of the Year' for points gained at trials during the preceding season. Domnall Creamer made this presentation, on behalf of the Creamer family.

Championship winner Ian Openshaw, also made a special presentation on behalf of the handlers to Mark Stewart in recognition of his work for cockers in Ireland.

Committee Chairman, Christy Hasson closed the 2021 Irish Cocker Championship with special thanks to the organising committee, other sponsors such Country Sports Ireland, Countrysports and Countrylife magazine and anyone else who helped make the event a success.

Copies of the championship DVD are available from or by ringing Tom mob 00353 877824034 or Ted mob 00353 870671772.

Next year's Irish Cocker Championship will be held at the Rann Shoot, Co. Tyrone by kind invitation of Kevin Cushnahan. More details will be published shortly.







(Above) lan Openshaw and Mick Walsh have fun before lining up for the run-off





Pictured above: Willie Edgar, Ronan Gorman and Damien Kelly receive their Diplomas of Merit

(Right) Scottish visitor Sarah Fallon



Huge thanks to main sponsor Redmills

Review of Field Trial Results for Pointers and Setters in 2021

Before my Report on Pointer & Setter Trials I'd like to share some thoughts on global warming and conservation: Many of the readers of this magazine are conservationists and environmentalists as their sport and one of their primary enjoyments relies on habitats with flourishing flora and fauna. We have all become familiar with the many international initiatives to reduce the emission of carbon dioxide to combat global warming. But what does it all mean and what is the context for Ireland as a country?

The Earth is estimated to be 4.54 billion years old, plus or minus about 50 million years. This extraordinary estimate is based on scientists that have searched the Earth for the oldest rocks to radiometrically date. Rocks in north western Canada, are estimated at 4.03 billion years old. Scientists say that our ancestors have been around for about six million years but the modern form of humans only evolved about 200,000 years ago. Modern civilisation as we know it is only about 6,000 years old, and industrialisation started in the earnest only in the 1800s.

Scientists have documented five mass extinctions. Most of the extinctions, as today, are a trade-off between oxygen and carbon dioxide and its impact on global warming or cooling. The first documented was the Ordovician Mass Extinction (440 million years ago). This mass extinction event is thought to be caused by the shift in the continents and the consequent drastic climate change. It happened in two different waves. The first wave was an ice age that encompassed the entire Earth. As the climate went to freezing, sea levels lowered and many land species could not adapt fast enough to survive the harsh, cold climates.

The second wave was when the ice age ended and the thaw began. This episode ended so suddenly that the ocean levels rose too quickly to hold enough oxygen to maintain the species that had survived the first wave. Species too slow to adapt were wiped out.

The Devonian Mass Extinction (375 million years ago) occurred just as the climate stabilised and species adapted to new environments and life on Earth began to flourish again. In this Extinction almost 80% of all living species in the water and on land were wiped out. There are several explanations as to the cause of this second mass extinction. The first wave, which dealt a major blow to aquatic life, may have actually been caused by the quick colonisation of land where many aquatic plants adapted to live on land, leaving fewer autotrophs to create oxygen for all of the sea life. This led to mass death in the oceans. The plants' quick move to land also had a major effect on the carbon dioxide available in the atmosphere. Scientists estimate by removing so much of the greenhouse gas so quickly by afforestation, temperatures plummeted.

The Permian Mass Extinction (250 million years ago) is the largest of all known mass extinctions with a massive 96% of all species on Earth completely lost. This major mass extinction has been called "The Great Dying." Aquatic and terrestrial life forms alike perished relatively quickly as the event took

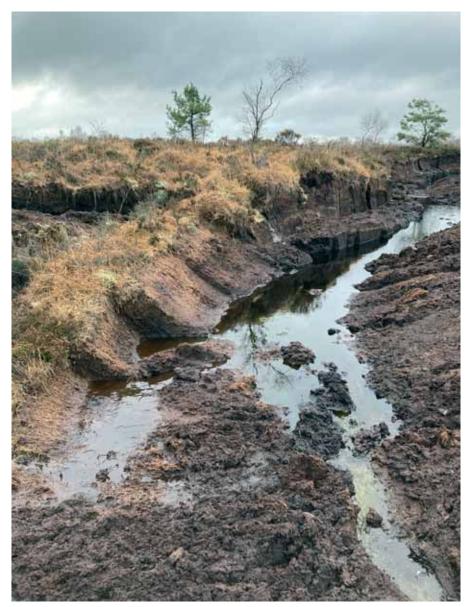
place. This could have been caused by massive volcanic activity paired with asteroid impacts that sent deadly methane and basalt into the air and across the surface of the Earth. These could have caused a decrease in oxygen that suffocated life and brought about a quick change in the climate.

The Triassic-Jurassic Mass Extinction (200 million years ago) happened over a long time span, about half of all known species on Earth at the time perished. The causes of these individual small extinctions can, for the most part, be attributed to volcanic activity with basalt flooding. The gases spewed into the atmosphere from the volcanoes also created climate change issues that changed sea levels and possibly even pH levels in the oceans.

The event that wiped out the dinosaurs

The final Mass Extinction so named Cretaceous-Tertiary (or the K-T) is the event that wiped out the dinosaurs. The dinosaurs were not the only species to go extinct, with up to 75% of all known living species dying during this mass extinction event. It is documented that the cause of this mass extinction was a major asteroid impact. The huge space rocks hit Earth and sent debris into the air, effectively producing an "impact winter" that drastically changed the climate across the entire planet. Scientists have studied these large craters left by the asteroids.

After a large mass extinction event, there is typically a rapid period of specialisation among the few species that do survive; since so many species die off during these catastrophic events,



We still look at bogs as wastelands but they're global superstars

there is more room for the surviving species to spread out, as well as many niches in the environments that need to be filled. With less competition for food, allowing the surviving" species from the mass extinction event to thrive and reproduce rapidly.

Is it possible that we are in the midst of the sixth major mass extinction? Many scientists believe we are. A number of known species have been lost since humans' evolution. Since these mass extinction events can take millions of years, perhaps we are witnessing the sixth major mass extinction event as it happens.

This raises a number of obvious questions. With unfathomable inventions such as satellite televisions and mobile phones that act as minicomputers, surely an invention to absorb carbon dioxide from the atmosphere is not far-fetched.

Afforestation is oft quoted as part of the solution and yet do we know whether broad leaf deciduous trees, which ecologically support life, are better at absorbing carbon dioxide than the various conifers such as Sitka spruce that are much favoured by the Ireland's national forestry?

We are lead to believe by scientists that bogs and moorlands absorb carbon while ploughed land releases carbon. This was confirmed by David Fallon, the Ballydangan bogs project's ecologist which has recent such international praise in the media recently. In fact, the projects story was presented at last year's COP26 climate summit in Glasgow, Scotland. Mr Fallon said: "It can't be overstated how important Ballydangan bog is. An intact raised bog and a restored raised bog like Ballydangan, is much better at storing and sequestering greenhouse gases than an equivalent area of rainforest. In Roscommon, this is our rainforest. There's 10,000 years of carbon locked in there. "In Ireland, we have looked at bogs as waste lands over the years, but they're global superstars. Bogs are the mosaic of everything - rare plants, birds and insects." It is a relatively recent phenomenon for the ploughing of ground in the autumn once the grain has been harvested.

During the first lockdown, with building projects on hold there was not a rushy fields around Ireland that did not have a digger to "reclaim" the land. I always had an issue with the word "reclaim". Moorland was never in grassland to begin with! It is likely as parts of the world become inhospitable that habitable places such as Ireland will see a rapid and prolonged increase in population and it is projected that low lying areas such as parts of Connemara will be reclaimed by the sea.

Changing farming practices

On a non-climate level, mass extinction is caused by changing farming practices such as drainage, removal of habitat, and use of pesticides to name three factors. Today, there is rapid removal of hedgerows to enable larger farm machines to function. The Journal reported in January 2022 that a small section of woodland and 1,000 metres of hedgerow was removed from land bordering agricultural fields, with a large portion of hedgerow within a protected nature zone.

Dr. Alan Moore, Secretary Hedgerows Ireland said that up to 6,000km of hedgerows are being destroyed every year even though the value of hedgerows is now acknowledged. Indications from Teagasc on measuring the carbon sequestering ability of hedgerows indicate they may store 600,000 tonnes with the potential to store 1 million tonnes or more, if removal ceases.

In terms of biodiversity, two thirds of our native bird species either feed, nest or both in hedgerows and they are home to 600 of our 800 flowering plants, but there is no legal obligation to conserve or protect them, apart from annual nesting season cutting restrictions. In the same RTE report, Donal Sheehan, a dairy farmer from North Cork, outlined that farmers should get payments for sustainable management of their hedgerow boundaries. "There needs to be payments for these habitats because there is no value in them, we don't have legal protections on them. Farmers are perceived as being the damagers or destroyers of the environment but this is the price of cheap food production where these habitats are removed purely to increase food production and until there is some sort of protection and some sort of value put on our hedgerows and all our other natural habitats, this will continue"

Replanting the hedgerow or woodland as some form of deterrent

Early in 2021, Noteworthy investigated the removal of hedgerows to make way for agricultural expansion, finding that almost 1,000 offences related to hedgerow removal on farms identified by Department of Agriculture, Food and Marine between 2011 and 2019. There were no penalties issued. Surely replanting the hedgerow or woodland would act as some form of deterrent. These many examples bely the fashionable national rhetoric of tackling the climate crisis and being "Green".

It is political to suggest often uncontrollable international solutions than supporting unpopular local solutions. Currently there does not seem to be a national appetite to bring forth solutions though it is conceivable in the future Ireland will pay farmers to plant hedgerows.

In a recent article, I outlined the distribution of the extensive carbon credit fund to have our own "diversity scheme" which not only would allow



Much of Irelands flowers and birds rely on the hedgerows. Up to 6,000 km being removed a year in Ireland- but our politicians prefer to focus on Brazil and the rainforest

Ireland to market its produce as green and sustainable but by subsidising farmers for the inevitable lower yields. Irish beef is rated as the most organic in the world and the checks on its authenticity are rigorous. The extensive use of nitrogen and other fertilisers on said grass may not be as healthy or organic for the consumer.

Consumers are becoming much more concerned about the source of food and its implications on their health. Ireland due to its relative youth as a nation is fortunate to still have a level of wildlife and biodiversity. We have enough examples of mainland European countries such as Belgium and France to understand the end product of extensive farming practices on wildlife. And yet it is cost prohibitive to do the right thing? For example, the Agri-Environment Pilot Scheme launched by Department of Agriculture, Forestry and Marine (DAFM) to great fanfare in April 2021 specifically excludes commonage land and land with heather. The GLAS scheme to support planting of wildflowers closed to new entrants in 2016. In order to draw down payment in respect of the Basic Payment

Scheme entitlements, you must have an "eligible hectare" to accompany each entitlement. In this context, an "eligible hectare" is land that is used for an agricultural activity and includes land used to grow cereals, oilseeds, short rotation coppice, miscanthus sinensis, protein crops, sugar beet, maize, fodder beet, turnips, mangolds, kale, vegetables, potatoes, grass for silage or hay or grazing. It also includes maintaining an agricultural area in a state suitable for grazing or cultivation. Areas under Wild Bird Cover, Riparian Zones and designated habitats are also eligible for the Basic Payment Scheme provided you are in GLAS. Wait did GLAS not close to new entrants in 2016? There is no real appetite to protect habitat and farmers to achieve an income have to reclaim wilderness to achieve "Green" payments!

A friend of mine has wild land and as a nature lover has resisted his own personal comfort to leave the land in its natural state. Wild partridge have always survived, flocks of golden crests, every conceivable bullfinch and stonechat, pheasants, hawks and even barn owls. The land is not keepered and the number of foxes is testament to that. But the number of species has increased dramatically in the last few years as habitat destruction has pushed all of these creatures into the last island of nature.

Why should landowners be paupers for doing the right thing for the

environment? There have been many costly conservation projects over the years in Ireland driven by Europe such as grey partridge, red grouse and now the curlew. Surely, saving the species habitat before destruction would yield more benefit to the public.

But in the end is it all 'politics' and marketing?

But I guess it's politics. Green is the most marketable symbol as you see all companies embrace the marketing of it. It means sales and politically it means votes. But, we are not at the point where there is an appetite for real change. There may be a gap in the political order for a party that understands practical solutions to make sustained improvements to our country. One of the indicators of sustainable farming practices is the prosperity of wild partridges. They are highly vulnerable to the use of pesticides while the consumer is better informed of the dangers of fertilisers and insecticides and its potential link to a range of cancers. In Ireland, the saving of our land is not too late. One has only to see what agricultural practices have achieved in other European countries

such as France, Belgium and Spain where wildlife in any way has ceased to exist. It would seem extraordinary to follow this path.

I have always felt unless a radical change in National thinking that the only wildlife that will exist is that that will survive in people's gardens. There are over two million domestic gardens (or 359,000 acres) in Ireland. Two million gardens that are biodiversity friendly have not just altruistic benefits but research has shown that the more urbanised humans have become, the more we actually need exposure to nature. People feel better when they are surrounded by nature and indeed the sense of wellbeing increases directly with an increase in biodiversity. A sterile garden, with tightly mown grass and hard artificial surfaces, offers humans no exposure to nature, no buzz from insects, no birdsong, no life. The vibes are positive for the future as I think change is coming not because it is wanted but because we have to. Access to wildlife and good mental health are inextricably linked.

Indeed, in a time of climate and environmental anxiety, wildlife gardening is a great way to feel like you're doing something positive to help your local wildlife and community, including farmers who depend on pollinators. Did you know Ireland's houses are the biggest in Europe? Our gardens probably reflect this too! Ireland needs to control the controllables. That is to heavily subsidise sustainable farming practices such as schemes similar to REPS scheme to allow rewilding, protect our bogs and hedgerows, formulise a land management strategy and re-think our forestry policies to commercially plant native trees. But I digress...

REVIEW OF POINTER & SETTER TRIALS

Due to the third wave of the COVID pandemic no spring trials took place due to various social restrictions and related lockdowns.

With safety precautions field trials got the green light to proceed from August. The Irish red setter clubs two days traditionally initiate the beginning of the summer trials. Held in Kilchreest over both days, there was no award for the breed stake as game proved elusive.

The second day seemed to be heading in a similar direction until a



Ethan Brady with the winner of the English Setter club Summer stakes F.T.Ch The Morrígan and second prize to F.T.Ch Malstabodarna Idun of Ballydavid.



Gerald Devine with F.T.Ch Ballyellen Tango

(Photo R. Monroe)

third round of two brace of dogs. David Bell's Irish setter Sheenmel Dream was drawn with Joan McGillycuddy's Starjet and to the joy of all competitors Dream had a lovely find on some grouse and was announced the winner. The pointer breed stake had also just one winner being Pat Dooley's Wildfield Hawthorn.

The following days English Setter open stake took place the following day in formerly the Kings Hunting ground of Glencree. Judged by Christy Davitt (Blackstairs) and Larry Quinn (Bansha), the results were first and second to my own brace FTCh The Morrígan and FTCh Malstabodarna Idun.

The following weekend the 14th August the circuit moved a few miles up the road to Kippure where Donegal man Gerard Devine was victorious with FTCh Ballyellen Tango and third with Gortinreagh Jack Duggan. Jim Sheridan's Irish red and white setter Craigrua Loki was second.

Next day, the Wicklow and Wexford trials returned to Glencree under the judges of Christy Davitt and Pat Dooley (Wildfield). First and second awards were my own litter sisters FTCh's Malstabodarna Idun and Malstabodaran Embla with Con Dunne in third with Brackbawn Fiach.

The following weekend the circuit moved south to the pretty village of Kinnity for the Cashel field trial club. The work done by the NPWS on the ground is exemplary. While the focus is on the hen harrier project the grouse populations are at a level not seen in my lifetime. In what was a high quality trial, judges Alan Bartley (Ballinahemmy) and Anthony Mulhall (Mountbay) announced Pat Reape the winner with Lisduvoge Missy with Lisduvoge Bruno in third. Int. FTCh Ballydavid Starjet of the Kingdom was placed second for your scribe.

The Irish Championship was held in Glencree on 28th and 29th August and after two days of plentiful supply of grouse there was just one award announced by judges Michael Houston (Strabane), Colin Forde (Bownard) and Christy Davitt (Blackstairs) and this was to Steve Robinson's Irish setter Shanrycon Diamante.

The following weekend of 4th September the Irish pointer club's open stake took place on Liffey Head East and while game was not as plentiful as usual though there were some good chances spurned. The winner announced by judges Billy Grace (Capparoe) and Larry Quinn (Bansha) was International FTCh Ballydavid Starjet of the Kingdom.

The following weekend and it was back to Kinnity for the Premier field trial club where Billy Grace's brace of English setters Capparoe Sian and FTCh Capparoe Jata placed first and second. The circuit moved westward to Kilchreest where the Connaught field trial club held its trial on what turned out to be a pretty wet and blustery day. Judges Michael Houston (Strabane) and Anthony Mulhall (Mountbay) gave their all where they announced my own FTCh Malstabodarna Embla as the winner with local man Joe Tannion's FTCh Mountbay da Vinci in second and third to Paraig Kiely's Gordon setter Birchvalley Rusty Tipped.

The prestigious Irish pointer club's open stake held on 1st October despite the efforts of judges Michael Houston and Anthony Mulhall, who walked the entire Dublin mountains at Kippure could not meet game and therefore could give no award.

The 3rd October on a windy day in Glencree was where Anthony Mulhall (Mountbay) and your scribe (Ballydavid) judged the English setter open stake and again while there were some groused opportunities, it could not be said that grouse were plentiful on this occasion. There was just one find, on a snipe, for Mark Adams' Hunshigo Donard and this win made the dog an International FTCh subject to bench qualifications. Mark has owned just two Irish setters and his previous dog Int. FTCh Ballydavid Spitfire also attained this prestigious title as well as winning the Irish Championship and placed second in the British Championship. We wish Mark well on his sabbatical from the sport. The Pointer confined stake in sugar beet was held in Athy under judges Christy Davitt (Blackstairs) and Ollie Kelly (Illeigh) with first place to Pat Dooley's Wildfield Hawthorn with second place to Michael Houston's Int. FTCh Ardclinis Francie Frank.

On the 9th October, the red and white setter confined stake judged by Bill Connolly (Ballyellen) and Pat Dooley (Wildfield) was won by Jim Sheridan's FTCh Craigrua Devin, with Des



F.T.Ch, Snipe Ch. Malstabodarna Embla of Ballydavid was the winner of Connaught field trial stake



Jim Sheridan with F.T.Ch Craigrua Devin

(Photo R. Monroe)



Des Linton winner with Irish Red and white setter Craigrua Nevin with Dr Stephen Clarke with Carnockmoor Serin. (Photo R. Monroe)

Linton's International FTCh Craigrua Eoghan in second and Alan Bartley's Benwhisken Rebel in third.

On 10th October, trials moved north to Scotstown in County Monaghan for the Donegal field trial association to the moors of Lord Rossmore. Judges Michael Houston, Aidan Dunne (Maodhog) and local man Kevin Quinn awarded Des Linton's Irish red and white setter Craigrua Nevin in first place with my own FTCh Malstabodarna Embla of Ballydavid in second and Jim Sheridan's Irish red and white setter Craigrua Loki in third place.

On the 16th October the English setter confined stake in Kippure was won by Billy Grace's Upperwood Resolution of Capparoe on snipe under judges Bill Connolly (Ballyellen) and Pat Dooley (Wildfield).

The Munster pointer and setter club stake in Kilchreest was won by Joe Tannion's Irish setter FTCh Mountbay da Vinci with second place to David Bell's Irish setter Sheenmel Dream. Both awards on snipe. The Irish setter open stake on 24th October judged by Bill Connolly and Colin Forde at the same location was won by Ray O'Dwyer's Sheantullagh Bolt with second to David Bell's Sheenmel Dream and third to Ray O'Dwyers Sheantullagh Red Berry. All awards were on snipe.

The Connaught field trial club trial on bank holiday Monday judged by Pat Dooley (Wildfield), Anthony Mulhall (Mountbay) and Paraig Kiely (Tulrahan) had to choose from a number of snipe finds. The winner was announced as Jim Sheridan's Craigrua Loki with second to Wicklow man Brian MacDiarmada's Irish setter Sugarloaf Scamall and third place to Colin Forde's Irish setter G.B. FTCh Bownard Delegator.

The following Saturday the 30th October, Connaught field trial club returned to Athenry with judges Bill Connolly (Ballyellen) and Jason Benson (Concomrue) and a full suite of awards were announced all on snipe. First was my own FTCh (Snipe Ch) Malstabodarna Embla of Ballydavid and second to my own FTCh (Snipe Ch) Ballydavid Gaelforce with third to Larry Quinn's Craigrua Ualtar and reserve to Billy Grace's English setter Upperwood Resolution of Capparoe. The traditional final trial of the year was Halloween and the circuit returned to Glencree in county Wicklow for the Irish red and white setter stake. It was the trial of the year with the number of grouse met and number of finds and general standard of dog work. Judged by Alan Bartley (Ballinahemmy) and Larry Quinn

(Bansha) the judges had to choose from eight finds at the end of the trial. The winner was announced as my own FTCh (Snipe Ch) Ballydavid Gaelforce with second to Kieran Walsh's Blackmoor Tyrell and third to my own FTCh Mastabodarna Embla of Ballydavid.

The Final Stakes of the Year

The final stakes of the year were held in mid-October on snipe only. The Irish championship on snipe was having its third running. Before that the Irish breeds society held two trials in advance of the weekend championship.

A trial of very high standard, the winner announced by judges Billy Grace (Capparoe) and Vincent Flannelly (Benwhisken) of the first day was Ken Watterson (Isle of Man) Irish setter Tiqun Verona of Cronkmooar with second place to Paraig Kiely's prodigious 12-month old puppy Ballydavid Nike and third to Alan Bartley's very exciting Irish red and white setter Benwhisken Lignight Teasel. The second day the judges were Pat Dooley (Wildfield) and Heike Sporleder (Germany) and the winner was announced as Kieran Walsh's Woodend Boy with Billy Grace's duo of FTCh Capparoe Jata and Capparoe Sian in second and third respectively.

The Irish championship took place in the Midlands and was expertly run as always by the Irish Championship committee and Hon. Secretaries husband and wife team Christy Davitt and Maeve Waters. The winner over the two days was the Irish Setter Vislev Nillson for Heike Sporleder (Germany) with second to David Bell's Irish Setter Sheenmel Dream and third to Pat Dooley's English pointer Wildfield Hawthorn and reserve to Paraig Kiely's FTCh Irish setter Ballinahemmy Rose.

The Ulster circuit began in September and overlapped a number of southern events. Grouse were not as abundant as we have become accustomed, yet trials were well attended and as usual dog work was at a premium. The Northern Irish Pointer club initiated proceedings in the hallowed ground of Slieveanorra. Despite my relative lack of success there, I always really enjoy this ground, though it is becoming very heavy indeed as the heather length increases and the spongy under surface seems to sap your legs. However, it remains the greatest test of a dog and for that alone, it is unique on our islands.

On 18th September a good card went to post under the experienced judges of Gerald Devine (Gortinreagh) and Ray Monroe (Granaghburn) and after a tough day in heat the winner was announced as Michael Houston's English pointer Int. FTCh Ardclinis Francie Frank with second to Ballymena man Andrew Law with his Irish setter Shanrycon Diamond. The following weekend the circuit moved to Glarryford on pheasants and judged by Dessie Linton (Ballymena) and Dr. Stephen Clarke (Glendrissock).

A high-quality trial with plenty of birds and opportunities to run the result was another win for Michael Houston and Int. FTCh Ardclinis Francie Frank with second place to Mark Adams' Irish setter FTCh Hunshigo Donard and third to my own Int. FTCh Ballydavid Starjet of the Kingdom and reserve to James Coyle' English pointer Brackbawn Wanda.

Fog greeted competitors on their return to Slieveanorra on 2nd October

and thermals were definitely required. Brian Morris has travelled sportingly from Scotland for the trial. Judges for the day were Carol Calvert (Glynlark) and Ray Monroe (Granaghburn) and despite the evasiveness of grouse a full suite of awards was announced on snipe. First was Bill Connolly's Irish setter Sheantullagh Hayley with second place to Brian Morris Ballyellen Spider. Third place was to Andy Law's Irish setter Cairnroe Osprey of More with

reserve to FTCh Sheantullagh Djouce.

The following day's Strabane & District stake, the circuit moved to Legfordrum by kind permission of the shooting syndicate there. The event was on partridge and judged by syndicate members Michael Houston and John Murray. Success was Davy O'Neills with his own bred Irish setter Shanrycon Casey with second to Ray Monroe's Irish red and white setter Granaghburn Nebraska and third Gerald Devine's English setter Gortinreagh Jack Duggan and reserve to Bill Connolly's FTCh Sheantullagh Djouce.

COMS were to Des Linton's Craigrua Nevin and Ray Monroe's Ballydavid The Dagda.

The 18th October The Ulster Irish Red Setter club open stake returned to Slieveanorra under Michael Houston and Ray Monroe. After a freezing, wet and foggy day relieved competitors returned to cars and had their delayed lunches. The awards were first to your scribes International FTCh Ballydavid Starjet of the Kingdom with second to



James Coyle winner in Glarryford with Brackbawn Wanda. (Photo R. Monroe)



Michael Houston with Int. FTCh Ardclinis Francie Frank on way to winning NIPC in Glarryford. (Photo R. Monroe)



Bill Connolly was the winner of the Ulster Red Setter confined stake with Sheantullagh Hayley. (Photo R. Monroe)

John Martin's Irish setter Mossy Abe, third to Dessie Linton's Irish red and white setter Craigrua Nevin and reserve to Bill Connolly's Irish red setter Sheantullagh Cormac.

The last trial of the year in Ulster returned to Glarryford under the judges of Andrew Law and Dr. Stephen Clarke. Again, while birds were not plentiful there was a nice mixture of opportunity and ability to quarter ground. While some good dogs had no opportunity on pheasant, that is the luck of the draw and it is better than too much game on the ground. There was a very popular winner with the eighty years young James Coyle top of the pile with his English pointer Brackbawn Wanda while Gerald Devine was second with Gortinreagh Jack Duggan and third your scribe's FTCh (Snipe Ch) Ballydavid Gaelforce of the Kingdom and reserve to Carol Calvert's English setter Gortinreagh Blue.

So what was the year of 2021 in terms of pointer and setter field trials?

Let's start with the good: The Irish Kennel Club and in particular the field trial committee deserve enormous credit for ensuring through strict safety restrictions that our sport could continue in the summer and autumn despite losing our spring circuit.

The Slieve Blooms are back! Huge credit goes to the Irish National Parks and Wildlife Service. The increase in the grouse population, albeit to support hen harriers, is a revelation and should serve as a blue print for any grouse projects on the island. In my time attending Kinnity I do not believe I have seen such healthy grouse numbers and while at the time I wished there were less, it was wonderful to see.

The standard of dogs seems to have leaped again and relatively new competitors are achieving success which can only be good for the sport.

The last trial of the year in Glencree was one of the best trials I remember attending. The Irish red and white setter club held this trial on Halloween and there was an incredible supply of grouse, with most dogs having not one but two opportunities on the king of the gamebirds. It gives great hope for our trials in 2022.

The judges had to choose award winners from eight dogs on grouse and one on snipe.

The standard of Irish red and white setters is at a level not seen in my



Alan Bartley's Benwhisken Night Teasel (Photo Linda Weston)

lifetime. Despite not a huge number of dogs competing, they recorded three wins, two seconds and two thirds for the breed and some exceptional new dogs. In addition to the consistent breed supporters, Alan Bartley and Pat Reape, two brilliant trainers are now campaigning this breed. Expect new handlers of this breed in the near future.

The bad: Grouse have become scarce on some of our traditional grounds which is sad. Nature has its way of revitalisation so we live in hope. Some of the trials in these great grouse trial grounds were decided on snipe due to scarcity of grouse. Hopefully a better spring in 2022 will change this.

The loss of spring was a huge loss but in the context of bigger things ...

The Dogs

By my records Michael Houston's International FTCh Ardclinis Francie Frank, Joan McGillycuddy's International FTCh (Snipe Ch) Ballydavid Starjet of the Kingdom, my own FTCh (Snipe Ch) Malstabodarna Embla of Ballydavid and Pat Dooley's Wildfield Hawthorn had the honour of winning two trials.

David Bell's hard running Irish setter Sheenmel Dream had one win, and three seconds on snipe including in the Irish snipe championship and had a fantastic year.

The aforementioned Malstabodarna Embla had two wins, three seconds and a third place while Ballydavid Starjet had two wins, a second and a third place. Wildfield Hawthorn two wins were supplemented with a third place in the Irish snipe championship while Ardclinis Francie Frank had a second place in addition to his back-to-back wins.

Young Dogs

The young dogs section is what most people are enthusiastic about. Any of these dogs braced in competition would more than make up for the entry fee.

Benwhisken Night Teasel – a fiery red and white setter with an arrow-like gait. Owned by Janet Sarsfield (Wales) and campaigned by Alan Bartley she is a throwback in style to the great Irish Championship winner Davy Byrnes FTCh Sugarloaf Millie. She can bridge that gap and be a winner of our most prestigious trial. Exciting to watch and her spirit always makes it an edge of the seat ride. Her brother Rebel is supposedly similar but have not seen him at that level yet. Under the expert guidance of Alan, she won't be overcooked and will peak for the big trials. Expect a few big runs in the Irish championship in years to come.

Craigrua Ualtar another red and white setter, this time for Larry Quinn. A fluid running dog that covers his ground accurately, the trademark of his trainer. As usual for this breed, clinical around game. Expect success in 2022.

A myth de-bunked

For years it was acknowledged that female red setters were superior to their male counterparts. This myth was debunked this year.

Maodhog Saoirse a powerful running red setter dog. There are times when the power of a male can be more attractive than a brilliant female- this is one of those cases. Only seen the dog on his debut and showed extraordinary gait and will have real power for the mountain trials. His trainer will be judicious and will only appear when perfect.

Maodhog Stoirm the sister of the above dog possesses the same efficient movement and fire. Under the very capable trainer Colin Forde, expect big things both here and across the water in 2022.

Knockgreana Meaux a different type of Irish setter dog to Saoirse but is magic in motion and has an incredible style on game. Runs his lines like a copy book and is extremely light on foot. Will not be over exposed at field trials by his trainer Jim McCormack so will retain his polish. His sister Knockgreana Sky competed well in her one outing and is adept around game and trainer Sean Hogan has her schooled extremely well. Ballydavid The Dagda another red setter male, brilliantly trained by the legendary Tyrone Gaelic footballer, Raymond Monroe. Has astonishing speed (the dog) and clinical lines of quartering. The Dagda has recovered from a serious injury and has been trialled lightly so far but is getting into his groove.

Woodend Boy, a powerfully made English setter dog of Kieran Walsh's. Possesses the same explosive action and gait of his famous grandsire Geronimo while retaining the breeds expertise around game. Expect big performances on the mountain. He will get opportunity and will add to his solitary win in 2021.

Capparoe Sian another of a line of wonderful females from this kennel. For a small dog looks big in her gallop which is the sign of a great one. Had a very good year and was unlucky in one or two trials she will be well managed by Billy Grace and will continue his strong line of Capparoe females from Lassie to Jip to Jata. Her brother Capparoe Veltog, owned by George Forbes gave some outstanding performances particularly in Kilchreest, which is one of the toughest tests for any dog.

Ballydavid Nike a petit female with as smooth a gait as you will see. Daughter of Starjet she debuted in her first trial in November 2021 at 12months achieving a second excellent award on snipe in a hot trial with eight finds on the books at the end. Does wide flat running lines typical of Paraig Kiely's dogs and is cute on top of that!

Carnockmoor Serin a statuesque Gordon setter dog with a great engine and athletic gait. Performed well in Scotstown and in Slieveanorra and has the pace and style to win consistently at top level competition. Owned by dr. Stephen Clarke he will get plenty of opportunity on grouse.

The kennels

Billy Grace, despite not competing at his usual levels with his team of dogs (FTCh Capparoe Jata, Upperwood Resolution and Capparoe Sian), still won two stakes, two seconds and a reserve.

Jim Sheridan's Craigriua's (FTCh Craigrua Devin and Craigrua Loki) had two wins, second and a third.

The Ballydavid kennels of your humble scribe had seven wins, six seconds, two thirds and two reserves. Each of the five dogs (Int. FTCh Ballydavid Starjet, FTCh Ballydavid Gaelforce, FTCh Malstabodarna Embla, FTCh Malstabodarna Idun and FTCh The Morrígan) campaigned won at least one open stake.

Let's look forward to a great 2022!



Stephen Clarke's Gordon setter dog Carnockmoor Serin. (Ph

(Photo R. Monroe)

The Best Deer Calibre?

The Mauser .270 in South Africa's Great Karoo.

his question has been around forever, well, certainly since hunters began using firearms for hunting deer. Having spent over half a century in the sport I've heard it debated at the end of every hunting season. If you were to ask a dozen hunters for their views you'd probably get a dozen different answers. Individual opinions are varied, sometimes heated, depending on one's point of view. Almost everyone has a favourite rifle/calibre combination with many of these opinions based on performance in the field. If the hunter takes successful shots the ammunition used is usually considered to be the ultimate. Less successful hunters who miss or require several shots to arrive at a conclusion have been known to blame those "useless bullets"! Could it be possible that they don't spend enough time offseason on the range?

With rifles up to and including .30 calibre classed as non-restricted, there's a decent variety to choose from. In the bad old days when hunters were restricted to a .22-250 calibre rifle, ongoing discussions inevitably centred on the unsuitability of that specific bullet and the urgent need for a more suitable calibre. The dogs in the streets knew that the round was not appropriate for the stated purpose, yet it took an EU Directive to generate action on the subject. However that's a separate conversation.

Suitable calibre ideally should be based on correct bullet performance. The appropriate bullet over an appropriate distance (100 - 200metres?) producing appropriate terminal energy will do the job. It's that basic! The appropriate bullet is one that strikes at a decent velocity and expands at the chosen distance. A round designed to expand at 500 metres won't do so at 150 metres. Likewise one built to expand at shorter distances won't perform well at long range, plus its energy starts dropping off over the longer distance.

It's also worth noting that two bullets of identical weight fired from rifles of different calibre won't perform the same as each other. The larger case produces greater energy, so its round will travel faster at higher velocity. Bullet construction, controlled expansion, terminal energy, sectional density plus shot placement are the important criteria. Sectional density is the relationship between a bullet's length/weight to velocity. For example, a heavier than standard bullet still has to fit the same barrel and the only way to accommodate any extra weight is to make the bullet longer. An over-long bullet may not stabilise if a barrel's internal twist is not designed for it.

Premium ammunition correctly delivered is what really counts

My 270cal Mauser using bullets from 130 – 160 grains will always perform but 180 grain bullets won't stabilise resulting in appalling accuracy. Likewise, controlled expansion on impact is critical otherwise the round will just carry on through. Premium ammunition correctly delivered regardless of calibre, is what really counts.

Hunting doesn't exactly require bench-rest accuracy or the latest high tech supersonic missiles that punches holes in thick metal. Suitable tried and trusted premium hunting ammunition is adequate! Selecting a rifle in which to use it is far more important. Over the years I have used rifles of varying calibre from .22/250 upwards. While the .22/250 discharges an excellent fast 55grain round, its frangible bullet is not considered humane for use on live deer.

In 1992 when it finally became possible to upgrade from a Parker Hale .22/250, I procured a new .243 rifle that chambered up to 110gr weight bullets; double that of the 22/250. Its arrival was quite interesting. Having ordered it from a well-known shooting emporium in Wales and secured a serial number, I completed a firearms certificate application at the local Garda station.

The rifle arrived in the post wrapped in brown paper

A few days later, the postman called and handed me a long package wrapped



The Parker Hale .22/250 in the 1970's

in brown paper saying "here's your new rifle Frank." The firearm had been sent by post from Wales and somehow came through both British and Irish postal systems, arriving here before the licence application had been processed - and the postman knew what was in the box! Strange, but true! The firearms certificate issue was swiftly sorted, but that particular .243 was a great disappointment. Despite breaking-in the barrel slowly, the rifle just wouldn't produce tight groups. Bench-rests, every brand of ammunition on the market, 100 and 110 gr rounds and test-firing at break of day to avoid wind - all to no avail. The rifle just wouldn't deliver anything less than a 3" group at 100 yards so I changed it for another new .243. A rifle that can only produce 3" groups at 100 yards from a bench-rest won't do anything near that from the shoulder during a hunt. Too many variables come into play, wind, light, no steady rest, nerves etc.



Sako .270 Hammerhead ammunition. The cartridge at top right is 30-06 calibreThe new model was purchased from a local firearms dealer – couldn't risk another delivery by the postman! It produced tighter groups than the previous model and while it was used for a few seasons it was never "comfortable". So it had to go!Through

the years numerous other rifles made brief appearances in the gun-safe. They included a 1904 Carl Gustav Swedish Mauser with straight-pull bolt in 6.5 X 55, a Steyr 6.5X55, Sako 6.5x55, Ruger 30-06 and Parker Hale 7.62mm. All were ideal deer-hunting rifles, each within its own specific ballistics range capable of delivering a projectile fast enough to penetrate, expand and make an immediate humane kill. However, a rifle must be "comfortable" - a good fit, acquire a fast sight picture and release a stress-free shot with the hunter's body providing a gun-platform -"Comfortable"!

Lack of the latter is the main reason I changed rifles frequently. The Swedish Mauser was an exception, being a venerable old warrior it didn't deserve to be butchered to fit a 'scope. Drilling and tapping it just didn't seem right and it was never used on the hill. It's still in use elsewhere today. Some rifles had several inches of timber removed from their stocks which improved the fit but still didn't make them comfortable. The Styer 6.5X55 was a top class rifle but always felt awkward, as did the Sako 6.5 X 55 which was fitted with a stainless steel barrel and synthetic stock. It looked the part, failed the comfort test and had to go. The 30 - 06 Ruger was a

decent rifle, very accurate - I brought it on an African safari specifically to test hunting with standard iron sights. It performed admirably but wasn't quite comfortable enough, so it too had to go. All the above rifles are currently and successfully in use with their present owners. The Parker Hale 7.62mm was a target rifle, also in use these days somewhere in England.

In 1997 a new Mauser model 94 in .270 calibre appeared on the local dealer's shelf. It was comfortable to handle, fitted like a glove, had an incredibly smooth action - and swiftly ended up in the gun safe. Having tested it with many ammunition brands, Sako 156gr Hammerhead ammunition produced the best results on-range and in the hunting field. That Mauser has remained a permanent fixture in the gun-safe while other rifles come and go - 25 years later it is still being used.

It featured on hunts in Ireland, many European countries and served me well several times in Africa where it proved capable of taking species large and small including making one-shot kills on Eland, the world's largest antelope. It killed a crocodile on the Botswana bank of the Limpopo River using the 156gr Sako ammunition. The 100 yard shot at the croc's golf-ball sized brain was taken from the South African side. Colleagues who used 6.5 X55, 30-06 and .308 rifles successfully on African hunts all agreed that being comfortable with their rifles was far more important than bullet calibre. I'm not particularly sold on .270 above other rounds - if the Mauser had been chambered in a different calibre I would have bought it anyway - solely for its perfect fit. The .270 round is set in a necked-down 30-06 cartridge, the difference between the bullets being .03".

Every calibre has individual ballistics designed and constructed for the intended quarry that will perform admirably in a decent rifle - assuming correct shot placement. Bullet calibre isn't a major priority given that we don't have large thick-skinned game to deal with on this island. Perhaps that annual conversation should be about comfortable, accurate rifles rather than their calibre?



The Ruger 30-06 using iron sights



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