

# Irish COUNTRY SPORTS and COUNTRY LIFE

ON SALE  
UNTIL 19th September



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Volume 10 Number 2 Summer 2011 £3.00 / €5.00



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'Master McGrath'. From a painting by Louise Barrett

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**Printed by** W.&G.Baird **Distributed by** Easons (Dublin), E M Distribution **Also Available by Subscription** ISSN No. 1476-8240

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Published in association with Ireland's country sports and country living web portal <http://www.countrysportsandcountrylife.com>



# Country Sports and Country Life

## Rol Comment

**W**e are well into another game fair season with a very successful show at Ballywalter which will be followed by another great event at Shane's Castle, where it is always a pleasure to meet friends both old and new. Now such enjoyable events might just take your eye off the ball for a moment or two and, with recent mutterings from some of the medical profession in the Republic about their involvement in the firearms licensing process, it would be unwise to drop your guard. One wonders what exactly was the point they were making! Certainly from what appeared in the national press it was far from clear but certainly it cannot be ignored. The licensing saga still rumbles on and I understand that those whose licences depend on having pistol and rifle shooting on licensed ranges will have their attendances counted by the authorities and lack of visits may well count against you to the point that the Gardai may try to revoke licences. Is there ever going to be an end to this story or will we just trundle on without any sense of reason? The last coalition government in the Republic has left us plenty of problems to solve without even thinking of the economy.

### **Angling Regulations**

Changeable weather has been the curse of the angler this season with low water conditions and everything from almost Mediterranean warmth to some very chill winds. Fly hatches have been surprising in some places, but it has been difficult to judge the 'right day' and many anglers have been disappointed. It would seem that the demise of drift netting is beginning to show results on some salmon waters with larger fish being taken than in previous years but it is important that all anglers obey the various regulations. It is important that we all do everything we can to stop poaching and reporting such incidents to the authorities is our duty. Ignorance of the law is no excuse and Inland Fisheries Ireland (formerly the Central and Regional Fisheries Boards) have all the regulations on their website



[www.inlandfisheries.ie](http://www.inlandfisheries.ie) so don't find yourself on the wrong side of the law.

### **The Aliens Increase**

Alien species have been a long standing problem on this island with grey squirrels, mink, zebra mussels et al but the latest problem is even worse. Two sites in the Dublin area have been identified as having localised populations of turtles including the Snapper Turtle which can grow to a considerable size and amputate a finger with ease. These were pets which either grew too large or became a nuisance to care for so the usual unthinking element of the population dumped them into the Irish countryside or in these cases a pond in the Phoenix Park and a river in South Dublin. While not quite on the scale of 'big cats' which give rise to the various

'beast' stories, they are creating a problem for native species. It is always worth reminding ourselves that we are no more than custodians of the countryside and we have a duty and responsibility to leave it in a good state for those who follow us.

### **Billy O'Regan**

It is with regret we note the death of Billy O'Regan, President and founder member, of the Wild Deer Association of Ireland. Billy, along with his wife Mary, have been active in the Association since its foundation in 1981 and are well known and respected in the stalking community in Ireland. In recent years, Billy has been tireless in the fight against the increasing level of deer poaching and he will be greatly missed by many fieldsports men and women. We extend our sincere sympathies to Billy's family and friends. I bhlaithneas De go ráibh se.

### **Looking Forward**

Times may be hard and money in short supply but fieldsports followers are renowned for being among the survivors. I'm sure that you will all continue to promote your sports and encourage young people to become involved – after all they are the future of our well loved sports and country lifestyle.

**Philip Lawton**  
ROI Editor



# Country Sports and Country Life

## Comment

**A**t the moment I am a flyfishing junkie. For the first time in many years, I am buying angling magazines, browsing catalogues, reading the reviews, sorting my flyboxes and wait for it..actually getting some river fishing done. I am going after trout like.. well..like I used to in my early twenties.

Maybe it's the unseasonably warm and pleasant April this year that sent me river-wards; maybe it's the fact that my fishing partner has retired and can get on the bank with me at the drop of a hat. I like going fishing with friends - but not WITH them on the bank if you see what I mean. For whatever the reason, I have been out once a week since the season opened. And I can't get enough.

What has changed in the intervening years? Well, I no longer actually fish from dawn til dusk, I may be on the bank then, but as I wrote last time, I also like to see the sights, listen to the sounds and let my mind take a memory snapshot. If I get a fish that's great. If not there's always the dipper, the rabbits and the kingfisher to watch.

Mind you having said that, I asked our writer Andrew Griffiths to tie some flies for me. Nothing fancy GRHEs, PTNs, Greenwells, that sort of thing. And before you comment - I paid for them too! He also tucked a couple a fly he calls 'the carpet' midge and a March Brown variant spider he calls 'George.' I will not detail exactly how I got on other than to say that the Six Mile Water trout were rather keen on the midge. As to George, I have advised Andrew to patent it or something. On one occasion, I stopped counting fish taken and released. Fished in the surface film it's, well, totally brilliant. One thing is obvious, he's not only is a superlative writer, but ties flies that (in some eyes) look like nothing special but are totally effective at doing what they are supposed to do.

But back to this issue of the magazine. With burgeoning sales throughout Ireland and the magazine now available to a huge international audience on the Internet at [www.countrysportsandcountrylife.com](http://www.countrysportsandcountrylife.com) we thought it useful to offer the leading country sports



bodies in Ireland a platform to reflect on the challenges ahead for fieldsports in the aftermath of elections in Northern Ireland and in the Irish Republic. By doing so the bodies would be able to make their views known to many, not just their own membership. You can read FISSTA, NARGC and CAI's opinions in later pages and clearly for each it is very much a 'work in progress' and none of their eyes will be taken off the country sports ball at all. Each of the organisations faces a series of challenges that will, in one way or another, affect most if not all of us. Very important work indeed and

work that needs good pro-active lobbying, effective pro-active PR and proper consultation with members to ensure their views are sought, taken into account and acted upon.

We also asked BASC NI but they were unable to provide anything.

Others write in this edition about the Game Fair season ahead, the rip roaring success of the first Great Game Fair at Ballywalter and the treats in store at Shanes Castle and Birr. If you missed Ballywalter, you can view the documentary that I made with the Fieldsports Channel at [www.fieldsportschannel.tv](http://www.fieldsportschannel.tv) and the excellent programme hosted by the Dog Guru Keith Mathews which can be seen at [www.dogandcountry.tv](http://www.dogandcountry.tv)

It was great that the First Minister Peter Robinson and Chief Constable Matt Baggott came to Ballywalter. Not only did they confirm that they enjoyed their visit immensely, but they highlighted the way that the Great Game Fairs crossed all community backgrounds, bringing huge economic boosts to the country as well. I even got a minor scoop in the interviews when they both admitted that they were..... anglers! You learn something every day in this game.

Another programme will be made from Shanes Castle and you may be 'caught on camera.' In any event, it is a surefire certainty you'll enjoy the experience.

Paul Pringle  
Northern Editor

## 'Barbour Sporting' launched for the New Shooting Season

**H**elen Barbour, Vice Chairman of Barbour, is launching her first shooting collection including four new jackets. Under the brand name of Barbour Sporting, the range, designed by Helen and Lord James Percy, showcases a wardrobe of clothes for the active sportsman, which will lead the way in performance and technical innovation.

Barbour Sporting features a co-ordinated, 'fit for purpose' mens shooting clothing collection. The range utilises the best branded fabrics, including GORE-TEX® to deliver outstanding durability of waterproofness, windproofness and breathability, keeping the wearer dry and comfortable.

Helen Barbour said: "At the very heart of Barbour is our long association with the sporting and country clothing markets. They are the foundation for everything we do. With James Percy, I have developed a premium shooting range which is functional, practical and versatile and adheres to the principles on which Barbour was founded – quality, durability, fitness for purpose and attention to detail. Particular focus has been made on ensuring total freedom of movement."

### New jackets

The Sporting Featherweight, is Barbour's lightest shooting jacket offering complete protection from the elements. Ideal for early season shooting, the Sporting Featherweight also works well later in the season when used in combination with a fleece waistcoat.



For the ultimate protection against the unpredictable British weather, the Sporting Ultimate 3 in 1 is the jacket of choice. Combining a two layer GORE-TEX® fabric with a zip in fleece gilet, the two can be worn together or separately.

Inspired by a 1950s heritage jacket, the Highmoor is a combination of sports jacket and showerproof coat in a lightweight yet tough Gaberdine cotton.

The range incorporates both a new tartan and tweed, especially designed for Barbour Sporting which takes its colours from the landscape of the Northumbrian hills and moors.

Sweaters, in V neck, crew neck, sleeveless and half zip, pick up the colours from Barbour's sporting tartan in petrol, rust, moss and claret to create knitwear that provides warmth and comfort. Shirts in a longer sporting fit and choice of four styles are hardwearing and practical.

### Accessories too

Sporting accessories in co-ordinated colours are designed to compliment. Hill stockings, garters, shooting gloves, ties in both wool and silk and a large leather cartridge bag which takes up to 150 cartridges are all of exceptional quality. The perfect companion for a day out on the hills is the Sporting Hill bag. Designed by Lord James Percy, it's a practical and roomy piece of kit.

Barbour Sporting will be available through selected sporting stockists from the end of July. Call 00 44 191 427 4210 or visit [www.barbour.com](http://www.barbour.com) for full details.



The exciting new Barbour Sporting range



Sporting Hill bag

## New Binos from Swarovski Optik

**T**he compact, ergonomic design and light weight of the new CL Companion 30 combined with an unbeatable price make these binoculars perfect as an entry-level model or a handy spare and extremely versatile for all your hunting requirements. The CL Companion will be available in stores from 01 July 2011.

Whether you're an experienced, passionate hunter in need of a compact, lightweight alternative to your larger professional SWAROVSKI OPTIK binoculars, or a young hunter looking for your very first binocular, the CL Companion 30 is the ideal companion for travelling or just visiting your local hunting ground. The compact construction of the CL Companion 30 makes it easy to handle and ensures that it is close at hand for those crucial moments.

With a field of view of 124 m/100 m to 1000 m and the proven precision of SWAROVSKI OPTIK binoculars, impressive viewing comfort is guaranteed. The distinctive design of the new binoculars combines a modern look and feel with the compact construction and proven

ergonomics typical of this long established Austrian manufacturer. At only 500 g (17 oz), they are the lightest binoculars in their class.

Its impressive benefits mean that, in addition to being perfect for hunters, the CL Companion 30 is also a useful companion for anyone who travels a lot or enjoys an active lifestyle.

The CL Companion 8 x30 RRP £790.00 and CL Companion 10 x 30 RRP £820.00

For more information visit [www.swarovskioptik.com](http://www.swarovskioptik.com)







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*Sporting*



## Countryside Alliance Ireland News



### Fires ravage Ireland's Countryside

This year's spring has so far brought a long dry spell and whilst this was glorious respite after the long, harsh winter, it did have serious repercussions for our countryside. For over a week local and national news were busy reporting the many gorse and forest fires ablaze throughout Ireland. For viewers, that may have been hard to believe until they went outside, where a large proportion of people could see a fire in their vicinity. This was in the height of the dry weather however, prior to this, at the end of March, the Northern Ireland Fire Service attended to 289 gorse fires in one week alone. This means a staggering amount of time, energy and money wasted. It appears now that every year, with a prolonged dry spell, will lead to an irresponsible and reckless minority endangering lives and spoiling our beautiful countryside. Many of us, who love country walking and know the delights a good cover of gorse can yield, find it shocking that there are people out there who can find nothing better to entertain themselves. With, unfortunately, no real solution in sight the question therefore has to be asked about what precautions the good citizens of this island can take to ensure the rest of our spring and summer passes without another week like that?

In both the North and South of Ireland, guidelines were issued about the prevention of gorse and forest fires. The NI Fire and Rescue Service launched an advertising campaign highlighting the substantial increase in fires in 2010 and the precautions which can be taken; please do not throw cigarettes out of car windows, only use barbecues in designated and safe areas, ensure that barbecues are extinguished and cold before disposing of their contents, do not leave glass or bottles in woodlands and avoid using open fires in the countryside.

In the Republic, Minister of State, Shane McEntee TD, issued a statement, which we obligingly passed to our members. The Minister emphasised that until 31st August, the burning of growing vegetation is prohibited and stated: "Any person found breaching this prohibition risks prosecution, fines and imprisonment. Any farmer found engaging in illegal burning will face the same rigours of the law but will also risk the loss of their Single Farm Payment."

Forest and gorse fires can wipe out livelihoods in a matter of minutes, so please check you have adequate insurance, fire prevention schemes and fire plans. We sincerely hope that our members and their families enjoy this year's summer in our beautiful, engaging countryside, however for everyone's sake, please do so safely. For more information and advice, please visit [www.agriculture.gov.ie](http://www.agriculture.gov.ie) or [www.dardni.gov.uk](http://www.dardni.gov.uk)

### Firearms Provisions within the NI Justice Bill 2010

The Department of Justice has issued information regarding the Justice Bill 2010. This Bill passed through the final consideration stage on 23 March 2011 and will soon receive Royal Assent. The Bill contains three amendments to the Firearms (NI) Order 2004; clauses 103 (Variation of firearms certificate), 104 (Restrictions on the use of shotguns by young persons) and 105 (Restrictions on possession of air guns by young persons).

The Department of Justice has confirmed these clauses will not be commenced upon Royal Assent and will only come into effect once they are commenced by the Minister at some time in the future by means of an Order in the NI Assembly. Therefore, the provisions in the Firearms (NI) Order 2004 are unaffected by the Bill until such times as the Minister decides to commence any or all of the three clauses.

As an active member of the Northern Ireland Firearms Forum, Countryside Alliance Ireland works closely with the NIO, Department of Justice and PSNI Firearms Licensing Branch (among others), to influence

and shape firearms legislation within Northern Ireland; as always with our members' interests at the forefront.

At a meeting of the Forum on 1 April, the main topic under discussion was the implementation of the firearms amendments as contained within the Justice Bill. The group are now drafting proposals to put forward to the Department that will allow the implementation of the new legislation whilst ensuring it is safe, workable and fair to all.

### IMFHA Annual Show at Stradbally Hall

The Irish Masters of Foxhounds annual show at Stradbally, Co. Laois is being held on Sunday 3rd July 2011. The show classes are divided as follows: doghounds in the morning and bitches in the afternoon. The classes are in three parts: those for 'unentered' hounds which have yet to go hunting; those for 'entered' hounds which have completed at least one season's hunting (often in 'couples' or 'two couples' i.e. four hounds); and those for stallion hounds or brood bitches which are for hounds certified to be the parents of living puppies. The judges at this year's event are Mr. Anthony Sandeman MFH (the Crawley & Horsham) and Mr. Charlie Shirley-Bevan MFH (currently Haydon but to become Mid-Devon on 1 May).

Entry details for the show are available online by visiting [www.irishfoxhunting.com](http://www.irishfoxhunting.com) If you would like to advertise in the show catalogue, sponsor one of the classes or have a trade stand at the show, please contact Roddy Bailey on +353 5393 89959, +353 86 268 5895 or email Roddy at [roderic2@eircom.net](mailto:roderic2@eircom.net) If you require further

information, please contact David Lalor MFH on +353 87 254 2114 or email [imfhapro@gmail.com](mailto:imfhapro@gmail.com)



*Getting our message out -  
Lyll is interviewed by the  
Fieldsports Channel's  
broadcast team at  
Ballywalter.*



*CAI's busy stand was a 'must see' at Ballywalter Game Fair for First Minister Peter Robinson, pictured with Jonathan Bell, Jim Shannon MP, Liz and John Shaw Brown*



## Irish National Deer Strategy Initiative

**D**ave McCullough writes that the Wild Deer Association of Ireland (IWAI) has convened a highly successful inaugural annual conference to explore and develop a national strategy for deer management for Ireland. It was held in Athlone in April and was attended by 160 delegates representing a range of deer interest groups in Ireland from Irish government agencies, hunters and hunting groups, deer societies, north and south, land owners, veterinary and scientific research bodies.

The IWAI fielded seven speakers who presented papers for consideration and discussion. Marianne Freeman of Queens University Belfast, led off with her presentation of Professor Jamie

Dick's paper which considered the costs and benefits of releasing invasive species of deer into the wild. Peter Watson of The Deer Initiative UK followed on by discussing the work of his organisation in England and Wales and issues encountered in trying to obtain concerted support for a national deer strategy there. Representing Woodlands of Ireland, Declan Little spoke on the key issues and perceptions of deer management in the context of developing and preserving woodland, particularly broad leaf varieties. Veterinarian and stalker, Jim Walsh presented a paper on the deer cull and sale of venison in Ireland, which included a challenge to Irish deer statistics and the need for accurate data as a prerequisite to developing a national deer strategy. Jim raised more than a few eyebrows with his statistical conclusions on the reliability of the annual deer cull figures.

Ciaran Nugent speaking for the Inter Agency Deer Policy Group/Daff was next to discuss the development of Deer Management Policy and related strategic principles. Ciaran centred on conservation and the need to protect and maintain habitat and the need to meet and satisfy current and future environmental legislation. He concluded by outlining his thoughts on a number of key principles that he felt should be considered in the development of a deer strategy for Ireland.

Liam Nolan of Deer Alliance spoke on the issues affecting hunters, covering topics such as deer poaching, the reintroduction of a carcass tagging system and assessment and certification of hunters.



*Conference speakers and organisers (l/r) Damien Hannigan, Wild Deer Association of Ireland, Declan Little, Woodlands of Ireland, Liam Nolan, Deer Alliance, Jim Walsh, Veterinarian Barry Coad, Coillte, Ciaran Nugent, Forest Service, Marianne Freeman, Queen's University Belfast, Peter Watson, Deer Initiative UK and Liam McGarry, Irish Deer Society.*

Liam also highlighted that the concept of a national deer strategy was far from new and gave the conference a brief historical review of previous attempts to bring such a strategy forward and stressed the importance of the strategy becoming a reality this time around.

Finally, Coillte Teroranta's Barry Coad gave the landowner's perspective and provided facts and figures including costs on deer related damage to crops and forestry, backing these up with a very convincing set of slides. Barry also provided details on income from hunting licensing, and comparative costs relating to deer culling by Coillte, and protective fencing. He also contributed to the recurring theme of deer related statistics and their doubtful reliability.

Barry then chaired the general discussion of the topics presented, which was lively, wide and varied and the need of a National Deer Strategy and accurate deer statistics to develop that strategy were clearly endorsed by the conference. Determination was also expressed that this initiative would not be allowed to falter. A proposal was made that the Deer Alliance, as it already had the majority of stake holders represented within it's ranks, should take the lead in developing proposals for the national strategy and that it should take on board representation from other interested groups to ensure that all views and expertise are taken into account to inform the process. The point was also made and accepted that a national strategy needed to an all Ireland strategy to be effective. Further details of the conference can be found on the WDAI web site [www.wilddeerireland.com](http://www.wilddeerireland.com)

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## Comber Wildfowlers Results of the Working Tests held on 7 May 2011



Preliminary Winners (L/R) - K. Coey (4), M. Mcfarlane (3), J. Young (2), R. Briggs (1).



Novice Winners With The Judges (L/R) B. Harper (Cw), J. Boals (J), N. Carville (J), I. Davis (4), R. Griffin (3), S. Hutchinson (2), D. Willis (1), R. Rankin.



Advanced Winners With The Judges (L/R) B. Harper (Cw), N. Carville (J), R. Rankin (J), J. Wilson (4), R. Rankin (3), D. Beattie (2), W. Taggart (1), J. Boals (J).

## Property slump has no effect on one lucky group of Lower Lough Erne residents

**N**igel Irvine reveals that while the economic downturn has severely affected the property market, one lucky set of local residents appear to have beaten the trend, and are now eagerly moving into a large number of new, highly desirable, purpose built homes, in and around Enniskillen and the Lower Lough Erne area.

Over recent weeks, the Devenish Wildfowlers and Conservation Club have assembled and installed a further 33 nesting tunnels, each designed to provide wild ducks with a safe nesting and hatching environment during the breeding season.

For six years, the Devenish based group installed nesting tunnels, commonly known as 'hen-houses', in and around the Enniskillen area. The tunnels have proved to be extremely popular, with many being used twice in the same season to rear successive broods of young ducklings.

The Club experimented with several different designs and have now adopted a design which not only suits the wetter conditions experienced in the west of the Province, but also allows for quicker maintenance and refurbishment of the Hen-Houses each year, just before the breeding season begins.

Peter Taylor, Club Chairman commented: "As we install more nesting tunnels each year, refurbishing the existing tunnels is becoming a very time consuming affair. Ultimately our goal is to provide more nesting opportunities for our resident wildfowl. A simpler, 'renovation friendly' design is essential, especially if we want to increase the number of tunnels being utilised each year." Early indications show that the new and improved tunnel design is proving to be a big hit with the local wild duck community.



One of the new nesting tunnels.

## Top writer's one way ticket and a 'long let'

**A**lways a man with an 'angle,' our own Andrew Griffiths, one of the country's leading fishing writers, is upping sticks to Ireland for the summer and is looking for 'long let.'

He only requires very basic accommodation in rural location, preferably in midlands region, (Portumna) but wherever he lays his hat - not to mention computer, rods and flytying

equipment - he must be able to have his three salukis with him too. So with that in mind, a small farmhouse would be ideal.

Andrew says: "I want a change of scenery from the UK, to be able to spend time working on writing projects - and flytying of course. I spent last summer in Ireland, found it very welcoming and loved it. And now I want some more please!"

Andrew is studying an Institute of Fisheries Management course, and would be happy to provide some caretaker duties in return for a reasonable rent. He also will bring his trusty working Landrover along, so that's transport organised.

Ideally, he would like to come over June/July on a one way ticket and can supply references. Please contact: [andrew@reallysimplepartnership.com](mailto:andrew@reallysimplepartnership.com)





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## You don't need huskies and snow - another Canine first for the Irish Game Fair at Shanes Castle

**A**lready offering by far the largest and most varied canine events in Ireland, the Great Game Fairs of Ireland are always looking out for new and novel canine attractions. Not only is the fair at Shanes Castle the greatest gathering of gundogs and terrier and lurchers in Ireland with REAL international events - NOT just North/South events, it has a massive array of other canine attractions such as Keith Mathews, the Dog Guru; a unique HPR demonstration; a visit by the Kennel Club from London; dog agility tests and show; pedigree dog show; horse and hounds.

Now, for the first time at a Game Fair in Ireland we will have a 'mushing' display and a stand selling all the equipment to make any breed of dog and handler dream of Iditarod glory!

Country Hounds was formed in 2008 by Rita and Trevor Wilson to help introduce people and their dog(s) to dog powered sports such as dog sledding, dog scootering, bikejoring, backpacking and canicross.

As Rita says: "We supply a high quality range of products and

equipment that is specifically designed for dogs with owners who love the great outdoors. Whether you are mushing, walking, hiking, cycling or running we have the right equipment for an active lifestyle for you and your dog. At the two Great Game Fairs of Ireland we will be offering a wide range of high quality gear including harnesses, lines, leads, collars, coats, booties and walking belts. For the beginners to the sports we've put together beginner packages which include everything you'll need to get started in outdoor activities with your dog.

"Please feel free to contact us if you have any questions about our product range, equipment or for advice about working your dogs or using our equipment. Our passion is mushing and mushing is a very special part of our life as it gives us a chance to be out with our dogs and friends and enjoy everything nature and our dogs have to offer." See [www.countryhound.ie](http://www.countryhound.ie) for more details.

**E**urope's hunters discover the potential of international hunting exchanges through [yeswehunt.eu](http://yeswehunt.eu)!

Yeswehunt.eu has welcomed its 7,215th community member. With these 7,215 hunters from 75 different countries, yeswehunt.eu is already after just one year becoming a cross-border and multi-lingual network to preserve a passion for sustainable hunting and wise use for future generations, a Passion which is under pressure at a European level.

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\* English muntjacs in exchange for German wild boars: [www.yeswehunt.eu/en/hunting-in-europe/hunting-blogs/yeswehunt.eu-newsletter/out-to-swap-a-hunt-for-muntjak-in-england](http://www.yeswehunt.eu/en/hunting-in-europe/hunting-blogs/yeswehunt.eu-newsletter/out-to-swap-a-hunt-for-muntjak-in-england)

\* A variety of Belgian big and small game in exchange for a Swedish capercaillie: [www.yeswehunt.eu/en/hunting-in-europe/hunting-blogs/yeswehunt.eu-newsletter/international-hunting-exchanges-an-example-of-the-power-of-yeswehunt.eu](http://www.yeswehunt.eu/en/hunting-in-europe/hunting-blogs/yeswehunt.eu-newsletter/international-hunting-exchanges-an-example-of-the-power-of-yeswehunt.eu)

\* Czech red deer and wild boars in exchange for a cocktail of Swedish, Finnish and Slovenian hunting experiences: [www.yeswehunt.eu/en/hunting-in-europe/hunting-blogs/yeswehunt.eu-newsletter/yeswehunt-abroad](http://www.yeswehunt.eu/en/hunting-in-europe/hunting-blogs/yeswehunt.eu-newsletter/yeswehunt-abroad)

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## Rockview Hound Show, Kilkenny's exciting racing sends top two to Shanes

Master McGrath Challenge (l/r) Alan Casey, Keith Murphy, Flapper Organiser and Shane Lee.



**O**ver 800 dogs at the show, but which lurchers qualify for the ultimate race - the Master McGrath Challenge at Shanes Castle Game Fair in June?

Here are the winners and the qualifying lurchers from John Dicker's show held on 1 May, which was a qualifying event for the most exciting race for lurchers ever held in Ireland - the Redmills/ICS&CL Master McGrath Challenge to be held at Shanes Castle Game Fair in June.

The lurcher champion also qualified to go to Birr for the Redmills Five Nations International Lurcher Championship Final.

And John says that the show was a huge success: "A massive thank you to the Great Game Fairs of Ireland and to Irish Country Sports & Country Life magazine for all their kind support. I am delighted to say that we had a great day, with almost 100 people and around 800

working dogs of every shape and size. Brilliant!"

### Results:

Master McGrath Challenge - 1st Shane Lee, 2nd Alan Casey.

Terrier Champion - Tom Cahill, Waterford

Hound Champion - John Cooney, West Wexford Harriers, Wexford

Lurcher Champion - Gary Healy, Cork



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## OUR SWIFTS RETURN Summer migrants are back ... and the RSPB says you can help

**O**verhead, the familiar sight of our summer birds are becoming a familiar sight. Swallows, house martins, sand martins and swifts are now winging their way back to the places they had nested the previous summer, and some are even looking out for new places.

These small but feisty birds make a journey of thousands of miles from sub-Saharan Africa with nothing more than instinct and willpower to guide them, and somehow they manage to risk perils and dangers to finally get here.

The Partnership for Action Against Wildlife Crime Northern Ireland (PAWNI) is asking us all to make sure that we do something, or in certain cases, nothing to ensure that these birds have a good breeding season.

"Numbers of these birds have declined, in some cases so drastically, that they have gone down by as much as 80 per cent in the last 30 years" said Lynne Peoples, RSPB. "This is partly due to changes in architecture and building design where traditional nesting sites in the eaves of roofs or old buildings have been lost. If you have these wonderful birds nesting in your house or area, please do not chase them out or worse still block them in. They will be gone in a few months and in many countries, including Ireland, they are regarded as lucky!"

Lynne added, "If birds are already nesting in your roof, then destroying the nest is a wildlife crime. With the new Wildlife and Natural Environment Act in Northern Ireland, it means that 'reckless' or accidental damage will be an offence.

In addition to leaving nesting sites alone, people have also put up interesting new structures for these birds.

Tescos in Crumlin, is a case in point. It has put up a 13-metre 'swift tower.' Other buildings like the Antrim Library and the Crescent Arts Centre in Belfast have also used 'swift bricks' to provide more nesting areas. They have been remarkably successful.



## Field and Stream to mount major stand at the Irish Game Fair at Shanes Castle



**A**ndrea Cowan from Field and Stream, Moy has announced that Field and Stream has been appointed the Irish Distributor for Rangemaster (RPA) Rifles and a good selection will be on the F&S stand at Shanes Castle on the 25th & 26th June.

Andrea said: "We at Field and Stream are delighted to announce that we are now the Irish Distributor for Rangemaster (RPA) rifles. We will be holding a full range of target, sporting, hunting and tactical rifles along with the range of accessories. These rifles are renowned as being probably the World's most accurate rifle.

"We also stock Ruger, Tikka, Sako etc along with a vast range of shotguns and air-rifles, large game rifles and any make of pistol can be supplied. Examples of all of these brands will be on our stand plus we will have a vast range of high-end scopes.

"We also stock Dillon, Lee, VihtaVuori, Lapua, Norma, Prvi Partizan and Magtech ranges and are section-5 movers, and move for all the major English auction houses, Holts, Bonhams and Tennants, please contact us to receive a quote.

"We look forward to seeing everyone at the fair and wish Albert and his team the best of luck for a great Fair."



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Tel: 01425 655434

E-mail: [education@bds.org.uk](mailto:education@bds.org.uk)  
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**To book: contact details are as above  
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Damian McElholm: [info@glennooshoot.com](mailto:info@glennooshoot.com)**

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## Great Game Fairs of Ireland gives MUDDYBOOTZ a business boost

**T**he old saying 'Where's there's muck, there's brass' proved inspirational for Bangor businessman Alan Boyd. Just a year ago he spotted a gap in the market and founded The Muddybootz Company, manufacturing and marketing a range of shoe and boot cleaning equipment for commercial and industrial customers. The new business was an addition to his already successful Boyd Golf business.

Now Alan who has just launched his company on line has swept to victory in the competition run by the Spectator newspapers and The Great Game Fairs of Ireland, collecting a marketing and promotional support package worth up to £7,000! That package gives Muddybootz promotional stands at all three Great Game Fairs of Ireland: The Ballywalter Game & Country Living Fair on April 30 & 1 May, The Irish Game Fair at Shanes Castle on June 26 and 27 and The Irish Game & Country Fair at Birr Castle, County Offaly on August 27 and 28 – an exceptional opportunity to showcase the business province-wide and cross-border to around 100,000 show goers. The prize also included advertising and editorial in the Spectator Newspapers' special Ballywalter Game & Country Living Fair feature plus page adverts and editorial support in The Irish Country Sports magazine; PR support from Future Image, PR Consultants and a morning's marketing advice from Albert Titterington, an internationally acclaimed marketing consultant and the man behind the Great Game Fairs concept.

On behalf of the judging panel, Albert congratulated The Muddybootz Company on its win, saying: "It came as no surprise to us to receive entries from some fantastic small to medium sized businesses across North Down, for we always knew they were out there and we were confident about the calibre of our local business community. What did surprise us was the sheer variety of businesses entering the competition. That variety, coupled with evident professionalism, speak volumes about the spirit of entrepreneurship which exists in our region.

"The Muddybootz Company is a fantastic winner and one which will, I know benefit hugely from the massive showcasing opportunity which the trio of Great Game Fairs of Ireland provides. The initial exhibit at Ballywalter has already generated significant leads and with the two really big fairs to come should help the company generate a good level of sales.

"Everything about this company – from its product range to its newly launched website – indicates that this business is determined to grow and that's something we must all admire, particularly in what is, for many, a harsh economic climate."

Since it was established thirty years ago Bangor based Boyd Golf has established a reputation for quality and service but this latest expansion has taken the light engineering company beyond its original markets, rapidly establishing The Muddybootz Company as one of the UK's leading shoe and boot cleaner manufacturers, supplying an extensive range to everyone from councils, schools and sports clubs to building contractors, farmers and the food industry.

The need for clean footwear in many sectors is much more than cosmetic. In food companies and abattoirs for example Muddybootz products are helping workers to establish and maintain strict hygiene standards, while in the equestrian and farming sectors regularly and thoroughly cleaned boots can help avoid the spread of infectious diseases.

When Alan Boyd launched The Muddybootz Company as an extension of his long established Boyd Golf enterprise, he was responding to his customers' demand for boot and shoe cleaners. He was confident of the market within sport, but, as he discovered, the opportunities didn't end there.

Alan says: "We started off by answering customers' requirements for



Alan Boyd, Muddybootz Company (front row, centre) and his wife Frances Boyd (back row, left) pictured at the recent Newtownards preview of the Ballywalter Game and County Living Fair. Alan won the recent Spectator competition prize of a Great Game Fairs business marketing package worth £7000. He was congratulated by (back row); MLA Jim Shannon and prize provider (right) Albert Titterington, Ballywalter Game Fair Director, as well as Front row (left): Ards Mayor, Cllr David Smyth, (right) Cllr Angus Carson, Ards Borough Council. Muddybootz will be exhibiting at The Irish Game Fair at Shanes Castle on the 25th & 26th June.

shoe cleaning equipment as they came off the greens but the interest just seemed to keep on growing. Initially we serviced sports-related customers but we soon recognised the potential to take our boot and shoe cleaning products into other sectors and we believe there is a considerable potential to grow the business still further."

The Muddybootz Company is very much a family affair and Alan gives much credit for the successful marketing ploy to his wife, Frances: "She's driving marketing activity and," Alan laughs, "makes sure he never lets the business stand still."

He says: "Ours is a small and very close workforce and we're all delighted that our latest endeavour is working out so well and showing such promise. We're looking forward to really harnessing the benefits of the prize package from The Great Game Fairs of Ireland and Spectator Newspapers, as we take the next steps in our Business Plan. We are confident that dirty boots and shoes will help us not only to underpin good jobs today, but also that they may lead the way to increased for more jobs and investment for Bangor at a future stage."





# The Muddybootz Co

Keeping the world's muddy boots clean

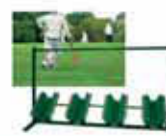
As one of the UK's leading Shoe and Boot Cleaner Manufacturers, **The Muddybootz Co** have been supplying the UK and Europe with first-class products for over 30 years.

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# New Governments In Ireland - What It Means For Country Sports

**W**ith new governments in the Republic of Ireland and in Northern Ireland, ICS&CL asked the leading countrysports bodies to assess how the situation would have an impact on country sports and to highlight issues of concern and opportunity. Through [www.countrysportsandcountrylife.com](http://www.countrysportsandcountrylife.com) their message will reach a huge international audience as well their own membership. We asked them to give their 'take' on the new administrations and some of the key issues that they will be addressing over the coming months, and to express the likely impact that would be made on our country pursuits.

We received responses from the Countryside Alliance Ireland (CAI) Director Lyall Plant, the Federation of Irish Salmon & Seat Trout Anglers (FISSTA) Secretary Noel Carr, and the National Association of Regional Game Council's (NARGC) National Director Des Crofton which show clearly the areas that will warrant their particular attention.

We also asked the British Association for Shooting & Conservation Northern Ireland (BASC NI) but they confirmed that they were unable to provide anything on this occasion.



## *National Association of Regional Game Councils*

The new Fine Gael/Labour coalition government in the Republic is still enjoying something of a honeymoon. The NARGC in particular played a decisive role in the extent of the mandate which they received, particularly for Fine Gael. This is also ruefully recognised by the former coalition partners of Fianna Fail and the Green Party. Fianna Fail support in rural constituencies suffered meltdown while the Greens had the door firmly slammed in their face. The Greens, who tried their best with the support of the anti hunting organisations, to dismantle everything which we as fieldsports enthusiasts hold dear, received their answer from an electorate who became fed up by their preoccupation with preaching to all and sundry

and symbolic gestures which pandered to a tiny minority of zealots while at the same time they continued to support the continuation in office of an entirely crooked and discredited government of which they were part. At least with no one elected we don't have to listen to their stomach churning moralising from the floor of the Dáil. The election results should be a salutary warning to politicians from all parties that they ignore fieldsports groups at their peril.

However, this is not a time for hunting, shooting and fishing groups to be complacent. There is still much to be done to defend hunting and shooting from the many threats which come from every direction. This includes not only the usual anti hunting groups who are constantly vying for political and media attention which is disproportionate to their numbers, but also from some institutional sources such as the Garda Síochána and the Department of Justice.

We have clear expectations of our new Minister and his Government in relation to what must be done during their term of office. While there are a great many issues requiring attention, some hold greater priority for fieldsports people than others.

## *The Ward Union Stag Hunt*

I negotiated with Fine Gael in the run up to the wildlife act amendment banning carted stag hunting, which was introduced by the Greens, to repeal that amendment when in government. I received a firm commitment on this issue in writing from the Leader's Office. What followed in terms of the election and support delivered to Fine Gael is now a matter of record. Well, Fine Gael is now in Government and the first thing we expect as a matter of some urgency is for them to make good on this commitment.

## *Firearms Licensing System*

The Firearms licensing system in the Republic has, despite denials to the contrary, descended into chaos and farce. District Courts around the country, with very few exceptions, are overturning the refusals of Chief Superintendents to renew firearms certificates. Almost 200 challenges by way of Judicial Review are waiting to be heard in the High Court while the Garda Authorities do their best to delay the hearings. The latest shenanigans is that the deadline for complying with an order of the High Court for discovery of documents passed on 20th May without a single document having been produced. In fact the court order still hasn't been perfected. The reason for this is that the Gardai have failed to provide the court office with the names of the deponents for the order i.e. the names of the



people who would be swearing the affidavit of discovery on their behalf. We even have the disgrace of a competitor who was ranked number two in the world and twice European Champion, refused a certificate for the firearms he has held for many years on the basis that he suddenly, and without explanation, did not have a good reason for requiring them. As a consequence of these quite unforgivable and irresponsible actions of the licensing authority, he was unable to defend his European title in 2010 and he has lost his number two world ranking because he is not able to compete. I say irresponsible, because in any other walk of life this is precisely how such actions would be regarded. There is no doubt but that efforts have been made to circumvent the legislature. How else can anyone explain how 18 out of 28 Garda Divisions have refused to grant even a single firearms certificate for short centre-fire firearms? How else can anyone explain the illogical arguments being advanced and the energy being spent to have WA1500 competition, a centre-fire calibre specific competition, declared unlawful? Let me be clear. The legislation expressly provides that those people who previously held centre-fire handguns for sporting purposes would be allowed to continue to obtain firearms certificates for them under tighter security requirements – requirements which all who have been refused have met at not inconsiderable cost. What we are facing is a concerted effort by the Garda authorities to effect a gun ban through the back door and to do this they must circumvent the legislature and its legislation. This by any other name is termed a conspiracy. It is self evident that a number of people had to have come together to decide to bring about this current situation. There is documentation in existence which will clearly demonstrate this to be the case and that argument will be supported by incontrovertible expert evidence. In the meantime the taxpayer is being disgracefully exploited by the Gardai who are using scarce revenues, not to defend the state against some enemy, but to avoid being held accountable for their incompetence and their actions which demand accountability.

We want the new Minister to get on top of this problem because it has no hope of going away in the current climate. The Gardai have lost all credibility among the vast majority of the shooting community, who incidentally, are all law abiding taxpaying citizens of this state. The administration of the licensing system must be taken over by an independent central authority with the only involvement of the Gardai revolving around the character of the applicants. Nothing less than this will bring the current fiasco, which has cast Ireland as a laughing stock among licensing authorities internationally, to an end.

### ***Section 36 of the Wildlife (Amendment) Act 2000 and tourist shooting***

Section 36 was enacted as part of the Wildlife (Amendment) Act 2000 at the urging of NARGC following years of abuse of the hunting system by tourist interests. The new law was designed to implement a regulatory framework for the tourist shooting sector, much of which was operating under cover of the black economy. When the Act was passed, many of those involved in this activity ceased operations or changed their modus operandi in the face of new laws and heavy fines for non-compliance. Alas, since 2000, no Minister has given

Section 36 a commencement date. The reasons given repeatedly are that there are no resources available to implement the provision. Interestingly, this was also the reason during the boom years. In the meantime, because of the lack of political will to commence the Section, the commercial exploitation of game species, both feathered and fur, has flourished again to the extent that poaching for profit, particularly for deer, is now at an all-time high. Many of the operators of the past have re-emerged, confident in the knowledge that the Minister will not take action and the black economy flourishes yet again. However, this time NARGC is not prepared to listen to any more excuses and our determination is such that we are prepared to have a bitter falling out with our new friends in Government on this issue. We expect the new Minister to commence Section 36, and if he does, we will give him all the help he needs.

### ***The use/abuse of Section 42 licenses to cull deer out of season***

The use of Section 42 licenses to cull deer out of season has been viewed by deer hunters with increasing alarm over recent years. There has been anecdotal evidence that the incidence of Section 42 licenses has been steadily increasing, and with each Section 42, a permit to cull by lamping was including for good measure. NARGC can confirm from documents obtained under the Freedom of Information Act that the following are the figures for Section 42 licenses since 2006: 2006, 286; 2007, 271; 2008, 350; 2009, 584; 2010, 628.

These figures dispel any myths there are about how deer are regarded by commercial interests. There is no definitive independent research carried out in the state to quantify the damage caused by deer which would justify Section 42 permits. Deer are being unjustifiably treated almost as vermin, instead of any real effort to establish the facts and then move forward with a rational management strategy. This attitude towards deer as pests raises fundamental questions about our attitude to wildlife management generally. NARGC will be requesting the new Minister to act decisively to carry out the necessary research in the first place as a matter of urgency followed by the implementation of a cohesive national management strategy involving all the relevant stakeholders. We also will urge him to introduce a tagging system for deer which would go some considerable way towards discouraging poaching which currently is rampant.

### ***Dedicated Hunting Department***

We will be urging the Minister to consider the establishment of a dedicated hunting department. This has much to offer, apart at all from the desirability of having the administration of hunting separate from the research functions as occurs in most EU countries but not in Ireland. Having both functions under the same management team means that the independence/integrity of the research function, which is critical to informing decisions, can be become 'corrupted' by such considerations as resources and management priorities.

### ***Other issues***

We also wish to discuss with the new regime the potential to phase out lead shot in wetlands in the Republic and the contribution which hunters' bag data could make to cost

effective research.

We also need to discuss at Ministerial level the arrangements for any future cold weather bans, the possibility to have the season opening day for both waterfowl and pheasants moved to 1st October as was the consensus view at the last NARGC general meeting and the very serious 56% cut in the wildlife budget. The time may have arrived for some radical thinking. With a 56% budget cut the NPWS will be rendered virtually incapable of delivering on any aspect of its mandate and this will have knock-on implications for hunting. Perhaps it's time to float the idea of establishing a "Reserve" Ranger Group, similar to the Reserve Garda Force, but made up of suitable firearms/hunting licences holders. The members of such a group would be 'Authorised Officers' and have limited powers, but crucially, power to prosecute under the Wildlife Act. This would go a long way towards cost effectively addressing the void caused by the non commencement of Section 36 and poaching. It would also provide cost effective support for a dedicated hunting department.

We look forward to meeting the New Minister and we hope that the positive start will translate into real meaningful action.

**Des Crofton**  
**National Director**



## **Countryside Alliance Ireland**

These past few months have seen two elections taking place in Ireland; the Dáil in February and the Assembly in May. Both governments have now been finalised, and the respective parties have staked their claims in the various departments. CAI has followed both election processes carefully, and whilst the new format means there will inevitably be some changes, we do not feel there will be a substantial difference to the threats the country sports community will be facing. Those who oppose our rural traditions and way of life will continue to be active throughout and seek every opportunity to attack our activities.

A Fine Gael/Labour coalition is now in the Dáil and has set out a programme for government. Time will tell how committed to the rural way of life the new government is, and if we shall see a repeal of the stag hunting ban. However, we are fully aware that the government has other priorities of a more financial nature to address as they endeavour to bring growth back to the economy. In the meantime, CAI has corresponded with the new TDs and sent them all a copy of our rural manifesto. We have received positive feedback from many who share our vision of a vibrant countryside where farming and sustainable country sports are essential in delivering economic growth for the future.

In Northern Ireland the recent Assembly elections have produced little change in governmental layout. The two largest parties are still DUP and Sinn Féin, with the UUP, SDLP and Alliance following behind. In addition, there are sole MLAs for the Green Party, TUV and Independents. On studying the party manifestos for the DUP, Sinn Féin, UUP and SDLP, there is little commitment to either the continuation or the abolishment of country sports. In these issues, there remains

little change from the previous mandate.

It is when we study the Alliance Party manifesto and that of the Green Party, that concerns are raised. Within the environmental governance of the Alliance manifesto, it clearly states they wish to obtain full protection of the Irish hare, a ban on the hunting of mammals with dogs and a ban on the use and sale of snares. In addition to these, the Alliance Party aims to work to enhance the monitoring and identification of existing and new Areas of Special Scientific Interest (ASSIs). As with Amendment 23, this could curtail rural activities such as shooting and fishing within these areas, and therefore a maintained level of vigilance is needed.

The Green Party in the Assembly, namely Steven Agnew MLA, has made it clear he wishes to extend the Hunting Act (2004) to Northern Ireland, and restrict the number of dog breeding licences; to name just two issues within their Animal Welfare agenda. On the plus side, they do recognise the environmental and conservational benefits of angling and fishing however, completely fail to extend this courtesy to other country sports. It is from these two parties that rural pursuits in Ireland will face their biggest threats.

The Minister for the Environment post has been filled by the SDLP, with Alex Attwood MLA standing forward. Mr Attwood did previously vote in favour of full protection for the Irish hare, however since in his new post he has stated he will "make the best of our heritage to enhance our enjoyment and our economy." As an organisation, CAI will offer our help and support to guide him in that.

Sinn Féin has previously displayed its support for country sports and rural practices and we therefore welcomed the post of Agriculture Minister to this party. CAI had a successful working relationship with the previous Minister and we can only hope to emulate this with the new Minister, Michelle O'Neill.

Overall, CAI feels the level of threats to our rural way of life have remained the same as in the previous term of government. We will continue to provide information and figures to those MLAs and TDs who do not understand the many benefits country sports provide, and work closely with those in government who wish to protect and nurture Ireland's countryside. In general, we perceive the main threat to Ireland's rural way of life to be a lack of understanding regarding the many environmental, social and economic benefits that country sports and rural activities provide. It is for this reason that we will strive to maintain the good working relationship already formed with many of the re-elected members of government and work closely with those who are newly elected.

**Lyall Plant**  
**Director**



## **Federation of Irish Salmon & Sea Trout Anglers**

### **New Ministers - hopes and fears abound**

The first decision of the new government under Taoiseach Enda Kenny T.D. was to lose the state cars and Garda



chauffeurs to save in the region of around €5m. However, that is where it seems to have stopped for now as our fisheries development budget appears to have been cut once again. We now know the new Minister for Agriculture and Rural Development at Stormont will be Ms Michelle O' Neill. This marks a new departure for the department that saw Michele Gildernew manage in the last government. So, it is back to lobbying all over again with a new set of ministers on both sides of the border who will normally take some time to read into their brief. Hopefully, the civil servants will not be allowed to dominate the ministry as it seems the Sir Humphreys have already taken control down south with the announcements that aquaculture will be increased tenfold and commercial netting will return to Castlemaine Bay where it was closed down as mixed stock fishery in 2007. FISSTA yearn for the day that they do not have to lobby against the netting of our salmon and seatrout unlike other angling federations who can concentrate on going fishing and appear to have adequate fish to organise a season long programme of competitions. We hope that by our hard and expensive lobbying they too can avoid the curse of commercial netting of their fish and the crippling €120 angling rod license in the future.

We have much work to do regarding commercial draft netting, and with the Department of Agriculture Food and Fish (DAFF) now changed to Dept of Agriculture Food and Marine (DAFF) now under Minister Simon Coveney TD who announced on an RTE Frontline programme in early May that he plans to increase the aquaculture sites tenfold. We suspect that such decisions are already in a programme as laid out and agreed by the International Monetary Fund and signed off by the last government in an attempt to restore finances. So, our worst fears are realised within a month of a new Dail being elected.

While anglers fully realise that finance for new projects were going to be limited and cuts would prevail, the impending damage to stocks by opening netting stations and increasing aquaculture will weaken our potential to grow tourism and angling into the future. The Minister for the Environment Mr. Phil Hogan TD has flagged the introduction of water metering to charge all householders and this will mean a greater demand for abstraction in future as more and more money is made from our rivers and lakes.

## Netting madness

Any salmon angler or conversationalist who campaigned for the wild Atlantic salmon are now dejected after learning of the decision by the new regime in Dublin to reopen what was classified as a mixed stock fishery in Castlemaine Harbour near Cromane in County Kerry.

As news of the decisions from Fishery District Committees arrive in our office it is apparent that stocks are in serious decline and the policy will not change anytime soon. For example, one river in Donegal has a surplus of 194 fish to be divided up between 200 anglers and 10 draft licenses (some from closed Bays miles up the coast) which left under ten tags for each nets-man and over half of the anglers having to catch and release again for the second year running. It is madness to allow commercial netting on a fishery that warrants brown tags for anglers, yet this happens year after year by people being paid from our licence revenue.

What a nightmare start to this season. Mr. Pat Rabbitte TD commented on the plans to re-open licensed commercial

fishing, following receipt of the results of the pilot fishery undertaken there in 2010. Last year, a pilot fishery was permitted to take place inside Castlemaine Harbour under the supervision of Inland Fisheries Ireland (IFI). The Department requested advice from IFI on how a commercial fishery could be operated on salmon stocks in the Castlemaine Harbour Special Area of Conservation in a sustainable manner, maximizing the opportunities for commercial fishing while ensuring that stocks are not overexploited. As part of the pilot, a comprehensive monitoring programme ran for the duration of the salmon fishing season and covered all areas of the harbour. The pilot aimed to investigate whether stock proportions vary over the fishing season and also to determine if they vary between different areas of the fishery. Additionally genetic samples were taken from salmon caught during the pilot fishery and were analysed by UCC to identify the proportion of salmon from the rivers entering the Castlemaine Harbour area and, if present, rivers from outside this area. The result of the pilot, the report by IFI to the Minister, indicates that a commercial fishery should be permitted in Castlemaine Harbour in 2011, inside the rivers Laune, Maine and Caragh and within specified areas in Castlemaine Harbour.

The bottom line for anglers is that we now face an uphill battle to overturn this decision made by Minister Rabbitte following lobbying by the commercial draftnetting industry.

## International reaction

The feedback from newfound readership worldwide to this column has been very positive especially from members of the European Anglers Alliance who can download this report and respond with similar stories on the issues from their own country. I am indebted to a Brittany correspondent for sharing his advice which we will explore very soon at the upcoming conference of NASCO (North Atlantic Salmon Conservation Organisation) taking place in Greenland in June.

It is most unfortunate that the meeting is taking place so far away as the costs of traveling for any Non Government Organisation are prohibitive and many of our NGO colleagues believe that is why it is held there this season. However, any federation serious about angling and the future of salmon must lobby and participate effectively at such an event so our Federation's National Executive Council insist that we are represented to highlight the major challenges this new policy of netting and aquaculture will have on the global stocks of salmon and seatrout. It is envisaged that a major negative reaction will be recorded to the decision of our government to open netting once again and already the North Atlantic Salmon Fund have issued press statements and letters to Ministers as I have mentioned in the NARGC pages of the magazine.

**Noel Carr**  
**Secretary/PRO**

### Editor's Note:

I would like express my appreciation to our major organisations for their timely and detailed responses. I would also like to offer thanks on readers' behalf to the same bodies for being so pro active in the defence and promotion of our sports and the rural way of life. We trust that other smaller organisations will support their work over the life of the two governments.

# Mourne Terrier and Lurcher Show & Irish Digging Championships



*Sponsor Albert Titterington with the complete team of diggers.*

**I** was delighted to attend the charity show organised by Kieran Young and team staged in a beautiful location bounded by mountains and sea. I have fond memories of the area as a group of us had a cottage here when we were in our teens and a rather more

scary one when I was nearly swept out to sea in a canoe off the coast! No such hazards were encountered on the day and the weather played its part by being for the most part very pleasant.

A good sporting atmosphere prevailed throughout and the results were well and sportingly accepted. A grand young lurcher went Champion in the show sponsored by Feedwell and will be a worthy representative for the Mourne Show at the Redmills Five Nations International Lurcher Championships at Birr



*Albert Titterington and show organiser Kieran Young with the Lurcher Champion.*



*Rose with Diego and Ian with Smokey.*



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## The Irish Retriever Championship 2010

The 2010 Irish Retriever Championship was held on the 28th and 29th of December at Dromoland Castle, County Clare, Ireland. Dromoland Castle hosts one of the finest shoots in Europe.

Thirty of Ireland's Top Retrievers competed for the title of Champion of Champions.

The two day driven field trial proved an enormous success, with visitors from near and far attending.

The dogs and handlers were put through their paces under the watchful eyes of four of Ireland's Top Judges.

The challenges were many and varied and on the final day eight dogs went head to head for the honour of becoming Supreme Champion.

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*Dessie Mackin with Top Terrier & BIS.*

Castle on the 28th August.

The racing was well contested with Rose and Diego and Ian with Smokey qualifying for the final of the Redmills Master McGrath Challenge at the Irish Game Fair at Shanes Castle on the 25th June.

Des Mackin had not only top terrier but also took Best

In Show overall.

However what turned out to be the 'main event' in many ways was the inaugural Irish Digging Championships which we were delighted to sponsor with Irish Countrysports and Country Life. This was a challenge to the guys who criticise shows and talk about 'show ponies' but as one would expect few of these guys turned up to show what they could do. Six genuinely game teams took part including the oldest team by far of Dessie Mackin and Peter Morgan.

The challenge was to dig a hole large enough to take a rather large tea chest within half an hour. No one actually managed this but all were within a few millimetres of doing so.

In a tight competition winners and runners up were literally a few millimetres apart and Des and Peter, in spite of meeting with a brute of a boulder finished in the middle of the field.



*Des gives it some wellie:*



*And what do we do with this bugger?"*

Overall all aspects of the event went well including the digging, the racing and the show and a handsome sum was raised for two charities. Well done Keiran and team!



*The Digging Winners Receive their prizes*



# Pointer Field Trials 'Georgia-style'

**T**here are two types of field trials in Georgia: walked up trials where the handler follows the dog on foot and trialling on horseback where the dogs are followed on horses. Georgia's quail population has declined more than 80 percent since the mid 1960s so the trials release bob white quail for the competitions. The lack of quail habitat in the state has been responsible for dropping the annual quail harvest from 4 million in 1962 to approximately 622,000 bobwhite quail in 2005. As a result the price of these quail have increased to \$4.00 a bird. Georgia's quail decline is due to the loss of quality grasses, shrubs, weeds and bugs. For many years Georgia was recognised as the Quail Capital of the World. The days before the competition the quail are brought out from flight pens or Johnny houses, usually wooden portable recall pens and are most commonly used to provide quail for dog training purposes. Callback birds are usually left in the house and, after being released, the quail find their way back into the house over the next few days, by means of a one way catch funnel and the calling of the birds inside. The funnel allows the birds to enter the house but not allow exit. Inside, they find protection from predators and extreme weather. The trial ground vegetation is sparse pine, sweetgum, oak tree forests and mixed landscapes which is the natural habitat for quail. Patches of sparse broomsedge or other warm season grasses offer excellent cover for nesting. Georgia's forests are home to approximately 250 species of trees.

The working expectation of the pointing breeds is quite different between the US and Ireland. While the dogs in



*The beginning of the fall in Georgia.*

Western Europe are expected to cover the ground left and right of their beat methodically crossing quite closely to the handler as they pass in each direction, the dogs in the US are allowed to run wide and roam freely after their noses although they are discouraged from hunting behind their handlers. As in Europe, the dogs are run into the wind however on finding game, the dogs are not expected to produce the bird by flushing it. Rather the handler walks in front of the pointing dog, flushes the birds and fires a blank pistol. In any field trial stake a blank shell must be fired by the handler over the dog on point after the game has been flushed. Given that ground treatment is not a priority, dogs are not penalised for passing game though in reality given the vegetation and character, quail do not always flush and sometimes have to be given provocation to fly. The dogs are expected to be steady to wing and shot. Rather than use of a whistle, the dog handlers often sing to the dogs, which allows the dog to keep in contact. If the dog is working behind the handlers on horseback, singing to the dog or the use of a whistle should bring the dog forward.

Field trials in the US differ quite substantially to Irish and British field trials. The first major difference is that the pointing class at home is limited to all types of setters and English pointers. In the United States the dual purpose HPR breeds like German long-haired and short-haired pointers, Hungarian Vizslas and Weimaraners are also included. Handlers are also on horseback as are the judges and a scout is also used to discover pointing dogs. During training and in some field trial events dogs wear GPS collars to allow the handler track the dogs in the forested vegetation.



*Seasoned finished dog training on Bobwhite quail.*



*The gallery following a brace of dogs in Georgia.*



*The handler flushes the bird in a Retrieving Stake while the dog remains on point.*

The winner of the trial is adjudged to have the most style in finding and pointing birds with style and class.

## ***A trial can last four days***

Application, desire, intelligence, style, class and pointing with a high solid tail around birds usually determines the winning dog. In many trials, retrieving is also required as in Nordic countries. German Shorthair Pointers, German Wirehairs, Vizslas, Weimaraners and other pointing breeds are required to retrieve to be AKC Field Champion or Amateur Field Champion. The dogs must retrieve promptly to hand in all retrieving stakes. A field trial can last between two to four days where the dogs run in one heat per day usually of a twenty to thirty minute duration, due to the high temperatures in Georgia. The dogs usually get cooling baths after their run. The trial will usually consist of about ten to over twenty dogs and as at home they are run in braces. However one of the differences is that if a dog is eliminated due to being out of contact from the handler for a continuous period of more than five minutes, the remaining dog in the brace continues the heat on his own.

The dogs competing are mainly German Short Haired Pointers, English Pointers, English Setters, Gordon Setters, Brittany's and all other pointing breeds. David has not encountered many Red Setters competing in horse back field trials in Georgia. The Irish Setters in the US are show type or dual purpose and the Red setters are much smaller in stature, shorter in leg, stockier dogs and are very popular field trial dogs in the Midwest and north east of America.

The trial begins at approximately 8 a.m. and continues to about 3 or 4 o'clock in the afternoon for the two to four day events. Similar to continental Europe some owners pay their handlers to trial their dogs. The handlers often are also the trainers of the dogs and can charge up to \$600 per month for training and keeping the dog. The US trials are a spectacle in arriving into town. Some of the trailers can house up to three horses, 20 dogs and sleeping and dining quarters for a family. Dogs must become familiar with horses and being on a 'chain gang' with 10-15 other dogs. Dogs are handled to ensure they cover the ground between 10 and 2 as looking at the face of a clock, in a fan shape ensuring they keep ahead of the handler. During training dogs wear GPS collars which can cost up to \$600 and are sometimes trained using e-collars due to the prevalence of deer and other wildlife distractions. As is the style in the US dogs point with a high tail and remain motionless when it finds its quarry. The handler walks in front of the dog, flushes the birds and fires a blank pistol once the bird has flushed. Though for running birds such as pheasants and chukars the dog undertakes a more active role.

## ***Each pointing breed has a National Championship***

Of course with all field trials the aim is to make the dog a field trial champion. A dog of one of the pointing breeds will be

recorded in the US as a Field Champion or Amateur Field Champion after having won 10 points. There are literally hundreds of pointing field trial clubs nationwide. Each pointing breed has its own National championship. The climax of the year is the American Kennel Club's Annual all pointing breed gun dog championship. This is the equivalent of the Kennel Club's Championship stake and the Irish Kennel Club Championship stake. There are also the American Field sanctioned weekend events, regional championships and the National all-age championship held every February in the Ames Plantation, which is almost exclusively pointers and setters. This is the trial where pointer and setter owners aim to qualify for this prestigious event each year.

Given in part the long distances travelled between competitions there is a strong social aspect to the trials. The night begins with the presentation of 1st, 2nd, 3rd, and 4th field trial placement ribbons. There is of course the fun with the other handlers and families over BBQ's. In particular, South Georgia is famous for its social gatherings. Given the remoteness of the trial, while some people stay in towns, it is more common for people to camp on the grounds in their horse trailers where there is living quarters. This gives a camaraderie and closeness which means the atmosphere on a trial day is very exciting as the gallery follow each brace on horseback. Training is also rather difficult. Dogs are encouraged to be independent but obedient. Many training centres round fitness and steadiness to flush. To maintain the dogs point when the handler flushes the bird, dogs are trained to stay by command. Many handlers use their voice rather than whistles as the voice is different and the dogs seem to react better.

David O'Brien, a native of Leopardstown in Dublin emigrated to Georgia in 1995. In his workplace in Atlanta he was introduced by his boss to field trialling of pointing dogs as a way of keeping fit. Never having owned let alone trained a gundog before, David brought his 18 month old English setter to a professional trainer, Dave Walker from Gray, Georgia. David had attended a few field trials in Georgia and he felt this was a sport that would combine his passions for exercise and nature as well as the comradeship of working with a dog. David is hoping to qualify and enter his English setter Irish Pinecone Nessa in a field trial event in the Ames Plantation next February 2012. She has placed in AKC field trials so it is an attainable challenge. Hopefully he will be flying the Irish flag at this famous competition next year, albeit with an English setter, but we will have to change that in the coming years.

**Footnote:** David was an active member of the Johnstown Urlingford gun club and comes home every winter with the returning wild flocks to enjoy the excellent sport in county Kilkenny with his father who still lives in the village of Johnstown.



◀ *Stamina is important so dogs are conditioned for this in their training.*

▶ *Dogs wear expensive GPS equipment and e-collars (in training).*





# GLENNOO SHOOT

*The best little game shoot in the West*

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For those looking a few days' break we have excellent chalet self catering at the Blessingbourne Apartments in the beautiful estate courtyard with use of the "barn" of an evening to socialize and relax in front of a log fire. The rate per chalet for 4/5 people is in the region of £150-£175 per midweek night. You could then shoot back to back days on Glennoo ... no problem as we have almost 20,000 acres to choose from!

We offer walked up shooting for the sportsman and we base our packages on groups of five friends shooting per day. Prices range from £100 per gun per day depending on the number of guns there are and the number of birds you shoot. Please ring us to discuss what you require. We can also cater for smaller groups shooting smaller numbers but we will have to charge a little extra.

So whether you come on your own or as part of a group, hunt over your own dog(s), wander about on your own or whatever we will try to sort you out.

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# The Sun Shines on the Ballywalter Game & Country Living Fair



Pictured at Ballywalter: l-r First Minister Peter Robinson, MLA; Councillor David Smyth, Mayor of Ards; Jim Shannon, MP for Strangford; host Lord Dunleath; Fair Director Albert Titterington; Chief Constable Matt Baggott and Councillor Angus Carson, Chair of the Economic Development Committee of Ards. (photo Nicky Cahill)

**The weather played its part in delivering a successful second stage of the rescue plan for the game fair concept at Ballywalter as all stages of the event plan were bathed in sunshine. From the initial photo shoot in the beautiful setting of the house and grounds, through the press preview event in Ards Town Square through the build up stages and the two days of the fair the weather played its part in successfully delivering a very successful event.**

In early 2010 when BASC, against the backdrop of the recession, decided to cancel what looked to most people as a 'product at the end of its life cycle' it looked as if the beautiful venue of Ballywalter had hosted its last fair. But the Great Game Fairs of Ireland team are made of sterner stuff and had the confidence to believe that with their experience, creativity and most of all commitment they could put in place a plan to not only rescue the idea of a fair on the Ards Peninsula, but to develop an international class Game Fair that could take its place within the Great Game Fairs of Ireland brand.

With only a few months to organise the fair in 2010 it was decided to relaunch an experimental one day event, focused primarily on a local and cross border audience. That was successful in widening the base of the fair and in creating its own unique identity. It also led to strengthening the all Ireland focus in 2011 within the Great Game Fairs brand, and to the introduction of international promotions and

competitions with the objective of delivering a truly international event next year in 2012. We are indebted to Ards Borough Council for supporting us in this part of our plan and we trust they recognise the effort that our team put in delivering an event that attracted significant day trippers and bed nights to the area. We are also indebted to Lord and Lady Dunleath and their magnificent staff for the use of what is a truly magical site within a most beautiful traditional estate.

## *VIPs and International Highs*

The 2011 Great Game Fairs of Ireland series got off to a fantastic start when the new Ballywalter Game & Country Living Fair not only basked in wonderful weather, but attracted superb support from a range of distinguished guests, including First Minister Peter Robinson, MLA and the Chief Constable Matt Baggott along with an array of other politicians as well as a media focus from TV companies including BBC4, Fieldsports Channel TV and Dog & Country TV. It also attracted record crowds and a record number of competitors especially in terms of terriers and lurchers, fly casting and shooting competitions. The gundog competitions also reached a new high with a team from Denmark making the long trek to compete.

As part of the Great Game Fairs of Ireland commitment to



Host Lord Dunleath with Great Game Fairs of Ireland Directors Albert Titterington and Philip Lawton and some of the cast of Victorian players.





*Hounds in the Square.*

giving their fellow country sports enthusiasts a 'beat the recession blues' boost, each person purchasing an entry ticket for Ballywalter received a free ticket for the next fair in the series, the Irish Game Fair at Shanes Castle, Antrim on the 25th & 26th June. This is likely to enable the event at Shanes Castle to break the Irish record for Game Fair attendance set in 2010.

Meanwhile plans are afoot to extend the Victorian theme of the Ballywalter event and to bring in even more quality trade stands, international standard attractions and competitors – the new Ballywalter Game & Country Living Fair is here to stay!

## **Highlights - too many to list**

There were many highlights within the fair including the superb period set pieces of the vintage cars, vintage weapon displays, horse drawn vehicles, punt gunning, theatre from Valhalla Theatre Group and even Victorian Flycasting from Charles Jardine and Glenda Powell. On the competition front, there were superb prizes and entries in the clay pigeon shooting ably run by Drew Heslip and the Ballycranmore Club; excellent fly casting displays and competitions organised by Mark Patterson from GAIA, with supporting displays by APGAI; great truly international gundog competitions organised by Johnnie Rea and Willie Thompson with Danish, ROI and NI teams taking part on an excellent course and an excellent main arena programme including two world Records set by Keith Mathews.

The Terrier, Whippet and Lurcher competitions which launched the Redmills Five Nations International Lurcher Championships and the Redmills Master McGrath Challenge broke all records for such an event at Ballywalter with a really *Some of the Sherlock Holmes cast who performed throughout the Fair.*



*Director Edwin Dash treats the Mayor to some period transport.*

packed car park.

Through the good offices of Stuart McIntosh from Brackenhill Pheasantries and Head Keeper Gordon Wooldridge, we were able to invite game keepers throughout Ireland to our Game Keepers' Club. This has now become a traditional event.

## **Getting the message across**

The fair was a well organised, happy, trouble free event which pleased and delighted its good family audience. However it also delivered an excellent local, national and emerging international platform for country sports and for local country sports organisations prepared to utilise the fair to get their message across. Lyall Plant and the Countryside Alliance Ireland team engaged fully with the fair organisers in giving the event pre-publicity, sponsoring some prizes for the lurchers, being interviewed by the TV crews, and in mounting an interesting stand which attracted good public and even political interest – the first Minister was noted leaving the stand with a superb Lindsay Carlisle original stick!

I cannot describe the potential benefits to country sports from country sports bodies engaging fully and enthusiastically in game and country

fairs any better than CAI in their Newsletter column. The CAI said: 'Game and Country Fair season gets off to a sweltering start. The first fair of the season/The Ballywalter Game and Country Living Fair was held at Ballywalter last weekend. The weather did not disappoint and the crowds soaked up the glorious weather on this magnificent County Down Estate.

## **Support at the highest level**

Following the official opening of the fair, Lord and Lady Dunleath hosted a luncheon attended by the First Minister Peter Robinson, MLA and the PSNI Chief Constable, Matt Baggott. Jim Shannon MP, addressed the assembled guests stressing the importance of country sports to the economy as a whole.

CAI Chief Executive, Lyall Plant, was among the guests and availed of this excellent opportunity to meet and speak with many (then potential) MLAs, including Jonathan Bell and Simon Hamilton who voiced their support for sustainable rural activities.

Lyall commented: "Game Fairs are important to bring the



*Councillor Angus Carson can handle all sorts of problems!*





*Just some of the Ards crowd watching the performers.*

countryside to an urban population that have very few opportunities to actually know or learn what happens in rural Northern Ireland and we would encourage everyone to come to these events."

The Lord Mayor of Ards Borough Council was also present together with council members who voiced their support for country sports.'

### ***'Go For Game' campaign brings game cookery to wider audience***

Conversely we were extremely disappointed when BASC, which under its previous director had engaged in an effective 'Game On' campaign, informed us that they could provide neither a chef nor kitchen to promote game cookery demonstrations at Ballywalter. We were particularly disappointed because we had considered their initiative had much promise and had supported it fully by advertising the venues in the magazine, attending ourselves and by having it televised, at our expense, for Countrychannel.tv.

We considered that if BASC could not deliver on this very important part of promoting shooting, and the end products of our sports, then we would have to 'pick up the torch' ourselves. We were fortunate to be able to commission the services of Emmett McCourt, one of the finest game and fish chefs in Ireland, and with sponsorship from Flogas, mounted what has been generally acknowledged as the best game and fish cookery demonstration ever seen at any game fair in Ireland. Emmett amidst a never ending series of demonstrations had only time to have one quick go at the fly casting competitions but showed he is as effective on the water as he is in the kitchen by coming second in the distance casting competition.

Through discussions with Emmett and others we have decided that the promotion of game and fish cookery is too important to our sports to leave it to apparently half-hearted campaigning, so we have decided to help Emmett launch a new 'Go For Game' campaign to take it to a much wider audience through the magazine, the Great Game Fairs of Ireland and other promotions. Of course if BASC wish to continue their 'Game On' promotion in a few hotels and restaurants, we would be happy



*William Thompson's springer spaniels were real crowd pleasers.*



*CAI's Lyall Plant carries out some political and ferret lobbying to incorporate it within our own campaign.*

Emmett will be taking the 'Go for Game' campaign to Shanes Castle where he will be based on the Irish Countrysports and Country Life magazine stand.

The Great Game Fairs of Ireland series now rolls forward to Shanes Castle on 25th & 26th June and Birr Castle on the 27th & 28th August but plans are already in place for the next stage of development of the newest of the fairs at Ballywalter in 2012.

The Great Game Fairs of Ireland are supported by Ards Council, The Northern Ireland Tourist Board, Antrim Council, Failte Ireland and Shannon Development.

The three fairs are televised by fieldsportschannel.tv and can be viewed on their web site. The Ballywalter Fair was also televised by dogandcountry.tv



*BBC4 presenter Dan Cruickshanks with Liz Edgar, Fair Directors Albert Titterton and Philip Lawton, hosts Lord and Lady Dunleath and some finely turned out 'muzzleloaders' Dave McCullough, Bill Parker and Ian McConnell.*





*Is it a Yeti on the Firefly stand?*



*Andy Scullion's punt gunning display was one of the major attractions.*



*The well turned out Muzzloaders giving a salute.*



*The Retriever international had teams from Denmark, the ROI and Northern Ireland.*



*Lindsay Carlisle presents Peter Robinson, MLA with a fine walking stick.*



*There were some fine foods and fine craft work.*



*A fine turnout of vintage cars.*



*Jim Shannon MP and Simon Hamilton MLA stopped to admire the fine vintage firearms display by the Edgar family.*





*The crowd watching Keith set his World Record.*



*Fly Casting winner Thomas Armstrong with representative from Atkins Angling (sponsor); Mark Patterson (Angling Director) and fair director Philip Lawton.*



*A crowded lurcher race track at 7.00pm!*



*Overall Best in Show, Wesley' Scott's Terrier Pet Reserve Chris Angus' Lurcher Stitch. (photo Deidre McCoy)*



*Part of the team of dog owners who helped Keith Mathews set a World Record.*



*11yo Leah Currie who won the scurry with her mum and Ronnie Spence (organiser) and Charlie Keenan (sponsor).*

*(Right) Fair Director Liz McCracken presents Paddy Brown with the John Mc Clelland Memorial Cup for winning the clay shooting. Also in photo Donal McCloy (sponsor) and Drew Heslip (Clay Pigeon Director).*

*(Below) Master McGrath Qualifier: John Humphreys with China and U23 Straight Racing Winner, Grant Floyd O23 Straight Racing Winner (photo Deidre McCoy).*



*Just part of the very busy terrier & lurcher car park.*





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*For details contact Patricia*



# The Irish Game Fair, Shanes Castle , Antrim on the 25th & 26th June 2011

## *The Great Game Fairs of Ireland*

**T**he team who organise the award winning event at Shanes Castle, Antrim (the largest game or country fair in Ireland); the Irish Game and Country Fair at Birr Castle. Co Offaly ( the largest game or country fair in the ROI) have also launched a new fair at Ballywalter which has grown rapidly in just two years.

The fairs are organised by the team who brought the Game Fair concept to Ireland in 1978 are within sight of reaching the fantastic milestone of having organised 50 game and country fairs. Their game and country fair concept has been copied but the original team who through innovation, investment and commitment maintain a clear brand leadership and 'lead where others follow.'



*An action packed arena programme always draws the crowds.*

## *The best competitions and prize funds*

Since 2008 & 2009 when the All Ireland Game Fair All Comers and Novice Championships ( in clay shooting, fly casting and retriever handling ) were launched the prize fund has been maintained at a level unsurpassed by any other events in Ireland. This is why these competitions attract unrivalled entries and why the Great Game Fairs of Ireland are recognised as the top fairs for attracting both local and international competitors. In 2010 a new All Ireland Game Fair Stickmaking Championship was launched and in 2011 two new international championships for lurchers have been launched - the Redmills Five Nations International Lurcher Championships ( qualifiers throughout the UK and Ireland - final at Birr Castle) and the Redmills Master McGrath

Challenge - to find the fastest Lurcher in the UK and Ireland - final at Shanes Castle.

## *A huge tented village*

Both Shanes Castle and Birr Castle Fairs host huge tented villages of trade stands packed with everything that anyone needs to 'buy into the country lifestyle'.

There is a great range of stands selling country clothes and accessories; the largest gunmakers rows in Ireland - this year at Shanes Castle we have major gun displays by Tommy Beattie (two stands); Field & Stream with a superb range of unique shotguns, rifles a reloading equipment; Firefly from Newtownards and a massive display of guns from Donal Mc Cloy Guns Unlimited. If you want to look at or choose from the widest range of guns available in Ireland this is the place to visit.

And very special guests on the Mc Cloy stand will be Mike Yardley and top London gunsmith Chris Symonds who can measure you and then adjust the fit of your gun while you walk round the fair.

For anglers too at both Shanes Castle and Birr Castle there is the widest range of tackle, including boats, to be seen at any Game Fair in Ireland including a major stand with fly tying materials from Ultimate Tackle.

And of course as the fairs host the largest gundog and indeed canine events there is a great canine row featuring kennelling, dog beds and boxes, dog foods, all sorts of canine accessories including equipment for mushing. And we are delighted to host an information stand from the Kennel Club from London.

Paul Morgan from Coch y Bondu books with probably the best range of shooting, fishing, gundogs, hunting and terrier & lurcher books in the UK will be a magnet for all you bibliophiles.

We have always led the field with our Fine Food & Drinks and Crafts Pavilions and once again we will have two huge pavilions packed with mouth watering delicacies and finely made craft. In addition we have excellent displays of sticks, quality taxidermy, sporting embroidery, sporting holidays, antique tackle and valuations and super cookery demonstrations.

Talented chef Emmett McCourt with our assistance has launched a 'Go for Game' campaign to promote the eating of game and fish and of course he has the unique skills and recipes to really stimulate the public to think about game and fish as a 'first choice'. Emmett is no slouch when it comes to shooting and fishing and at Ballywalter his casting skills took him into second place behind young casting sensation Thomas Armstrong and just ahead of talented caster Sean Armstrong.



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*'Go for Game's' Emmett McCourt second in the casting competitions at Ballywalter*



*Emmett in action in the kitchen.*

Emmett will be 'cooking up a storm' throughout the two days of the fair in the Flogas Kitchen on the Irish Countrysports and Country Life magazine stand.

The Great Game Fairs of Ireland have the support of the major country sports organisations so when you are at Shanes or Birr do drop in to say hello to the NARGC, FISSTA, CAI, IFA Countryside and BASC teams.

## ***A Fantastic Action Packed Main Arena Programme***

The Great Game Fairs of Ireland are renowned for their action packed main arena programme which changes roughly every half hour. No other events put on such a variety of quality entertainment.

The programme for Shanes Castle will include: Muzzle loaders; Gundog Demos by the CLA Irish Team; Free Flying Falconry; Long Netting Displays; the dancing Cochise horses; displays of Western Riding by US horse whisperer Franklin Levinson and his Cow girl assistant; Pipe Bands; Carriage Driving & Running Horses; Fly Casting Demos: Horse and Hound Displays; North Irish Dragoons with cannon, muskets and sabres; dog agility; a display of HPR dog work; Dog mushing with teams of Irish Setters! Keith Mathews – the Dog Guru and Elizabethan Pike & Gun Display by the Best of Times, Worst of Times.

## ***Fantastic Family Entertainment – Children's area plus Fantastic Living History; Conservation & Eco Villages***

The atmospheric setting of the old ruined castle of the O'Neills (legend says it was destroyed by a flaming banshee) is the perfect setting for a medieval festival/living history village sponsored by Antrim Borough Council where children of all ages can see over 120 top re-enactors from all over Ireland and the UK put on authentic displays of life and warfare on the period. There are four historical themes from a Viking encampment; through to an Elizabethan Village – in peace and war, and a 17th century Dragoon Encampment to 19th Century muzzle loading displays. See cooking, medicine, arms making and crafts from the various periods and of course the weaponry and costumes of the period. This really is living history at its best all sited in the perfect location of the ruins of the old Shanes Castle – the birthplace of the O'Neills the Kings of Ulster.



*Living history in action including musketry.*

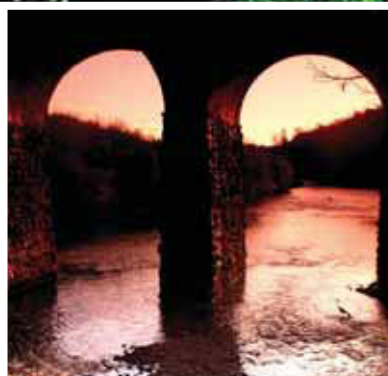
Plus children have the opportunity to handle rare fowl at our poultry show; falcons, vultures, eagles and hawks with the NI School of Falconry and Owls and other animals from the World of Owls and ferrets with Tony Carinduff.

And learn all about Green Energy and conservation from the Conservation Volunteers and the Woodland Trust. Education and entertainment combined in an 'outdoor classroom and theme park'.



*Childrens love the fair.*





# Discover Antrim's Hidden Treasures...

**For further information on attractions, leisure activities  
and accommodation in the Borough of Antrim contact:**

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## Equestrian Action

Equestrian action includes horse and hound displays; the fabulous dancing horses of the Cochise Stud; a Western riding display by Franklin Levinson; Dragoons; carriage driving both traditional vehicles and the fast and furious carriage driving.



*All types of equestrian activities*

This year you are invited to come to Northern Ireland Carriage Driving Association stand to see what horse driving trials is all about. As Judith Lyttle says " we will have drivers to answer all your questions, a display of carriages, photos and DVD's showing you all the action!

On Sunday afternoon in the main arena we'll be doing a display with obstacles and cones, testing the skill and competence of the driver and obedience of the horse/pony. Please visit our website for an event near you: [www.ni-carriagedrivingassociation.com](http://www.ni-carriagedrivingassociation.com)"

## A place to meet and remember old friends

Of course for the country sports man or woman game and country fairs are great places to meet old friends and remember some of those who made such a contribution to our sport and



*Denis and Paul Rollo at Ballywalter.*

who now are no longer with us. At this year's launch at Stormont we will remember one of our founders the late Major William Brownlow when the Brownlow Trophy will be presented to the person having made the greatest contribution to the promotion and defence of our sports in 2011. At our press breakfast on the Friday before the Fair, this magazine honours country sports people from all over Ireland with the ICS&CL Country Sports Lifetime Commitment awards which I say not only recognises the commitment these people have made but commits them to similar 'service' for the rest of their lives!

It was with great sadness that just as we go to print, I learned of the death of one such person, my good friend Denis Stephenson. Denis received one of ICS&CL awards some years ago for his work with Strangford Lough Wildfowling and the Joint Council. Denis was a committed country sports enthusiast right up to his death and indeed I had the pleasure of his company when he drove round with me on the day he always took at Ballywalter Estate. Although in his 78th year he shot exceptionally well that day. And he demonstrated total commitment to this year's fair at Ballywalter where he was instrumental in mounting a very informative wildfowling exhibit.

## Angling Village – Organised by Stevie Munn and APGAI

Featuring the largest selection of tackle, clothing and boats outside of the specialist angling shows. Casting competitions sponsored by HardyGreys are qualifiers for the All Ireland Allcomers and Novice Game Fair Championship to be staged at the Irish Game and Country Fair at Birr Castle on the 27th & 28th August 2011. Casting demonstrations and tuition given by APGAI coaches and Glenda Powell. Fly tying demonstrations also carried out by APGAI instructors – come and visit the Angler's Row and the APGAI area.

## Ireland's largest and most varied canine event

Amongst a glittering array of canine attractions are: The Information Stand mounted by the Kennel Club; the Feedwell International Team and individual open event featuring teams and competitors from NI, ROI, Holland & Wales; the Chudleys UK and Irish Interclub Test featuring 10 teams of Golden Retrievers from all over the UK; the Feedwell Dog & Gun events and novice retriever test; Redmills Cocker and Springer Spaniel tests; the All Ireland Allcomers Game Fair Championships in Retriever Handling; a heat of the Barbour All Ireland Game Fair Novice Retriever Championships; the Irish Gundog Scurry Championships heat and final; gundog arena displays by the Irish CLA Team; arena display by HPRs; dummy throwing championships; display of sled dogs with a difference – Irish Setters!; NI Gundog Field & Show Society pedigree dog show for gundog, hound and terrier groups; dog agility show & display; horse and hound displays; displays of canine art including the unveiling of the new portrait of Master Mc Grath; a huge row of canine related products; children's dog handling show; the Victorian Poacher & his whippet; the 24th All Ireland Terrier and Lurcher



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Championships – racing and show; heat of the Redmills Five Nations International Lurcher Championships ( final at the Irish Game & Country Fair at Birr) and the final of the Redmills Master McGrath Challenge to find the fastest lurcher in the UK and Ireland.

## **Gundog Events Saturday 25 June 2011**

The Chudleys UK and Irish Interclub Test featuring 9 teams of Golden Retrievers from all over the UK. This is one of the best opportunities to see the top working golden retrievers in action and a unique event to Ireland's top Game Fair and Gundog event. Prizes: Crystal Tankards plus Dog Food for the Top Team and the Top Novice and Top Open Dogs.

## **The Feedwell Dog & Gun Competition organised by the URGRC**

There are three competitions: An Individual Competition - where the handler will run his/her dog in the Novice Gundog Test (mainly seen retrieves) and shoot ten sporting clay pigeons. Entry Fee £5 (does not include admission to Fair) Prizes: 1st A Webber BBQ Value £180 sponsored by Haldane Fisher £30 and a bag of Feedwell Dog Food; 2nd £30 and a bag of Feedwell Dog Food; 3rd £20 and a bag of Feedwell Dog Food; Rosettes to Fourth place.



*Some stylish gundog work expected at Shanes.*

Unclassified and Novice Tests. The Novice Test is a qualifier for The Barbour Novice All Ireland Game Fair Handling Championships: top four dogs will qualify for the final at the Irish Game & Country Fair Birr Castle, Co Offaly on the 28th August 2011

Unclassified Prizes : 1st £40 2nd £30 3rd £20 Bags of Dog Food to 3rd place Rosettes to Fourth Place

Novice prizes: 1st A Family Set of Garden Benches (Barcelona and Noah's Ark Children's bench) Value £71 sponsored by Haldane Fisher, £40 and a bag of Feedwell Dog Food; 2nd £30 and a bag of Feedwell Dog Food; 3rd £20 and a

bag of Feedwell Dog Food; Rosettes to Fourth place. Entry Fee £5 (**does not include admission to the Fair**) Prizes Sponsored By Feedwell, Haldane Fisher and Irish Countrysports and Country Life Magazine

The Top Four dogs qualify for the final to run off against the finalists from Birr at Birr Castle for a Barbour Linhope Endurance 3-in-1 Jacket.

For Further details – Contact JOE JOHNSTON – Telephone 028 8673 6432

## **Saturday 25th June Redmills Cocker and Springer Spaniel Tests**

Puppy Test organised by The NI Cocker Club Novice and Open Tests organised by the Antrim & Down Springer Spaniel Club.

Class Prizes : 1st £40 2nd £25 and 3rd £15

Top Spaniel will receive a Crystal Tankard and a Family Set of Garden Benches (Barcelona and Noah's Ark Children's bench) Value £71 sponsored by Haldane Fisher.

For Further Details of the Spaniel Tests contact Willie Thompson Tel: 028 90962441

## **Gundog Events Sunday 26th June 2011 Sponsored by Feedwell - official Gundog Sponsors**

**The Feedwell International Gundog Team Test** – Ireland's only REAL International event organised by the Mid Ulster Gundog Association (Contact Joe Johnston on 028 8673 6432) or Robbie McGregor (028 2766 8867) starts at 09.30am

Teams: N Ireland, South Ireland, Holland, Ulster Select and Wales

Prizes:-1st Team Prize £200 plus bags of Feedwell Dog Food. Rosettes to 4th place

## **Feedwell International Open Test**

Organised by the Mid Ulster Gundog Association starts at 1.45pm sharp entries in advance or taken on the ground.

Prizes: 1st £50 Plus a BBQ sponsored by Haldane Fisher value £180 plus a bag of Feedwell Dog Food; 2nd £40 plus bag of Feedwell Dog Food; 3rd £30 plus a bag of Feedwell Dog Food; 4th £20 plus a bag of Feedwell Dog Food; Rosettes to 4th place. Entry Fee £8 (**does not include admission to the Fair**)

## **All Ireland Game Fair Retriever Handling Championship**

Top four dogs qualify to meet the top four dogs from Birr 2010 and the top four dogs from the Ballywalter Game & Country Living Fair for the coveted title of All Ireland Game Fair Retriever Handling Champion 2011.

**The Prize for this includes a top of the range box from DT DOG Boxes worth over £400 plus a watch sponsored by Gardiner Bros, Belfast value £250.**

The top four dogs will also form the Northern Ireland team to compete in North v South event at Birr on the 27/28 August 2011.

## **Gundog Scurry Championship Final – Sunday 26th**

The top four fastest dogs overall from Ballywalter Game & Country Living Fair and the top four fastest dogs at Shanes Castle will meet in the final. The Winner will receive a crystal tankard and a Big Bill suit sponsored by Charlie Keenan Countrywear.



# Top Winning Dogs Thrive on **Feedwell**

**Dogs such as those owned by Alan Rountree:**



*Alan C.M. Rountree with Int. FT Ch Waterford Edward of Tasco - 2nd in this year's IKC Championship. Alan's record in the IKC Retriever Championship is unlikely to be equalled, 5 times winner of the Championship, 5 times awarded 2nd place and 3 times awarded 3rd place over a 23 years period from 1976 to 2009*

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

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

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**Damian Newman**



**Laurence Hennessy**



**Alan Rountree**



**Tim Crothers**



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



**John Wilson**





11 yo Leah Currie winner of the Scurry at Ballywalter goes forward to the final.

## Terrier, Whippet and Lurcher Events

IRELAND's Most Prestigious Terrier & Lurcher Events are staged at Shanes Castle.

**The 24th anniversary Barbour/Irish Countrysports and Country Life REAL All Ireland Terrier and Lurcher Championships Show and Racing.**

With a Barbour Coat plus the opportunity to win the coveted All Ireland Champion Title - this is and has been since its inception Ireland's largest gathering of terrier and lurchers, the REAL All Ireland Championships and indisputably the blue riband event of its kind in Ireland. Racing will take place on Saturday with the Show on Sunday.

**Prizes:** Overall Show Champion Barbour Coat worth £400 - This will be judged from Champion Terrier, Champion Lurcher and Champion Whippet.

Top Terrier & Lurcher qualify for the Midland Game Fair Championships.

**Show Prizes:** Champion Lurcher £50 plus Tankard; Champion Terrier £50 plus tankard; Champion Whippet £50 plus tankard plus bags of dog food. Trophies & Rosettes for Each Class.

**Racing:** Over 23" Lurcher, Under 23" Lurcher and Whippets All winners £40 plus Trophies and bags of dog food.

## New REDMILLS INTERNATIONAL LURCHER CHAMPIONSHIPS

The Champion Lurcher from the All Ireland Championships qualifies for the Five Nations International Championship Final to take place at the Irish Game &

Country Fair at Birr Castle, Co Offaly on Sunday 28th August 2011. The prize fund for the winner of this championship is expected to exceed €1,500 and the winner of the Shanes Castle heat qualifies for €50 expenses towards travel to Birr.

## The REDMILLS MASTER McGRATH CHALLENGE TO FIND THE FASTEST LURCHER IN THE UK and IRELAND

This is a competition that has generated great interest all over Ireland and the UK. A number of qualifying heats have taken place and others are planned for the GRAND FINAL over 150 yards to take place at Shanes Castle on the 25th June 2011. **Please note there will NOT be a heat at Shanes Castle but after the final, the normal ALL Ireland Terrier & Lurcher Championship racing will take place over the normal longer distance.**

The Winner of the Master McGrath Challenge will win €500, A Barbour Coat worth €500 plus a portrait of their dog by well known canine artist David L Prescott plus dog food and other ancillary prizes. The Runner Up will receive a watch value £250 sponsored by Gardiner Bros of Waring Street.

## The Irish Game Fair is the top canine event in Ireland

If all of these competitions were not enough to more than justify the organisers claims to be Ireland's largest and most varied sporting and working dog event the organisers have put in place many other canine attractions including:

The largest display of canine related products to be seen at any Irish Game or Country Fair; Comber Wildfowlers Dummy Throwing Championship; Dog Agility Show and displays; Pedigree Group Dog Show staged by the NIGFSS; Dog Mushing and sleighing; Gundog Displays - HPR Display by Billy Lewis and Kieran Fox - first seen at the Ballywalter Game Fair; Horse & Hound displays; one of top UK canine artists; the unique long netting display complete with Whippet by the 'Victorian Poacher'; the children's dog handling class; and the



Redmills Jenny McMeekan with John Humpries and Billy Craig launch the Redmills Master McGrath Challenge.



*(picture) perfect*

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*Keith Mathews' training masterclass draws the crowds.*

UNIQUE DISPLAY AT IRELAND'S TOP GUNDOG FAIR by the CLA International Team led by Willie Edgar

AND

Keith Mathews - probably Ireland's most reputable dog trainer, famed for his practical refreshing teaching manner and his ability to rehabilitate dogs with extreme behavioural problems is to appear exclusively at the great Game Fairs of Ireland at Shanes Castle, Antrim and Birr, Co Offaly. AND to try to better his WORLD RECORD set at the BALLYWALTER GAME & COUNTRY FAIR.

Keith will be giving main arena displays on both days of the Fairs as well as conducting one to one clinics with pet owners on his stand in Canine Row.

## ***The Great Game Fairs of Ireland the top fairs for shooting and shooters***

The Great Game Fairs of Ireland have the top prizes and the best layouts at any Irish Game or Country Fair and now the Game Fair at Shanes Castle has the unique attraction of Gunfitting by Mike Yardley.

## ***Competitions***

The All Ireland Game Fair All Comers Championship Final moves to Shanes Castle this year on Saturday 25th & Sunday 26th June.

The Shanes Castle event is also a qualifier for the Barbour All Ireland Novice Clay Pigeon Championships which have their final at the Irish Game & Country Fair at Birr Castle on the 27th & 28th August.

This year for the All Comers Championship the top four shooters at Shanes Castle will meet the top four shooters from Birr 2010 and the top four shooters from the 2011 Ballywalter Game & Country Living Fair in a Grand Final, the winner of which will assume the title of **All Ireland Game Fair Champion**.

**Top prize is a Beretta 682 Golden worth over £3,000 jointly sponsored by Ardee Sports Ltd and Irish Countrysports and Country Life magazine.**

### **Irish Game Fair Championship**

Top Gun on his/her way to the All Ireland Final will win a Bettinsoli Shotgun sponsored by Donal McCloy Guns Unlimited and a pair of Ranger XL Shooting Glasses worth £200 sponsored by Tommy Beattie.

Best unclassified score over the two days wins a pair of Ranger XL Shooting Shooting Glasses worth £200 sponsored by Tommy Beattie

### **Class prizes Each Day At Shanes Castle**

Class A/AA : 1st £50 : 2nd £30 : 3rd £20

Class B/C : 1st £50 : 2nd £30 : 3rd £20

Unclassified : 1st £50 : 2nd £30 : 3rd £20

Side by Side : 1st £50 for top gun each day

**Please Note previous winners at Shanes Castle or Birr are ineligible for the unclassified section.**

For the Novice Shooter There is a new ALL Ireland Game Fair Novice Championship sponsored by Barbour.

The Northern heat of the championships takes place at Shanes Castle where shooters posting the top four scores over





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the two days will qualify for the final at Birr Castle and the chance to not only take the title but a special tankard and a Barbour Linhope coat.

**Please note this competition is for Novice Shooters only previous winners of any of the events at Shanes Castle or Birr Castle are ineligible.**

#### **AND FOR the FIRST TIME IN IRELAND**

#### **IRELAND'S LEADING GAME FAIR TO HAVE GUN-FITTING ON SITE**

For the first time ever at any Irish game or country Fair, shooting expert Mike Yardley will bring his unique gun-fitting skills to Ireland's leading event at Shanes Castle on 25/26 June 2011.

As most shooters know, an ill fitting gun really does not help their scores or put game in the bag. The obvious thing to do is ave your gun shaped to fit you properly and that is exactly what Mike will be doing at Shanes Castle.

Albert Titterington explains: "Mike Yardley is one of the most highly respected authorities on all aspects of gun design, shooting and gun fit and the art of fitting a gun properly to the shooter is one of Mike's particular specialities, having advised several gun makers on stock design, and writing the major work of 'Gun-fitting: The Quest for Perfection.'

"Now for the first time at any Irish Game Fair, anyone can have a personal fitting session with Mike on both days of the Fair. But the really stunning news is that their own guns can be altered there and then, using a special infra red method, which offers huge advantages over others. So you can get measured, wander off round the best Game Fair in the country and collect your weapon before driving home – all for the very modest fee of just £200. What could be more enjoyable, a better investment or more simple than that!"

Mike Yardley is certainly a shooter with expertise as Albert outlined: "Mike has been an active shooter for more than 40 years, shooting birds and big game all over the world. He has held high averages in various clay disciplines and has won many competitions and championships. He is former British Side by Side Champion, a multiple County Champion and one of The Field magazine's 'Top Shots'. Gun-wise, his particular love is vintage side by sides, but he is also well known for his 32" Guerini 20 bore over and unders and his 32" Beretta 303 semi-autos (one of which has fired more than 100,000 shots!"

With Mike at Shanes Castle will be Chris Symonds, who has worked as a gunsmith for the London trade for many years. His particular specialities include barrel making and stock bending, but he is an active general gunsmith with enormous experience.

Mike Yardley explains more: "It was Chris, in particular, who developed the infrared system of stock bending which offers a number of advantages over conventional techniques and leads typically to less staining of the wood than those methods that use hot oil and he has worked in association with me for many years."

Albert Titterington concluded: "The Shanes Castle Fair provides the largest single and most varied competitive Irish



*Top Shot Mike Yardley*

event for shooting, angling and gundog handling. Mike Yardley's appearance at Shanes Castle is yet another one of the amazing reasons for the public to flock to the country's leading Game Fair. With more trade stands including the largest display of guns to be seen at any fair, great new attractions, entertainment and Living History - and a World Record Attempt there is little doubt that this year we will cement our position as the country's No1 Game or Country Fair."

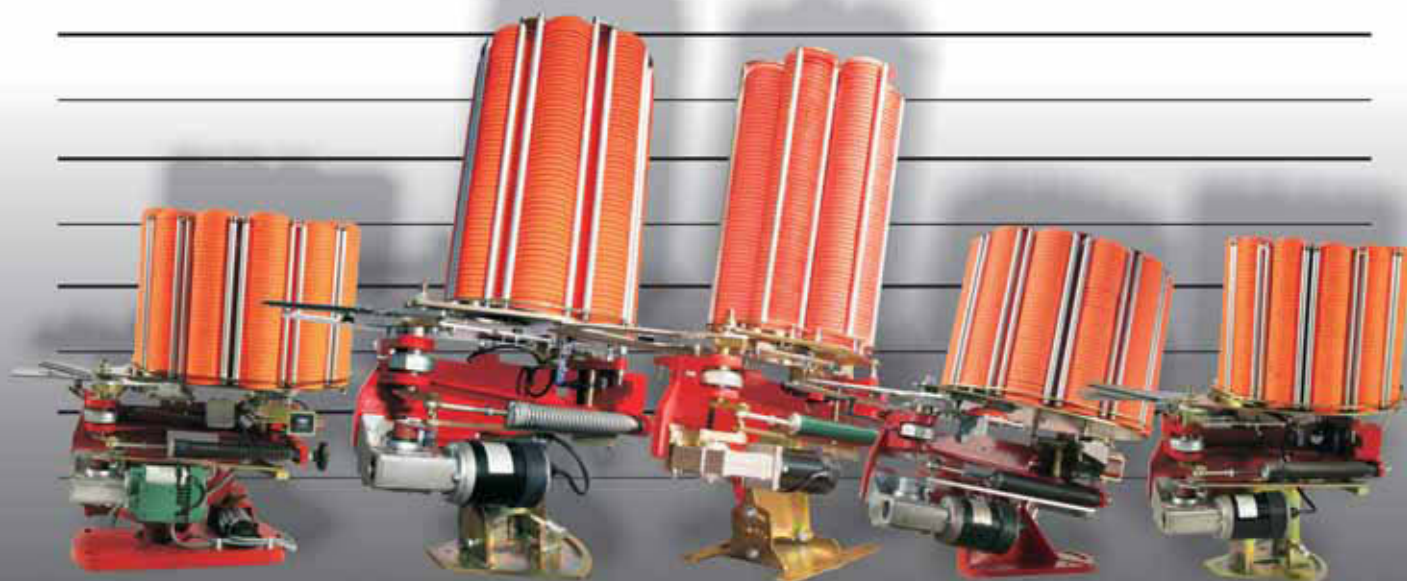
**The Irish Game Fair runs from 10.00 to 6.00 on the 25th & 26th June with an action packed all day programme. Admission prices are : Adult £10 Children £5 Family £25 this includes FREE programme and parking. For further information and a free downloadable programme visit [www.irishgamefair.com](http://www.irishgamefair.com)**

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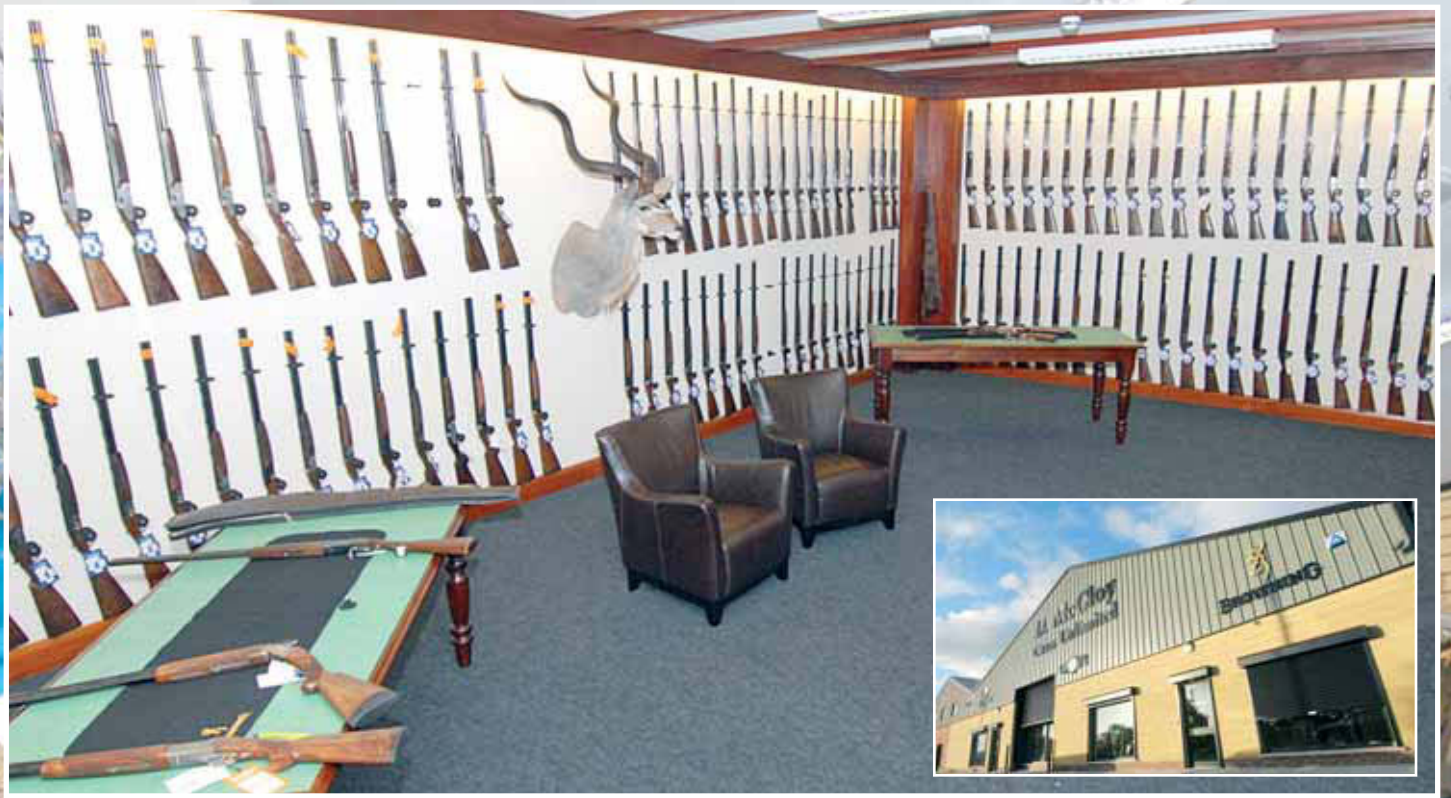
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# Forever Golden

**A**mongst many others no doubt, two things are certain about the Irish Game Fair at Shanes Castle, County Antrim: you'll be able to see some of the best Golden Retrievers as they compete in their inter-club competition which is held annually at various locations throughout the UK, and it's a fair bet that many of them will have June Atkinson's Holway breeding behind them.

There is no more pre-eminent name in the gundog world and, with her death at the age of 84 on 1 April earlier this year, working golden retrievers lost an utterly committed advocate whose sporting life, both in the field and on the turf, had been one of consistent high achievement. Like her line of point-to-point winners, her goldens date from 1947 when she acquired Musickmaker of Yeo from Lucille Sawtell. Despite early uncertainties June handled her to her working title and, when put to Westhyde Stubblesdown Major, she produced FTCh Mazurka of Wynford. Like his sire, who had won a Diploma of Merit in the 1951 Retriever Championship whilst still a puppy, he was to prove precociously talented. Just two and a half years old, FTCh Mazurka of Wynford won the 1954 Retriever Championship when it was held over three days at Six Mile Bottom and Shadwell Park. Then, the following year at Sandringham, on only the second occasion in that era when the Championship was held over three days, he was second. Diplomas of Merit at Cromlix, Perthshire in 1956 and at Littlecote, Hungerford in 1957 followed and in that year too he won the Rank Routledge Trophy for the best overall performance in trials.

Mazurka won a remarkable 25 trial awards in all: at a time when, even by the 1957/58 season, only 47 retriever trial meetings were held. And his record as a stud dog is no less impressive, so it is no surprise to find him strongly behind many of the Holway FTChs. He was the sire of FTCh Holway Zest, second in the 1959 Championship, who was himself the sire of FTCh Holway Westhyde Zeus, another influential sire. He, for instance, sired FTCh Holway Flush of Yeo, dam of FTCh Holway Gaiety who would win eight Open Stakes and the Rank Routledge Trophy. June bred to that bitch line again and again. Mazurka, meanwhile, can be found on both sides of the pedigrees of FTCh Holway Barrister, whose litter brother FTCh Holway Barty was so influential in America, and FTChs Gem, Grettie and Dollar.

Though her bitch line was enormously important, in the public mind June was, principally through her CLA



*June Atkinson 1927 - 2011*

Game Fair runs for the England Team, more obviously associated with charismatic dogs like FTCh Holway Chanter and, especially, FTCh Holway Corbiere who took on the mantle of his great National Hunt contemporary Desert Orchid. In her hands especially, Holway goldens were often a match for the best and, of the 29 Holway FTChs in England, Ireland (where Frank Dobson made up FTCh Holway Legato) Europe and America June herself made up fourteen. Her husband Martin, who died in 1968, made up one and her son Robert, who won the IGL Retriever Championship at Sandringham in 1982, has made up four. The Atkinson family have qualified for the Championship a remarkable 54 times and June had the distinction of judging that premier event no fewer than nine times, beginning in 1960 and for the last time at Holkham in 1996.

## **A total commitment**

Fiercely competitive, June set herself the highest standards and could be sharply critical when others fell short of them. Her commitment to her dogs and horses

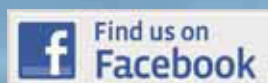


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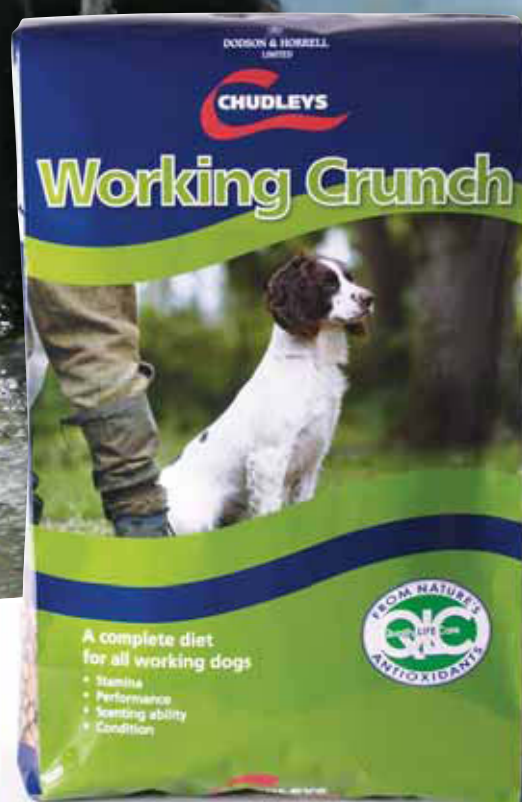


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*Kirsty Cousins' Gortons Red Ruby Rascal is ever alert as Headkeeper David Clark changes his position in the line at the 2010 Retriever Championship at Sandringham.*

was total and her understanding of the golden temperament helped make her a gifted handler. Maintaining a hunting flow was critical to keeping gamefinding at the forefront of everything she did. She will be sorely missed, as much for her keen appreciation of the priorities of our sport, as for her presence. Her stature was imposing and her achievements impressive: we shall not see her like again. On more than one occasion, after descending the steps of the commentary box at the CLA Game Fair, I was asked by a member of

the public who happened to have just seen her run, "Who was that? Her dog looked so happy working." That says it all. June's dogs were desperate to do their best for her: and they did what they did with tremendous brio.

As you are sure to see at Shanes, a golden working well is as far from sullen compliance as it's possible to imagine. The breed, thanks to the researches of the late Elma Stonex, Valerie Foss and others, is now in no doubt as to its origins. Guisachan, an estate of about 20,000 acres near Beaulieu in Invernesshire, was bought by Dudley Coutts Marjoribanks, the first Lord Tweedmouth, in 1854. A photo in his Stud Book from the period 1868-70 shows, among others, his Headkeeper Simon Munro with

the retriever Nous who has a rabbit in his mouth. Nous, when mated to Belle of 'the Ladykirk breed' in 1868 produced a litter of four yellow puppies and they, three bitches and one dog, are the root foundation of the golden retriever as a distinct breed.

Developing her work which began with the Tweedmouth Stud Books Elma Stonex was able to show that fully 99% of all goldens went back to four matings; Dual Ch Balcombe Boy and Balcombe Buntie in 1922, Glory of Fyning and Stagden Cross Pamela in 1921,



*Andrew Wright, whose FTCh Marcus Maybe of Wadesmill was the 2006 Retriever Champion, receives a hen bird from Archie Charlie of Wadesmill in the 2009 Retriever Championship at Blankney.*





*Red Ruby Rascal  
brings a hen to  
hand on the way  
to getting a  
Diploma of Merit  
at the 2010  
Retriever  
Championship.*

Binks of Kentford and Balvaig in 1921 and Rory of Bentley and Aurora in 1924/5. And behind them, through the linking Culham lines were the Guisachan dogs. Indeed, what is clear from the researches is that using line breeding the first Lord Tweedmouth carefully worked out the evolution of the yellow breed in the period between 1868 and 1890 when his stud book ends.

Initially registered as flatcoats and defined only by colour goldens were finally registered by the Kennel Club as a separate variety under the title Golden or Yellow Retrievers in 1911. The following year Captain HFH Hardy took second place in an Open Stake with one and in the post war period it is only goldens, on just four occasions, which have interrupted the dominance of the Labrador in the IGL Retriever Championship. A hundred years on from Colonel Hawker's claim that Labradors were 'without a living equal in the canine race' Captain Hardy published *Good Gun Dogs* in which he explained why he had kept goldens for more years than any other breed of gundog. It was not just a matter of sentiment. 'I do like them best of all', he emphasised, but he accounted for that liking in very practical terms. 'I find them easy to train and to manage, good trackers of wounded game and excellent at water work.'

### ***'Fast and sure'***

The Rev. EN Needham-Davies, too, extolled their water work in a book titled *Gun Dogs: Their Training, Working and Management* published shortly after. 'Fast and sure,' he wrote, 'is excellent, they are two gundog virtues but the greater of these is sureness. The golden,

broadly speaking, is sure' with 'a nose second to none. He holds his line and carries it . . . Too much pace', he added, 'and he may drop it.' Where he was unequivocal was in lauding the virtue of what we would now call biddability. The golden 'is a nice dog to teach. He is kind and willing to learn', adding 'I would say he was on the whole easier to break than the other varieties.' And this was from a man who had bred, trained and worked 'curlies, flats and Labradors.'

Goldens are often characterised as being slower to mature than Labradors, for instance. Such generalisations can mislead though. What matters is that temperament and raw intelligence – the ability to learn things – can often be out of kilter in the early life of a golden. The temptation to race ahead because the dog seems to be learning effortlessly is a strong one, but it should be resisted. By all means be firm, but avoid at all costs any need to admonish. As June Atkinson used to warn, "you must never lose your temper with a golden" and, certainly, as others have observed, it is a breed which is easily offended and when their generosity or willingness is withdrawn it can sometimes be difficult to restore.

Goldens need to have their sensitivity respected and they assuredly do not need to have their intelligence patronised by people confusing a different pace of maturing with ability to learn. They are two very different things: even if you can only realise the potential of the one by taking full account of the other. Appreciate that and much else falls into place. Goldens are gregarious and take less readily to kennel regimes.



Above all they relate. They want to be with humans. So, whereas it is possible to let goldens be wild as puppies and still get them back in hand many experienced and successful trainers think that would be disastrous for a Labrador. For, whilst they are more than happy to be independent, the golden always wishes to be with a human

The late Keith Erlandson's first trial bred dog was a golden who, in his words, proved 'unbelievably easy to train'. In his assessment of the breed, thirty or so years ago, he wrote: 'A good golden is second to none and, at the risk of sounding controversial, I believe a top specimen can actually be superior to the very best Labrador but I will admit that such dogs are very thin on the ground.' Nobody demonstrated the truth of Keith Erlandson's assessment more consistently or with more flair than June

Atkinson. She showed, *After a good run surely a dog's entitled to pose for the camera.* time and again, especially when it came to raw gamefinding, that there were few to touch her.

At Shanes Castle goldens will certainly not be 'thin on the ground' and with luck you will see some work, at least, which is worthy of her memory.

### **Publisher's Note**

People are often described as 'legends in their own lifetime' and this certainly applies to June Atkinson with her Holway line of golden retrievers. I have had golden retrievers since 1978 and as a biologist have had a keen interest in the various lines. What is indisputable is that the Holway line developed by June from Lucille Sawtell's 'of Yeo' lines has been the most successful



working line in the breed all over the world.

The best bitch I ever owned was, of course, sired by June's great dog FT CH Holway Corbiere out of FTCH Standerwick Roberta of Abnalls and I was delighted, when I met June some years ago at an interclub test, to hear that she planned a mating which brought similar lines together. I was even more pleased when she agreed to let me have a pup. I am proud to have in my kennels Holway Serena of Ruadth, one of the last litter of pups bred by June.

Our deepest sympathy goes to her son Robert on the loss of his mother, but we know that he will keep the Holway flag flying high and that is the best tribute his mother could have.



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# David L Prescott –



**O**ne of the most popular artists to feature any of the Great Game Fairs of Ireland is undoubtedly David Prescott. His impressive paintings, simply a 'must see' for many, are inspired through his love of nature. With such an impressive talent, we decided to ask David how it all began.

"I suppose with artistic skills inherited from my Mother and Father, both of whom were extremely talented. But I began my artistic career as a stained glass window artist, in my home town of Liverpool, turning later to the work I do now." And it was in Liverpool that he had his first one man exhibition, in a city centre department store, at the tender age of seventeen. "It was while at Art College in Liverpool, that I became adept in oils, watercolours, pastels and graphite pencils."

A decision to emigrate to America in 1978 saw him to make his home in the San Bernardino Mountains of Southern California. "My neighbours were Black Bear, Cougar, Raccoon, Big Horn Sheep, Bob Cat and Golden Eagles to name just a few. It was heaven for me," he says.

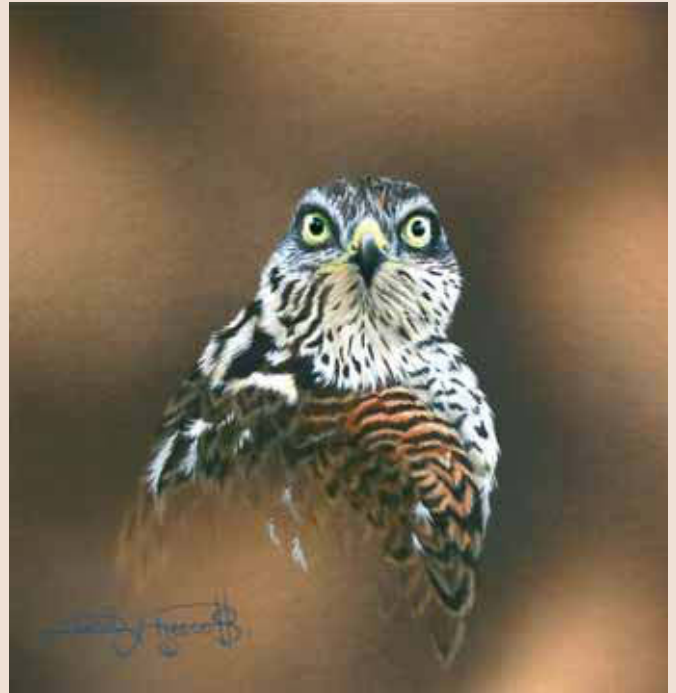
And it was his insatiable interest in animals, their conservation and habitat that began his career as a wildlife artist. "I have always had an affinity with the animals that I paint. My paintings are the result of many hours spent in the field observing, sketching and photographing wildlife and their unique habitat, followed by many more hours in the studio, striving to reproduce that perfection of light, composition, contrast and harmony of colour balance observed in the field."

And here's something that we didn't





# *a profile of a wildlife Artist*



know - David's original paintings have raised considerable amounts of money for worthy causes throughout America and the British Isles. He explains: "It's important to give something back, to conserving wild places on this earth, therefore ensuring ongoing habitat, for the many different and unique creatures that inhabit this beautiful planet with us."

David has been 'featured artist' at a number of shows, both in America and the UK. "In 2003, one of my originals was exhibited at the Mall Galleries, London, from an entry of over 10,000 and my work has been featured in magazine and newspaper editorials. In 2007, one made the cover of the international 'The Falconers and Raptor Conservation Magazine' and in 2009 and 2010 original paintings were featured three times on the cover of Irish Country Sports & Country Life, reaching a huge international audience then as well."

He is immensely modest about his impact on the art world - which has been considerable - but quietly admitted that his original paintings are in many private collections throughout the world, and have raised considerable amounts of money for animal and habitat conservation. To which we would say - well done indeed!



*David will be exhibiting at the Great Game Fairs of Ireland at Shanes Castle on 25th & 26th June and at Birr Castle on 27th & 28th August and will be doing head studies of the Master McGrath Challenge at the Irish Game Fair at Shanes Castle, and the Redmills Five Nations International Lurcher Championship Final at the Irish Game & Country Fair at Birr.*

He is available to undertake commissions and can be contacted by telephone: 0151-922-1192 or email: [davidlprescottwildlifeart@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:davidlprescottwildlifeart@yahoo.co.uk)

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# Master McGrath – an Irish Legend Remembered

**I**t is often said that great minds think alike and just when we were devising the new Master McGrath UK & Ireland Lurcher Racing Challenge to be held at Shanes Castle on the 25 June, Billy Lewis quite independently decided to write a eulogy to the great dog.

As a boy totally immersed in my dogs and Irish history the story of how Lord Lurgan took a small weakly pup and had enough confidence in it, not only to take on the best of the English dogs in the Waterloo Cup, but to stake part of his fortune on the result. 'The Master' did not let him down and, not only won the cup on three occasions, but made Lord Lurgan a substantial fortune.



The dog went on to be so famous that he was celebrated in song and even Queen Victoria sought an 'audience' with him.

The first few lines of the Ballad of Master McGrath set the scene nicely for Billy's piece:

Eighteen sixty eight being the date and the year,  
Those Waterloo sportsmen and more did appear;  
For to gain the great prizes and bear them awa',  
Never counting on Ireland and Master McGrath.

On the twelfth of December, that day of renown,  
McGrath and his keeper they left Lurgan town;  
A gale in the Channel, it soon drove them o'er,  
On the thirteenth they landed on fair England's shore.

And when they arrived there in big London town,  
Those great English sportsmen all gathered round -  
And one of the gentlemen gave a "Ha! Ha!" Saying,  
"Is that the great dog you call Master McGrath?"

## Billy takes up the story

An entire nation went mad! In Dublin vast crowds thronged the streets waiting for news and, when it came, celebrated into the night. On the hills above Belfast, bonfires burned, while church bells pealed throughout Ireland. Large crowds of up to 80,000 witnessed the event, which lasted over three days. Queen Victoria herself even requested an audience at Windsor Castle, later recording the visit in her diary. The year was 1871. What you may ask could lift the spirit of a nation just twenty odd years removed from famine, death and despair?

The pup was born on the 16 February 1866 at Colligan Lodge, Ballinacouch, near Dungarvan, Co Waterford. He was bred by Mr James Galway, the owner of the Lodge, a close friend of Charles Brownlow, the then Lord Lurgan, a very prominent gentleman in the coursing world at the time. He was reared by Thomas Ducey and named after his nephew, a small orphan boy who walked him when he was just a pup. In the litter the dogs had 'Master' and the bitches 'Lady' as a prefix to their names, which were usually taken from the family who walked them.

The runt of a litter of seven, they said he had an ugly little head and a little tail which was more like a rat's. Records show that the National Coursing club of England and the Irish Coursing Club started registration in 1882 and 1916 respectively, so there is no official registration of the litter. His sire was Mr Douglas 'Dervock' and his dam was Lord Lurgan's 'Lady Sarah.'

The young lad was also instrumental in his companion's future achievements. The dog was held at one end of a large field, intersected by a stream, while the boy went to the other end. The dog was then let go and would run to the lad, jumping the stream in his stride. In this early training he took to the drains without hesitation, gaining several lengths on his opponent and more than once actually catching the hare in the jump. The following description of him is interesting. It was made up by a bystander who watched him and another dog pursuing a hare in the Lurgan Demesne. "His eyes were like two living balls of fire, the muscles of his back sprung and twitched like whalebone. The dog looked as if he were charged with electricity. I knew at once that the hare had no chance. He swept round her when she broke, and crashed into his game, as if shot from a gun." He continued: "A little 54lb dog with a sour-looking



plainest head, he'd look up at you as if he owned the universe. He had a good killing neck that ran into muscular shoulders. His chest was of fairest depth but he had a wonderful spring of rib, and the best muscled back you ever saw, he had strong quarters and the neatest legs and feet that ever set under a dog. He had the shortest and finest of rat-tails; sometimes you'd think he hadn't a tail at all. He was black in colour and had a long white streak on his chest and a small white patch over one of his shoulders, carrying two white toes on all four feet and over his back he was ticked with white specks as if a shower of hail fell on him."

## **The Waterloo Cup**

In October 1867, he coursed for The Visitors' Cup and, in a scintillating company of 32 dogs, divided the honours with his kennel companion, 'Master Nathaniel.' He was now commanding attention. He was nominated for the Waterloo cup, which was one of the greatest greyhound sporting events of the 19th century. The first was held in 1836 on the Altcar estate of the Earl of Sefton. William Kynn, who was the proprietor of the famous Waterloo hotel in Liverpool, founded the event. Henceforth he was to be trained by Mr Walshe, Lord Lurgan's trainer. He was virtually unknown when he crossed the Irish Sea for his first outing at Waterloo in February 1868. He easily defeated his opponent 'Cock Robin' in the final, beating the cream of English coursers along the way, returning home to a hero's welcome winning the lasting affection and appreciation of Irishmen the world over.

Then in 1869 he claimed the cup for the second time. He bowled over all opposition, beating one of his biggest rivals, 'Borealis,' in the first round, leading by eight lengths he dumbfounded the spectators. His speed bewildered them, leaping drains and ditches like they didn't exist and his death-stroke when it came, left them speechless. He went on to beat 'Randolph,' 'Hard Lines' 'Charming May' and 'Lobelia,' an old rival from the previous year. In the final he raced against 'Bab-at-the-Bowster,' a Scottish dog that had won three open cups and twelve courses since 1868. Many spectators later described the final against 'Bab-at-the-Bowster' as the greatest course of all time.

Excitement was at fever pitch as he and 'Bab' entered the slips for the final. "Both dogs left the slips as if they had only been held in check by floating gossamers." For hundreds of yards they raced in the greatest final of all time. 'Bab' led as the hare flew over the path, both flashed into the next field with the hare just ahead. Both sent their points up with amazing rapidity and left the crowd spellbound. Then he got ready and those who knew him knew what was coming, wrenching quickly, once, twice - and he was in with a lightning thrust that

never failed. Once again victory was Master McGrath's.

In 1870, the course at Altcar was in bad condition due to a heavy frost and he went down pointless to the bitch 'Lady Lyons' in the first round. In October that year he won the Brownlow stakes, which in those days ranked second in importance to the Waterloo. He was now in training for his fourth Waterloo and to all Irishmen, was an obvious favourite. Rumour has it that Lord Lurgan (Charles Brownlow) backed him to win £150,000 and insured him for his sea journey to and from Belfast for £9000.



*The Course*

Evidence tells us that never before or since was there such intense excitement on Lord Sefton's plains. The 1871 Altcar saw people in thousands who had never seen a coursing event before and each of these newcomers knew that the greatest race in history would be witnessed. On his sixth birthday he was across the Irish Sea again but this time, like his former days of glory, his eyes flashed with fire.

## **The little dog from Ireland launched in for the kill**

Course after course he ran, winning by big margins, 'Dervock's' son was sweeping all before him. Dogs like 'Black Knight,' 'Letter T.,' 'Rocket,' 'Wharfinger' and 'Eyes of Fire' were disposed of with comparative ease. Then he was matched with a dog named 'Pretender.' The little dog from Ireland only weighed 52lb as he entered the slips. On being released he led with 'Pretender' hot on his heels. The crowd went frantic; the battle was on in earnest, the race of champions. Everyone waited for that decisive stroke; suddenly it came like a bolt from the blue. The little dog from Ireland braced himself for his greatest effort, and launched in for the kill! The blue riband of the coursing world adorned his shoulders, he had won the Waterloo Cup for the third time. Back home in Colligan, his birthplace, bonfires burned for an entire week. He proudly paraded his colours before Queen Victoria and as he did so, he really did look 'as if he owned the universe.' Sadly he died on Christmas Eve shortly afterwards at Brownlow house, Lurgan, from



tuberculosis of the lung and pneumonia. Staffordshire pottery figurines of him were produced. His portrait in Mealy's auction catalogue of 1995 was valued at £2,250/£3000 and cites him as 'The world's greatest greyhound.' He is commemorated in two countries in stone. A life size replica of him stands in the gardens of a country house in Hampshire, still owned by Lord Lurgan's descendants, where the three times winner of the Waterloo Cup lies buried. Another monument stands at the public road junction near Dungarvan in County Waterford, in sight of the farm where he was reared. A statue of him can be seen in the grounds of Craigavon Civic Centre and he also appears on the Craigavon Borough Crest. He is honoured in the American Greyhound Hall of Fame. His memory is celebrated in story and in song.

Many historians and coursing enthusiasts have searched for the field where he received his early schooling, but the land has been reclaimed and the stream has long since vanished. The original farmhouse where he was reared, with its thatched roof, is occupied and stands practically unchanged to this present day.

Master McGrath was the little Greyhound that captured the hearts and imaginations of a nation, and a three times winner of the most prestigious cup in coursing history. The runt of the litter that was to be culled shortly after birth, if it hadn't have been for the intervention of an orphan boy who had cried so bitterly when he heard that his Uncle wanted to drown the little pup with the ugly head and a tail like a rat. It had been

also that orphan boy who he was named after, whose early training did much for his future prowess at Waterloo. Such is the story of Master McGrath.

I am indebted to Mr Peter Nolan who kindly provided me with the paperwork on Master McGrath. I am also very grateful to all those who took the time to research the facts and the history about this famous Greyhound. It's because of them and many others that the story of Master McGrath will live on in the memories of those present and long after. His achievements will remain green and unfaded for generations to come.

#### *Publisher's Comment*

We are delighted to keep the Master's memory alive by organising the Redmills Master McGrath Challenge at the Irish Game Fair at Shanes Castle on the 25 June 2011, when lurchers which have qualified at heats all over Ireland and the UK will compete for a new commemorative title.

I was fortunate enough to acquire the photograph of Master McGrath outside Brownlow House and the actual measurements of Master McGrath (Coursing Calendar Vol xxi). From these and other photographs, paintings and prints, I commissioned the painting by Louise Barrett of Master McGrath that graces the front cover of the magazine. It will be on display at the Game Fairs at Shanes Castle and Birr Castle.

*Master McGrath by Louise Barrett.*







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# Dvd Review - 2010 Irish Retriever Championship, Dromoland Castle

**We have just been watching a DVD of the 2010 Irish Retriever Championship which is undoubtedly the hottest product in the countrysports catalogue from Dog and Country TV.**

Filmed in full HD at Dromoland Castle, with production values rarely seen outside a blockbuster cinema epic, you are there. Right at the heart of the action. We watched, riveted with bated breath as marks were given, handlers worked their dogs in the heat of battle, each vying for the coveted title of Irish Retriever Champion. We actually felt alongside the judges right in the nerve centre of the action. It is a complete account of what really happened - the buildup, the action and results and how better to hear the whys and wherefores than by talking to judges and competitors.

It took very little time for us to ask the question - why have we never seen a championship DVD like this before? Even the introduction makes you wonder if you've wandered into the cinema by mistake. But then you see that it was produced and co-directed by one of the country's top film makers with worldwide credits, Harry Cook of Image Media Films, a man renowned for his unique cinematic style.

But this is no ordinary championship - and this is no ordinary video. Even the hilarious outtakes at the end are probably worth the purchase price! Boobs and blunders that show that even the best handlers and others can sometimes slip up in front of a camera.

The presenter and co-executive producer is Keith Mathews - the Dog Guru - the Irish trainer and competitor who hosted the hit TV series Good Dog Bad Dog and has made up and bred a number of top FTChs himself - so there is no doubt the man knows what he is talking about. Let's face it how often do we have such a commentator on DVDs like this.

From the opening titles we just know that this is going to be unique entertainment - and it was. We browsed through the contestants and their dogs biographies in the brochure that came with the DVD. We were able to match the names to the people and dogs as the film

unfolded. It really did feel that we share their high and low points and their moments of drama, such was the cinema quality of the production.

Film? It certainly is a film with glorious scenery captured by inspired camerawork from some of the top film makers in the country, interviews with the leading handlers from Ireland and farther afield and every tense moment of the Championship is shown until, job

done, the champion dog and handler was revealed. But it's the way that highs and lows, top retrieves and disappointments are shown is the key. As one of the viewers said 'the gundog world's agony and ecstasy laid bare - but done with the thoughtfulness of someone who knows only too well what top competitions are about - and crucially what the public want to see.'

When Keith dropped in for a chat we asked him what the rationale was before the project got underway: "Our aim was simple: make the best dog trial video - ever! We wanted to make a film that captured the tense excitement of the event, right from the meet before it started, through the two days which

saw the cream of 'the best of the best' rise to the challenges and come out victorious. But we also wanted to learn from the contestants and the judges and key organisers what exactly they were looking for and why decisions were made. In short, we wanted a film that was not only an accurate reflection of the Championship, but was immensely watchable, entertaining, informative and, well, simply stunning to watch. I believe we have achieved our goals."

As you read this, the video is already a hit in many countries and Keith is delighted that the feedback from top handlers and the wider public has been so positive. All we can add is that when we got some of the non-gundog members of staff to have a look they were as entertained as we were. And that's a first too. Oh and see if you can spot Keith's 'David Bellamy' moment. Priceless.

The Irish Retriever Championship 2010 DVD is priced at £14.99 while stocks last and can be bought online at [www.dogandcountry.tv](http://www.dogandcountry.tv)





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# Hunting Roundup



*A well taken hedge with the County Down at Crossgar.*

## **The Newry Harriers**

The Copeland family of Taylorstown, outside Loughbrickland Co. Down, are great supporters of hunting and their daughter Jenny, who works in the Countryside Alliance Ireland office, is at the forefront of the defence of hunting here. It was no surprise that the Newry Harriers' meet at Fulton's Crossroads, outside Loughbrickland, was hosted by the family with the invitation that 'everybody was to come back to the house afterwards.'

An initially wet day turned sunny, then eventually very cold to give huntsman Mr Mark McIlroy and his 11½ couple mixed pack some changing conditions each presenting their own challenges. Mark was assisted by two amateur whippers-in, cousins James and Ian Bryson.

Among the car followers were sole master Mrs J E Close and Bob Tucker, who now lives locally and he was accompanied by Mr Alan Kensett MH, of the Wealden Minkhounds in Sussex. Among a twenty five strong field, under field master Mrs Uel McKee, anticipation was keen as Mark drew George Anderson's Bog off Greenan Road as, in the previous seasons, this bog had provided forty and forty five minute hunts. Sadly, on this occasion it was blank so Mark moved to Cassidy's Road but, despite drawing every available covert, no one was at home.

Moving up the hill to Tate's Hill, on Andy Johnson's land, things got no better as only some hares were seen but hounds, despite some having Harrier lineage, ignored them. Gordon Steen's was the next to be drawn and a fox was put afoot from the trees to give a very fast hunt across some very heavy going over some formidable fences. This fox ran, at speed, to within one

field of Loughbrickland village before being headed by car followers and going to ground.

Hounds were then taken back towards the meet and Mark McIlroy went into Patsy Smith's land where he drew all the coverts, down as far as the old quarry but they were all blank. A move into Buller's Scarvagh House Estate brought no improvement, all the normally productive coverts proving blank. Lisnabrague, owned by Edwin Bryson who was in the mounted field, met with a similar lack of success.

As a final attempt, in a surprisingly light late afternoon, Mark drew Little Acre where only hares were spotted (and again ignored) and this continued through Drumsallagh.

A former huntsman of these hounds, Mr Jim Bryson, always held that the four o'clock fox was the one to look for but no such fox could be found today so home was blown in late afternoon. This had been a poor scenting day on which the one fox found gave everyone the chance to keep up with the Newry huntsman and whippers—in which does take some doing. As we had been asked to do, everyone repaired to Roy and Margaret Copeland's home for an excellent reception.

## **The Louth Foxhounds**

The Louth Foxhounds met at Termonfeckin on a wet day which just got wetter and which, ultimately, proved blank. A generously hosted meet at the home of Seamus and Ria Meegan, at which Seamus dispensed immense quantities of solid and liquid refreshment to everyone, was followed by huntsman Noel McKeever taking a 13½ couple mixed pack off to the first draw, assisted by whippers- in Alan Reilly and Mr Stephen Gunne.

Despite the rain this Wednesday meet had attracted



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some forty five mounted followers including three of the joint masters Dr Ralph Hoey, Gerry Boylan and Joe Callan while the day had an international flavour with the presence of a party from the Triple B Hunt in Belgium. The first draw, at Sandpit, set the tone for the day being blank. At this early stage this international flavour took on a competitive edge with an impromptu swimming gala, albeit an involuntary one! With four Belgian, but only two local, swimmers the teams were rather uneven but all competitors made it back to land!

A move to Blackhall House saw all three coverts prove blank, this being particularly disappointing in the case of the big covert in front of the house which normally holds. Noel McKeever then drew Killartry before moving through Walshestown Bog, owned by Paddy McCann. Here the huntsman again spent some time on foot with his hounds before taking them under the main Dublin to Belfast railway line as far as Carrickbagot, continuing to find no one at home.

At Rokeby, the impressive home built in 1778 as a retirement home for Archbishop Robinson of Armagh, gave everyone a reminder of what used to be. The adjacent (former) stable block has been converted to give an excellent home for joint master Gerry Boylan and, like the house itself presents a fine example of the work of the period. In admiring these examples of past building work I was driven to compare them with modern building work, of which there is an alarmingly increasing amount in this part of Louth. It had been a last minute decision to draw around Rokeby but this had proved to be no more successful so home was blown with some three quarters of the field still on parade.

Everyone then went to Whelan's Pub and some very welcome refreshments, where it was a case of 'what might have been.' One topic of interest was the abundance of big, fast hares on show which just pointed up the dearth of foxes. Such



*Huntsman Mark McIlroy takes the Newry Hounds to the next draw at Loughbrickland.*

had been the disappointment felt by the Louths for me (and my two guests Callum Rae and Tom Langshaw from the Dumfriesshire and Stewartry Foxhounds) that I was pressed to return for their next meet at Dromin. Having thought of the perseverance shown by the huntsman and his hounds and of the excellent hound control shown by Noel McKeever in such testing circumstances I resolved to accept the invitation.

## ***Dromin***

I travelled to Dromin, on the following Saturday, with John Savage, former master and chairman, of the County Down Hunt. On the motorway we encountered fog which did not augur well for hunting but happily on arrival at the meet at the Village Saloon, the fog had



*Nicely over with the Louth Foxhounds Nr Rathescar, Dromin.*





*Jenny Copeland with the Newry Hounds at Loughbrickland.*

completely cleared. Huntsman Noel McKeever, assisted by whippers-in Alan Reilly and Mr Chris Rogers, had on a 14 ½ couple mixed pack while joint masters Dr Ralph Hoey Gerry Boylan and Joe Callen again has some forty five riders under their charge.

A series of draws at Dromin House and then Richardston, near the graveyard, proved negative and it was not until the hunt moved to Toberdoney townland that hounds put a fox afoot. This fox gave a steady, circular hunt around Toberdoney before being lost in seemingly fading scent. Noel McKeever drew steadily towards Kildemock and the former home of Mr RW McKeever, a former long time master of these hounds, which evoked many memories for the car followers and, doubtlessly, for the field too. At this time I was standing on the ruins of the famous Jumping Church at Millockstown. Here, the remaining gable wall of the church lists at a pronounced angle. Local legend has it that the wall jumped to exclude the grave of an excommunicated person and landed upright but at its present angle!

True or not, the ruins afforded an excellent view point over Millockstown as we watched hounds draw the whole area including a covert immediately under our gaze. As they left the area a fox was viewed entering that covert by Patsy Myles and myself and this sighting was

relayed to Alan Reilly so hounds were brought back to draw the covert again.

We were then treated to the sight of this fox leaving the covert with hounds hard on as they went up the hill and away from the church. This hunt continued across Kildemock and back into Millockstown as far as the Water Commissioners' land then from the hill out towards The Round House, almost as far as the main Ardee road. A number of circular hunts around the hill had hounds showing drive and good voice as they pushed their fox across Millockstown and back to Hackbum where they put him to ground. We then moved to Rathescar Estate and, after a series of draws where the huntsman was on foot we suddenly heard an outburst of music as hound put another fox afoot from the area around the lake.

This fox took a line out of the Estate onto Rathescar Road and then out beyond Mosstown Chapel. He crossed the road again, this time in front of my driver Anthony Tuite's jeep, at which time he looked tired but was still running. Our fox continued back across Rathescar Road into Mosstown, then re-entered Rathescar Estate where he took hounds on a circular hunt, at one time running along the lakeside path before going through a ditch into the woods where he

went to ground and, like our previous pilots, was given best.

Everyone had had a good day and it was a happy group who gathered in the Village Saloon to enjoy the hospitality offered by the proprietors, cousins John and Kenneth Byrne.

## ***The County Down Hunt***

The County Down Hunt met at dairy farmer Roy Carlisle's home at Derryboye, between Saintfield and Killyleagh, on a dry but dull day with the land still wet and heavy after recent bad weather. A reception in the house over, huntsman Steve Collins took a 10 ½ couple mixed pack, assisted by amateur whipper-in Mr Ossie Jamison, to draw nearby lands. A mounted field of some forty riders included three of our joint masters Mr Eric McClelland, Mr Robert Steele and Mr David Baird. Just as everyone was settling in their saddles two outliers were suddenly afoot.

For a time there were two hunts underway before hounds settled on one customer. A fast hunt in wet conditions ensued across Derryboye, Tullyveery and Tullymacnous as far as Jericho Road and Killyleagh Road. At one stage two visiting South Tyrone Foxhounds' masters took swimming lessons but I cannot name names - suffice to say that Martin Laverty MFH,





*Gabriel Slattery whipper in with the North Galway.*

who hunts those hounds, was not out! This circular hunt was taking its toll of the field and a lot of muddy outfits could be seen, some were even freshly muddied at each new sighting! Hounds had run well and some of the new entry, on only their second day's hunting such has been the interruption to hunting caused by the weather, were out and gave a good account of themselves despite what appeared to be poor scenting conditions.

Home was blown in late afternoon and, on returning to the meet, we were again well catered for once the riders had hosed down their horses and, indeed, themselves.

### ***The East Down Foxhounds***

The East Down Foxhounds meet at Raleagh, between Ballynahinch and Crossgar, saw persistent drizzle ("mizzling" as we call it here) just about all day but it didn't dampen the spirits of the dozen mounted followers or of the joint masters, Craig Caven and James Armstrong. Huntsman Declan Feeney, assisted by amateur whipper-in and former master Mr Michael Smith, took a 15½ couple mixed pack to draw Norman Walsh's land on Drumnaconagher Road and they put their first fox afoot almost immediately. They moved at pace across Walsh's, enjoying a fast circular hunt which moved on to Win Smyth's where this fox was lost. A series of draws across dressage rider Jennifer

Somerville's land proved blank so Declan Feeney moved along the full length of Green Lane to the dairy farm of stalwart hunting supporter David Graham who had left his son Nigel in charge. These lands were also blank so the huntsman moved on.

This is varied horse country as was shown by the next coverts which were on the land of show jumpers Calvin Watson and Elaine Quinn. These coverts also proved blank so we moved on to Spratt's. Drawing steadily across Spratt's land hounds put a fox afoot from Spratt's bog and another circular hunt ensued across Spratt's, back onto Watson's and hard onto Graham's where this fast hunt saw some fallers (who all fell on very soft ground). This fox was marked to ground at the top of the hill which had fully tested the stamina of hounds, horses and, indeed, riders as they galloped up it. The huntsman then moved back towards the meet drawing along Raleagh Road and on to Creevyargon Road without success.

As light was now beginning to fade Declan Feeney moved onto the land of another stalwart hunting supporter, Terry Steele of Raleagh House, which was adjacent to the meet. Terry Steele's bog was blank so Declan drew the area around the house from where hounds put their third fox afoot. This fox ran from the wood through Shilliday's into the Glen, crossed Win Smyth's and Ned Carlisle's where it was marked to ground.

As it was now relatively dark home was blown, allowing a short hack back to the meet. Here, the rain meant that there was no hanging around at the end of this day which had tested the patience and stamina of all concerned. It was good to see Andrew Turley (12) was still there, having matched his father Pat throughout.

It had also been a day on which huntsman and hounds had showed drive and perseverance having to work very hard for everything they got in seemingly poor scenting conditions.

### ***South Tyrone***

A dry, rather dull day greeted the South Tyrone Foxhounds for their meet at Mallon's

Bar, outside Ardboe, providing a dry welcome to Horse and Hound correspondent

Martha Terry on her first day's hunting in Northern Ireland. Kennel huntsman Richard Perry brought forward 14½ couple of fit hounds for huntsman Martin Laverty MFH who, assisted by amateur whippers-in Nicky Corr and Paul Kinane, brother of retired flat jockey Michael, lead some three dozen riders including the other joint masters, Stephen Hutchinson and Patrick Heffron, to the first draw.



With Creighton Boyd acting as field master, Martin drew publican Dan Dorman's land and almost immediately put a brace afoot. One pilot gave a fast hunt towards the lough shore with hounds quickly into their stride to push him hard until he was lost. Martin Laverty drew along the shore and the other of the brace then broke covert giving another fast hunt through Timmy Shepherd's, from Drumcairn to Stewartstown giving the field a lot to do to keep up. This quickly became a three mile point with hounds in good voice before marking their fox to ground at Stewartstown. We then had a welcome break for refreshments which were very kindly supplied by the Earl and Countess of Castle Stewart, whose estate includes the country's only Presbyterian Chapel. On leaving the estate Martin drew steadily around Mile Walk from where hounds suddenly put their third fox afoot. Unfortunately, after a sharp hunt this fox was headed by car followers and was lost. As light was now beginning to fade and a long hack back to the meet was necessary home was blown.

In later conversation with Martha Terry, she confessed that, not only was this her first experience of hunting



*Sonya Boyd and Hazel Hall with the County Down Hunt – note the clean clothes and horses!*

here, it was also her first experience of jumping wire! She was very glad to be aboard one of Alexander Mills's wire jumpers! This day, the last Saturday in January, had been kind to us in that it was quite mild (unless one stood around for too long) and we can only hope that the remaining weeks of the season are similarly blessed.



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# WHITE HUNTERS

**T**he term White Hunter is seldom used today. In bygone days it described those who ventured forth to hunt the African bush or veldt. The expression originated in the early 1900s from a remark made by Lord Delamere, the man credited with founding the safari industry in Kenya and East Africa. Delamere employed two hunters on his ranch outside Nairobi, one was white and the other was black. The terminology was intended solely to avoid any confusion arising from the fact that the white hunter's name was Alan Black. 'White Hunter' eventually became synonymous with those adventurers and rascals who trekked into unexplored territories, blazed trails and experienced adventures that still stir the imagination. Many passed away to remain forever unknown, others attained notoriety for their sometimes outrageous behaviour, while some left written accounts that provide a wonderful insight into an Africa now long gone. Men such as Bell, Selous, Pretorious, Taylor, Selby and dozens more, became legends in their own lifetimes before the inevitable intervention of poaching and political greed decimated Africa's wildlife to the point of bringing some species close to extinction.

Hunting in Africa increased in popularity during Victorian times. Many books on the subject were published – possibly the most notable being John H. Patterson's 'Lions of Tsavo' – these fired the imagination of young men seeking adventure in far-off darkest Africa. Theodore Roosevelt's book describing his extensive safari generated huge interest in the US. Around the

same time – early 1900s – Walter Dalrymple Maitland Bell, better known as 'Karamojo' Bell, was hunting elephant to an extent that would be considered shocking by today's standards. The demand for ivory was insatiable, particularly from Asian countries and fortunes were to be made by those who supplied these markets. Despite the numbers of pachyderm shot by Bell and many others, the herds did not decrease significantly until professional poaching within emerging African states became common. Likewise, as recently as the 1980s Idi Amin's uniformed thugs devastated Uganda's elephant population with heavy calibre machine guns just for the hell of it. Today the results of this slaughter are painfully evident. Uganda's wildlife base is incapable of sustaining a properly managed hunting/conservation programme.

Bell wrote a number of books about his days in Africa and liberally illustrated these with pencil and charcoal sketches of tribesmen and women of the period and also wildlife, providing us with an invaluable record of another era. However, he was a little ahead of the White Hunter era that has been the catalyst for innumerable biographies, novels and of course Hollywood productions. Perhaps the most remarkable of the latter was Sydney Pollock's 'Out of Africa,' based on Karen Blixen's life. Writing under the pen-name Isak Dinensen she described setting out from Denmark for Kenya in the early 1900s with her new husband Baron Broar von Blixen. Blixen turned out to be a bit of a philanderer although he is credited as being one of the great White Hunters, second perhaps only to his nephew Eric Rundgren. Apparently Rundgren wasn't someone to cross although he is recognised as the greatest white hunter of all time. The film also depicts Robert Redford as an English adventurer, Finch-Hatton, who in real life became involved romantically with Karen Blixen while the Baron was away doing whatever philanderers do. The Honourable Denys Finch-Hatton came to hunting

later in life and did indeed fly a yellow Gypsy Moth biplane as depicted in the film. The Delameres also featured in the story. Other Hollywood attempts to cash in on the period include major movies starring Stewart Grainger, Clark Gable and Gregory Peck as White Hunters. None of these portrayed the real Africa effectively and don't compare well with Pollock's film.

An almost imperceptible common thread links many of the White Hunters, starting in the period when Bell was still active. The acknowledged father of safari hunting, Lord Delamere, would have known Bell as did his white hunter





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Alan Black. Other notables around those days such as Frederick Selous and Major P.J. Pretorius were also to leave their mark. Both, along with many other hunters, campaigned in the locality against German East Africa during WW1. Pretorius achieved renown for his remarkable feat in locating and helping to destroy the German warship *Konigsberg* when it was hidden in Rufiji River delta. Following this it appears that a price was put on his head. In two separate incidents Pretorius was stood down at the last minute when he was due to take foot patrols on scouting missions. The white officer commanding each patrol was killed by a sniper. On a third occasion Selous was substituted for Pretorius and he too was killed by a sniper. Clearly the Major was a marked man. Today the Rufiji meanders through Tanzania's Selous National Park, named to commemorate the man who first explored and opened up the area. The Pretorius family still possesses a rifle presented to them by the Selous family after WW1. Author Wilbur Smith used the sinking of the German warship in his novel *Shout at the Devil* which also screened as an adventure movie starring Roger Moore and Lee Marvin.

### ***The safari business boomed***

In the years between the world wars East Africa's safari business boomed and countless hunters from around Europe and the USA booked hunts with the White Hunters. These trips were mainly of 3 months duration and everything necessary for subsistence in remote areas had to be carried in both the hunting car and a back-up lorry. Once the convoy ran out of dirt road as it ventured into uncharted wilderness, obstacles or impediments such as rivers and bogged-down vehicles needed to be overcome. The White Hunter had to be a manager, medic, mechanic, armourer, game hunter and trail blazer (no maps) as well as the provider of all things required to keep body and soul together. The comforts of home were mainly a canvas tent for sleeping in, cookhouse tent, long drop toilet and an ablution system operated by one of the African crew constantly pouring hot water heated on a nearby fire into a 'shower.' An old oil drum with holes in the base, probably made by gunfire, was slung from a convenient branch and complete with a canvas screen for ladies, comprised the camp bush-shower facility. Sometimes a reliable client was allowed to shoot antelope for camp rations. All too often when hunting, a client wounded an animal that had to be followed up and when dangerous game was involved, the White Hunter was obliged put his life on the line. Some were killed in these pursuits and others seriously injured or maimed. Many White Hunters were notorious for their antics on returning from a safari. Letting off steam involved outrageous behaviour like riding horses into the local hotel bar, sometimes shooting-up the place Wild West style. Horse play and brawls were not uncommon. The sensible ones saved their money in order to buy ranches on which to retire.

### ***He grunted a one-liner***

The connecting thread continued after WW2 and is still evident today. Lord Delamere's White Hunter, Alan Black, remained in the business until just before the war. In the post war era he retired to a small house outside Nairobi where he lived a semi-reclusive existence. A safari operator visiting him around 1946 was accompanied by a young professional hunter about to set out in his chosen career. Overawed in Black's presence, the youngster finally ventured to speak and timidly asked Black about Karamoja Bell. Black grunted a one-liner to the effect that Bell's only mistake was to write books. Harry Selby who was about to enter the business of conducting safaris had established the link between three generations of hunters of world renown. Selby wasn't aware then that in a few short years he would become the best known White Hunter on the planet. American author Robert Ruark would see to that in numerous books recording his African adventures. Times moved on and the term White Hunter has become unfashionable - Professional Hunter (PH) is the accepted job description today.

Several years ago, a PH with a very Irish surname, Toon, presented me with a book for my birthday. 'The Ivory Trail' is the story of another extraordinary character that had spent most of his life in the Rhodesian wilderness - JC Barnard - better known as the ivory poacher Bvekenya. Barnard is reputed to have endlessly pursued the largest elephant ever recorded, Dhlulamithi - it too was a legend in its own lifetime. Dhlulamithi, Shangaan for "taller than the trees" and well known throughout a vast area, was the target of many luckless ivory hunters/poachers. The book is a romantic record of Barnard's life in general and how he spent many years in the 1930s attempting to track down Dhlulamithi. The author, TV Bulpin, also an experienced hunter went on to pen a further 10 books about an Africa that was disappearing rapidly. At the time I did not grasp the significance of John Toon's gift - it was a first edition, published in 1954 and in mint condition. Recently an article in the popular South African shooting magazine, *Magnum*, outlined how Bulpin tracked down an ageing Barnard in the bush in the early 1950s and persuaded him to tell his story for posterity. An accompanying photograph shows Bulpin interviewing Barnard at his tented encampment. Toon had known both men in his youth and only after reading that article did the real value of his gift finally dawn on me.

Today's PH's carry on the tradition and business of the White Hunters. Few of the greats are still with us although Harry Selby is hale and hearty, living in Maun, Botswana. His son Mark is carrying on in the business and as luck would have it I met a well-known Kenyan wildlife artist, Paul Augustinus, in Johannesburg last year. He and Mark Selby are lifelong friends and he invited me to join them on safari this year. Wouldn't that be something!



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# Another successful year for the Wild Deer Association of Ireland

**T**he Wild Deer Association of Ireland (WDAI) 30th AGM took place on 14 May 2011 in Kilcoran Lodge Hotel, Cahir, Co. Tipperary. Officers elected were Billy O'Regan President, David Dunne Chairman, Tom O'Donnell Vice Chairman, Damien Hannigan Hon Secretary, Teresa O'Hea Treasurer, Eddie Graef Safety Officer, Pat Scully PRO in addition 24 committee members from all regions were elected. The association's membership continued to grow strongly with 83 new members from all areas of the country since the last AGM and 2010/11 was by far the busiest year the association had experienced, with the association representing its members on many important issues, along with hosting and taking part in numerous events.

## *Meeting with the Department of Environment*

Following an invitation from the then Minister for the Environment, John Gormley the WDAI met with senior officials from the Department of the Environment on 12 January. The meeting was very productive and covered a number of important issues raised by WDAI members such as the need for a National Deer Strategy, the dramatic increase in Deer Poaching, the introduction of a Tagging System, the impact of the recent severe weather conditions on our wild deer, the need to review the process of issuing Section 42 permits and more, a follow up meeting is been planned to progress these matters further with the new Minister Jimmy Deenihan TD

## *Survey of Deer Stalkers and Foresters*

The WDAI undertook a national survey of its members and foresters in January, with the survey findings been presented to the Department of the Environment. The survey received an excellent response from all regions. Some of the findings were 88% of Deer Stalkers and 58% of Foresters had seen a reduction in deer numbers, 81% of Deer Stalkers and 73% of Forest Managers had seen an increase in Deer Poaching.

## *Pledges from the main Political Parties*

Prior to the last General Election the WDAI sought



*Some of the Red and Sika deer heads on display at the AGM.* and received support from all the main political parties who gave written pledges that they will support Hunting and all Field Sports and will vote against legislation that harms or restricts Hunting and Field Sports activities.

The pledges were: 1. You support Hunting and all Field Sports; 2. You will vote against legislation that harms or restricts Hunting and Field Sports; 3. You support calls for a National Deer Management strategy to be implemented without delay; 4. You support calls to address the current Deer Poaching epidemic and agree to take immediate action on entering government to address this illegal activity. The WDAI are actively working to ensure these pledges are delivered.

## *Wild Deer Conference*

Following the efforts of a number of organisations, such as the Wild Deer Association of Ireland and Woodlands of Ireland to promote the need for a National Deer Management Strategy in recent years, a conference was held on 2 April in the Hudson Bay Hotel, Athlone. The WDAI co-organised and supported this inaugural Wild Deer Conference, with the event being well supported and financed by members of the WDAI. The theme of the conference was 'Is it Possible to Build Consensus on a National Deer Management Strategy?' Over 160 attended from all sectors including forestry, landowners and those involved in deer management. Following presentations by a number of speakers on various topics, a number of proposals were made including that the role of the Deer Alliance which has been successfully in existence since 2001 to over the





*WDA Chairman David Dunne presents the award for Best Overall Head to Noel Callan.*

Hunter Competence Assessment Programme (HCAP) be extended to incorporate all outstanding and relevant stakeholders, to oversee a national deer management strategy with an independent chair person to be appointed. Currently all proposals are being explored.

### **National and International Recognition**

At a national level the WDAI continues to be respected and acknowledged as a leading authority on wild deer and as a national representative body for deer stalkers in Ireland. This status receives similar recognition internationally through their membership of FACE Ireland and CIC International. FACE is recognised by the European Commission as the main discussion partner, representing Europe's 7 million hunters, whereas, CIC International represents hunters in over 80 countries around the world.

### **New initiatives and future events**

The WDAI launched a number of important initiatives to support legitimate deer stalkers and protect the reputation of deer-stalking. "Report a Wildlife Crime" will allow the reporting of wildlife crimes such as deer poaching, through the associations website [www.wilddeerireland.com](http://www.wilddeerireland.com) or by completing a questionnaire, each report will be logged and followed up by the relevant authorities.

Members were informed reports of Road Traffic Accidents involving deer or "Deer RTA's" are on the increase, as our growing motorway network impacts on existing deer habitat and the range of our deer herds expands. Were a human fatality to happen resulting from a Deer RTA, this could create a negative and alarmist impression of wild deer, with possible negative consequences for deer-stalking. Deer Awareness Ireland has begun to identify, Deer RTA's hotspots, along with

educating road users, road planners and County Councils on the corrective actions required to reduce deer RTA's.

The WDAI will also host or support a number of events over the coming months. On 21 to 24 July the WDAI have organised a coach to the CLA Game Fair in the UK, the package covers accommodation, travel, tickets, contact Dominic O'Hea 086 8120442 for further details. The WDAI will also have a stand at the Ballinlough Castle, Westmeath 16/17 July and Birr Castle, Game Fair Offaly 27/28 August.

The association's annual shoot is to be held on 14 August at the Midlands Rifle Range, Co Offaly and a second carcass handling seminar will be held in Roscrea during October. For further details on all events go [www.wilddeerireland.com/events](http://www.wilddeerireland.com/events)

In conjunction with the AGM the association's annual trophy exhibition was held for outstanding trophy taken during the previous season - the winners were for Best Fallow to Paul Fletcher, Tipperary - Best Sika to Fran Lynch, Wexford - Best Red Deer to Christopher Marron, Monaghan - Most Unusual to John Clooney, Laois - Best Overall to Noel Callan, Louth.

In memory of former Chairman John Creedon, the John Creedon Memorial Award for Wildlife Photography sponsored by Countryside Alliance Ireland (CAI) was presented. The competition was judged by renowned Wildlife Photographers Fran Byrne and Brendan Devitt, Wicklow, with Peter Bacon from CAI presenting the first prize to Paul Hogan, Tipperary, who captured a fantastic image of a Fallow Doe. There were also a number of exhibitors and a display of African game species for members to view.

All those who contributed to the associations growing success were acknowledged and thanked.



*Peter Bacon presents the John Creedon Memorial Award to Paul Hogan.*



# Two Scottish Gems



*Taychreggan Hotel*

**I** was thinking of 'a wee tour' of some of the rivers I had fished over the past half century and that meant at least a week in the glorious surroundings of north west Scotland. Now while I am definitely not in the first flush of youth, I would still be game for a Hell-for-leather trip with the objective of fishing, fishing, fishing and little required in the realm of home comforts. However, this was different as I was to be accompanied by my wife, Pamela, which meant a little luxury was required to make up for the less exotic accommodation near the rivers. The plan was to make a couple of stops en route to and from the fishing, one going and the other at the end of what would be, hopefully, a successful angling expedition.

A short hop using Stena's HSS from Belfast, we soon skirted Glasgow and Loch Lomond to a beautiful corner of Argyll, heading first for Taychreggan Hotel, to spend a couple of days before the trip down fishing's memory lane.

The hotel lay down the most wonderfully secluded

winding road, glimpsing Loch Awe as it shimmered through the trees. Like magic the hotel materialised, nestling loch-side, surrounded by woods filled with wild flowers. Every inch a lodge, complete with private jetty, Loch Awe was a mere cast away past the manicured lawns. Things looked promising!

Warmly welcomed by John Preyde, Assistant Manager, we settled into our sumptuous room. The hotel boasts 18 rooms, including the luxurious Sonachan Master Suite, two rooms with spacious sitting room and a bedroom complete with four poster bed, complimented by an en-suite bathroom and spa bath. We had one of the junior suites, delightfully furnished to the very highest standard with Kingsize bed and a wonderful south-facing loch view. The ultimate 'room with a view' perhaps? A spacious bathroom, separate showers along with stand-alone bathtub ... well you get the picture. The rest of the hotel's accommodation includes standard rooms and superior rooms and, taking a peek in each, our view is that each offers something that so often is lacking elsewhere - sheer quality.

## ***Falconry and an orangerie surprise***

A shower later, we met falconer Hugh MacNeill, for an inspired demonstration of free flying his Harris Hawk. Soon, sun dipping, it was time for a dram in the light and airy Lounge Bar, next he courtyard orangerie, and a perfect place to relax. Over 50 single malt whiskies are there to be sampled and the hotel claim it's possibly the finest range on the West Coast of Scotland.

Chef Colin Cairns offers imaginative, beautifully presented food with a contemporary European theme. Using Scottish home grown products, Taychreggan has won many accolades, including two AA rosettes. We were spoilt for choice, an appetiser or Chilled Cucumber & Melon soup. We had one of each - superb. Starters were Warm Salad of Stornoway Black Pudding, Goats



*Falconer Hugh MacNeill displaying his Harris Hawk.*





*Taychreggan's spacious dining room had superb views.*

Cheese and Red Onion Confit, while my wife said her Inverawe Smoked Trout with Trout Caviar could not be bettered. Main courses were Breast of Guinea Fowl, Savoy Cabbage, Rosti, Caramelised Celeriac Puree, Glazed Shallots and Thyme for me, while Pamela chose Pan Roasted halibut, Wilted Greens, Buttered Asparagus, Seared Scallops, and Sauternes Sauce. Everything was cooked to perfection and, despite the attractive sweet menu, we decided leaving that option until the following evening. Skipping coffee, we retired to plan the next day's activities.

### ***Spoilt for choice for things to see and do***

A glance at the Hotel's literature showed that despite its wonderfully remote location (it's known as 'Scotland's Most Romantic Hotel') there was much to see and do. Surrounded by mountain grandeur, loch, forests and an abundance of wildlife, it's an ideal location for walking, fishing, touring or just relaxing. If you want something different, falconry, ferreting, archery, clays, or that most Scottish of activities, deer stalking is available at Taychreggan. Close by, award-winning photographer Philip Price teaches wildlife technique during a day-long

adventure. Striding out, there are Munros to climb, golf at Taynuilt and here's a novelty, you can tour the West Highlands with Lord Gray as your personal guide/chauffeur. There are the magnificent Lochawe forests to visit and cruises on Loch Etive and ferrys from Oban to Mull. Castles, standing stones and Neolithic museums are in the area too but, as we were only staying briefly, we could fit in everything, opting for some sightseeing, boating and a little falconry.

Summing up the Taychreggan experience is simple: excellent by any comparisons! It's delightfully peaceful, yet surrounded by a host of things to do and see. The accommodation is magnificent, food excellent and the views, well words fail me. As a holiday destination for



*Loch Awe was a stone throw away.*

something quintessentially Scottish, it's highly recommend.

But there were loughs and rivers to fish, as we bade farewell in the blue tinged sunshine of a fine Scottish morning. That trip was to be eventful as readers will discover in a later article, but next the Creggans Inn.

The weather had been wonderful all week, and as we headed homeward we were looking forward to what the Creggans Inn might offer. Peeling off the main road just

*The Creggans Inn has a long history of hospitality.*



north of Loch Lomond and heading for Loch Fyne, mountains, buzzards and a return to a more leisurely pace saw us along Loch Fyne heading towards Strachur. It was hard to believe we were just an hour and a half from Glasgow's bustle. A stone's throw from the water's edge was Creggans Inn, owned and run by Archie and





*Each of the Creggan's rooms had its own charm.*

Gill MacLellan and from the warm welcome on arrival to the morning's farewell their hospitality was wonderful.

This historic hotel offers award-winning food, an enthusiast's wine list and stylish, individually furnished rooms. You not see better: colours and decor are, well, classy for want of a better word.

Throughout the hotel, its historical past blends with a modern touch. Our journey had been a little delayed and there was just time for a shower before a pre-dinner drink in MacPhunn's Bar - named after a local sheep stealer who was hanged for his deeds but his corpse staged a remarkable recovery as it was rowed across the Loch. The cosy bar with log fire is friendly and comfortable with Cask Ales and a generous range of malt whiskies spoilt us for choice. The restaurant next to the bar serves everything from snacks to steaks. Dinner in the Loch Fyne Dining Room, with its five picture windows overlooking the hotel garden and the loch beyond, another elegant room indeed. The terracotta walls, hung with fine antique prints, discreet ceiling lighting and a bleached pine floor, set off the round tables dressed with crisp white linen. Posies of home grown flowers decorated the tables.



*The unique MacPhunn's Bar was full of character.*

## Fine dining

For starters, Pamela selected Loch Fyne Scallops with soft herb salad, parsley oil and crispy artichokes, while I had Guinea Fowl and Forest Mushroom Roulade with pear chutney. The Cauliflower Soup with Cumin was probably the best I have ever tasted, followed by

Roast Loin of Scottish Lamb with rosemary braised potatoes, roast shallots, butternut squash puree and a port & basil jus for us both. Toasted Almond Pannacotta with roasted peaches and orange caramel and a portion of Dark Chocolate and Coffee Torte with home-made fresh mint ice-cream were the sweet choices. With a selection of fine Cheeses, Coffee or Tea and Petit Fours to finish, diners are in a gastronomic paradise.

Creggans is well placed for walking in and around Strachur, such as The Cowal Way, Glenbranter Forrest and Puck's Glen while nearby are Strachur House and the Flower Gardens. In front of the hotel, you'll spot Oystercatchers, Herons and Cormorants, while out to sea you may see Porpoises and Seals. Fishing is available, Mackerel from the pier in front of the hotel (sea rods can be borrowed from the hotel) or for the more ambitious, Dunoon and District Angling Club can help organise a day's fishing. There are several golf clubs in the area and there are facilities nearby for boat charter and more. You can explore Ardkinglas Woodland Garden boasting the 'Mightiest Conifer in Europe' and Benmore Botanic Gardens includes a world-famous collection of magnificent conifers, rhododendrons and exotic shrubs and trees and spectacular Avenue of Giant Redwoods.

Next day, despite the previous night's feasting, we could not resist a full Scottish breakfast (well it would be impolite to say no) before the journey home. Our two stopovers had been excellent. While both hotels were very different, each offered a unique experience. The similarity was 'sheer unadulterated quality! And you can't expect better than that!'



*Casting from the nearby pier.*

For further information on The Taychreggan Hotel visit [www.taychregganhotel.co.uk](http://www.taychregganhotel.co.uk) and for Creggans Inn visit [www.creggans-inn.co.uk](http://www.creggans-inn.co.uk)



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*The old dog knew her job.*

# A true survivor

**L**et's take our hats off to the rabbit. We owe him a lot, for the rabbit has provided generation after generation with sport, fur, food and much more besides. As much as I hunt the poor old rabbit, I have the deepest respect for him. No animal has been hunted like it, and if they had, none certainly would have survived. Every hand was turned against him; snared, trapped, shot, hunted with ferrets, netted, lamped, gassed, poisoned, been caught with Birds of Prey and had diseases created to wipe him out. Yet the rabbit is alive in great abundance. What other animal could withstand this? None is the answer; a true survivor. Many people scoff at

rabbiting, thinking maybe it's a bit of a soft old game, or it's had its day, but there is no greater sport in my book. The rabbiting game is an art all on its own; there aren't many other types of hunting where one can hunt the same quarry in so many different ways. It's true to say the rabbit catcher must have many strings to his bow if he is to be truly successful. He must learn to ferret with nets and to work nets by night. Where this will not work, he must learn to snare, and if this isn't possible then he must train his dogs to work by night and sometimes use a gun. What other quarry requires such versatility? Should a farmer be having trouble with deer eating

crops, a stalker and gun would solve his problem. A rat catcher armed with poison could easily solve a rat problem. When the farmer calls upon the rabbit catcher, a man armed with ferrets, nets, traps, guns, dogs and sometimes birds of prey must be found! This is a tribute to the rabbit, because this array of skills and equipment is often what is required to thin his population somewhat. And with all this work, thinning is usually all we can do. As I said: a true survivor.

Some years ago I offered help to a



*The young ferrets did well.*





*Holding fast in the longnet.*

farming friend. It was a relatively small farm, but the rabbit population was huge and it was causing him serious problems with crop damage. I immediately set to work with my longnets. Night after night for some weeks I dropped nets on various parts of the farm and took some great hauls of rabbits by darkness. But then things changed, the rabbits shifted their feeding patterns. I noticed a decline in numbers caught in the nets, but no difference in the numbers out feeding when lamping. I watched carefully and discovered the rabbits appeared to have got wise to the longnet and were taking different routes home. My theory proved correct when I shifted my netting areas. The rabbits were still causing problems on areas I couldn't net, so this called for another method, the dog! My old bitch Ruby was in her prime and we spent the next few weeks lamping. Ruby in her younger days was an outstanding lamper and still is albeit slightly slower and a little arthritic! For the first few nights many of our catches were squatters, laying tight to the ground in the beam of light, hoping not to be seen. Ruby stalks up the beam like a cat, slowly, until she strikes like an anaconda and returns the rabbit to my hand for dispatch. For almost two weeks we lamped until they became 'lamp shy' knowing full well danger is imminent! This makes it difficult for the dog as the rabbits feed closer to the holes and are gone before the dog hits second gear.

So, with nets and dog pretty much done for, the next option was snaring. This proved one of the most successful methods, although time consuming as it's necessary to check

the wires once every 24 hours to avoid any unnecessary suffering. I tend to check them every 12 hours, more if it's possible. I set fence snares and also set on the runs. During one week I accounted for over 60 rabbits on one fence line. Snaring is an art all on its own and not one I claim to be an expert at, but fence snaring is an easy way. Where the real experts stand out is on runs, wide open grass fields that test anyone. There's an old tale I hear far too often 'set them four fingers high.' I can tell you here and now that that's nonsense. Snares must be up six inches at least from the ground, higher in taller grass. Watch a rabbit moving along a run and you see how high he actually is. Eventually, the rabbits became wise to the snares, and I began catching less so it was time for another method.

### ***A purse net on a frosty morning***

As a ferreter for almost 20 years I still find it exciting every time I slip a ferret below a purse net on a ditch on a frosty morning. My heart still races every time I hear that familiar thump below ground and old Ruby twitches her head, staring at the ground as if she can see what's going on. Then, as you think nothing is going to happen, the bushes rustle and a fast footed coney is high tailing it up the field with the dog in pursuit. I love nothing more than seeing one of my dogs in high speed pursuit of a rabbit, sometimes its over quick and the dogs returns, sides heaving with the rabbit in its mouth and other times the rabbit makes the dog look like a fool. We began to ferret the same farm we had been netting and snaring now for a few weeks, but it wasn't going to be easy. The majority of warrens were deep in cover, thick bramble, impossible to net. So now to use the trusty old dog and shot guns. A reliable and



*Watching carefully for coney!*

trustworthy marking dog is invaluable, saving countless time netting empty warrens. Ruby pushes her head into the entrances of warrens which are holding rabbits, and those that aren't she will ignore. It's not a unique skill, and almost every dog regardless of breed will do it, it's just learning their body language and what they are telling you as every dog will mark different. I have younger bitches that simply stand over the holes and stare to indicate presence, while others will scratch at the entrance.

### ***Fleeing rabbits test any gun***

Within a few minutes of the ferrets entering these bramble infested warrens we had shots going off. Fleeing rabbits are a great test for any gun and a great way for me to waste cartridges as I haven't been blessed with shooting skills at fast moving quarry! We ferreted this way for several Saturdays, but the rabbits began to stop bolting. They became wise to the ferrets and the armed response unit waiting outside! It never takes long before the rabbits catch on to what's going on, and especially so when guns are involved. I managed a few more cleaner warrens on my own with long nets and my dogs, but this was only possible to an extent because of the thick cover. Within a few weeks I had taken 385 rabbits off the farm. There was a noticeable reduction and I continued with the snares and added cage traps and Fenn Mk6 traps to my arsenal.

It was now almost spring and the rabbit numbers were really at their lowest ebb. A quick scan with the lamp revealed six pairs of eyes looking back and the farmer seemed pleased with my efforts. The numbers were now acceptable, the grass that was once eaten 100 yards out from the fence had grown back and the flower beds in the gardens hadn't received much battering.

I left the rabbits alone for the summer as I always do. The farmer didn't pay much attention and informed that there was only the odd rabbit about and, sure enough, my nighttime checks only revealed a couple at the most. Winter passed and I didn't hunt the farm at all, the numbers were too low and they weren't doing much harm. Summer arrived and strangely enough, so did Myxomatosis. A walk with my dogs one summer morning revealed several sitting out on the fields, eyes swollen shut and unable to move. Mixy is a cruel disease and I was certain my days at the farm were over.

For the next few months I didn't see one rabbit and over the following winter they seemed to vanish completely. I don't like to see the numbers low, but when someone asks for help in controlling them what can you do and the Myxomatosis had finished them off; it was a shame, yet something we could do nothing about. Just recently at the start of spring, I was driving past the farm and a young rabbit shot across the lane and I swerved to miss him. A quick check with the lamp on the way home in darkness revealed at least two dozen rabbits sitting out on the fields feeding, the same place that one year prior appeared devoid of rabbits. I thought that Myxomatosis had wiped them out, but as I said at the beginning, the rabbit really is a true survivor.

**Steven McGonigal will displaying his skills in the main arena, at the Great Game Fairs of Ireland at Shanes Castle, Antrim and Birr Castle, Co Offaly. He will also be carrying out displays of netmaking on the Irish Country Sports and Country Life magazine stand.**



*The whippet after a night's sortie.*



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# The Dog That Went To Sea

**I**n my distant past I lived for five years in the village of Aunascaul, County Kerry, on the Dingle Peninsula. This was a quiet, picturesque place and although long established, the village only came to fame recently when Tom Crean, the legendary explorer of the South Polar regions with Scott and Shackleton, finally achieved real fame by crossing several glaciers and ice fields and drinking a pint of Guinness in a TV Ad. The changing seasons in West Kerry were marked by the arrival of and the departure of tourists. Easter brought the first of the foreign visitors but for anyone interested in shooting there was the agonisingly long wait until September for the grouse and snipe. By mid November, the antennae were up and then the word spread 'The 'Cock are in!' From then until the last day of January, everything else had to be manoeuvred around woodcock shooting and the shooting was only mighty.

Mervyn did do a bit of shooting, but, unlike the rest of us, he was not driven. He was a good shot, but you could see that his heart was not really in it. So, when he got this big red setter from a Mr. Hogan in Tralee, we all perked up. Was this to be the making of Mervyn? How good was the dog? How was he in cover? It didn't matter a hoot how good your dog was in open country, if he didn't enter cover and produce woodcock, and those shootable, I may say, he was deemed a failure. Well, Bruno was a bitter failure from the start. We

hunted then with Irish and English setters and every dog had to enter, point, and produce woodcock-otherwise he was discarded. Springers? We didn't have any; they were regarded as an old man's dog, but the pointing dog had the advantage of setting game in the open also and especially grouse on the high hills and snipe on the bogs. There were no wild pheasant in the locality at that time

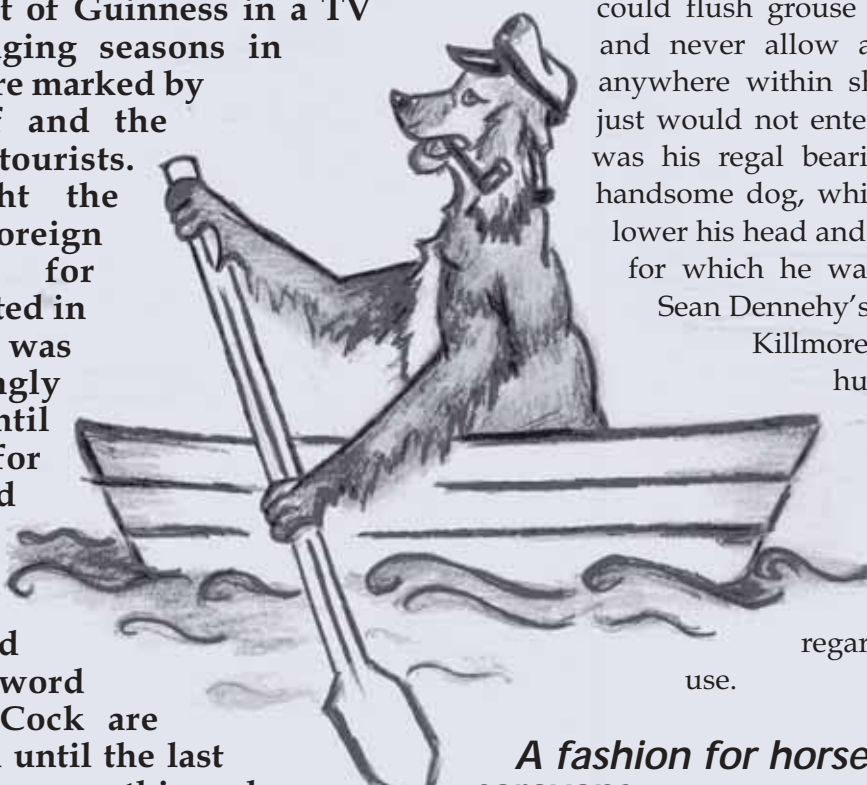
Bruno had size and pace. In fact, he could flush grouse and snipe all day and never allow anyone to get up anywhere within shooting range. He just would not enter cover. Perhaps it was his regal bearing, for he was a handsome dog, which forbade him to lower his head and hunt in conditions for which he was not bred. I saw

Sean Dennehy's P.D. Pal Grouse of Killmore at 11 years of age hunting and beating

cover for woodcock as good as any springer or lab.

If he hadn't he would have been regarded as being of no

use.



## *A fashion for horse-drawn caravans*

Anyway, Bruno was quickly abandoned and allowed the freedom of the village where he strolled each day, looking imperious. When he walked down the street, always on the footpath, lesser dogs would try to block his passage, but a withering look 'like curs a glance had brought to heel' sent these on their way and he ruled his domain in kingly fashion.

In West Kerry, there was a fashion for horse-drawn caravans among the tourists. These caravans were based in Castleisland and were designed to cater for tourists who wanted to laze away their holidays in slow movement through the beautiful scenery and step, for a time, out of



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the world's rat race. That, truth to tell, only happened in fine weather, but they all gnashed their teeth and said that this was most enjoyable even when it was belting rain down on top of them. And, truth to tell again, it rained a lot. The horses, Irish Draughts, were as cute as any Kerryman and could sometimes stop dead on the road and refuse to budge and, if they got the chance during the night, could slip their bonds and head home to Castleisland leaving stranded continentals bewildered and as they did not speak the lingo to any great degree, there was often more than a little confusion and chaos.

Into the village one evening came such a caravan, drawn by such a horse and it stopped for the night. Mervyn kindly and chivalrously gave grazing to the horse for the night and the two French girls decided to stay for an extra day, both to rest the horse and to admire the beautiful dog *Ne C'est Pas?* They fed him tidbits and bigger bits and Bruno was their slave and they felt that they could not leave and abandon him. So Mervyn told them that they could take the dog as a present. "Oh, La La!" But they then demurred: "If we take ze dog perhaps there is ze possibility that we must also take ze man, alors?"

Mervyn, still a bachelor at this time, got thick, I mean he got really mad. He told the girls to take their something horse and their something, something caravan and to depart pronto and that he wouldn't give them the dog in a fit. The girls left in a hurry in their caravan, drawn by a horse that was still in no hurry, but the dog remained, but only for a time because his exit visa had now been prepared.

### ***Over indulgence in drink***

I digress, but only for a short time. The Dispensary Doctor was Dr. Hector, a man of many parts and moods. He was particularly fond of wearing a fur-lined cap with ear flaps and of blowing a referee's stop whistle at peculiar times. He had been all over the world. He had served as Ship's Doctor in the British Merchant Navy and had been shipwrecked twice, after one occasion he had had to assume command as all the ship's Officers were incapacitated through an over indulgence in drink which might reasonably explain the cause of a shipwreck. He told me of one searing memory he had, that of seeing slaves, chained together on the pier in Shanghai and he would never forget the look of despair on their faces. I remember him calling to our flat very late one night with some drink taken and enquiring if I

rode horses well. At the affirmative he said that he had arranged a day's hunting for both of us with the County Limerick Hounds. He was especially fond of Limerick people as he maintained that the richness of the soil came out in the people and how right he was! Probably because of his years at sea, he was not an early riser and only appeared after the sun was well over the yardarm. No. 1 son, now an A panel judge and Committee Member of The Red Setter Club and Hon. Secretary of the Pointer & Setter Championship was then about two and well able to speak. As the only child at that end of town, he was well coached by some of the locals who took a keen delight in bribing the child with sweets and ice cream and then going to Dr. Hector's bedroom window where the good physician was exhorted to rise in language that would make a sailor blush!

Anyway, Dr. Hector took the dog from Mervyn and presented him to a friend in Valentia Island. Bruno took to island life with gusto. He was free to roam where his fancy took under his him. He often wandered down to the quay at Knightstown where all the fishermen knew him and there was always the chance of a tidbit from these. Time passed and the dog that was a fixture in island life suddenly vanished. He disappeared without trace, but there was no alarm at first, maybe he was visiting some female of the species or had found some other source of amusement. Certainly he could not get off the island under his own power as there was yet no bridge to Portmagee, but he could not be found.

Two days passed and then some locally based trawlers returned to port and each reported meeting a homeward bound Spanish trawler steering a South by South-East course for The Azores. This was a massive boat which dwarfed their vessels, but what caught the attention of each crew was that there was a big red setter standing on the prow and barking at them as they went by! Wheels turned. The Guards contacted their headquarters who contacted the Department of Justice who contacted the Department of the then External Affairs who brought in the Spanish Ambassador who contacted his Government in Madrid and the whole system of contacts was reversed. The dog was eventually returned by another Spanish trawler that was bound for Northern waters and the whole affair was quietly dropped.

Bruno lived out his life in tranquillity after that. It is not known if he produced any offspring, but it is unlikely as there would have been few, if any, of his breed on the island. In any event, no further international incidents were reported.



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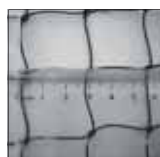
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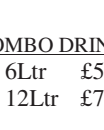
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# Extract from the National Woodcock Association of Ireland's Annual Report 2010/2011

**W**oodcock appeared in good numbers during early part of the season, November woodcock were spread across most of the country with reports indicating birds in most counties. Woodcock are weather responsive birds and by the end of November a lot of woodcock had arrived in Ireland due to very cold weather driving them from their breeding grounds. Then came December and the resulting devastating severe cold and snow. As we all now know the month of December was a disaster for probing birds and in particular woodcock. Sub zero temperatures and feet of snow dominated the landscape for more than three weeks. Woodcock were seen in the most unusual of places trying desperately to find some form of food supply, many survived but it is possible that many did not. The wing returns would suggest that juvenile woodcock, which is birds in their first year, did not overcome the protracted cold spell as they did not appear in the normal numbers in the wing analysis. Wing returns from members were down in numbers, perhaps because of the ban in December or due to a number of woodcock hunters not pursuing woodcock in January? Unfortunately an extension to the hunting season was granted by the NPWS for the month of February to hunt pheasant, but there were many reports of woodcock being shot during this extension and evidenced by fresh woodcock appearing in game dealers premises during this month.



2009 as an adult woodcock. We have sent the wing for isotope analysis to determine the country of origin of the bird; this will give us an indication of the direction it took to get to Co Clare. This season we analysed some birds on weight and these are the results.

## **November:**

13 Adults with a total weight of 4617grms, the average weight was 255.1grms

10 Juveniles with a total weight of 3250grms, the average weight was 325grms

8 birds not aged, a total weight of 2712grms, the average weight was 339grms

The average bird weight for November from these returns was 341.2grms.

## **December:**

14 Adults with a total weight of 4505grms, the average weight was 328.9grms

9 Juveniles with a total weight of 2823grms, the average weight was 313.6grms

36 birds not aged, a total weight of 11559grms, the average weight was 321grms

The average bird weight for December from these returns was 321.8grms.

## **January:**

19 Adults with a total weight of 6504grms, the average weight was 342.3grms

18 Juveniles with a total weight of 5978grms, the average weight was 332.1grms

62 birds not aged, a total weight of 20388grms, the average weight was 328.8grms

## **Thanks**

The association would like to thank the following for their assistance and contributions:

Association of Game Shoot Operators of Ireland; Albert Titterington; Charles Cooper; Michael Bailey; David Wilkinson; Our members; Des Crofton. (NARGC); Dr. Jean Paul Boidot. (FANBPO); Neville Atkinson. (Atkinson Brothers); George Kelly. (Millard Brothers Ireland Ltd.); Declan Cooney; Declan Manley; and all those who supplied woodcock wings.

## **Ringed Woodcock**

We received only one report of a ringed woodcock this season, this woodcock was taken in Co Clare by a member of the association Mr Eamonn Giblin. The woodcock was shot on the 22nd January 2011 and it was ringed in the Isle of May Fife Scotland on 30th October





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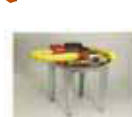
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*Watching, listening for the geese chattering on the wind.*

# The Annual Goose Shoot

**T**hings were different this year, with the snow and very cold spell disrupting the wildfowling bookings up and down the country. Instead of our usual pre-Christmas goose trip we had to arrange something for after the New Year. As some of us had never shot the Solway area and for others it was many years since they had we decided that, for a change, we would search out some shooting in the Dumfries and Galloway region. After many phone calls that resulted in fruitless enquiries, Guy eventually managed to source some goose shooting on the Logan estate by simply driving around looking for geese on fields, and then asking locally who we would need to ask to arrange a morning at them. A chance encounter with a local fisherman in a fish and chip shop led us to one of the best mornings goose shooting we have ever had, if not the best.

Alan Flynn, the Logan estate head keeper, met us at 06.30 and led us to up to the field we were to shoot over. He had the quad bike with a trailer load of full bodied goose decoys which he drove across the 100 acre field of permanent pasture to the far side and began to set the closest of them up about 30 yards out from the stone wall we were to crouch behind. We walked across carrying our guns, cartridges and flasks of coffee. There was a slight dampness in the air, it was milder than it had been with no frost but the wind had a bite to it as it blew across our faces. Dumping our guns beside the wall we gave a hand to set out the rest of the decoys. It was a good spread of 42 decoys in all, some were mounted on home-made spring steel stands that had them bobbing in the stiff breeze providing some realistic movement to the pattern.

With the light still at the purple stage Alan left us to settle in behind the wall and await the first skein of geese. There was no hurry, it was a good hour before the light would herald the first party of honkers and so we stood in a huddle and discussed tactics over a steaming





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*Some of the 42 decoys needed to be moved.*

predawn and as we stood there talking in low voices the light started to shape the world around us. It was still a dim, blue light but at last we could see the blades of grass at our feet and the decoys stood out like sentinels on the field in front of us and suddenly we could hear the voices of the first skein of geese, faint at first as the sound was whipped away by the sea breeze, then getting stronger. We had all snuck into our places along the wall and were crouched tight to the ground, not looking up so the approaching geese would not see the giveaway white rounded shape of a human face, even though we wore either a balaclava or had a scarf wrapped

around to hide them. mug of coffee and a chunk of Dundee cake. The fine drizzle merely gave a misty outlook to the world and hardly made us damp, it was refreshing to be out in the

around to hide them.

### ***A decision was needed fast***

That first skein made a beeline direct for the field our decoys were on, we had seen plenty of goose droppings on the field when we set the decoys up, but would they choose the same field again? That question was soon answered as they dropped into the valley and landed on the field we were crouching in, next door to the one they had used yesterday. It was more sheltered in the valley on the area they had chosen to land. We had to make a decision and fast as the next skein was already clearly visible of the horizon, approaching from the same direction. A group of live geese chattering away were going to be a bigger draw than our decoys another field away, so I was despatched to stalk down behind the wall and to try to get in a position for a shot as I lifted that first skein off the field. With luck they would circle and come to the decoys. If not, at least the live decoys would have been moved on and give us a better chance with the later skeins.

I got down into the valley without being spotted fairly easily, the stone walls offering good cover. I crossed the gap made by the gate at a crawl and flopped over the wall into the



*The stone wall offered good cover.*



next field, so as to be behind the wall out of sight of the geese. The ground was firm grass and the wall was chest high, making it easy to walk at a crouch and remain hidden from the geese. I had about 100 yards to go when the second skein arrived. They turned into the wind and hovered over the field before dropping their paddles and setting their wings. I crouched tight against the drystone wall and watched through a convenient gap in the stones. When the second lot had landed I started to make my way along the wall to where they were feeding. The decoys on the hill stood out boldly against the skyline but the men hiding at the base of the wall could not be seen.

I made my way to where a water trough was set in the wall, this was as far as I could go, there was no cover from the sharp eyed geese from here on, so took my hat off and moved it about just above the top of the wall. It had the desired effect and the geese all took off, into the wind and towards me. They gained height quickly but came directly over my position. I stood up, picked a goose that was on a direct path over me, swung through from tail to beak and fired as I kept swinging. The goose fell out of the sky like a stone as my no 1s struck home. It was a fair way up too, it took about 3 seconds to hit the ground, but was stone dead. It was a good greylag goose to open my account. The others were already out of range before I could get a second shot off, but I was happy to have the one and to have moved the geese on.

### ***Low, to keep out of sight***

As I watched the now joined skeins swung as one and headed round in a great circle to approach the decoys. The plan had worked and as I started back along the wall I heard shots ring out and saw several geese falling from the sky. The others had got some shooting too, now I just had to make my way back to them. More skeins were coming from the Northwest, in waves of two or



*We return with some from the last skein.*



*Taking a break after the flight*

three at a time, we could see them far out now it was daylight. I had to keep very low to remain out of sight, but the wall was enough cover for me to make ground between skeins that were accompanied by a barrage of shots from the others. They were getting some good shooting up there. I was nearly back to them when my next opportunity arose. Three pinks had broken off from the main skeins and were coming over the valley, approaching the decoys too far from the other guns, but directly in front of me. I crouched behind the wall as they

approached and then there they were, coming right at me no more than 30 yards away and not very high. I had time to let off both barrels and dropped a right and left with number 4s, my usual charge for shooting geese over decoys. That was my trip made.

I walked back to the others carrying my gains and we had time to gather up the fallen geese from the last two skeins. Everyone had shot a goose, but Pierre Fletcher was on his first goose trip, with a borrowed gun and he brought down his first goose with his first shot. Colin, his elder brother, was also on his first goose shoot and he had opened his account too. Guy, their father, was over the moon at his lads getting a goose on their first outing and he felt it was the most memorable goose trip of his life. David Souter, the fifth member of the party, and I go

to shoot geese each year together, so he was no stranger to goose shooting, but even he said he thought it was the best morning at geese he had ever had.

The geese were still coming over so we ducked down again as a skein turned to drop into the decoys. We shot a couple more and then decided we had enough, there were 4 greylags and 12 pinks in the bag beside us and one towered way out that the boys were determined to go and fetch. So as we started to gather everything together they set off to find the downed goose, we had a good mark on it, but it was two huge fields away. They got it though and came back in the now damping mist, and proudly held their prize aloft. It was a fitting end to our annual goose shoot. We have already booked to go back to the Solway for next year.



*A fitting end to the annual goose shoot.*



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# Plus Twos Opening Day at Woodless

**N**ovember 1st is usually a rather jolly day at Woodless and this year should have been no different, but that's not the way at Woodless, not even in the glory days of Aunt Irene. Dixon gets quite excited as the day approaches as he dreams of the great shoots of his youth when he was second footman in the employ of 'The Colonel' and later when Irene took the reins. Unfortunately, this causes a certain amount of stress and tension among the other servants, especially Mrs. Reilly, our rather explosive cook, who has been there as long as Dixon. Purdey was keen to show off his skills acquired during his tenure under old Keane-Handy, but there was plenty of money in that setup. Dixon soon was showing a few prickles every time Purdey mentioned the subject of the shoot lunch and Purdey might have been more careful if he had known Mrs. Reilly a little better. Poor old Dixon knew only too well how his most well meant suggestions would be greeted by cook, so he tried the old strategy of suggesting what he didn't want, so that Mrs. Reilly would do what he really wanted by default. Esso was staying out of it, as she already had her wings clipped over catering at Woodless and said she could do without the hassle anyway.

Eventually, a lunch menu was agreed and Dixon was sorting out who would be staying overnight as we could now offer extra accommodation in Keane-Handy's place and just feed them in Woodless. Tierney, the groom, had seen a way of expanding his own little empire at a recent sale of horse drawn vehicles and persuaded me to buy a horse drawn omnibus and a pair of smart blacks to pull it, so he could transport the guests from Upper to Lower Woodless in style. He even had ideas of taking the assorted wives and girlfriends on a tour to Mullingar, while the guns were blasting their way through our meagre stock of birds, which might cause further

problems with the local constabulary unless we invited Superintendent Farlow.

I retired to the safer territory of the estate office which doubles as Plus Twos' study to start on the guest list, bearing in mind that some had to be asked whether they could or couldn't shoot and others had to be avoided if there were to be any birds left for another day! The twins' godfather, Derek Whittle had to be there, despite his reputation for practical joking and, of course, Timothy Farlow and Judge Delacey to represent the denizens of the law but who else were to grace the drives of Woodless? I thought of the Rector, but fishing was more his sort of thing and the Bishop wouldn't manage to make it as far as the second drive, so there was an opportunity to put Toni, the nymph from the stables into action and see if her live shooting skills would match up to her deftness on the clay ground. I owed Derek Chubb, the fisheries chap, a day out after all the work he had put into the lake. I had to avoid some of the locals who would poach the place until it was empty if they ever got inside the walls of the old estate.

All seemed shipshape and Bristol fashion with the guest list done, lunch organised and even the various sleeping arrangements sorted, when that dreaded instrument, the telephone, started to vibrate and clatter on Plus Twos' desk. I must have been distracted as I grabbed the receiver and admitted that it was Plus Twos, because I suddenly found myself talking to my old Headmaster - and on the subject of Ivan and Sap.

What could they have got up to now? It wasn't quite as bad it is could have been, but they had managed to sneak the famous model shotguns back to school and terrorised not only my old English master, but the otherwise imperturbable teacher of the native tongue better known as 'The Clip' in my day, when he could still dish out a swift smack across the side of any offending





experience of the 'country house shooting party' and what passed for normal at such gatherings.

Everything seemed to be going swimmingly, with cook barely simmering away in the depths of her kitchen and I hadn't heard so much as a squib's worth of argument between herself and Dixon. Purdey and Dillon had managed to do a deal for a couple of hundred extra birds and had even managed to settle them in with the existing stock so we might have a decent bag if the powder shot straight. My only problem was having to face the dear old Headmaster when I collected the twins. But perhaps if I offered to treat him to lunch I might avoid too much trouble?

### ***Start of the Hols***

I headed towards the School in the old shooting brake with a reasonably light heart and a few pounds in my pocket to spring for lunch and all looked to be fair sailing. Plus Twos has something of a reputation for misjudging the time necessary to cover any journey so Esso

*The first two drives went well but inevitably things went downhill.*

head. He suggested that a bottle or two of the old 'Woodless Elixir' might soothe the English master, and an invite to the shoot would keep the custodian of the Gaeilge from revenge at some future date. He also reminded me that I had to collect the blighters at lunchtime as he had declared a half-day for the Halloween weekend and I could take them off his hands for a few days. Purdey and Dillon were busy worrying about the birds and the drives and the pegs and all the rest of the 'field work,' while Esso was becoming concerned about the number of guests who had accepted the overnight invitation - where would she put them all? Perhaps it was just as well that the Rector wasn't invited as Esso was getting concerned that there were going to be a lot of 'doubling up' - even among those who were not as yet tied by the bonds of holy matrimony! You can understand how a man of the cloth would be inclined to view such carry-on especially as he had no real

had me up at the crack of dawn and on the road well before the streets were properly aired. That was the reason that I had to pull in to the pub beside the School for a 'coffee' - just to kill an hour or more before I was due to pick up the twins. Half-days are always a cause for celebration for both pupils and teaching staff, but especially the staff who can look forward to a few days without the torment of their charges and this sometimes tempts them to nip down to the pub for their morning 'coffee.' Seating myself in a quiet corner with a small glass of Jameson and water as I am terrified of drinking anything made from the city water supply unless some sort of antiseptic substance is added - and Jameson tastes a lot better than Jeyes Fluid! Who should walk in but several of my former teachers obviously on the track of a stronger coffee than was available in the Masters' Study and what could I do but offer some hospitality? It was really a sort of apology for the torment I had



inflicted on some of them in past years. In no time at all, my previous misdemeanours had been forgiven if not forgotten and we were on our third - or was it fourth - round and time was passing very easily. Living in the wilds of Woodless is inclined to get you out of the habit of glancing at your watch; nothing happens on time in Woodless! The next thing I knew was that the Headmaster was sitting opposite me enjoying his 'coffee' and asking when I was actually going to take Ivan and Sap off his hands. I managed to collect the blighters and treat them to lunch so that I might have some blotting paper to absorb the Jameson before heading back to Esso and whatever the latest panic was as there would undoubtedly be one as things had gone far too smoothly by Woodless standards.

### ***Pandemonium at Woodless***

Having safely negotiated the motorway out of Dublin, I eventually swung through the gates of Woodless, only to be greeted by a scene resembling a cross between the preparations for D. Day and a state visit. There was a queue of cars and shooting brakes milling around the front of the house and Purdey was wrestling with a dozen or more gundogs, none of which appeared to have any training, but lots of energy. Even Dixon's pox-faced expression was beginning to show the strain, as he had foolishly borrowed that awful brat, Mickey Corrigan, from Dillon to help with the luggage. Mickey is bad enough doing a bit of outside work with Dillon but letting him into the house was a disaster.

There wasn't a vase, or a piece of ornamental carving, safe from his total lack of spatial awareness, otherwise known as pure clumsiness. Esso was constantly shouting at him to mind this, or avoid knocking over that, with 'Lisbeth adding some of her Afrikaans rhetoric to the mixture so the old pile sounded like a Zulu war zone.

The only thing to do was sneak around to the estate office door and try to avoid meeting any of the warring factions; best to leave those that know to do the best they can! I managed to get Ivan and Sap safely into the house and disappear into the study with a nice pipefull of Erinmore and a little nip of the famous Elixir to await developments and they weren't long in coming.

Purdey and Dillon wandered in with plans for the drives and seemed reluctant to venture forth into the maelstrom of luggage, hat boxes, gun slips and all the other paraphernalia that a shooting weekend attracts. Eventually, Dixon announced dinner and I was greeted by a sea of faces all of whom were going to eat us out of house and home as well as bagging all the birds on the place. Plus Twos isn't noted for his ability at 'small talk,' at least not without putting one foot, if not both, in it and sitting beside a rather flighty young scantily dressed lady

wasn't going to improve his record. Mrs. Reilly, our irascible cook, had surpassed all expectations, but oysters were really pushing out the boat and guaranteed to get me into trouble. The young lady on my left was just about to tip one down her elegant throat when I managed to elbow her in the ribs - accidentally of course - so it went down the front of her rather low cut dress. She shrieked and my attempts to recover the morsel seemed to cause further shrieks including a threatening one from Esso. Eventually it slid all the way down just in time for me to stand on it and slide across the floor towards the side table which was laden with goodies. I managed to grind to a halt just before hitting it and excused myself as I retreated to the study for more Elixir.

### ***Shoot Day At Last!***

Dixon woke me early as Purdey and Dillon were chaffing at the bit to get proceedings started and I just about had time for a quick boiled egg - with soldiers of course - before inspecting the first drive. Now, Purdey is an old hand at organising shoots and had worked out a method of keeping the better shots away from the thicker streams of birds so we would, at least, have a few for the last drive by some careful dogging in and running the drives in a meandering circle. Whittle is a good shot, even if a little impatient, and we put Ivan and Sap with him to cramp his style. He likes to show off when he has an audience, but it does take his mind off his normally deadly aim which was also part of Purdey's strategy. The first couple of drives went quite well with nice high birds that mostly out flew the lead but things deteriorated rapidly after that. Whittle had three dead in the air and the old master of the Gaeilge was nearly as good - I knew he was accurate with a piece of chalk at the length of a classroom but I didn't realise that his out of school passion was banging fifty or a hundred clays every weekend! I reckoned a little extra booze with the lunch would soon sort the problem but, as always seems to befall at Woodless, things went from bad to worse - mainly due to having put Ivan and Sap with Derek Whittle and boy, was that a mistake! It will take quite a few pages to explain that especially when the law became involved so I'm afraid you will have to wait for the next epistle from the depths of the Midlands.

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# Art and Antiques

**W**hat is it really like out there in auction land with the recession biting away at property prices, antique estimates, land values and what not? Northern Ireland auctioneer James Armstrong who heads up the family run business, which was established almost ten years ago and is based in the idyllic Clondeboye Estate on the outskirts of Bangor in Co Down, has some views on the situation as it stands at present. "You don't need me to tell you times are challenging, but every cloud has a silver lining," he says. "The auctioneering industry has been experiencing record turnover in recent years, and surprisingly for a variety, if disparate, reasons many items are retaining robust values. One would have thought the market for used cars would decline, however the scrappage scheme last year ensured a lack of supply to the second hand market, and underpinned valuations. Equally the Japanese Earthquake and Tsunami has underpinned the used plant and machinery market due to reduced production of new models in Japan. Furthermore the historically low yields on cash deposits, coupled with increasing affluence in the Far East have resulted in a solid performance in the market for alternative investments such as wine and art, where reasonable investment yields remain."

But he does stress there is another side to the coin: "On the negative side we have seen forced sale auctions, whereby the banks have reduced or called in facilities on otherwise solvent businesses, resulting in directors and owners needing to raise capital in short timeframes. In

this scenario a discounted auction can raise several months turnover in a couple of days, albeit at reduced margin. Similarly the residential and commercial property sectors afford cash rich investors with opportunities to acquire assets at prices which provide



*By Dan O'Neill sold for £8,500 at Ross's*





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Sir John Lavery *Steamers in the Harbour, St. Jean de Luz*, sold for €28,000 at Whyte's.



Gerard Dillon *Young Couple in a Landscape*, sold for €30,000 at Whyte's.

an attractive return on capital invested. However, as a note of caution in the commercial sector, investors should factor in the likelihood of non let periods due to current oversupply and the fragility of the wider macroeconomic climate and the increased tendency for tenants to ask for considerable rent free initial periods. Record numbers of businesses are being traded within administration, with a view to either a CVA, a CVL or an acquisition.

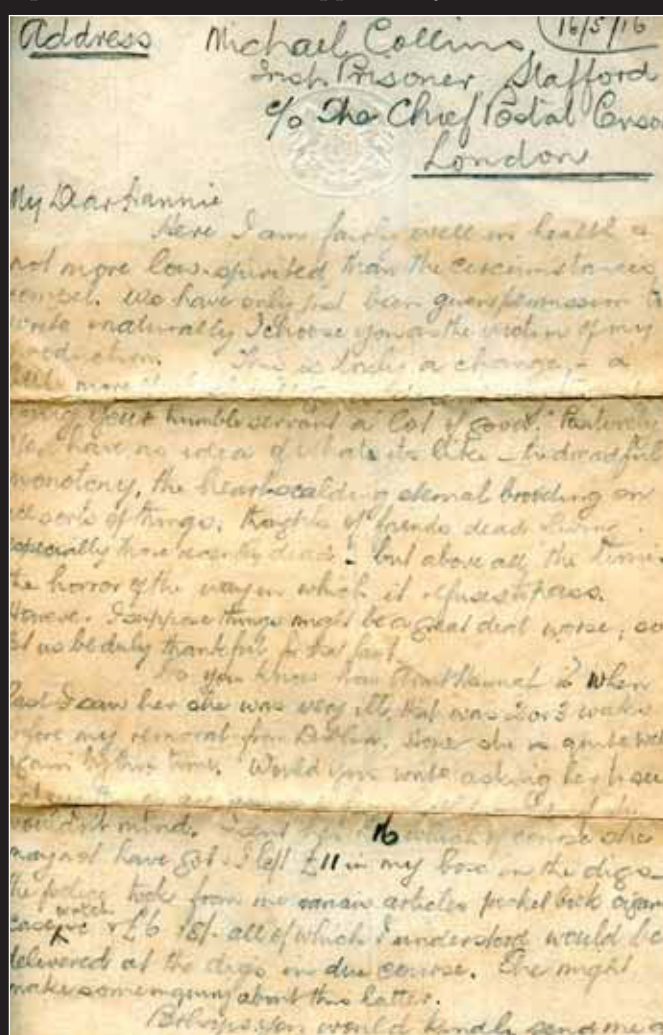
"For a savvy investor, the fundamentals of many of these businesses remain attractive, if additional capital or expertise can be introduced. This is particularly noticeable within the Licensed Trade, where properties were acquired at the height of the boom, and current sales revenues and profitabilities cannot sustain the capital spend. They remain attractive investments for an acquirer able to purchase freehold at a more realistic market price. The retail sector continues to struggle. The recently experienced poor winter weather coupled with increased costs, purchase input inflation, in an environment of increasing sales discounting are

seriously affecting margins, and we have seen a number of high profile failures in recent years.

"From an auctioneer's perspective this has opened up a new play, whereby several very successful retail trade-outs, have proven that the market exists to trade out at discount via well advertised liquidation sales, rather than the traditional route of a job lot trade sale of stock. This recent development has significantly benefitted creditors in a liquidation scenario, with much higher realisations against stock assets. Land as always is difficult to quantify. There is no doubt it is a buyers' market, although my experience over the last couple of years is that agricultural land for agricultural use has maintained value.

"Gone however for the time being are the speculators who used to acquire attractive agricultural land with the long view of rezoning, as there is an oversupply of zoned land bank at present with subdued appetite for development. Typically zoned land is attracting poor prices from the peaks of 2007, however like any property investment, 'location, location, location' is everything.

"However I must say my auctioneer's gavel has never been busier, and one man's misfortune remains another man's opportunity. Cash is King, and access to capital is the lifeblood of opportunity."



Letters from Michael Collins to his sister sold by Adams.





*This George Campbell sold for £10,200 at Ross's.*

## On Line Sales

Belfast auction house ROSS's went online for a week this spring time to sell Irish art and by all accounts the venture has paved the way for another sales avenue they intend going down. Auctioneer Daniel Clarke says: "We decided to get involved with on-line sales because we felt the time was right to do so. We are very pleased with the way things have gone. Around 60% of the 100

paintings on offer were sold and they were targeted to buyers at three figure sums. Of course this does not mean we are moving away from our quarterly Irish auction sales. They will continue but now we intend offering another facility for buyers and sellers and hopefully we will continue with these online sales during the months of June, July and August. At the moment, however we are preparing for our June sale of

Irish art. The online sales exercise is another facility we are offering customers and we believe it will be a success."

In ROSS'S spring sale of Irish art, prices held up quite well with a George Campbell still life coming under the hammer at £10,200, followed by a Patrick Collins oil £9,500 and a Dan O'Neill oil at



*This Colin Middleton sold for £6000 at Ross's.*

£8,500. A Colin Middleton oil realised £6,000 while three by Co Antrim artist Hector McDonnell fetched £5,000, £5,000 and £4,800. Among others were: William Conor, £3,800; Cecil Maguire £3,000; Neil Shawcross, £2,900; George Campbell, £2,700; Basil Blackshaw, £2,600; Kenneth Webb, £2,300; Graham Knuttel, £2,200k; Frank Egginton £2,20; Charles McAuley, £1,850 Frank McKelvey, £1,750; Brian Ballard, £1,700; Tom Carr, £1,600; Maurice C Wilks, £1,600; Joseph W Carey, £1,500; Markey Robinson, £1,500.

## Down South

As ever, we have to look south to the Dublin sales to determine if 'big' money is still being paid for Irish art that buyers are always wishing to possess. Ian Whyte of Whytes, the long established sales house has a finger on the pulse and says: "We continually hear from collectors that they wouldn't leave their money in a bank when they could look at it on a wall and at least derive some pleasure from it." Without a doubt there is certainly much sense in that. He adds: "Our last art sale was in mid March and grossed €700,000 when 67% of the lots we had to offer were sold. The highest price was for a Gerard Dillon at €30,000, followed by €28,000 for a World war 1 period John Lavery, and €22,000 for a John Brenan interior, circa 1875, showing a young woman preparing to emigrate. Bidding was good and it was our best attendance at the viewing and at the sale for about three years."

## Independence Sale

It is easy to know when spring time has arrived on the Irish sales scene with the staging of ADAM'S and MEALY'S Independence sale. One has to marvel how each year so much material, relating to Ireland and its troubled past can come to auction. But it does and long may it continue for there is no doubt about the pleasure the procurement of such memorabilia brings to those who successfully bid for it.

This year's sale, held in two sections, offered over 600 items as diverse as photographs of Roger Casement to letters from Michael Collins to his sister. According to James O'Halloran the sale was a resounding success and the receipts from it certainly prove this true: "Yes, Independence was a tremendous success with 82% of the lots sold making for gross receipts of €650k," he told me. "There was great interest in the collection of Michael Collins letters to his sister, Johanna. The collection raised a total of €202,000 with the top lot being his letter from jail which raised €16000. Generally the Market is good for high end objects of all kinds but the real difficulty in the present times is sourcing these lots as vendors are reluctant to sell if they don't really have to despite the good prices. We have a good selection of paintings for our June sale of Irish Art and included are fine examples by Paul Henry, Jack Yeats, Gerard Dillon and Colin Middleton. The sale highlights will be on view at The Ava in Clandeboyne in mid May."



*John Brenan's  
The Finishing  
Touch, sold for  
€22,000 at  
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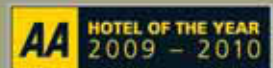
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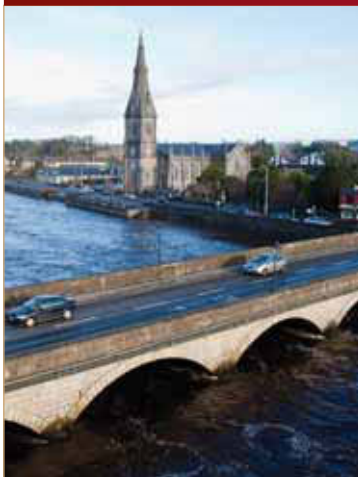
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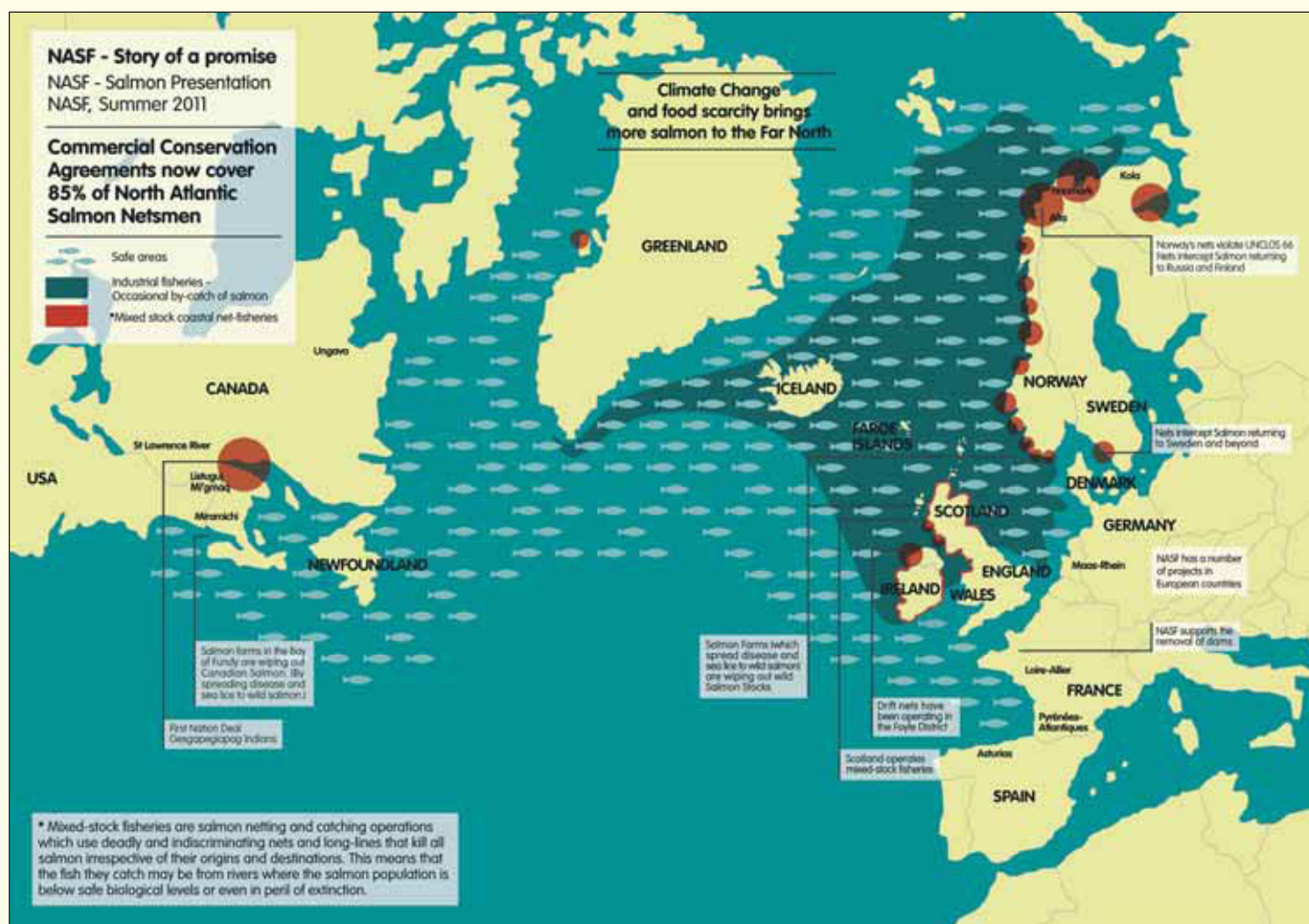
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## North Atlantic Salmon Fund (NASF) anger over decision to open mixed stock fishery in Kerry

In a separate article in this magazine FISSTA has commented on the situation below, but it is essential to note the contents of a letter to government from Orri Vigfusson Chairman of North Atlantic Salmon Fund Iceland, saying that that the decision to reopen licensed commercial fishing in Castlemaine Harbour, has been brought to our notice. Orri Vigfusson said that this was extremely worrisome and NASF wanted to express deep concern as it will send extremely damaging signals throughout the world where efforts have

taken place to restore wild salmon to historic abundance. He went on to write, 'You may recall we met when we campaigned for the closure - with full compensation - of the Irish drift net fishery few years ago. That took a great deal of effort for fifteen years when Fianna Fail led Irish governments stood in the way of inevitable progress. Every year the Irish Government invented and reinvented formulas to justify their disgraced policies. Finally, our campaign won in 2007 after it was proven that the EU Habitat Directive had been violated and the UN Law of the Sea, art. 66, had been broken. Meantime, the Irish driftnets had unnecessarily killed



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a few million wild salmon, that had been actually saved and returned healthy to your shores by the goodwill of the high seas feeding nations, Greenland, Iceland and the Faroe Islands.'

Orri Vigfusson said the only reason you still have salmon in Ireland is the goodwill of these nations in the north Atlantic. 'It has now emerged that for every 100 healthy salmon we have returned to you since 1991, no less than 98 have been killed in your draft and drift nets. Building up robust spawning stocks for wild salmon takes a lot of concerted efforts by many nations. In excess of 90% of the biomass of your salmon is created outside your jurisdiction and outside the jurisdiction of the European Union. Therefore, we were surprised and dismayed to learn that again your country is reinventing accepted scientific formulas to justify the killing of the brood stock we send to you freely. Already, your decision has opened up international discussions and at the NASCO meetings next week, Greenland and the Faroe Islands will propose to reopen up their fisheries and there are many "science based buyers" ready to buy their products. In a year or two, Ireland may not have wild salmon any more and your department will be to blame.

### ***Fishery Development funds slashed for 2011 as matching funds sought for new projects***

On 20 May Anglers and Commercial Fishermen were invited to participate in Salmon Conservation Funds – Pilot Scheme. An Advance Announcement said that €120,000 was available and that Salmon Conservation projects undertaken by or on behalf of Angling Clubs, Fishery Owners and Commercial Salmon Fishermen can now be funded from the Salmon Conservation Fund. Inland Fisheries Ireland, who manage the fund, will provide guidelines and applications forms to all interested parties. €120,000 has been made available under the pilot programme and it is anticipated that a number of projects will be undertaken throughout Ireland.

This pilot scheme will facilitate the rehabilitation of salmon stocks, giving priority to rivers below their conservation limit, which have the greatest prospect of recovery. Projects may receive different proportions of funding. Applicants must outline the benefits of the project, the ability to plan and complete the project, and value for money. Any statutory approvals necessary, such as planning permission, must be in place. The fund is wholly made up of Salmon Licence Holder contributions, therefore projects may qualify to receive match funding from other sources such as Leader etc.

#### **What can be funded?**

Fish passage improvement. (E.g. removal of barriers, modification of weirs, and construction of fish passes etc)

Spawning enhancement (addition/raking of gravel or cleaning of existing substrates)

In-stream structures (weirs, deflectors, rubble mats, random boulders etc.)

River Bank protection (rock armour, log revetment etc.)

Fencing (protection of river banks including fences, stiles, cattle drinks etc.)

Riparian zone improvement (tree pruning and strategic tree planting)

Removal & control of exotic invasives (e.g. Rhododendron, Japanese knotweed, Asian Clam, Chub etc.)

'In this era of reducing resources stakeholder involvement is crucial to ensure the conservation of our salmon stocks' commented Dr Ciaran Byrne, CEO Inland Fisheries Ireland. 'This pilot programme will enhance habitat, knowledge and ultimately the wonderful angling and commercial fisheries we enjoy in Ireland adding benefit to local economies.' Application forms and full details of the scheme were available from 31 May 2011 on [www.fisheriesireland.ie](http://www.fisheriesireland.ie) or from any IFI office and completed applications must be returned within two weeks but at the latest, 14 June, following which evaluation will take place. Works may only commence once approval has been granted and there will be no retrospective funding.

FISSTA consider it was most unusual to receive an invitation from the new Inland Fisheries Ireland inviting anglers and netmen to submit 'shovel ready' projects on fisheries throughout the country. A fund of €120,000 is being made available for all to compete. It is hoped that there is no repeat of Scottish project where a licensed commercial netsman received £100,000 to improve his gear to kill more salmon. Yet, why are they being enticed to apply for such badly needed funds that should be exclusively earmarked for habitat enhancement schemes to ensure more spawning and salmon are created.

Every year to date, the regional fishery board submitted the projects as approved by them without little or any consultation with the anglers and clubs on the river. The CFB slide rule or points system was then applied to select the lucky few fisheries that were awarded funds which would then be expended by the regional fisheries board without little or any input from the local anglers. Many angling clubs have pointed out that the conservation stamp fund which anglers pay since 2007 by the doubling of the rod license has dwindled down from over €1m. to €120,000 as more and more commissioned research projects are paid for out of this fund instead of projects that put more salmon back in the system.

While anglers understand that IFI must make such limited funds stretch farther into the future by getting local clubs to apply for matching funds from Leader and FAS allocations, it must be remembered that when the money was flowing more freely and no club input to raise matching funds was needed, it was the policy of the previous CFB to exclude clubs from championing such projects in the past as CFB staff held on to the funds and staff entirely to complete the work. Too often in the past our members would raise the issue of projects being completed unsatisfactorily, so perhaps the new measures



announced in the press release below will give anglers a greater input into future allocations of funding.

### **Pearl mussels**

The freshwater pearl mussel depends on clean river gravels to live in and breed, so the salmon and high water quality environment is pivotal to their survival. That is why healthy stocks of salmon and sea trout returning to their spawning habitat in the river assist so many species including the pearl mussel. Our federation has campaigned to raise the awareness of the valuable pearl mussel for many years but to no avail. Thankfully, the EU has taken heed at last and a new programme to conserve the endangered fresh water pearl mussel was launched and it is hoped the multi million euro project is successful. The Donegal County Council is the lead partner in a €2.3m cross border project to ensure conservation of the species. A new council based leader of the project has been appointed and the successful applicant is Dr Tony McNally.

The project leader will oversee the development of catchment plans for the pearl mussel colonies in the designated rivers of Tyrone, Derry, Fermanagh, Cavan and Donegal. Ireland, with over 27 designated catchments holds almost half the population of pearl mussels of Europe and is recognised as such by the EU Commission. Unfortunately, just like our wild salmon and sea trout, the pearl mussels have been in dramatic decline in recent years. That is why they are now listed as 'critically endangered' and their habitat qualifies for Special Areas of Conservation status. The freshwater pearl mussel, unlike the salt water mussel has no culinary eating value and are protected from harvesting under the law. The project will shortly appoint further consultants to assist present staff undertake the new work-plan. Hopefully, the DGAF clubs on the rivers such as the Gweebarra River and the Leannain will be fully consulted as their local knowledge will be vital to the success of the project.

### **Water quality**

There has been a deterioration in drinking water quality in many counties including Donegal according to the latest report by the Republic of Ireland's Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). According to the report the tests were conducted during the 2008-2009 years and showed a reduction in the detection of E.coli in drinking water but it does not indicate the amount of tests undertaken compared to the previous report for 2007.

Anglers fear that the tests may have been reduced to avoid increased detection of pollution as budgets come under pressure. The report is available at [www.epa.ie](http://www.epa.ie) and contains summary reports for all counties. If you prefer to obtain a hard copy of the report you can telephone the EPA at 01 2680100.

### **Project reveals mystery of salmon migration**

FISSTA are indebted to Vice Chairman Edward Power who

reminded us that salmon were discovered feeding deep in the Arctic as far back as 1958 when the captain of the USS Nautilus reported such as his submarine was the first to travel under the North Pole ice. The following report from the Irish Times confirms more scientifically this discovery made over 60 years ago.

The paper wrote that some the mysterious migratory habits of wild Irish salmon have been revealed for the first time following research by Inland Fisheries Ireland in collaboration with Norwegian scientists. Until now scientists knew very little about this fish after it left Irish rivers, relying mostly on data collected from occasional specimens caught close to land. This new data released yesterday comes from the fishery body's pilot tagging programme started in collaboration with the University of Tromsø, Norway. Seventeen previously spawned adult salmon (kelts) were captured in the Blackwater and Suir rivers in March 2010, tagged and released into the Atlantic. Their journey has now been tracked on satellite. It was found they make their way to feeding areas south and southwest of Iceland and Greenland.

The information is captured by a tag attached by metal wire to the fish's dorsal fin. The tag is then safely released at a predetermined time. Once released, it floats to the surface and all data recorded on the salmon is transmitted by satellite to the lab. "We only get data once when the tag pops off but it will have been collected from the moment the fish was released to sea," said Dr Paddy Gargan, senior research officer at inland fisheries. "Because the tags transmit data via satellite we don't need to retrieve them."

One of the most interesting facts to emerge from the project, said Dr Gargan, is that wild salmon dive to deeper than 900m to seek food. "In two cases we saw the temperature rise rapidly to 35 degrees and 18 hours later the tag was released. It turns out that they were eaten by a whale and had passed through."

Ten more salmon from the Suir, Nore and Barrow rivers were tagged in March and released off Dunmore East, Co Waterford.

### **IFI dismayed with DAFF Sea Lice report**

FISSTA acknowledges strong line taken by the board of Inland Fisheries Ireland regarding the fin fish farming when Inland Fisheries Ireland (IFI) scientists warned that the recommendations from the National Implementation Group Report on a strategy for improved pest control on Irish salmon farms are disappointing and are insufficient to protect wild salmon and sea trout. The November 2010 report, prepared by the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries & Food (DAFF), identifies persistent and serious failures in controlling sea lice in spring, while expressing a desire to eliminate all "unnecessary treatments." IFI is concerned that any weakening of the current sea lice protocols will lead to a situation where sea lice levels will be allowed to increase and that effective lice management will not be possible. This will

impact on our already threatened wild sea trout stocks and could ultimately result in localised extinction of sea trout populations.

The key disappointing findings are specifically 1) a number of sites in the West of Ireland are unable to control sea lice during the critical spring period; 2) the Management Cell approach has failed in two areas over the past two years; 3) the report does not acknowledge the mandatory requirement for treatment of ovigerous lice at 0.3; and 4) increases in infestation were not isolated incidences as lice levels breached sea lice protocol levels on ten of twelve inspections in one particular area. These breaches can affect salmon and sea trout migration.

IFI CEO Dr Ciaran Byrne commented that as the statutory agency charged with the protection, conservation and management of Sea Trout, and as the major rationale for the control of sea lice is to protect the "outwardly migrating wild smolts" IFI's absence from the National Implementation Group (NIG) is a serious oversight. IFI recommends, inter alia, that the NIG develops a set of standards that will ensure no weakening of the existing protocols. These new standards, when achieved, could facilitate the issuing of waivers for mandatory sea lice treatment. Any proposals to accommodate

organic farming which may impact effective lice control should not be considered. IFI, as a key statutory body, along with all stakeholders should contribute to the formulation of any regional management plan prepared by DAFF and this plan must encompass the relevant licence requirements. There is now opportunity to review the location of salmon farms and re-site them to ensure the protection of wild salmon and sea trout while also meeting the needs of the commercial fish farming sector. This should be done as a matter of priority.

### **National Spring Cleanup Day**

A great many of our 90 clubs in our federation took part once again in our national clean up of our rivers and lakes before the angling tourists arrive for the summer. This year FISSTA signed up to the national spring clean programme run by An Taisce and we are grateful for a sample number of kits our clubs received to assist them undertake the work. The pictures of skip-loads of plastic bags and cleanup groups including youth anglers have been sent into the provincial papers for each area to view and the FISSTA NEC congratulate the Pollution & Protection Officers of all the clubs that participated.



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# Bass Heaven

**A** 4lb bar of gleaming silver sparkled as it lay on the dark seaweed, pattered by large scales that looked for all the world like the marks from a silversmith's hammer. There was slight bluey tinge to the white edging of the fins and she was solid with muscle from a life in constant motion against the waves and currents. Birds were diving around me, less than 20 yards away and there were swirls as more bass charged the shoal of baitfish corralled into a tight area. I had landed a handful of similar fish in less than an hour, all caught fly fishing from the waters edge. This is what I had travelled across the Irish Sea for, to take advantage of the magnificent bass fishing they have over there. Ireland has the best bass fishing in Europe, they know it and they want to keep it that way. Even though thousands of anglers visit for the bass fishing every year the place is never crowded and you nearly always have the shore to yourself. Those like minded souls that you do bump into on the beach are friendly and share information with sportsmanlike fellow anglers.

The reason Ireland has such wonderful bass fishing is due to a combination of factors which together allow the fish to reach a greater than average size and remain in numbers that can make for some spectacular fishing. The mild climate and effect of the warm currents of the Gulf Stream and North Atlantic Drift ensure the sea temperature around the Irish coast remains well above the comfort zone for bass. That in turn creates a heavily stocked larder of food items to sustain the predator. The most important factor, however, is the protection the Irish Government has provided for the bass for the last 20-odd years. There is an enlightened fishery management policy in place which allows the bass the chance to grow big. A no commercial take is probably the biggest contributory factor to the success of the bass stocks, but anglers also play their part in the conservation of the fishing, with a two fish limit per angler per day of fish above the first spawning size. The results speak for themselves and the Irish can hold their heads up high as the leaders in fish conservation measures in Europe. This is why I make the journey to Ireland each year and I shall continue to do so whilst the situation remains the same.

It would seem there is good bass fishing everywhere along the south coast, from Wicklow in the east all the

way round to the beaches and rocky shores of County Clare. Like anywhere else, there are features to look for where the bass will favour, but the spread of good fishing is universal along the south coast. A visiting angler can immerse his or herself in wild places confident of catching good fish in any likely looking place. It is little wonder then that fly fishing has taken off in a big way. With such good numbers of fish to cast to, the fly fisherman can catch every bit as well as the lure or bait angler, sometimes fly fishing can be more effective.

There is no more enjoyable method of fishing than travelling with just an 8-weight rod, reel and a wallet with a selection of different fly patterns in it. Everything you need can be carried in a couple of pockets. I use a stripping basket too, made out of a washing-up bowl and cable ties, to keep my line tidy and off the rocks or out of the waves. The stripping basket makes a big difference to how effectively you can fish difficult places.



*An 8-Weight is the rod to use.*

### ***I had a plan!***

I arrived at my mark and like so many anglers I got out of the car and peered over the slipway wall to see what was happening. I had a plan, but as soon as I saw the birds wheeling and diving and the commotion on the surface of the water, I changed it and got tackled up quickly. There was a massive amount of activity and it was just one of those occasions where you happen to be in the right place at the right time. If, or rather when, it happens to you, make the most of it because you will be lucky to experience it a couple of times a year. The sandy beach gave way to some spurs of rock, sticking out like fingers into the sea. Gulls, terns and the odd gannet were diving continuously no more than twenty yards out from the ends of the fingers of rock. The surface of the water was boiling with fish activity from below and every now and then I could see the spiky dorsal fin of a bass carving through the surface like the periscope of a submarine, and then the boils and swirls as they attacked the baitfish.

Even in the fading, evening light my polarised glasses enabled me to see the dark, rocky patches jutting out under the water and the brighter, sandy patches between. The gullies were too deep for me to wade, but I could wade out on the fingers of rock and cast between, or past the end of the rocky spurs into the clear water beyond. I had a green and white deceiver type fly of my own creation on the end as I find green and white works well over sand. Blue is better for deeper, more open water and over rocks I tend to use olive.



*Shadows lengthened in the hazy sunshine.*





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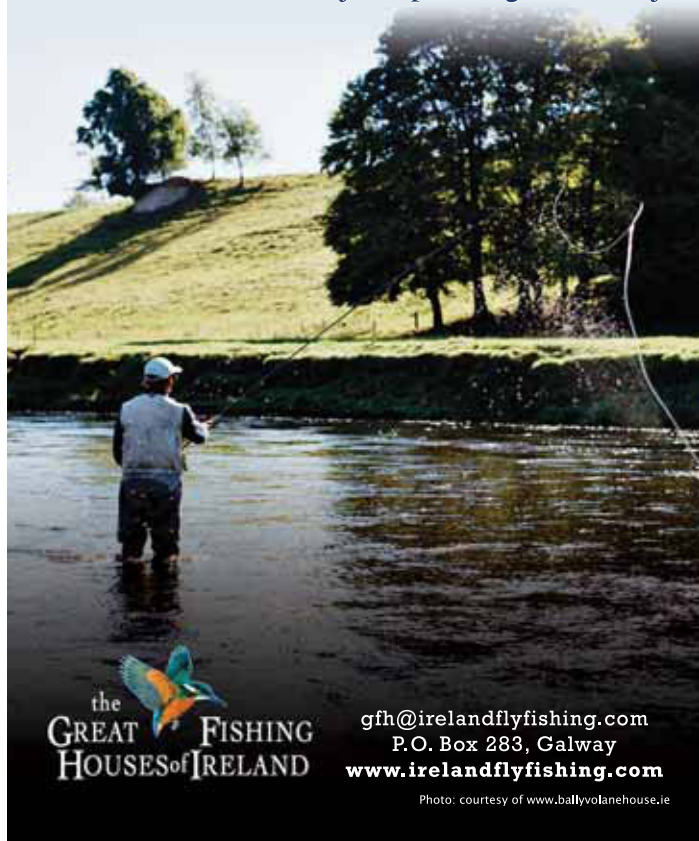
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*Each fish was safely released.*

### **The rod slammed round**

I worked my way out along a finger of rock and found a good place to stand, there was very little wave action and the fish were still active in front of me, only 25 yards away. I put out a couple of casts to get the line off my reel and then sent the fly out across the gully between my rock and the next. I gave it a count of three and started to retrieve in short, staccato strips with my left hand. After just a few strips the line went taught and the tip of my

rod slammed round as a feisty bass took the imitation baitfish with confidence. I waded ashore with the bass in my landing net to weigh, measure, take a couple of scales for the scale reading project and then released the fish.

Wading back out on to the next finger of rock, I was straddling a narrow gully where the bait fish were herded tight. They were so thick it was like a live fish soup beneath my legs. The birds were still diving and the bass were running up the gully, underneath me, to charge their prey. It was an unforgettable evening with superb fishing. I finished the tide with about a dozen fish, all over 3½ lbs and the biggest just over 5lbs. On

the fly rod they gave absolutely fantastic sport, and each one swam away strongly to provide more incentive for visitors to go to Ireland and avail themselves of the stunning scenery and magical bass fishing.

*Even the seals came to watch.*







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# Fishing in the sun



*The author in action.*

I was beginning to think that I was making a poor show of introducing her to the sport, and that I would have been better taking her to the local pond with a float and a box of maggots. But, as luck would have it, in the last few minutes we had available, she pulled in her line and we saw a small flash of bronze fluttering at the surface. Jemima reeled in excitedly, and a wild brown trout, all of four inches long (almost) had obligingly attached itself to an equally diminutive Pheasant Tail Nymph. I don't know who was the most surprised to see the other - Jemima, or the trout.

**T**hose balmy days of summer may not always provide the best day's fishing, but they have certainly given me some of my most memorable fishing days. This summer, for the second year running, I am again cast in the role of Izaak Walton's Piscator to my ten year old Goddaughter's proto-Venator, as I attempt to introduce her to the gentle art of 'angling with the fly.' When she visited last year, Jemima saw me tying up some flies and of course wanted to have a go herself. She ended up tying a mean Black & Peacock spider, and it was only natural that she wanted to try it out on the river. It was one of those scorching summer days when nothing moved unless it absolutely had to. There hadn't been a drop of rain for weeks, and the river was running low and clear. Hardly ideal fishing conditions, and to compound it all, circumstance had dictated that we should be out in the hottest part of the day.

After an hour or so of fruitless searching I could sense a gloomy despondency descending on Jemima. Despite me trying to encourage her by complimenting her on her casting progress (she was really quite good) she was becoming increasingly impatient to make that first catch. That is what it is all about after all, as she was quick to remind me, the clue being in the name: 'fishing.'

The episode made me think. Introducing children to the sports of field and stream is an important business. In today's increasingly urbanised society, it would seem that there is a concomitant tendency of its representatives to reach for the statute book and swat any activity that swings differently from their own moral compass. The future of our country sports depends on how we hand them down to our children. We must pass them carefully because if we do not, there are plenty who would willingly assist in their breaking.

So I got to thinking, what would be the perfect way to introduce Jemima to fly fishing? Ideally, I would want her to experience a composite of some of my most memorable fishing days of summer. I think I would begin such a day by trying to explain that fly fishing is about so much more than fish. I would try to explain that if you are to catch



*Jemima is anxious for that 'first catch'.*



fish well, then you must fully immerse yourself in the whole experience of the river - while always ensuring that none spills over the top of your waders of course. In moments of absent mindedness, this can be a pretty tricky balancing act to perform.

### *A bubbling at the surface betrays a feeding trout*

We will leave the house early and take sandwiches and fruit juice. The sun will be beginning its climb into the day and to keep the juice cool, we will anchor the bottle in a bag at a strategic point of the river.

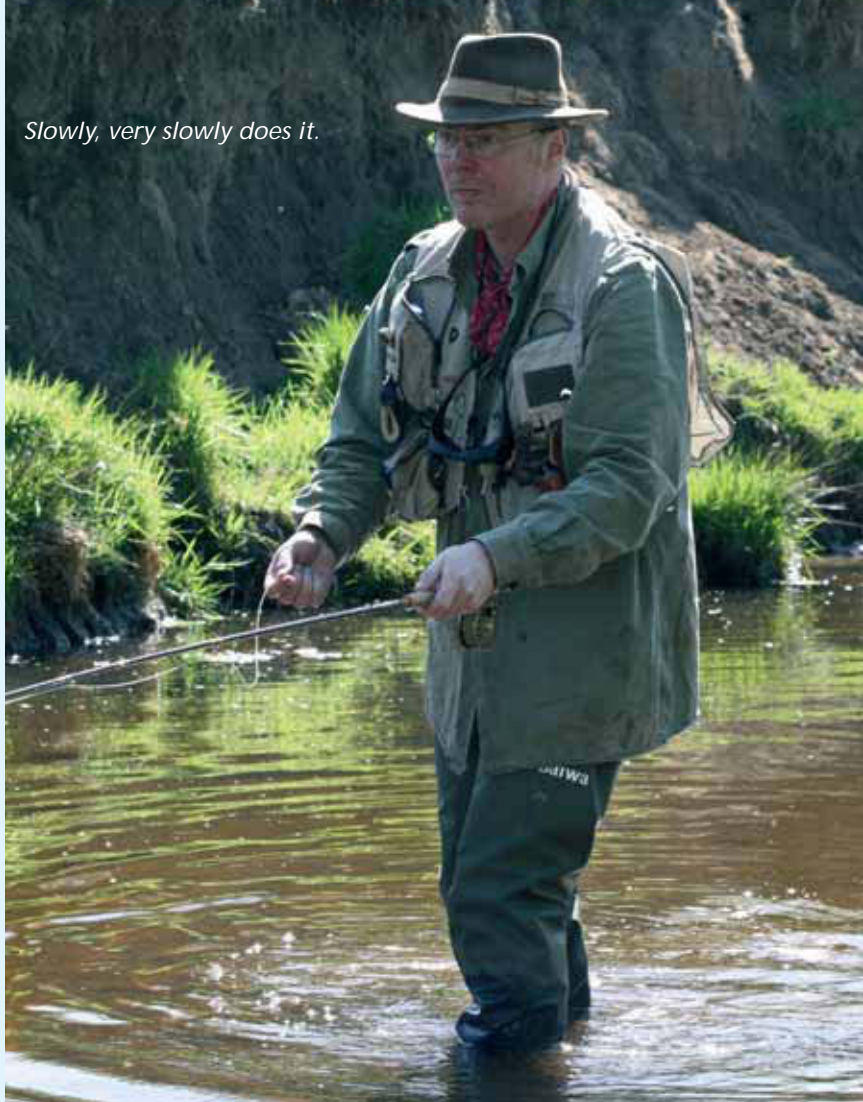
Now for the first rises of the morning. A bubbling at the surface betrays a feeding trout, and we will scratch our heads and look at what is in the air, see that midge are on the wing and conclude that midge must be hatching. A reverse parachute, or a small Klinkhammer, or a suspender buzzer will hopefully account for the first fish of the day.

When we have our first catch, I will show Jemima how to handle fish (as little as possible) and how to keep them in the water (as long as possible) especially in hot sun. Then I will show her how to slip out the de-barbed hook, and cradle the fish facing upstream in the river until it flicks away from her hands and is gone.

As the morning progresses the temperature rises and the fish go deeper and most likely all but stop feeding at all. If we were determined to winkle out another trout then a small, weighted bug may do the trick. But we

*A nice brownie, taken on the carpet hatching midge, #18*

*Slowly, very slowly does it.*



decide to leave them in peace for a while, and elect instead to climb out of the river and sit beneath the shade of a tree and eat our sandwiches. There should be no rush, when fishing in the sun. After we have eaten, I shall tell her stories of strange, mystical creatures that live in the gravel and sludge of an alien, watery world. I will tell her

(Photo Barney Copestake)





about these tricksters, these shape-shifters, how they can shed their skins again and again, changing form, rising up through the column of the river until they finally leave the water altogether and enter our world on gossamer wing. And then the intense dance that soon goes the way of all intensity and leads to inevitable tragedy, in death in the film of the river, in sacrifice for renewal. Then we will hunt down the protagonists, caught and helpless in spiders' webs. The lives and deaths of these incredible creatures prove that nature can be far more miraculous than mere magical tales. Next, I will open my fly boxes and we shall compare them to those found in the spider's web. Now comes the magic: if we tie fur and feather onto the shank of a hook in a certain fashion, such artifice can fool a trout into taking it for a fly.



*A simple tying of fur and feather to fool the fish.*

### **The firebrick heat of the river stones**

It will now be time to pick up our rods again. Summer fishing on days such as these is never easy, but once the afternoon begins to cool there is the chance of some exciting action. Many say the mayfly is the cream of fly fishing sport, but for me it is the sedge. I tie a simple

pattern, just an elk hair wing on a hook-shank with a sparsely dubbed seal's fur dubbing. But there can be few more heart-stopping moments than when skittering this pattern across the surface and inducing a full-on

take from a violently committed trout. This perfect composite of a fishing day would end in a darkness lit bright by moon. It is eleven o'clock. Ok it's late, but Jemima has special dispensation from her Mum. She feels the firebrick heat of the river stones, an echo of the day's sun.

As she strains to make out the scrap of elk hair bobbing on the river, she hears the shriek of a distant owl, itself hunting too. The bats that flit all around, one comes in so close that she feels the breath of its wing in her hair. Then the last trout of the day snaps at her fly. It will not be a big fish, and as it sides and comes to hand to her surprise she will see that in her net she has a double catch. There is not only a perfect little trout, spotted flank sparkling in the moonlight, but too the silver moon itself, reflected, full and wobbling like jelly in the flow of the river.

If you are lucky enough to fish the fly, then you will know it is one of the most elegant and absorbing of all sports. If you have the opportunity, pass it on.



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# Fish stocks - the shocking truth

**W**hy are we paying to have our fish stocks wiped out? As a member of an Irish Environmental NGO, I sit on several bodies which are trying to protect the future of our fish stocks for all users of this resource. Not just for seals and dolphins, but commercial fishermen and recreational anglers too. Having been asked to advise on a proposed report commissioned by a group called Smart Taxes, I was in a position to be one of the first to hear the results of this report which was prepared by a fishery Scientist who cares passionately about the Marine environment. He spent many years working for a Government body studying Marine fisheries and advising how best to optimise the return from these resources while at the same time protecting the stocks for future generations. Since his retirement he has become a journalist and has made clear in industry papers his views on how our commercial fisheries are conducted. He spoke out a few years ago about the danger to the brown crab fishery, which at the time was Ireland's third most valuable fishery. He saw the collapse coming and warned that action be taken but, not surprisingly, his warnings were ignored. That fishery is now in a state of collapse with jobs lost in some of our poorest regions.

It is a recognised fact that over eighty percent of European fish stocks have been overfished. Some to the point of near extinction. Indeed the European stocks of Bluefin Tuna are not expected to last much longer. Many would consider this fish to be the ultimate sportfish. I know I would have liked to catch and release one. I am glad that I did get a chance to try at least. I think it a disaster that it is most likely that my kids will not have the opportunity to even try for one of these magnificent fish.



*The haul comes aboard.*

But as an individual fish can sell for such an enormous amount of money in Japan. I am not alone in expecting that soon they will be gone forever.

The Northwest of Ireland will be noted as one of the last places on the planet where there was a chance to catch one of these magnificent fish on rod and line. But just as this valuable sportfishery was discovered they were already in their final years.. Some charter skippers in Donegal did operate a catch and release fishery for them. But it was the commercial fishery, which really destroyed these fish.

Anyway, this new report reveals some startling figures. I was shocked to find that as taxpayers we are



*Undersized fish will simply be discarded.*





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### Standard Accessories

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Rubber coaming rail  
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Bow storage area  
Underfloor storage lockers  
Glove box (on Sport)  
Helm unit (on Sport and Console model)  
360deg swivel seats inc upholstery (on Sport model)  
Transom fold out seats inc upholstery  
Marine carpet (on Sport model)  
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Gaffe holder  
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Auxiliary bracket points

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### Specifications

Length	4.9m
External beam	2.0m
Internal Beam	1.65m
Hull Weight	300g
Engine Rating	60hp
Deadrise	18deg
Hull thickness	12mm
Capacity (App max)	6
Warranty (conditions apply)	5 years
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paying fishermen huge amounts of subsidies to fish out our seas. The report reveals that for every four Euro worth of seafood landed in Ireland, three Euro is paid out in subsidies. Not surprisingly the industry refute this. But the figures are in the report. Even as I write this there is a request before the European Commission to increase fuel subsidies for fishermen to offset increases in fuel prices. Everyone else has to pay increased prices, why not the commercial fishermen? There is no logical comparison between commercial fishing and farming other than that they both provide food. A farmer sows seed and looks after his crops. He knows that if he has no seed, he will have no crops. He farms his own land. In contrast commercial fishermen



*Many have been wiped out - discarded by prawn fishermen.*

take what they can from a wild resource belonging to all of us, without having to pay a cent for the privilege. Worse than that, they consider that they are the only users with the right to manage this resource which rightly belongs to us all, and our children. I have seen harbours covered in slicks of what the fishermen themselves call 'seed whiting.' Undersized fish dead and discarded. The stocks they fish do not stay in the same area and may have been spawned hundreds of miles away from where they are caught.

## ***Inequalities***

As you study the report the inequalities just get worse. The fuel subsidies are paid to the owners of the boats, the crewmen who take the risks associated with fishing do not benefit from the subsidies. Many of the larger boats, which are the ones burning the most fuel, particularly the trawlers, are owned by individuals or even companies. These employ skippers and crew and can put pressure on these workers to catch more,

therefore using more fuel. More fuel equals more subsidies. I had not realised the amount of fuel involved until I took a trip out on a small trawler fishing for prawns in the Irish Sea. We were pulling a single eighteen-fathom net and loaded 1200 litres of diesel for five days fishing. We saw several 'Twin-riggers' fishing the same area of sea as us, and I learned that they burn in the region of 1600 litres of diesel a day pulling two nets up to fifty fathoms each. Indeed one skipper who works these boats told me that when the black smoke is coming from the funnels "We are fishing!" A crewman working on these boats reported getting a wage of 550 Euro for a ten-day trip. The fuel bill for that trip was 13,000 Euro. The fuel bills are paid off before any shares are paid. But the owners get the cheque at the end of the year. Many Irish crews had enough early on during the Celtic tiger years, so crews were employed from Eastern Europe then, as they became disillusioned, Egyptians were employed, then from the Philippines. Perhaps this is why Europe is fining Ireland at the moment for not supplying the socio-economic data as required. More taxpayers money!

Recent report studies in Irish waters reveal that for each tonne of seafood landed, 0.69 of a tonne of diesel was used. I find these astonishing figures. The Irish fishing industry, indeed the European Fishing industry has powerful professional lobbyists working hard for them, even at European level. I have attended meetings at EU level and am constantly amazed at how these lobbyists can ignore the facts and the science, as if they always know better. The European Commission is criticised for listening to what they referred to as the "branding" of a celebrity chef who recently called for something to be done about discards. No mention of the



*A fine basket but for how much longer.*



# CHARLIE KEENAN



Charlie wears Hoggs Wax Indian Hat £25  
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Tay

This is undoubtedly the best value for money quality neoprene welly on the market at this time, it combines a multitude of features to create a very comfortable, durable and practical field boot. There is a rubber outsole which has been bonded to a blown rubber sponge sole to create a sole unit which is lightweight, durable and 'cushy' underfoot, the firm rubber outer which is extended up the leg of the boot is reinforced in key areas to maintain utmost flexibility and also to provide support for the ankle and fore foot as well as protecting the neoprene inner of the boot from damage caused by the most unforgiving briar bushes and barbed wire. There is a breathable mesh liner in the boot to allow airflow around the foot thus minimising perspiration and in turn maintaining the comfort of the foot of the wearer. Sizes 4-12 Colour Green Price £75/€90



Spey

These 100% waterproof products are made with Breathable Airmesh™ lining and CR-grade foam for additional comfort. The Spey has the same style, fit and sole as the Tay, but features the realtree™ camouflage pattern. The standard 5mm neoprene lining has an additional soft fleece lining throughout, while the toe area has extra Thermo-foam™ for added warmth. CR flex-foam bootie (5mm) with four-way stretch nylon, snag-resistant cover is 100% waterproof, lightweight, flexible, buoyant, and will form to virtually any calf girth. Stretch-fit topline binding snugs calf to keep warmth in and cold out. Additional achilles reinforcement for added protection. Seamless quick-clean rubber overlay. Breathable Airmesh™ lining. Comfort range of 85° F to sub-freezing conditions.



Esk

A state-of-the-art working boot, the Esk has a high rubber covering on the leg and a superb sole tread. Other features include: a highly reinforced toe cap and instep; a removable 'Nitrocel' footbed for additional insulation and cushioning; an anti-shock heel made from MuckBoot's own 'Absorb' open cell polymer; a kick-rim to allow boots to be kicked off without damage; and a rubber Achilles protector to shield the wearer from blows to the back of the ankle. The Esk also has MuckBoots' own 'air-mesh' technology. Thousands of tiny vertical fibres allow air to circulate throughout the internal lining of the boot. When combined with the CR-Foam bootie, it provides an unmatched comfort range of +85°F to -85°F. Colour: Green Size: 4 - 13 Price £75/€90



Trent

A premium but lightweight general-purpose welly with a 5mm cleated field sole for a good all-round grip. Excellent for gardening, the Trent features a special 'Spade Contour' sole to protect the foot when digging. As well as a reinforced toe cap and instep the Trent has a rubber achilles protector, an Absorb (TM) anti-shock heel, a kick rim and a removable Nitrocell (TM) footbed. The leg is covered with a 4-way stretch nylon, snag resistant cover and the boot has an Air Mesh lining for optimal temperature/moisture control and comfort.

Colours: Moss Size: 4 to 12 Price £75/€90



Derwent

The Derwent from Muck boot, it has a high leg waterproof neoprene outer with protective rubber foot and ankle cover, lightweight sponge sole and can only be described as very comfortable footwear that functions as a wellington but fits like a boot. The materials are all very flexible and offer the utmost in comfort to the wearer whilst protecting from the worst of the weather providing a warm and dry environment for the feet. Available in sizes 4-12 Price £60/€70



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hundreds of thousands of members of the public who signed up to support his call. It should not be a surprise because the fishing industry has proved over and over again throughout history that they are incapable of managing the fish stocks that they rely on. A simple fairly recent example, which a lot of the general public might remember was the Orange Roughy fishery. Fortunes were made by a few in the few short years before the stocks were fished to a point of commercial extinction.

### ***The lobbyists' influence***

Yet the fishing industry will point the finger anywhere but its own excesses. Now they want a cull of seals because they claim that seals have caused the collapse of fish stocks. Seals and fish have co-existed for millennia. Several species of seal were almost wiped out during the years of the global seal fisheries. Whaling was and still is in some countries labelled as a fishery. We still see governments value our marine resources only as the value of the commercial landings, such is the influence of the lobbyists. Yet a study conducted in Scotland revealed that a single tagged Common skate was caught and released more than ten times by recreational anglers and valued to the local economy at approximately two thousand pounds each time she was caught, between

accommodation, boat hire and tackle shops. Yet the same fish caught by a trawler might make fifty pounds. These members of the shark and ray family were wiped out in many areas such as the Irish sea, where they were caught and discarded by trawlers fishing for prawns. There are about 25 million Recreational Sea anglers in Europe but they have virtually no say in how our fish stocks are managed. As previously stated trawlers and other mobile gears use vast amounts of fuel to pull nets over the seabed. This is so destructive and unselective that it is banned in many areas. Venezuela banned it outright and Portugal has banned it from much of its waters.

This is a huge subject and it is very easy to get distracted and go off on a tangent, so I ask anyone reading this with the slightest interest to go to the Smart Taxes website ([smarttaxes.org](http://smarttaxes.org)) and read the report. Anyone who wants to dispute the findings or figures will find the report references all the figures quoted. There are numerous books available now detailing how our seas have suffered at the hands of the fishing industry. Remember, as a species we know more about the surface of the moon than we do about the deep sea. Only two men have ever been to the deepest part of our own planet. We are not so concerned because we cannot see the richness of the oceans, as we can the rain forests or coral reefs.

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# David Brennan reports on leading British Auction House link up with Ardee Sports Company



*Pictured are (l/r) Martin and David Brennan, Ardee Sports, Nick Holt and Robert Morgan, Holts.*

**T**he demise of the Irish economy has given rise to changes in gun trading. Unfortunately, there are more guns for sale than people to buy them. There are situations where gun owners, having to sell their guns for one reason or another, are only being offered a fraction of the price that the gun is worth. It is not that anyone is trying to take advantage of these people, there simply is no market. While other economies are also depressed, they are not as bad as ours and second-hand guns are realising a much better price elsewhere.



*Lock detail on a fine Purdey sold by Holts.*

The policy of a number of Garda Chief Superintendents not to re-licence centre fire handguns has rendered the value of these items in Ireland to zero. Legal action has been taken against these Chief Superintendents and it already has been acknowledged in RTE news bulletins that the new legislation covering gun control is the most legally challenged since the foundation of the State. Even though gun owners stand a good chance of taking millions of euros in compensation from the State, in the meantime life must go on.

Holt's Auctioneers have had many enquiries from Ireland's gun owners who are not satisfied with the prices being quoted locally, and are looking further afield for an improved market. In the past, Holt's considered Ireland an expanding market for quality and bespoke guns and has had many dealings with Irish owners. They now realise the economical tide has turned and there are now more sellers than buyers. Fortunately, Irish gun owners have a lot in common with their English neighbours - both have the same taste in gun design. Of course, Holt's auctions are supported by clients from all over the world.

Holt's Auctioneers was founded in 1993 by Nick Holt, and are based in North Norfolk. They hold four auctions per year, late March, June, September and mid December. These are conducted at Princess



*Over and Under Boss.*

Louise House, their London salerooms.

Holt's hold valuation days and attend shows all over the world and have an extensive network of Representatives covering most countries. They specialise in achieving the highest hammer price for fine modern and antique guns, edged weapons and fine vintage fishing tackle. A typical auction would comprise of upwards of two thousand Lots, ranging in price from £20.00 to over £100,000.00.

The movement of guns between countries has become very cumbersome and can be very expensive if one does not know the route to take. With this in mind, Holt's have appointed agents in most countries. Agents are also responsible for setting up valuation days at Game Fairs and other locations. Ardee Sports Company are pleased to represent Holt's in Ireland. They will take responsibility for export permits, packing and transporting guns to Holt's. They have already set up two free valuation days, one at Ardee Sports Company premises on Saturday 27th August and the other on Sunday 28th August at the Irish Game and Country Fair in Birr Co. Offaly.

Any queries you might have should be answered by logging on to [www.holtsauctioneers.com](http://www.holtsauctioneers.com) or by contacting Ardee Sports Company, +353 4168 53711



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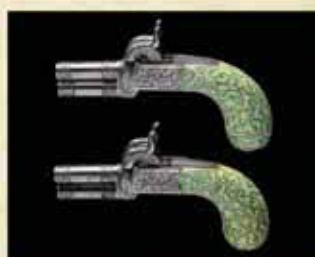
To consign any item to Holt's for sale by auction please contact Ardee Sports Company. They will be available for consultation and advice as well as to organise shipment of all types of guns direct to Holt's gunroom. We are holding two free valuation days in Ireland, to avoid delay it is recommended to make an appointment. Our free valuation days are:

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