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Main Cover: Game and Fine Food from a photograph by Daniel Rengel Morales



Irish Game Angler Cover: Launch of the new NI Angling Show

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Country Sports and Country Life Rol Comment

In his March 2014 newsletter, Simon Coveney, the Minister for Agriculture, Marine and Food, said he was delighted to recently sign a commencement order to give effect to the Animal Health and Welfare Act. This Act is complex and covers many issues, some of which have occasioned a negative reaction in the ranks of the hunting and shooting community. Under the Act, compulsory microchipping of dogs won't come into effect until 2016, giving dog owners two years grace. Many shooting folk will be irritated to learn that the banning of taildocking will come into effect imminently, probably during the next six months.

The Minister was under pressure to also ban fur farming but he won't do that because it will be too expensive to do so. There are four or five fur farms in Ireland. The Act is tackling several SIs (Statutory Instruments) which include microchipping, taildocking, fur farming and a change to Equine Passports. In his newsletter the Minister said this is an important piece of legislation, bringing together and modernising many existing laws in the area of animal health and welfare. He pointed out that the Protection of Animals Act dates from 1911 and the Diseases of Animals Act dates from 1966 and there is a need therefore to make Ireland's animal health and welfare law fit for purpose in the 21st century. 'This was a major priority for me,' he remarked, 'and I am very pleased that this Act is now in place. The Act brings the areas of both animal health and welfare together under one legislative framework for the first time.' He said that the Act, by placing the concepts of prevention, risk assessment and biosecurity at the heart of Ireland's legislation relating to animal health and welfare, puts the state to the fore of best international practice.

There is of course much which is excellent and laudable in this Act. For example, for the first time judges will be granted specific powers to prevent persons convicted of cruelty to, or failing to protect the welfare of animals from owning or working with animals. In the case of dog fights, the range of evidence which courts can consider has been expanded to include attendance at a dog fight, which will make conviction easier.

New Features of the Act include the following:

- Increased penalties: summary conviction up to €5,000 and on indictment €250,000 and/or imprisonment up to 5 years. Fixed penalty payments for lesser offences.
- Clear responsibilities on owners of animals to provide for 5 freedoms: freedom from hunger and thirst, freedom from discomfort, freedom from pain, injury and disease, freedom to exhibit natural behaviour, and freedom from fear and distress.
- Greater powers to intervene in advance of potential welfare situations rather than waiting for problems to occur.
- Clarity of abandonment of animals.
- Greater powers in relation to dog fighting, including attendance being an offence.
- Greater powers to judiciary including power to disqualify people from owning or working with animals.
- General ban on the docking of dogs tails and the removal of dew claws; with certain restricted exceptions.
- Introduction of regulation to make micro-chipping of dogs (including hunting hounds) compulsory by 2016. Tattooing will not be sufficient.
- Extension of authorised officer powers to NGO welfare organisations for the first time, with a focus on urban areas.
- Animal Welfare Codes of Practice being developed - draft code in respect of fur farming available for consultation.

Serious security problem for licence holders

Speaking to Irish Country Sports, Des Crofton, National Director of NARGC (National Association of Regional Game Councils) said the



NARGC has a problem with Sections 4.1(c); 4.2(b) and 6(4) of the tail docking S.I. Des pointed out that 'The inclusion of a copy of a firearms certificate to be retained by a vet is a serious security problem for licence holders. Firearms licence holders are under severe caution as regards compliance with security measures which are set out in the firearms acts and all premises, including domestic dwellings, must comply with specified security requirements. The circulation of a copy firearms certificate could seriously compromise a licence holder's personal security and that of his/her family. I am not aware that either vets or their veterinary premises are

vetted for compliance with security measures as would satisfy the sharing of a person's details of firearms ownership and location of same. I believe this is a flaw in the S.I. which should be addressed immediately. From the NARGC's perspective, we will certainly be telling our members not to comply with this option. 'The other matter which is quite objectionable is the advice circulated to vets from Mr Rossiter who urges them to abandon vet client privilege where a pup with a docked tail is presented to a veterinary practice and report that person to a variety of officialdom "in the public interest". I doubt if such a matter could be construed to be of such public interest as to justify the breaching of client vet privilege. As you know, we were not consulted about the contents of the S.I. prior to it being signed by the Minister. Had we been consulted, these issues would have been teased out and avoided.'

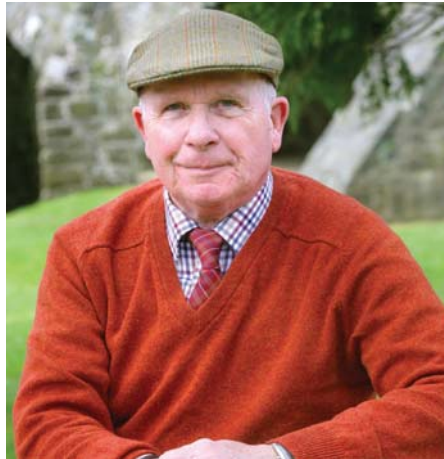
Also speaking to this magazine, Philip Donnelly, Chairman of the Hunting Association of Ireland, said the Animal Health & Welfare Act is a flagship effort by Minister Coveney and his department, because it is seeking to update many different animal welfare laws that accumulated over the years. Philip pointed out that the horsemeat scandal which generated so much negative publicity in the media strengthened the government's determination to cut through the thicket of rules and regulations and create a one-stop-shop "super Act" which would give civil servants more ability to monitor the movements of commercially-bred animals and ensure as far as possible the threat from animal-borne diseases such as foot and mouth were minimised.

Carried out by suitably trained people - not just vets

Regarding the microchipping of dogs Philip made the very good point that the enforcement measures might not be very effective and many people in the dog-owning public mightn't buy into the scheme. Whilst microchipping might be a hassle and an extra cost, Philip pointed out the positive fact that microchipping has the potential to isolate irresponsible owners who deliberately abandon hounds or who fail to claim hounds lost after a day's hunting, giving as it does a track and trace mechanism to local authorities and welfare agencies, allowing for owner identification. 'Few things,' he said, 'are more damaging to the image of field sports than photographs of emaciated hounds appearing in newspapers, accompanied by reports that are long on speculation and short on fact.' The micro-chip will cost about three Euro and the cost of having it inserted by a vet will cost about 50 to 60 Euro per dog, which would be an unpleasant cost for many. However the government has recognised this problem and the act states that microchipping may be carried out by suitably trained people and not just vets. The NARGC has already taken the first steps in setting up a training scheme which will be provided at a low cost to its members. Another pressure point to be found in the Act,' commented Phil, 'was that of terrier work. It remains for the Department's officials to write up and finalise the regulations concerning terrier work in a statutory instrument (SI) and it is to be hoped they draw heavily from the existing code of conduct agreed bilaterally with the HAI some years ago.' In terms of the Dog Breeding Establishments Act, Philip noted that it has become apparent that despite the public outcry over puppy farms, it is only hunt clubs that are being registered and inspected under this legislation.

Derek Fanning, ROI Editor

This has been one of the best starts to a fishing season for many years, very noticeable on some rivers for prolific hatches of Large Dark Olives and even the makings of a decent rise or two. This is really great news for anglers and is surely, in many cases, due to improvements in both habitat and water quality as well as being fairly warm, certainly around the middle part of the day.



available in the shops. Many still do prefer the hard copy though and that fact along with around 75-80,000 readers online every month has consolidated our position as Number One. And don't forget you can have your copy delivered direct to your home too. Please see elsewhere in this copy for full details.

Food for thought

The powers that be are certainly to be applauded for this improvement but maybe we should also give a very loud hooray to the largely unsung heroes with a vested interest in such matters, anglers themselves. A huge amount of work goes on throughout the country by anglers who constantly monitor their patch of river and lake, taking note of spillages, strange discolourations in the water, outfalls not functioning correctly, fish kills and so on.

Of course, some might say, well they would wouldn't they, they have a vested interest because they want to catch fish. Well, while that vested interest cannot be denied, they are the ones who walk the rivers out of season as well as during it, the ones who pick up the phone and talk turkey to those in charge, they are the ones who can be seen improving habitat with their own backbreaking work, they are the ones who, along with our representative bodies, lobby hard for things to be done and continue to do so for as long as is necessary.

So next time there's a photo in your local paper of a group in suits along with a politician or public representative and a headline about 'water quality' or 'something must be done,' etc., please take a good look at the group in suits to see if you recognise anyone. Ten to one there's someone there that you would be more accustomed seeing with a rod in their hand at the water's edge, when you are enjoying your sport. Wouldn't it be nice to give them a smile next time you walk by and a cheery word of thanks?

'What it says on the tin'

Little did we think when we launched the first edition of Irish Game Angler that it would be such a success. You have called and Emailed to say that it's just what you were waiting for and we are getting a very clear message of 'more please.' Of course, we are committed to giving you as much coverage as ever of the other country sports as well, so don't worry, you'll still find shooting, gundogs, hunting, country lifestyle and many other stories - as well as the new angling section - in Irish Country Sports & Country Life. So, as it says in the advert 'we do what we say on the tin.'

You can also see our 'free to read' Internet edition as well, which is available a couple of weeks after the hard copy is

improve community relations. Recently, I was chatting to somebody at the media launch of the new Northern Ireland Angling Show and we found we shared something - —neither had ever had a discussion about the media's favoured news topics — war, religion politics, etc on a river bank. Come to that we'd never had a thought about anything other than the job in hand when we were involved in any other country pastime either.

What we worried about was our sport; the countryside; if we looked at someone else we would be thinking: 'wow, they can cast well,' or 'what a great shot,' 'that wee springer goes well' and so on — definitely nothing about politics or suchlike. We came to the conclusion that perhaps everyone who fished, shot, worked dogs or hunted already had a shared future of country sports and wondered if someone should tell Stormont. Well, many there already read this magazine.....so who knows.

NewAngling Show at Shanes - the biggest just got even bigger!

Arguably the biggest participation sport is angling and it's about to get a whole lot bigger with the launch the Northern Ireland Angling Show, to be run in conjunction with the province's largest annual celebration of country sports, lifestyles and heritage on 28th and 29th June at Shanes Castle, County Antrim.

The new Northern Ireland Angling Show will feature an increased number of specialist stands featuring fisheries, tackle dealers, boats, representative organisations, fly tying, casting instruction, competitions and a 'put and take' fishery for kids. All anglers attending will have the opportunity to enter a draw to win a top quality rod and a kid's fishing outfit as well as having access to all the attractions of Ireland's largest country sports event.

Have a look inside this edition or visit www.irishgamefair.com for the latest details of this brand new unmissable event in the countryside calendar.

Paul Pringle
Northern Editor

A Look at Barbour's Latest Collections

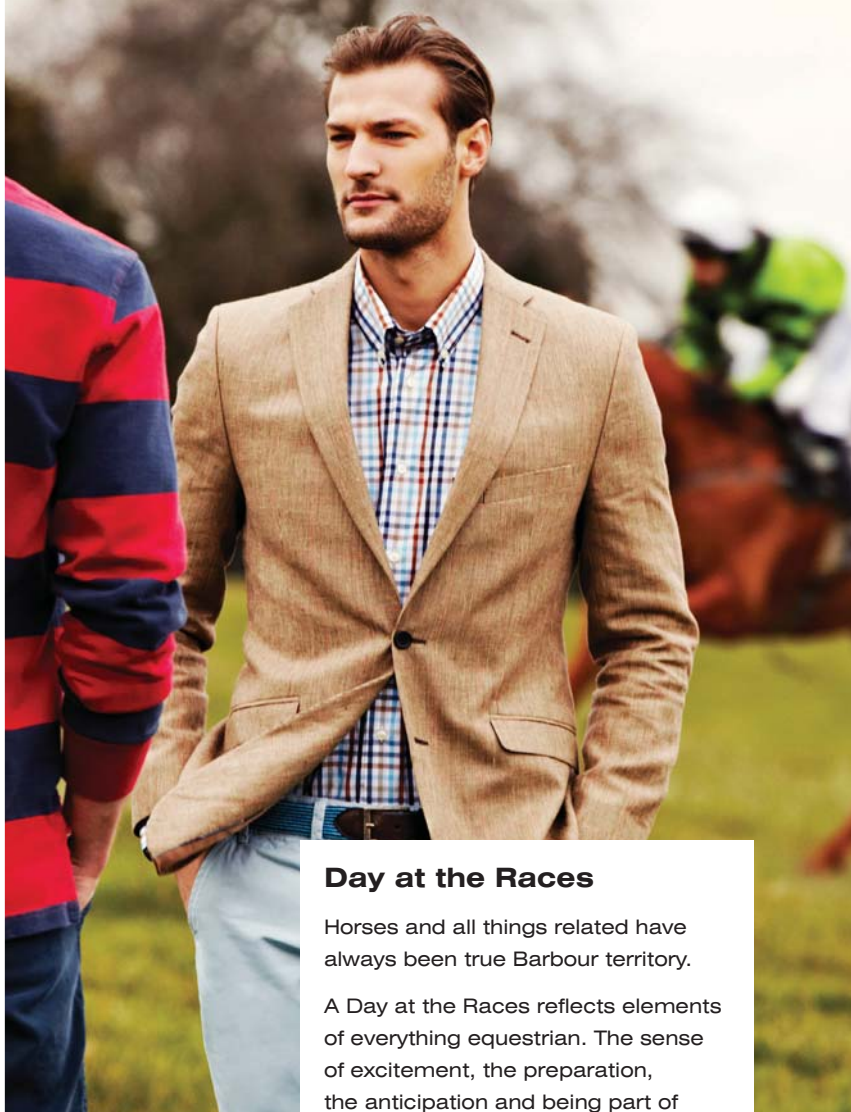
Barbour's Spring Summer collections build on the brand's most iconic pieces and themes to deliver practical and stylish outfits for everyday wear. The collections are designed to mix and mingle to build sophisticated looks for a co-ordinated summer wardrobe.



Polo

Barbour has sponsored the Household Cavalry Polo team for over ten years. Each season, the team play in a number of tournaments including The Barbour Cup, first played in 2013. This collection is a celebration of that connection, featuring smart polo tops for all occasions.

£84.95 for the polo top



Day at the Races

Horses and all things related have always been true Barbour territory.

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CAI Working Closely with Marine Plan Team

Countryside Alliance Ireland has been busy as usual over the last few months. In addition to the normal workload we have been very active in many of the Marine Plan (NI) stakeholder meetings. This has included close workings with the team who designate Marine Conservation Zones (MCZs).

These MCZs have the potential to curtail or prohibit country sports in areas, and we feel it is very important country sports organisations take an active interest in the whole MCZ, and indeed Marine Plan, process.

Whilst the Department of Environment seems sympathetic to the plight of rural enthusiasts, it is still vital that we fully represent our members' opinions and their interests. If the Department's views were to change or other parties were to increase their influence, this could mean problems for all foreshore country sports, including wildfowling, sea angling and even hunting along the shore.

Thankfully, the Department of Environment, and those in control of the Marine Plan, have asked our organisation to consult with our members with the aim of collaborating a full picture of the economic, environmental and social benefits that country sports in the foreshore area provide.

We will therefore be contacting all our clubs in Northern Ireland who partake in or manage hunting and shooting activities in the foreshore region and requesting they take part in a questionnaire. If there are any clubs who would like to help with this, or indeed if any individuals feel they could contribute to the survey, then please contact the NI office on 028 9263 9911 or email jenny@caireland.org

It is imperative that we make the value of country sports in Ireland known.

Pheasants Forever Visit Ireland

Steve Christian, President of Pheasants Forever, Idaho State, recently visited Ireland to give a presentation on the work of Pheasants Forever in America. The event was hosted by The Fly Fishing and Shooting Museum, Attanagh, Durrow, Co Laois on Friday 4th April.



L to R Barry Hendy, IFA Countryside, Lyall Plant, CA Ireland, Billy Ryan, KRGWC, Steve Christiansen, Walter Phelan and Jim Fitzharris.

During Steve's presentation, he outlined the methods of wild pheasant propagation as researched and practised by Pheasants Forever in the State of Idaho, USA. Pheasants Forever is a USA based organisation and is dedicated to the Conservation of Pheasants and other wildlife species through habitat improvement, public awareness, education and land management.

What amazed most delegates was the vastness of the areas of farmland over which the programmes were conducted. Whilst comparisons could not readily be drawn with the Irish situation, some valuable lessons were taken away by all who attended. Amongst these was the fact that although the scale of things stateside may be vast by comparison, there was no reason why some of the methods used could not be replicated on a smaller scale here in Ireland.

Steve also spoke about his love of fly fishing (which is what brought him to the museum in the first place) and his hopes of casting a line on

COUNTRYSIDE ALLIANCE IRELAND

Love the countryside

some of the local rivers. On the night, he was presented with a bronze replica of a 'Currach' (that versatile little canvas boat used on the western sea board of Ireland) by Mr. Billy Ryan of Kildare Game and Wildlife Council to mark the occasion of his visit to Attanagh.



Steve Christiansen is presented with a bronze replica of a 'Currach' by Billy Ryan of KRGWC at Attanagh Museum.

Mr. Ryan thanked Steve and the evening's host, Walter Phelan, and he reserved a special word of thanks for those who had attended on the night, some from as far away as County Cork. Mr Ryan also said he hoped in the coming years the pheasant population would benefit significantly as a result of the seminar. A most enjoyable evening concluded with a refreshing cup of tea and a sandwich before delegates dispersed for the night.

Angling in Ireland

Angling season is well under way and, for the moment, we're all getting great weather for it. There are many competitions taking place and CAI is always happy to publicise these events for our members.

A great start to keep informed about all the angling news in Ireland is the 'Fishing in Ireland' website. From this, it was discovered there is an Irish Bass Festival on July 25th to 27th in Tramore, County Waterford.

The festival is open to all lure anglers, being a lure only event, and will take place along the south coast of Ireland. Anglers are free to roam around and fish wherever they please in search of bass. It will be fully catch and release and all the rules for the festival and details of how to enter can be found on the website (www.fishinginireland.info).

All anglers are welcome whether you are a novice or a hardened lure angler. There will be people on hand to help and give tips and advice on any questions you may have.

In addition, why not prepare yourself for the event by stopping at one

Three great wines to enjoy this summer

from
James Nicholson Wine Merchant



Nothing says summer quite like a delicious glass of chilled rosé. Our favourite comes from the stunning **Château Léoube** estate in Provence. This is a delicately coloured **rosé**, light and dry but perfect with summer salads or on its own after a long day in the garden.

£16.50 per bottle



If you are looking for a fine summer red, we would urge you to seek out some of the juicy red wines now coming out of Portugal. We love the **Alento** red – sweet, pure and quite lush on the nose, the palate is juicy, pure and vibrant with sweet bramble and berry fruit. This perfect accompaniment to barbecued meats. *£9.99 per bottle*



A glass of bubbly always goes down well in the summer months too. For a change from Champagne and Prosecco why not try our **Sartarelli sparkling verdicchio** from Italy. Crisp, dry and elegant with notes of almond blossom, citrus and apricot, this unique bottle of bubbles is sure to delight.

£15.00 per bottle

As the French would say “un repas sans vin est comme un jour sans soleil” (a meal without wine is like a day without sunshine)... and we could all do with a little more sunshine in our lives!

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of our member's shops – Cleere's Angling Centre in Clane, County Kildare.

Where ever you head this summer, CAI wish you happy, safe and enjoyable angling!

Irish Hawking Club Plea for Vigilance

It's that glorious time of year again when birds are pairing up and building nests in preparation for the breeding season.

Whilst it is a most wonderful time for birdlife, it is also one of the most critical, as they are very exposed to any external interference. Every year during this vulnerable period, there are numerous reports of birds of prey being persecuted and killed.

To help prevent this mindless criminal behaviour, the Irish Hawking Club is asking all their members, friends and supporters to please be extra vigilant around known bird of prey nest sites at this crucial time.

If you do witness any suspicious behaviour or notice anything out of the ordinary, please report it to your local Police Station.

BDS NI Courses

The Northern Irish branch of the British Deer Society will be running training courses towards the end of the summer.

The schedule so far is:

Deer Stalking Certificate Level 1 which will be held in Northern Ireland on Friday 12th, Saturday 13th and Sunday 14th September 2014. The cost for the full course, including assessment, registration and full Deer Management Qualification is £295.

The Distance Learning Course, which is a home study course, will be assessed on Saturday 13th and Sunday 14th September 2014.

This is a complete training package including an interactive DVD containing the comprehensive BDS Stalkers Training Manual together with a number of relevant and informative publications, enabling you to acquire and test knowledge in preparation for taking the Deer Stalking Certificate Level One.

The cost of this course, including all study material, assessment and registration is £185.

For more information about either of the two courses, or the British Deer Society, visit education@bds.org.uk or telephone +44 (0) 1425 655434. To speak to a representative of the BDS NI branch, phone Tom Brown on +44 (0) 7525 070339.

Hunter Trials Proving Popular

The majority of weekends in March and April were taken up by various hunter trials taking place throughout the country. These are a great way for hunts to fundraise and involve riders of all levels and skills in the hunt activities. Whilst they may not fully represent hunting, it's very encouraging to get young people and novice riders cross country.



Jenny at Fingal Hunter Trials in March.

Hunting clubs that are members of Countryside Alliance Ireland are fortuitous in that they receive free insurance to hold hunter trials, and other fundraising activities within their membership. These are done without the hunt having to pay a one off premium for such events and in addition, mean that guests can take part without incurring extra costs.

For more information about CAI's hunt club package, contact the ROI office on 01 690 3610, the NI office on 028 9263 9911 or email info@caireland.org

Davy Telford - the man behind the cover of the first ever Irish Game Angler

We have had an amazing response to our new IRISH GAME ANGLER from readers everywhere. 'Just what we've been waiting for' and 'more, more, more please' would probably summarise the main thrust of what's being said about the BRAND NEW magazine which came free of charge with the Spring issue of Irish Country Sports & Country Life.

Readers were very complimentary too about the cover photograph

featuring our very own Stevie Munn at the Six Mile Water, which was taken by angler Davy Telford.

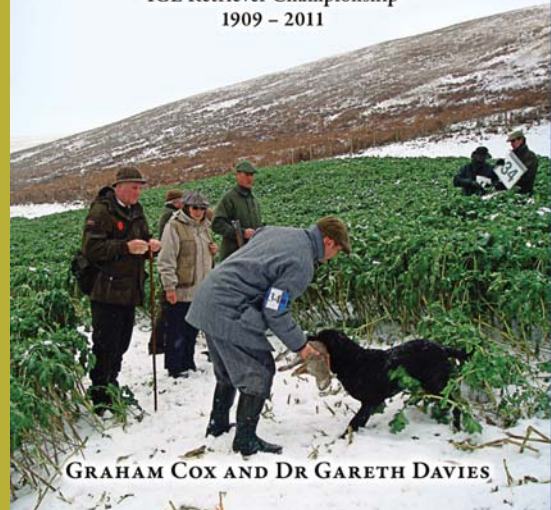
Here's Davy demonstrating that he's just as fine an angler as a photographer as he releases a fine fish taken moments earlier on the Six Mile Water.

(Photograph by Stevie Munn)



THE BEST OF THE BEST

A History of the
IGL Retriever Championship
1909 - 2011



GRAHAM COX AND DR GARETH DAVIES

We reviewed this in the winter edition of the magazine (see www.countrysportsandcountrylife.com) A superb book, we can heartily recommend it to our readers.

The Best of the Best is available from www.pernicepress.com and also, now from Amazon.

Something Fishy!

Eagle eyed readers will have spotted the... ahem... 'deliberate error' in Johnny Woodlock's article in the last edition. He is, of course, holding a Bass and not a Spurdog. Apologies for the printing error.



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Carcass Handling Seminar & Venison BBQ

The Wild Deer Association of Ireland (WDAI) recently held its 18th carcass handling seminar in Cahir, Co. Tipperary. The skill and knowledge of carcass handling is something we all require new or old to deer-stalking and this event is a must for all deer-stalkers.

The seminar included a veterinarian, who gave a presentation on disease identification, the normal anatomy and physiology of wild deer, abnormal behaviour and pathological changes in deer due to diseases, environmental contamination or other factors which may affect human health after consumption. He also spoke about the hygiene rules and proper techniques for the handling, transportation, evisceration, etc., of deer carcasses after a successful stalk. Deer-stalker and game butcher David Dunne also gave a demonstration on carcass preparation and home butchery.



David Dunne (WDAI/game butcher) demonstrating home butchery.

Trained head measurers from the Irish Trophy Commission were also in attendance and gave a presentation on identifying Sika/Red hybrids and potential medal class heads. A mouth watering venison BBQ and hot refreshments were served during the seminar.



(l/r) Joe Murphy WDAI/ITC head measurer, Damien Hannigan WDAI, Pat Scully WDAI/ITC head measurer.

Shooting Competition

WDAI held their annual shooting competition for deer-stalking calibers at the Midlands Rifle Range, Co Offaly on Sunday April 27th. For the first time the competition included a ladies shooting competition.

The competition was of a sporting nature over 100 and 200 yards, prone and using shooting sticks. The event was well attended and the standard of shooting excellent. A mouth-watering (but hot!) Slovakian venison stew was served after the event.

Results: 1st David Dunne 137 out 150, 2nd Jonathan Murphy 133, 3rd Robbie McCardle 132, 4th Paul Byrne 125, 5th Dave Canty 124.

Ladies, 1st Lenka Dunne, 2nd Vicki Moody



Lenka Dunne winner of our ladies shoot receives a Tony Tang print from Damian Hannigan, kindly sponsored by John Clooney. Also included (r) is David Dunne, winner of the men's event.

Bovine TB in Wild Deer

WDAI attended a meeting with senior officials from Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine (DAFM) & the Department of the Arts, Heritage and Gaeltacht (DAHG). The purpose of the meeting was to discuss recent media comment regarding claims of widespread Bovine TB (bTB) in wild deer.

Statistics from WDAI carcass handling seminars held over a 15 year period where deer carcasses are inspected for disease, such as TB, show a rate of less than 2% in wild deer. DAFM agreed with these figures and confirmed it was their view that there was no connection between wild deer and the spread of bTB amongst livestock. Reports of higher than normal rates of bTB in an area of Co Wicklow were being investigated by DAFM.

Significant decline in wild deer cull

Information released by Department of the Arts, Heritage and Gaeltacht (DAHG) show a continued decrease in the national wild deer cull in Ireland. Hunters are required to make an annual deer cull return from the previous hunting season when renewing deer hunting licenses. Despite the granting of an additional 2,576 hunting licenses in the last 10 years the national deer cull has continued to fall since 2009/10 to 30,513 carcasses during the 2012/13 hunting season or a reduction of 4,307 animals. While it is believed there are a small number of local hotspots of high deer densities the DAHG data reflects the consistent feedback WDAI is receiving from hunters, landowners and foresters of falling deer numbers nationally.

Further data from DAHG also show a further fall year on year in the number of permits requested under section 42 of the wildlife acts. Permits are requested by landowners who suffer genuine crop damage from wild deer. Controversially DAHG issued over 200 permits during the months of June, July and August when female deer have dependent young.

WDAI have asked DAHG to review the current process for the granting of these permits as there is evidence of widespread abuse mainly for financial gain by some unsporting hunters who canvass landowners to request permits on their behalf.

The decline in permits under Section 42 of the Wildlife Acts is a further indication of falling wild deer numbers nationally, mainly due to illegal hunting by poachers, strong demand in the UK for wild venison and high venison prices.

Deer Poaching

WDAI are actively working with a number of government agencies including DAHG, An Garda Síochána in tackling deer poaching. There have been a number of recent successes with a number of prosecutions and further cases due to come before the courts.

The WDAI would like to thank all those who continue to report suspected incidents of deer poaching and look forward to the continued support of licensed deer-stalkers and members of the general public.



PERFECT INTERACTION

Z6(i) WITH BALLISTIC TURRET AND NEW PBC, EL RANGE AND ATX SPOTTING SCOPE

Challenges are part and parcel of life, and the same can be said for the world of hunting. This is definitely true for long-range shooting, which reveals, not least, our personal limitations.

Exceptional innovations that have been made in both hunting weapons and long-range optics have significantly contributed to making long-range shooting technically possible today. Although intensive shooting practice improves confidence, the responsibility with long-range shooting is still as great as ever. This means that it is up to marksmen to honestly and ethically assess what they realistically regard as hunting targets.

CHALLENGE OF LONG-RANGE SHOOTING

Experienced hunters know their personal limits and the limits of their weapons. Particular distances may be seen as a challenge by one hunter, but as run-of-the-mill by another. SWAROVSKI OPTIK develops numerous products to support hunters right at the crucial moment. We ensure that all the products complement each other perfectly to provide you with optimum reliability. Using a **spotting scope** ensures that you are best equipped for recognizing details over very long distances. The **rangefinder** and **SWAROAIM angle shot program in the EL Range** provide all the precise values in a matter of seconds. Last but not least, using a **rifle scope with its ballistic turret and personalized ballistic cam (PBC)** assists you in achieving even better firing accuracy. This is because you can easily and quickly attach the PBC, which has your individual, personal details engraved on it, without having to sight it in. Therefore, in long-range hunting, the observation, measuring, and shooting processes interact smoothly and in an instant. These are the ideal prerequisites for helping you to achieve maximum firing accuracy.

HANDY HINTS

One of the features of the perfect long-range optical equipment is in particular a reticle with small subtension dimensions for additional accuracy. There are also plenty of things you can do when preparing the shot to ensure that you hit long-range targets reliably.



ASSESSING DISTANCE AND TERRAIN:

Knowing how far away you are and carrying out an accurate survey of the terrain are actually the key basic prerequisites. You must also assess whether it is safe to take a shot and whether the game can be retrieved.

CONSIDER KEY VARIABLES:

Sea level influences air pressure. In addition, the shot is also affected by temperature and, most of all, wind.

CHECKS BEFORE SHOOTING:

Use a stable support (e.g. a backpack). Before you take your shot, you are advised to check the ballistic turret's setting, the magnification (mainly for the long-range reticle), and the parallax.

HOW TO TAKE A RELIABLE SHOT:

Breathe. Aim. Pull the trigger. Good hunting!

INDIVIDUAL ENGRAVING

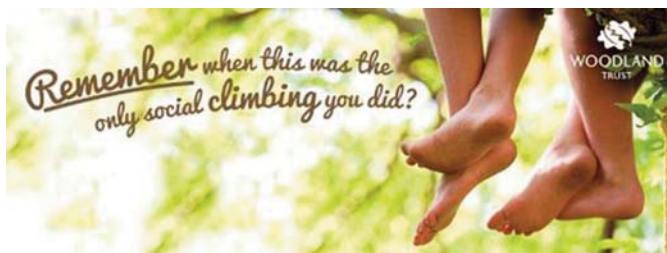
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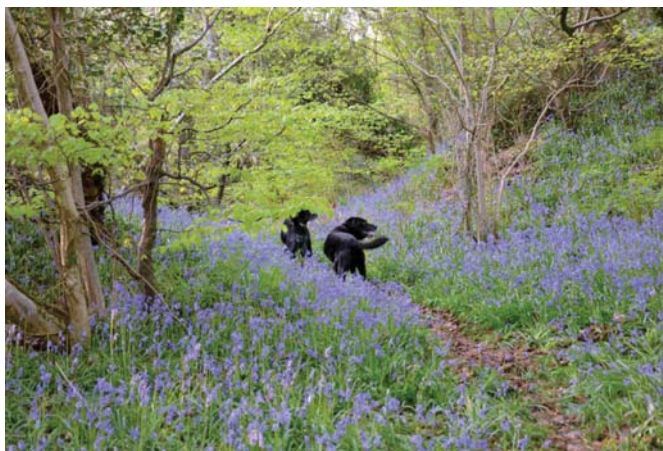


For more details and tips, visit
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Native bluebells are bouncing back this spring, with the Woodland Trust expecting carpets to peak in time for the May bank holiday weekend. A quintessential sign of spring, bluebells are often found in ancient woodland – one of our rarest and precious wildlife habitats.

Long term records show that native bluebell flowering dates have advanced by five days in the last 50 years alone, with other spring species flowering up to 12 days earlier over the last 25 years. The records are indicative of climate change, which the Trust has highlighted as one of the greatest long-term threats to ancient woodland.



Molly and Hannah at Prehen Wood, Londonderry.
(photo by Christine Cassidy)

Join the quest for bluebells and other blooming beauties

Patrick Clegg, director of the Woodland Trust in Northern Ireland, said: "Last year was an exception, with the harsh spring resulting in bluebells being over a month late. This spring has been kinder and we've already started to see that welcome glimmer of blue. We've had some early reports of bluebells, with the first recorded on 8 April in County Down. And now that spring is unfolding right across the country, this really is the perfect time to get out and about and enjoy your nearest woodland."

The Trust is calling for local people to record sightings of flowering bluebells and other seasonal beauties as part of its UK-wide Nature's Calendar survey. Records from Northern Ireland are particularly scarce, and your observations will help show how climate change is affecting our precious wildlife. To play a part, or simply find out more, visit www.naturescalendar.org.uk

Fabulous bluebell facts:

- In the Bronze Age, people used bluebell glue to attach feathers to their arrows.
- The Victorians used starch from crushed bluebells to stiffen the ruffs of their collars and sleeves.
- Legend says that a field of bluebells is intricately woven with fairy enchantments.
- Bluebells are important early flowers for bees, hoverflies and butterflies which feed on the nectar.
- Bees can 'steal' nectar from bluebells by biting a hole in the bottom of the bell. This allows them to reach the nectar without pollinating the flower.

For more information on the Woodland Trust
www.woodlandtrust.org.uk

Lightweight fleeces and country check shirts from the Jack Murphy Spring Summer 2014 Collection



The Jack Murphy BORIS Lightweight Fleece Jacket
Colourways Available: Heritage Navy, Heritage Green
Sizes Available: S – XXXL RRP €60.00

The Boris is an understated and practical lightweight polarfleece jacket style, showcasing simplicity at its finest. Ideal to keep the chill off without stifling in the Summer months and also perfect worn under a waxed jacket in Winter, the Boris is a wardrobe staple for all seasons. Features finishing touches such as concealed zipped pockets in side seam, accent coloured branded embroidery to chest, quilt stitching detail for added interest, YKK Zips, accent coloured neck tape and accent coloured Lycra binding, which allows the garment to stretch and move easily with the wearer. A sleeveless gilet version (the Alfred) is also available in the current range

www.jackmurphy.eu/catalogue/category/mens-fleece-collection



The Jack Murphy CIARAN Shirt
Colourways Available: Fresh Gingham Check,
April Shower Check & Burnt Fig Check
Sizes Available: S – XXXL RRP €60.00

A tasteful and smart pure cotton twill long sleeved shirt, which is available in three gorgeous checks this season, the Ciaran shirt is a wardrobe staple. Finishing touches include contrast herringbone tape to inner neck, branded embroidery to left chest pocket, woven shirt label to bottom hem and contrast shirting detail to front placket, collar stand and under cuffs.

See the full men's shirt range at
www.jackmurphy.eu/catalogue/category/mens-shirts

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Report on Holts Sale of Fine Modern & Antique Guns

Holt's March sale coincided with the penultimate budget before the next general election, but even the best efforts of Mr. Osborne failed to dampen spirits in the saleroom, and we enjoyed yet another successful and fun week in London with un-rivalled prices being generated. It sometimes seems as if our economy has joined the topics of the fashionable narrative of decline so loved by our media, but not so the world of fine modern and antique guns. We (and by that I mean the trade in general) appear to have been insulated to a degree against the downturn, and that must surely reflect well for the future values of the Lots we bring to the hammer. Total hammer price on the day was just over the £1m mark, and so once aftersales and the sealed bid results are folded in I expect a total sales figure (not including any premium) in the region of £1.25m.

A splendid double-fronted 21st Century gun cabinet (Lot 1) in the form of a display unit got proceedings underway and this sold for a deserved £2,500, followed by the usual eclectic mix of sporting accessories and ephemera which included a rather fun set of silver place-finders (Lot 40) in the form of shotguns that sold for £1,200. This section also included two pictures that I rather liked; the first an 1892 print of partridge driving at Lord Ashburton's famous estate The Grange (Lot 59) that reach £260, and a fine still life study of hanging game by the Italian Eugenio de-Giacomi (Lot 76) dated to 1907 that sold for £1,300.

A very useable pair of Boss round-bodies (Lot 1323) performed well in the double-gun section. These had been commissioned by H.R.H. The Princess of Pless in 1912 and sold for £21,000. Single sidelocks proved ever-popular and of these, I'm choosing a Badminton by Holland & Holland with a cast-on stock for central vision (Lot 1452) that sold well at £5,200 in spite of the fact that its stock dimensions narrowed its audience somewhat. We then moved into small bores and kicked-off with, for me, the most charming shotgun of the sale; an exceptionally rare and possibly unique diminutive 28-bore bar-in-wood hammergun by Holland & Holland (Lot 1500). It's never easy placing an estimate against such rare items, there being no benchmark to work to and so it proved, as the £5,000 – 7,000 was soon left behind and the gun flew up to £12,000.

There were several other small bores worthy of a mention, but I'll limit myself to one more, a charming 16-bore sidelock by Beesley (Lot 1503) that sold well at £9,000, some margin above its top estimate of £6,000. I'll skim through the over/unders as they always perform well, but mention should be made of a refinished example by Boss (Lot 1635) that sold on the hammer for £30,000. Good boxlocks remain sought-after, in spite of reports to the contrary, and this was illustrated by a single-trigger Leeson



Greener 'Blue Rock' pigeon gun

(Lot 1710) that reached £1,400 and a largely original Greener 'Blue Rock' pigeon gun (Lot 1725) that went over top estimate at £2,600. That brought us through to hammerguns and a fine example by W. & C. Scott (Lot 1800) in the form of a dedicated live pigeon gun in, probably, its original case. I'd known this gun for some while and knew it would be fought over at sale, but the result of £7,500 was even better than I had hoped for. I shall close on another rare item, this time a quad-grip (Scott's patent) Harris Holland. Very rare and an interesting action. Other people clearly shared our liking for the gun (Lot 1810) as it sold for £6,000.

For more information E: enquiries@holtsauctioneers.com
T: +44 (0)1485 542 822 or visit www.holtsauctioneers.com

Government respond to e-petition

"Allow the ownership and use of .22 calibre Rimfire pistols for sporting purposes in England, Wales and Scotland."

The e-petition "Allow the ownership and use of .22 calibre Rimfire pistols for sporting purposes in England, Wales and Scotland." reached 13,076 signatures and a response has been made to it. As this e-petition has received more than 10 000 signatures, the relevant Government department have provided the following response:

The Government continues to monitor all

aspects of the current controls on firearms. There are, however, no plans to re-categorise any weapons within the Firearms Acts or to repeal any of the existing bans. The Government recognises that people who compete at international level in any sport need to train on a regular and intensive basis. The special arrangements that permitted British pistol squad members to have to access to secure facilities in the UK to enable them to

carry out their training in advance of the 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games in London will continue for squad members in preparation for the 2014 Commonwealth Games in Glasgow and the 2016 Olympic and Paralympics Games in Rio. This e-petition remains open to signatures and will be considered for debate by the Backbench Business Committee should it pass the 100 000 signature threshold.



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Official fuel consumption for the Volvo V40 Cross Country Range in MPG (l/100km): Urban 24.4 (11.6) – 67.3 (4.2), Extra Urban 44.1 (6.4) – 80.7 (3.5), Combined 34.0 (8.3) – 74.3 (3.8). CO₂ Emissions 194 – 99g/km. MPG figures are obtained from laboratory testing intended for comparisons between vehicles and may not reflect real driving results.

*Volvo Personal Contract Hire. 18s and over. Subject to status. Offer shown on V40 Cross Country D2 SE with Styling Kit. Initial payment of £1,794, followed by 35 monthly rentals. Based on 8,000 miles per annum. Vehicles returned at contract end must be within contracted mileage and in good condition to avoid further charges. Subject to availability at participating dealers for vehicles registered between 1st January 2014 and 31st March 2014, or while stocks last. Not available with other promotions. We can introduce you to a limited number of carefully selected finance providers. We may receive a commission from them for the introduction. Volvo Car Leasing Contract Hire is provided by Lex Autolease Ltd, trading as Volvo Car Leasing. †The retail service is for 5 years or 62.5k miles (D2 engines), 90K miles (all other engines), whichever occurs first and includes 5 services at a cost to the consumer of £500 incl. VAT.

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NI ANGLING SHOW

28th & 29th JUNE, SHANES CASTLE, ANTRIM

Huge tented village of trade stands: three action packed arenas; top international gundogs, terriers, whippets & lurchers; horse & hounds, ferrets and falcons; carriage driving; top clay pigeon shooting; cookery demonstrations by celebrity chefs.

For further details see: www.irishgamefair

Email: irishgamefair@btinternet.com Tel: 028 44839167

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Tradition, Creativity, Experience and Commitment mean that the Great Game Fairs of Ireland Team Delivers Ireland's Premier Game and Country Living Events

While other events change their name and types of venue with almost bewildering speed, the Great Game Fairs of Ireland team have stuck to their brand names and trademarks of 'Irish Game Fair' and 'Irish Game and Country Fair' and their commitment to deliver exciting action packed family orientated events which promote and defend country sports and the rural way of life.

The Great Game Fairs of Ireland were conceived in 1978 and first stage – where else than the traditional venue of a beautiful country estate, Clondeboye Estate, in County Down? Not for them, public parks, playing fields or exhibition venues – they believe that the proper place for a country sports event is a traditional country estate where the competitions, displays, living history villages, tented trade villages etc are enhanced by the natural setting for their attractions. And of course as a team with extensive experience in both marketing and strategic planning, they have selected venues which are not only traditional and beautiful and enhance the visitor experience, but venues that can also accommodate growth.

And this year both Shanes Castle, Antrim and Birr Castle, Co Offaly will see the planned growth of both events which are recognised by the Irish and international country sports communities as Ireland's national game fairs and country sports events. AND on the 27th & 28th September the team launch a new Country Sports and Country Living flagship event and, of course once again, in a beautiful country estate, the Montalto Estate in Ballynahinch, Co. Down.

Director Irene Titterington said: "There are five key themes to each fair – country sports, country living, living history, fine food and real family entertainment. This year all these facets will be extended and enhanced to

provide truly spectacular visitor experiences for the whole family and in fact anyone who lives, works or plays in the Irish countryside. For visitors

from outside Ireland we have top competitions, with prizes unrivalled in Ireland and equivalent to the best in the UK, special ferry and accommodation



John Blair (DCAL) with directors Albert & Irene Titterington and the angling team at the launch of the new NI Angling Show at Shanes.

rates, the opportunity to enjoy a short break in beautiful countryside and a very friendly welcome from our host areas.

THE IRISH GAME FAIR AND FINE FOOD FESTIVAL

The first event is the Irish Game Fair and Fine Food Festival at Shanes Castle on the 28th & 29th June and visitors will see planned expansion in virtually every area of the event. There will be more trade stands, more competitions with improved prize funds, a huge number of new attractions and displays and even more opportunities for family participation.

FOCUS ON ANGLING

It is arguably the biggest participation sport in the UK and Ireland, yet angling rarely receives the public profile it deserves. While the Republic of Ireland has boasted three specialist angling shows, it is some time since Northern Ireland had an angling spectacular. In fact the largest angling presence at any NI event has often been the Angling Pavilion and Angling Village at the Irish Game Fair at Shanes Castle, County Antrim.

Now that presence is about to get a whole lot bigger as the Game Fair organisers launch the Northern Ireland Angling Show, to be run in conjunction with the Province's largest annual celebration of country sports, lifestyles and heritage at Shanes Castle, County Antrim.

Enjoying the support of the Department of Culture, Arts & Leisure's Angling Outreach programme, the new Northern Ireland Angling Show will feature an increased number of specialist stands featuring fisheries, tackle dealers, boats, representative organisations, fly tying, casting instruction, competitions and a 'put and take' fishery for kids. The 'put and take' fishery is part of our commitment to engaging the young in countryside activities and will be organised by the teams from NSN and APGAI Ireland.

All anglers attending will have the

opportunity to enter a draw to win a top quality rod and a kid's fishing outfit courtesy of AM Angling from Newtonards, the opportunity to enter casting competitions with prizes sponsored by Outdoor & Countrysports, Coleraine, as well as having access to all the attractions of Ireland's largest country sports event whose new attractions for 2014 will include medieval jousting and a Viking encampment, together with the return of the Flavour Ireland Fine Food Festival.

Looking forward to the high profile angling focus in June, Great Game Fairs Director Albert Titterington said: "Late last year the angling community faced the sad news that Ireland's best loved angling magazine, The Irish Angler, was ceasing publication. Great Game Fairs of Ireland immediately stepped into the breach, creating the new Irish Game Angler magazine as a high quality insert into our already highly successful Irish Countrysports and Country Life magazine. Both are available in glossy magazine format as well as free to read online. The response to this from anglers right across Ireland was so immediate and so enthusiastic that we decided to take the bold move of developing a full scale angling show ... we were determined that this opportunity wouldn't be 'the one that got away'."

A veteran of 53 game fairs, Albert Titterington is a firm believer in the need to keep changing and enhancing his shows. He says: "We are always looking for new ideas to make the day out for the family an even more exciting and enjoyable experience and, with many new attractions in the pipeline, we were already confident that this year's event would be the best ever. However, just a few months ago, when one of the team came up with the idea of a specialist angling show which could be supported by our new Irish Game Angler magazine, we felt the opportunities were just too good to miss!

"Our stunning location at Shanes Castle, bounded by Lough Neagh and

the Six Mile Water and Maine rivers, is an ideal setting for an angling event, providing a fabulous natural backdrop as well as some excellent angling – a great reminder of the tourism potential which angling unlocks, creating important economic benefits for the region.

"Our approach has been to create a show which not only answers the demands of the dedicated angling fraternity, but which also opens the sport to newcomers. We are determined to share our passion for fishing with everyone, whatever their past angling experience ... or lack of it. Working with APGAI Ireland, The Angling Show will provide a unique kids' experience where children can learn to tie a fly, to fly cast and then to take the fly and their newly acquired skill and try to catch a trout. If they get lucky, celebrity chef Emmett Mc Court will be on hand with a few ideas on how to cook their catch. We are delighted to have the support of DCAL in this initiative."

Reinforcing the 'fishing is for everyone' theme, Dr Bethany Sinclair, Business Development Officer with DCAL's Inland Fisheries Group, said: "DCAL are proud to support and exhibit at the Angling Show within the Irish Game Fair at Shane's Castle this summer. It is an important local show for us, in terms of meeting our customers and networking with other angling professionals. DCAL's Inland Fisheries Group are committed to increasing participation in freshwater angling at all levels of society, especially to promote equality and tackling poverty and social exclusion."

One of Ireland's best known names in angling, Stevie Munn, is combining his expertise with that of The Great Game Fairs of Ireland Directors to create the new event. County Antrim man Stevie, who runs the already highly successful Irish Fly Fair in Galway, is a Hardy Greys Fly Casting Instructor, a qualified Advanced Professional Game Angling Instructor in Fly Tying and Fly Casting with



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APGAI-Ireland, and an APGAI fly casting instructor, teaching the art of fly fishing at every level. He says: "I am thrilled to have the opportunity to create such a major event in my home county and to promote a sport which, while it already has a huge following, also has massive capacity to grow and develop."

AND SPECIAL ADMISSION RATES FOR ANGLERS

DCAL and the fair organizers have teamed up to give anglers a £5 off admission voucher for all DCAL Licence and permit holders. These vouchers are available from DCAL, your local angling shop or the game fair organizers. Simply fill in your licence/permit number and present it at the gate.

in 2014 all facets are enhanced including an enhanced 'country sports in action' arena with all sorts of action from long netting to ferret racing.

DOGS

Shanes Castle has always hosted the largest and most varied canine event in Ireland including superb arena displays and personalities; real international gundog events with great prizes; a group pedigree dog show with Irish Wolfhound classes; dog agility show and demos; horse and hounds; and the 27th all Ireland Terrier, Whippet and Lurcher championships (racing and showing). In addition to the prestige of the All Ireland championships a huge number of heats are being staged throughout Ireland and UK for The Master Mc Grath Challenge to find the



Nick Gregory (left) with Owen Philips (owner, right) and Voodoo Black Widow, 2nd place at the 2013 Cocker Spaniel Championships

demonstrate, we are delighted to welcome top spaniel handler Nick Gregory to Shanes Castle. You can see him in action in the Red Mills International test and in the main arena on both Saturday and Sunday.

Nick has always held a keen interest in country sports and has worked professionally as a falconer, gamekeeper and stalker.

Nick has been training and working with gundogs for the last 20 years. He began field trialling in 2006 initially with Springer spaniels before starting to train and compete with Cocker spaniels. Having made up four dogs to FTCh for himself and various clients, Nick has also won and been placed second in the 2009 and 2013 Cocker Spaniel Championships respectively. He was also promoted to 'A' Panel Judge status in 2012. Having successfully established himself as a Professional Gundog trainer whilst working for a private estate, Nick is now working for himself as Misselchalke Gundogs

CLAY SHOOTING

Once again the clay shooting is in the capable hands of Kenny Thomas and the Ballydugan Clay pigeon shooting Club, who have put together some innovative competitions with a great range of prizes including THREE guns to be won. Donal McCloy Guns Unlimited has once again provided sponsorship and we be exhibiting a fine range of shotguns at the fair.

ANGLING FOR EVERYONE - The NEW NI ANGLING SHOW will be an integral part of THE IRISH GAME FAIR, SHANES CASTLE, ANTRIM on the 28th & 29th June

The angling show features an increased number of stands featuring fisheries, tackle dealers, boats, and representative organisations, fly tying, casting instruction & demos, competitions and a put and take fishery for kids. All anglers attending have the opportunity to enter a draw to win a top quality rod and a kids fishing outfit. **PLUS** obviously access to all the attractions of Ireland's largest country sports event set in the stunning traditional setting of the Shanes Castle Estate. New attractions include medieval jousting and a Viking encampment plus the Flavour Ireland Fine Food Festival.

For further details see: www.irishgamefair.com E: irishgamefair@btinternet.com or Tel : 028 44839167

The Angling Show is supported by DCAL, and all DCAL licence and permit holders can have a £5 voucher for admission off the cost of an adult ticket (normally £10); a family ticket (normally £25) or will cover a child's admission (normally £5). To activate this voucher simply put in your permit/licence no below and present the voucher at the gate:

MY DCAL PERMIT/LICENCE NUMBER IS:

The Irish Game Fair & Flavour Ireland Fine Food Festival is sponsored by



£5 OFF voucher

(cannot be used with any other offer)

WAIT FOR A BARGAIN

In 2013 the Ballywalter Game Fair was seamlessly combined with the Irish Game Fair at Shanes Castle to deliver Ireland's largest and best attended game fair ever. Trading was good last year and exhibitor bookings are flooding in, including many new stands for our tented village of trade stands with everything one would need for stylish country living. And as the organisers have asked all traders to have at least one special offer there will be no better place for bargains this year!

HUNTING, SHOOTING & FISHING

Hunting, shooting, gundogs and fishing are always placed centre stage at the Great Game Fairs of Ireland and

fastest lurcher in Ireland and the UK in the final at Shanes and for the new Five Nations Whippet Championship also to be staged at Shanes Castle. The other Five Nations Terrier and Lurcher Championship finals will be staged at Birr Castle.

There is truly international gundog action with Scottish and English teams taking on NI and ROI teams in the Feedwell and Red Mills retriever and spaniel international team events. Added to this are preliminary, novice and open tests for both retrievers and spaniels and the chance to win the Red Mills Gundog Challenge, where the top spaniel meets the top retriever for a prize of £500.

Continuing our policy of bringing top UK handlers both to compete and

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LIVING HISTORY AT SHANES CASTLE

The Great Game Fairs of Ireland team have a reputation for bringing Irish living history to life and Shanes Castle will see a number of Irish legends featured and a large number of spectacular static displays in the living history village including the return of Grunald Moneta, coin maker to the British Museum, and fantastic action packed displays including medieval jousting by the evocatively named 'Knights of the Damned' and a Viking landing in the bay of the lough at the castle, including a re-enactment of the

race to the shore to be 'King of Ulster' which gave rise to the legend of the 'Red Hand of the O'Neills' and the 'Red Hand of Ulster.'

FINE FOOD AT SHANES CASTLE

A very wide range of fine food and drinks and cookery demonstrations from both UK and Irish producers will be on offer at the Game Fair. The Fine Food Pavilion will host a good range of artisan and 'slow food' producers including Peter Gott and his famous game pies. It will host game and fish cookery demonstrations by celebrity

chef Emmett McCourt in the Flogas Kitchen. And in two new initiatives LIDL will also have chef Ian Irwin supported by Yellow Door carry out cookery demonstrations on their stand opposite the area and the South Antrim Regional Network will have the BBC's food expert Paula McIntyre on their stand.

Plans are also being put in place to bring similarly spectacular displays, demonstrations, exhibits and competitions to the Irish Game and Country Fair at Birr Castle on the 23rd & 24th August, before the team's focus moves back North to the end of season event in Ballynahinch - the Ballynahinch Harvest & Country living Festival on the 27th & 28th September. Full details of all three events will be published in our Autumn magazines.

The Irish game Fair and Fine Food Festival will take place from 10am – 6pm on Saturday 28th & 29th June at Shanes Castle Estate, Antrim. The event is sponsored by the NITB and Antrim Borough Council. For further information see www.irishgamefair.com
E: irishgamefair@btinternet.com
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The evocatively named Knights of the Damned will join with the Vikings in bringing history to life at Shanes Castle.

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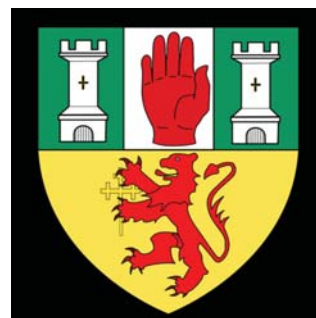
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County Antrim – host to the Irish Game Fair and Fine Food Festival



Co Antrim is a county of many attractions including Antrim town, known as the ‘Jewel of the Lough’ because of its location on Lough Neagh; the significant history surrounding Carrickfergus with its John de Courcy built castle; the port town of Larne leading to the beautiful coast road and the lush green Glens of Antrim; and Ballymena town with its great shopping. There is much to see and do including fishing on a number of rivers including the Six Mile Water and the Maine and what better time to visit the county for a few days than at the time of Antrim county’s largest event – the Irish Game and Country Fair at Shanes Castle on the 28th & 29th June.



Castle Gardens & Six Mile Water River.

Antrim... Jewel of the Lough

The Game Fair host town of Antrim and the Borough of Antrim are set in rolling countryside located on the north-east shores of the largest fresh water lake in the British Isles, Lough Neagh. The Borough’s rich tapestry of attractions and activities is just waiting to be explored. From leisurely cruises on Lough Neagh to retail therapy at Junction One International Outlet Centre and Castle Mall, from the glorious Antrim Castle Gardens to

relaxation at The Spa at Antrim Forum, Antrim Borough can cater for everyone!

Antrim Castle Gardens offer a breathtaking walk into history where you can explore four centuries of culture and heritage. At every turn in the Gardens, you will find features that will fascinate and intrigue you. And of course the Massereene hound which has been celebrated at the Game Fair for several years through the Irish wolfhound classes in the dog show.

Following the shoreline of the

Lough, travel to World of Owls in Randalstown, Northern Ireland’s only owl, bird of prey and exotic conservation education centre or travel south to Clementsmount Fun Farm at Nutts Corner where children can enjoy the petting barn. Take a boat trip onboard the Island Warrior from Sandy Bay to Ram’s Island. Bring a picnic and explore the largest island on Lough Neagh and discover the round tower and ruins of the O’Neills’ 19th century summer house. The lough has many



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other attractions see

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For shopaholics, Junction One, on the edge of Antrim town. In the town itself, Castle Mall offers high street brands while the other towns and villages have a wide range of independent retailers.

For further information on accommodation including camping and caravan park, attractions and activities in Antrim Borough, please contact: Old Courthouse Information Centre, Market Square, Antrim, T: 028 9442 8331, E: info@antrim.gov.uk W: www.antrim.gov.uk

Ballymena

Another great visitor experience can be had in Ballymena and its Borough. Also particularly attractive for shopaholics, this is a town with a reputation as a first rate retail centre with many fantastic independent retailers as well as all the major multiples. Ballymena too has much to offer for those interested in history including the Arthur Cottage and Interpretive centre.

The Arthur Cottage & Interpretative Centre Cullybackey

The ancestral home of Chester Alan

Arthur, the 21st President of the United States of America is situated in the heart of country Antrim, only a short walk from the village of Cullybackey. Enter the carefully restored cottage, be transported to a bygone era and see how the Arthur family lived in the late 18th century. Follow the story of the Arthur family and trace the link from a rural village in Northern Ireland to the American President.

Arthur Cottage provides an educational experience for all ages. Local ladies dressed in period costume give demonstrations of traditional cooking. The baking of soda bread and pancakes over an open fire provides and insight into life in Ireland over the last 200 years. You cannot only enjoy the demonstration but also sample the pancakes and soda bread straight from the griddle.

The interior is decorated as a traditional cottage with a dresser, settle bed, crockery, iron pots and griddles. There is also a bedroom which has been carefully restored. The centre of the cottage is impressive with an open turf fire and stone hearth.

During the summer season events will be held including music evenings when you can come along, listen and

enjoy traditional music, storytelling, etc. The facility is used by school groups, historical groups, women's institutes, pure holiday visitors, general public and can be utilised for craft demonstrations, Halloween and Christmas events and more.

To book your group visit or for any further information about Arthur Cottage please contact the Visitor Information Centre on 028 25635900 or visit the website at www.gatewaytotheglens.com

Accommodation and hospitality

There are many excellent hotels in County Antrim including the Maldron Hotel at Belfast International Airport just 5 miles from the Game Fair at Shanes Castle. Maldron Hotel Belfast is located in the heart of Northern Ireland making it an excellent location for the explorers among us. Whether your visit is for business or pleasure the warm friendly welcome you will receive from the minute you step through the doors into the marbled lobby will make you feel right at home. The Maldron Hotel Belfast boasts 104 bedrooms which are contemporary in design and finished to a high standard. Complimentary Wi-Fi is available in all public areas.

Good meals and great pubs

Shanes Castle, the venue for the fair is situated midway between Randalstown and Antrim and there are many good places to eat and drink in both towns but just up the road towards Ballymena is the famous Ramble Inn a hostelry frequented by the Game Fair team and one that they can personally recommend for great food and a convivial atmosphere. The Ramble Inn dates back to the 16th century when it was a coaching inn serving travellers on this, the main road to the coast and the Antrim area and it still retains the atmosphere of a country pub, a restaurant serving great food, and music to suit all tastes.

And for the Irish game Fair a most historic site – Shanes Castle

Visitors to the Irish Game Fair on the



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28th & 29th June will see a Living History Village sited in the ruins of the old castle on the banks of Lough Neagh and which features a timeline from when the Vikings came up the Bann to the Georgian period. I hope many will reflect and appreciate that they are visiting an estate steeped in history, legend and noble traditions.

Mary Lowry in her 'Story of Belfast' gives a most fascinating insight into the history of Shanes Castle and the O'Neill family.

In fact, 'The Red Hand of Ulster' one of the most abiding legends and the start of the O'Neill's connection with Ulster was based on a race to claim Ulster by two Vikings. As Lowry states: "In an ancient expedition for the conquest of Ireland, the leader of it declared that whoever of his followers first touched the shore should possess the territory. One of them, the founder of the race which supplied Ulster with kings for centuries, coveting the reward and

seeing that another boat was likely to reach the land before him, seized an axe and with it cut off his left hand, which he flung on shore, and so was the first to touch it. Hence a red hand became the armorial ensign of the province." The red hand is also part of the O'Neill crest and the coat of arms of the county of Antrim.

This year Living History Ireland hope to carry out a re-enactment of this legend and will stage both a Viking longboat landing and a Viking village.

I trust visitors to the Game Fair will appreciate the history and beauty of this

ancient estate and we thank our hosts Lord and Lady O'Neill and estate manager the Rt Hon. Shane O'Neill for allowing us to share it with you all.



Ingrid Houwers and two of the Vikings from Living History Ireland.

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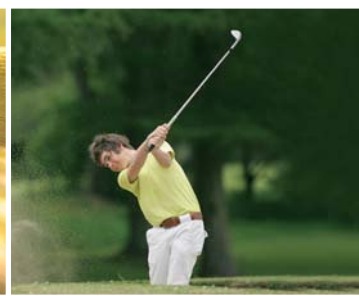
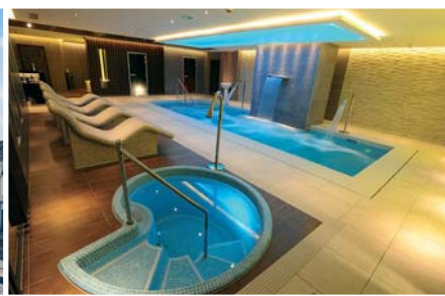


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Antrim ... Jewel of the Lough!



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Since the magazine went FREE to READ online it is not only massive numbers of Irish and UK readers who enjoy Ireland's most read ever 'Hunting, Shooting & Fishing' and Country Lifestyle magazine but a whole international brotherhood of country sports enthusiasts. Though his reading of Irish Countrysports and Country Life, Andalusian sportsman and photographer Daniel Rengel Morales got in touch and through email and Facebook we found that we shared numerous interests. We thought his superb still life photographs perfectly encapsulated many of the themes of our events including game, fine food and cookery, and of course the wily ways of the long netter and Victorian Paocher. But over to Daniel to tell the story of his photography in his own words.



One special feature of Andalusia is the wealth of nature in the fields, so full of life that it makes my community ideal for hunting of all kinds and the two main types are known locally as 'big hunting' and 'small hunting.' For 'big hunting,' Monteria is the area best known in Andalusia for hunting deer and wild boar and hounds are used to

locate and drive the quarry towards the hunters. The sound of the conch shell being blown, the barking of dogs, the waiting and the sheer anticipation of the coming day's sport are all part and parcel of this unique spectacle, which is so much an inseparable part of the Andalusian landscape.

Here in Andalusia the hunting dog is

a vital part of proceedings. When engaged in 'small hunting,' for example when hunting partridge, this is usually done in two ways – either by lying in cover waiting for birds to be flushed to the gun or else the birds are located by the hunter using a dog working in front.

In the first case the hunter must remain in cover, silently waiting until

the birds are pushed forward from the bush hopefully within range. But when using the dog it is a little different. The hunter, armed with a shotgun, walks the area with the dog hunting in front trying to locate the partridge who will be squatting as the dog approaches the area. The dog squats or points showing that something is there - hopefully a partridge. The dog is motionless as the hunter approaches, every instinct trying to make sure that the bird if it flushes is not missed. It is a beautiful image and this is one of the sights that I try to feature in my work.- the dog rigidly waiting, scarcely breathing as the hunter moving in slowly, oh so carefully, makes his way forward, surrounded by bushes and scrub, to flush the bird.

All my work captures the essence of hunting in Andalusia, 'big' and the 'small' game but in particular I give special attention to what I consider the epitome of the Andalusian countryside, the Red Legged Partridge.

I started in the world of photography just over 10 years ago, exploring many different facets such as sports, landscape, portrait, and nature until I found my own way of expression through still life. I have a background in social and cultural anthropology and have had the luck to be born in Andalusia in southern Spain, an area of traditions. And it's here that the people have a unique identity which has always aroused my curiosity and desire to investigate it in depth. In this cultural heritage must be added my admiration for the great painters of the Baroque and Spanish Golden Silgo. I feel I identify in particular with the austerity of the compositions of Zurbarán and the excellent use of light and composition of Velazquez Sanchez Cotán Chardin and these have influenced to a great extent all of my photographic work.

Recently I just finished a project dedicated exclusively to hunting still life photographs. They all reflect my passion for hunting along with the special quality of light in Andalusia. These works are all perfectly framed in the Andalusian tradition, in a harmony of size, colour and texture. I have tried to provide something which illustrates perfectly the best kept secrets and memories of the hunter. The project has a variety of subject matter for example game shot for the table and prepared in the Andalusian style such as orange duck, partridge with garlic and lemon or rabbit with peppers and onions. There are other hunting still life too illustrating the hunters in Andalusia, with their equipment and their quarry and my compositions are intended to represent the essence of my land, but what inspires me most is Andalusia itself."



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The Most Hunted Quarry Species?

*We have hares around us but normally very few rabbits, yet on a walk over the fields recently one evening, I was surprised to see a good show of rabbits. It made me think that rabbits are probably the most hunted quarry species in the world hunted by all sorts of other animals including stoats, buzzards and foxes and by man through long netting, ferreting with sight hounds and by shooting with both rifle and shotgun. It is currently a quite an underrated quarry for the shooter but I remembered reading in *The Rabbit* by J. E. Harding about some 'gentlemen' sportsmen making some very big bags including in Northern Ireland!*

Harding quotes Mr Lloyd Price's book 'Rabbits for Profit and Rabbits for Powder' which described bags of 1,850, 2,500, and 1,650 rabbits killed in one day, only beating half the ground,' and since the publication of his book these figures have been considerably exceeded on his own ground at Rhiwlas, North Wales. For instance, a party of nine guns shooting there in 1883 killed 3,684 rabbits in a single day, and on another day, in 1885, as many as 5,086. Of this last number no fewer than 920 were shot by Lord de Grey. The next best bag of rabbits made by a single gun was that of the late Sir Victor Brooke, who, shooting in his own park at Colebrook, Co. Fermanagh, in 1885, killed 740 rabbits in a day to his own gun. He fired exactly 1,000 cartridges, and shot from his right shoulder for one half of the day, and from his left the other half.

To show what may be done in this way upon a comparatively small

shooting, The Field of December 1, 1894, contained the announcement that on the previous November 19, Mr. Charles Eley and a friend, each shooting with two guns in a forty-acre warren, on the East Bergholt Highlands Estate, killed no fewer than 900 rabbits, or twenty-three to the acre. With a large party and on a much larger acreage, one of the most celebrated days at rabbits was that which happened at Bradgate Park, Leicestershire, the seat of Lord Stamford, where on a certain day in December 1861, thirteen guns accounted for 3,333 rabbits besides twenty-six head of other game. The way in which the operations were carried out on this memorable occasion has been described by the park-keeper, Mr. J. B. Lucas, in the following terms:

'Being in the service of the late Earl of Stamford as park-keeper at Dunham Massey, one of my duties was to attend the large battues on his lordship's other estates. I kept account

of the game killed, and assisted the late Mr. Reeves in the management of the beaters, &c., at Bradgate, from 1855 to 1865, which included the season in which the celebrated 'threes' bag was made.

'The principal home of the rabbits was an extent of several hundred acres of hills and rocks, rough, poor ground, covered with fern, rushes, and coarse grass. A small herd of red deer existed in this part of the park, which was surrounded by a stone wall, six or seven feet high, built without mortar, in the manner usual on Charnwood Forest. The deer park adjoined it on one side. Three walls, which were built at right angles to the main boundary wall, and ran out into the deer park, formed two enclosures, one about thirty acres, the other about forty acres. Holes were made, and fitted with wooden doors, at intervals along the main wall, so that the rabbits could be allowed to feed in the deer park at pleasure. They were never allowed to establish burrows in the two enclosures named, and as there was plenty of fern and rough grass in them there was no lack of covert for shooting purposes.

Everything was kept as quiet as possible

'A good many rabbits were bred in another part of the deer park. To get at these, a portion of the best feeding ground was kept free from burrows. The same tactics were pursued inside the warren. Large patches of ground alongside the wall were set apart, the fern mown down at times to improve the grass, and all holes dug out. The

Ferreting a warren





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rabbits were not allowed to feed on these patches and enclosures for a few days before the day of shooting, and great was the anxiety of all concerned when the night for the 'pitch' arrived. This was, of course, the night before the appointed shooting day, and the bag depended on the wind and weather being favourable. Everything was kept as quiet as possible inside the park and warren, and as soon as the proper moment had come, when the rabbits were supposed to be well on the feed (this varied with circumstances), the doors in the wall were shut and locked, and long nets of the usual square-meshed stop pattern were set between the burrows and feeding patches. Sometimes the whole thing was a failure. Thick fog or heavy rain will keep rabbits at home effectually. When the 'pitch' was successful the shooting was very pretty, and by no means easy. The rough ground was always well covered with long grass and fern, so that by the time the guns were posted and at work the rabbits were seated all over their allotted area.

'In the first enclosure 808 rabbits were shot in twenty-three minutes on the 'threes' day. The year previous, 2,103 were killed over the whole beat in one day.'

Not unconnected with 'big bags' is the subject of 'odd shots,' for it is only natural on occasions when more than the ordinary amount of shooting takes place that some of the shots should be unusual ones. Two rabbits at a shot would not be a remarkable performance in a warren, or on ground where rabbits have been previously stopped out; but two rabbits with each barrel, or four at a double shot, is a feat which is hardly likely to be performed often. Yet such an achievement is described in *The Field* of July 14, 1894.

In October 1888, a sportsman in the neighbourhood of Ripon, walking over a rough grass field, kicked up and shot a rabbit at twenty-five yards distance. To his surprise he found that he had killed a hare by the same shot, her

'form' being directly in the line of fire. Only a foot separated the two as they lay dead. A similar thing happened at Beverley in September 1890, except that the order was reversed. The shooter fired at a hare and killed it, when immediately a rabbit was seen to leap up a few yards further and tumble over dead.

Two instances of an unseen rabbit being killed when a grouse was shot at, occurred at Strathardle in the autumn of 1890—one on August 20, when the grouse was killed, and on being picked up a rabbit was found kicking close by;

the other on September 22 when the grouse was missed and a rabbit came rolling down the brae. In December 1888, Mr. Alfred Ware, while rabbit-shooting on his father's warren on Dartmoor, fired at a rabbit crossing a bog. On going to pick it up, he found he had also killed a jack-snipe. On examination the snipe was found to be lying just where the bulk of the charge had struck the ground. Probably other instances of the kind will occur to our readers as having happened within their own knowledge.

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Western Riding With An Expert In Offaly

Cochise Stud in west Offaly is a very fine place to go to if you would like to try your hand at Western Riding. It's run by Derek O'Byrne-White, who is a font of knowledge about Western Riding. Derek oversees a herd of horses which have been expertly trained and are sensitive in their responses to a rider's wishes. Cochise (with the first syllable pronounced like 'crow') is a small place located in a landscape that would be ideal for leisure riding if only we'd wake up in this country and start creating horse bridleways. Nearby is the slow-moving Shannon, with its acclaimed birdlife including the endangered corncrake. Also nearby are places of historical interest such as Clonmacnoise and Clonony Castle. Clonony was built during the Tudor era by the MacCoughlan clan; and Mary and Elizabeth Boleyn, cousins of Queen Elizabeth I, are buried there.



Derek Fanning on Cosy, a 14.2 hands Appaloosa mare.

When I met Derek at Cochise for an interview he was welcoming and relaxed and we proceeded to his outdoor enclosure where I hopped up on an Appaloosa mare called Cosy. Cosy was born in Germany, was 13 years of age and 14.2 hands high, considerably smaller to the horses I normally ride. Before I drove out to

Cochise I chatted to Derek on the phone and told him I was a big man: "Cosy will be able to carry you, not a problem," he said, "even though she is only 14.2." He reminded me that John Wayne was a big man: "Size doesn't matter," he said. "She'll be able to carry you for long periods of time. Size matters more when English Riding

because of the jumping element. In Western, jumping is not an issue. People think that size matters. It doesn't. If you take weightlifters for example, they are short, compact, muscular people; it's muscle that carries weight, not bone."

Born in Dublin some 54 years ago or as he maintains bred in Cork 'and

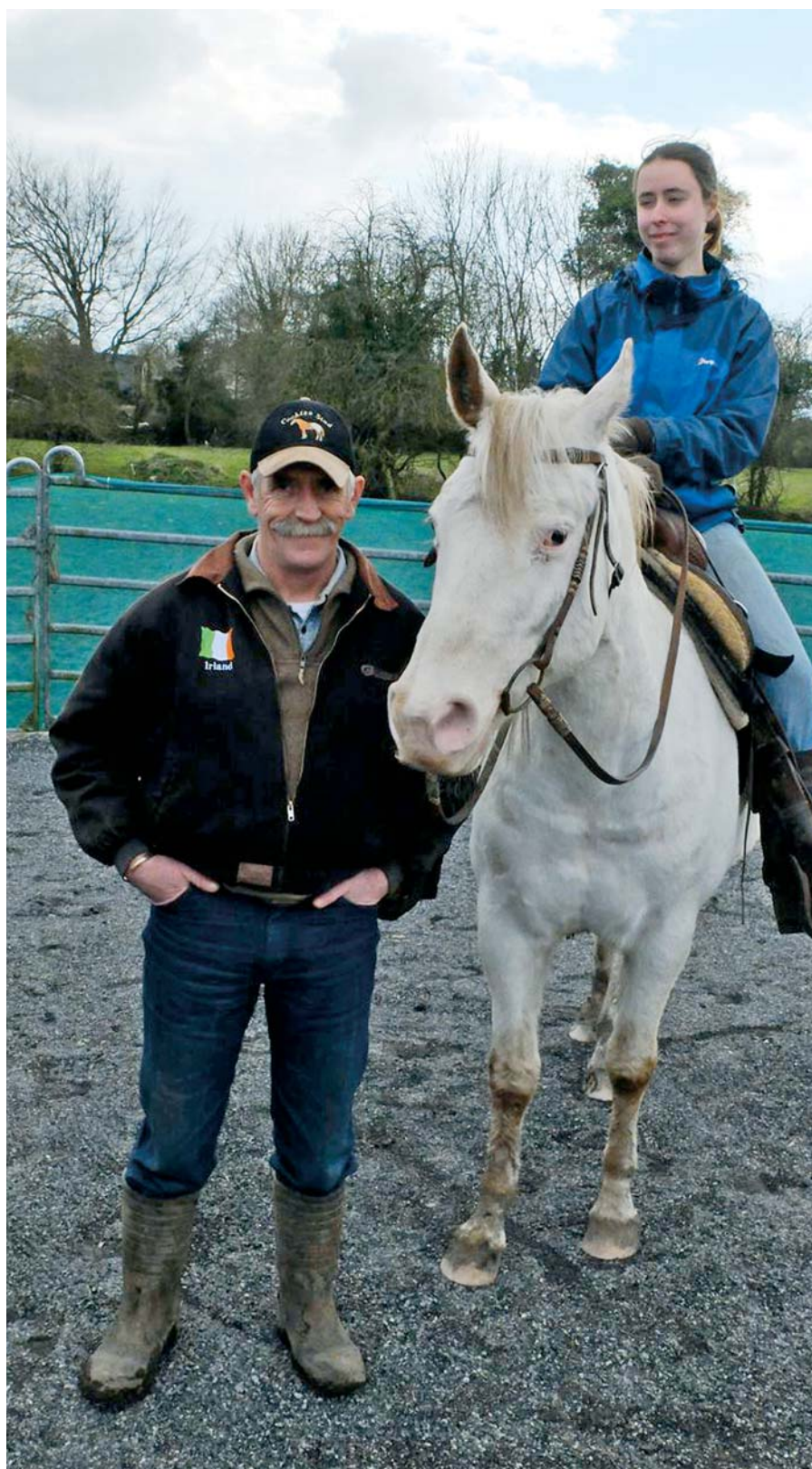
battered in Offaly' as his mother was from Cork. Another part of his family is the Whites from Cobh and the well known singer Freddy White is a first cousin. When growing up in Dublin he lived in Sandyford which, back in the 60s, was quite rural. There was a place called Burton Hall, which is now Sandyford Industrial Estate, and that was where he first became involved with horses as his house was very close to Burton Hall.

"My mother wasn't into horses but my Dad's family were - some of them had ridden horses and had been around horses all their life. My Dad's family were Purses and these were the same Purses connected to Lady Gregory. Lady Gregory is a great great grand aunt of mine. I was checking the family tree a while back and we are actually related to Lord Rosse through marriage. I haven't told him that yet." (He added that it was such a pity that Lady Gregory's house near Gort was demolished).

In a previous incarnation Derek enjoyed a very successful life in Dublin.

"I was working in a company called Megatech Software, now Tas Software, as general manager and marketing director for six years, a great job and we were developing and expanding but it reached a stage where I felt it had become too big. There was a lot of staff and pressure and it just became too much so I gave it up. It was a difficult challenging time and I wanted to leave the city and settle in the country. When I was working in Dublin I used to come down to Shannon Harbour because my parents had a boat there so this place was always a place to get away from things, to relax and enjoy the fishing and that type of thing.

About that time, during a visit to west Offaly, a place I know and enjoy so much, I bumped into a Swiss gentleman with a cowboy hat in the bar and started chatting to him about Western Riding. Meeting him sparked it all off and got me back in the saddle. That was in 2001.



Derek O'Byrne White with Lillian Bakker on Cosy, an Appaloosa mare.

Horses are a passion - 'they bring out the best in people'

I asked him what was the attraction of horses for him? "Horses are a passion; horses really do somehow bring out the best in you. When things are really challenging in your life, then working with a horse is a good antidote. Riding brings out positive and life-

affirming instincts. This passion of mine is not about money; that doesn't motivate at all. Horses also bring a sense of responsibility because they depend on you and you have to live up to that."

Derek agreed when I said that horse riding or just being with horses can improve one's mood, that if you are



Pictured in the round pen (l. to r.) Jessica Steinkamp, from Sweden, Aline Falcon, from Switzerland, Derek O'Byrne White and Lillian Bakker, from The Netherlands. Jessica, Aline and Lillian are all students at Cochise doing a five month internship which includes studying Event Management at events such as shows and competitions.

feeling a bit down or depressed they can lift you a little bit. "They do certainly take your mind off a worry because the tasks associated with them are very absorbing; and when you are absorbed in tasks you sometimes forget your negative feelings or worries. You want to sit on the horse, ride out into the countryside and have a very pleasant time. The tendency for riders is to get into a different, better frame of mind when they are on a horse."

There are 23 horses in Cochise, ranging from an old thoroughbred to the Appaloosas, American paint horses, Pasa Finos and the American Quarter Horse. Cochise Stud is named after a Chiricahua Apache who was a famous warrior (Cochise featured in the film called 'Broken Arrow' which was released in 1950 and was one of the first major Westerns since the Second World War to portray the Indians sympathetically). The stud is also named after the famous horse John Wayne rode in the film 'El Dorado', Zip Cochise.

Cochise Stud breeds its own Appaloosas, with two Appaloosa stallions, a Quarter Horse stallion and a

Pasa Fino stallion. "People do bring some mares to us here," said Derek, 'but the mare has to be right. We try to get people to breed a breed and not to breed just anything."

A very well trained horse and a pleasure to ride

After been shown a few basic Western Riding techniques Derek and I rode down to the Shannon Callows, a ride of 45 minutes. Derek was riding one of the horses which was bred in Cochise Stud, an Appaloosa gelding. Western is a very different technique to English and it works on a pressure and release system. By applying and releasing pressure with my body in various ways I was able to create a sensitivity in the horse's response which I wasn't use to. It was immediately obvious that this was a very well trained animal and it was a pleasure to ride.

People can come along for treks and hacks with Cochise at a very competitive rate, but what Derek prefers doing is working with students and working with people who want to learn what he calls 'commonsense and

western horsemanship.' Some of the students pay a fee but those students staying longterm are able to stay for free.

"What we do with some people is they come for a weekend which involves a bit of riding, a bit of groundwork, and a bit of trekking. Lessons are usually more than an hour. You don't get enough in an hour lesson. What we try and do is teach people for half a day or longer where they get the concept and philosophy of what they are doing and why they are doing it.

Derek is sceptical about 'horse whispering' As he says: "We put people through their paces in the round pen and disprove an awful lot of myths out there which have come from certain trainers. There are myths surrounding this notion of being a horse whisperer; the trainer doesn't have a conversation with the horse. But what the film was about was better means of training horses; because in the old days the training was brutal - they trained their horses in a harsh, unacceptable way until they achieved what they wanted. It was finally realised that through more subtle and gentle training you get more

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Tall in the saddle - the Author tries his hand 'Western style'.

out of a horse The trainer who was so important in the film 'The Horse Whisperer' was a true horseman called Buck Brannaman.

"We show them that this is all about the simple thing of pressure and release; knowing when to put the pressure and when to give the release, which is the reward. It's not very complex.

"There are great horsemen out there whom I have had the pleasure of working with, such as Franklin Levinson who was at the Game Fair a few times. Franklin is one of the people I appreciate because he does explain things in simple terms. Certainly when people do have issues with horses in most cases it is the human being, because we are thinking this big horse, this big body, that it has a big brain and is thinking rationally - it's not - it's got a brain the size of a walnut and it reacts - we just complicate it. The other thing when people are having issues with horses, they don't realise that when they are riding, gravity affects the horses the same way as a human being. So if we are off kilter the whole horse is off kilter. We can overcomplicate our experiences with horses when things are simpler. Subtle and slow approaches are often the best way to solving issues."

Treks in the Slieve Blooms

Derek commented that he would like to lead horse treks in the Slieve Blooms: "I looked into it a few years ago and because we were a commercial establishment the powers that be wanted €1500. To me it is a lost opportunity because there is a very large number of North Americans that would love to come here and ride western horses. I think Irish people would love it too because it is safer than English riding.

"In North America alone there are 12 million horse riders; 6 million of them are western. Most of them when they do travel they will want to sit in a western saddle. So they are going to go to Germany, France, Belgium and Italy to do it. So we have a huge opportunity here by incorporating more western and more places to do it. When you look at the Slieve Blooms you couldn't ask for a better venue, yet we seem to want to overcharge people. It's a pity.

"Regarding the subject of creating more horse bridlevays, there might be an EU directive saying we should invest more in that. Again, we are losing a huge amount of money, because there is a very large number of people who do want to travel here and do that. It's huge. Fáilte Ireland did a

big promotion a few years ago which proclaimed Ireland as the place of horses. A study a couple of years ago said there should be more places to cater for the western concept because there is more appeal. If they did and they followed on with that I think there would be a big opportunity here, which would benefit many people."

Derek also spoke about Cochise's connection with the Game Fairs in Shane's Castle and Birr Castle: "Soon after the National Country Fair went bust David Wilkinson approached us and asked us would we do a display at event he was running in Markree Castle in 2006. I said we would love to because we enjoy getting out and showing. We brought two horses to showcase our Riverdance routine and it was preparation for big championships in Germany, where we a European title. In 2007 Albert Titterington invited us back to the new fair at Birr and since then we have been showcasing western and horsemanship at the Game Fairs and we always add music to it to get the horses to dance or appear to dance; last year, we did linedancing. We are returning to Shane's Castle and Birr this year - they are two highlights in our calendar for us. and we will be bringing our students along as well as it's a good experience for them.

"Horse training legend Al Dunning might be coming to Cochise Stud again too. I was talking to him two or three weeks ago when I was in New Orleans and we discussed his return to Ireland and I would like to have him back next year. This guy is awe-inspiring - it is his approach. When the man walks into a room you know you are in the presence of a professional horseman. He is one of the best to have around and it was a pleasure to have him at Cochise previously where he had a really enjoyable time! Watch this space'

If you would like to learn more about Cochise Stud, contact Derek O'Byrne White on 086 0830267 or email westernclinic@gmail.com

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Humid Autumn Hunting And Exciting Days In The Saddle

Cubhunting and decent scent can be a hit and miss affair because often the weather is too warm for good scent. However, it's nice to get out into the countryside, meet old friends and watch the hounds working. My first day of cubhunting of the 2013/2014 season was on August 24th and I went out with my local hunt, the Ormond Foxhounds, whose kennels are located near the pleasant village of Cloughjordan in North Tipperary. Seven of us had made the big effort of getting up an hour or so before dawn. I exited my bed at 4.30 and we met at the kennels at quarter to six. It was very humid and we were perspiring shortly after setting off. Our territory was a large bog and woodland near Modreeny Church (one of many uninhabited Church of Ireland churches across Ireland) on a regional road between Nenagh and Birr. There had been enormous growth during the summer and the undergrowth was very dense, so dense in fact that one of us said it was like the Amazon jungle! I thought to myself that this is one of the reasons I love hunting, because we are entering a natural environment which is good for the soul and peaceful, and can even make you on occasion think of exciting adventures in exotic places such as the Amazon.

We spent a few hours crossing challenging terrain which included deep, muddy holes and some very deep drains. It took me a little while to 'screw my courage to the sticking-place' and jump down into or across these drains, as it would have been easy enough to sprain an ankle or worse. One of our number was a young lad of 15 years who was recovering from a broken leg incurred while hunter-trying in April and he couldn't jump across these drains but had to climb down into them.

The pack of 15 couple was mostly quiet for the three hours but they did open a little. The hounds at one stage took off on a strong line of scent, and we jogged after them. We were perspiring and occasionally tripping on the undergrowth. After several minutes the hounds checked and we were glad of the breather. After it had all finished we drank tea at an open car boot and as always after exercise and in the outdoors the tea was very welcome.

once again cubbing with the Ormonds and this time I remembered to bring leather gloves and a wooden stick with a two-prong head. The gloves were for keeping out thorns and the stick was for holding down electric wire and for beating a way through brambles and dense undergrowth. We met at Faddan

More Bog near Carrig not far from Birr. In 2006 a local man operating a turf cutting machine on Faddan More Bog unearthed an unusual-looking object. This was a medieval psalter which was probably written about 800 in one of a number of monasteries in the area. This find was called one of the most



Riverstown Beagles with Noel Lambe, huntsman.

A couple of Saturdays later, I was out



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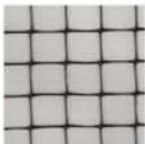
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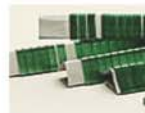
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Colm Cleary from Birr in action.

(Photo: Brid C Ryan)

significant Irish archaeological finds in decades.

Following the hound music

I was a bit late for the Faddan More hunt because I slept it out a tad, but it wasn't difficult to find the others as I could follow the hound music, who were marking at a den in woodland. The terrain was boggy and hugely overgrown and giant heather grew around us. The trees were still in their summer foliage and hadn't begun changing to an autumnal hue. I went out cubbing about ten times during the autumn and probably the most enjoyable outing was a Saturday morning in mid September which was a really beautiful morning. It was also less humid and more fresh, therefore we enjoyed good scent. After an excellent summer the ground was dry. A few of us followed on horseback and jumped over a couple of wire fences. I jogged along behind on foot, my shoulder-length stick providing support, and I expended quite a bit of energy over the course of the morning. The hounds on a number of occasions found very quickly and pursued Rénard to the nearby dens. We also drew a large plantation not far from the considerable

expanse of Scohaboy Bog, which is not far from Sopwell House / Hall. Sopwell is a fine building and was built in the mid 18th Century by Colonel Francis Sadleir and the house has been attributed to Francis Bindon who had connections with the owner. Bindon was a popular architect and painter in 18th Century Ireland. Scohaboy Bog is a large raised bog and is a Natural Heritage Area. A couple of rare bog plants grow there.

October saw our cubbing outing

begin, when the temperature was one degree celsius at 6am, bringing with it the first frosts of Autumn. Compare this with just the week before when it was 16 degrees celsius at seven in the morning! As so often the cool weather was beneficial for scent and the hounds were keen and went well. We drew at the gorse covert beside the transmission mast on the small hill beside Knocknacree Wood just outside Cloughjordan and the hounds found almost immediately with a couple of foxes leaving the covert and running into the wood. We lost the fox in the wood and decided to draw elsewhere. We crossed a few fields and drew a small covert consisting of farmsheds and crops, a place which is called The Maze. There were about five foxes here and we pursued one across a ploughed field (tough going) to a den in a hedge. Overall, this was a very good morning's hunting, with beautiful, cloudless weather, fantastic views of the countryside and the hills in the distance.

The first day of the mounted season for me was the 2nd of November and this was accompanied by the usual butterflies in the stomach. I joined the Ormonds at a small, picturesque pub called Ryan's between Nenagh and Borrisokane. The weather was very blustery and wintry, therefore quite a few riders stayed away. About 25 riders



Anne Ryan during the same meet taking a jump in some style.



Ormond Huntsman Denis O'Sullivan decides to try another covert and calls the hounds during a hunt in February.



The Ormond field during the Riverstown hunt in February.

(Below) Holding on - Huntsman Denis O'Sullivan.

(photo: Anne Ryan)



turned out and despite the strong gusts of wind the hounds performed well. We spent some time at a sand and gravel quarry, which entailed negotiating one obstacle where you had to pull hard to the left to avoid going into a wire fence. Shortly afterwards we were caught in a very heavy downpour which penetrated to our skin. We took shelter under high thorn bushes.

One of the November meets with the Ormonds took place at Eyremount House which was beside the train station in the attractive village of Cloughjordan. The hosts of Eyremount were hugely welcoming and provided a big feed and punch. About 50 people gathered for the lawnmeet including some old stalwarts of the Ormond and North Tipps, who had hung up their hunting crops. One of these former mounted followers of the chase showed me a picture of a considerably younger me and some other hunt aficionados taken in a pub about 20 years ago. We were all laughing and looked as if we were having great fun. One of the guinness imbibers was wearing my top hat, which I had worn during that day's hunt.

The drain was an unforgiving place

A few people went to a good deal of trouble erecting jumps for the Eyremount meet, which didn't head towards the usual goal of Knocknacree Wood but ventured out the Nenagh Road direction. We drew a covert adjacent to the rail-line but it was blank. We rode along the rail-line for a few minutes, not trotting because the sharp stones could cause foot-bruising, crossed the Nenagh Road and found in a small wood by a stream. To cross into the wood it was necessary to lower an electric fence and the ground was live, a fact which some of the horses didn't like. I crossed the lowered wire and the deep stream and came to a drain. A horse coming behind was reacting negatively to the electric current. We walked down into the drain but it was an unforgiving place and my horse couldn't get out of it because of very deep mud. I had to get off the horse who lay on his side for a minute,



Phillip Donnelly (Chairman, HAI) at Punchestown festival last year with Mr Alan Reilly of the Louth Foxhounds.

recovering. I climbed out of the drain, pulled the reins over his head, and he managed to get out. He was ok to hunt on but at 3pm he lost a rear shoe and I had to retire. Prior to that we crossed a couple of fields with several jumps, in pursuit of Rénard, including one challenging jump over a log with subsiding ground on the jump-side. The fox after a mile's pursuit went to ground in a small sitka spruce covert and here we crossed a wide drain which contained deep water and a muddy, slippery bank, which tested some of the horses. My horse crossed this obstacle very well.

My fall in the muddy drain resulted in a twisted knee for me which was a sore thing. This meant that on the next day, when I was out with Balgarrett Foot Beagles near Mullingar I wasn't able to run after them, but only to walk painfully. The weather was very poor. It rained without cessation and by the end of the hunt, after two and a half hours, we were soaked to the skin. The country was near the hamlet of Rosemount, not far from Moate and a hill which dominates this whole region. Hares were plentiful and the beagles were very close to the quarry on a number of occasions. One hare came close to us, stopped on seeing us, changed direction and stopped a few more times when crossing a

couple of fields looking at the beagles several hundred yards away. Despite the poor weather this was in fact a very good day with the beagles staying on the scent for long periods of time.

On Saturday the penultimate Saturday of November, the Ormonds were at an excellent pub called The Mill House on the Birr / Roscrea road. The day was excellent and involved a lot of jumping and several drains. One of us fell at a drain and was knocked unconscious for a few minutes. Shortly afterwards my horse slipped at a muddy drain and I fell into a stream. I went into the water up to my neck and was soaked right through. Later on a woman (who damaged her knee skiing during the year and subsequently broke her foot when she fell down stairs) disturbed a wasp's nest and was stung on the face, which resulted in significant swelling around her cheekbone area.

My horse handled the rest of the day's drains (about five of them) very well. The trickiest jump was a wall into a wood followed a very short distance afterwards (about ten feet) by a drain. My horse handled this fine. Shortly afterwards there was a pitstop and we were given hot ports and sausage rolls by very kind local ladies. An Italian man and a lady from Ohio were hunting

today as well. I was told the following day that there was a very enjoyable shindig in the Mill House after the hunt but I couldn't make it.

A week later, the Ormonds met at Stanley's Cross, which is a crossroads a few hundred yards from Ballingarry. There was a lot of jumping today with an exciting drop fence on the outskirts of Ballingarry village followed by a fine wall. The huntsman forded a stream on foot up to his chest in water to access a covert and there were a few fallers. One lady fell at a small gate which was angled in the wrong way for the horse. Her horse clipped the gate, stumbled and she was tipped over the animal's head. It looked a bad fall but she was fine.

I joined the Balgarretts in early December, at a traditional two storey farmhouse between Mullingar and Kilbeggan. The owner of the farm hunts with the Westmeath Foxhounds and he regaled us with exciting tales of days with the Westmeaths. The farm was very near Lough Errill and we spent most of the day jogging along beside the lake, after three or four hares. The day's temperature was a couple of degrees above normal. It was overcast and a reasonably strong wind was blowing. This was a fabulous day's hunting because in three hours the hounds' cry lapsed on only three or four occasions and then for only short periods of time. My twisted knee was still giving me a little trouble and I wasn't at full fitness.

I enjoyed Punchestown HAI Race Day in April this year, as it is traditionally a great day out for hunting folk, with the Wicklow Foxhounds and Grallagh Harriers parading in front of the grandstand.

Those are some of the highlights of my season, which was sadly cut short for me in January, when I fell from my horse and broke my arm. As I write this it is 12 weeks since my operation and my arm feels good. It's not yet back to the strength it was but I am looking forward to getting back in the saddle, beginning with nothing more than trotting the horse, and plan to do so in the next couple of weeks.

Spring Grouse Counting



There are few moments in the year that I look forward to with greater eagerness than when I take my first step back into the heather to begin spring grouse counts. February this year was a cold, wet month with precious little to recommend it but as the days slowly lengthened into March and the snowdrops faded to be replaced by daffodils blooming along the verges we loaded the pointers and the setter into the car and headed out for our first day counting on the high Northumberland moors.

It was almost the perfect day for a spring count with the bird dogs: warm and sunny with a light southerly breeze and dry underfoot. Plumes of smoke from heather burning were arising all around us and there was the distant hum of a tractor and flail cutting firebreaks around the patches to be burnt. The grouse were evidently enjoying the warmth and sunshine as

much as we were and even before we started we could hear cocks calling and see the odd one displaying – flying a few feet up into the air and then fluttering down again to proclaim to all around him that this was his patch of heather and no-one was going to take it away from him.

Spring grouse counts are valuable to give an idea to moorland managers as to how well the grouse have wintered and an indication (though no more than an indication) as to the prospects for the coming season five months along the way. While a pair of grouse in the spring is no guarantee of a covey in August a lack of grouse now will almost certainly mean a poor season in prospect. Also, while working the dogs we are looking for cock birds with no hen accompanying them, for any birds that appear weak or diseased and for evidence of predation. The real value of spring counts to the keeper though is the year on year comparison of the number of pairs on each beat, and in order to be as consistent as possible we

try to cover the same ground each year.

For the gundog trainer the spring counts are invaluable. It gives us the chance to get our young dogs out onto the hill to experience the feel of heather under their feet and the heady scent of grouse in their nostrils. Spring grouse are generally fit, strong and worldly-wise, having survived a shooting season, a moorland winter and the ravages of predation, and there is little danger of a young dog running in and chopping a bird. Summer counts, where there may be late broods and weak flyers are a different matter, but in the spring the grouse are well able to keep themselves out of trouble.

The dogs started out in their different ways: the two pointers full of themselves and eager to take in the whole hill in a couple of casts, while the little Irish setter was much more tentative and needed encouraging to get out and quarter her beat. All three eventually settled down to their work and with an excellent stock of birds on the ground it was soon a matter of



Monkey on point.



Cock grouse in flight calling as he goes.



Ilan and Millie working out a point near the lunch hut.



Another cock grouse takes to the air.

points for everyone. Often we could see the cock bird sitting up and watching the dog as it ran, then ducking down into the heather as the dog caught the wind and came onto point. Some pairs sat tightly until we rodded the dog in to put them up: others ran before rising, and in several cases the cock bird would try to lead the dog away from the hen, showing himself as he strutted away for perhaps fifty yards before taking to the wing and circling away to land behind us, ready to come back to his territory once we were gone.

We enjoyed two days of glorious March sunshine before the weather hit back at us. Our third day out was marked by a wind rising steadily towards gale force and a temperature that plummeted back to winter levels. Heather burning ceased abruptly; the grouse stopped displaying and the pointers shivered as they waited for their turn to run. They were still finding birds okay, but the grouse were tending to be tucked down in the heather and until a dog went on point the moor appeared to be devoid of all life. When grouse did get up they were whipped away by the gale, swinging round and pitching in again some way behind us. We only managed to cover about half the beat before the wind got so strong that we decided to abandon operations for the day and retired to the cars, the flasks and the packed lunch.

The strong winds stayed with us for the rest of the week, though mercifully, apart from one day, there was little rain. A heather moor on a sunny day is one of the most beautiful places in Britain, but the same moor being swept by rain and hail is no place for man or beast, especially if the 'beast' is a thin-coated pointer. At times you wonder how the moorland birds survive at all in such harsh conditions, but survive they do, and not just the grouse.

We saw lapwings and curlew, skylarks and pipits, snipe, oystercatchers, kestrels, golden plover, Canada geese, teal, mallard, blackgame, partridges, the odd buzzard and numerous other birds that benefit



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from the proper management of the moors. Systematic heather burning coupled with the control of crows, magpies, foxes, rats, stoats and weasels and the reduction of rabbit numbers produces an environment that is aimed at maximising grouse numbers but has the side effect of benefitting any number of other moorland birds and animals. Take away the red grouse and the incentive to burn and control predators is lost and heather moorland will soon be over-grazed, planted with conifers, infested with wind turbines or simply revert to scrubby woodland. In every case the wildlife will suffer as a result.

But enough of the preaching. The window for spring counts is quite narrow and obviously, once the grouse start nesting they must be left undisturbed. With spring pointer and setter trials being run at the same time there is a frantic burst of activity from birddog trainers all over the moors for three weeks or so. Some days there was just Georgina and me with our three dogs doing the counts; at other times we would join up with friends Angela, Joy, Ian, Steve and David, either splitting into two teams or covering larger beats between



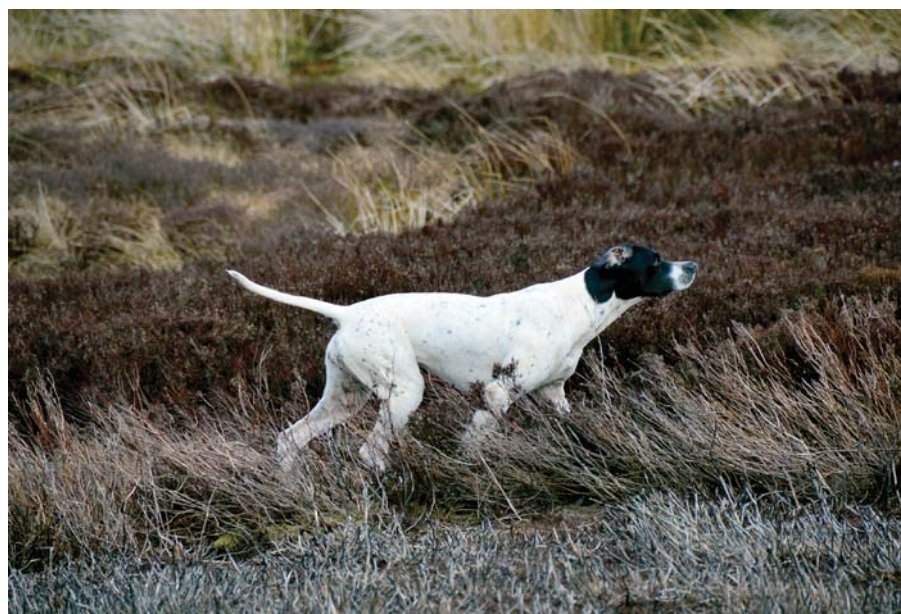
Steve watches as a grouse goes away from pointer Zak.

us. As always with birddogs there were moments of triumph and disaster:

clever finds downwind, textbook quartering, a puppy's first proper point on grouse; offset against the times a dog took off into the far distance, flushed birds that it should have pointed or ran in instead of dropping when grouse took to the wing. There was the adder that we almost trod on as it lay

supine in the weak spring sunshine; the rabbits that sprung up under the dogs' noses and were chased (disaster) or completely ignored (triumph). There was the day when sunshine changed to stinging showers of hail; the driving wet snow that turned us all into snowmen for a few minutes and the day that we sat for three hours waiting for the fog to lift. It never did and we went home again without running a dog at all.

The two pointers gradually settled to their work and the young dog slowly became more responsive to his whistles and the idea that he should do what we wanted rather than the other way around. Monkey the Irish setter visibly gained in confidence after the first couple of days on the hill and by the end of our counting was getting out as well as any of the dogs. Towards the end of the counts she even ignored my whistle once or twice, much to Georgina's delight. All too soon though April is arriving and the moors and hills will be off limits for the dogs until July when we can start our summer counts and see just how well all those pairs of birds have done in the intervening months. Let's hope for good weather, big broods and another bumper season to follow.



Ian's pointer Millie on point.

Hunting Roundup

Around the meets **East Antrim Hounds**

Late in January, a desperately wet day greeted the East Antrim Hounds at host John Reid's home outside Beltoy, near Larne, where fifteen hardy souls under field master John Minford followed huntsman Patrick Headdon, a 12½ couple mixed pack and whipper-in Robbie Hodge to the first draw, without any undue hanging around. This is my home pack but I don't think I have ever seen them hunt on a wetter day.

Patrick first drew Wilbert Semple's and hounds put one customer afoot to give a fast hunt as far as David Bell's with the field having to come out onto Manse Road as the ground here was so wet. Hounds carried on but eventually lost their pilot in the very wet conditions.

The second draw, at Ian Erskine's, also produced a hunt with this fox taking hounds into the forest off the Beltoy Road where he was very hard pushed by one bitch, Dapple 08. This hunt continued towards Lough Mourne where our pilot, still hard pushed by Dapple, went to ground.

This wet day now actually got wetter

and some desultory draws failed to produce any business so home was blown, in late afternoon, as light was fast fading. Anyone out hunting on such a day deserves great credit, as do the land owners for allowing them to cross their land.

Westmeath Foxhounds

En route to the Westmeath Foxhounds' meet at Delvin, had I owned a mobile phone, I would have rung huntsman James Lowry, so heavy was the rain once I crossed the border, to confirm that the meet was on. However, on arrival at Athboy there was no rain and this remained the case at Delvin where everyone's response was 'what rain'? This is James's last season as huntsman, having been in office since 1996 and, on the evidence of this visit; he will be leaving them a first class pack of fit, hard working hounds. With a 14½ couple mixed pack on view, James was assisted by professional Niall Donne and by Andre Bouabbse.

With visitors from the Newry Hunt, the Louth Foxhounds and from the Farney Harriers field master Helen Moorehead had a thirty strong mounted field to oversee. Of course as we

reached the first draw, at Curry's, the rain arrived. James drew here and hounds put a fox afoot which gave a hunt right around Curry's, then skirted Tom Cox's and headed for the main Mullingar to Derry Road, which he crossed. He continued towards Billistown and then Caddagh before he was lost.

At Halpin's in Clonyn, near the Castle, hounds put another fox afoot. The rain had now eased but ground conditions were absolutely sodden and everyone was now carrying some mud, whether they had fallen or not! A sharp hunt, right around Halpin's, ended when this fox went to ground in a wood at the Fairy Ring Fort.

Seamus Bray's at Clonyn yielded another fox which, almost immediately, went straight across the road into Mulligan's and after another sharp hunt he, too, went to ground at Carland's. Hounds then drew Killadorin old cemetery but it was blank as was the nearby bog so home was blown to enable everyone to dry off.

Back at the meet I was informed that James Lowry's successor was to be Naill Mahon, a former whipper-in here who is returning from England.



Huntsman James Lowry with the Westmeath Foxhounds at Delvin.

Killultagh Old Rock and Chichester Hunt

Mr and Mrs Noel Fitzpatrick welcomed a small but hardy field to the Killultagh Old Rock and Chichester Hunt's meet at their home near Stoneyford, Co Antrim, on a cold, wet 1st February. Huntsman Mark Casserly had on a 12½ couple mixed pack and was assisted by Christopher Berry while Mrs Frank Boyd MFH was field master for the day. Mark has a good balance of Modern and Old English blood and they nick in nicely. However this day, on which we actually had some sleet, proved to be one of very poor scenting conditions which no amount of effort on the part of a very determined huntsman and his hounds could improve.

Mark first drew Bertie Mairs's property which was blank so he moved on to Sam Gowdy's. Sam was in the mounted field, having his first day on a new horse that he had bought from former master Danny Duffin and he later professed himself satisfied with his purchase. Sam's neighbour, Tommy Eason, opined that there were foxes aplenty on his land but hounds could make nothing of it.

The huntsman persevered but a move to Drumnakelly and a series of draws through the plantation off Moss Road and as far as Aghacartan also came to nothing so home was blown in very fast fading light on this disappointingly blank day.

West Wicklow's visit makes history

Ireland's newest Foxhound pack, the West Wicklow, made history by visiting Northern Ireland's oldest Foxhound pack, the East Down, to hunt at Crossgar in what no one, not even former East Down joint master Craig Caven could remember as having the precedent of a pack from the Republic visiting the Province. As Craig said: "I've been involved for fifty years and I can't remember a precedent".

Joint master and huntsman Rupert Macauley and one of his joint masters,



Killultagh Huntsman Mark Cassidy with 'Parsley' at the meet at Stoneyford, Co Antrim.

Christy Hart, had a dozen of their members 'on parade' and a combined field of thirty was under field master James Armstrong MFH (East Down).

With Sarah Callow as whipper-in, Rupert led his mixed pack off on this almost spring like day which had bright, but cool, weather. The first draw, at Robinson's off Lough Road provided a fox which everyone was amused to note stood still and looked at them for almost two minutes. This big, gold coloured dog fox then took them off, at speed, through Ferris's towards Derryboye. Going through Max Ervine's he continued through Max's mothers farm then back in to Robinson's. He continued right handed and went across the back of the Monastery where hounds made a left hand turn towards Crossgar and went back into Robinson's. Hounds hunted off Cluntagh Park then in to Bell's and down Cluntagh Road eventually going in to Savage's plantation.

This fast hunt continued in to Turmennan Wood where, after one hour and twenty minutes hunting, our pilot went to ground allowing home to be blown in reasonably good light. The

weather was now cold and, as we returned to the meet, the hail stones appeared so we sat in Davidson's Hill House Restaurant and watched them fall!

This had been a singularly enjoyable day especially as it was spent on one fox and the West Wicklow visitors were well satisfied with their history making visit, as were their hosts.

Fermanagh Harriers

The Fermanagh Harriers' meet at Nutfield, outside Brookeborough, turned out to be the coldest day I think I have ever been out hunting. Master and huntsman Johnny Vance had on an 11½ couple mixed pack with his sister Susan and Mr Michael Bevan whipping-in while field master Mr Ted Persse had a thirty strong mounted field under his control.

Hounds first drew Armstrong's but it was blank so they drew Alan Hurst's where they put their first fox afoot. He took them through Hurst's, into Barry Hennessey's continuing into Willy and May Cooke's before crossing a river, which itself flows into the Colebrooke river, then into



Mr Robbie Hodge, Amateur Whipper In with the East Antrim Hounds at Beltoy. Ernie Johnston's.

This hunt had been carried on at a fair pace for over half an hour and it ended, after crossing Michael McDonald's, in Peter Carr's where our fox went to ground on the edge of the Ministry forest. Hounds were lifted here but, almost immediately, they put a second customer afoot who ran through the forestry. He went into John McDonald's then Rosemary Breen's before running back into Michael McDonald's and on into Norrie Johnston's, only to go to ground below the reservoir. Light had started to fade as early as 2.30pm but now, after 4pm, it had seemingly stopped fading allowing everyone to return safely to the meet.

Joint master Patrick Murphy's daughter Michaela who, though not yet twenty years of age, has been hunting for over fifteen years, opined that she had never seen a hunt with so many fallers – fortunately no injuries were sustained, so soft was the going. A bigger than usual number of horses lost shoes to keep the farriers happy!

Ballymacad Foxhounds

The Ballymacad Foxhounds' meet at Kilsyre, near Oldcastle Co Meath, had one of the worst scenting days of the season so far. Huntsman Kevin Donohue and whippers –in Maurice Quinn and Garry Fitzsimons led a forty

strong mounted field, under Jim Stevenson MFH, to the first draw at Farrelly's off Clonmellon Road. The day was bright but cool with, in the event, no rain and seemed to leave hounds with a lot to do all day.

Hounds put a fox afoot and, with intermittent good music, enjoyed a fast, circular hunt for some forty five minutes before a check on the road where they lost their fox. The Elephant Grass, which normally holds a fox, proved blank and hounds fared no better at Gurnin's. However, matters improved at Lakefield with a second pilot providing another fast hunt before going to ground, still in Lakefield.

A move to Billy Connell's, at the Christmas trees, saw another fox leave covert among the trees and he, too, gave a fast hunt before going to ground. By now the weather had worsened, it was much colder and rain was threatening so, after a series of draws back towards the meet had proved blank, Kevin Donohue blew for home.

Kevin Donohue has bred a top class pack of hounds and the 12½ couple on view certainly underlined their high reputation. The going had been extremely heavy and a number of fallers, fortunately, had sustained no injuries while the fact that the field had had so much country to cross was due to a hard working huntsman and pack of hounds making much more of poor

scenting conditions than could reasonably have been expected.

Galway Blazers

At Cartymore, Co Galway, the Blazers' huntsman Tom Dempsey had on a 16 ½ couple bitch pack for the meet at Lafferty's Bar with Jason O'Donnell whipping-in, while field master Kevin Dempsey gave an excellent lead to a seventy strong mounted field on this blowy day.

The first draw, at Little Mount Brown, was blank so Tom moved on to Hasel's where hounds put one afoot and this presaged a hunt towards Canavan's through to Bane's then back in to Canavan's, where he was lost after a sharp hunt. The ground here seems to be more resilient to the rain than other meets I've been to this season and was surprisingly good in places. As hounds drew steadily across Bane's they put a second fox afoot which also ran towards Canavan's, then into the Forty Acre at Bane's. From here he ran in to John Feeney's then back to Canavan's and up in to Johnny Egan's before running back in to Bane's and going to ground. A series of draws on O'Brien's land put a third fox afoot and it crossed O'Brien's, ran through Brod Creshan's and returned to O'Brien's, went in to some rocks and was given best.

This had been an 11am meet and home was blown in late afternoon after a testing day which had shown Tom Dempsey's light framed, active and fast hounds to their best advantage. As always with the Blazers, leading the car followers was senior joint master Michael Dempsey, who has been in office since 1978 and seems to know where each fox will run.

Ward Union Staghounds

The Ward Union Staghounds' meet at Carragha, near Ashbourne Co Meath, was hosted by Paddy Swan at the eponymous Swan's Bar beside the historic monument of Paud O'Donoghue's Forge, where a famous local blacksmith is depicted by a statue. Swan's Bar is a very horse oriented

place with a hitching rail outside which bears the notice "Tie your horse here" and a nearby half door has a horse's head jutting out of the top half so that this horse's head is the first thing anyone approaching from Slane sees of the bar.

Huntsman Pat Coyle hunts only doghounds and those on show were a fit, hard, impressive looking bunch. Some thirty riders were under two of the joint masters, Seamus Fitzpatrick and David Baker, while Pat was assisted by whippers-in Darren Campbell (professional) and Colm O'Dwyer.

An outlier was known to be in the Kilbrew area and was put afoot at Andy Johnston's from where he moved to Gargan's and on through to Garry Burke's at Frankstown. This hunt had been in a big circle and this proved to be a very unenterprising customer who entered Garry Burke's plantation, briefly came out again and was then lost.

Among the interested spectators was Tony Lockwood (ex master of the Croome and West Warwickshire Foxhounds, 1993-2000) and his wife who were on a brief visit here. Michael Delaney had a second outlier on his property and Pat Coyle went looking for him. After a slow start hounds pushed him on towards Cabin Hill before he took them back across Brackenstown Road heading towards Dunshaughlin. From here he performed a large circle before again heading towards Dunshaughlin, crossing into Red Bay and moving towards Lagore before moving back towards Dunshaughlin and the Black Bull Golf Club where he was left, with Pat Coyle blowing for home.

The field had certainly enjoyed themselves but scent seemed to be at a premium, though a large number of car followers did not make for a good scenting day on this last meet of the season.

South Tyrone Foxhounds

The South Tyrone Foxhounds have had a "storming season" with huntsman Ryan Carvill, in his first season here, consistently showing good sport and

they closed their season at Caledon, with a reception in the Castle beforehand and a plated meal afterwards, courtesy of the Earl and Countess of Caledon.

Ryan had on a mixed pack of 14½ couple, with whippers-in Paul Kinane and Loyd Parr to assist him while forty mounted followers had a busy day under all three joint masters, Stephen Hutchinson, Patrick Heffron and Martin Lavery. Among the spectators were ex huntsman of the East Devon Foxhounds Michael McAnulty and his wife Mary, who are very good friends of Ryan Carvill's while there was also a large number of car followers, all of whom had attended the previous evening's Hunt Ball, which accounted for a degree of fragility among some of the mounted field.

The first draw, at Mulberry Meadows, saw a hare go afoot and be studiously ignored by hounds but they enjoyed better luck at Chapel Hill. As they drew around the edge of the village they put a fox afoot opposite Beattie's. This fox crossed, then re-crossed, the main Caledon to Dungannon road and ran towards the Bull Ring where he performed a left hand loop and was lost. However, he was quickly 're-found' to run back from the Bull Ring towards Aughnacloy.

A further draw off the Aughnacloy to Dungannon road saw another pilot afoot at Back Hill Flats near the vegetable plots. He crossed the Flats on a one and a half mile run and entered some planting. This good run saw some empty saddles but no one suffered any injury unlike an earlier incident where Dianna Heffron, Patrick's wife, was actually

treated by an ambulance crew and paramedics while still on her horse. She was removed to hospital in a neck brace and on a back board in an impressive display of ultra cautious professionalism. Hounds marked their fox to ground and Ryan Carvill moved on to some hill ground from which another customer went afoot to run back towards the Bull Ring through Back Hill Flats before being lost after crossing the Flats. A further series of draws around the outskirts of the village proved blank so home was blown to end this "storming season" with a seriously depleted field returning to the meet in still excellent light at 5.20pm!

A happy postscript to this meet was that Patrick Heffron rang to inform me that his wife had "only bruises and stiffness," after her fall, with all precautions happily proving to be unnecessary.

Heard it on the grapevine

At the North Down Foxhounds the departure of huntsman Tom Haddock, to the Clifton-on-Teme Foxhounds, has seen whipper-in Barry Jones promoted to huntsman to succeed him.

Johnny Vance, MH, Huntsman with the Fermanagh Harriers at Nutfield.



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Obituary

Joe Craig

1922 - 2014

The words which best sum up Joe Craig were penned two years ago by his great friend Winston Kelly, on the occasion of his ninetieth birthday. The headline to the tribute read 'Joe Craig – a true gentleman of the gundog world.' Those words are equally true as we mourn his passing on 5th February 2014.

Joe was born into an agricultural environment at Struell, outside Downpatrick, in the early 1920s where he learnt the way of the country. Early contact with sheepdogs and livestock were something which came easily to him, and formed the basis of his love of the countryside. This rural idyll was rudely interrupted in 1939 when Hitler and the German Army swept through Eastern Europe, prompting Neville Chamberlain our then Prime Minister to declare 'consequently we are at war with Germany.'

Joe Craig had a deep sense of patriotic duty, he enlisted immediately, even disguising his occupation to ensure a place in the British Army. As an agricultural worker he would have been in protected employment, but Joe insisted he was an industrial operative. Joe served locally at the start of the war before being posted to the King's Own Scottish Borderers. In June 1944 he was scheduled to take part in the D-Day landings, but sustained injuries in training which delayed his arrival in Normandy until 10th July 1944. The horror of war was quickly apparent and soon after his arrival his best friend was killed in action. Joe was given the job of 'bren gun operator,' not the safest of occupations and with minimal life expectancy. Undeterred, Joe served through the remainder of the war, seeing action in France, Belgium, Holland and Germany. He finished his military campaign in Palestine in 1947 from where he was demobilised.

Like many of his era, Joe rarely discussed his experiences in the war, even with his family; his memories, however would have been many and varied. Courage, valour and distinction are just some of the descriptions vying to do honour to his service at this time.

Arriving back in Downpatrick, Joe set about getting employment and he commenced work at Downshire Hospital as a nurse. He remained caring for the mentally ill until retirement as a Charge Nurse in 1977. One of the aspects of treatment Joe was particularly keen to see adopted was Occupational Therapy, which he helped to pioneer.

Joe Craig was always interested in working dogs and started breeding Labradors in the 1950s, his first appearance in a Field Trial can be found in the early 1960s. He always believed that the dog 'should be natural' — not for him the manufactured retrievers we see today. His Kennel name was Meadowbrae, and he produced some very fine animals — notably FTCh Meadowbrae Widgeon who won the Irish Championship and CLA for Robert Horner, but also FTCh Meadowbrae Survivor, who was also Joe's personal favourite.

Joe will always be associated with Derryboye Daniel with whom he trained and won two Open stakes. He came fourth in a FT Class at Crufts and appeared on the Blue Peter television programme as the happiest dog in show. Daniel



Joe Craig with Flo and Goldie at Ballydugan Estate.

was eventually sold back to Margaret Glossop, who had bred him, and was made up to an Int FTCh, winning many Open Stakes and coming third in the British Championship.

Always keen to improve his training, Joe regularly went to Lough Bawn in County Monaghan where Ruth Tennison hosted training classes. His companions on these occasions would have been Jim Cranston, Sam Jennett, Robert O'Farrell and Margaret Glossop. Dedication is a word which easily comes to mind when considering the logistics of a training class in this remote location. Lough Bawn remained one of Joe's favourite places and he continued to attend the annual Working Test run by the Utility Gundog Club of Ireland until the year before he died.

Success in trials was augmented by winning performances in Tests, and Joe represented Ireland at the CLA, under the great Tom Creamer's captaincy, on at least five occasions during the 1980s. He was on the winning side on three occasions, which is a significant achievement given the ferocious competition between the home nations. His teammates at the time would have included Winston Kelly, Seamus Savage, John and Jim Barr, Stewart Rogers, Michael McGivern and Aidan Daly.

Joe's competitive instincts with his dogs were always guided by the fact that they were required to work very hard in the field. He will always be remembered as a loyal picker up on his favourite shoot at Ballydugan Estate in his native Downpatrick, where he was still picking up in his 91st year. He was also a regular at Finnebrogue, Montalto, and Castlewellan.

Joe Craig was a quiet, dedicated man who did much for his community and the gundog world. In his distinctive tweed trilby hat and shooting coat he epitomised a gentlemanly era now sadly neglected. He would never have dreamt of being critical of a Judge or of offering some biting, offensive remark about a fellow competitor. He will be sadly missed.

Joseph Craig was born on 24th January 1922 and he passed away on 5th February 2014. He was married to Rose for fifty-five years, and she pre-deceased him by nine years. He is survived by his sons Vincent, Maurice and Ian and by his grandchildren and great grandchildren.

May Joe rest in peace, for he was a peaceful and honourable man and the world is the poorer for his passing.

Peter Smith



An earlier picture with FT Ch Meadowbrae Survivor, his personal favourite.

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Dog Show and Race Reports

Combined Clubs Race Day And Dog Match Saturday 15th March

The first Race day of 2014 was held at Hollymount Road, Laurencetown on Saturday 15th March. Being the first sporting occasion of the year, this event brought a sizeable crowd to the venue. It was nice after the long cold, wet winter, to meet up again with some old friends, and also make some new ones. I spoke to people who travelled from Carlow, Dublin and Drogheda, all out for a great days racing.

Dessie Mackin took command of the lure, Tracy Gill efficiently mastered line judge, while Tom Barry lined up the dogs and their handlers at the starting line. Within minutes the roars and cheers of excitement rang out across the valley, as the first race of 2014 was under way.

Racing results

Whippet Final Graham Fyffe with Bolt. Reserve Michael Quinn .

Under 21 Fiona Devlin with Angel, Reserve Rose Mc Coy with Kyro

Under 23 Elite Rose Mc Coy with Diago, Reserve Fiona Devlin with Diva

Under 23 Lurchers Ged Donagh with Zeus, Reserve Gary Smyth with Lucy.

Bull x Paddy Mc Carthy with PIP, Reserve Mark Sloan with Sasha.

Over 23 Elite Michael Quinn with Mo Charra, Reserve Ged Donagh with Jess.

Over 23 Lurcher Ian Balfour, with Ben, Reserve Glen Doherty with Diesel.

Terriers Ged Donagh with Boe, Reserve J Mc Gregor with Nipper

Whippet Pups Colin Tucker with Tia. Lurcher Pups Ged Donagh with Shadow.

Overall Winners of Qualifiers for The Master McGrath.

Michael Quinn with Mo Charra, Reserve Rose Mc Coy with Diago

Dog Match Results

Puppy Match Janet Duke with Maeve Reserve Tracy Gill with Scarlett.

Adult Dog Overall Match Winner Peter Morgan with Fire, Reserve Kirsty Fyffe with Ollie.

Finally, there were presentations to those who could not attend Dessie Mackin's Christmas show last

December. Fiona Devlin, with Maverick was awarded 'Dog of the Year 2013.'

Next award went to Billy Harpur for his photographic contribution to shows.

Field of Dreams Dog Show and Raceday Sunday 13th April

Field Of Dreams is an established business run and owned by the Hurley family, with an up to date Schooling Track. It is always nice to meet nice people, and they were out in abundance. 110 dogs raced on the day, what a turnout.

Showing Results

Handling Classes Ladies Margaret McStay Gents Michael Quinn

Champion Lurcher Melissa Greer Reserve Arlene Greer

Champion Terrier Peter Morgan Champion Whippet Michael Quinn Reserve Brian Welsh

Champion Pairs Gered Lynch Reserve Jamie Doherty

Champion Puppy Jed Donagh, Reserve Peter Morgan

Overall Best in Show and Supreme Champion Michael Quinn with Finn Reserve Champion Melissa Greer with Sasha.

Racing Results

Bull Cross 1st Shadow Jed Donagh 2nd Lady Micky Quinn

Whippet Race 1 Duke Mark Dogherty, Race 2 Frankie Steven Dummigan, Race 3 Sox Kirsty Harpur

Open Novice 1st Sheba Willie McKensey, 2nd Holly Ryan Wright

Under 23" Lurcher 1st Jackie D. Wilson, 2nd Ruby Johnny

Over 23" Lurcher 1st Flick Jed Donagh, 2nd Boris Ryan Wright
¾ Type 1st Bullet Charlene Rafferty, 2nd Enzo Melissa Greer

Under 21" Lurcher 1st Lola Kirsty Harpur, 2nd Jill Michael Lynch

Rough Coat Lurcher 1st Pepper Ben Davison, 2nd Gypsy Paddy McCarthy

Elite under 23" 1st Tina Kirsty Harpur, 2nd Dash Steven Dummigan

Elite Under 25" 1st Fizz Charlene Rafferty, 2nd Jess Jed Donagh

Elite Over 25"1st Ty Paul Carmichael 2nd Darky Ian Balfour

Terrier 1st Spike Jed Donagh, 2nd Boe Jed Donagh

Greyhound 1st Jerry John Bettly, 2nd Pluck Michael Lynch

Tommy Cullen's Dog Show and Raceday Sunday 30th March

Baltinglass was the location for Tommy Cullen's Lurcher, Terrier and Whippet Dog Show and Race day Sunday 30th March. There was a very large turnout of Whippets, Lurchers and Terriers in the ring.

Showing Results:

Puppy Champion Barry Holland with Links

Whippet Champion Tracy Gill with Ash Reserve Janet Duke with Damson

Lurcher Champion John Sheehan Reserve Mickey Quinn with Lady

Terriers Stan Kelly with Borris Reserve Dessie Mackin with Tara

Overall Show Champion Tracy Gill with Ash.

Ferrets Jills - Macauley Fox, Hobs - Lorcan Martin

Digging Competition Winners - Trevor Moody and John O Toole.

CHARLIE KEENAN

Greta



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

Sizes 4-9. Price £90

Tay



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

Size 4 -13 Price £90

Torray



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

Size 4 -13 Price £120

Esk



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

Size 4-13 Price £90

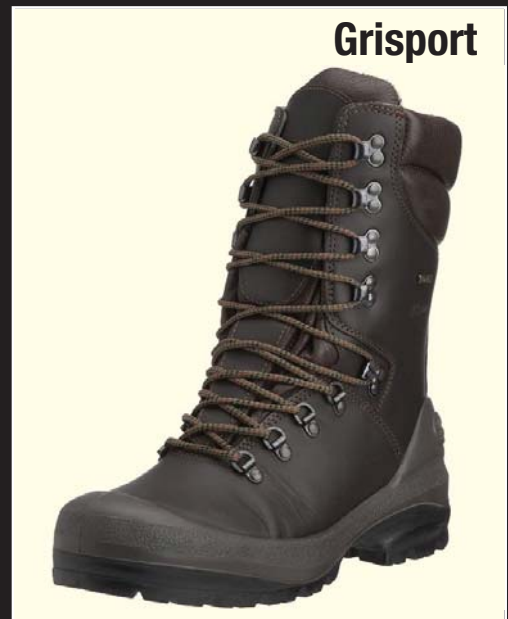
Chore Cool



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Tommy Cullen's Show



1



2



3



4

Dessie Macken's Show

1. Overall Show Champion Tracy Gill (centre) with Ash.

2. Under 21" Elite Racing Winner was Rose McCoy's Zola.

3. The Digging Competitors - including Winners Trevor Moody and John O'Toole.

4. Over 23" Elite Racing Winner Michael Quinn with Mo Chara - Qualifer for the Master McGrath.

5. Under 23" Elite Racing Winner Rose McCoy (left) with Diego Reserve and Fiona Devlin with Diva

6. Over 23" Elite Racing Winners Michael Quinn (left) with Mo Chara, and Reserve Winner Ged Donagh with Jess.

7. Whippet Racing Winner Graham Fyffe (left) with Bolt and Reserve Winner Michael Quinn.

8. Whippet Pup Racing Winner Colin Tucker with Tia.



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8



Albert Titterington stays in Ye Olde Fighting Cocks Inn in beautiful Cumbria and explores why he thinks the theory of genetic memory might explain his interests in the countryside, field sports, and history - and why people often have a sense of déjà vu when they go to places they have never been before.

Genetic memory can be described as a memory present at birth that exists in the absence of sensory experience, put simply while you could not possibly have that memory through experience, the genes you have inherited could well have had that experience and as well as more physical characteristics you may have inherited memories of these experiences.

Hugh Brady, in his article on setters in this issue, touches on how some of his dogs of Scandinavian ancestry rather naturally 'report back' in the style of their ancestors without being taught this. Throughout my life I have come across many examples of what could be considered genetic memory in lines of dogs I have bred and more personally, thinking about the reasons for some of my own behaviour!

I have been interested in genetics since I started breeding dogs when I was twelve and studied it more formally together with animal

behaviour when taking my Zoology degree. Over the years I delved in and out of various genetics and psychology books and papers on genetic memory but really started to 'study myself' just over seven years ago I visited Cumbria as part of a gathering of Titteringtons from all over the world and was rekindled when I recently stayed in Ye Old Fighting Cocks Inn, at Arnside. My earlier visit had been at the invitation of Lee Titterington, a lawyer from Pheonix, US, who had contacted me to say he had been doing some work on a family tree and thought we might be cousins

A lot of material he had, seemed to fit with knowledge I had of my own direct ancestors and I was fascinated to hear that he was visiting the UK to take part in a 'Titterington Trail' based in Cumbria, where Titterington's from Maine, New York and all over the UK, would meet and discuss their ancestry based on such 'landmarks in time'

represented by evocatively named family groups such as 'John the Bleacher,' the Morecambe Bay Fishermen, and 'the Dalton Game Keepers.'

I had only visited Morecambe once before, when we overnighted when my car broke down on the way to Liverpool and, at that visit, I felt a sense that I had been there before. Irene said it was probably due to the bottle of wine and too large a portion of the delicious Morecambe Bay Shrimps!

We met up with Lee in the Wheatsheaf, at Beetham, a very atmospheric inn going back to the 16th century before meeting the Titterington group at the St Michaels Church at Beetham for a coffee and tour of the church and churchyard. From there we went off in convoy around the beautiful South Cumbrian countryside visiting sites of relevance church graveyards where Titteringtons were buried and pubs where they had been licensees.

Cock Fighting Pit

One of the most notable of the 'Dalton Game Keeper' was William Titterington who appeared to have prospered and lived with his wife and eight children at Yealand Hall, Yealand Redmayne, situated north of Carnforth and south of the estuary of the River Kent in Lancashire, where he farmed 300 acres. With such a large family to feed he probably needed to diversify and it appears he and his sons became publicans including of the Crown Inn at Arnside, now renamed Ye Olde Fighting Cocks due to the fact that there is a cock fighting pit under the floor and The Kings Arms Inn, an old coaching inn in Burton in Kendal, situated near the 'Cocking Yard' in the village!

The Dalton Game Keepers had worked in the Haverthwaite area in the beautiful Leven Valley and fells, where when the industrial revolution came there was foundry making cannon and shot and the Gunpowder works at Low Wood which opened in 1798 and continued production right up until 1935.

The Saturday evening of the Titterington Trail ended it up in the Ship Inn, Sandside, another pub with Titterington associations, where the results of the DNA tests that various members had done were discussed and linkages drawn up.

Lee had completed the DNA test and that stimulated me to have mine done and what a fascinating area of interest that opened up. By the time he came across to Ireland to share his research with me the DNA had confirmed that we were indeed cousins and the one disparity in our recorded ancestry was that Lee's records and mine had shown a disparity of c 10 years in one ancestor – we reckon it was because in Lee's records he married, for the second time to a younger wife, and had knocked a few years off his age on his marriage certificate.

Lee and I spent some time visiting the various graveyards around Hillsborough and Lisburn including the Church of Ireland one where I had inherited a grave – empty I should hasten to add! His research took us back beyond the 1789 rebellion where one of our ancestors was a tenant farmer of the Marquis of Downshire, and a member of his yeomanry. As such he may have been in action at the Battle of Ballynahinch.

Scandinavian with a strong Finnish influence

I found the DNA analysis of my genetic makeup fascinating especially as when I was younger I had rather dark swarthy looks and thought I would be of more Mediterranean extraction – instead I found my ancestry was mainly

Scandinavian including a strong Finnish influence and even a genetic Inuit input. This could be highly indicative of the great genetic influence exerted in Ireland, Scotland and parts of the UK by the Vikings. And it could be significant that, unaware of their ancestry my sons, when they were buying a cabin, purchased one in Finland and holiday there every year!

Although there is a place Tytherington in Gloucestershire recorded as "Tidrentune" in the Domesday Book of 1086 it is generally agreed that the first recorded surname of the family was in 1250 in Cheshire where Jordan de Tytherington was Lord of the Manor.

The Titteringtons spread northwards establishing strong concentrations in Lancashire, West Yorkshire and Cumbria – the former counties working in the linen trade as indeed did my own grandfather. And of course many made their way to Ireland and the US settling from Newfoundland and Maine to Virginia and the Carolinas.

This year I had occasion to visit Cumbria on business and thought I would review some of the 2007 Titterington Trail and where else could we stay but Ye Olde Fighting Cocks Inn, in Arnside.

Formerly named The Crown, Ye Olde Fighting Cocks dates back to 1630 and is one of the oldest buildings in the



The view from the bedroom windows.



Licensee Anthony welcomes Albert to the 'Fighting Cocks'.

village of Arnside The pub overlooks Morecombe Bay and the area has much to offer visitors, in wildlife, walking and history. The Arnside area is a designated area of outstanding natural beauty with sites of scientific interest because of the rare butterflies and alpine plants that may be found around the limestone pavements. The area also offers great access to the Lake District and has many sporting opportunities.

As can be seen from the website www.fightingcocksarnside.co.uk the 'Fighting Cocks' has twelve recently renovated bedrooms, with the comfort of Egyptian cotton sheets, upgraded TV's, virtually all the rooms have wonderful views over the estuary and Lakeland mountains, and all have a seating area and a pair of binoculars to

watch the fantastic wealth of birdlife and the changing tides and weather patterns on Morecombe Bay. Another seven luxury bedrooms are being constructed in the old stables and will come 'on stream' in the next month."

Licensees Anthony and Jay took over the pub just over two years ago and in that time have made significant improvements in all areas of the business including customer service. So much so that when they entered the TV programme 'Four in a Bed,' where couples rate each other's hotels or B&Bs, they came out clear winners www.youtube.com/watch?v=ipP-Txx0Uh8

From when we arrived at Ye Olde Fighting Cocks, we could see that customer service was very much part of

the charm of the place both in terms of the licensees' own 'hands on' approach and the whole culture of delivering customer satisfaction which has permeated throughout the whole business. Part of this is due to the excellent training programmes the management have put in place but also obviously because of good initial staff selection.

One has only to read the Tripadvisor Reviews www.tripadvisor.co.uk/Hotel_Review-g1055396-d1125173-Reviews-Ye_Olde_Fighting_Cocks-Arnside_Cumbria_England.html to see that Anthony and Jay's management of the business is working.

Apart from well appointed bedrooms, great views from the bedrooms and a friendly and competent staff, good food and drink are essential to make for a pleasant and satisfying stay. Anthony claims: "We serve a fantastic traditional hearty breakfast and home cooked and freshly prepared food with daily specials, and a traditional roast on Sundays. For young ones we offer a special children's menu, drink, meal and an ice cream."

We ate in the hotel three nights and with three or four daily specials on offer there was plenty of choice. Of particular interest to me were the Morecombe Bay Shrimps starter, which I had twice and which were excellent and one of the 'specialities of the house' real homemade Steak and Kidney pie which I also had twice. Other local specialities which caught my eye were the 14oz Gammon steak, local lamb shank and the traditional Cumberland sausage. Irene more of a fish/pasta eater had also plenty of choice over the three days. We were highly impressed with the range of dishes available and the hearty portions all delivered at a very reasonable price.

On the drinks front, the pub has an excellent selection including normally a minimum of five cask ales at any one time. As founder members of the 1807 Cask Club they have access to a frequently changing cask ale range plus



*A couple of signature dishes -
Homemade
Lasagne and
Steak & Kidney
Pie*



a range draught lager including Kronenborg 1664 & Warsteiner, Kingston Press Cider & Guinness and a good range of wines including a number of wines by the glass. And by sheer chance Anthony and Jay were hosting celebration of St Patrick's say, as part of their regular live music sessions!

The old cock pit has now been covered by the floor of the games room but Anthony has kept the memorabilia

associated with the pub's history including the cages in which the birds were kept and a couple of specimens who would have 'strutted their stuff' in a less enlightened age. He does plan to excavate the pit as part of his planned improvements.

And my overall impressions: with its beautiful views and first class access to the beautiful scenery of the lakes it is an excellent place to have a relaxing

break with good accommodation and imaginative food at a very good price. And with a good number of shooting and fishing opportunities on offer in close proximity it would be an excellent venue for a shooting and fishing group.

It is likely that I shared many of the genes of the Dalton Game keepers which drew them first into countryside employment and then entrepreneurial activity, many of the genes of the Vikings which came down through all the lines of the family and of course the genes of my own ancestor who was in the Hillsborough yeomanry. We have brought history to life before at our events with the Byereley Turk, Master McGrath and the Massereene Hound but, this year, am I indulging myself a little with Viking re-enactments at Shanes Castle and the Battle of Ballynahinch reenactment at Montalto?

And of course I couldn't help noticing the potential country sports opportunities on offer in the Arnside area as I am keen to enjoy the surrounding countryside, lakes, rivers and shore as my genes may have done before!



The Cock Fighting Room.

Shooting and Fishing Opportunities which could be associated with a stay in Ye Olde Fighting Cocks

Wildfowling - <http://www.westmorlandwildfowlersassociation.co.uk/information.cfm?page=5> they have a number of member options

Game shooting - <http://www.holker.co.uk/holker-estate/about-holker-estate/holker-sporting/> can arrange individual gun days & also do duck flighting and clay sessions.

Game Fishing – <http://www.hawksheadtrout.com/> for Pike & Trout or River fishing Kent <http://www.kentangling.co.uk/>

Sea Fishing – <http://www.anglingaddicts.co.uk/forum/arnside-t4067.html> is a good resource blog & is linked to a fishing shop <http://www.gerrysfishing.com/> in Morecambe. This is an interesting option too incorporating a spot of sea fishing, foraging and shellfish http://www.tastethewild.co.uk/courses-coastal-twodayflookburgh.html#.U0aFI_ldVX0

For further information on holidays and breaks of all kind in the Lake District see www.golakes.co.uk

Learning the hard way

It's always easy to write the good stories, the big days and nights when everything went well and it all worked out fine. The season began for me back in September last with a few of those days and nights. It seemed the ducks were endless, the rabbits were plentiful and, as October rolled in, the pheasants were high. It would be as easy for me to tell you about those times and leave out the bad bits, tidy it up a little and maybe you would think I never make any mistakes and it's always good. The truth is it's not, and we all make mistakes and it's never always good as I was to find out one dark windy night back in October.

The night started as did any other night lamping rabbits, only I intended this night to be short, it was Thursday and had been a long week already, so a few runs to clear my mind and keep the young bitch who had been a little off a day or two before sharp was all I intended, but little did I know what lay ahead. I worked out a route in my mind as I drove and parked at the farm in order that the direction I took would bring me back to the truck again. As we set off the young bitch tugged on the

slip lead enthusiastically knowing full well what lay ahead. The weather was just right for what we needed, a little rain and a good hard wind, in fact it couldn't have been much better. The fields were heavy going, and every one we crossed was thick with mud which stuck to my boots and made walking feel twice as long.

I don't remember much from the early part of the night, other than there seemed to be plenty of rabbits on the ground. As we walked, I lit up rabbits

here and there, she had plenty of runs and, over the next hour or so, she ran reasonably well, making some nice catches that I thought she had lost, and losing some I was sure she would catch.

The particular ground we were on that night is quite hard walking never mind lamping and has a lot of steep hills that the rabbits feed on. They feed quite far from the warrens and it is always a long hard run to get them either up hill or down. The grass is short and tight and anyone who has

In hot pursuit



lamped rabbits on a golf course will know that golf course rabbits really go fast and can make a good dog look daft. This ground is similar in places, and the dogs really have to work to make a catch.

Looking back, I didn't really realise at the time just how much ground we had covered in a short space of time and, as I am often guilty of, I kept on walking and kept on lamping, diverging from my 'early night' plan and getting carried away with catching rabbits as I do. I kept going hard, up one hill and down the other, slip after slip I gave the dog, and she took it all in her stride, she seemed really on form and nothing was going to stop her tonight, or so I thought.

Again, I went off my plan and made a short walk from the farm and crossed the road onto some other land where I have permission. This route takes us almost two hours to go round when lamping, but I cared little as the sport was so good. I remember well the first

few fields, she caught a brace in one field and a brace in the next. Over the wire and a quick flick of the lamp revealed several 'rubies' shining back. "Get on girl," I said as she tore up the field and turned a rabbit out from a stone ditch and then back towards me, making a dramatic slide as she snatched at it while she ran, knocking it off its balance, then scooping it up while still running just as her dam would have done in her younger years.

The slipped lead cracked and she was away

I stood in the blackness in the middle of the field, the little bitch beside me, her sides heaving and her tongue out. I probably should have gave her ten minutes rest, and let her get back to herself but selfishly I just about let her get her tongue in and kept on marching. I jumped a short fence and she jumped it after me. Quite far ahead was another fence with a large expanse of heather right behind it and to our left in the

middle of this large field were two rabbits. The slipped lead cracked and she was away, the rabbits split, one going for the fence and the other heading for a stone ditch. The dog followed the rabbit heading for the ditch and snatched it as it tried to get into a hole; I caught up with her, dispatched it and threw it over my shoulder into my bag.

I swung the lamp around and the second rabbit was sitting down tight along the fence line. "Get on girl!" and again, still tired from the last two runs, she wasted no time in getting level with the rabbit. It ran along the fence before slipping through it with the dog jumping the wire behind it. The rabbit was however on unfamiliar ground and desperately wanted to get back to the stone ditch behind me.

Anyone who lamps rabbits will be familiar with this situation when a rabbit gets pushed out onto somewhere its not familiar with and begins to panic, running around seemingly in

Catching her breath.



circles not knowing where to go. They will turn and turn again, jink and jump and go anywhere to try and get back home. This leaves the dog at an advantage as the rabbit quite quickly makes a fatal mistake and it's all over. This situation was unfolding in front of me and as quick as this rabbit had got through the wire and towards the heather, it was back through trying to get home, but faced with a dazzling light between it and the ditch it again turned through the fence!

The dog jumped the fence, in all honesty, about half a dozen times back and forth and the rabbit deserved to get away, but just as they often do, he made one fatal error, leaving him clamped tight in a now totally exhausted dog's jaws. It's not often I have seen such a dramatic run with a dog and a rabbit under the lamp, with such exciting runs usually the reserve of larger quarry.

I removed the heavy load from my bag and counted 13 rabbits, not a huge haul but reasonable for the ground and the time we had been out, but not content with that I kept on going, perhaps a thought twinkling in the back of my mind to try and reach twenty.

We walked down another steep hill and through some marshy ground where a rabbit sat tight behind a clump of cover. I could see him, he could see us but the dog didn't know he was there at all. I sent her on and she went, but not as she should have. It was a half hearted attempt and it was here that alarm bells should have gone in my head.

The little bitch is by no means an outstanding Lurcher, but she is a trier and always puts in an effort no matter what, and I can't ask for much more. She missed the rabbit and returned to me, we walked and she lagged behind slightly. Another rabbit got up in front of us and again, she made a half hearted attempt at it so I sat down with her for a few minutes. Everything appeared OK as I checked her over. She had no visible injuries, cuts or wounds and appeared fine. I gave her a few minutes and we walked onwards, by now

coming back onto some hills before the laneway home. I walked a shorter cut and again came onto some rabbits sitting out feeding, they all scattered but one sat tight and the young bitch simply wondered up almost on top of him and although she caught it I began to realise all was not well.

We came to a large fence which would lead into a very narrow long field. I climbed and turned round to usher her over to find her sitting flat with her front legs stretched out in front of her. No amount of coaxing would bring her through, so I decided to take the other route to the truck downhill and got back through the fence to her side and walked on expecting her to follow but she didn't. I walked back, lifted her on her feet and got her lead out to clip it on, but she fell at my feet. I lifted her again, and again she fell. By now I realised what I had done, but it was probably too late. I lifted her onto my shoulder and began to walk and had that awful empty feeling in the pit of my stomach, this was not a good situation at all. She wasn't heavy for a while, but after a good distance my arms began to cramp. I made it onto the lane and lifted her over a gate and set her down on the other side where she just collapsed in a heap. I got over, knocked my lamp on and she had begun to convulse quite badly. I felt so ashamed, this was down to my stupidity and she was going to pay the price for it.

She lay there with an empty stare

I threw off my bag and dumped it on the hedge, the little bitch needed a vet and I was going to do everything I could to get her there fast. I put her once again onto my shoulder, my arms starting to go numb with the weight and she was getting heavier by the minute. As she lay against my neck I felt her convulsing and I had a lump in my throat, partly from pity for her and partly because I felt so badly about what I had done. I stupidly kept talking to her, telling her keep going and not to give up. I came to a small stream that ran the side of the lane and as I walked

down into it to put her in the water I tripped and fell giving us both quite a knock. I switched on the beam and she lay there with an empty stare, groaning and trembling. I set her in the water and opened her mouth trying to get her to drink, but she had no interest and simply lay there with glazed eyes. I didn't know what was wrong with the little bitch but I knew that it was both not good and totally my fault. I got up from the stream and got her on my shoulder again and gave it all I could to the end of the lane, it seemed like miles until I got out onto the roadside and I set her down on the ditch while I shook the cramps from my arms.

I had about half a mile to the truck, and decided to leave her on the ditch and run to the truck and come back for her, but I couldn't do it. If she was going to die she couldn't go alone, no way, she deserved better. I had her on my shoulder and as she groaned and stretched in pain, I gasped for breath as I attempted to jog to with her in my arms. I got her into the van, and sped through the village at twice times the speed limit before screeching up outside my house and throwing the back doors open and lifting her out and into the house, leaving the lights on and the keys in the ignition. I got her into the kitchen and as I dialled the vet's number, the life was slipping out of my pride and joy before me. My vet answered the phone and as I apologised for waking her she told me to bring her straight up and hung up. Some ten minutes later my headlights were bouncing up her lane and I carried a now floppy and almost dead little Lurcher into her surgery and onto a table.

Anne has been my vet for some years and I am very lucky to have her, she has pulled me out of many a scrape and thought nothing of me waking her at 2.30 in the morning. She knows all of my dogs well and understands that not only are they dogs, but they are working dogs and they love what they do. She shone a light in Fudges eyes and I explained the situation. "Will she

be alright"? I asked. She paused for a minute and looked at me. "Hopefully," she replied. She suspected Hypoglycaemia (Low blood sugar) and tested her to obtain a reading. "If it's below five it could be dangerous," she said. The reading was so low it didn't show up on the scale and I fully expected to drive home alone that night.

After inserting a needle into an artery and getting a quantity of morphine into her bloodstream she then ran a glucose drip into the blood. This only took around twenty or so minutes and Anne went off for a while leaving me, a grown man to have a conversation with my dog in a veterinary surgery at 3.30 in the morning about why not to die. Anne returned after a few minutes with some dry cat food and offered it to the little bitch who accepted it and was now beginning to come round a little. Within another half an hour much to my relief, she was up and on her feet and as she

enjoyed the rest of the cats dinner Anne explained what had happened. It was as I thought a case of Hypoglycaemia, or low blood sugar. In this instance, it was so low the dog collapsed and went into a seizure. If too much time had passed she would have died, and luckily on this occasion we had been lamping close to home as quite often I can be over an hour away.

There are probably several factors myself included that cause this to happen. The one and first reason was I ran the dog too hard despite the fact that she wanted to run, I ignored the signs, got carried away and pushed things a little too much. Secondly it was down to diet, for several days during that period in October I had been feeding them dry food as my raw meat supply had been interrupted. This drop in protein and a change in diet may also have been a contributing factor. The dog itself had not been her usual self for a few days before this, and although she was not sick or unwell she had been

eating slightly less, possibly to the change in her diet. I am glad however, that it all turned out well. I happily loaded her into the truck that night for the short drive home, arriving at 4.00am, tired but feeling very lucky I let her sleep in the house that night just to keep an eye on her and woke only a few short hours after to find her back herself and looking no worse for the previous nights antics.

We live and learn and thankfully with the help of my excellent vet and a little luck it worked out well in the end. Some weeks after the incident our nocturnal activities resumed, it was by all accounts a brilliant night to be back, but what appeared in our beam of light that evening surprised not only us but the dog, but that as they say is another story. See you at The Irish Game and Country Fair at Shanes Castle I'm that 'disreputable' character at the fair entertaining you in the Main Arena with longnets and dogs and..... well you'll just have to wait and see!

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The Nigel Carville Red Mills Interview

With Hugh Brady

Connolly's
RED MILLS
SINCE 1908



Hugh Brady at a trial with Int. FTCh Remkilens T-Ebba, FTCh Ballydavid Starjet of the Kingdom and Int FTCh Ballydavid Airforce

Hugh Brady has had huge success over the last 10 years, consistently winning trials with his team of Irish setters. We believe he is unique in having four International Champions competing at the same time. He also has two Field Trial Champions in his kennel of six dogs.

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

An Irish setter called Moanruad Call Bird and he was a service fee from my Dad's FTCh Fernglade Airforce to John Nash's FTCh Moanruad Rum. I was five years old and the dog died tragically young. To this day he was the best trained dog I ever owned.

Question: When did you purchase your first for trialling and what was

their breeding and name?

I am in the lucky situation of never having bought a dog. My Dad gifted me my first setter Fernglade Ned from Dr. Albert Feeney's kennels.

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

My prefix is Ballydavid, the area where I grew up. I knew every rock and blade of grass in that area. I used to dream of the future for myself and of winning the red setter club trials.

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

I ran Fernglade Ned in the Derby in 1995 in Cloghran in county Tipperary. He was really excellent and got three runs to give him an opportunity on a bird however there was no game seen that day. The first open I attended was

the Connaught field trial club which is my local club and I got 3rd with Red Monarch. He won the next open which was the South of Ireland.

Question: With which dog did you win your first Trial and what ground and what quarry?

I won my first trial in 1996 at the South of Ireland club, a grouse trial which took place on the moors in Mountbellew. Jimmy Dalton was judging and Monarch who was from Billy Hosick's GB FTCh Moanruad Red Queen and John Mullins FTCh Sheantullagh Gillie marched out while my heart was thumping waiting for the birds to rise.

Question: What breeds of dog have you (a) Trained (b) Trialled

I ran an English Setter many years ago called Lefanta Lemoni in one trial



Winning the Irish Gundog trial in Feb 2014 with Int FTCh Remkilens T-Ebba - a consistent Spring with two wins, four seconds and three thirds.

who was by John Geoghegan's Stokestarrs G'Snorre and The Queen. He did his ground very well and was extremely fast. He got hit by a car at two years old. Who knows, if he had not been killed maybe I would be running English setters today? I am probably best known for training and trialling Irish setters but I competed last year in a spaniel working test which I really enjoyed.

Question: How many Trials have you won?

I have won 56 trials in total. On average, over a year, I usually win in the region of five trials, although 2011 was my best year with 10 wins. Having a team of dogs increases your chance of success and the years from 2008 to 2013 have been successful. Between T-Ebba, Airforce and Aodh they have won 37 trials.

Question: How many champions have you made up? What are their names?

Seven champions. In the Irish Kennel club the dog must also get placed in a championship show to be recognised as a FTCh. Red Monarch broke his shoulder when he was five years so did not qualify on the bench.

The dogs are Red Monarch*, FTCh Creg Jake, International FTCh Remkilens T-Ebba, International FTCh

Ballydavid Airforce, International FTCh Ballydavid Aodh, International FTCh Creg Rena, FTCh Ballydavid Starjet.

Question : Which of your dogs to date would you rate as your best dog(s) and why?

T-Ebba has over 40 placings in field trials, mostly either 1st or 2nd prizes and holds the records of most wins of any red setter. By two years old she had a litter of pups and was a FTCh winning her first three trials in a row on her comeback. Her pups were hugely successful with two International Champions and two FTCh's from a litter of seven pups. She has been as successful in the Show ring winning first in the red setter championship show in her class for the last six years. Personality wise she lies round the front of the house all day and will never wander belying what a fierce competitor she is. She is also an excellent retriever which is handy when you are shooting.

Airforce would also be strongly in contention. He was a FTCh at 22 months and achieved his international title by 2.5 years. A lot of people reckon Starjet is the best – she is probably the best all round. She has won three trials and three seconds in 10 starts. She is very stylish and a throwback to Moanruad in terms of style and

excellent on game. However she is not old enough to prove her durability and consistency that I rate so highly.

Question: Through your career you must have met, seen and been influenced by many handlers. Can I ask you which of these handlers most influenced and impressed you?

As a child, I ran against Jack Nash in Ballydavid; in terms of the standard of trainers in Ireland it is exceptionally high. There are the likes of Ray O'Dwyer, Paddy Collins, Michael Houston and Ger Devine who you respect enormously and you hope they admire your latest dog. Aidan Dunne's dogs run with great zest and beautiful lines while it's a joy to see Ger Devine and Carol Calvert keep a dog out of trouble, on a bad scenting day. They can keep even the fastest of dogs on a very lean pattern, across their toes, while the brace mate makes all the mistakes early on and at some signal, the dog opens up the pattern with right angled turns, invariably upwind. I also admire the dogs produced from Pat Reape, Ollie Kelly and Colin Forde.

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

Kieran Walsh's English setter FTCh Blackstairs Geronimo. I admire his dash, his effortless style and his head carriage. As a child I was struck by the majesty of FTCh Tyrone Banner owned by Paddy Peoples and later Lefanta Kira of Ger Devine who was an effervescent spirit. FTCh Mighty Viking was another amazing English setter owned by John Geoghegan while Bill Connolly's FTCh Lefanta Quiva was also breathtaking. I was also a big fan of Christy Davitt's FTCh Blackstairs Spice. Ger Devine's GB FTCh Ballyellen Cody and Billy Graces' FTCh Capparoo Tork are as hard running English setters as there ever was. Tork's find in Cashel field trials in Kinnity last summer will live long in the memory.

Laurence McAllister's GB FTCh

AT STUD



FTW:
Waysgreen Apollo

Hips: Single Digit

Elbows: 0-0

CPRA/CNM: Clear

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Showing is important for Hugh - pictured with Int. FTCh Ballydavid Airforce.

Ardclinis Caitlin is immaculately trained and possesses real dash and drive. Pat Dooley's FTCh Darinish Starlight was incredible at finding game, after all that's what it's all about, while Paddy Collins' FTCh Boston Jingo showed enormous power and precision in his ground work while Mick Murphy's FTCh Knock Dante was consistently excellent. Joe O'Sullivan has trialled incredible pointers and I was enormously impressed with his bitches FTCh Sugarloaf Wolfe and his current Gardenfield Quest in terms of pace and true pointer style.

In Irish Red & White Setters we are fortunate to still have the major promoter of that breed called Jim Sheridan. His early FTCh Craigrua Flame was everything good about the breed. I remember him beating the ultimate gamefinder, the Irish setter, Sheantullagh Gillie to grouse. Des Linton's Int FTCh Craigrua Osprey was consistently excellent in terms of his angled running and game sense.

For me Jack Nash's FTCh Moanruad Quiva was a supreme example of Irish setters. I saw her do the double at the

Irish setter trials in 1989 and run against some of the top dogs at the time including Ray O'Dwyer's FTCh Ruaros Jennie. She was incredibly graceful and fast in her quest for game. She was deadly accurate around game as well. Of more contemporary dogs Joe O'Sullivan's FTCh Mountlake Banner was a legendary gamefinder and a really big strong running dog. Pat Reape's FTCh Lisduvoge Aileen has obviously shown her quality in winning the Irish Championship twice and being consistently excellent over a number of years. It is funny there are certain years when a crop of pups is exceptional. In the derby of 2008 Aileen, Ballydavid Airforce, Ballydavid Aodh, Blackstairs Geronimo all competed. Ray O'Dwyer's FTCh Sheantullagh Merlin was a tiny little dog but full of heart and reckless abandon. She was extremely intense in her quest for game which made you naturally drawn to her while Aidan Dunne's FTCh Ikerrin Crouch & Hold is a superb dog competing today.

Question: What do you look for when judging a dog?

I look for that drive in the search,

while keeping straight lines with minimal interference from the handler. I love passion being demonstrated in the quest and the real skill of the trainer is not to lose that. Dogs with a good style can negotiate all obstacles easily while maintaining their head upright. If a dog's head is bouncing, it will be harder to pinpoint the lie of a bird. I have found with good dogs they naturally search the ground in a pattern as their competitiveness to find the bird first drives them to be methodical. A dog biting off too much ground or erratic in its quest will not be rated highly by me. I also rate the quality of the find and production.

Question: What changes have you seen over the years when judging and running trials that you think are positive and most negative.

I think any judging changes have been positive in recent years. Every dog now gets tested on stamina due to the duration of the runs. I think in Ireland there is a positive attitude to the dogs where judges are trying to keep good dogs in trials rather than hoping to eliminate them. Because the competitors in trials are next week judges this continues to be a positive benefit.

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

It is crucial. I rely on food foremost for health because fitness for me is an intended benefit. Nutrition has massive psychological benefits and I believe that not all dogs thrive psychologically on the same food. High protein might be needed for one dog but for another dog it could affect his concentration and psyche.

Question: What food do you use and why?

I use Red Mills Star. It is 20% protein which is not very high. The line of dogs that I have do better on lower protein as they have a lot of power. When they are working very hard occasionally I may mix in Red Mills Racer which is 27%, but at least a week in advance of the day of a trial.

Sometimes I pour olive oil onto the nuts to assist digestion.

Question: As well as a handler you have established a reputation as a breeder of good dogs and these dogs are in demand throughout the world. Can you tell us which KC recommended screening tests you use? Why you think it is important that breeders should use KC screening tests?

The GB Kennel Club requires Irish Setters to be genetically clear of CLAD and PRA before they can be registered and compete. CLAD is puppy fading syndrome while PRA is the early onset of blindness. There are no such requirements to register your dog in the IKC. I have not come across instances of either disease, but in fairness breeders may not be vocal if they had it. I am hugely influenced by health and general conformity. You increase your chance of success as a breeder if the pups are made properly rather than hoping for the one talented outlier who defies poor confirmation. I have an interest in showing dogs so the correct conformity is crucial to me. If you are selling a puppy you want it to be what is says on the tin. While you cannot vouch that it will be a champion, you want to ensure it is healthy, balanced and properly made so that it will fulfil all basic functions.

Question: What do you look for in a dog and bitch that you are going to breed?

In a dog I look for masculinity in terms of personality, drive and power. Nervousness or skittishness are traits that I cannot afford. In terms of conformity, I go for lightly build dogs, with no coarseness at the shoulder with just a bit more substance than a good sized bitch. In bitches I look for short coupling and toughness. A good indication of conformity is to look at >7 year olds still winning in trials. When I breed, I need a light boned animal who has the drive to take exercise when it's offered. I do not have access to any moorland, so I need my dogs to be fast learners and not



Winning team in 2013/14- Int FTCh Remkilens T-Ebba, International Creg Rena , International FTCh Ballydavid Aodh , International FTCh Ballydavid Airforce, and FTCh Ballydavid Starjet of the Kingdom.

need to be re-trained. I train the dogs very young so patterns are engrained into them. When they grow stronger they don't need much correction therefore not damaging my relationship with them. The trials are their training and this is where they will meet game. So I am breeding for a highly metabolic animal who wants to please me and who has swagger.

Question: You must have had many highlights as a trainer and handler as well as some disappointments. Can you share with us your highlights? And your biggest disappointment.

The Holy Grail for me was making Airforce an International Champion in Murley mountains, country Tyrone. It was particularly pleasing as he also won the previous day in the Ulster Gundog League (the best trial I have ever won). T-Ebba winning three of the four red setter trials and coming 3rd in the fourth trial all in 2007 was a dream as the red setters trials were the reason I started trialling. Making T-Ebba an International champion was the biggest relief of my career, given all of her wins and placings in the Irish championship. My biggest

disappointment without a doubt is having just one litter from T-Ebba given the success of her previous effort. Coming second a few times in the IKC Championship also ranks as disappointments. Second is the hardest place to come.

Question: You have been mainly associated with training Setters what qualities do you look for in your own dogs?

First and foremost, heart and bravery. I also cherish consistency. A great dog on an off day should still be excellent. They also must be clever. I need the dogs to understand that without a bird they cannot win.

Question: Do you prefer handling dogs or bitches?

I do not have a preference.

Question: Why do you think Setters are the breed most suited

to your training methods for overall trial success

I think they suit the Irish psyche in that they are hot blooded and reckless and possess a good sense of humour. It definitely becomes easier training your own strain of dogs as there are traits that are carried from generation to generation.



(l/r) FTCh Creg Jake, Int. FTCh Remkilens T-Ebba, International FTCh Ballydavid Airforce, International FTCh Ballydavid Aodh and International FTCh Creg Rena.

Question: If you didn't have Setters which breed would you have?

I am genuinely enthusiastic about all of the breeds and an excellent performer should be cherished and admired by all. I would love to train a pointer because of their style on birds.

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

When I lived in Athenry as a child, we were brought up in the hills of Kilchreest. I have an enormous affiliation with that place and when I worked abroad I often thought of those Slieve Aughty hills on a summer evening.

Question : What is your favourite Trial grounds and why?

Murley in country Tyrone. It is similar to Kilchreest in terms of the difficulty of terrain. It separates the dogs who have substance.

Question : What sort of quarry do you prefer trialling on?

Without a doubt, grouse.

Question: What would your advice be to anyone who wanted to get into trialling setters?

Owning an athlete is a responsibility, even a vocation. The dog will need to be fed, exercised and looked after when you go away. The name of your dog may become famous but you will not. Keep it as a hobby. Decide what breed best suits you, what facilities for training you have and then go to a few trials and look at a strain of

that breed you admire. Then go to that breeder.

Question: Apart from your involvement in training dogs and judging you are well known for having given a lot back through an involvement in clubs and events. Please list of the highlights in this for you and some of the low points.

I have been Hon. Secretary of the Connaught field trial club for the last five years. We are the only pointer and setter field trial club in Connaught, which has such a wonderful tradition for having red setters. The club was formed in 1962 and we enjoy very local support from our members. We work hard to ensure an enjoyable day. We run our trials in Connemara so we are geographically off the main circuit in Dublin, Wicklow and Kinnity. We have in the past revived brace stakes where one handler manages a brace of his own dogs. For me it is the ultimate in handling. I have been also on the Committee of the Irish Setter club, the oldest club in Ireland, formed in 1882. I am actively involved in our annual yearbook, website and our bi-annual open day. I was also treasurer for many years of the Grouse conservation fund which is a fund that collects €1.30 from every field trial entry and puts it towards grouse preservation projects. Over the years pointer and setter triallers have collected in excess of €30,000. It is important for everyone involved in the sport to give something

back, though I do understand the pressure on people's time. The sport cannot function without judges. Another disappointment, though it is not common, is the recent phenomena of competitors leaving to go home five minutes before the final presentation. Whatever about the club, I feel it is disrespectful to the judges who had that person's dog in the final shake up.

Question: How important is it for people to get involved positively in the administration of gundog events and clubs?

I think it is really vital as those people that are actively involved in competing are best placed to understand the adjustments needed to improve the sport at administrative level. It is not a democracy if only a few are involved.

Question: When not judging, training or breeding, what do you like to do outside country sports?

I have a very busy life. I had a very active playing career in hurling and rugby and still play though due to my commitments with work cannot be as substantial. I like to keep fit and outside of trialling season we try and travel abroad most weekends. I have volunteered to help with the Special Olympics which is on in Limerick this summer. I have studied consistently over the years and I am currently finishing a diploma with the Royal College of Physicians. I also hope to start an MBA in September so that won't leave very much free time!

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Art and Antiques

It has become I suppose an annual exercise for me to seek out Co Down auctioneer James Armstrong and discover how things have gone for the sales scene over the past year. So this springtime, as regular as the changing of the clock, I sought out James who runs the well established and widely respected family auctioneering business from a marvellous site, the idyllic Clandeboye Estate outside Bangor.



Colin Middleton, 'Girl with owl,' sold by Adams for €46,000.

He tells me it has been a busy years in the auctioneering industry with record turnover and excellent realisations being the norm: "There have been a number of high profile retail failures in Northern Ireland in the

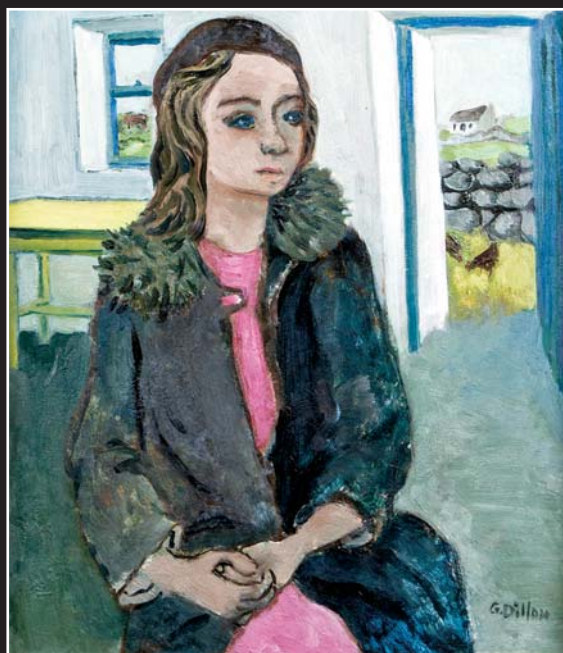
past 12 months, and I have been involved in asset realisations for most of them. This has involved different approaches to each individual project, with some having their assets sold under the hammer, and others being traded in a forced retail manner, or indeed a combination of both. My job is to determine the best route to market for distressed assets in order to maximise realisations for creditors, so I'm sure many of your readers will be aware of my efforts in the retail sector recently."

According to James the plant and machinery market has remained robust in the last 12 months, with prices largely matching 2012/13 peak levels. This has been driven by both a progressive pick up in the local construction market both north and south in Ireland, coupled with a

significant pick up in activity in the mainland, and a healthy export market:

"On the export side I am increasingly seeing plant and machinery bound for Africa rather than Australia which was the previous case. While Australia has seen the resource boom begin to recede from its peak, more and more focus seems to have shifted to many of the rapidly emerging African markets. Similarly prices for used vehicles have remained buoyant. The decrease in sales of new cars and vans at the beginning of the recession has filtered through to a reduction in numbers of used vehicles on the 2nd hand market, resulting in top end realisations.

"Finally we have seen a noticeable pick up in the residential property sector, particularly east of the Bann, with a general trending upwards across the board, with price growth in a number of hotspots, notably East Belfast and North Down. The



(Left) Kathleen Joyce' an oil on board by Gerard Dillon, fetched €33,500 at Adams.

(Above) Another Dillon work, 'In the London flat' sold for €33,000 at Adams.



This blue gouache by William Scott, realised €31,000 at Adams.

Government's Help to Buy scheme has had a noticeable effect on the number of 1st time buyers entering the market, pushing up prices at the lower end of the residential spectrum. Couple this with a decrease in forced sale properties coming onto the market, and we have the beginning of the classic shift whereby demand begins to overtake supply, resulting in prices moving upwards. My view is that this trend will not only continue, but accelerate, as households trapped in negative equity see their homes re-inflate, resulting in reduced repossession and consequently fewer distressed sales. I further welcome the recent extension of the Help to buy schemes duration.

Economic benefits

"On the topic of Government intervention, the recently announced change to pension legislation will I think have significant benefits for the wider economy. As of next year one can withdraw one's pension either in whole or in part after the age of 55. Previously the options were to take a tax free lump sum, and either invest the balance in an annuity (with historically low annuity rates recently), or opt for an income draw down option whereby the Government each year determined the percentage of income draw down

available. Now, after taking your 25% tax free, you can withdraw as much as you like whenever you like after the age of 55, subject only to taxation at your marginal tax rate. The other perhaps more interesting thing about this legislation is that since a pension for an over 55 will now be a relatively liquid asset, I feel certain the market will begin to tailor a range of borrowing options securable against one's pension pot: "Given the Help to Buy scheme and the new pension changes coming in from April 2015, I can see greater liquidity within the wider economy, and thus forecast a significant pick up in

many asset classes, notably residential property.

"On the commercial property front, the market remains relatively subdued. Activity has definitely begun to increase with the sector representing value at distressed price levels, although this is only beginning to filter through to realised prices. Nevertheless I predict a modest upturn in this sector. Luxury goods and Irish art remain subdued, and are likely to lag behind the growth in the wider economy. Similarly fine wine which had been a particularly robust investment over recent years largely driven by Chinese demand has settled back from its heady valuations of a couple of years ago.

Good progress is being made

"In general, while the recovery becomes sustained on mainland UK it remains fragile here in Northern Ireland, but good progress is being made. As the Republic of Ireland (our largest export market) picks up, and general liquidity improves, and Europe begins to drag itself out of stagnation, I can see a sustained if rather plodding recovery, provided we can avoid any significant headwinds such as the inevitable interest rate rise likely within the next 18 months. Risks remain, particularly relating to the potential of an increasingly strengthening pound



1960s poster for 'Dr No' made €3,800 at Whytes.



All Ireland hurling final winners medal sold for €2,700 by Whytes.

impacting on exports, and in particularly in the case of Northern Ireland reducing the attractiveness of cross-border shopping. Similarly inevitably interest rates will begin to creep up as quantitative easing begins to be unwound, increasing borrowing costs for businesses and households alike. In balance the tailwinds for the economy outweigh the potential headwinds, and I see the consolidation of 2013 turning to growth in 2014 and beyond."

BANGOR AUCTIONS

Gerald Holden-Downes who, in partnership with Grahame Hull, has been running the successful Bangor Auctions for over twenty years, has his views too about the scene. Every week the auction house has a general sale and during the month also hold successful bed sales and antiques sales.

Gerald said: "The first three months of this year so far have been very, very busy, but there is no great demand for antiques and brown furniture. People are working to personal budgets and they are always on the look out for bargains. If they want to change a furniture suite they are looking for a good one at auction as opposed to going out and spending £4,000 on a new one.

"In some respects it is a buyers market for many things although I must say quality, period pieces of furniture do sell well because there is a demand for them. People attending auctions are also on the lookout for quirky items,

little knickknacks and unusual items. Silver lots are selling well and so also are coins. In fact I think the interest in coin collections today is a lot stronger than it was a couple of years ago.

"A lot of people are also interested in box lots. They are always hoping to find that bit of 'hidden treasure' and get one over on the auctioneer. And sometimes they do. That is another aspect of auctions, finding the unexpected and it does happen."

ADAMS

For a barometer check on Irish art let's look at Dublin-based ADAMS most recent sale held towards the end of March.

It was stated that around 75% of the lots on offer sold and a work by Northern artist Colin Middleton, 'Girl with owl,' an oil on canvas, went under the hammer at €46,000 to be followed by 'Kathleen Joyce' an oil on board from the hand of Gerard Dillon which fetched €33,500. Another Dillon work, 'In the London flat' sold for €33,000 while a blue gouache by William Scott, realised €31,000.

Among other high priced lots were: Louis le Brocquy, €29,000; Paul Henry €28,000; Colin Middleton €27,000; William John Leech, €23,000; James Malton, €20,000; and Patrick Hennessy, €16,000.

DE VERES

In De Veres' sale, held at Ballsbridge, again 75 per cent of lots sold with a 1981 painting of a betting shop, Arkle Racing, by John Doherty making €26,000 while. The Sisters by Jack B Yeats went at €60,000 and Fantail Pigeons, a 1985 oil-on-canvas, by Louis le Brocquy achieved the highest price, €81,000.

Among other high prices were: Still Life With A Comptoir Of Fruit by Roderic O'Connor and Girl With Stripes by Colin Middleton which each sold for €72,000.

WHYTE'S

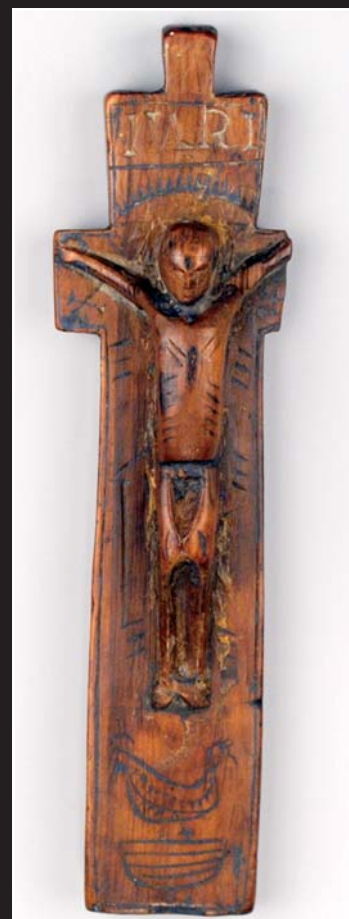
WHYTE'S History sale was said to

have sold over 70pc of lots on offer with around 43 percent being snatched up by online bidders. Ten bidders were in competition for a censored Irish version of a 1960s cinema poster for DR NO which made €3,800 while an All Ireland hurling final winners medal sold for €2,700 and an 18th century carved penal cross from Co Monaghan, at €2,800.

ROSS'S

In ROSS's springtime Irish art sale, an oil on canvas, Ballintoy Harbour, by Romeo Charles Toogood went at £4,000, followed by a Neil Shawcross mixed media at £2,800 and a William Percy French watercolour, dated 1915 at £2,500.

Other lots included: Cecil Maguire, oil, £2,200; J B Vallely, oil, £1,800; Hans Iten, oil £1,700; Ken Hamilton, oil, £1,500; Wm P French, watercolour, £1,450; Noel Murphy, £1,350; Maurice C Wilks, £1,300; £1,250; Markey Robinson, £1,000; Terence P Flanagan, £1,000; Rose Maynard Barton, £700.



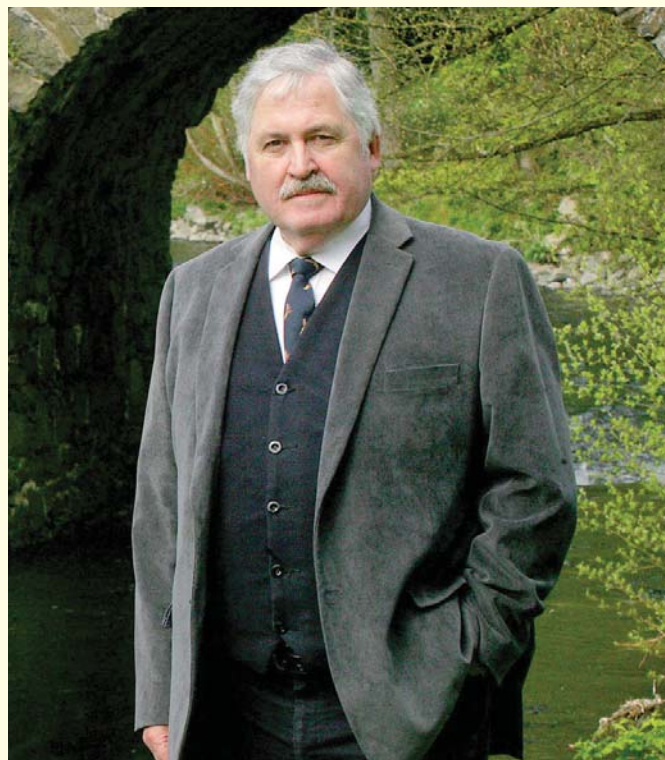
18th century carved penal cross from Co Monaghan, at €2,800 by Whytes.

AJ's Angst

Frank opinion on the issues facing the Irish country sports scene

It is interesting that firearms legislation concerns are now active in the Republic of Ireland, Northern Ireland and GB. In the ROI a new group the Sports Coalition has emerged to lobby politicians on a range of issues including Firearms legislation. Supported by: The National Association of Regional Game Councils (NARGC); The National Association of Sporting Rifle and Pistol Clubs (NASRPC); The Range Operators Association of Ireland (ROAI); The Irish Firearms Dealers' Association (IFDA); WA1500 Association of Ireland; Irish Bullseye Sports (IBS); Eastcoast Dog & Gun; Ardee Sports Company; Mourne Shooting Grounds; and The Federation of Irish Salmon and Sea Trout Anglers (FISSTA) the Coalition produced an election leaflet for candidates and canvassers and a well argued 60 page 'Critique of the Administration of the Firearms Licensing System in the Republic of Ireland.' Derek Fanning and Frank Brophy have both given their perspectives on the activity in the South and we will keep readers abreast of what is happening.

In Northern Ireland it is heartening to see the two gun trade organisations working together, with the support of the representative organisations, and focusing on dealing with the trade issues in the proposed legislation. This is something we have advocated and support wholeheartedly. The hard pressed gun trade who provided a good, safe and secure firearms service throughout 'the troubles' do not deserve to have increased fees and expensive new security measures forced upon them in the current economic climate.



While in GB, Mike Yardley represented shooters in a discussion on the Jeremy Vine Show on the proposed increase in certificate costs. On this occasion the Home Office Minister, police representative and Mike all appeared, if not 'singing from the same hymn sheet,' to be moving towards an equitable compromise. We thought the police representative was eminently reasonable, and Mike, who came across as friendly, normal and non confrontational, put the shooters case brilliantly.

Involving the young in country sports

We in the Great Game Fairs of Ireland team have always been keen to involve the country sports men and women of tomorrow in our sports and we have lead the way in our events with several initiatives to involve young people and their families. We obviously provide unrivalled entertainment for children through our spectacular Living History Villages; our main arena programmes; opportunities to meet and pet animals from spiders and snakes to falcons and ferrets; and lots of have-a-go activities including main arena involvement with the 'Dog Guru'.

FISSTA's Noel Carr (left) and CAI's Lyall Plant - 'Angling really is for everyone'



Last year, we introduced two new competitions in association with the Scouting movement and introduced a prize for the top junior gundog handler.

This year the opportunities for involvement have been built upon with the launch of our new NI Angling Show, as a 'show within a show' for which we have a focus of 'Angling for Everyone.' We are delighted to have the support of DCAL for the project as part of their own angling outreach programme and the support of most of the major angling organisations who recently joined us at the launch of the show at the Six Mile Water River in Antrim.

Children will be given instruction in fly-tying and fly-casting and using these acquired skills will be able to try to catch a fish in the put and take fishery. Celebrity Chef Emmett McCourt, no mean angler himself, will also demonstrate how to cook the fish in the Flogas Kitchen. Bait rods will also be available. This tuition will be in the capable hands of APGAI Ireland and NSN members.

Our hard working representatives

While we often offer constructive criticism in the magazine to our membership organisations, it is always done with the objective of getting the best membership service for our readers, in what we think are the best interests of the whole countrysports community and/or in opening up debate and discussion on the way to deal with threats and opportunities. However we do try to be quick to support, including financially, the organisations when they get it right and give praise where praise is due. We also try to recognise the work that both the staff and members of these organisations do, through our Irish Country Sports and Country Life 'Countrysports Lifetime Commitment Awards'.

The organisations are always offered a right of reply to any criticism and normally engage in positive discussions and debate with us. They may even act upon our suggestions. And we do find it heartening when we praise the organisations the senior management are often extremely modest and rather self-effacing – preferring in turn to praise the work of their staff and volunteers rather than

themselves. And we put up our hands and admit we do not always fully recognise and appreciate the workload of those key staff of these organisations.

I have often admired the work that Des Crofton puts in nationally and internationally on behalf of our sports and I know that he certainly doesn't 'clock watch' in terms of keeping normal office hours.

When our editor and I recently visited Courtlough multi sports centre, we bumped into Lyall Plant, the Director of CAI, who was fresh at his desk in his ROI office at Courtlough, having travelled there from his home in Donaghadee early that morning. In a discussion with him we found that he does c30,000 miles a year and goodness knows how many additional hours travelling around Ireland on CAI business. Plus I know, like Des, his life is virtually one of being 'members' property' and not just in office hours.

And when we met up with Noel Carr, at the launch of the NI Angling Show, we found out that apart from his crisscrossing of Ireland for all sorts of FISSTA meetings, protests etc he also clocks up quite a few air miles representing Irish fishing at international conferences and symposia. Noel was the well deserved recipient of our Brownlow Trophy for the person making the largest contribution to Irish country sports in 2013.

These are the representatives of three of the largest organisations and of course there are literally hundreds and even thousands of staff members and volunteers such as those in APGAI and NSN who give so much to our sports. Let us have your nominations for who we should honour with awards this year.

And talking of representative organisations

This year we welcome the SACS, Scottish Association for Conservation and Shooting to the fair at Shanes Castle. Hands up again – we have been critical of SACS in the past – not least in that we felt the name should reflect their membership in Ireland! But as we have said before while we offer constructive criticism we aren't slow to recognise good work and we know that SACS has done some very good legal

work behind the scenes in Northern Ireland. Having welcomed them to Shanes to join with us in what in 2013 was the largest gathering of representative bodies at any fair in Ireland, we hope for constructive co-operation in future. Perhaps a little constructive suggestion now - why not a subtle name change SIACS?



*Noel Carr, FISSTA's
Sec and PRO,
receiving the
William
Brownlow Award
as Country
Sportsman of the
Year 2013 from
Albert
Titterington.*



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CRUFTS - A GUNDOG DAY FOCUS

Crufts – The largest dog show in the world was staged at the NEC on the 3rd - 6th March 2014.

Albert and Irene Titterington visited on ‘Gundog Day’ the 6th March.



Picture shows Jason Lynn from Blackpool with his Poodle (Standard), Ricky, the Best in Show winner on the final day of Crufts 2014, at the Birmingham NEC (photo: onEdition photography)

The first thing that strikes the visitor, and especially one with event management experience, is the sheer scale of the organisation necessary to stage ‘the largest dog show in the world.’ With nearly 160,000 visitors, literally hundreds of trade stands and over 21,000 dogs entered, the traffic management alone to the NEC is a fine example of operational execution. Apart from the crowds who actually attend and compete, public interest is high with over 4.6 million viewers watching Channel 4 coverage.

And of course there is huge international interest, the press centre a busy hub of activity with correspondents and reporters from dog and general consumer media from all over the world gathering and reporting

on results. Here too, there is great efficiency and we were pleasantly and smoothly ‘processed’ with our press packs and let loose on the spectacle that all dog enthusiasts should experience at least once.

The show was started by Charles Alfred Cruft (1852 – 1938) who became involved with dogs when he began to work at Spratt’s, a manufacturer of dog biscuits. He rose to the position of General Manager, and whilst working for Spratt’s in France he was invited to run his first dog show at the 1878 Exposition Universelle. After running dog shows in London including ‘The Great Terrier Show’ he ran his first multi breed Cruft’s dog show in 1891, and continued to run a further 45 shows until his death in 1938, as well

as running two cat shows in 1894 and 1895.

After his death in 1938, his wife took over, but found it to be too much work and sold the dog show to the Kennel Club in England three years later. By then, Crufts dog show had over 10,000 entries and remains to this day as the world’s largest show.

I attended on Gundog Day at Crufts and couldn’t help reflecting on the fact that it was gundog and shooting enthusiasts who organised the first official dog show featuring only pointers and setters! This year at Crufts gundog entries were buoyant with the highest entry being of Golden Retrievers with 599 dogs, closely followed by Labradors with 548 and even the Flat Coated Retriever had an

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excellent entry of 374 dogs.

However it was all a bit different to the first dog show staged in the Corn Exchange, Newcastle upon Tyne one hundred and fifty-five years ago on June 28th & 29th 1859. That was organised by Messrs John Shorthose, a brewer's agent, and William Rochester Pape, a Tyneside shotgun manufacturer for working gundogs.

The Show was staged in association with a poultry show and was restricted to setters and pointers, and as can be seen from illustrations in Stonehenge's British Rural Sports, published in 1888, these breeds were well developed. And just as Charles Cruft started his shows in 1886 to promote the sale of dog biscuits, Pape probably saw the chance to bring together potential customers

for his shotguns and the owners of the main gundog breeds owned by the gentry for moorland shooting.

Shorthose bred poultry and had extensive kennels for his working Irish and English Setters, while Pape bred black pointers, and his great granddaughter, the late Miss Patricia Pape, bred and showed Golden Retrievers under the Abbotsford prefix for 30 years until the late 1990s.

Entries were small - 23 for pointers and 37 for setters, many being 'from distant parts of the kingdom'. The pointer judges were Mr. G. H. Walsh of London (who edited the Field and wrote sporting articles under the name of Stonehenge), Mr. Joseph Jobling, Morpeth, and Mr. Thomas Robson of Newcastle, and the awards were as

follows: Best of Breed winning one of Pape's celebrated double barrelled guns worth from £15-20, J. Brailsford Esq., Knowsley. The setter judges were F. Foulger, R. Brailsford, and J. H. Walsh and the best setter was carried off by William Jobling Esq. of Morpeth with his Gordon Setter, Dandy.

The first organised Field Trial took place at Southill in 1865 and this sport also gained a large following. Whilst Field Trials were very much for the country gent, Dog Shows were an urban activity, accessible to people of all classes and popular both with exhibitors and spectators.

This show and others which followed was the stimulus for the formation of the Kennel Club. Recognising the necessity for the establishment of a governing body with regulatory powers, MP Sewallis Shirley, called a group of well-known fanciers together and The Kennel Club was formed. In April 1873 a small group of people had a meeting in a three roomed flat, which led later that year to the Kennel Club's first show at Crystal Palace with 975 entrants.

The first general meeting of the Kennel Club took place in Birmingham's Great Western Hotel in December 1874. During the same year, one of the first important actions of the club was to publish a stud book, which contained the pedigrees of 4,027 dogs that had won prizes at shows in the previous fourteen years. Rules were formed and classifications established.

I have exhibited at Crufts, but this year my aim was to see how far the gundog focus of Crufts had moved away from the first show in which working dogs were judged for conformation. One of the real highlights of the show for us and many members of the public, were the classes and displays for working gundogs organised by BASC. It was a delight to see well filled classes of keepers, pickers up and beaters resplendent in their shooting garb with a wide range of gundogs. Especially attractive were the classes for teams from the various shoots.



Pointer Illustration from Stonehenge's British Rural Sports.



Irish Setter illustration from Stonehenge's British Rural Sports.

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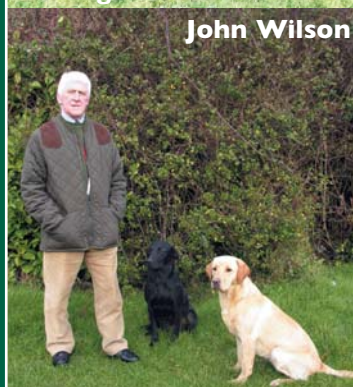
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John Wilson



Keeping the working gundog represented – the BASC Working & Gamekeeper classes.

Other innovations were demonstrations of gundog work and an exciting timed scurry. So well done BASC for promoting the working gundog at this great show!

The KC does offer the facility of Field Trial classes and Special Working Gundog classes within each of the breed classifications. The latter classes were fairly packed which made me think that the 'working' qualification might not be too onerous and obviously could deter true working dog owners. At one time FT classes were quite well patronised, especially in the HPR breeds where Dual Champions were quite common. This year most breeds struggled to have more than two or three in a class and I was disappointed that more FT handlers do not take advantage of this potential international 'market place' to show their working dogs off.

However one thought that did strike me when watching the 'show' classes

was that the KC's 'fit for purpose' emphasis appears to have created a more 'workmanlike' focus and the winning dogs tended to be active free moving dogs which while they might not have the ability to become FT champions could be trained to fulfil their original purpose.

Having visited most of my favourite breeds, seen most of the dogs entered in the Field Trial classes, spent some time at the BASC area and even done a little shopping, we were able to take in the final judging in the Golden Retriever rings, which ended in a great result for the Archibald family from Northern Ireland when the Golden Retriever dog they had bred and handled by Emma Archibald won the Dog CC and Best of Breed, and later went on to come second in the Gundog Group. We hear that he has

subsequently won his third CC to get his UK title.

And finally, the Best in Show, went to a Standard Poodle, once a gundog breed in its native France and although many might scoff at his elegant coiffure, when one saw how well conditioned he was and how freely and well he moved in the ultimate challenge – one couldn't help but think there is still a potential 'gundog' lurking under 'hair-do.'

It had been a tiring day walking the various halls, but a day packed with entertainment value and interest for me, not only as a dog lover but an event 'professional.' Crufts really is the ultimate canine experience!



Two working golden retrievers waiting to go into the FT Bitch class.



Local Success - Emma Archibald, from Ballymoney, shows 'Blue' to 2nd place in the Gundog Group (photo Paul Scanlon).

Courtclough Shooting Grounds...and much more!



If you shoot clays, then it's more than likely you've heard of Courtclough Shooting Grounds just outside Balbriggan, Co Dublin. It has a reputation second to none for providing a huge range of clay shooting disciplines to cater for the needs of everyone from beginner to expert. But we've been hearing glowing reports of much more than shooting, everything from angling to archery, from aerial trekking to falconry, from zip lines to paintball — well you get the idea.

An easy motorway journey Dublin-bound and a swift turnoff later we were impressed with the setup as we parked outside the onsite clubhouse and restaurant to be welcomed by the main man Bill Flynn, who along with his father had a dream just about 25 years ago. The dream — to provide a shooting ground which was simply the best of the best in Ireland.

Very proud of what the family team has created at Courtclough, Bill first took us into the clubhouse complete with restaurant and even a bar upstairs, with a panoramic view across the Courtclough complex, right across the shooting grounds, towards the lake to the distant mountains. Oh yes, and past the falconry layout and the tall towers of what could perhaps be best described as an assault course on speed. And that was only from the window. We couldn't wait to see more.

A cup of freshly brewed coffee - we declined the kind food offer as we were excited to get going with the tour - and we were off in one of the 4x4s that Courtclough was



High Tower provides some 'interesting' shots.



On the rifle range.

endowed with. Bill told me more about the place: “We’ll be going 25 years next year. We’ve come a long way since back in 1989 we held our first shoot on St Stephens day. By March 1990 we had only OlympicTrap and 2 DTL layouts, but we had a dream and we invested heavily to make that dream come true. We still have a dream to make even more of the 70 acres we have here, but we already have a significantly important setup to lay claim to be the best clay ground in the country.”

There have been many milestones along the journey for Courtlough: hosting the Dublin Grand Prix Trap shoot for many years attracting the cream of competitors many of who travelled from the UK; hosting the Barney Mullen Memorial shoot (the late Barney introduced the sporting shooting discipline to Ireland early 50s) which has been held every St Patrick’s Day since 1986, a very prestigious shooting occasion with over 160 competitors on average.

A family business

Always a family business in the true sense - the whole family is involved at Courtlough - Bill and his father were farmers before the passion they felt for shooting became a full time business. Both former Irish Olympian Richard Flynn and his son Bill also an International grade shooter and Irish team member were the driving force behind the embryonic Courtlough. Bill is very proud of the fact that there have been three family generations involved over the years at Courtlough: “My father was on board since we started until the mid 90s. My son Liam runs the onsite shop where he specialises on the guns

side of things, my daughter Ciara in finance manager and is also involved in the clothing end of the shop, while my other daughter Aine is sales marketing manager, also looking after the clubhouse with the restaurant and bar. Another son, Shaun, manages the whole 70 acre of grounds and equipment and is also responsible for Courtlough’s burgeoning club membership.”

Clays were always a passionate hobby for Bill and his father after all they have shot internationally at the highest level. Indeed the whole family can lay claim to representing Ireland in variety of clay shooting disciplines - surely an unrivalled pedigree in the field.

Superb clay layouts

As we approached one of the many superb clay shooting layouts, Bill continued: “We realised quickly that there was a huge interest in what we were creating at Courtlough judging by the early numbers of clay enthusiasts and we wanted to build on that early success. With the first early obstacles overcome such as planning permission, etc., (we had made huge financial commitments already) we took the decision in 1994 to really go for it with a major enhancement programme to improve the facilities on offer.”

In the early stages there were basic facilities: two DTL and one OlympicTrap layouts. As I watched two of Bill’s sons smoke clay after clay I wondered whether it’s all about practice or being born with natural shooting ability and decided that maybe a bit of both was the answer.

Then I had a go at a couple of birds and thought afterwards that if you had



On target at the archery range.

Courtlough as a venue with its two Olympic Trap, three DTL, two Skeet and four Compaq sporting layouts to choose from you would be spoilt for choice. All that plus corporate layouts, 20 Sporting stands are also available and there’s a .22 rifle range with targets from 50 to 100 metres, a silhouette range of 25 metres.

Then I saw the 100 ft tower and I was hooked as I fast-forwarded to practising for the next game season, but could I get coaching? Bill supplied the answer: “We have qualified coaching from our three generations of shooters. There’s me, my father, Aine and Liam all of whom represented Ireland in disciplines from Sporting to Olympic Trap to DTL and ... well you get the picture,” he added with a smile.

Shooting, fishing, falconry...and more

I asked about pistol shooting and he said that that was on the long finger, adding that the biggest draw in clays was Sporting shooting with its huge variety of targets. “That’s the big thing at the moment, mainly on a casual, fun basis. Many of the young people who have passed through Courtlough, and still do for that matter, are now top guns and we have 200/300 entries in their league shooting each week which is a great way to get new members into the sport.”

Back in the 4x4 and we reached the falconry ground where Trevor Roche is resident Falconer. There are over 20 birds, including Lanner Falcons, Harris Hawks, Buzzards, Owls and many others. Trevor’s confided that his favourite is the peregrine tiercel: “I’ve been interested in falcons since I was



Flycasting for rainbows on the picturesque lake.

eight years old and I have been flying birds at Courtlough for the past three years. There are flying displays every Saturday and Sunday and you can join the 'hawk walk' getting the chance to fly a bird for yourself, as well as seeing the flying displays in the arena. It's a unique experience for folk, as well as learning all about these amazing creatures either one to one or in group with myself and I cater for corporate days as well."

Next on the agenda was the lake with places for 20 anglers, complete with its little island and I was told that it was proving very popular with anglers all year round with its winter league being huge attraction. "There's top prizes for anglers catching most fish, all catch and release of course, with fish weighing 1 1/2 pounds up to 10 pounds, all fast growing triploid rainbows. We are also developing a small put and take fishery for children and qualified coaching is available for anyone who wish as Gareth is qualified coasting instructor as well as a shooting coach."

Talking generally about the Courtlough operation, I learned that of its clientele around 75 percent come from the Dublin area but some even travel from UK especially as Courtlough even caters for stag parties as well as tourists from as far away as the Europe and the United States.

Archery and 'adventure'

Leaving the lake we arrived at the archery ground and watched as Bill and his team demonstrated that clays and fishing were only two of their skills as arrow after arrow hit the targets. Archery is very popular with many trying it for the first time as well. They can offer a range of targets as part of a package and are even looking at providing

competitions for keen archers to hone their competitive skills. Standing looking up at the adventure layout, a sort of 'assault course' is how best I would describe it, Bill explained that safety was paramount in everything at Courtlough, whatever the activity: "All our personnel are qualified coaches who can help with instruction at every level, especially as we cater parties of up to six. We stipulate a minimum age of 14 for clay shooting but for the adventure sports the minimum age is seven to join in the outdoors adventure side of things.

Top brands

Back at HQ I visited the extremely well stocked shop - you enter and then it seemed went from room to room well stocked with every sort of equipment and accessory imaginable. Liam said that they had a wide range of top quality makers to choose from: "As main dealers, our brands include Browning, Benelli, Winchester, Beretta, Mirouku, Sako Tikka, CZ BRNO and Remington rifles. We have optics from Bushnell, Docter Bushnell, Tasco, Hawke, Nikko

Stirling, and Leopold."

Beautifully displayed in yet another department I saw an extensive range of clothing, Barbour, Aigle, Musto, Deerhunter, Hunter and Le Chameau immediately caught my eye. In another area, Liam continued: "Rods are new venture, so we are in middle of bringing in all the top brands such as Sage, Loomis, Sonic, Airflo, Rio etc with a selection to suit from beginner to expert, and all manner of accessories too."

Bill chipped in: "Our dream is a one-stop-shop for fishing and shooting in Ireland. Equipment, accessories, having a go... even setting up a day's shooting and angling for individuals and group, that what we are aiming for. Basic we want to be able to say 'come here, practice, buy equipment if you need it, then go off and have some fun in the wild.' We're even offering a service to provide sport and accommodation in



The thrilling 'adventure sports' layout.



Resident falconer Trevor Roche (left) chats with Bill.

ideal surroundings countrywide and we plan soon to offer packages for game clubs to come, shoot and stay over. We have a great foundation, a base to go forward over the next 25 years; we have people and infrastructure in place already so we can input much more. Our target is simply 'The best shooting facility and much more that is available in Ireland.'"

Bill is certainly keen to encourage people into the sports such as fishing and shooting to get as much enjoyment out of the sports as himself, making friends, travelling and having fun meeting the same like minded people Courtlough Shooting Grounds have a slogan 'Always on target to be entertained!' Maybe another could be 'creating a benefit for people that will change their lives and last them a lifetime.' It certainly worked for Bill. He has no doubt it can work for you.

Visit www.courtclough.ie for details of the shooting, fishing, archery and the facilities available or click on www.xtreme.ie the adventure and team building website to find out more.



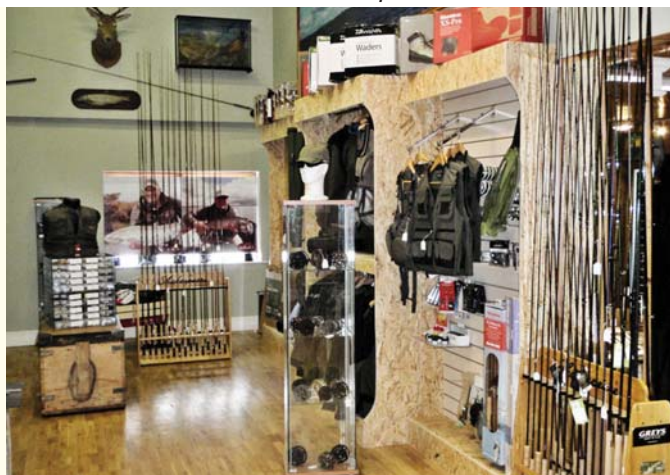
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The Death of an Icon

DEFENDER

From Harry Cook

The Second World War ended in 1945. The war effort saw much technological advancement in vehicles and one of those was the Willys Jeep. This American workhorse prompted the Rover Car Company to conceive a vehicle, which would be a light agricultural and utility vehicle, but the emphasis would be on agricultural use. Enter Mr Maurice Wilks. Wilks was Rover's chief designer and he had used a Willys Jeep on his farm in Wales so he knew that a gap existed between the Jeep and a tractor. He saw an opportunity to design something to bridge that divide and, in so doing, he created a vehicle which was to become a legend.

The first 'Series' Land Rover rolled off the production line in 1948. The vehicles were aluminium bodied with a 'ladder' chassis, they were flat panelled with few curves, easily repaired and indeed a mechanic with a toolkit of spanners could carry out any repair work, which may be required. This was to be a trendsetter, designed by a farmer for farmers. The history of Land Rover is far too long to be covered in this article, the range of vehicles introduced is so long and varied that it would take a book to include them all. What this article does do however is show that in 1948 an icon in motoring history was created and that icon, which is now called Defender, still exists to this very day.

A good few years ago, when I was looking to buy my first Land Rover, my preference was a long wheelbase County specification Defender. A friend had bought at auction a 1984 V8 110 County and in conversation he suggested that this would be a good starting point for me; a step on the Land Rover road. I have now owned this particular 110 for eight years now and it is still going strong. At this point I should mention that over 70% of all Land Rovers produced are still operational, quite a record for a vehicle which was invented to fill a gap between a truck and a tractor and which was a stopgap vehicle before Rover got back to making luxury cars. Boy, did they get it wrong... or right! Early

vehicles were two-wheel drive, before moving to switchable four-wheel drive systems and my 110 is a switchable 4WD system. The progression then went to permanent 4WD, which is current to the present day.

Changing times

So what has changed over the years? What has changed is that we live in a very different world than that which existed in 1945. We needed to get more economical, we needed to get safer and to reach different markets we had to comply with their regulations so naturally the vehicle had to change as well and so we now come to the present day. I still have my 110 for comparison purposes as I take delivery of a



The Defender 110 County Station Wagon XS.

beautiful Defender 110 County Station Wagon XS, XS being the top of the range specification. It has many extras fitted, including roof rack, a very handy addition for taking large loads and the roof can carry up to 75 KGS but with an 'expedition' roof rack that load increases to 150KGS, quite a load.

At first glance the interior looks quite 'tasty' with its half leather upholstery and seven seats, a CD player and indeed an iPhone connection; very modern. This of course does not in any way detract from what this 'Landy' can do. This is still a serious off-roader. Not forgetting that if you encounter heavy snow or serious flooding when carrying out the 'school-run' this Landy gives you confidence by the bucket load. By the way, the Defender can wade up to 500mm, or about 20 inches and that is before you could add some serious wading kit to really increase the depth. Defenders have been known to cross rivers with the water coming over the window ledge.

Few people of course need a vehicle which will climb a mountain, or ford a deep river, or indeed traverse a desert, but that is what Defender does every day of the week. Mountain Rescue, Coastguard, Fire Service, Electricity Company's, each use Defenders when

the going gets very tough and it is this Land Rover Defender, this icon, which delivers time after time after time.

Land Rover, or Jaguar/Land Rover as it is known has not had an easy life. The company has changed hands many times. It has been owned by Ford and by BMW and is now currently owned by Indian company TATA, which incidentally make trucks. It is under the ownership of TATA that has seen an explosion of interest in both. Jaguar and Land Rover, from Range Rover to Discovery, through Evoque to Freelander and on to the workhorse of the range, the Defender, the sales figures have soared, but I am in danger of straying from my story, which is about the death of an icon.

Driving the Defender can be challenging, it is large, has a poor turning circle and you can't rest your elbow on the drivers window ledge. That is a point people make, but if you are driving properly you shouldn't be doing that anyway. It can be noisy inside but only if you want to talk to your passengers. There is oodles of space for the children, the dogs, the cats, the sheep... yes they do that as well.

But let's take the latest Defender for a run, take some photos and see what

improvements have been made. Did I say improvements, this 2014 model looks almost exactly like my 1984 model. It is however radically different, so let's see what she's like to drive. The Defender County Station Wagon CSW is very sure footed; you sit high, with a great view all around, 'square' corners help in that respect and they also help when parking, there are no hidden corners. This CSW is a 7 seater, placed in this class for taxation purposes, well governments do have a habit of finding ways to get extra cash. Earlier Defenders were able to carry up to 12 passengers and my own fell into that category, which excluded it from all sorts of taxes; it was a 'mini-bus' and the Government changed the rules to make it a 'car' which brought more money to the exchequer.

Driving a modern Defender is very little different to driving an older model. Yes the engines have become more refined, they are now more economical, most definitely quieter and certainly more luxurious, in a manner of speaking. The driving position for a tall person is limited as you sit very close to the steering wheel and there is limited rearward seat adjustment. In the back, the seats are very little different, not overly comfortable on a long journey but adequate. The fold up rearmost seats are designed for children but can be used by adults if the need arises. On the economy front it is all right - but don't forget this Defender weighs in at about two tons and it can pull a braked trailer of three and a half tons, that's 3,500KGS in modern speak. That's a lot of pulling power.

Driver confidence

Around town it feels large, the driving position is high with great all round vision, while out of town the Defender goes through the gears slowly, that's because the gearing is set for towing, but once on the open road the Defender can cruise all day at motorway speeds. Air conditioning and a super heater make summer and winter driving comfortable. All in all the



All mod cons but still a serious off-roader.

Defender gives the driver confidence - this machine will take on whatever it encounters and take it in its stride.

The Defender, no matter what the age, has something else going for it, it may even be called inverted snobbery. It is that you can work all day in the fields or quarries with it, give it a wash, then go to any location of your choice, the opera, a 5 star hotel, the yacht club or wherever and you can park it outside these venues without being told to 'park it round the back.' What Defender has is difficult to qualify, in fact you don't even understand what it is, but it does have that special something.

So, what happens next? This year sees the run down on the Defender as it will cease in 2015. It is not known yet when the last models will roll off the production line but the curtain will fall for the final time next year.

Last year it was privilege to be invited by Land Rover to the factory at Solihull. It was a truly remarkable experience seeing a modern factory in operation where everything worked on a 'just in time' assembly line, bar codes saw vehicles built to individual specifications for every country in the world. Range Rover and Discovery are built together on the same line and the speed of assembly was amazing to watch. Technology and robots, under the ever-watchful eye of a skilled workforce, came together to create

some of the most luxurious vehicles on the road today. Then I was taken to see the Defender assembly line and it was totally different. Everything was being done manually, much more slowly, there was an air of 'old' of 'out of place' but the Defenders kept rolling along and eventually went through their 'water test' before being driven to a despatch area. I looked on them with a degree of sadness because these were 'old' vehicles, designs from a bygone age, but they sat with pride, they almost knew what they could do, the lives they would save, the people they would rescue, this was pride in abundance. The Defender has truly earned its place in motoring history.

Yes, maybe the Defender does need to be replaced, but it is what will replace it that will test the designers at Land Rover. Their challenges are great: will they retain their core customers; will they continue making a vehicle which is a cross between a truck and a tractor; and can they retain the original concept, whilst making it into a twenty first century vehicle? Only time will tell.

As a Defender owner I am very much a Land Rover convert and my thanks goes to Charles Hurst, Belfast for letting me have this Defender for a few days. We hope to see Charles Hurst at the Great Game Fairs of Ireland show, the Irish Game and Country Fair

at Shanes Castle, so if you get the chance why not drop by and have a look at some of the best and most luxurious off road vehicles on the planet and I can assure you that their hospitality is excellent. Charles Hurst and Land Rover make it their business to look after their customers, after all, you may be in, or are about to enter, the Land Rover Club.

I end with a little story. A few months ago I had to visit a friend of mine at their car showroom outside Ballymena. Their luxury car brand is world renowned. When I arrived I saw my friend's Defender 110 County Station Wagon sitting outside. It had every conceivable extra, roof rack, ladder rack, snorkel, winches front and rear, extra lights, everything you could imagine, yet it would never be used by him off road. When I went into the showroom I met my friend's wife and, in passing, I mentioned the Defender. Her reply was immediate: 'Don't mention Defenders, that's our third one.' I enquired what she thought of them. Again her reply was instantaneous: "They are noisy, uncomfortable, leak, have a poor turning circle, do you want me to keep on going with the list?" I was quite taken aback with this and wondered why they would have bought three of them, when she was obviously not impressed. Her reply was simply this: "Because there is something about them, I don't know what it is, but they have something which I love." As for the Cook family, well my wife and I just like many thousands of others have the same opinion - it has something, something that we love. And sadly, it all ends soon for the Defender.

If you want to see what the Defender can do visit www.vimeo.com/43514393 and also please visit my website at www.harrycook.tv We film all kinds of events all around the world and we are now bringing broadcast television to Wedding Filming and Photography. Visit the website and please give us a call.

Machiavellianism In Firearms Certification?

Just when we all thought that firearms certificate difficulties had finally settled down, the goalposts moved – again. The latest moves by the Garda Authorities are nothing short of outrageous. Firearms that were licensed since the last amendments to the firearms acts came into force in 2009 are now being classed as “restricted” despite being on the Garda Commissioner’s non-restricted list. Rifles of .30 calibre and upwards plus specific shotguns presently held on certificates are in danger of being banned. This smacks of Machiavellianism of the highest order and does Garda management no credit at all.

While the usual “empire strikes back” syndrome by the Gardai was not entirely unexpected following the huge number of Court appeals that they lost in recent years, the extent of their latest moves beggars belief. Obvious warning signs began to emerge following a hearing in the Dublin District Court during the run up to last Christmas – a hearing at which crucial evidence sank the Garda position out of sight, although judgement was not delivered until January. Shortly after this hearing a much publicised statement about the introduction of armed Gardai in Dublin’s Grafton Street on Christmas Eve raised many eyebrows. Even the remotest possibility of firearms being used in the capital’s most densely crowded shopping street conjures visions best not imagined. After

Christmas an announcement was made with much fanfare including press and TV coverage that some uniformed Gardai were to be armed because of crime levels. This confirmed many observers’ suspicions, including mine, that an anti-licensed firearms move was afoot. It may have been a new change in direction but in my opinion it was just more of the same! We have become accustomed to anti-firearm stories being “planted” in the press in the run-up to Court appeals by applicants over dubious certificate refusals. District Court Judge Timothy Lucey’s written judgment in January once and for all time effectively destroyed the worn out clichés that have been peddled as expert ballistic evidence in Courts nationwide.

Coincidentally, shortly after

publication of the Lucey judgement a submission was made by Garda management to the Minister for Justice suggesting the banning of practically all licensed pistols, plus rifles of .30 calibre and above, semi-automatic centre-fire rifles plus pump action shotguns and semi-auto shotguns that hold more than three cartridges. The grounds for all of this? Public Safety! That claim doesn’t stand scrutiny in any shape or form and no evidence was produced to back up this submission. The Garda document is seen by the hunting/shooting community as an attempt to recover credibility following their colossal list of losses in District Courts around the country and the High Court. 93% of all licence refusal appeals were overturned.

Catch 22?

A further twist in the firearms licensing saga has emerged with quite a number of Garda Superintendents refusing/delaying applications and renewals for non-restricted .22 target pistols that are included in the Commissioner’s list, published in 2009. Restricted firearms can only be certified by a Chief Superintendent and applicants who were refused restricted pistol certs received by return post a list of “acceptable” .22’s along with an invitation to apply to a Superintendent for one of the listed non-restricted models. Now it is being claimed that the models specified on the list are “restricted”! Catch 22? No legislation has been forthcoming in any of this, so who moved the goalposts? The answer



Big rifles and some shotguns under threat.



The author (right) scoring a pistol competitor's target.

lies in a circular letter from the Garda Firearms Policy Unit in the Phoenix Park to Garda Superintendents. This smacks of 'blanket policy' and blanket policy has been declared unlawful many times in the High Court and even in the Supreme Court. In fact Garda "Policy" was declared to be unlawful in the Supreme Court in 2003 and this in turn raises questions as to why a Garda Firearms Policy Unit exists in the first place. It is not yet clear if the Policy Unit is inventing ideas to justify its existence or if it is carrying out instructions from on high. Either way, the anger of the entire shooting community has been aroused, from hunters to clay shooters to target shooters, range operators and registered firearms dealers. The shooting fraternity has 100% lived up to the letter of the law and the firearms act amendments introduced in 2009. The same can't be said for the Gardai, there's considerable documented evidence of Garda law-breaking, ranging from perjury, altered legal documents and admissions of non-compliance with the act which emerged during the hearing of 168 successful High Court appeals in January 2012. Further instances of non-compliance were recorded in the District Courts as was the considerable efforts being made to circumvent the legislation. Judge Lucey highlighted most of this in his written judgement last January. A number of recent High Court Judicial Reviews has been granted to shooting folk who have become victims

of these latest Garda attempts to circumvent the firearms licensing system.

Attempts to further restrict lawful firearms ownership will be resisted

All of this disingenuous behaviour has backfired dramatically. A coalition of shooting and fishing interests was formed last March under NARGC leadership and a major printed submission to Government was prepared highlighting the lamentable record of Garda mismanagement of the licensing system. It also includes recommendations for updating the law by eliminating the many root causes of disquiet within the Act. The contents of this critique are startling and every member of Government plus all elected Representatives and Senators in both houses of the Oireachtas have received a copy. It further states that any attempts

to further restrict lawful firearms ownership will be resisted all the way through the Dail, Courts and on to the European Court of Human Rights if necessary. Compensation claims will also be forthcoming from all concerned. However, recently emerging political and Garda scandals have rocked the establishment - events are moving rapidly as this is being written and an end is nowhere in sight. A new Garda Authority is apparently on the way and removing control of firearms licensing from the Gardai is a distinct possibility. The latter is way overdue because Garda management cannot be trusted to administer firearms licensing in accordance with the law. Their well-documented malpractices have resulted in alienation of the entire hunting/shooting community.

Finally, it has to said that democracy works in its own tin-pot way. The Garda Commissioner has 'retired.' The minister who introduced the current restrictive, unnecessary legislation is no longer involved in politics and the person in the Department of Justice who carried out that minister's bidding is elsewhere.

The Submission entitled "A Critique of the Administration of the Firearms Licensing System in the Republic of Ireland from August 2009 to February 2104" and also the written Judgement handed down by Judge Lucey are available on the NARGC's website www.nargc.ie.



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'Angling Is For Everyone'

The Department of Culture, Arts & Leisure's Inland Fisheries Group has been reaching out to encourage people to try angling for the first time. We believe that angling is for everyone and we particularly want to get young people, women, those with disabilities and from areas of social deprivation involved in the sport of angling.



We want everyone to get involved in angling.



All kitted out and ready for the fish!

These initiatives can help to increase participation angling, as well as benefitting individuals, communities and the environment. The health and well being benefits of angling for individuals are well documented and the sport can also be a vehicle to address issues such as promoting equality and tackling poverty and social exclusion. The Inland Fisheries Group has been involved in a number of initiatives aimed at broadening participation in partnership with a diverse range of interests including angling clubs, health care agencies, local councils, criminal justice agencies and youth groups. .

DCAL is confident that increased participation in angling can help to support small businesses and the local economy and assist in bringing communities together. As Aidan Cassidy, Head of Policy in Inland Fisheries Group explained: "The community outreach work currently being undertaken by staff is offering angling as a good value outdoor recreation to new participants, who can experience the enjoyment of the sport and the benefits it can bring for health and well being."

His support was echoed by Chief Fisheries Officer, Seamus Connor, who said: "Fisheries Officers across the



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The 'Casting for Recovery' Group - the smile says it all!

North have been involved in the Inland Fisheries Community Outreach Programme and this has helped the rollout of the activities across the country. The programme also provides a vital chance for the Department to reach new audiences with its messages about fisheries conservation and protection and wider environmental issues."

For some years, DCAL has supported various community initiatives including a schools programme centred on salmon conservation at Bushmills Salmon Research Station. The Department has also, regularly, supported community angling initiatives at various venues and attended numerous angling shows and exhibitions enabling DCAL staff to engage directly with the public.

A number of groups have already participated in and benefitted from the DCAL Fisheries outreach programme. A project for formerly homeless residents, now living in sheltered accommodation in Belfast, has introduced new anglers to a DCAL Fishery in County Down. The participants have enjoyed their visits to the great outdoors, learned new skills boosting their self confidence and

improving their ability to interact with others.

The Department has assisted the group 'Casting for Recovery' which was set up for women recovering from breast cancer to experience the therapeutic exercise of fly casting. Adults with learning difficulties have visited the DCAL Fish Farm at Movinagher near Kilrea to learn about how we rear trout to be stocked in our

fisheries. DCAL Inland Fisheries Group will attend the Disability Action Exhibition in the Kings Hall Pavilions on 30th and 31st May 2014 to promote the facilities we have for anglers with disabilities. All of these targeted activities come on top of regular support offered to local angling clubs who have been organising their own events to encourage young people and first time anglers to become involved.

DCAL is pleased to report that there is already proof of uptake and success of our outreach programme. Inland Fisheries Group set a target of 1,000 first time anglers during the 2013 season and we have exceeded that figure by several hundred. It is hoped that with increased activity during the 2014 season and new groups working with DCAL, numbers of first time anglers will continue to grow.

The Department is keen to explore the potential for new initiatives with angling clubs and other groups to find new ways to access the wide range of angling facilities across the North. The outreach team can be contacted by telephoning Michael McAnallen on 02890 515112 or e-mail dcalangling@dcalni.gov.uk We would like to hear from you as 'angling is for everyone.'



Another successful 'Casting for Recovery' group.

Federation of Irish Salmon & Sea Trout Anglers

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F.I.S.S.T.A.

NEW ANGLING FORMAT – A GREAT SUCCESS

Firstly, may we thank all who contacted us to express their welcome and enthusiasm for the new prominence that angling has been given in the last issue. We appreciate the feedback and will pass the complimentary comments on to the Editor and his most cooperative team. We also pay serious attention to the constructive critical comments, which we take as advice to be acted on as our Council decides.

VOTE FOR COUNTRYSIDE SPORTS AND ANGLING WILL PROVE WE ARE A FORCE FOR CHANGE

Election time is a particularly good time to let the established and aspiring politicians know that angling more than salmon farms matter to our economy and recreational pursuits. Indeed, FISSTA know that we have many members who are either candidates or canvassers for their favourite politicians so we remind all, at each election, to use your vote wisely. It is an opportune time to ask Government party supporters that call to your door to question why the executioner's axe is being held over angling with their support for fish farms that will wipe out the wild Atlantic salmon resource. We hope to see change in their anti angling policies or suffer the

consequences of losing seats to the opposing parties now promising everything we want after they get elected.

This is normally the time when the members of the National Executive Council of our federation would be happy to take more time out to go fishing as the season heats up. Like the flowers of May, the salmon and sea trout are given a hearty welcome to our shores and the expectations rise again to fever pitch as we answer the call to the waters and the wild. Sadly, there has been little time to fish as our members felt they had to remain on a war footing to lobby forcefully, as the local and EU elections take priority once again. This is one of the most crucial periods of our angling campaign to protect our sports and angling tourism industry as the people who got elected to county councils and EU after this May are the people we will depend on

later on to honour their promises. That is why we use every opportunity to get our message across and we are forever grateful to this excellent publication and their team who support and carry this column every issue.

No stone was left unturned for to ensure our voice is heard more clearly, and as FISSTA cooperated with, and assist other organisations in protecting our countryside way of life. Last September at the Birr Game Fair, FISSTA signed an agreed Memorandum of Understanding with our shooting colleagues in the NARGC who have since assisted us in a leaflet distribution to all candidates and parties who need to know that we stand against fish farms and other impediments to our respective sports.

LEAFLET FOR LOCAL AND EUROPEAN ELECTIONS 2014 - POSITION OF SHOOTING, HUNTING AND FISHING INTERESTS - THE SPORTS COALITION

The following was contained in an information leaflet issued by THE SPORTS COALITION which fully supports the FISSTA Ireland Against Salmon Cages campaign to protect our wild salmon and sea trout:

The Problem: The maladministration of the Firearms Licensing System by An Garda Síochána and the failure of the Government to protect our wild Atlantic Salmon and Sea Trout.



FISSTA in action - no one could miss our clear message.



New Wild Atlantic Way signs all over the west coast.

The Result: Years of maladministration resulting in approximately 600 court challenges in the space of three and a half years, almost all of which have been successful. This has been at huge financial cost and substantial inconvenience to citizens.

The History: Failure of the political system, but particularly those in Government, to heed the concerns as repeatedly expressed by the shooting, hunting and fishing interests, sufficient to take the necessary action to rectify the problem in a satisfactory manner.

THE SPORTS COALITION represents a minimum of 100,000 votes directly through membership and approximately another 100,000 through family connections. Our members and supporters are now being asked by candidates in the Local and European Elections for their votes. At a meeting of twenty representatives of THE SPORTS COALITION on April 3rd 2014, it was agreed to withhold votes from candidates who do not publicly support the resolution of the problem. It was unanimously agreed that as the Government Parties have a particular authority and role in resolving the problem to our satisfaction and have thus far turned a deaf ear to our repeated representations, Government sponsored candidates would be particularly targeted for NO VOTE in the absence of an agreement on resolution of the problem. A previous pre-election promise in 2011 to the hunting community was recalled and it was noted that this was reneged upon once the political parties went into Government. It is accepted that there are individual politicians and political candidates in the Government parties who personally support the cause of THE SPORTS COALITION. But it is a fact that their parties have had it within their power since coming into office to bring the current licensing scandal to an end and have failed to do anything at all. It is regrettable, but there are political consequences for inaction and ignoring a matter which has had such a profound effect on such a large number of people. In the end, when our

calls and attempts at dialogue and persuasion have been ignored, and even when we prove our case repeatedly in the courts and this too is ignored, we are left with the exercise of the only democratic sanction available – the ballot box.

THE SPORTS COALITION therefore requires agreement on a published list to support shooting, hunting and angling interests. In the absence of agreement on the above, THE SPORTS COALITION is calling on all its members and supporters not to vote for any Government Party candidates in the local and European elections and further, in the 2015 General Election. THE SPORTS COALITION also calls on its members and supporters not to vote for any other candidate who does not publicly support its requirements.

This information leaflet was issued by THE SPORTS COALITION which is comprised of:

The National Association of Regional Game Councils (NARGC); The National Association of Sporting Rifle and Pistol Clubs (NASRPC); The Range Operators Association of Ireland (ROAI); The Irish Firearms Dealers' Association (IFDA); WA1500 Association of Ireland; Irish Bullseye Sports (IBS); Eastcoast Dog & Gun; Ardee Sports Company; Mourne Shooting Grounds; The Federation of Irish Salmon and Sea Trout Anglers (FISSTA)

NASCO - NORTH ATLANTIC SALMON CONSERVATION ORGANISATION CONFERENCE 2014

The NASCO conference is being held in early June once again, and this is where the nineteen salmon countries, including Ireland, will give their state of the nation address on our salmon stocks and outline what they are doing about the nearly 90 closed rivers in Ireland. FISSTA have lodged their concern on the failure of both government administrations, North and South to manage the challenge. Everyone that cherishes our wild Atlantic salmon will

always be indebted to Orri Vigfusson and North Atlantic Salmon Fund for implementation of his visionary plan that has saved a lot more than the estimated twelve million salmon that keep returning to our North Atlantic Rivers. Our twenty year long campaign with NASF at the international helm, eventually bore fruit in 2007, when a reluctant Irish Government ended mixed stock fishing by buying out the licences for a generous €30m state "hardship" grant. So, it is right that the island of Ireland, (both the Republic and Northern Ireland) along with Norway and Scotland are still included in this offending group against the wild salmon as he believes that Greenland have had enough of our greed and lack of cooperation.

There are 6 main reasons why Ireland is included in this problem group and why Greenland refused to sign up to their usual contract of restraint with ASF and NASF last season:

- All NASCO natal water countries rightly urge the feeding countries of Greenland, Iceland and the Faeroes Islands to restrain from mixed stock exploitation. Yet Scotland and Norway, and to a lesser extent Ireland and UK (NASF initiated deals in NI and NE England) fail to protect the valuable brood stock on their way home to spawn.
- The 2010 licensing of commercial netting in the Castlemaine fishery was clearly a decision to test our reaction for a return to mixed stock fishing. The success of our campaign against Castlemaine to date, with the help of NASF and our international colleagues, is the main reason why our government has refrained from opening any further bays and returning to those dark days when our salmon were on the brink of extinction.
- While many embrace the single stock river management system as the way forward, the lesson from Ireland is that it has failed to deliver increased stocks after almost two life cycles of the salmon having elapsed. The latest state fishery regulations for 2014 confirm that of our 150 designated wild salmon rivers, 86 are still below conservation levels and without surplus. This means they are closed down yet again for the taking of any fish in 2014. This slippery slope politically motivated management policy will never result in recovery of our fisheries as long as the scientific advice continues to regard commercial netting equivalent to angling exploitation, because netted fish can never be released. This flaw in the single stock management system will impede any escapement until all commercial draft netting on rivers are closed down.
- In June 2011 at the NASCO conference held in Greenland, the Greenlanders staged a protest outside our

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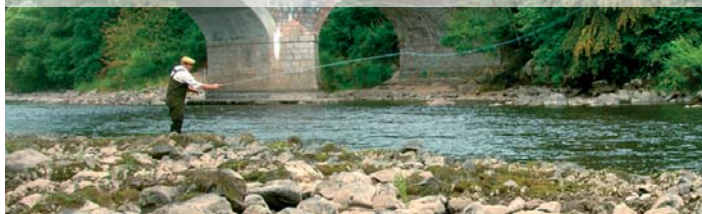
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conference hotel against the NASCO failure to meet them half way by protecting the resource and ending mixed stock netting forever. At that meeting they were fully aware of our Irish mismanagement as they quoted the sad recent history of the River Feale. This case study represents one of worst examples where many of the 50 estuarial draft licenses were bought out in 2007 for an estimated €2.8m. only to be replaced with 50 new licensees in May 2008 which made a mockery of our conservation efforts at that time. The Feale counter figures in 2007 recorded 14,301 salmon returning to spawn, while the 2013 figures record only 5,540. Such blatant mismanagement of our resource throughout Ireland explains why we hold out little hope of our salmon recovering any time soon.

- In November 2012 our government announced their intention to locate ten mega salmon farms off the west Irish coast, starting with the iconic Galway Bay. The media reported that it would increase national production from our present 10,000 tons to a possible 300,000 tons but failed to state that the plan will pollute the habitat and eliminate any hope of our smolts surviving their migration through the sealed gauntlet of cages to their feeding grounds in the far North Atlantic.
- Irish anglers are paying a double rod license fees since 2007 to finance a protection policy that simply does not work. These fish are invaluable, yet nothing is being done to develop those 86 under performing rivers despite a recent independent socio economic study estimating the angling industry at over €750m p.a. to our economy. The Greenlanders know this and wonder what point is there in protecting a resource for it to be wiped out on the other side of the Atlantic anyway.

So, while we wish NASF and ASF well in their efforts to salvage our few remaining fish in their Greenland negotiations, it is indeed a struggle 'to live for to fight another day' in what is a mad gamble by those responsible for our natal rivers. It is fair and just for us and our international colleagues to campaign against any state body that fails to recognise and protect our hard won wild Atlantic salmon asset from extinction.

FISSTA SUBMISSION TO THE NEW FISHERIES ACT

This Spring was a most embarrassing period for the Government as Minister Coveney had to announce the biggest official salmon farm escape sending 230,000 fish into our wild salmon habitats. To add insult to injury our protector of our fish, Minister of State Fergus O' Dowd read

an outrageous response into the record of the Dail which has raised more questions than clarification.

Arising out of our respective submissions on the Review of Fisheries Legislation last June 2013, there are many who have attempted to confuse the FISSTA position on a number of issues. It is therefore necessary to clarify the present position on the various headings as prioritised by our respective federations who represent the vast majority of the registered and cater for the non registered anglers of Ireland and many who visit these shores to fish.

It must be noted that in the absence of any visionary document from IFI, the state managers of the fishery resource, puts us all at a great disadvantage but clearly indicates to all and sundry why our angling and stocks are in the very poor state they are at present. That our angling sector is being asked to use up their invaluable voluntary time to submit their 'shopping lists' that are so well known by all state bodies and politicians and Ministers defies belief.

IFI - FEDERATIONS MUST QUESTION VALUE OF SERVICE

IFI appear to have been found wanting in many aspects of their brief and at our last meeting of all the angling federations and other connected groups their very existence was questioned without anyone to defend their failure to confront so many issues that we would consider to be their statutory responsibility. We understand this may have happened, as staff and management appear to obey orders despite repercussions to the very product that they are charged to defend and protect. The decision to appear to constantly ignore the welfare of the fishery resource for the welfare of the organisation is no longer acceptable to those of us who continue to invest our invaluable time and hard earned cash trying to maintain what is a diminishing dream.

FISSTA SUBMISSION - TO THE MEETING OF FEDERATIONS AS CHAIRED AND CONVENED BY EAMON CUSACK ON MARCH 1ST 2014 - THE FOLLOWING ISSUES ARE CLARIFIED TO AVOID ANY CONFUSION

No New Angling Charge - Funding Of Angling - 100% To Come From State Grant To IFI And Other Leader Regional Enterprise Bodies

The announcement at NIFF by IFI on 25th November last to impose a new rod charge or contribution was hastily withdrawn on 8th December when a Dept. man stated that it was never on the table to the then Chairman of TAFI Eamon Moore. Following a meeting earlier this month it now appears that IFI and DCENR are once



Richard Todd catches his first of the season on the Drowes River.

again putting it back on the table. FISSTA are the only salmon federation paying the rod licence that deem it a most unfair, unjustifiable, and outdated tax on our type of angling which impacts negatively on the membership. It is time for the broader governance perspective to be adopted as the collection costs far outweigh the income collected. Based on the socio economic study, the value of angling is already being sustained by the huge voluntary effort of our members who have built this product over the decades. We can do more but need encouragement by state acknowledgement of our labour and by matching our investment. The Scottish model can be used to demonstrate how their angling product thrives without penalising the sport with a state licence – their rationale being that golfers pay green fees but no state licence. So, why charge salmon anglers a licence fee when they can buy an airline ticket with the same money? It is time for some joined up thinking that takes a long term perspective to this valuable industry. For angling to thrive, it must be allowed to breathe. So this Minister must remove the state from sport and especially angling. The Salmon Conservation Stamp Fund model must be withdrawn and dismissed as a costly and cumbersome system to administer and a return to the previous system of 1990s when far more was done with far more. Allow clubs to manage and administer, as they do it best.

IFI Angling Representation On Board

Like much of the 2009 Inland Fisheries Ireland Act, there has been far too much resistance from IFI staff to the implementation of the new measures. The delays in getting very simple exercises such as bank erosion done have frustrated anglers to the point that so much foot dragging has made fisheries management and development so cumbersome as to cause many voluntary club members to

avoid wasting their time. Appointments to the board via JOC is an example where the spirit of such a decision is being abused to the point of ridicule, where any new change will improve the present situation.

Fisheries Enforcement

The powers of protection are adequate if there was full and proper enforcement in partnership with An Garda Síochána and reservists. An end to all commercial draft netting until abundance is achieved.

Fisheries Ombudsman

A Fisheries Ombudsman is essential for the independent investigation into complaints from the public. The rationale being to avoid yet another Donegal Fishery Board scandal such as the Gweebarra dispute that has damaged the angling and sporting relationship (possibly irreparable) with state since 2003. Provision must be made to accommodate whistleblowers who feel the need to report interferences in the execution of their duties. For example, there is no provision in the act to report the interference of a member of Government who might in future overstep his authority to order a CEO not to oppose BIM's promotion of fish farming at media events.

Water Quality – Habitat Biosecurity

The proposed legislation in addition to

invasive species, must also provide for the banning of all imported live fish, especially all foreign and Norwegian strains of salmon smolts that will dilute our native strain when escapes from fish farms occur.

Development Of Angling Strategy

The proposed legislation must provide for a time table of events that reviews, researches, debates and formally agrees new measures to develop and build on a strategy that each species body agrees with the IFI to implement in accordance with clear goals and objectives. Eg Open all 153 salmon rivers by 2018-20 which will generate up to €2 billion for the state.

Harmonisation Of Angling Rules For All Island Of Ireland

We are competing and losing out to Scotland with our angling tourism product and needs a standard and very simple list of regulations that disregards the dozen or so borders where rules and values change depending on who is in charge. Greater harmony is required.

NEW ERA FOR FARMING ARRIVES IN CANADA

FISSTA has written to all Ministers concerned to inform them that the technology is now up and running for to

rear salmon in freshwater closed contained tanks. A very historic night of celebration was had by all as our colleagues in Atlantic Salmon Federation of Canada tell me that the closed contained fish farm pilot project is completed and they are having a banquet for the exclusive group of supporters. So, it shows that if the FISSTA of Canada can do it then industry giants Marine Harvest most certainly can. We know that Taoiseach met CEO of mh Norway in Dublin recently Hopefully the closed containment issue was on the agenda.

The invitation to all attending read as follows: The Atlantic Salmon Federation is proud to announce that guests at this event will be among the first to enjoy salmon grown in a land based, closed-containment facility. The Atlantic Salmon Federation is proud to announce that guests at this event will be among the first to enjoy salmon grown in a land based, closed-containment facility. The salmon were raised without the use of vaccines, harsh chemicals or antibiotics in tanks with continuously cleaned and re-circulated water. Best of all, closed containment aquaculture separates farmed salmon from wild Atlantic salmon and their environment, eliminating the risk of sea lice, disease, ecological and genetic interactions.

OBITUARY - THE LATE EDWARD POWER

Noel Carr writes: The sad passing of the FISSTA Vice Public Relations Officer, Edward Power from Clonmel is a huge loss to Ireland's country sports and in particular Irish angling where he was a true leader of our beleaguered salmon and seatrout fisheries. Just like his beloved wild Atlantic salmon which know no borders, his advice was highly valued on both sides of the Atlantic by anglers, scientists and managers alike.

The first time I saw Edward Power, he was wearing an Atlantic Salmon Federation tie and spoke from our FISSTA AGM floor with the authority of an international Director with whom nobody could disagree. He served on the national executive council of FISSTA for many years and his lifetime angling contribution reflects how high a standing FISSTA have both on the national and international scene. Many in angling did not realise that, as former Director of Transport at Bulmers in Clonmel, he was also held in very high esteem as evidenced by the very large crowd attending his funeral on the 28th February last.

Eddie was a key member and officer of Irish Angling from his early years, but his major achievement was to have been serving as FISSTA National Chairman in 2006 when the ending of the driftnets was announced. He was a strong defender of Irish country sports and served on the NARGC board for many years with distinction. However, through his love for salmon and trout sport-fishing he became a legendary leader of anglers throughout his lifetime. He was a former Chairman of FISSTA at the crucial time when salmon stocks



The late Edward Power.

were at an all time low due to over fishing. His strong qualities of public relations and management completed the international campaign to end the wild salmon driftnets that surely saved the species from extinction back in 2006. His professional contribution to his beloved River Suir and the town of Clonmel was immense having served as Transport Director of Bulmers with distinction. He is survived by his beloved wife Mary and was the much loved father of Anna, John, Alison and Kenneth. His steady hand on the rudder with true friendship and jovial humour will leave a great vacuum in our federation that is already sorely missed. Go ndeanai Dia trocaire ar cara dhilis na mbrádaín.

APGAI IRELAND



You've probably seen some of us at a Game Fair or at an Angling Club event. We're the people standing outside the marquee waving a fly rod about on the grass, or sitting inside the marquee vainly trying to stop our precious fly dressing materials from being blown away by the gale howling through the open flaps of the tent. So, who are we and why do we do it?

Our full title is The Association of Game Angling Instructors (Ireland) and we're sometimes known as APGAI Ireland or APGAI. The group was formally constituted in October 2002. At that time, our founder members were required to travel to England or Scotland to be assessed and become qualified by APGAI – UK. It subsequently came to light that the UK based organisation could not offer insurance to our Republic of Ireland members and advised us that they would be unable to do so at an economic rate. Peter O'Reilly, who then worked for the Central Fisheries Board, discussed the problem with John O'Connor, then the Chairman of CFB. Peter and some other founder members had been very concerned at that time about the insurance issue and also the



Ray McKeeman from Straid Fishery demonstrates Single Handed Spey Casting techniques to other APGAI Ireland members at a recent CPD Day in Co. Monaghan

diminution of teaching standards within the sport in Ireland. This, too, was an issue for CFB and hence we were encouraged to form our own Association in Ireland, with CFB support, in order to maintain the highest possible standards of Game Angling

Instruction and Assessment and to provide suitable insurance for our members North and South.

A meeting was held in Navan, in the autumn of 2001, with Professional Game Angling instructors from both Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland who had qualified in the UK. It was agreed that the island of Ireland should have its own properly constituted and insured body for Game Angling Instructors, which would develop and maintain the highest possible international standards of instruction and thus APGAI Ireland came into being. Our members may be qualified in Single Handed Casting, Double Handed Casting or Fly Dressing but they may only teach in those discipline(s) in which they have been assessed and qualified. Assessments for membership of the Association are rigorous and demanding. In addition to being able to perform all the tasks outlined in a specific syllabus, the candidate must also possess the highest possible teaching skills. This is what we do best - we regard ourselves primarily



Arthur Greenwood, Paddy Keenan and Keith Cole helping entrants in the Junior Fly Dressing Competition which APGAI Ireland organises on behalf of the Irish Fly Fair in Galway annually.

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Joe Stitt giving a Fly Casting Demonstration at the Irish International Fly Fair in Killyleagh, Co. Down.

as a teaching organisation.

You may recognize some of the names of the 16 founder members of the group who attended the Navan meeting: Gary Bell, Davy Dowery, Liam Duffy, Michael Faherty, Arthur Greenwood, Eddie Hopkins, Frank McCafferty, Tommy McCutcheon, Pat Mulholland, Peter O'Reilly, James Pembroke, Andy Ryan, Roy Simpson, Joe Stitt, Packie Trotter and John Woodside. Many of these are still active in the group, some have retired and sadly, some passed away. However, many more have joined us since those early days and our numbers continue to increase.

So, that's who we are. Now, what do we do? Well, the clue is in the title - 'Professional Game Angling Instructors'. We teach members of the public how to cast or tie flies and sometimes we even get paid for it! We do this in a variety of ways. As mentioned earlier, we attend all of the Game Angling Shows and Game and Country Fairs throughout Ireland. This is a good platform for us to demonstrate our teaching and to encourage people to join us in this great sport with which we are all involved. We like to think that we provide a useful and attractive service to the organisers of these events who enthusiastically support us and have always been more than generous in their invitations to us to attend, which is why we offer this service free of charge.

We are also frequently asked by Angling Clubs and other groups such as DCAL and IFI to organise Open Days,

Raising Awareness Sessions or Coaching Events at their own venues. This is a great opportunity for APGAI Ireland members to become 'hands-on' with motivated experienced anglers (and often beginners as well) and to extend and improve their range of skills. These events usually involve casting tuition during the season and fly-dressing sessions during the winter as well as general hints and tips on how to be a better all-round fly-fisher.

Of course, our members often work on a one-to-one basis with paying clients who require individual tuition. Sometimes, these are complete beginners; sometimes they are anglers looking to improve their capabilities in casting or fly-dressing who prefer the individual personal attention they receive from a professional instructor. We also work with pairs or very small groups of anglers who club together to keep costs down and are happy to do so, although there is a law of diminishing returns here so groups of three or fewer are ideal.

Once a member of APGAI Ireland, an Instructor's own learning does not stop there. We continually have to hone our skills and explore new innovations in the sport to ensure that we are always on top of our game and to be able to pass on new casting, fly dressing and teaching techniques. We organise annual Continual Professional Development



It's not always serious stuff! Stevie Munn having a laugh with colleagues at the Irish International Fly Fair in Killyleagh, Co. Down.

Days (CPD) for our members where we learn from each other and pass on our skills to each other for the benefit of our little community. These events are also open to members of the public who are welcome to come along and see the 'nut and bolts' of fly-fishing tuition in action.

Finally, why do we do this? We do it because for some, it's a livelihood and it puts a loaf on the table. We do it because we want to teach and pass on our own skills to the next generation and to encourage them to get the best from themselves in our sport. We do it to meet our own personal challenge of attaining the highest possible standards of knowledge, skill and teaching ability in Game Angling Instruction on the island of Ireland and we all do it because, well, we enjoy it and we're good at it!

If you think you have what it takes to become a member, or to find an APGAI Ireland Instructor near you, have a look at our website: <http://apgai-ireland.ie/>



Successful Candidates with their Assessors at a recent Single Handed Casting Assessment held at Brookhall Fishery, Lisburn, Co. Antrim.

LIFE OF A CHALKSTREAM

If you are anything like me, your first trout catch will be seared on your memory as one of the best moments in your life. Occasionally I re-visit the exact spot on the River Meon in Hampshire where I caught mine. And more decades on than I care to recall, the river on the opening day of this season is precisely as it was on that blustery April day.

The River Meon is not up there among the pantheon of chalkstream greats. It doesn't get many mentions by the giants of fly-fishing writing nor

does it feature much in where-to-fish directories or magazines, but it is, even though I am biased, a perfect small stream. About 10 miles to the east of

the Itchen, fast, not very wide, with great weed growth and wonderful hatches, the Meon is, to all intents and purposes, an all-wild-trout river. In its lower reaches, just up from the Hamble where it joins the Solent, the sea trout are prolific.

I had not visited the Meon on the opening day of the season since I was a teenager, so on its opening day this year, I was determined to turn back the clock. Opening my fly box I was transported back to that unforgettable day as the April array of Dark Olives, Grannom, Greenwell's Glory, Hawthorn and March Browns winked back at me in the afternoon sun like old friends. I genuinely felt excited and nervous tying on the Grannom, deliberately ignoring those modern day interlopers, the Klinkhammer and Parachute Adams.

Sight fishing is not the general 'mode du jour' for the Meon. It is one of those streams best fished by speculatively casting in the margins, between the weed and into the open spaces. In the fast water and with all that weed the fish are too hard to spot, so unless you see a riser, nine times out



ten the first time you see a fish is when it comes up to your fly. Ring-rusty after months away from the rivers (well that is my excuse) I missed the first fish of the day, which boldly came straight up to the Grannom from under a trailing branch alongside the bank. The photographer, who had been brought along to record my efforts, asked whether it was normal to swear so much. Giving up on the Grannom, which was ignored by a couple of risers, I switched to the Dark Olive, but against the gloom of the dark clouds it was too dark to track it easily on the water. So sacrificing tradition on the altar of practicality, out came the Parachute Adams. Much better.

Upstream we went, prospecting in all the likely spots with no success, but just being able to track the fly on the water and get some satisfaction from well-executed casts was something of a pleasure in itself. The photographer got out the hyper-zoom to take some line and fly-on-the-water shots. At one particularly tasty-looking eddy behind some woody debris I pinged in the fly, came up dry on the first cast and as I fired it back in I turned to the photographer saying, 'Can you believe such a perfect spot doesn't have a fish?' It is no credit to me that the photographer pressed the shutter on the rising fish before it even occurred to me to strike. But no matter, it was one of those kindly fish that hooks itself and, for me at least, a new season had officially been christened.

'Life of a Chalkstream'

Early one morning about three years ago I fired up my computer and read an email from a now retired angling magazine editor, who to my surprise was a regular reader of my bi-weekly newsletter. 'Hey,' he wrote, 'isn't it about time you turned your hand to a book?' A kind thought, I wrote back, but not my thing, and I consigned the idea to history. Later that morning another newsletter follower, entirely unconnected to the first, but this time a literary editor, sent me an almost

identical email ... Sometimes you simply can't escape your fate.

I can't pretend that *Life of a Chalkstream* happened overnight. Weaving a tale about these iconic rivers was a challenge that defeated me for a while. I didn't want it to be purely a fishing book, nor did I want it to be a geological dissertation. Somehow I wanted to capture the uniqueness of the people, fish, other creatures and plants that make their lives in and around the stunning beauty of the chalkstream valleys. I tried all sorts of literary devices to make it work: a diary, a journey from source to estuary and a how-to-book, to name a few. Nothing worked, until one day I had a call from someone who had just bought a stretch of river and water meadows. Would I look at it and give him my thoughts? So I did. And it was driving back from the river on that July day that the opening chapter of the book was born. Suddenly I found that by writing about what I saw as I went about my everyday life on the chalkstreams, there was a story to be told.

I am no botanist, ecologist, entomologist or geological expert but for over two decades the chalkstreams have been at the centre of my life. Every day I walk, fish or work on these scarce and beautiful rivers and with each passing year I try to use my store of knowledge to improve and conserve them.

The book follows my year on an undiscovered chalkstream that has been neglected for many years. Through the winter, along with a team of willing volunteers, I embark on a long process to nurture it back to rude health. Along the way the salmon return to spawn, the eels slip back into the river to head for the Sargasso Sea and the wild trout thrive in the spawning beds we create. On the banks the native plants, like comfrey and meadow-sweet, flourish in



a display as beautiful as any Gertrude Jekyll garden. And amid the cattle-grazed meadows the animal hierarchy of the valley thrives as the work progresses. From the otters at the top to the water voles at the bottom they seem to accept our intrusion at face value, going about their daily lives as spring turns to summer and fishermen become their most regular companions. Above all, *Life of a Chalkstream* is a view through the keyhole into a private world that few are privileged to see as often and as close up as I have.

Editor's Note: All of these photographs by Minnie Copper are taken from Life of a Chalkstream by Simon Cooper. The book has just been published by HarperCollins and is available from bookshops and Amazon in hardback and Kindle editions.



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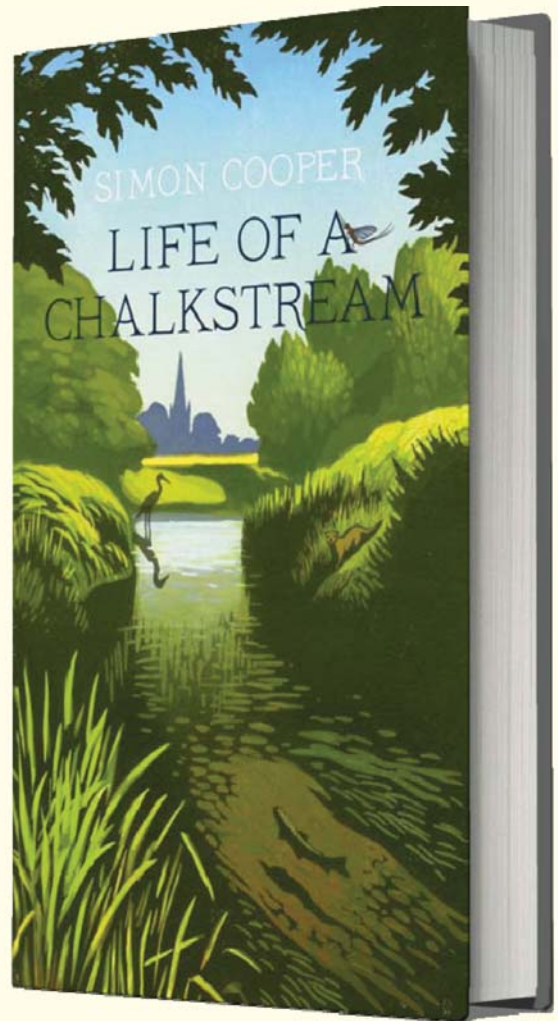
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Fly Fishing Newtyle Beat on The Tay

Travelling north from Fife, I am heading into Perthshire to spend the day on the Tay at the Newtyle beat next door to Dunkeld. It is a beautiful spot only ten minutes up the A9 from Perth. The catch and release beat extends to 2 miles of mostly double bank fishing with 16 named pools. The Tay is Scotland's longest and one of the most popular Atlantic Salmon Rivers, which holds the UK record for the largest Salmon ever caught. Miss Georgina Ballantine caught a 64lb Salmon in 1922 and the record still stands to this day.

I park my car and head down the steps to the fishing hut stopping to take in the striking view of the river winding its way between Birnam hill and Newtyle hill. The distinctive blue and red fishing hut dates back to 1892 when it was originally a golf club house. It was then sold for £10 for a Curling pond, then sold again for £15 to a Bowling club before it was bought by the Newtyle regulars and moved to its current location on the beat in the

1970s.

Inside the fishing hut, Head Ghillie Andy Gunn and the anglers are sitting by the log fire laughing and having a swift nip of whisky from a hipflask. Amongst the group is Ian Shaw, from Lancashire, a big Newtyle legend as he caught the largest salmon on the beat last season.

Spirits are high as Andy advises everyone on today's river conditions and best flies to use then takes us across the water in the boat to the left bank. It is a sunny but cool day and the jokes are already flying around about conditions being too bright to catch fish. Calum McRoberts points out that fish do not have any eyelids, so maybe there is some substance to this excuse.

One of the first anglers into the river is Calum, who first fished at Newtyle when he was 14 years old. Fishing addict Calum runs the fishing department at the house of Bruar and he also lives near the river where he fishes most days. He says: "About 10 to 15 years ago fly fishing started to trend. There is a lot of snobbery surrounding fly fishing, but over the years it has

become more popular and the gear has also improved so it makes it easier to fish. I love everything about fishing, but most of all I like catching fish and being outside no matter what the weather is doing. I get so much enjoyment from the sport of hooking the fish, playing it hard but quickly returning it to the river."

Fly fishing is a bit of a dark art, a challenging yet traditional craft. Everyone wants to do it, some get it right and others desperately want to perfect it but struggle to do so. Ghillie Andy says: "It is an art form and everyone wants to do it. If you want to improve you have got to spend time on the water with your rod in your hand that is where you get most pleasure and improve your rivercraft. If you are a novice and you are looking to get into fishing start by booking a few casting lessons. Do not rush into buying gear, it pays to take your time to find equipment you like and which feels good in your hands. It is really important to take good care of it. I am a big advocate of waxing your ferrules."

Ian Shaw has been fishing for 46



Ghillie Andy Gunn shares a joke with the team.



Crossing the river - an eager Calum McRoberts in green.



Ian Shaw with his 15ft Sage rod.



Ian Shaw's huge 27lb salmon was caught at Newtyle.

years and caught his biggest ever salmon, a huge 27 lb cock fish, at Newtyle last year. To date it is the most thrilling fish he has ever caught and probably the most challenging. Ian can recall every second of the thirty five minutes it took to get it into his landing net. On the edge of the banking, Ian casts out on 15' Sage Method rod (Ian is a self confessed 'tackle tart') as he relays a detailed account of his epic battle to land the monster fish. He talks excitedly about the weight of the huge fish and how it was bending and straining his rod, pulling him downstream and almost 'took me out to sea' with the strength of a 'bull elephant'. Ian says: "He was pristine, a bar of silver, who had given the fight of his life and the most enjoyable 35 minutes of fishing I had encountered in 46 years. He was swiftly returned with a kiss on the head." Ian and his friends enjoyed a few cups of Ardbeg in the local pub that evening, reliving the heroic battle of man verses salmon a few times.

One of the other anglers on the river today is Morrice Howitt. He took early retirement and spends most of his time fishing. Although he has fished since he was a schoolboy, today is his first time on a river the size of the Tay. He says, "I really enjoy flying fishing, on the way here this morning I was thinking about the water conditions and wondering will this be my day for catching a fish."

At 1pm we head back over the river to the fishing hut. Andy stokes up the fire as we all get stuck in to lunch. There is a lot of good humoured leg pulling about the lack of fish caught, but I can't help but wonder how much



If reels could speak - this one has seen some interesting action.

of their competitive nature is driving them to cut lunchtime short and get back out on the river.

I can see there is a considerable degree of skill and technique required to fly fish, there's also a lot to think about: the correct placement of your feet, weight distribution and ensuring you stay relaxed so you cast the line out and get the fly landing where you need it to land. "The secret to good casting is taking your time," says Tom Brown one of Speyonline's casting instructors. "Many people rush it and use their arms when they should be letting the rod do the work. It should be a relaxed and fluid movement allowing you to load the rod correctly."

Tom adds: "There are no rules or guarantees in fishing, great casting doesn't mean you are a good fisherman but it's the challenge we all enjoy and it keeps pulling us back for more."

The salmon have proved too elusive for the fisherman and Ian Shaw has not been able to beat his record set last season. It has been an entertaining day; the story telling and humour have constantly flowed. I have also had an unexpected yet illuminating insight into the minds of 'tackle tarts' and their belief you can never have enough fishing clothing and equipment.

Newtyle is one of the most picturesque, peaceful spots on the Tay and I look forward to visiting again very soon to perhaps try my luck at fly fishing.

The Salmon fishing season at Newtyle runs from 15th Jan to 31st October.

Newtyle Ghillie Andy Gunn can be contacted on 07715 257610 www.facebook.com/pages/Newtyle-Beat-River-Tay/

Casting instructor Tom Brown can be booked via www.speyonline.com



The Newtyle fishing hut.



All smiles - this angling group certainly enjoyed their Newtyle experience.



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The GX500 fly reel features a new system of friction fit identification pins that allows you to clearly mark the spool with line size, density, sink profile and core type.

- 4/5/6 size and 6/7/8 size spools interchangeable with GX700
- Tool free left to right conversion
- Supplied with two spare spools

GX500 + 2 Spare Spools

Code	Model	Capacity	Was	Now
GR1688	#4/5/6	WF5+90m	£59.99	£49.99
GR1689	#6/7/8	WF7+115m	£59.99	£49.99

Spool

Code	Price
GR1733	£9.99
GR1734	£9.99



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GREY FX Box + 50 ASSORTED WET FLIES
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 QL0041C
 RRP: £47.49
 FOR ONLY: **£12.00!**



GUIDELINE REACH FLY RODS

Glasgow Angling Centre have been working in conjunction with the top tackle manufacturer Guideline to bring you this amazing new and exclusive range of fly rods! Using technology normally reserved for high end rods, combined with the latest manufacturing processes and input from our tackle advisor team, we have come up with a range of rods perfect for those just starting in the sport.

*Half Wells handle on the 9ft #5 only

Code	Length	AFTM	Pcs	RRP	Our Price
GC1729*	9ft	#5	4	£409.99	£74.99
GC1730	9ft 6	#7	4	£419.99	£79.99
GC1731	10ft	#7	4	£429.99	£84.99



HARDY SINTRIX JET FLY RODS

After the success of the Zenith and Proaxis rod ranges, Hardy have now released the Jet, which delivers all the powers and advantages of the SINTRIX 330™ material, at a price point more affordable for the everyday angler.

The 4pc Hardy Jet is available in a range of sizes and line ratings, including short lightweight streamers, powerful #7 and #8 rods for modern loch styles, and even a selection of long, light line weight rods for modern European nymphing techniques. The Jet features Fuji hardware guides, superb, high grade cork handles with a reversed half wells on everything below a #6, and a full wells and fighting butt on everything above. The Jet comes packaged in a protective, cordura hard tube.

Glasgow Angling Centre
NEW 2014



Single Hand Rods

Code	Length	AFTM	Handle	Pcs	Price
HR1699	7ft	#5	RHW	4	£349.00
HR1700	7ft 6	#3	RHW	4	£349.00
HR1701	8ft	#4	RHW	4	£349.00
HR1702	8ft	#6	RHW	4	£349.00
HR1703	8ft 6	#4	RHW	4	£349.00
HR1704	8ft 6	#5	RHW	4	£349.00
HR1705	9ft	#4	RHW	4	£379.00
HR1706	9ft	#5	RHW	4	£379.00
HR1707	9ft	#6	RHW	4	£379.00
HR1708	9ft 6	#6	FW+EH	4	£379.00
HR1709	9ft 6	#7	FW+EH	4	£379.00
HR1710	10ft	#3	RHW	4	£399.00
HR1711	10ft	#4	RHW	4	£399.00
HR1712	10ft	#5	RHW	4	£399.00
HR1713	10ft	#6	FW+EH	4	£399.00
HR1714	10ft	#7	FW+EH	4	£399.00
HR1715	10ft	#8	FW+EH	4	£399.00

Double Hand Rods

Code	Length	AFTM	Handle	Pcs	Price
HR1716	13ft	#8/9	RHW	4	£599.00
HR1717	14ft	#9/10	RHW	4	£629.00
HR1718	15ft	#10/11	RHW	4	£649.00

GREYS GR50 FLY RODS

Designed to deliver incredible performance at a price that offers unbeatable value. Manufactured from high grade carbon fibre in an all new advanced taper design, the GR50 is a light, fast recovering high performance fly rod with modern cosmetics and styling.

Code	Length	Handle	AFTM	Pcs	Price
GR2026	6ft	HW	#3	4	£129.99
GR2027	6ft 6	HW	#4	4	£129.99
GR2028	7ft	HW	#3	4	£129.99
GR2029	7ft	HW	#5	4	£129.99

AIRFLO SUPER STIK FLY ROD

The Super Stik from Airflo is a rod to get excited about! Airflo have combined cutting edge carbon technology, high quality fittings and great cosmetics to create an incredible range of fly rods with performance and looks to match.

Buy any Airflo Super Stik Fly Rod and get an Airflo Super Dri Xceed Flyline **FREE!**



Code	Length	AFTM	Pcs	RRP	Price
AF6767	8ft	#3/4	3	£149.99	£99.99
AF6768	8ft 6	#4/5	3	£149.99	£109.99
AF6769	9ft	#5/6	3	£149.99	£119.99
AF6770	9ft	#6/7	3	£149.99	£119.99
AF6771	9ft 6	#6/7	3	£149.99	£129.99
AF6772	9ft 6	#7/8	3	£149.99	£129.99
AF6773	10ft	#6/7	3	£149.99	£139.99
AF6774	10ft	#7/8	3	£149.99	£139.99
AF6775	10ft 6	#7/8	3	£149.99	£149.99
AF6776	10ft	#6	3	£149.99	£149.99
AF6777	10ft	#7	3	£149.99	£149.99
AF6778	10ft	#8	3	£149.99	£149.99

GUIDELINE EXCEED DOUBLE HAND RODS

The latest Salmon fly rod Guideline is sure to be a top seller! Made from 30/40 Ton graphite and featuring all new tapers and actions these rods offer exceptional value for money.

All models are 4 piece with AAA Grade cork handles, Multi Weave tapers and complete with Bag and tube.



TROUT SALMON RECORDERS

Code	Length	AFTM	Pcs	Rod Price
GC1590	12ft	#7/8	4	£259.99
GC1591	12ft 9	#8/9	4	£279.99
GC1932	13ft 7	#8/9	4	£289.99
GC1592	13ft 7	#9/10	4	£289.99
GC1933	14ft 8	#9/10	4	£299.99
GC1593	14ft 8	#10/11	4	£299.99

HARDY SINTRIX 2012/13 PROAXIS FLY RODS

SALE
EXTREMELY LIMITED STOCK. SAVE 30%.
 Here at Glasgow Angling Centre, we have recently got our hands on some old style Hardy Proaxis rods, delivering the **original model** of these groundbreaking rods at a fantastic price. This range features the **Old Style metallic reel seat**.



Proaxis rods are lighter, stronger, more impact resistant and capable of withstanding much higher loads than standard graphite fly rods, with less chance of damage.

Code	Length	Casts	Pcs	RRP	Price
HR1335	9ft	#6	4	£549	£384
HR1336	9ft	#7	4	£549	£384
HR1340	9ft	#11	4	£589	£412
HR1341	9ft	#12	4	£599	£419

HARDY SINTRIX 2012/13 ZENITH RODS

EXTREMELY LIMITED STOCK.
 Save 30% on the 2012/13 Hardy Zenith rods with the **original metal reel seat**.

Single Hand Fly Rods (4pc)

Code	Length	Casts	Pcs	RRP	Price
HR1782	8ft	#3	4	£499	£349
HR1764	8ft 6"	#5	4	£529	£370
HR1784	9ft	#3	4	£549	£384
HR1765	9ft	#4	4	£549	£384
HR1767	9ft	#6	4	£549	£384
HR1769	9ft 6"	#7	4	£599	£419
HR1786	9ft	#8	4	£599	£419
HR1787	10ft	#3	4	£649	£454
HR1788	10ft	#4	4	£649	£454
HR1789	10ft	#5	4	£649	£454

Single Hand Fly Rod (1pc)

Code	Length	Casts	Pcs	RRP	Price
HR1779	8ft 10"	#5	1	£499	£349

Double Hand Fly Rods (4pc)

Code	Length	Casts	Pcs	RRP	Price
HR1774	12ft 6"	#7	4	£949	£594
HR1775	13ft 6"	#8	4	£999	£629
HR1777	15ft 1"	#10	4	£999	£699

Location	Small	Medium	Large	Next Day
Republic of Ireland	£3.50		£9.99	
Northern Ireland	£2.99		£9.99	£14.99*

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FISHERIES AWARENESS WEEK

FAW 2014 will run from May 16 and to May 25. The fun filled week already has over 40 events planned in 14 counties and more are in development.

Fisheries Awareness Week's main aims are to encourage adults and children alike who may never have fished before to take up a new hobby, to work with angling clubs and organisations to promote all types of angling and to promote the role Inland Fisheries Ireland has in protecting and conserving our fisheries resource.

This year there will be events dedicated to sea angling, pike angling, trout angling, coarse angling and salmon angling as well as family fun days, school days and more. Events from Inland Fisheries Ireland, angling clubs, community groups and more have been scheduled. To find out what's happening in your area visit www.faw.ie. If you would like to hold your own event you can submit it at the FAW website. While many of the events are run as open days others do need to be booked as places can be limited.

Would you like to take part? Find out more at www.faw.ie. Many of the events need to be booked as places can be limited. So don't delay, visit [faw.ie](http://www.faw.ie) today

A small selection of the events running this year include

Donegal Lake angling days at Loughs Fern, Eske and Loughanure in Co. Donegal with fly casting instruction, water safety information, barbeque and more

Mayo/Sligo Youth salmon angling day on the River Moy's famous Ridge Pool, Introduction to fly fishing at Lough na Leibe, Introduction to fly fishing at Mount Falcon rainbow trout fishery, introduction to shore angling at Streedagh Beach/Lissadell – depending on weather.

Louth/Dublin Sea angling for beginners at Clogherhead, Ladies Flyfishing day at Kilineer Reservoir,



Adam (left) and Kayleigh (right) with Dad David at the introduction to game fishing for youngsters and their parents in Drogheda at Barnattin Reservoir.

Have a go Rainbow Trout Fishing at Aughrim

Kerry/Limerick Fisheries Open day at Listowel, Introduction to fishing for kids at Annacotty on the River Mulkear.

Galway School tours of the Cong Hatchery, Introduction to salmon fishing at the Galway Fishery, Introduction to shore angling at Silverstrand, Balsam Bash at Maam, Trout Fishing at Moher Lough

To mark World Fish Migration Day on May 24. IFI and EIFAAC will host a seminar on 22 May in Clonmel to highlight issues of fish migration in

estuaries and rivers, identify the risks to key fish species and life stages involved, examine problems the species experience and discover how problems of passage can be overcome. Mulkear Life will host 2 events on 24 May at Annacotty on the River Mulkear to raise awareness of issues with salmon and sea lamprey passage on the river and there will be an awareness event on the Galway Fishery.

Full details of all the events planned can be found at www.faw.ie.

Eleanor and Grainne had great fishing at the Ladies Day.





Iascach Intíre Éireann
Inland Fisheries Ireland

Fisheries Awareness Week 2014

Find out about fishing from 16th to 25th May 2014

**New Dates
Announced**



FAW.ie

IFI is inviting angling clubs, fisheries, fishing organisations, charter skippers, instructors / coaches and guides to take part in, or run their own, events between 16th and 25th May 2014.

It is planned that events will be free and focused on getting a fishing rod into beginners' and novices' hands.

Including events on 24th May to mark
World Fish Migration Day 2014.



Some examples of previously run events are listed below...

Open Days, Family Fish-in, Introduction to Angling,
Grandparents / Grandchildren learn to fish day, Retired People's Fish-in,
Ladies' Days, Scouts - taking their angling badge,
Tackle repair workshop, Water Safety.

We will be promoting all FAW events through posters, local/national media and the internet.
If you or your organisation is interested in being involved please register your event online at:

www.faw.ie/register-an-event

Or contact your local IFI office:

Blackrock 01 2787022 | Clonmel 052 6180055 | Macroom 026 41221 | Limerick 061 300238
Galway 091 563118 | Ballina 096 22788 | Ballyshannon 071 9851435

Crazy Charlies and Conch Fritters



One March morning at about six thirty, on the dock of a bonefishing lodge at Andros Island in the Bahamas, we watched the sunrise spread golden orange light and warmth over the ocean. Mike and I waited with about eight other anglers as the coolers of packed lunches and our gear were loaded onto the skiffs. Not sure what to expect we had fished in the tropics before but never for bonefish. We were well prepared with our five-piece 9ft, 8 weight travel rods, System 2 disc drag reels and fly boxes full of ‘Gotchas,’ ‘Clauser Minnows’ and ‘Crazy Charlies.’

The skiff is a 16 ft flat bottomed boat powered by a 40 hp outboard engine. There is a well in the centre with two comfortable seats and a raised platform over the engine from where the guide silently propels the skiff using a 19 ft fibreglass pole. The fore deck usually has a leaning bar. Fairly deep water is required for launching but for most of the 40 mph journey to the flats, the boat planes. Our guide was Rambo (yes, his real name) and after a boat ride of about 45 minutes we were ready to start fishing at Little

Loggerhead Creek.

I am standing on the upper deck, fishing rod poised and pointing forward. I have about forty feet of line stripped off the reel lying in loose but manageable coils at my feet, a large loop of line in my left hand and holding a size 6 Crazy Charlie fly between my index finger and thumb. I feel ready for action, according to the book!

The ocean is like turquoise silk and all is silence except for the tiny dipping sound made by the pole as Rambo glides the skiff over the still water. The instruction is quiet but urgent. “Give me a cast, 12 o'clock....50ft...cast again, 11 o'clock...40ft.. drop it....strip it...aww, he spooked...don't lift you rod mon.”

Fishing for bonefish is unlike any discipline most of us practice as anglers. A couple of false casts to warm up is usually out of the question, you need to be able to cast a fair distance very quickly and with reasonable accuracy. I eventually got the message into my head that unlike hooking a trout, the rod is not lifted, the strike is made by one long strip with the rod kept low and pointing at the fish.

I remember Mike's first bonefish, also in Andros probably at Yellow Cay

(pronounced key). Rambo, reminiscent of Captain Ahab in Moby Dick on his perch high up over the engine, silently poled the skiff as he searched the horizon for ‘bones.’ Deftly the boat was turned about 45 degrees, Rambo began to issue instructions. “Bonefish....12 o'clock...give me a cast ...50ft ...stop... cast again...40...30 feet...10 o'clock... stop it...drop it. Our first sighting of the fish took the form of a silver flash as it spooked. Rambo's loud observation: “You spook him mon” caused a little tension.

Harmony between angler and guide was restored when a pair of bones were spotted heading in our direction. Once more the urgent instruction... “bonefish...1 o'clock ...50ft ...2 o'clock... cast 40ft.... left...left.. I said left”... Mike...”this is left”.. “I mean you other left mon.”

Mike's eyes had become accustomed and he could now see the fish, vague shadows at first, heads down and tails up as they use their noses to dislodge tasty crustaceans from the sand. Calculating the distance he dropped the size four Bonefish Special just ahead of the feeding fish, let it settle then stripped. There was a puff of sand as the fly rose shrimp like, the take was



Author and Delphi Club guide Ishy at Netti's Cut.



Bonefish from Abaco Marls.

explosive and Mike was into his first bonefish, it took some time for him to stop shaking!

Searching for bars of crystal

Next time up on deck I was determined not to make mistakes. Bonefish are very difficult to spot until you get some practice. The sky is blue, the ocean is turquoise and you are searching for bars of crystal swimming over silver sand. So for the first few days the angler is dependent on the eyes of the guide.

A school of fish was working its way towards us. "Don't cast" ...then... "give me a cast...40 ft....11 o'clock....lift the line and cast again....40 ft... 10 o'clock... strip.... stop..... strip long... fast"...suddenly the reel sang out. The dorsal fin of the bonefish sent up a long column of spray as torpedo like, the fish, my line and most of the backing headed for Cuba. I understood what

they had all been talking about, it is heart stopping excitement. I also found out why I had to wear a stripping glove. The fish eventually turned and began swimming fast back towards me. Reeling in without giving the fish any slack is important, hand lining is dangerous and this is no time to have fly line in tangles at ones feet. He made a couple more runs before he was ready to be taken to the side of the boat, admired, photographed and released... with thanks.

That was my first experience of fishing for 'bones' 20 years ago and unforgettable, however there have been many more exotic fishing adventures over the years. Last month we went to Delphi Club, Abaco also in the Bahamas, it was our second visit to that lodge. February can be difficult climate wise and the last thing one needs for bonefishing is wind. Weather forecasting is most important and unless the guides are content regarding conditions no boat will go on the water. Ripples make it almost impossible to see the fish until they are too close. While it is normal to be 'talked' into the take, it is really much more exciting when the fish is seen by the angler and targeted successfully without guidance.

We had at least one breezy day this last trip to Abaco. However, we had travelled a long distance at considerable expense and were determined. Our guide was Ischy who is very good humoured and dedicated to pleasing his

anglers. We anchored close to the mangroves and cast blind into a 'mudding,' where the fish congregate to churn up the sand looking for shrimp and crabs. At first we both had brief encounters with barracuda resulting in frayed casts and lost flies.

I ignored the 'strip it...leave it'...commands

We hadn't blanked so far that that week but it wasn't looking good when we had no fish by three o'clock. Again anchored a little out from the mangroves a feeding fish was travelling fast with the outgoing tide. I was up on deck, Mike in the well and Ischy on his raised platform. My most successful fly for the week had been a size six 'Pink Puff' which would not be a fly that my male fishing friends will ask for in the outfitters! I was receiving instructions from both men, "strip it"... "leave it"... which I ignored. I took an awkward side cast, dropped the fly a few yards in front of the fish, left it until he was almost upon it, and in one short and one long strip, fish on. It weighed about four pounds and got one of us to the head of the table in the lodge at dinner that night.

The highlight of our week at Delphi Club happened when we were out with guide Robin. It started with our usual four or six fish to the boat by lunchtime. Robin decided to check the mouth of a creek lined on either side with thick mangrove roots. There was more than the usual number of sharks including a five foot long Reef Shark not normally seen in this area. I could not believe the size of the bonefish schools running out ahead of the falling tide. We hooked many fish but some had to be cut loose when it was impossible to keep them out of the mangroves. Alternating between deck and boatwell we had at least three double hookups. Robin was kept busy releasing fish as we tried to get our flies to bones ahead of barracuda. We returned a catch of nineteen for that day, a memorable one on the Marls of Abaco.

The famous Abaco Marls covers



Some of the Bonefish flies.



An old picture of Mike with his first Bonefish.

about 400 square miles of saltwater flats, with inlets and shallows. Some anglers enjoy wading on the flats but I am chicken having seen the effect the smell of a bonefish in distress can have on the ever present sharks. I saw Nurse, Black Tipped and Lemon sharks, also big Sting Rays and plenty of Turtles at Cherokee Sound.

The lodges are all different but mostly fishing begins at 8 am and finishes at 4 in the afternoon. The après fish is part of the experience and Conch (pronounced conk) Fritters with Piña Coladas or Planters Punch on the

terrace sets the scene for the unwind and dinner. The Bahamian diet consists mainly of fish and fresh fruit. Having lived in the Bahamas for some years we are good judges and would rate the meals at Delphi Club excellent but more 'grande' than typical. In Mike's expert opinion the Conch Fritters were perfect. Peter Mantle's wine cellar is extensive and impressive and includes a good range of well chosen house wines.

To get reacquainted with old haunts we took time out to visit Pete's Pub in Little Harbour where we ate Blackened Wahoo, Grouper and Russian Salad made with pineapple and other exotic fruits.

Dress code is also different between lodges. At those which cater for serious hunters of big game fish, anglers would change into a fresh flats fishing outfit (logos of other lodges usually prominent) for dinner and maybe retire to tie flies afterwards. At Delphi Club non-fishing partners are catered for particularly well. Guests enjoy the

opportunity to dress 'country house' fashion for cocktails and dinner. There is a beautiful pool, extensive library, well appointed reception/dining and reading room and the mile plus of silver beach is effectively private. From lovely lunches served on the terrace to the many tours both on and off water which can be arranged, Peter Mantle has turned Rolling Harbour in Marsh Harbour into his own tropical island piece of angling paradise.

More information can be found at The Delphi Club Abaco website <http://www.delphi-bahamas.com>



The Author rounding off a fantastic trip.



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You can take the majesty and beauty of the Cork Blackwater for granted. You can take the numbers of glistening salmon as read. You can take the 16 private beats of the Blackwater Lodge as some of the best on the river. But on top of all that there's the comfort of the Blackwater Lodge itself. Now concentrating on the prime months, we're open for residential (Guesthouse B&B) bookings from July 16th, but our self-catering accommodation and waters are open all season. Flick through your 2014 diary and mark a few days on the Cork Blackwater. Contact Ian Powell for info and bookings. Where in the evenings you can put the 'port' back into 'sport'.


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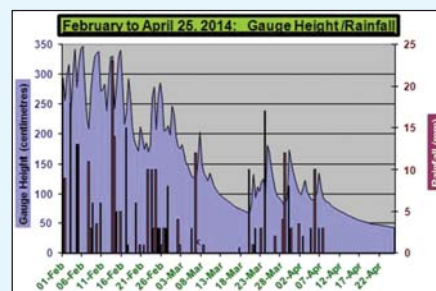
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Whatever's next?

I guess we all have a tendency to look back and say: "Things ain't how they used to be!" But nowadays, there seems to be more and more truth in this. I can't really remember great extremes in weather – certainly not to the degree that we see now. There is a lot of talk in the media about climate change and it looks as if we are seeing more extreme events taking place.

The month of August is a good example. Last year (2013) the average height of the river on the Ballyduff gauge for the month was just 0.32m as we had a severe drought. Then compare this with the same month the year before. August 2012 had the highest rainfall ever for the month in the area. The average height of the

Opening Day on the Blackwater on February 1st., I would have to say that the extreme weather seems to be hitting us once again this year. The record for the highest average level on the Ballyduff gauge which was set in August 2012 at 1.22m didn't last long. It was smashed in style in February this year which had an average height of no

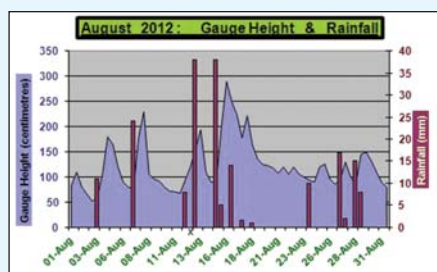


The graph above shows the Ballyduff gauge height from the Opening Day to April 25.

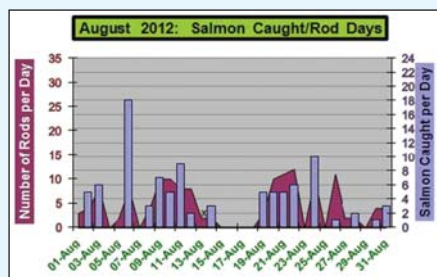
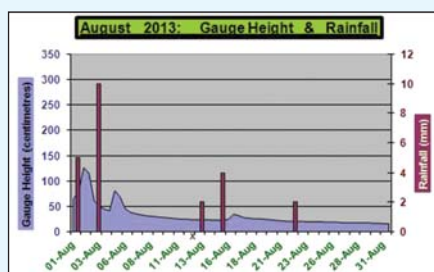
where the water is really too high and (more importantly) coloured to be able to fish.

In February this year, it was a case of there being only a few days where there was any chance to fish at all. The lowest level that the gauge went down to was 1.71 metres! We would normally consider the optimum level to be 50-80cm for Spring spinning & 30-60cm to be the optimum for the fly.

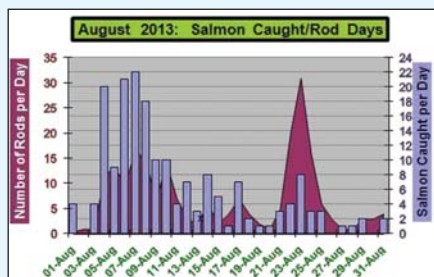
I caught the very first salmon off the entire Blackwater river in 2012 from the Jole on Lower Kilmurry on February 3rd. Charles Quesada from France was on a work experience programme at the Lodge and I took him out for his very first ever day salmon fishing on February 19th. We stopped at the bridge in Ballyduff to look at the river as we were going out and the gauge was on 1.82 metres. Undeterred as the clarity was reasonably good at 2-



Between the two years there were dramatically different river conditions and the catches were also very different due primarily to the fact that was very difficult to fish in the high waters of 2012.



96 fish for 138 Rod Days -
0.70 fish/rod day



184 fish for 221 Rod Days -
0.83 fish/rod day

river on the Ballyduff gauge was 1.22m for the month was 1.22m the highest it has ever been for any month during the season since I started to keep accurate records. This illustrates very well that interpretation of statistics can be misleading if you don't take all the factors into account. In this case there were 60% more rod days in 2013 which helped contribute to the 92% increase in salmon caught.

Overall between the two years, the catch per rod day was quite similar – 0.42 in 2012 compared to 0.36 in 2013.

Looking at the year so far since the

less than 2.62m. We had one of the wettest springs ever.

Normally in the Spring, one would expect to lose a few days in the month



This was the river on February 9th this year with the gauge on 3.30 metres.

The Smartwave AV3500



The Smartwave AV3500 has impressive deck space lending it to many applications. This craft is well suited as a tender, fishing or duck shooting platform, for rescue work or as a tough

commercial boat. In short the AV3500 will excel in every application. The AV3500 is designed for maximum space, stability and low planning speed.

Specifications

Length 3.5m (11.5ft)
External beam 1.7m (5.6ft)
Hull Weight 100kg (220lbs)

Horsepower 25Hp
Deadrise 13deg
Hull thickness 8mm
Warranty 5 years
Max No People 4
Max Payload 340 Kg

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Charles Quesada from France on his first day salmon fishing



The Best Fish on the Fly so Far for 2014. 3 feet we heading for the very same spot where I had landed the first salmon of 2012.

Charles was good with a spinning rod – having fished for pike and zander in France. After a short while he caught a kelt and was already very happy with his day. A short while later he caught

and released this fish of about 6lb which turned out to be the very first off the river as well. Some time later that day, a fish of about 15lb. was released by Mark Gledhill (UK) further up the river at Ballyhooly. This was a truly amazing result considering just how high the water level was that day.

Levels were somewhat lower in March, when the average height for the first half of the month was 1.36 metres and down further to 1.07 metres for the second half of the month. In spite of a low rod effort due to people being deterred by high water, we recorded eight springers for March which was the best total since 2006. All bar one were caught in the first half of the month. One major effect of the high water was to ensure that most of the spawned fish returned safely to sea without out even being hooked. Last year we had days where up to thirty kelt were caught in a day by two rods on one beat. This year I doubt if six were caught in total during the entire spring.

Both fish caught in February fell to spinner in the high water. Eight fish were caught for March of which three fell to fly and five to spinner. For April, the fly is starting to come into its own as levels drop, and seven fish fell to the fly, with just three on spinner.

Weighing 12lb. it was caught by James O’Keeffe on the Inches on Upper Kilmurry on a fly he tied himself.

The Best Fish taken by a lady angler was this lovely 9.8lb. fish released by Ger Gaffney on spinner on Woodstream

on April 21st.

Last year, I noticed that there seemed to be more very large fish hooked, even though they were all ultimately lost. There were half a dozen which were reckoned to have been around the 20-30lb mark.

This is the Island Stream on Lower Kilmurry, where Lodge syndicate member Daniel Kolomanski lost a huge fish on April 22nd. He was fishing all by himself and hooked the fish on a #10 Cascade. He played the fish for an hour without seeing the fish at all until he had three vain attempts to net the fish by himself which proved to be too difficult to control. Eventually the fish threw the hook and escaped.

Hopefully one day soon, someone will manage to land one of these leviathans.



A fine fish returned.



A huge fish was lost here.

A photograph of a man, Georgie Thomas, fishing on the River Moy. He is standing on a grassy bank, holding a fishing rod that is arched over the water. A small boat is moored nearby. The background shows a river flowing through a lush, green landscape with trees and hills under a clear sky.

THE FABULOUS RIVER MOY

Geordie Thomas playing a lively grilse on lovely September afternoon.

Issuing from the Ox Mountain range in County Mayo, the River Moy runs for approximately sixty-eight miles before entering the Atlantic Ocean at Killala Bay. The Upper Moy flows beside Swinford while another tributary, the Lake River drains Loughs Cullin & Conn which are in turn fed by the Deel and Ballyvary. The river has enjoyed prolific runs of Spring Salmon and at one time simply phenomenal runs of grilse during the summer months. To give an indication of the numbers of fish present along the coast of Western Ireland a catch statistics report by the Central & Regional Fisheries Board reports a declared total catch (all methods including drift & draft nets) in 2001 of a staggering 259,475 salmon, unfortunately by 2006 it was less than half this. Although each year is different, notable years were 1989 and 1996 which produced 11,075 and 12,543 salmon to Moy anglers. The massive runs of yesteryear may be a distant memory but the mighty Moy still produces prolific catches and for me it holds many great memories.

When I see how salmon fishing has declined in recent years I have to count myself fortunate to have experienced the final years of truly prolific runs. I can remember back to the eighties; come Friday night, finishing work, race over home to pick up my bro and the tackle and point that motor toward Ballina – happy carefree days with the promise of good fishing! In those days there were many regulars who made the trip and we would recognise the cars as we sped along the twisty Leitrim roads, at times it was like Whacky Races! Our final destination would be Paddy Dean's pub the 'Hideout' in Foxford

and this is where we gathered our intelligence so we could decide on where to concentrate our efforts for the next couple of days. This operation sometimes also entailed buying a drink or two, just to loosen up the tongues of those 'in the know'!

In my enthusiasm to learn everything I could about salmon fishing I had read just about every book I could find and felt fairly confident of tackling this new game. In fact I'd already caught a salmon on the beautiful Owenea River in Donegal, classic fashion, in a deep pool below a gravelly run on an orange shrimp pattern recommended by Neil

from Joseph Bradells fishing shop in Belfast. What a shock the Moy was: deep, slow, featureless, no flow to work a fly, banks too high for a back cast!

I'll never forget my first visit to Foxford, my brother and I just decided, spur of the moment style, to go have a look after seeing an advert in an angling mag. We didn't arrive till late and after checking into the digs were sent around to the 'Hideout' where the owner, Paddy would 'keep us right'. It was a beautiful summer's evening, seatrout and bats were competing for the sedges in the twilight below the bridge, the pungent smell of peat and

honeysuckle was in the air and Foxford was buzzing, in fact the pub was standing room only and its customers spilled out onto the pavement. Everyone was talking fishing, the crowd was so friendly but the accents were mostly from the North though it felt a long way from the troubled Belfast we had just left behind. We introduced ourselves to Paddy and next thing two nice cold pints were set up before us. We still didn't know how we were going to tackle the river but fortunately help was at hand in the shape of a 'regular', Basil, a character from Rathfriland who was to introduce us to the 'mystery' of the prawn over the next day or two.

Adapt to the conditions

As mentioned, although the Moy is a tremendously prolific water it is far from classic salmon fishing water thanks to years of destruction by dredging. There is excellent fly water on the East Mayo Water and some nice exclusive water on Mount Falcon beats but much of the river is simply not fly water as such so other methods must be employed. In high water the worm reigns supreme, usually suspended from a huge float and weighted by a large



Action on the Mount Falcon beat as another fish comes to the net.

chunk of lead. This may sound crude but there is a technique and as a dirty flood drops off it can be devastatingly effective. To see the big red and white float chugging up and down, then taking off across the stream at rate of knots is very exciting but unfortunately by the time this has happened the fish will have swallowed worms, hook and all, and will not be able to be released. As the water clears then spinning comes into its own, Flying Cs perhaps the most popular nowadays. This is also effective but a bit monotonous and you'll sure be glad of break at the end

of the day, also a fair percentage of fish swallow those big trebles so can't be released. Bubble and fly can also be employed and as the water becomes lower and clearer this will become more effective.

The 'little purple boy'

Finally we come to a controversial method, the prawn or shrimp, not always purple either as I've seen just about every colour available. For those who think this method is straightforward, think again. The idea is to present your prawn a few inches



Into a fish on the Ballina water behind the town.



The ultimate sporting fish, a tide-fresh 'Springer'.

from the bottom, without drag in a river that may be thirty yards wide and ranges from six to twenty feet deep and has dark peaty water where visibility stops at a couple of feet. The aforementioned Basil is one of a number of master anglers in this technique and it was he who showed us to use delicately weighted floats, to grease our line and use long light rods to throw a long mend into the line to prevent drag. A sliding float stop allows for quick and accurate depth adjustments.

The hard bit is learning the contours of the bottom and there's no easy way around this other than hard legwork and because three of us fished together we could map the various depths of each pool. There will be large areas of barren water and every now and again what we call a 'Taking Spot'. On the Moy the water is not easy to read, though after a while you do get a feel for it and I do feel sorry for those anglers who plough down to the river, full of expectation only to be frustrated and bewildered at their lack of success. The number of times one of us dropped into a pool beside an angler who had been fishing fruitlessly for hours and hooked a fish on the first or second cast (after asking permission of course)! is legion.

Normally after releasing the fish we'd set the angler up with the right tackle & depth before moving on. Alternatively

you can hire a guide and although Robert Gillespie or Stuart from Mt. Falcon, it may seem expensive, their ability to put you over a taking fish makes them worth their weight in gold. One of our great pleasures was to help someone catch their first salmon and there were many strangers who broke their duck whilst in our charge and there were many who helped us on our way at the start; characters such as Robert Shephard, Billy Buttons, Jodie, the Ramsey brothers, Derek and Ian, Raymond Stewart and more besides.

Once you know the 'taking spots' at the various water heights, then presentation is the key; your prawn or shrimp must not drag or fish too high. A long rod and greased line allows for long distance mends and an upstream breeze can help in this respect. In no other form of angling is the dictum about ten percent of the anglers catching ninety percent of the fish more true; knowledge of the taking 'lies' and perfect presentation are essential for consistent success on a river like this and both are hard earned; unfortunately it can lead to jealousy and unfair criticism of this type of angling by those who don't have the necessary skill or patience to master the technique.

Back in the day, the runs of grilse would be coursing through the various beats on every tide from mid June

onwards. It came as great revelation to me when I met a gentleman who explained how to fish the shoals of grilse as they moved up through the river and sure enough he knew how long after each tide that it would take the fish to enter each beat. This guy would follow the runs up the river and made prolific catches. The first time we joined him he timed the run perfectly, they arrived at the Wood Pool right on schedule and it wasn't long before the rods were bent into fresh lively bars of silver. We found that you don't have to fish deep for running fish as they swim close to the surface and also that the presence of running fish also can stimulate the resident salmon. After about half an hour things went quiet and we were on our way to intercept the fish several miles upstream. Often, in those days, the start of a run was heralded by a few fish showing on the surface, giving everyone a chance to be prepared, then shortly afterwards it wouldn't be unusual for several rods to be bent at once! The fresh fish were free-taking but often were easy to lose, whether because of their energetic and often acrobatic fight or because of more fragile hook holds in soft skin but it wasn't unusual for them to come adrift; luckily it usually wasn't too long before the little orange float was sliding under



Jim Martin with a September grilse from the Cathedral beat in high water.



Ricky Semple helps ensure the future of his sport releasing a little September grilse.

the surface again to signal another take!

Often the great fishing was to be had if you could find where the fish were holding up and this varied from year to year. Some years the lower river such as Ballina, Attymass, Mount Falcon beats would be stiff with fish and on other years Armstrong's, Gannon's or Jack's Park would be the place. There were always fish around the Railway Bridge waiting to run into the Loughs and of course, when the water came, then the fly fishers would get the fishing on the upper river around Swinford. To be in the right place at the right time was an exciting time. I remember on one occasion six of us had started fishing one September morning on a beat which was unfamiliar to us, so after a couple of preliminary casts to ascertain the depth, we all set up and started fishing. The place must have been thick with salmon and we all hooked up more or less at once except one guy who had to net the fish. There were two fish of ten pounds and several little grilse all being played at once and the guy with the net couldn't get a cast because every time he'd netted a fish another one was being landed! Unfortunately the 'take' went off before he got a cast so he obviously got 'first cast' at the next spot we went to.

Corncrakes

A feature of the Moy catchment at

that time was the abundance of the elusive corncrakes and every field around Foxford seemed to have its resident bird, which would call throughout the summer mornings, 'crrek crrek', an almost mechanical sound which has all but disappeared now with the introduction of modern farming methods. They were very elusive birds, rarely seen unless flushed by my angling companion, the little black Patterdale terrier. He also had great sport along the river, especially in the years when the mink became very abundant. Sometimes you'd be quietly fishing when 'plop', a rat would jump into the river with a mink in hot pursuit. When the rat realised that the mink could out-swim him it often let out squeals of terror and it wouldn't be long before it was dead in the water. Sometimes if the mink came to our bank there would be an opportunity to witness a double murder for although he looked like butter wouldn't melt in his mouth, the little Patterdale always had murder on his mind and hunted the mink relentlessly even though he often got bitten, which only made him more aggressive. Sometimes he would appear on the bank to beckon us and he'd take us to a log or rock to be pulled out of the sandy bank to reveal its furry occupant inside. Once he'd killed the mink he would proudly carry his trophy around all day and we'd have to drive home with the car

windows down as, after being attacked, a mink's scent glands blow and emit a strong musty odour and our little dog would stink of this! Unfortunately Tinkers lust for killing wasn't confined to rats and mink for he also liked hunting cats and was a liability if farm cats happened to stray too close to the river! Although he's long dead now, I can still see him cavorting up and down the sandy river banks as he loved to be beside the Moy and wouldn't try to conceal his joy; he would jink this way and that in mock combat and spent happy hours playing and hunting the big sandy banks and he was well known amongst the anglers. Its just as well he was popular for I couldn't get away without him: he'd lie around the garden motionless for days but as soon as I lifted the fishing rods he'd be sitting in the boot of the car, I'd swear he had a sixth sense!

As mentioned before, the run of salmon on the Moy was enormous and no one ever thought it wouldn't last. There were drift nets, draft nets, salmon box traps, anglers and rampant poaching but still the runs continued. Salmon were the currency and were sold in bars, shops, hotels, etc. Unfortunately the angling became a numbers game and, as money was being offered for fish, then of course greed came into it and the sport was dragged through the mud. The average size of grilse dropped from five or six pounds to less than four and they were all net marked, obviously it was only the small fish which could get through the drift net mesh that made it to the river. Of course, slowly but surely the numbers crashed, the word went out and after a few bad seasons this super river had a bad reputation. To add to this the Euro was making it more expensive to visit, plus there seemed to be constant squabbling over ownership of fishing rights, anglers were being asked to pay to fish the same piece of water by two different owners, it was a fiasco. Ballina and Foxford suffered terribly from the lack of tourist anglers. Pubs, guest houses and restaurants which were once thriving were abandoned.

Something had to change - the recovery begins

A radical change had to occur and the Irish government moved to stop the drift nets, draft nets and indiscriminate poaching and also to ban the sale of wild salmon. During all of this time new habitat enhancement schemes were going on to allow better juvenile recruitment from the spawning streams. All of this took years to happen and although there were still good numbers of fish running, they did not compare with previous bonanza figures and the bad reputation continued.

I have to laugh when I hear the disparaging comments about the Moy. I understand that mud sticks but if you take the time to examine catch statistics there may be a surprise or two. How about the rod catch for 2010 - 9,466 and 2011 - 8,801 fish! This puts it firmly into the top ten UK rivers and easily the most prolific Irish river. I know for one that I wouldn't

abandon this epic water, I don't expect super fly water or exclusive access, but the Moy could be purpose built for a relaxing day watching the prawn float or bubble and fly and there as many fish to cover here as anywhere in the country, with the bonus that prawn and fly caught fish will be easily released.

I enjoy fishing the fly as much as the next man but I still get a buzz when I present a prawn perfectly to a lie thirty yards away, knowing the depth is perfect, throwing a lovely mend to give a drag free drift, and watching as the little orange float bobs a couple of times then shoots under in a heart stopping moment then an instant strike and the trembling feeling up the line signals a fish, the peace and tranquillity of the river is broken as a beautiful bar of silver thrashes on the surface and takes off on a run, for me this is the essence of the Moy; the peaceful tranquillity of the river, the excitement of the take, the knowledge

that through better management the whole system is improving.

Just to drive into Ballina, stand on the bridge and inhale the atmosphere is great but when you march into the Ridge Pool Tackle Shop and see Gary's face grinning from behind the counter, purchase a few handmade floats, immaculate flies, catch up on the gossip, watch the fish sporting up the river and anticipate what this trip will bring, it's a great feeling! Another bonus is that the river is not as crowded as it once was and the permit prices are still reasonable; even the exclusive Mount Falcon Hotel is doing some fantastic deals which will allow access to fly fishing on other rivers as well as their own exclusive beats, you may be surprised at what's on offer. The great tourism trade and phenomenal runs of the past may not be completely back but there's no reason why this fishery shouldn't return to its former glory, possibly this year? Only one way to find out!

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The Life Of O'Reilly

Into a good fish in high water on the Professor's Run at Careysville.

My life revolves around fly fishing. It has been like that for a long time now. The year begins on Christmas Eve with a frantic chase around the local stationery shops to find the right diary with a year planner where I can enter my fishing trips, casting lessons and fishing courses for the year ahead. I like to be able to open it and see at a glance where I'll be and what I'll be doing week by week. The fishing comes first!

'What's another year' was the name of an Irish Eurovision entry; it was a good one. It's great to be doing what you like best – fishing. But then there is the saying, 'There is more to fishing than catching fish.' Do I believe in it? Well, I do now, but for a long time success was measured by how many fish you put on the bank – and killed. Now I only very occasionally kill a fish – and never a trout. I remember a ghillie on the Munster Blackwater wanting to chase me off the river for returning the first salmon of the season. He gave all kinds of reasons, like it will only die anyway, it will upset all the other fish in the pool and no one else will catch anything. It went back anyway and he walked away in disgust.

People often ask me how long I have been fishing. "A long time," is the short answer. It began in the late 1940s. I don't count the years any more! Life began for me in my father's corn mill on the banks of the Annalee River in Co.Cavan, where we ground oats and made oaten meal for the local farmers of the parish and several parishes around. The river was part of our life. Everything depended on

a plentiful supply of water for the water wheel. It was a gorgeous river too, the water gin clear, and standing on the little footbridge you could count the trout, see the occasional salmon and watch the shoals of minnows and the trout and salmon fry by the edges, in the slack water. For a child, it was a strange experience watching those fish. They were there and yet they were untouchable. They lived in a different medium to us. I wanted to hold them in my hands - so near and yet so far!.

On a winter's night in the kiln, sitting in front of the big coal fire, Hughie the kiln man related his experience with a hazel rod, a line & a hook and how he could catch perch, trout, eels and even the occasional pike; I wanted to do that too. One early March evening, at the tender age of 7 or 8, before the mill closed for the season, he took me fishing and we caught a perch. It was small and fell back in the water before I could lay my hands on it, we were fishing barble, with a bent pin! No matter, I was hooked. Soon, I was fishing too – for minnows – with a bent pin for a hook, a short length of strong white

sewing thread as a line, a hazel rod my father cut in the wood and a worm for bait.

For the next ten years or so that was basically how we fished. OK, we advanced to acquiring fishing line, hooks to gut and the rods grew longer. It was about this time we discovered spinning reels. Perch were the main quarry. They were carried home, strung on a willow sapling, cleaned, salted and fried in butter for dinner. It felt good to be a provider and the fish for dinner were a pleasant change from the salty home cured bacon.

In life there are defining moments

But life moves on and other fishermen came to the river. They wore waders, had cane rods, fished in the faster flowing water and caught trout, sometimes big trout that they landed with a landing net. How I envied them. In life there are what are known as defining moments – incidents that happen and change your life. They parish priest gave me a split cane fly rod, silk line, reel and a box of flies. He was old and had stopped



The Author with a 14 pounder on the Blackwater.

fishing. Then I met Mick Finnegan, a very competent river and lake fly fisher and he took me fishing. We fished Lough Gowna, Lough Sheelin, Lough Annagh and the upper Erne. Fly casting was a big problem for me, particularly the casting. In desperation one day I asked Mick, "What do you think of fishing for trout with a worm?" I'll never forget his reply, "Peter, the man who fishes for trout with a worm is lower than the worm he fishes with!" I was cured. From that moment I resolved to become a fly fisher. Now the challenge became catching the biggest fish and the most fish. I was reasonably successful, there was that 7 1/2 lbs trout, 70 river trout caught (and returned) in one session and a 17 lbs salmon on the fly and son on.

A milestone in my fishing life came in 1978 when I joined the Inland Fisheries Trust as an angling officer, which opened up a whole new vista as far as fishing was concerned. Now I was involved in

the bigger picture and met, fished with and learned from some of the greatest fishermen of the time. Hugh Falkus' statement is forever etched in my memory: "The environment is part of the nation's wealth and our rivers and the fish that swim in them are part of that environment. We live in an age of zoos, safari parks and put-and-take fisheries, but we also need our wild places with fish that are truly wild." Slowly I came to realise the meaning of the words "There is more to fishing than catching fish". The admonition of St. Francis of Assisi 'it is better to give than to receive' struck home too.

I took fly casting lessons because I had my share of wind knots, tennis elbow, sitting in the boat on a flat calm day unable to cast for lack of wind from behind. Pat Mulholland, Eddie Hopkins, Sean O'Brian and the late Tommy McCutcheon from Belfast, all members of A.P.G.A.I., were my first casting tutors. I learned that in fly fishing, whether for trout or salmon, good presentation is everything. If you see a trout rise to a fly, it is hungry, hence can be caught. But usually you only get one change – the first. Nowadays my main focus is teaching people how to improve their fly casting and how to fish with a fly. There is great satisfaction to be had from seeing a beginner make a good cast and hook, play and land a fish all by themselves.

In days gone by, the craft guilds had their trade secrets where knowledge was wealth and they did not share it. Fly fishing could be a bit like that too. But things have changed, now we have

qualified fishing instructors willing and able to share their knowledge. It is a fact that any normally coordinated person with a desire to learn can master fly casting after a few lessons with a competent teacher.

Fly casting is easy when you know how. I have never met an all-round angler who didn't prefer to fly fish when it is practical. What is it that makes fly fishing so interesting? With fly casting the fishing is very much your own responsibility – and pleasure. You see a fish rise or know where it lies, make the cast, retrieve the line, hook it, play it and land it all by yourself. Coupled with that is the satisfaction and joy you get simply out of casting a fly well. Spey casting with a double handed rod is one of the greatest pleasures in fly fishing. Using a bait rod may be fun, but not pure enjoyment – fly casting is. Here I would like to share some of the knowledge that I have gained over the years.

There are those who would have you believe that unless you are touched by the hand of God, you will never learn to cast well. That is ridiculous. Anyone can learn to cast with a few hours good instruction, followed by plenty of diligent practice. And where best to practice than when you are fishing. But remember, it is perfect practice that makes perfect. It is no good practising and repeating faults.

So what are the secrets? Be safe. Get your tackle right – Use matched tackle. Learn to cast. Spend the rest of your life learning to fish. Safety is paramount both for yourself and for those around you. You are responsible and my to two top safety tips are to wear eye protection and wear a life jacket when afloat.

When selecting an outfit, the best method is to have someone help you that you know is competent. Even then it is a good idea to understand how tackle is matched, and it much be.

Most people select their fly fishing tablet in reverse order. They buy a rod, reel, line and finally the flies they need. That is wrong! What should first be determined is the size of the flies that are needed for your specific task. Then



A nice 3lb bonefish at Delphi, Bahamas where he leads a party in the first week of December every year.



Returning another 3½ lb bonefish.

choose the line that will properly transport them. The fly line is a long flexible weight that unrolls on the cast, carrying the fly on the end of it. It serves two functions, to transport the fly and to provide the weight to load (the spring in) the rod. Fly lines are graduated according to the AFTMA scale. For example, if you are using a 2 inch copper tube fly, a light #5wt fly line could not carry it to the target. And a heavy #11wt line, used with a tiny fly would land on the water with such an impact that it would defeat the whole purpose of such a delicate fly.

No sense in using a low-loader to carry spade!

Basic guidelines suggest that if you are using small trout flies, where delicate presentation is required, then you will need a small fly line in the #4-6wt



You never forget the first one - David from Austria with his first salmon.

category. For medium sized flies or if you have droppers, a medium sized line from #7-9 wts generally recommended and for heavy salmon flies or unusually bulky flies a line from #10-12wt may be needed. You would not haul a heavy piece of machinery on a light pick-up truck, nor would there be any sense in using a low-loader to carry spade!

In my opinion your fly line is the most important part of your equipment, take good care of it. Clean it frequently and attach the leader with a needle knot or a nail knot. Avoid braided loops, especially on the small and medium sized lines. They are one of the main causes of why a leader turn over to present a fly well.

The rod is the next consideration and must be matched to the line. In my opinion, there are very few bad rods made now-a-days. Just remember that a rod cannot cast by itself. Firstly a fly rod is a lever, but a complicated one. It is flexible. Every rod has it's own unique speed of loading and unloading and the skill of casting is in the hands of the user.

In fly fishing, the line is the weight that loads the rod. Make sure your rod matches the line you have chosen. On the butt of every rod, just above the cork handle, is the number telling what weight of line matches that rod. The rod is matched to a specific weight of line, although most well designed rods will handle a size heavier than the one that matches it perfectly.

For trout fishing, ideally, you will need a rod with a progressive action, one that allows you to cast the fly gently on the water. The primary purpose of a trout rod is gentle delivery, trout can be easily

spooked. For salmon, pike, bass or bone fish, where greater distance is required, you will need a rod with a faster tip and capable of casting a heavier line.

For double handed rods my preference is for a progressive action that I can fully load, right down into the cork handle. Having said that I repeat the statement I made earlier. Every rod has it's own unique speed of loading and unloading. Be patient, practice frequently and you will soon get the feel of your chosen rod. It cannot cast by itself. Good casting and good fly presentation is in the hands of the caster.

Fly reels are the next consideration and are generally regarded as a storage space for the fly line – that is until you hook your first really big, strong running fish. Then you will find out that your reel must be reliable and fit for purpose. What I look for in a reel is firstly that it is big enough to hold the line and enough backing for a big fish – 50 yards for trout and a minimum of 150 yards for salmon. Then it should have a good drag and much never allow the line to run off in an uncontrolled manner. It should be capable of right hand winding or left hand winding. My advice to the novice angler is to fit the reel so that it is wound with the non-dominant hand. Save the dominant hand for playing the fish. It gives you more and better control. Playing a fish with the non-dominant hand is like asking a right handed person to write with the left. For most



A nice trout on Lough Sheelin.



Returning a springer.

freshwater fish a simple reel that allows a strong fish to run off against a smooth drag will serve you well.

Yes, it has been long journey and a lot of water has flowed under the bridge at the mill since my dear friend and first angling mentor, the late Hughie Sheridan, taught me how to catch perch with a hazel rod and a porter bottle cork for a float, more than 60 years ago.

About the author: Peter O'Reilly is an

angling author and fly fishing instructor. His first book "Loughs of Ireland" had the distinction of being #1 in the Irish Times bestseller list when it was first published in 1987. It was followed by "Rivers of Ireland", "Flies of Ireland" and "Flyfishing in Ireland" all of which are still much in demand. He is a qualified flytying and flycasting instructor and has given demonstrations at events in the UK, US and across



The Waterfall Pool on the beautiful Bundorragha River, Connemara.

Europe as well as being a regular at Irish fishing shows. He is a vice-president of The Wild Trout Trust. His fly fishing school on the River Boyne at Navan is open year-round. Peter can be contacted by phone on 046-9028210 or by email at peter@oreillyflyfishing.com For more information see oreillyflyfishing.com

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IT'S TOP TACKLE AT NORTH DOWN'S BOOMING AM ANGLING

A new north Down angling outlet has become the talk of the angling world recently, so with our Irish Angler readership in mind we just had to find out more. AM Angling, based in Newtownards alongside with its sister retail outlet Ards Pet Supplies, already has a large customer base in Northern Ireland and is generating a worldwide reputation with its impressive Internet presence. Eager to find out what all the angling buzz was about, we talked to Ards Pet Supplies owner and countrysports enthusiast Brian Anderson and his business partner AM Angling's Michael McMenamin, a self confessed angling nut and a veritable guru on everything to do with the sport.

I spoke first to Michael, a man as much at home on the Finn, Ballinderry and Owenea as he is in the angling department and asked how it got off the ground last March: Michael said: "I came in to see Brian in Ards Pet Supplies, where AM Angling is now based. As it turned out, Brian was also a huge flyfishing fan and at the mention of

trout he asked me if I fished. If I fished! I'm simply mad about it! Then the talk got to tying flies and Speycasting and eventually I ended up helping him learn that technique as well as tying flies."

Brian added: "In the end, Michael was tying loads of flies for me and my friends, and bringing us up to date with the latest modern techniques and technology coming into angling. From that, our mutual angling interest grew quickly to such an extent that we put our heads together and decided to add angling to the existing pet supplies business."

A small area was set aside upstairs, Michael immersed himself on the Internet, sourcing suppliers and monitoring latest trends in game angling. AM Angling was quickly up and running. Very soon, business became so brisk, they needed to treble the space for angling products of all descriptions, from waders to jackets and rods and all sorts of accessories, even

live bait. It was important to getting the message out that they were very much open for business and this saw even more frenzied activity on the Internet as new products and new ranges were sourced and advertising outlets identified worldwide, as well as locally.

Brian continued: "The orders poured in: from Scotland to Scandinavia our new customers couldn't get enough of our products, unaware that we were then only a very tiny shop grafted on to the pet supplies area. While the emphasis is on game angling, coarse fishing and sea angling was also catered for, so we had to increase our floorspace for our extensive range and to make sure that our walk-in customers could have the space required to browse in comfort, as well as meeting the needs of global customers."

Equipment focus and new trends

While they can supply any angling



Michael McMenamin - as much at home on the Finn, Ballinderry and Owenea as running the business.

requirement from beginner to expert, the AM Angling focus is very much on higher end equipment that's different from what you might find elsewhere in the country. Michael explained: "Even at the beginning, we knew we wanted top brands, names like Loop, Mackenzie, and Guideline. The big brand we wanted was Zpey, which produces top quality futuristic designed rods that simply do the job better than before.

People came into the shop and at first they wondered how we would ever sell such exotic stuff. That soon changed when sales showed we were selling ten times more Zpey rods than any other. Very simply, quality was what the customers wanted and we delivered exactly that. Zpey are designed with a kink in the handle for the modern Scandinavian casting technique with shooting heads." The trend is very much away from longer rods of up to 15 feet, to modern rods of around 11 feet with an 8 weight line, casting more effectively than before: "While I say 8 weight, modern lines are now being rated in grams rather than the old AFTM method, so you have a particular weight for a particular line but I can offer advice to anyone on what they require," he added.

In fact, tackle and angling advice is key element of a trip to AM Angling, with Michael chatting to a customer about the type of fishing they wished to



Spoilt for choice - just some the rods in stock.

do, the location, the size of river and the size of likely fish expected, etc well before any advice is given.

"Many people are hung up on the traditional heavy line/heavy rod approach which is far too much for the fishing they actually do. I can steer them into a whole new way of approaching the sport, with lighter more efficient equipment, shorter lines suitable for modern casting techniques. Reels are a matter of personal taste but we aim to get a balance for the rod."

Try before you buy at AM Angling

"While we already have an excellent range of stock, we have just been appointed retailers for Patagonia products, a very exciting development with this top manufacturer. We have also invested heavily in demonstration

gear, so it's no longer a matter of holding a rod in a shop, giving it a wiggle and trying to decide if it's what you want, as customers can try it out at Movilla Fishery to see if it's exactly right. While I can offer advice it's always best to try before you buy to make sure it's 100%."

And if you would like to try your hand at flytying, there's even a wee session in the shop on Friday evening which closes 'when the last person leaves the shop.' No doubt, part of the attraction is that it's great for people who need to tie up something to use of a trip over the weekend and of course AM Angling can tailor tying times to suit. We have our own range of fox-tail fur for flies which we import as full tail skins and while it's mostly fox we also do racoon and other fur ideal for generating movement in salmon flies and for pike as well."

Passing the kitchen — you might even get a cuppa — I saw a great range of rods from a starter kit to something that would set you back almost £1,000, purposeful looking reels and lines, including Royal Wulff, Abu Garcia, Sonic and much more, including Zpey's latest shooting heads to match. Waders, breathable and neoprene, including Sonic, Airflo, Shakespeare are everywhere with much more arriving daily. I was amazed by a huge range of spinners, hooks, floats and much more, everything, I imagined, someone could possibly require for a day's sport, even a fridge full of deadbeat.



Try before you buy.



Everything for the modern flytyer.

Unique Open Days instruction and hands-on gear sampling with the celebrities

But what does AM Angling offer that is truly 'out of the ordinary' in addition to their impressive array of top tackle? Answer: a day's instruction and hands-on gear sampling and a chance to meet the celebrities of the fishing world on the River Mourne's Snaa Pool in the exclusive setting of Baronscourt Estate. This was the Estate's most renowned and famous pool, similar in its appearance to the Junction Pool on the River Tweed, Scotland. Other Estate pools include the well known The Half Water, Carniquin and Blackstone.

One of these Open Days was held in February from over 180 anglers. Flytyers were set up in the gillie's hut, including Brendan Garland, Ronan MacGrianna, Dean Armstrong and Stuart Wylie. As for casters, they had experts such as Robert Gillespie from Foxford, Gerry McAleer a local instructor with huge local knowledge of the River and two from Scandinavia, Mabs Pedersen and Henrik Moller who had worked extensively with the renowned Henrik Mortensen. All had expert knowledge of modern techniques using light rods and light lines - Henrik Mortensen has designed tackle for Loop, Scierra and Zpey and has been at the forefront of much of the development both in tackle and revolutionary angling methods.

Over the two days, AM Angling also hosted the first ever Henrik Mortensen seminars which illustrated the modern Scandinavian way to use very deep

sunk lines. Over the weekend, ten anglers per session got the chance to have a one to one with Henrik. If you think about it, a session with Henrik would be similar in golfing terms to having one with Tiger Woods!

The focus was on new methods of salmon angling and casting in particular, as well as trying out the very latest equipment on the water. By working with acknowledged experts, it was possible to see why and how the latest tackle was to operate in a certain manner of fishing.

Jamie Hamilton from Baronscourt Estate said: "Baronscourt Estate was delighted to host the AM Angling, Open Days with the venue held on the Snaa Pool, Upper Mourne. As the Estate has two beats to let on the Upper Mourne we are keen to attract more anglers to our fishery. Our fishery is well known locally and we felt that working with AM Angling would allow their clients and other anglers from the east of Northern Ireland to come and see what we have on offer and encourage more bookings. We are also keen to support and work with new business trying to get established, such as AM Angling. It was a great triumph that AM Angling attracted over 180 anglers and hope that this could become an annual event. It was also good to see some young anglers attend and try out the latest rods and tackle. The Estate supplied our home produced venison

burgers and sausages for the BBQ which went down a treat."

Brian confirmed that they intend to run more: "We are working towards the first ever 'Spey Clave' a very popular event in America, an extension of what we ran but involving an array of manufacturers more heavily, along with their own experts who will demonstrate particular uses involving their products. Watch the website for more details."

How best to sum up the AM Angling experience for the customer? I put that question to Michael: "When a customer leaves I want to make sure that they have the right tool for their particular job. I want to make sure that they will be properly equipped to make their angling experience the best possible for them. I can help them with personal selection of equipment, advise them about how many of the places venues are fishing, flies and much more. The one thing I can't guarantee is the fish — that's really the only thing left to them to worry about!"

AM Angling is already an impressive operation but it's work in progress that's already tripled itself in less than a year and is driving forward with new ideas and products, a very good news story for the local economy and for anglers everywhere.

**AM Angling is located at
The Mall, 13 Frances Street,
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see www.amangling.com or
Tel: 07544 308 098**



Henrik Mortensen - making it look so easy

WOULDN'T IT BE GREAT?

A life with nothing to do but fish — and get paid for it. Surely this would be the dream of anglers everywhere. But what would be the reality of such a lifestyle? Well, who better to ask than angling expert Stevie Munn and that's what we did last time. In the spring issue Stevie wrote about his life as a busy pro angler over 12 months, his fishing, travels and the angling events he was involved with, basically what he got up to over a season in angling. Well, it certainly stirred the imagination of our readers and they wanted more from Stevie to bring them up to date since then. Was it really all about 'living the dream?' But the big question was does he ever get in some recreational angling, just for himself? Stevie takes up the tale.

Let me tell you how 2014 is shaping up. The first paid event I worked at was in February, when I was attending The British Fly Fair in England, I had a great couple of days dressing my local hair wing flies on the Partridge Hooks stand, where I was instructed by their first-rate sales manger and fellow country man Darrell Mooney to use the new Patriot up-eyed double hook by Partridge, which I must say is outstanding and great for salmon and Dollaghan flies. It was an excellent show this year and it was marvellous to catch up with old friends and make some new ones, nevertheless being there wetted my appetite, it simply made me desire the fishing season to start even more quickly, as I always suffer from horrific withdrawal symptoms over the closed season.

On my return from England, I was home only a few days, then off to The Ireland Angling Expo at The National Show Centre located near Dublin, this occasion is hosted by Mara Media and it was here incidentally that this magazine was launched by Albert and his team. I was to give a talk in the theatre, which I did on fishing for Dollaghan trout in Co. Antrim and I was also giving casting demonstrations on the indoor casting pool each day showing various fly casts using the new superb Hardy Jet rod, which



Demonstrating the roll cast.

was very well received. Others also doing similar things to me were my good pals, lady salmon angler Glenda Powell and well known fly angler Hywel Morgan, so I was in good company.

Home again for a few more days, but I barely had time to rest when my bags were packed again for the Spring Glasgow Angling Centre fishing weekend. At this I was to work for Hardy Greys demonstrating with their rods, selling their products, judging the casting competition and also giving some fly casting tuition. This is a really enjoyable event that brings together many professional anglers and people who work in the trade from many parts of the world. They also do valuable work with some of the local children getting them off the streets and into fishing, something that is close to my heart.

When I returned from Scotland my world was, to me anyway going to get a whole lot better as — hooray — it's finally here, my real fishing season that is, as in my part of this island the game angling season begins on the first day of March. I started to feel that I'm coming alive again like some woodland creature coming out of hibernation; I and many other dedicated fly anglers feel we have survived the dark days of winter, we



The Ginger Quill was neatly taken.

have endured the deadly 'cabin fever,' some of us may have even suffered particularly badly and even fallen prey to mind-numbing daytime television and we may also have even resorted to things that so called normal folk would do, 'working' most days, doing house work, decorating and even washing the car from time to time, to try and take our minds off casting to a trout or salmon in a beautiful shining stream or wild Irish Lough. But now I felt invigorated once again and like fly fishers everywhere I ran around like a

frantic mad March hare, busily doing hugely important tasks like sorting out tackle, cleaning down fly lines, fixing or replacing leaky waders, taking fly rods out of storage, checking their rings or line guides and perhaps most importantly dressing wonderful flies to restock my fly boxes which will grace the leaders and hopefully take a fish or two in the coming months.

OK, I know I may be exaggerating just a tad, as I know a lot of us now fish though the winter for rainbow trout at stocked fisheries and some of the salmon rivers have been opened in Ireland in January and February and perhaps some of us may have also been out in search of pike, which is becoming ever popular over the winter months with the fly rod and I know some of us may have even been fortunate enough to have even done some angling in a far off land and all these parts of our sport can be great, but as local anglers we now have many more options as rivers and lakes open and winter starts to loosen its cold grip and spring then summer pushes in .

My first few days of the new season were on my beloved local river the Six Mile Water in Co. Antrim. This is the river I grew up on and still one of my favourite rivers even after fishing many around the world, I guess it has a



Nice early trout - a quick snap and back it went.



Just another day at the 'office' (photo by Davy Telford)

special place in my heart. The river in parts was having great hatches of Dark Olives (*Baetis rhodani*, if you're interested in the Latin name) and trout had been feeding on them avidly. This time of year is all about timing and conditions; luckily unlike last year the weather had been mild and I knew what time to hit the river to correspond with the hatch and if I was lucky the trout feeding. I usually start with the nymph until I see trout rising to the duns and I had landed a few trout which I was pleased to see.

It is always marvellous to get the first fish of the year and mine was a very pretty trout of about 12 or 13 inches, a quick picture then I returned it unharmed to the river. On my next outings things were to get even better, the weather being settled, mild and overcast with light winds for a few days, just perfect for trout fishing, the dark olives were still hatching well, with armadas of them floating down the river like little yachts with their sails proudly upright. Better still, I noticed some fantastic trout feeding on them.

One of those days, as the trout were rising, I looked hurriedly through my box and a very old pattern caught my eye, a Ginger Quill, although I had dressed it with CDC wings and not the old feather style. This fly is steeped in history and was first dressed in 1836 probably by Alfred Ronalds, that said it is still as effective after one hundred and seventy odd years and normally is a good imitation for light olive duns in the summer months, but I always find it useful when any large up-wing is on the river.

The excellent trout I had spotted were in a difficult place to fish, as often the best fish are and without disclosing my exact location, it has high banks and not much vegetation, so you need to stay as low as possible as you will scare the fish in this area putting them off the feed. Even a well meaning angler stopping for a chat will put them down, so it's a bit of real stalking, almost crawling in parts. Like most river trout fishing, stealth is needed for the best

results, and this can be very rewarding as on this day I had six wild beautiful trout from the river up to 2lb. This is simply magical sport on a 4 or 5 weight rod and makes the world for me a better place and it was great to see the river fishing so well.

This trend carried on though most of my early season though in late March, but I was also to attend for Hardy's, for the first time, the 9th International Experience The World of Fly Fishing show near Munich Germany. This is a truly spectacular angling event in a stunning setting and I strongly suggest if you ever get the chance to go do so. It is run by Robert and Michaela Stroh, great people with a love for the sport of fly fishing and at this point I must thank them and also Stefan Meyenburg from Pure Fishing / Hardy for looking after me and also thank Juergen Friesenhahn, who ran the casting pool where I gave my demonstrations — he was tremendous at interrupting the English speaking casters in German and had a fantastic sense of humour.

At the time of writing, I am now looking forward to more fishing and in May I will be on Lough Sheelin hopefully casting to trout eating Mayfly

and maybe a few days before that on Lough Erne. Also more river fishing locally and elsewhere with, hopefully, some guiding, workshops and teaching and more shows including, The Loughs Agency show and The Irish Game Fair at Shanes Castle on 28th and 29th June, and The Dibney River Conservation Trust fly fair and The CLA Game fair in July. I will also be hosting with pro guide Espen Eilertsen in August, fishing in Norway on the marvellous Trysil, Glomma and Rena rivers for grayling trout in stunning settings and if you are interested in this please email me or email Go Fishing Worldwide at info@gofishingworldwide.co.uk Of course I will be continuing to work on the Irish Fly fair in Galway in November which already is talking bookings for trade stands and maybe even a hosted trip to Iceland or Canada for salmon.

That's the biz so far and it's shaping up to be a busy season ahead. Will I get out for a wee cast - just for me - well I certainly hope so! I also hope to bump into some of you while fishing or working, but in the meantime 'Tight Lines' for the rest of your season and please do get out and fish.

Some information about the Author

Stevie Munn from Co. Antrim is a full time Professional Casting Instructor and Guide with years of fly fishing and fly tying experience. He is a member of APGAI Ireland and holds GAIC, APGAI, APGAI-Ireland certificates in Fly Casting and Fly Dressing.

He is also a member of the Hardy Pro Team and Partridge pro team. Stevie has extensive experience in guiding for Dollaghan Trout, Salmon and Wild Trout throughout Ireland. He also hosts fishing trips worldwide and can help if you want to fish many places in the world, such as Iceland, Canada and Norway and can also help you with other Game angler's paradises including Finland and Argentina.

Stevie writes regularly and his fly patterns have appeared in many angling DVDs and he has also featured in many books. He has given fly dressing and casting demos and workshops, at game and fly fairs over the years, including The Germany EWF, The National Fly Fishing Meeting of The Rio Grande in Argentina the CLA game fair in England, Angling Ireland in Dublin, The Irish Game Fairs (Shanes Castle & Birr), Dutch Fly Fair, Irish Fly Fairs and others. He runs teaching courses in fly fishing and host groups fishing in many parts of the world. He is a long time Committee member of the Six Mile Club and the Lough Neagh Dollaghan Trust and is a life Member of The Wild Trout Trust. You can contact him via email anglingclassics@aol.com or get more info at www.Irishflyfair.com

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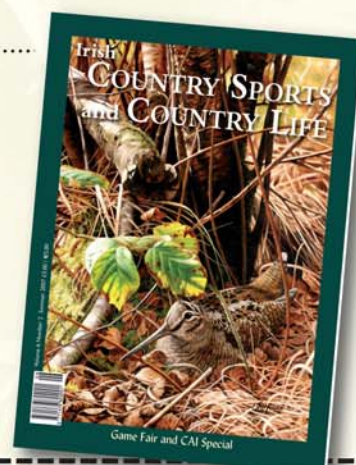
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Casting for more than fun

Trevor Greene from First Cast NI tells about the work of this exciting new community/angling organisation.

Everyone who fishes or enjoys other country pursuits will recognise the sense of calm which comes from a day spent in the countryside. For me, days in the countryside are spent fishing. I remember once being asked what I think about when I spend a day alone fishing. Simple answer – I think about fishing. Over the years, many difficult times, whether in work or in my personal life, were put into their proper focus by taking a day, or even a few hours away from the immediate problem and immersing myself in fishing. Happily, none of my problems were so great as to cause deep despair or a personal crisis.

However, many people in our society do find themselves in places where they feel closed in by their problems. It is a sad fact of life that many of our fellow citizens have to face issues such as unemployment, family breakdown, mental ill-health, debt, and homelessness. Many voluntary and community organisations now exist and provide excellent and expert services to people who find themselves in a 'dark place.' These groups along with government and professional organisations

recognise the beneficial effects of angling.

Indeed the recent report by Sports NI (A Strategic Review of Angling in Northern Ireland) sets out the benefits of angling for individuals and communities. These include gains in physical and mental health, opportunities for victims, disabled people, homeless people and people at risk of suicide. Evidence referred to in the report suggests that angling can be used as tool to reduce crime and people at risk of offending through broader social interaction among a range of ages and social classes. It is suggested that angling can contribute towards helping to divert young people away from anti-social behaviour.

First Cast NI was founded by a small group of anglers who had links with voluntary groups helping people in crisis. Ian Rowan, Chair of First Cast NI says: "We set about arranging a day where a small number of people came along to have a taster session at fly fishing. It was a taster for them and for us," and after the first session, Ian and his colleagues reviewed and developed some refinements to the programme. Funding became available from

North Antrim Community Network to run a fuller programme in the autumn and winter of 2013.

It is generally accepted that outdoors activities have health benefits for participants. Local fishing club, Willowbreeze Fly Fishing Club, put this into practise on Saturday 16th November by organising an Emotional Wellbeing Day at Straid Fishery, Co Antim. In collaboration with First Cast NI they aimed to introduce adults and children to fly fishing for the first time.

Ian Rowan summed it up by saying that the First Cast NI project has the potential to help many people through their current difficulties and beyond, giving an opportunity for angling to be a release from the pressures of their daily life. The work will also help to grow the pool of anglers for the future of our sport.

First Cast NI would like to hear from either individual anglers or angling clubs who want to take this work forward. You can get in touch either through the First Cast page on Facebook or by e-mailing us on Firstcastni@outlook.com

Scottish Game Fair

Welsh Axemen and hunting hounds will be prowling the grounds of Scone Palace in Perthshire this July as part of the superb line-up of entertainment at this year's GWCT Scottish Game Fair - Scotland's largest game fair and best annual outdoor show.

The 26th annual Fair is once again taking place on the banks of the River Tay against the backdrop of the magnificent Scone Place on Friday 4th, Saturday 5th and Sunday 6th July 2014 from 0930 until 1800 hours daily.

Set to be as spectacular as ever, this popular three day event offers an incredible weekend for all the family with a wealth of activities, competitions, great food and excellent shopping. New shows and events for 2014 include the Welsh Axemen who will take to the main ring with axe racing using razor sharp axes in competition to simulate the falling of a tree, and cutting it up into lengths. The death defying finale of this show is the tree climb using just an axe and foot

boards.

The finest crafts, clothing, equipment and sporting goods will be on display, and for sale, with over 300 traders participating this year. The impressive Food Hall, which is sponsored by Isle of Skye 8 Year Old Blended Scotch Whisky, houses some of Scotland's top food and drink producers from artisan cheese manufacturers and dairy delights to the finest game, poultry and preserves all under one roof.

Commenting on the Fair, director David Noble, said: "Each year the Fair attracts many thousands of outdoor enthusiasts, tourists and locals alike and with Scotland hosting some of the greatest sporting events this year, we

have expanded the programme and look forward to welcoming new and returning visitors.

"We are extremely excited about this year's event with the return of some of our most popular attractions as well as new headline events such as the World of Gun Dogs and Welsh Axemen. We have also expanded our retail and catering this year with a host of new traders providing a fantastic showcase of some of the finest food and drink, crafts, clothing and equipment you can find."

Tickets are available to buy online. For more information on the programme, events and all available ticket packages, please visit www.scottishfair.com

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The Angling Show is supported by  **DCAL** and all DCAL permit holders or licence holders can have a £5 voucher for admission off the cost of an adult ticket (normally £10); a family ticket (normally £25) or will cover a child's admission (normally £5). Collect in your local angling shop today or contact

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