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

## TO: READERS, ADVERTISERS and SPONSORS 2016 - AN EXCITING YEAR IN PROSPECT

There were a number of significant achievements for us in 2015 and as planning is well underway for 2016 we would like to thank you for your valued support.

## In 2015:

- **RECORD PUBLISHING** We celebrated 30 years of continuously publishing the Irish Countrysports and Country Life magazine (and its previous title Irish Hunting, Shooting & Fishing).
- SOARING READERSHIP Our combined readership of the hard copy glossy and online versions of the magazine passed the magical figure of 80,000 readers per issue – making the magazine the most read ever Irish hunting, shooting, fishing and country living magazine.
- INTERNATIONAL DYNAMIC The Shanes Castle Game Fair & Fine Food Festival introduced a new international focus for Irish game and country sports fairs and posted a record attendance and a record number of quality trade stands.

• TOURISM SOARS - The Birr Castle Game Fair & Fine Food Festival also posted a great attendance and a large number of quality trade stands and probably the largest influx of visitors to the Mid Ireland region ever.

Fairs

- DIVERSITY & EXPANSION Both fairs further extended the range and variety of their Fine Food Festivals.
- MARKETING & PR DIVIDENDS Both fairs received the greatest amount of PR coverage ever within a hugely successful multi media campaign including the use of radio, TV, general consumer printed media and online features. As such they once again stressed the fact that, with this magazine, they form the greatest vehicles for the promotion and defence of our country sports in Ireland. Vendors and advertisers reap the benefits as well.

## Our plans for 2016 include:

- HOT NEWS: A new fortnightly news section in the online version of the magazine at www.countrysportsandcountrylife.com with details of events, special offers etc.
- IRELAND'S INTERNATIONAL GAME FAIR: The Irish Game Fair & Fine Food Festival, Shanes Castle, 25th & 26th June – see www.irishgamefair.com
- The ROI'S NATIONAL GAME FAIR: The Irish Game and Country Fair & Fine Food Festival 27th & 28th August 2016 www.irishgameandcountryfair.com
- IRELAND'S MOST STYLISH COUNTRY SPORTS EVENT: The Ballynahinch Game Fair and Harvest Festival, Montalto Estate, Co Down 24th & 25th September www.ballynahinchharvestfestival.com

The year ahead will be very exciting as we put our magazine and Great Game Fairs scheduled programme and development plans into operation.

We trust that you will continue to give us your much valued support in the exciting year ahead.



Paul Pringle

For details on advance booking for stands at the Game Fairs or advertising in the magazine or a big value promotional package for both. Email: irishgamefair@btinternet.com Tel. 028 (from ROI 048) 44839167 / 44615416



Albert Titterington

## Irish

# COUNTRY SPORTS CONTENTS and COUNTRY LIFE



Front Cover: An eye-catching Bland boxlock made to mark The Queen's Coronation

Holt's Auctioneers is selling a 12bore 'New Reign' boxlock ejector shotgun made by T. Bland & Sons in 1955. Named in honour of the Queen's Coronation, it has 28in. nitro barrels, gold-inlaid rib and tubes engraved T. BLAND & SONS, WEST STRAND, LONDON. The gun weighs 6lb 5oz, has 2 1/2in chambers and is choked approx 1/4 and 3/4 choke. For sale in London on 30th June with an estimated price is £1,000-1,500.

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- ally Have to Eat Worms? -/ Woodlock
- h Riflemen -ORICAL SERIES -J. Titterington

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## Country Sports and Country Life Northern Comment

The Irish Game Fair & Fine Food Festival, Shanes Castle, is shortlisted by a panel of industry experts for the premier award of the Best Event or Festival Experience in the NI Tourism Awards.

With so much voting going on for local elections and for the In/Out EU poll — did you really think we would miss the chance of raising the profile for countrysports and the country way of life as well?

Of course not!

Naturally, we felt that a vote for the Irish Game Fair & Fine Food Festival would put down a huge marker for country sports and the country way of life — the very things which we showcase every year at Shanes Castle.

Others on the list included 'Van Morrison Live on Cyprus Avenue - Eastside Arts' and the Circuit of Ireland Rally. The winner would be determined by the public voting from 27th April to Thursday 12th May.

We love putting the event on the country calendar, the public give us huge support, and we attract many overseas visitors, but Van and the Circuit were the obvious big hitters with a mega fanbase. But we knew that the country way of life had wonderful 'grass roots' support as well. Whatever the outcome was to be, we were optimistic that our 'show' would show to advantage, even when pitted against such big names!

As Albert Titterington told the media: "Being short-listed in this hard-fought category is in itself a vote for our rural way of life. The Irish Game Fair & Fine Food Festival is proud to honour every aspect of rural living, from countrysports and lifestyles to conservation, living history, artisan food and crafts ... and we celebrate it all with great craic and a stunning natural location at Shanes Castle."

But there was another very important aspect as well to trumpet, the huge economic and tourism boost each year for the Antrim area. A fact that the local Antrim media lost no time in bringing to the attention of their own audiences. "Where better could the thousands drawn to the area by this event see such a shining showcase for Antrim's outdoor attractions and historic buildings, than the Irish Game Fair, set alongside the mysterious Shanes Castle on the shores of Lough Neagh."

So from the Irish Game Fair & Fine Food Festival being in the running for the country's premier tourism award, things suddenly snowballed.

The media message to local businesses, hotels and guesthouses in the area was clear as every Antrim person was urged to cast their vote for the Irish Game Fair Fine Food Festival at Shanes.

Everyone realised that it was now a huge opportunity to showcase Antrim as a whole. Everything that Antrim offered to tourists, its guesthouses, hotels, even the jewel in the crown of the magical Lough Neagh was now in focus.

On the countrysports agenda all the representative countrysports organisations threw their weight behind us.

We designed a 'Keep Calm Vote for the Irish Game Fair' poster which bounced around Twitter and Facebook. 'Love this, I'll tweet it now!' was the instant response from Countyside Alliance in the UK. Suddenly, organisations' websites, Facebook pages and Twitter began to canvas support and the media carried our story. We could do no more.

Did we win? As we go to press the jury is still out as the winners in every category will be announced at a Gala Evening in Londonderry/ Derry on the 27th May. But we are hoping that we can add to many awards the fair has had including the Best Marketing NI Tourism award we previously won.

In any event, we definitely gave a huge shoutout for the Irish Game Fair, countrysports and the country way of life, which was helped in no small way by the support from all our supporters.

So a hearty thank you to every individual and organisation that carried the story and helped raise support for our 'campaign.' In the final analysis it was a seriously good day for countrysports, which brought to the public's attention the fact that the Game Fair at Shanes Castle had been objectively assessed as being in the top five NI events of 2015. You should all be very proud of yourselves.

I'm delighted that regular contributor and doyen of the flyfishing world, Stevie Munn, in this issue talks about some of his early angling experiences. Stevie learnt his craft from his father at an early age. It was during a difficult time for Northern Ireland as a whole, a time of unrest and much worse.

I won't divulge more but, suffice to say, Stevie describes how 'the magical art of angling' changed his life quite literally. It made him who he is today and let's face it — who wouldn't want to live the dream of having all things to do with flyfishing as a career. As someone once said to me: 'Football had Bestie we have Munner'. And who could challenge that!

Now, Stevie had his father to teach him how to cast flies and even how to tie them and the right way to fish for trout and salmon. Our fantastic worldclass lady angler Glenda Powell will be giving expert casting demonstrations at Shanes and taking time out to coach too. She also had her father to coach her from an early age so there's two big names who both started young and now to the envy of us all — now do it professionally

While they had their parents to teach them not everyone is so lucky, which leads me nicely on to the Game Fair at Shanes Castle.

We are once again offering young people the chance to learn from our friendly experts how to tie a simple fly, how to cast and better still — have an opportunity to catch a fish for themselves from our special Put & Take fishery right on the sides on the world famous River Main.

We had scores of young very happy anglers last time and look forward to having even more in June. An added bonus is that you can take your fish to top Chef Emmett McCourt who will show how best to cook it. What could be better after a fantastic day out at Shanes to have the fish you caught yourself for tea! And angling will have 'caught' another youngster who may well be 'hooked' for life. Who knows they might even be the next Stevie or Glenda.

Whatever happens the young people just like everyone else will have a super time at Shanes castle I'm sure. Make it a date in your diary — the Irish Game & Country Fair 27th & 28th June. Meanwhile I do hope you enjoy this special edition the most read country lifestyle magazine. Have a great summer.

Paul Pringle, Northern Editor

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## Country Sports and Country Life Rol Comment

My hunting season this year came to an end during the third weekend of March and, as always, there was a sense of disappointment among my fellow hunters that this glorious activity, this weekend routine, which we love so much had come to a conclusion and would remain in abeyance until next autumn.

The pack was the Rock View Foot Harriers and the meet was in a place I had never hunted in before, the estate of Borris House, in County Carlow, which was gorgeous countryside and a real pleasure to hunt in.

I am not a one trick pony and when I am hunting in the various parts of Ireland, whether it be Kilkenny, Westmeath, Cork, etc, I am also keeping an eye out for historical buildings and matters of historical interest. Borris House was a place I knew nothing about and it has an intriguing history, but before I get to that let me say a little bit about my final hunt of the 2015-2016 season.

The first matter on the day's agenda was the supping of some port which was provided by one of the terrier men, a very generous person, affable and relaxed who has regularly dispensed alcohol to us thirsty people during the season. It being the last day of the season I drank considerably more port than would be my norm before a hunt, and when we set off after the hounds felt a warm, fuzzy glow.

As we tramped across the fields, I reflected upon the 22 previous final days I enjoyed over the last 22 hunting seasons. Some of those final days were great craic, entailing a few drinks before we mounted our horses, some more brandy & port from our hip flasks while we were engaged in the chase, and then quite a few pints of beer in the pub afterwards and a singsong. People were always in great good-humour on the final day of the season and there was a buzz in the air. Sometimes there would be more fallers than usual as our reactive powers had been dulled somewhat by the alcohol. In the pub afterwards people would recall the big, demanding jumps of the day and of the season in general. These reminiscences were prone to exaggeration and sometimes the jumps would be recalled as being higher and wider than they actually were. Needless to say, the following day was spent doing precious little, bar ingesting paracetamol tablets with the aim of assuaging a bad headache.

The Rock View huntsman drew the deciduous woodland lining the steep-sided banks of a tributary of the Barrow River. The terrain possessed an old world, estate feel and was very picturesque. It was a real pleasure to be hunting in this environment. The Barrow was wide, twisting and attractive.

It being the last day of the season there were more of us out, around 20 of us, and we enjoyed a real humdinger of an afternoon which went on for several hours and involved a huge amount of exercise. In other words, a fitting end to the season.

It didn't take long for the hounds to find, and we were off, following Rénard for an hour, our route sometimes being wet and muddy and on a couple of occasions requiring balancing acts across slender trunks spanning ditches and streams. The pursuit finally came to a halt when Rénard went into a den on a steep wooded slope about fifty metres above the agitated waters of the river.

We blew away, and went looking for another fox, and soon found again. This one left the woodlands and brought us across pastureland. Having left the trees behind we now enjoyed fine views of the Carlow landscape which undulated picturesquely for many miles to the steep, brown, high slopes of the Blackstairs Mountains. We could see the monarch of the Blackstairs, Mount Leinster (reaching about 2,600 feet). To our left stood the lovely form of Borris House.



Borris House was originally an important castle guarding the River Barrow. It was rebuilt in 1731 and the exterior was designed in a Tudor Gothic disguise. The exterior of the house has attractive features including a crenellated arcaded porch and windows decorated with rectangular and ogival hood-moulds.

Borris House is the ancestral home of the MacMorrough Kavanaghs who centuries ago were the High Kings of Leinster. The MacMorrough Kavanaghs have been living on the site for the last five centuries. Sara and Morgan Kavanagh are the current owners and Morgan was present for a short while at our final meet. Sara and Morgan are the 16th generation of MacMorrough Kavanaghs to live in this beautiful setting. Borris is one of the few intact living Irish estates that can trace its history back to Brehon times and the royal ruling families of ancient Ireland. The estate covers over six hundred and fifty acres of walled private park and woodlands and is a working farm. Both house and demesne have undergone much restoration work over the last two decades and there are plans to do considerably more.

One of Sara and Morgan's ancestors is Dermot MacMorrough, who invited the Normans to Ireland in 1167. Dermot wanted the support of Strongbow in order to re-establish himself in his kingdom, from which he had been expelled. In order to secure this support Dermot offered his daughter Aoife's hand in marriage to Strongbow. When Dermot died in 1171 Strongbow claimed the throne of Leinster in right of his wife, and in contravention of Irish law and custom. Soon afterwards he surrendered his rights to establish himself as an independent sovereign to King Henry II.

Another ancestor is Art MacMurrough-Kavanagh (who died in 1416/17) who is considered to be the most formidable of the later Kings of Leinster. Art dominated the Anglo-Norman settlers of Leinster and made the province a death-trap for any invading English or Anglo-Irish forces.

No doubt, Art hunted regularly. Nearly everyone of his ilk did. And no doubt his hunting outings were more dangerous than mine; however perhaps not more dangerous than mounted foxhunting. As Jorrocks in a Surtees novel proclaimed, hunting has 'all the excitement of war and only five and twenty per cent of the danger.'

After six hours of hunting in the Borris demesne the huntsman decided to call it a day. As he blew for home and the hounds answered his call we realised that it would be several months before we would witness and hear this agreeable sight and sound again. It had been an excellent season. Time now for other outdoor pursuits during the months to come.

Derek Fanning ROI Editor

## Barbour in the Summertime

Barbour's summertime collections are designed especially for you to enjoy the longer and brighter days ahead in style. With lightweight, cool attire and plenty of colour, it's the perfect way to refresh your country wardrobe from an iconic British brand whose countryside roots go back to 1894.

Performance is key, with innovation at the heart of the ranges this season. Lightweight waterproofs and hard wearing sports jackets are practical and stylish. Knitwear this season contains Cool-Max, a performance fabric to move perspiration away from the body - perfect for those with an active lifestyle. Functional clothing that remains timeless, it's designed in the colours of the country with a must have piece for every wardrobe.

The men's Summer Lutz is a smart men's casual jacket with a relaxed yet tailored fit. It features studded rear vents and three outer pockets which provide everyday practicality, while leather elbow patches add a touch of luxury to this casual jacket. This practical piece is also lightweight enough to be packed in a bag ready for unexpected showers, a reliable wetweather companion.

The inspiration for the Countrywear collection comes from the true country English garden where flowers intertwine to create a landscape full of bright cheerful colours. A new exclusive floral print is introduced to linings, dresses, shirts and skirts for a beautiful soft summer look. Greens, blues and creams are strong with a hint of coronation print. Knits are printed and ultrafeminine.

The Wytherstone Quilt from the Country collection is a fitted, flatteringly panelled women's jacket that's perfect for the milder months. Barbour's signature diamondquilted outer teams with a stud-close front and is finished with a floral top stud to finish the look.

For further information visit your local stockist or go to www.barbour.com

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Barbour Wytherstone Quilt (LQU0696RE52) £119



Summer Lutz Jacket (MCA0349ST51) £199



Smyth Country Sports, 1 Park Street, Coleraine BT52 1BD N. Ireland (+44) 02870343970

Homefield & Stream, 18 Church Street, Enniskillen BT74 7EJ N. Ireland (+44) 02866322114

Courtlough Shooting Grounds, Balbriggan, Co. Dublin Ireland (+353) 018413096

Sportsden, Trimgate Street, Navan, Co. Meath Ireland (+353) 0469021130

# Barbour

### The Dundarave Estate Experience

Dundarave Estate is the ideal escape to the country and hosts a range of sporting activities throughout the 1300 acres including game shooting, clay pigeon shooting and salmon fishing. Situated on the stunning North Antrim Coast, Dundarave Estate is open for pusiness and wishes to welcome guns and anglers to partake in the sporting activities on offer. Its experienced team will tailor each day to suit your needs.

The Dundarave Shoot has a well-established tradition of driven pheasant and partridge shooting. Today the estate provides a range of shooting packages from walked up shooting, to large driven days throughout the season. This includes hospitality and/or accommodation for up to 10 guns and their partners in Dundarave House, a mid-nineteenth century mansion located at the heart of the estate. The estate woodlands were intentionally planted to provide an abundance of natural woodland and the undulating topography makes for perfect game shooting with the first drive, just 200 yards from our front door. Our pheasants are carefully selected and produced from the Dundarave laying stock, with all birds incubated and hatched on our game farm. They are of the highest quality and this year we are increasing the quantity of birds on the estate. Ian Chapman, the Estate Manager, is now taking bookings for 2016/2017 season.

Located across 1300 acres with breath taking scenery, the Dundarave Estate also offers Clay Pigeon Shooting to accommodate all skill levels, ensuring an enjoyable and thrilling experience for all those involved. We provide a comprehensive safety briefing and training session, led by our on-site team to ensure even the first time shooter has a successful and memorable day. Our grounds are ideal for a day's shooting, with plenty of open fields and wonderful views to truly unwind.

The River Bush flows from the Glens of Antrim and is highly regarded for angling salmon fishing during the season. Fishing requirements can be tailored to your needs and led by our on-site team allowing first time anglers to acquire a new skill and experienced anglers to flourish.

What a better way to end your days activities than to enjoy refreshments in the drawing room while our in-house catering team cook and serve you in the splendour of the Estates dining room.

Please direct enquiries to: Ian Chapman, Estate Manager, Dundarave Estate, Bushmills

T. +44 (0) 28 2073 2090



## Inland Fisheries Ireland announces the cessation of IFI fish farm operations

Inland Fisheries Ireland (IFI) has announced its intention to phase out its fish farming operations over the coming years. A plan will now be developed to implement this decision.

The IFI Board, having reviewed the fish farm operations from both the technical and resource allocation perspectives, has chosen this course of action to ensure that IFI can deliver on its core remit of conservation, protection and development.

IFI management met with the small number of staff who are directly involved in fish farming operations last week to inform them of the decision and has given assurances that there will be no compulsory redundancies as a result of this move and that their employment with IFI will continue.

Dr Ciaran Byrne, CEO of Inland Fisheries Ireland, said: "IFI has performed a technical and financial review of its fish farming operations. Reduced resources within the organisation do not allow for the continuation of these aquaculture activities in the medium to long-term. The Board has no alternative but to phase out this element of its work and concentrate on the conservation, protection and development of Ireland's inland fisheries and sea angling resources.

"IFI appreciates that many state and club waters have been stocked from IFI fish farms over many decades. We acknowledge the support of IFI's customers and regret the organisation is unable to continue supporting fish stocking in this manner. The phase out plan will include consultation with affected stakeholders."

## Capture exceptional images of nature with Leica's new 35mm Digiscoping objective lens

#### hanks to Leica's new Digiscoping lens, it's now easy to capture nature observation experiences as exceptional images.

The lens can be quickly and simply attached to the eyepiece of a Leica APO-Televid spotting scope and

works with all cameras with interchangeable 35mm lenses. When used with Leica's T2 adapter, the new lens adapter is compatible with any camera system incorporating an electronic viewfinder or Live View (including Leica T, M and SL models). Optimised for cameras with APS-C sensor, the T2 can also be used for system cameras with a smaller or laraer sensor.

It is fantastically easy to use and enables you to capture images of incomparable quality without having to use specialist telephoto lenses. The Leica 35mm digiscoping lens UK RRP: £400 (inc. VAT).









## **One Unforgettable Shoot**

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Please direct enquiries to: Ian Chapman, Estate Manager, Dundarave Estate, Bushmills T +44 (0) 28 2073 2090 E info@dundaraveestate.com W dundaraveestate.com

## SWAROVSKI OPTIK Digiscoping Adapter Now Also For iPhone®\* 6s

### The popular SWAROVSKI OPTIK iPhone\* adapter is now also available for the iPhone\* 6s with its 12-megapixel camera.

The PA-i6s adapter for iPhone\* is used to attach SWAROVSKI OPTIK spotting scopes and binoculars to the iPhone\* in a single motion to produce telephoto zoom lenses, thus successfully producing in an instant enchanting close-up shots that capture the moment. The adapter from SWAROVSKI OPTIK is available now from specialist retailers, as well as at WWW.SWAROVSKIOPTIK.COM.

The assembly process for the PA-i6s is just as quick and easy as before – you attach the adapter to the relevant eyepiece cup. Suitable adapter rings are available for a wide variety of SWAROVSKI OPTIK spotting scopes and binoculars.

The adapter is compatible with the iPhone\* 6s and with the following binoculars and spotting scopes from SWAROVSKI OPTIK: CL Companion, EL family (32, 42, 50), new SLC family (42, 56), EL Range, ATX/STX, ATS/STS, and ATM/STM. All the iPhone's\* operating features are available while using the adapter and the specially designed strap ensures the iPhone\* is secure.

\* iPhone is a trademark of Apple Inc.



### Four Z8i models for different hunting priorities

he Z8i 1-8x24 (available with the optional 4A-IF FLEXCHANGE reticle) is the powerful experts' rifle scope suited to driven hunting. It impresses with its exceptional field of view, which is important for maintaining an overview in rapidly changing situations and making the right decision.

The Z8i 1.7-13.3x42 P (available with the optional 4A-IF FLEXCHANGE reticle), a versatile rifle scope suited to driven hunting and stalking, combines a remarkable field of view for driven hunting with a lightweight design, making it also ideal for mountain hunting.

As a multipurpose rifle scope for stalking, hide hunting, and driven hunting, the Z8i 2-16x50 P combines a large field of view for driven hunting and all the details required for long-range shooting.

Thanks to excellent optics, the high-luminosity Z8i 2.3-18x56 P rifle scope produces razor-sharp images even in poor light conditions and at twilight. The high magnification and detail accuracy facilitate accurate shooting over long distances.

## €50,000 fund for angling development in Midlands

#### nland Fisheries Ireland has announced the allocation of €50,000 to the Midlands Fisheries Fund (MFF), a funding scheme set up to support sustainable fishery development projects in the Midland Fisheries Group area.

The scheme was created in 2013 and is funded through angler contributions set-aside from the permit income received by IFI in the Midland Fisheries Group permit area. For 2016, the Board of IFI has allocated an additional €10,000 to the Fund which will be available to individuals and businesses for product development and to market and promote angling in the Midland Fisheries Group permit area.

Applications are now invited to support projects which seek to increase angler accessibility to fisheries, develop and install new fishing stands, tackle terrestrial invasive species, and to provide funding to the additional categories of product development and the marketing and promotion of angling activities in the Midlands.

Dr Ciaran Byrne, CEO of Inland Fisheries Ireland, said: "The National Strategy for Angling Development has identified a number of action measures which require prioritisation. These include stakeholder engagement, sustainable development of the angling resource, marketing and promotion, and the facilitation of increased access for angling to all.

"The Midlands Fisheries Fund will allow for projects to be developed and undertaken by anglers and communities which improve their inland fisheries resource. Essentially, the money for the scheme is raised locally through the sale of fishing permits and is then injected back into the catchments, increasing revenues to communities and creating jobs. In this way, funds raised in the locality stay in the locality."





The Z8i is the new benchmark set by SWAROVSKI OPTIK. You're equipped for every type of hunting with its 8x zoom and outstanding optics. Its slim 30 mm (1.2 in) central tube blends seamlessly with any hunting firearm. The flexible ballistic turret and FLEXCHANGE, the first switchable reticle, offer maximum versatility in every situation. When seconds are crucial – SWAROVSKI OPTIK.





## Changes to the Firearms (NI) Order 2004

It is expected that the Justice (No. 2) Bill 2016 will be granted Royal Assent around mid to late May 2016. Following Royal Assent, changes to the Firearms (NI) Order 2004 will commence the following day.

As such, the Department of Justice held two information sessions in Cookstown in late April to discuss these changes with firearms dealers and the Northern Ireland Firearms Forum (NIFF), including representatives from Countryside Alliance Ireland (CAI) and our partner organisations.

Each session covered Young Shots; The Banded System; Authorised Clay Clubs; Certificates of Approval for GB Firearms Certificate Holders and Revised Fees.

Whilst CAI welcome the changes in relation to Young Shots, we believe the legislation does not go far enough and we will continue our campaign to allow young people in NI the same opportunity to shoot as those in the rest of the UK.

Firearms dealers were on the whole pleased with the proposed new banded system for rifles which allows a FAC holder to exchange a rifle for a similar one under certain conditions. This in effect means that a FAC holder, who complies with the conditions within the guidelines, could purchase a new firearm and leave with it that day. The fee for these transactions will be prepaid electronically and the FAC holder will receive a transaction ID which the firearm dealer will quote on the paperwork to be returned to FEB.

Authorised Clay Clubs – the process of authorisation will mirror that of bullet firing clubs. Only those clubs who wish to permit young people aged 12 up to the age of 16 to shoot need to be authorised. Other clubs are unaffected.

Recognition of GB FACs for visitors to Northern Ireland. A certificate of approval is only required now for GB visitor with a lower powered airgun which is below the GB threshold but over the NI limit of 1 Joule.

The Revised Fees came into effect on 22 February 2016 and the full list may be accessed on the PSNI website.

CAI is an active member of the NIFF and we will continue to engage and represent our members' interests. There is still much work to be done and although slow, we are pleased that progress is being made. This has not been without compromise by all parties.

We will keep you fully updated with developments.

#### Northern Ireland Firearms Licensing

#### Addressing Delays

CAI continue to engage fully with PSNI FEB in respect of all issues

## **COUNTRYSIDE ALLIANCE IRELAND** Love the countryside

firearms related and this includes addressing the delays some of our members are experiencing with turnaround times; both new applications and re-grants.

At a recent meeting of the Northern Ireland Firearms Forum (NIFF), Nichola Murphy, Head of Firearms and Explosives Branch, advised that although FEB are working hard to reduce waiting times, there is still a backlog. Like many civil service departments, FEB are experiencing extreme staffing shortages mainly as a result of the Voluntary Exit Scheme which means when a staff member leaves, the post goes with them. This, together with natural wastage has caused difficulty within the department which has added to the delays for some applicants.

However, on a positive note, we are assured that these issues are being addressed and we have been asked to be patient. As an additional measure to help improve waiting times, FEB are devising new procedures to alleviate the paper backlog and this will include the introduction of online applications. We have only recently been informed of these developments and as an organisation looking after our members interests, given the limited information we have received on this to date, we do have some concerns. However, we will continue to fully liaise with FEB to try to ensure any changes will benefit our members going forward.

#### New Opening Hours at Firearms and Explosives Branch

From Tuesday 3 May, FEB will only be available to take calls between the hours of 2-4pm Monday to Friday only. All calls to the Branch should be made through the non-emergency number 101.



'See you at the CAI Stana' - John Clarke, CAI Chairman with some of the CAI members.



# A NEW BEGINNING

#### Introducing the all-new Volvo XC90 Made by Sweden

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

This has been introduced to assist in processing applications in a more effective manner and to improve performance. Most of the calls the Branch receive are applicants checking up on the status of their application and this takes administrative staff away from the task in hand which only adds to delays.

As mentioned earlier, FEB has asked applicants to be patient and have advised this new measure will be kept under review.

## Deer Hunting Licence Applications 2016/2017

We would encourage anyone applying for a licence to do so now to avoid delays. No one wants to see again the severe backlog in processing applications as experienced last year; caused by leaving applications to the last moment.

The relevant documentation (as outlined below) is available on the NPWS website – npws.ie

Deer Hunting Licence Circular – this document outlines the application process and deadline to receive your licence on time.

Deer Hunting Guidance Document – this document outlines how your application should be completed and the supporting documentation required.

Deer Hunting Permission Form – this is a new document and must be signed and completed by the landowner/owner of the sporting rights. A separate form is required for each permission. A minimum of 100 acres/42 hectares is required for each suitable permission.

Deer Hunting Application Form – this is the application for your 2016/17 deer hunting licence. If you held a previous deer hunting licence, Part 4 must be completed.

To ensure you receive your licence in time for the 2016/17 hunting season, please return your completed application form, land permission form/s (and Part 4 (returns) if you held a licence previously), before the end of June.

If you have any queries, please contact the National Parks and Wildlife Service at (01) 888 3275 or 888 3289 or 888 3298 or email wildlifelicence@ahg.gov.ie

#### **CAI Prepares for This Year's Fairs**

For us here at Countryside Alliance Ireland, summer mostly means the preparation for and attendance at various game and country sports fairs. These are events we always look forward to, as we relish the chance to meet our members and answer any questions face to face. This year, the first fair we are attending is the NI Countrysports Fair



which, after the success of last year, is again being held at Scarvagh House, Scarva, Co. Down over the weekend of 28th and 29th May 2016. For more information please visit the NI Countrysports website at http://www.countrysportsfairs.com/

Our next event will be the **Irish Game Fair at Shanes Castle on 25th and 26th June 2016**. As always this promises to be a vibrant and fun packed weekend.

We will once again be in attendance at the **Irish Game and Country** Fair at Birr Castle on 27th and 28th August 2016. Birr Castle is a spectacular venue and the crowds ensure that the CAI team is kept busy throughout the weekend.

The final event of the season will be the **Ballynahinch Game and Harvest Festival** at the stunning Montalto Estate, Co. Down. This will take place on **Saturday 24th and Sunday 25th September 2016** and the weekend will host the second year of the festival with the venue certainly adding to the character of the event. CAI look forward to rounding off the fair season by spending a weekend meeting the public in the relaxing surroundings of the estate, sampling the culinary delights the festival has to offer.

Whatever fair you visit, please do call into the Countryside Alliance Ireland stand, say 'hello' and get up to date with all the latest news.

#### Discounted Entry to Shanes Castle and Birr Castle Game Fairs - Exclusive Offer for CAI Members

Countryside Alliance Ireland is delighted to announce that we have procured tickets on behalf of our members to attend the Game Fairs at Shanes Castle (Saturday 25th and Sunday 26th June 2016) and Birr Castle (Saturday 27th and Sunday 28th August 2016).

As such, we are offering two adult entry tickets for the price of one. Two adult tickets for Shanes for £10 and two adult tickets for Birr for €15!

The Fairs gives CAI the ideal opportunity to showcase the organisation's work while engaging with members, potential members and the public in general.

CAI Chief Executive, Lyall Plant, comments, "The Great Game Fairs of Ireland are the perfect forum for CAI to meet and chat with our members and supporters. The Fairs offer something for all of the family and we are once again delighted to have a significant presence at these events and to be playing such a vital part".

Discounted tickets must be ordered in advance through the CAI offices, they cannot be purchased at the Fairs. Tickets for Shanes Castle are available to order now!

To avail of this superb offer, please contact our NI office on +44 28 9263 9911 quoting your membership number and we can take payment by debit or credit card. Last date for ordering discounted tickets to ensure delivery is Tuesday 21st June 2016. No exceptions. (Birr Castle tickets will be available for order from the beginning of July – we shall keep you updated.)

#### Tattersalls - Offer for CAI Members

This year Countryside Alliance Ireland is again pleased to be able to offer our members discounted tickets for the Tattersalls International Horse Trials and Country Fair.

Tattersalls International Horse Trials and Country Fair will run from the 1st to 5th June 2016. Tattersalls and Countryside Alliance Ireland are delighted to offer two tickets for the price of one for all CAI members.

Located in Ratoath, Co. Meath, this event attracts the top names in the sport. Spanning 5 days, it combines world class eventing (dressage, cross country and show jumping) with all the bustle of a Country Fair. The thrilling cross country, Country Fair and all the children's entertainment are on the Friday, Saturday and Sunday.

Family entertainment includes a free kids zone, pony rides, a hound parade, carnival stands, bucking bronco, bouncy castles, a pet farm, face painting, dog competitions and much more.

The shopping village has over 50 shopping stands selling lifestyle and country brands. Visitors can browse a range of products from clothing to crafts, park up and picnic by the famous water fence or enjoy some of the many artisan producers and food outlets throughout the venue.

Tickets must be pre-booked by either calling +353 (0) 1 886 4300 or online at www.tatts.ie. Please use the following Promo Code to avail of this offer - TATTSCA116.

For a full timetable of events, running order, maps etc please visit www.tatts.ie or contact info@tatts.ie or +353 (0) 1 886 4300.



MPG figures are official EU test figures for comparative surpases and may not reflect that driving results. Official fuel consumption figures for the Subaru range in mpg IU/100xmL Urban IS3 - 413 (11.2 - 4.8) [Creat Urban IS.4 - 51.4 (7.0 - 4.6), Combined 33.2 - 52.3 (8.5 - 5.4), CO2 Emissions 14.1 - 197 g/km. For model specific figures please contact Germiny Metrics or visit on www.absaru.co.it es proven and poly Webser's Web COT 995,00, Websel sectors Proven et WHEN STP. ILC SAULA TRAFF

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Peter & Noel Gormley trading as Gormley Motors is a credit broker and not a lender. MPG figures are official EU test figures for comparative purposes and may not reflect real driving results. #Official fuel figures for the Isuzu D-Max Fury Manual in mpg (I/100km): Urban 31.7 (8.9). Extra Urban 44.1 (6.4). Combined 38.7 (7.3). CO2 emissions 192g/km. Fury Auto: Urban 26.9 (10.5). Extra Urban 39.2 (7.2). Combined 33.6 (8.4). CO2 emissions 220g/km. For model specific figures please contact us directly or visit www.isuzu.co.uk

tPrice shown is an suzu D-Max Fury Double Cab £19.999 CVOTR with manual transmission available only in Magma Red. Automatic transmission also available at £20,999 CVOTR. Commercial Vehicle OTR price includes delivery, number plates, 12 months road fund licence and first registration fee, excludes VAT.\*3.5 tonne towing capacity applies to all 4x4 models.\*\*5 year/125,000 miles (whichever comes first) warranty applies to all new suzu D-Max models.

## Inland Fisheries Ireland undertaking review of Bass, Pike and Trout Policies

nland Fisheries Ireland has confirmed that it is in the process of reviewing the national policies for the management of bass, pike and trout. The policies were launched by IFI in August 2014 and have a three year review cycle.

IFI has commenced the process of examining all relevant and appropriate data to inform the review of these policies. This process was initiated in January 2016 and includes the examination of:

• The current stock management programme, including resource usage, fish transfer and health and safety;

 Marketing and socio-economic information to include actual and potential economic value;

• Scientific information to provide advice and to consider the scientific merits of the processes being currently undertaken.

An important element of each review will be a public consultation process which will be announced later in 2016. The consultations will ensure that anglers and other stakeholders have sufficient time to consider the existing policies and make submissions that will inform their review.

Dr Ciaran Byrne, CEO, Inland Fisheries Ireland, said: "The public consultation element of the reviews presents an excellent opportunity for the 273,600 strong community of Irish anglers to engage with IFI and will ensure that the decision-making process becomes better informed, more rigorous and more accountable. IFI is committed to on-going engagement with anglers and other stakeholders through public meetings, the National Inland Fisheries Forum, public consultations and our complaints, comments and compliment procedures."

During an anglers' demonstration at IFI headquarters in Citywest in March, IFI received a petition signed by over 22,000 people from around the world, including a total of 1,032 Irish signatures. A group of approximately 80 anglers protested against the implementation of the current Pike Policy, agreed with the Irish Federation of Pike Angling Clubs and the National Association of Recreational Anglers in 2014.

Commenting on this, Dr Ciaran Byrne added: "While the petition represents a small proportion of Irish anglers, IFI recognises the unified views of those who signed it and we have made contact with the protest organisers with a view to engaging with this diverse group of anglers. IFI appreciates that public policy-making can be enhanced through the active involvement and contribution of all stakeholders with an interest in particular policy developments.

"In recent weeks, many of the protesters have made their views known to IFI through our comments and complaints channels but IFI wishes to assure all anglers that they will have the opportunity to make a representation in the public consultation process on the Pike, Trout and Bass Policy reviews later this year."

## North West Angling Fair

The North West Angling Fair is taking place in the Melvin Sports Complex, Strabane on the 28th – 29th May and we will welcome a host of world class Fly Dressers, Casters and Angling Celebrities including Scott Mackenzie, Gordon Armstrong, Andrew Toft, Stevie Munn, Peter O'Reillly, Pauline McClenaghan and more.

Visitors to the event will have the opportunity to watch these fly dressers practice their art and fly casters demonstrating their techniques and tactics.

There will also be a series of talks from Ken Whelan & Jason O'Riodan on a range of angling related topics as well as a range of quality trade stands selling everything an angler needs.

quality trade stands selling everything an angler needs. There will be something for all the family, from educational programmes delivered by the Loughs Agency, Youth Fly Tying Competitions, Cookery Demonstrations, Virtual Angling, Birds of Prey and much more. For more information please visit www.derrystrabane.com/anglingfair

### A 'Left and Right' at woodcock by Mark Edgar was mounted by Ingrid Houwers



Mark with the two birds which had been expertly retrieved by his cocker spaniel who decided that she was photo-shy on this occasion.

Mark Edgar was delighted to have shot a right and left at woodcock on the 7th November at a rough bog near Downpatrick. He was shooting a tightly choked Thomas Wild s/s and shot the first one flying over the bog and the second pulling right into and over trees.

Mark was delighted to have bagged both birds and even happier to see them retrieved by his little cocker spaniel and very pleased that he had two witnesses for his feat.

The two birds were mounted by top taxidermist Ingrid Houwers and take pride of place in Mark's family home.



The birds mounted by acclaimed taxidermist Ingrid Houwers who will be showcasing her skills at the Irish Game & Country Fair at Shanes Castle.



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### New Book Dedicated To A Very Special Horse -The Irish Hunter



Derek Fanning has discovered a book which he says will strongly appeal to many readers of Irish Country Sports and Country Life. It was published during the spring and focusses on an animal renowned for its dexterity, stamina and resilience — the Irish Hunter. The book has been written and compiled by the Galway Photo-Journalist and author Noel Mullins and is entitled 'The Irish Hunter - An exceptional horse across any country.'

This tribute to these magnificent animals is a hardback cover book with a compilation of over 500 colour photos with more than 200 images of this unique horse crossing the Irish countryside, being piloted by members of various hunts.

Its exceptional ability and its reputation for having something special is clearly demonstrated in the book with pictures of horse and rider jumping cross country fences such as stone walls, double banks, ditches, hedges, streams, off roads, onto roads, and manmade fences such as wire, gates, pallets, concrete railings, and even a church pew and a bed post. Mounted fox-hunting in Ireland is not for the faint of heart, and for this reason Irish Hunters are sought by equestrian lovers from around the world.

In addition to images from the hunting field, Noel's book also contains images from cross country events such as the Ward Antler Challenge, Athlacca/Dromin Charity Cross Country Run, the Ballymacad Hunting Extravaganza, Hunt Chase, Hunter Trials, and Eventing.

There are also images from National Hunt Point to Point racing that has its origins in steeplechasing in Ireland, Side Saddle, Irish Hunters overseas in the USA, UK, Germany, Italy, France and the Czech Republic, as well as the Champion Hunters at the Dublin Horse Show, and the Clifden Connemara Pony Show.

The book looks as well at the origins of the horse in Ireland, including breeds such as the Irish Draught Horse, the Connemara Pony, and the Thoroughbred, which, when crossed in breeding, produce the Irish Hunter.

Noel Mullins is the author of a number of books including 'Horse Tales & Hunt Talk', and 'The Origins of Irish Horse Fairs & Horse Sales'. 'The Irish Hunter' can be ordered on line at www.noelmullins.com or by emailing noelmullins@hotmail.com.



Congratulations to Mario Corona from Italy who caught this super fish!

## Super Mario catches his First Salmon at 80 Years Old

Hailing from Italy, Mario was given a birthday present by his son to come to Ireland and fish for salmon with me for his 80th birthday, writes Glenda Powell.

"Mario fished really hard for two days and just at the end of his last day he hooked this salmon. He played the fish for around 15-20 minutes before I had a chance to net it. I will never forget the look on his face during the fight, and the relief when we got it into the net. This was a wonderful experience for both of us.

"We have caught 5 salmon in the last 10 days and there have been several fish lost on our beats during this period. We are seeing fish most days, and yesterday (1st May) we saw a lot of fish running."

More info at Glenda Powell Guiding - 00353 (0) 872351260 or glenda@glendapowellguiding.com

Glenda will be demonstrating casting techniques at the Irish Game Fair & Fine Food Festival on 25th & 26th June at Shanes Castle

### Dougal Distribution - On Target with NiteSite

## Dougal Distributions is one of the newest distributors to launch into the hunting and shooting market. One of the main brands exclusive to Dougal Distribution is NiteSite.

NiteSite is a UK manufactured night vision add system that turns any scope mounted rifle you own into a night vision rifle in under 30 seconds.

John Dougal, owner of Dougal Distribution, said : "NiteSite is on track to become the biggest selling night vision product available to the hunting and shooting market worldwide.

"The functionality of NiteSite's night vision system means that you are no longer restricted to hunting in the day time and a new world of hunting is open to you whenever you need it with one simple addition to your existing hunting gear.

"There is no longer a need for a dedicated night vision rifle when NiteSite can give you the diversity you need to turn any rifle in to a night vision rifle." Through Dougal Distributions, NiteSite will also be show casing their new RTEK range of products and accessories that include a night vision range finder and new recoding units."

#### SEE US AT THE IRISH GAME FAIR, SHANES CASTLE



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### New angling guide for brown trout angling on the Annalee River, Co. Cavan

#### A new guide is available for brown trout angling A on the River Annalee in the upper reaches of the River Erne system.

The Annalee River is one of the main tributaries of the Upper Erne and provides quality wild brown trout fishing over much of its 60 kilometres length. It is one of the premier trout fisheries in the area capable of producing trout up to two to three pounds in weight and has previously hosted national fly fishing championships based on the quality of the angling available.

The new guide, which was prepared in consultation with the Cavan, Laragh and Bunnoe district angling clubs, comes as a fold-out waterresistant leaflet providing a map and associated information identifying key angling stretches, access points and relevant angling regulations for the area. It also identifies where visiting anglers may obtain permits to fish as well as providing some helpful advice regarding recommended fly patterns for use throughout the season.

The guide was recently launched by renowned local angling guide, author and fly-tier Peter O'Reilly at the Angling Ireland stand during the Ireland Angling Expo at Cloghran, Swords, Co. Dublin.

Following the launch of the new guide, Dr Ciaran Byrne, CEO of Inland Fisheries Ireland, commented: "Angling in Ireland is a huge recreation and sport with over 400,000 adults fishing our rivers, lakes and coastline each year. Tourist and domestic angling activity supports over 11,000 jobs, primarily in rural and peripheral areas, and contributes €836 million to the Irish economy annually.

"The continued conservation, protection, development and promotion of the resource is fundamental to maintaining and growing these figures. IFI is committed to the National Strategy of

Angling Development through which these actions can be taken, subject to funding and the support of our stakeholders. The Annalee brochure is an example of IFI working with local angling interests to ensure the wonderful amenity of the Annalee is promoted to reach its full

potential in terms of the local and visiting angling in support of the local community."

The guide is available from the IFI offices or can be downloaded from the IFI website at www.fisheriesireland.ie/Angling/angling-publications.html.

## New angling guides for the Gweebarra and Eany Rivers in Co. Donegal

#### nland Fisheries Ireland has released two new angling guides for salmon and sea trout angling on the Gweebarra and Eany Rivers in Co. Donegal.

#### The Gweebarra River Angling Guide

The Gweebarran River is a highly productive salmon and sea trout fishery situated in west Donegal. It is a spate fishery, containing excellent fly-fishing water over its entire length with numerous holding pools, including the famous Mayo Pool, where the Cloghanagore River enters the main river.

The new angling guide, which comes as a fold-out water-resistant leaflet, provides detailed beat maps for the Gweebarra River fishery which extends for 13 kilometres from Lough Barra to Doochary village at the head of the tide.

Key angling stretches, holding pools and

access points are identified for each of the beats in addition to further information regarding fishing methods, relevant angling regulations and locations at which visiting anglers may obtain licences and permits to fish.

#### The Eany River Angling Guide

County Council.

The second guide provides information on the Eany River, a spate river draining the Bluestack Mountains in south Donegal and flowing into Inver Bay. The Eany is a spate river system with peak angling activity typically coinciding with grilse and sea trout runs from June to September.

The Eany fishery, which includes the main river together with the Eanybeg and Eanymore tributaries, comprises more than 20 kilometres of varied angling water suitable for fly-fishing, spinning and bait (worm only) fishing. (Please note: The Eany River is currently listed on conservation grounds for catch and release angling only, so angling is restricted to use of single barbless hooks only with worm fishing banned).

The guide comes as a fold-out waterresistant leaflet suitable for outdoor use, and provides a detailed map of the Eany River fishery identifying key angling stretches, holding pools and suitable access and parking points along the fishery. It also provides information regarding fishing methods, relevant angling regulations and locations at which visiting anglers may obtain licences and permits to fish.

Both guides are available from Inland Fisheries Ireland (IFI) offices in Glenties or Ballyshannon during the season or can be downloaded directly from the IFI website at http://www.fisheriesireland.ie/Angling/anglingpublications.html.



Pictured with the new River Annalee Angling Guide were (L-R): Ted Sweeney, IFI;

Peter O'Reilly, Trout Angling Expert; and Joanne Hayes, Tourism Officer, Cavan



## NATIONAL BASS PROGRAMME

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Please help us understand Irish recreational bass angling by completing a quick survey at the link below: www.surveymonkey.com/r/IrishBassSurvey

## Boost For Angling - Upgraded Clare Lake Amenity

#### The upgraded McMahon Park amenity at Clare Lake in Claremorris, Co Mayo was officially opened by Minister of State for Tourism and Sport, Michael Ring, TD.

Inland Fisheries Ireland (IFI) significantly upgraded the fishing facilities at the lake, with the installation of new floating fishing stands, wheelchair access, upgraded paths and signage, and the provision of disinfection facilities to clean fishing gear and prevent the spread of invasive species. Fencing was also erected to improve safety around the water and to encourage wild plants and trees to flourish around the lake. The work was completed in conjunction with the local Community Employment Scheme and was funded by the Department of the Environment Amenity Fund.

Clare Lake in Claremorris, Co Mayo, was formerly polluted and held little attraction for anglers or visitors. Over the last number of years, the local community formed a development committee and in conjunction with Inland Fisheries Ireland, the Forest Service, Mayo County Council and Southwest Mayo Development Company, developed the lake and park into an attractive amenity which features fishing stands, looped walks, seating areas and shelter. The water quality has improved significantly over the last 20 years and the lake now supports good stocks of coarse fish, which provide quality angling for both local anglers and tourists.

Speaking at the opening, Minister Ring said: "I am delighted to see this project completed. The angling and walking facilities will have a great impact on local tourism, sport, and recreation. It is a testament to how cooperation between State agencies and local communities can work best, and it is a credit to the town and Mayo. I would like to see Inland



Minister Michael Ring at the opening of new angling facilities at Clare Lake, Claremorris with members of the Clare Lake / McMahon Park Development Committee and staff from Mayo County Council and Inland Fisheries Ireland.

Fisheries Ireland develop many more such projects through their National Strategy for Angling Development, which I fully support."

Dr Ciaran Byrne, CEO of Inland Fisheries Ireland, commented: "Inland Fisheries Ireland has been very pleased to assist the local community in developing this fantastic resource, which can be used as a template for future rural recreation projects around the country. The National Strategy for Angling Development, which was drawn up by IFI, aims to develop the angling resource of Ireland to its maximum potential, and many such projects can be included in the strategy. Dependent on funding, IFI hopes to implement the NSAD over the next few years." The significant improvements to the facilities at Clare Lake have resulted in an increase in anglers using the lake and walkers using the looped walk around the park. The floating pontoons were introduced to provide safer access to the water for young anglers and the looped path to provide a safe and enjoyable walking route for the residents of Claremorris.

Dr Byrne added: "We hope that as a result of this upgrade youth angling in the area will increase and the park will also prove a draw for tourists visiting the area. More than 3,500 people a week are currently using the park for recreation." For more information, visit www.fisheriesireland.ie

John Rigby & Co. announces Deluxe special edition Big Game rifle

John Rigby & Co. Deluxe special edition Big Game rifle.

#### ondon gunmaker John Rigby & Co. has unveiled

La third model in its highly anticipated series of special edition Big Game rifles.

The Big Game Deluxe retains all the benefits of the tried-and-tested original Big Game rifle, but is characterised by premium features and a high grade finish.

The Deluxe edition is available on single or double square bridge actions. The Single Square Bridge model is available in .416" and .450" Rigby calibres, and is designed for use with express sights only. The action is fitted with the classic three-position flag safety and a 22" stepped barrel or a 24" lightweight barrel. Overall weight, unloaded, with 22" barrel is 10lb 80z, and 10lb with the 24" barrel. Stock length is 14 ½ " including a leather recoil pad.

The Double Square Bridge model is produced in .375" H&H and .416" Rigby calibres and with a 24" lightweight barrel this rifle is ideally suited for use with a telescopic sight. The Winchester style safety is in the horizontal position to facilitate the fitting of a variety of mounting systems on the machined bridges. The weight of the rifle unloaded is 10lb and stock length is  $14\frac{1}{2}$ ", including a leather recoil pad.

Built on a barreled action from Rigby's historic partners, Mauser, the

Deluxe Edition Big Game rifle features a grade 7 Turkish walnut stock with Rigby oil finish. As with

the best-selling original Big Game rifle, it is ergonomically shaped with a higher comb for better fit and better absorption of recoil. Rigby express sights are dovetailed directly into the quarter rib, with a single fixed V and two folding leaves zeroed at 65, 150 and 250 yards, and a Rigby pattern magazine floor plate. A plasma nitride finish gives the metal surfaces a resilient, rust-resistant, anti-glare coating. Like the original model, the recoil bar and grip cap are colour case hardened, and this new Deluxe edition also features a premium colour case hardened floor plate.

With hand engraved Tudor rose detail on the pins and recoil bar, and a chequered bolt handle, the Big Game Deluxe offers hunters the feel of a best quality rifle, while retaining the affordable Big Game price tag.

Price: From UK £7,732 excl. VAT / US \$16,558 For more information, visit: www.johnrigbyandco.com.



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### River to Lough Festival Sails Into Antrim Castle Gardens

magine celebrating the world renowned Lough Neagh Eel in the sunshine on the shores of Lough Neagh. This year the River to Lough Festival sails along the lough to its new home at Antrim Castle Gardens on Saturday 2 July.

The festival will be the finale of a week long celebration of Lough Neagh Eel across Northern Ireland with a specially developed fishy hashtag #EelsAreTasty.

With activities for keeping the children occupied and entertained to historical heritage tales from the fishermen, every age group is catered for at this award winning food festival, now in its third year.

The festival includes cookery demonstrations; cookery lessons; an eel heritage exhibition; storytelling by Lough Neagh fishermen and line demonstrations. Live entertainment will get the toes tapping and children can view heritage boats, enjoy outdoor activities and tour the community garden.

Northern Ireland celebrity chef Paula McIntyre will host the cookery school, priced at £20 per person. Aimed at teaching the art of cooking, preparing and serving Lough Neagh Eel, the exclusive cookery lesson will provide the opportunity to get up close and personal with the eel as you'll have the chance to cook your own.

Local chef Emmett McCourt will be on hand to share his passion for cooking Lough Neagh Eel in the Food Theatre and street food and craft stalls will add flavour, vibrancy and local culture to the perfect backdrop at Antrim Castle Gardens.

River to Lough Festival will feature a pop-up restaurant serving a traditional eel supper but booking is essential. Adults can eat for £10 and children for £5. Booking is available from

10 June at: https://rivertolough.co.uk/booktickets

River to Lough Festival at Antrim Castle Gardens, Randalstown Road, Antrim BT41 4LH

Opening: 12 noon until 5.00pm See www.rivertolough.co.uk

www.facebook.com/rivertoloughfestival



Come and Enjoy the River to Lough Festival on 2nd July

(Photo by Fergal Kearney)

Over 400 children at the Wild Deer Association of Ireland's primary school educational module on wild deer

Scoil Naomh Eoin in Killenard, Co. Laois is the latest and with over 400 students is the largest school to receive the WDAI's deer module for schools.

The module is tailored for primary school children between the ages of 5 - 12 years and covers wild deer species found in Ireland.

It is designed to educate and to cultivate the type of awareness and appreciation that simply cannot be taught from a textbook. The module is full of facts and trivia on deer and encourages interaction with the students, it is delivered in a fun and relaxed style. Children are our conscience of the future and it is important that they understand the importance of our wild deer from an early age.

The presentation is ideal for school in areas where deer are common. If a local school would like to have the module presented, please contact us on wilddeerireland@gmail.com.

WDAI would like to thank school principal Alice O Connor and all the teachers and of course our own member Brian Yarrow who all helped arrange the day.



Teacher Frankie Andrews is pictured with the students from Scoil Naomh Eoin

## Ready for 366 days of delicious celebration?

Northern Ireland's Year of Food and Drink 2016 is a celebration of everything that makes the produce from this place so good. The epic landscapes, time honoured traditions, people and producers that make our food heritage wonderfully unique. Pay a visit during the 366 days of celebration and discover all of the deliciousness for yourself. With goings-on galore, there's no better time to enjoy a true taste of Northern Ireland.



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## Zoli-sponsored Ben Llewellin's podium finish at ISSF Shotgun World Cup

#### Zoli shotgun brand ambassador, Ben Llewellin, proved that he is one to Watch, after winning silver for Olympic skeet at the ISSF Shotgun World Cup in Cyprus.

The talented 21-year-old showed that youth can triumph over experience when he beat off stiff competition from the likes of former world champion, Juan Jose Aramburu, in his first ever world cup.

The Welsh shooter scored an impressive 120 in a qualifying round in order to reach the semi-finals where he shot a perfect 15x15, sending him into the gold medal match.

Ben was in for a tough challenge against Ukrainian Mikola Milchev but he held his nerve and took Milchev all the way to a shoot off, in a nailbiting battle for the top spot. Unfortunately, the Ukrainian was just too good on the day, however to come away from his first world cup with a silver medal is incredible.

Ben competed with his luxury Italian, Zoli Z-Sport; a model he has favoured for the last three seasons. "I can't fault the Zoli shotgun. I point it and it breaks the clays; you can't ask for much more than that. I couldn't have asked for a better start to the season, hopefully it's just the beginning of greater things still to come. The next step is to begin training for the next ISSF Shotgun World Cup in San Marino this coming June."

### 'Live Here Love Here'

The Great Game Fairs of Ireland have joined the 'Keep Northern Ireland Beautiful' anti litter campaign and we invite country sports people, the true conservationists, to help in the campaign personally and collectively. And you can start by putting your litter in the KNI Beautiful bins at the Game Fair at Shanes!



#### Help tackle litter issues

'Live Here Love Here' is a national campaign aimed at promoting community pride by improving environmental quality in Northern Ireland. Live Here Love Here aims to tackle issues such as littering and dilapidation, by encouraging volunteers to take practical action in their local communities through initiatives such as the BIG Spring Clean, Adopt A Spot and the Clean Coast Programme. Groups can even access some Small Grants to carry out environmental projects in their communities.

By working together, we can start to tackle the negative impact of littering, dog fouling and other negative behaviours to bring about positive change to our communities. Live Here Love Here is an inspiring partnership between the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs, Tourism Northern Ireland and a number of local authorities including Antrim and Newtownabbey Borough Council, working alongside Keep Northern Ireland Beautiful. At this year's Irish Game Fair look out for the brightly coloured Live Here Love Here bins to ensure this great event remains litter free for your enjoyment and make sure you visit the Live Here Love Here stand.

To show your support to the campaign and to find out more about Live Here Love Here please visit www.liveherelovehere.org/



Ben Llewellin - one to watch

### ACTIVEON Hunting Cam designed by hunters for hunters

#### Action camera specialist ACTIVEON presents a new innovative Acamera for hunters and sportsmen.

The product features dual camera technology, capturing footage of the hunter and the game that is being pursued. Both can be recorded in Full-HD, creating dynamic and engaging hunting moments.

It has an integrated laser rangefinder for distances up to 850 yards/775 meters and comes in a ruggedised metal chassis, is water resistant and makes it a perfect companion even for extreme outdoor conditions. A 5x optical zoom as well as Low and Bright Light Modulation ensures stunning video quality even in varied lighting conditions.

Designed with hunters in mind, it also comes with an integrated GPS module. It also supports WiFi and connects to your smartphone or other mobile devices.

ACTIVEON will be exhibiting at the Irish Game Fair & Fine Food Festival, Shanes Castle, 25 & 26 June.



Ready for action - the ACTIVEON Hunting Cam

The Moyle Shoot would like to introduce our New Sallagh driven Pheasant and Partridge shoot. We believe this ground has the potential to produce extreme birds that will match the best in the UK and Ireland.

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## SHANNON TO SHOWCASE TOP SHEEPDOG SKILLS AT SHANES

#### The Irish Game Fair at Shanes Castle has pulled off a major coup to showcase the very best in top 'sheepdog handling' skills at its event in June at Shane Castle.

Taking to the Main arena for the very first time at the Irish Game Fair & Fine Food Festival on 25th & 26th June at Shanes Castle, is a young lady who has been crowned 'top dog' in the hugely popular 'One Man and his Dog' competition.

Only 14 years of age, Shannon Conn and her collie dog 'Bill' scooped the top award in the sheepdog contest when she was paired alongside sheep farmer John Magian with 'Moz.'

Shannon Conn, from Magilligan in the North West of the country, added the prestigious title to a host of other top accolades she already holds.

Shannon who had received her dog Bill as a Christmas present, said she was 'Over the Moon' with her success at the event when the pair beat teams from England, Scotland and Wales to take the title for the third year running for Ireland.

Delighted with her dog Bill's performance during the event, Shannon said: 'Bill was the main man! It was one of his best performances, he was working really well, and really paying attention to me all the time so I was very happy.'

Game Fair Development Director, Steven McGonigal, said: "This will be a first for the Fair at Shanes and a first for Shannon. There is no doubt that everyone is looking forward to her appearance in the Main Arena at Shanes Castle and I just know that she and 'Bill' will 'wow' the crowds.

"The Irish Game Fair at Shanes was shortlisted for a Northern Ireland Tourism Award as one of the top events in Northern Ireland and it will be a fantastic platform to showcase 'live' the skills which have taken her - and her dog - to the top."



## Lighten up your Summer & Save with Flogas Gaslight

Gaslight cylinders, available exclusively from Flogas, will allow you to take the heavy lifting out of your Summer activities. Whether staying at home and lighting up the barbecue and patio heater, or taking to the great outdoors for camping, caravanning or boating, Gaslight cylinders are ideally suited to your leisure activities.

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### Wherever you are



## All that Glisters will be Gold for Clay Shooters at Shanes Castle!

We are delighted to announce that amongst the prizes for our Clay Shoot at the Irish Game Fair at Shanes Castle will be two UNIQUE prizes.

High Gun each day will receive a pair of 9ct gold cufflinks valued at over £400 and specifically designed for the Game Fair by Steensons Jeweller (Belfast & Glenarm) who have made several pieces for Game of Thrones.

Pictured above is Dan Spencer, Director of Steensons Jewellers carefully designing the finished cufflinks: "Inset is a sketch of the proposed design for the gold cufflinks that we will be making for you. As you will see it is a landscape themed design with a shooter and his dog, taking aim on a flying pheasant," said Dan.

"In the finished gold cufflinks, I will apply some more detailed textures

to enhance the landscape by hand. They will be an unique design and a high quality finish. Handmade in 9ct gold by us in our Glenarm workshop,specifically for the winners of the shooting competitions. We only construct our jewellery using the highest quality, solid, precious metals. Each piece will be hallmarked by the London Assay office."

## Rare Daniel Fraser boxlock ejector double rifle at Holts June Sale

#### Holt's Auctioneers is selling a rare .303 nitro express boxlock ejector double rifle by Edinburgh-based gunmaker, Daniel Fraser & Co.

Chris Beaumont explained that Daniel Fraser double rifles are very scarce: "It's always a genuine pleasure to see one. They are of exceptional quality and very distinctive and unusually, it is quite standard for the internal workings to have a goldwashed finish. Daniel served his apprenticeship under the inimitable Alexander Henry before setting up on his own in 1873. Perhaps better known for his very successful falling block and match rifles, sporting doubles are very much the exception to the rule. One of those notable occasions when 'rare' does not equate to 'not really very good' it's a great pity that more of these rifles weren't made."

This rifle features 25 3/4in. cordite proofed chopperlump barrels, proofed for .303, 2.22" Cordite 37-174 MAX. With reinforced breeches, the breech end with fine acanthus scroll detailing and engraved 'DAN'L FRASER, 21 FREDERICK ST. EDINBURGH.'

A raised matt rib, open sights and two folding leaf sights with a file cut finish, white metal inlaid sight lines and marked for 200 and 300 yards. The muzzle is fitted with a ramped bead foresight and a flip-up moonsight. The breech end is fitted with telescopic sight mount bases. The treble-grip action has sideclips and characteristic carved serpentine fences, removable striker discs, a slender top lever, bolted automatic safety with white metal 'BOLTED' detail and gold-inlaid 'SAFE' detail.

Fine acanthus scroll engraving with ropework bordering and with the maker's name in central scrolling banners, the rifle retains traces of original colour-hardening and finish. It is fitted with a 14 1/2in. highly figured pistol grip stock with a cheekpiece, horn pistol grip-cap and buttplate, inset sling eyes and has a bolstered fore-end wood. It weighs in at 9lb. 8oz. and is presented in its brass-cornered oak-lined leather case with some accessories. Serial No 3064.

Estimate:  $\pounds6,000-8,000$  and for sale in London on Thursday 30th June.



Daniel Fraser boxlock ejector double rifle with fine acanthus scroll engraving with ropework bordering.



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## BROWNING B15



## HUNTIN', SHOOTIN', FISHIN', FIXIN' THE HOUSE

Those of us who love the 'Great Outdoors' know all too well that the 'Great Indoors' can occasionally suffer as a result. You have to admit, it can be hard to focus on home improvements when you could be out fishing or shooting ... and all those muddy clothes (not to mention muddy dogs) take their toll on any house.



Taking 'Top Honours' from Fair Director Albert Titterington - Business Partners David & Gary will showcase Betterhomes' range of home improvement options at Shanes Castle.

Take a closer look at the value and importance of maintaining and improving your property however and you might begin to think differently. Well-placed rural properties are much in demand at the moment and improvements or even full-scale remodelling could not only add to your home comforts, but could also considerably enhance the value of what is probably your biggest financial asset: your house. Gary Sinnerton of Betterhomes Group is well aware of that potential ... and how to fulfil it. The market-leading company which he runs with Partner David Boyd has fifty years of experience and expertise behind it and,



'An Eye' for the very highest quality - Gary Sinnerton of Betterhomest today, has made a speciality of the rural why, this year, we've come or living sector. title sponsor of the Irish Game

#### Countrysports connection

He says: "Northern Ireland is still very much a rural community, so it's understandable that a great deal of our business reflects that pattern. What may be surprising however is the fact that countrysports enthusiasts, farmers and those with a penchant for outdoor living are core customers for us ... which is why, this year, we've come on board as title sponsor of the Irish Game Fair and Fine Food Festival at Shanes Castle over the weekend of 25 and 26 June. It's a way for us to show our support to that community.

"We're finding that this sector is looking for real quality and craftsmanship combined with value for money. They are hard-working themselves, so they, quite rightly, expect us to turn up on time and get the job



Betterhomes' David Boyd can make your home lifestyle 'soar' with elegance.

done – whatever that takes. They are prepared to invest in the traditional value, adding home improvements such as bathrooms, doors, canopies and robust roofline work as well as double and, increasingly, triple glazing, but they also have some very specific priorities which our craftsmen have addressed with flair and imagination.

"Boot rooms and porches for example are great home additions for country families, while most lovers of the outdoors also aspire to having a well-proportioned conservatory or sunroom so that they can enjoy at least a view of the outdoors all year round. From modest 'lean to' designs to stunning 'orangery', this is an investment in an extra room."

#### Matching lifestyle

Partner David Boyd adds: "To get it right you have to understand the customer's lifestyle. There's no point for instance in giving a busy farming family a kitchen that won't stand up to wear and tear. Whatever the actual design choice may be, from country casual to sleekly contemporary, that family will demand a fit-out that is as robust as it is good-looking. A true 'country kitchen' in our experience really is the heart of the home and it will be both well-loved and well-used ... it wouldn't be the first time that we've had to take late night lambing into consideration when we're planning a kitchen layout!"

Making the right, high quality improvements can add substantially to the value of any property as well as making it more attractive to potential buyers. David adds: "Obviously a great kitchen and bathroom (preferably bathrooms, these days) will be attractive, important additions, but there are other features which make a measurable difference, in particular windows.

"It's important to choose windows which are perfectly suited to their location: vertical sliding sash windows for example is perfect to complement period properties, while bay window



canopies work well in rural settings. Fully reversible windows can take the hassle out of cleaning, while we can provide windows perfectly designed to suit even the quirkiest home design ... all bespoke-manufactured in uPVC and available in a vast array of colours: virtually maintenance free and will not rot, flake or fade unlike traditional timber windows or older uPVC windows. Whatever your choice, the right windows will dramatically improve your home environment with high performance, heat conserving double or triple glazing options, with an energy rating of 'A' as standard."

## Adding elegance to any home

While Betterhomes Group will be showcasing its full range of home improvement options at The Irish Game Fair, Shanes Castle, David and Gary are already predicting what will catch the rural eye. Gary says: "We know from experience that countrysports fans always love the idea of a downstairs wet room. The thought of being able to throw off muddy gear and jump into a fabulous hot shower is very comforting after a long day's sport! "Another rural top seller is our eminently practical stable door, an Irish classic which owes its origin to the half doors which have traditionally been used in thatched cottages. Today we create our stable doors from state of the art materials to add elegance to any home façade, but the sheer practicality of the design remains its essential charm. We're proud to carry on that

A beautiful new conservatory could transform your home.

tradition of craftsmanship, enhancing with modern materials and, we believe, a unique approach to customer servicing."

Find out more at

www.betterhomesgroup.com or visit the Betterhomes Group stand at the Irish Game Fair and Fine Food Festival at Shanes Castle over the weekend of 25 and 26 June.



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

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



Shanes Castle, Antrim 25th & 26th June 2016 www.irishgamefair.com

## Irish Game & Country Fair and Fine Food Festival

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



Birr Castle, Co Offaly 27th & 28th August 2016 www.irishgameandcountryfair.com

# **Ballynahinch Game and Harvest Festival**

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



### Montalto Estate, Ballynahinch, Co Down 24th & 25th September 2016 www.ballynahincharvestfestival.com

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

Available as a hard copy glossy quarterly or FREE to READ online at

www.countrysportsandcountrylife.com

For further details contact: Great Game Fairs of Ireland: Tel: 028 (from ROI 048) 44839167 / 44615416 Email: irishgamefair@btinternet.com

# **IRISH GAME FAIR & FINE FOOD FESTIVAL**

Main Sponsor: **better**homes www.betterhomesgroup.com



Living History Village Including Medieval Jousting and Battle of Antrim Encampment & Skirmish supported by Ulster-Scots Agency

# 25th & 26th JUNE 2016, SHANES CASTLE, ANTRIM

## Ireland's most action packed family event with:

- Living History Village & Medieval Jousting
- Falconry
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- International Terriers, Lurchers & Whippets

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- The Dog Guru
- The Victorian Poacher
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  - **Cookery Demonstrations**

- Three Action Packed Arena Programmes
- Huge Tented Village with unrivalled shopping opportunities
- The NI Angling Show
- 'Put and Take 'Fishery
- Angling Tuition for Children

### For further details see www.irishgamefair.com E: irishgamefair@btinternet.com Tel: 028 44839167/44615416

The Fair is supported by











# The Irish Game Fair and Fine Food Festival at Shanes Castle – Ireland's award winning international Game Fair

TRADITION, CREATIVITY, EXPERIENCE AND COMMITMENT MEAN THAT THE GREAT GAME FAIRS OF IRELAND TEAM CONTINUE TO DELIVER IRELAND'S PREMIER COUNTRYSPORTS AND COUNTRY LIVING EVENTS.



The Great Game Fairs of Ireland were conceived in 1978 and first staged by Albert Titterington, Michael Dickey, Stanley Scott (secretary BFSS) and the late Major William Brownlow (chairman BFSS) in 1979 in the traditional venue of a beautiful country estate, Clandeboye Estate, in County Down. Not for them public parks, playing fields or exhibition venues – they believed 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 continued to promote fantastic events in venues which are not only traditional and beautiful and enhance the visitor experience but venues that can also accommodate growth.

Other organisers of events of a broadly similar nature have attempted to copy the successful format of the fairs right down to apparently coveting the well established brand names and trade marks of the 'Irish Game Fair' and 'Irish Game and Country Fair'. One organiser went so far as to register on twitter as 'irishgamefair' and tried to trademark one of our brand names! While we welcome the existence of all events which support country sports and have to admit we get a 'bit out of a bounce' out of other events we feel they should develop their own branding.

### LEADING THE FIELD – WITH LOTS OF AWARDS!

Notwithstanding all of this, the Great Game Fairs of Ireland are proud to 'lead the field' in terms of all of the parameters of success including number and quality of stands; main arena and subsidiary arena attractions; range of competitions of a true international standard. And of course these claims of excellence are not just made by the organising team but are based on



TENNENT'S NI

objective assessment of the events by teams of experts making awards. The latest such assessment put the 2015 Shanes Castle event in the top FIVE EVENTS for Tourism NI's ' Best Event or Visitor Experience' of the year.

In a previous assessment for a premier tourism marketing award it was very good that two country sports events were shortlisted But the panel of experts gave the call to the event at Shanes Castle www.irishgamefair.com/award.asp.

### A NEW MAIN SPONSOR - The Betterhomes Group **betterhomes** www.betterhomes.com



Game Fair Director, Albert Titterington, with the Directors of the Betterhomes Group

This year amongst a range of new sponsors and supporters the Great Game Fairs of Ireland team is delighted to welcome on board the team from the award winning Betterhomes Group as major sponsors. With the Betterhomes group having won all Ireland awards for customer service the match with the award winning game fair is obvious.

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

Speaking at the launch of the Fair and emphasising the importance of country pursuits, heritage and attractions to his Borough, Mayor of Antrim and Newtownabbey, Councillor Thomas Hogg, said, "The Council is delighted that the 2016 Irish Game Fair will return to Shane's Castle in June and I would encourage everyone to visit. Major events such as this make a huge contribution to raising the profile of Antrim and Newtownabbey Borough as a tourist destination throughout the island of Ireland and on the international stage.

"Shanes Castle is the perfect setting for the Irish Game Fair with Lough Neagh, the largest freshwater lake in the British Isles, providing the perfect backdrop. The Irish Game Fair promises to be a memorable spectacle for all the family and I look forward in particular to the Battle of Antrim re-enactments and encampment which will be some of the highlights on the day."

Eddie Rowan from Tourism Northern Ireland has reinforced that view, saying: "I am pleased to see the event continue to mature as an appealing family festival with such a high quality programme of events on offer for all to enjoy. It is testament to



Mayor Councillor Thomas Hogg with Ingrid Houwers and a very lively Eagle Owl. Award winning international taxidermist Ingrid Houwers will be exhibiting her work in the Salmon & Woodcock Pavilion.

the hard work and dedication of the event managers that the Irish Game Fair is capable of attracting visitors not only at home but from further afield. On behalf of Tourism Northern Ireland I would like to wish visitors and participants an enjoyable event experience."

To See the video of the Game Fair launch made by master film maker Harry Cook, from Image Media Films see : https://vimeo.com/166220501

#### THE FIRST EVENT IN A SERIES

The first event in the Great Game Fairs of Ireland series is the Irish Game Fair and Fine Food Festival at Shanes Castle on the 25th & 26th June in June and visitors will see further 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.



Exciting Medieval Jousting at all three of the Great Game Fairs of Ireland.

#### FOCUS ON ANGLING

Looking forward to the high profile angling focus in June, Great Game Fairs Director Albert Titterington said, "Two years ago the angling community faced the sad news that Ireland's best loved angling magazine, The Irish Angler, was ceasing publication this was followed by the news earlier this year that the Anglers Digest was also ceasing production. The 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 enhance the angling presence at our fairs and to do this by working with DCAL Fisheries Division and Inland Fisheries Ireland to offer anglers a really special discounted voucher of £5 or €5 off the price of admission to our fairs if they are a licence or permit holder. Vouchers for Shanes Castle are available from DCAL, our office or your local tackle dealer."

We also launched a 'NI Angling Show' as a show within a show and this year the angling section will have a similar format and the event has the support of many of the major providers of angling in the island of Ireland including DCAL Fisheries Division, Inland Fisheries Ireland and many local rivers and fisheries including the Six Mile Water, Maine and waters operated by the Honourable the Irish Society. These will exhibit with clubs, representative organisations, artists and providers of shooting in the Salmon and Woodcock Pavilion.



Casting tuition and demonstration and fly tying instruction will be in the very capable hands of the team from APGAI Ireland including former World Ladies Casting Champion Glenda Powell who will be joined this year by well know UK fly caster, Charles Jardine.

Once again as well as much to interest the magazine the focus will be very much on introducing children and young people to angling including the NSN team with DCAL Fisheries support running a 'put and take' fishery for children



The Put and Take Fishery for children



PR Director Paul Pringle with DCAL officials and some of the team who will be delivering the angling attractions.

### WAIT FOR A BARGAIN AND BETTER CHOICE IN OUR HUGE TENTED VILLAGE OF TRADE STANDS

In 2015 the fair at Shanes Castle had the largest and most varied range of trade stands and as other events faltered it was clearly Ireland's largest and best attended game fair ever. Trading was good last year and exhibitor bookings have flooded in, including many new stands for our tented village of trade stands with everything one would need for enjoying your country sports or 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 than at the Great Game Fairs of Ireland at Shanes, Birr and Montalto.

### INTERNATIONAL HUNTING, SHOOTING & FISHING

Hunting, shooting, gundogs and fishing are always placed centre stage at the Great Game Fairs of Ireland and in 2016 all facets are enhanced including an enhanced 'country sports in action' arena with all sorts of action from long netting to ferret racing. There are great ranges of country clothing, guns, tackle and accessories to be viewed including those from all over Ireland, the UK, Italy and Holland. Added to this is the unique 'Salmon & Woodcock Pavilion' where you can meet sporting artists, a world class taxidermist; providers of fishing and shooting and expert advice from the main angling organisations. Advice is available too from the SACS marquee and from the Countryside Alliance Ireland marquee which is also hosting the inaugural NI STICKMAKING CHAMPIONSHIPS stickmakers from all over Ireland will compete for the Lindsay Carlisle Memorial Trophy. The Game Keepers Pavilion organised by Shanes Head Keeper Bill Storer hosts an excellent range of exhibits to interest the shooter including game displays, game rearing equipment, taxidermy, antique weaponry, wood carving etc.



Just hatched out for the Fair – a chick from the White Hill Game Farm part of the Keeper's display.



# The Choice of Champions such as

**Tim Crothers** – Birdrowe (www.birdrowegundogs.com)



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

**Damian Newman** – Maighmor (www.maighmorgundogs.com)



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

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Our events have always been of an all Ireland, apolitical and cross community nature and we felt that we should commemorate the two important anniversaries in Irish history taking place this year through historical exhibits. Thus we will have a Battle of the Somme display and a display of some of the material from the 1916 Rising. We trust that our patrons will find these important historical displays of interest.

#### 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 sponsored by NUTTS; dog agility show & demos; horse and hounds; and the 29th 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 RED MILLS Master McGrath Challenge to find the fastest lurcher in Ireland and the UK in the final at Shanes and for the FEEDWELL 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. And of course for terriers and lurchers there is Ireland's premier terrier, whippet and lurcher event the 29th All IRELAND Terrier, Lurcher and whippet Championships (open to all) in both racing (sponsored by FEEDWELL) and showing (sponsored by NUTTS).



Game Fair PR Director Paul Pringle with Jamie Clegg from FEEDWELL sponsors of the international retrievers ; Five Nations Whippet Championships and the All Ireland Champion Racing.

English teams taking on NI and ROI teams in the Feedwell retriever and Red Mills 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 top prizes.



RED MILLS Jenny Crozier with Game Fair Director Albert Titterington and Spaniel Director Ken Lindsay at the Game Fair launch.

Continuing our policy of bringing top handlers both to compete and demonstrate we are delighted to have the IRISH INTERNATIONAL TEAM which competed at the Chatsworth Fair (led by Declan Boyle and featuring four FT Champions including a Golden Retriever) carry out a gundog demo in the main arena and international spaniel handler Tim Crothers makes a welcome return with a Feedwell sponsored spaniel handling demonstration.

Also following on from his successful his successful debut in the main arena is 9 year old Cody Mathews – 'the Mini Dog Guru'



Cody takes centre stage.



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

The Old Courthouse, Market Square, Antrim T 028 9442 8331 E info@antrimandnewtownabbey.gov.uk



www.antrimandnewtownabbey.gov.uk

Keith's public dog training master classes with Countryside Alliance supplying prizes each day for the best gentleman, lady and child handler. This is a real opportunity for the public to get the 'Dog Guru's' assistance in starting training their own pet.

And new in the arenas this year is a sheepdog demonstration by international award winner Shannon Conn and an exciting terrier handing and racing display by Derek Davidson and his Scottish Terrier Racing team.



Derek's exciting terrier displays

### **CLAY SHOOTING**

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 TWO Bettinsoli guns sponsored by Donal McCloy Guns Unlimited. Donal will be exhibiting a fine range of shotguns at the fair including the new Browning B-15. Other clay prizes will include magnificent gold cufflinks specially designed by Steenson Jewellers for the fair; great clothing prizes; cash prizes and a chance to win travel to one of the big international shooting competitions in the UK

### **BYGONES AREA**

Another area of the fair developed last year was our 'Bygones area' which includes Lord O'Neill's famous team organ; horse drawn threshing; antiques & collectables; displays of horse drawn vehicles; vintage and modern landrovers; and even an old Spitfire retrieved from an Irish bog.



Johnny Fee's horse drawn threshing.



Lord O'Neill's Steam organ.



Carriage Driving.

### GREAT LIVING HISTORY DISPLAYS supported by Ulster-Scots Agency

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 Grunal Moneta, coin maker to the British Museum, and fantastic action-packed displays including medieval jousting by the evocatively named 'Knights of the North,' and a further bringing to life of the events of the 1798 rebellion with a 'Battle of Antrim' re-enactment and encampment.



Cannon and musketry bring to life the 1798 rebellion



Cavalry and Battle of Antrim Encampment

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See our range of clothing on the Charlie Keenan Countrywear stands at the Great Game Fairs of Ireland at Shanes Castle (25/26 June); Birr Castle (27/28 August) and Montalto Estate, Ballynahinch (24/25 September) or in his store at 10 Main Street, Toome, Co Antrim Tel; 028 79659888 www.charliekeenan.com PLUS A BONUS EVENT: A preview of the Battle of Antrim re-enactment will be staged in Antrim Castle Gardens at 12.00 noon on the 4th June. Admission is FREE and all attending will get a £5 voucher off the cost of admission to the Game Fair at Shanes Castle.

### FOCUS ON CHILDREN

The Fair provides an amazing amount of entertainment for children with a dedicated children's amusement area, the Living History Village, 'have a go' events such as air rifle shooting and archery; fishing instruction and the opportunities to fish; action packed entertainment in three arenas including the opportunity to get involved; and the chance to see all sorts of animals from horse & hounds, all sorts of dogs, ferrets, falcons, rabbits, alpacas and even snakes and spiders.

### THREE ARENA PROGRAMMES operating from 10.00 – 6.00

The Main Arena features medieval jousting, dancing horses from Cochise, muzzleloading and casting displays, gundog displays, dog agility, carriage driving, horse and hounds, marching bands, falconry, long netting & poaching displays from the Victorian Poacher, sheepdog & terrier displays; military re-enactments and much more.



The Victorian Poacher and Keeper Dash. Moving to the Countrysports Arena co-ordinated by Steven McConigal the public have the opportunity to not only get



Ferret Judging at Shanes Castle

involved with many of the main arena acts and others, but to get advice and instruction, or even 'have a go'; plus there is the excitement of ferret racing and showing organised by Darren Moore & Graham Fyffe two of Ireland's best know ferreters.

Moving up into the Living History Village, supported by the Ulster Scots Agency, at the old castle there is the Living History Arena where all sorts of re-enactments take place and children have the opportunity to interact with re-enactors from various periods, to mint medieval coins and listen to Ulster Scots music from Stonewall.



Grunal Moneta

The biggest complaint we get from families attending the fair is that it is difficult to see it all in one day - so our advice is to get there at 10.00 and treat your family to a really special day out in a marvellous country estate.

AND the fair provides great family value at  $\pm 10$  per adult;  $\pm 5$  for children over 5 and under 15 and  $\pm 25$  for a family (two adults and up to four children) – programme & parking FREE.

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 27th & 28th August (www.irishgameandcountryfair.com) and some really stylish entertainment at the Ballynahinch Game and Harvest Festival, Montalto Estate, Ballynahinch, Co Down on the 24th & 25th September (www.ballynahinchharvestfestival.com).

The Irish Game Fair and Fine Food Festival will take place from 10am – 6pm on Saturday 25th & 26th June at Shanes Castle Estate, Antrim. The event is supported by TourismNI and Antrim and Newtownabbey Borough Council and is part of the NI Year of Food & Drink 2016. For further information see www.irishgamefair.com E: irishgamefair@btinternet.com or call 028 (from ROI 048) 44839167/44615416



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AT RED MILLS

# **The Red Mills Interview** with Peter Smith Connector

### In this issue Peter interviews Louis Rice

One of the great pleasures of writing for this premier publication, is that occasionally one gets to do things which bring great pleasure, but also which recognise and reward immense talent in an individual.

In this interview with Louis Rice, I have the opportunity of recording this man's not inconsiderable achievements to date, but also acknowledging a unique training process, hard work and

a competitive ethic which is rarely seen.

In January 2016, Louis became the first Irish person to breed, train, own and handle an English Springer Spaniel to win the British Spaniel Championship, a keenly fought contest between fifty-seven contestants at Stowell Park estate in Gloucestershire. Whilst we have had Irish success in the past, Louis' uniqueness is in the

### SPRINGER SPANIEL CHAMPIONSHIP



Louis with Sliabh Treasure and the British Championship trophy.



owning and breeding of the winner.

The reason this victory gives me so much pleasure, is that I remember this shy, introvert, keen to do well beginner being introduced to me early on a shoot morning at the Saintfield House Estate some fourteen years ago. Since then we have wished him well, watched him develop into the supreme talent that he now is, and this unique victory is thoroughly well deserved.

The Red Mills interview follows a tried and tested format of O and A, which I have tried to follow. But historical detail is not one of our subject's strong points, he would rather be training his latest protégé, but with the assistance of some loyal friends we achieved our goal, and the statistics of achievement are truly frightening.

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

A: IFTCh Cheweky Lightning a bitch I bought aged sixteen months from Jon Bailey, well known trainer and handler from Derbyshire, who I had met while working in England. She was bred by Mark Whitehouse and her sire was FTCh Kettlestang Clipper out of Tulliechat Warbler

#### Q: When did you purchase your first spaniel for trialling?

A: 2002. All my dogs are for trialling and I am unusual in that I do very little shooting.

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

A: Sliabh which is Irish for mountain. I love to train and exercise my dogs in the hills around my home in Castlewellan, where I feel most at peace and able to achieve my ambitions for my dogs.



Sliabh Treasure and Cushla - perhaps the conversation would be 'over to you daughter'

Q: Where and when was your first trial and how did you get on?

A: 2004 Novice at Gortin and I won.

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

A: With Cheweky Lightning on good hunting ground for pheasant at Gortin.

Q: How many trials have you won?

A: Well over fifty.

# Q: How many Champions have you made up and what are their names?

A: Cheweky Lightning, Healintilty Ahprodisiac, Sunstar Salsa, Windhill Shona, and Sliabth Cushla, Treasure, Snipe and Gypsy. I also trained and won a novice stake with FTCh Countryways Judy of Sliabh who went on to win the Irish Championship handled by Jon Bailey.

**Q:** Which of your dogs to date

would you rate as your best and why?

A: Treasure who has just won the British, but Cheweky Lightning taught me a great deal and was the easiest to work with.

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

A: Matt Morgan was a tremendous help to me in my early days and still has a guiding influence on my career with readily available sound and constructive advice. Damien Newman also is a great friend and mentor who also does most of the shooting over my dogs when I am training.

Q: Other than your own dogs which spaniel/handler combination have you seen that would rate as one of your most admired?

A: Ian English with FTCh Helmsway Hope.

### Q: What do you look for when Judging a dog?

A: Natural style, hunting and handling ability. I have no time for robots, or dogs which by their actions indicate that they are completely handler dominated or broken.

Q: What changes have you seen over the years in judging and running in trials that you think are positive or negative?

A: The good thing is that we seem to have some good young handlers coming along with well trained dogs. The negative is that we still on occasions have groups of people, or cliques, whose aim is to dominate our sport in a negative way. A good, well trained dog giving a polished performance should always triumph over petty politics or a dented ego.

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

A: Good animal husbandry is at the

heart of a successful kennel. I go to considerable trouble to ensure the condition of my dogs is maintained by a healthy diet of flesh and a good quality food. I am currently an ambassador for Nutts dogfood.

#### **Q:** Screening Tests?

A: I do screen my dogs for certain conditions, but there is not currently a mandatory scheme for spaniels such as exists for Labradors. Any advances in health screening has to be welcomed.

Q: You must have had many highlights as a trainer and handler as well as some disappointments. Can you share examples of both?

A: Winning the British was monumental, especially with the dog I bred. I cherish the thought of winning the Irish Championship especially after coming second twice in recent years.

Q: You have been mainly associated with training spaniels. What qualities do you look for in your own dogs?

A: Natural game finding and hunting ability coupled with an intense desire to learn and please me as trainer and pack leader.

**Q:** Do you prefer dogs or bitches? A: Bitches, but I have also had

some good dogs.

Q: Have you trained any other

#### breeds?

A: Labradors and cockers.

Q: Why do you think the English Springer Spaniel is the breed most suited to you?

A: I like the drive and natural ability of the breed and I never tire of bringing on raw talent.

#### Q: If you did not have English Springer Spaniels which breed would you have?

A: Labradors.

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

A: Saintfield for availability of cover and game. The mountains for bogs and reeds which prove stamina.

Q: What is your favourite Trial ground and why?

A: Gortin. It is truly a testing ground and proves all aspects of a dogs' ability.

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

A: Pheasants.

Q: When not Judging, training or breeding what do like to do outside country sports?

A: I do not have much spare time, but I do like pigeon racing.

Q: How have you got on this season?

A: I won the British and came third in the Irish with different dogs. Sliabh

Treasure was also the top Irish spaniel in Open stakes and I was the top Handler in all Spaniel Trials.

Q: What would be your advice be to anyone who wanted to get in to trialling?

A: Work hard and buy the best dog with natural ability that you can afford.

*Footnote:* Doing this interview with Louis Rice was a particular pleasure for me because I have great respect for him as a gifted and dedicated dog man. He has that rare ability to get inside a dogs' mind and when handling seems to be at one with his charge, almost as if the two were connected by an invisible thread. It is no accident that you will find the word natural appearing in many of the answers given, because it is the lovely fluent action and willingness to please which marks out Louis Rice as a truly gifted trainer and handler.

At the end of the interview I accompanied Louis to his car, where he wanted to show me two puppies of his own breeding he is quite keen on . Whilst there I was given a glimpse of something special called Sliabh Cushla, a spaniel he is quite keen on for next season. And by the way she won eleven Trials last season. As they say in the best of circles, 'some hanlin.'

### Accolades come 'thick and fast ' for the Irish Game Fair & Fine Food Festival



Over the years the Great Game Fairs have won many tourism and marketing awards which recognise the commitment, creativity and expertise of our team and this year is no exception.

Hot on the heels of the news that the Fair at Shanes Castle had been shortlisted in the top five for Northern Ireland's top tourism award of 'Best Event or Visitor Experience' news of another accolade in an online travel magazine which highlights the Fair as one of the top 12 attractions to be organised in NI this Summer:

www.travelmag.com/articles/festivals-northern-ireland-summer/

Commenting on this very strong objective endorsement

for the event at Shanes Castle, which will take place on the 25/26 June, Game Fair Director Albert Titterington said: "I am delighted to acknowledge the awards and endorsements that have come our way on behalf of not only our directorial team and staff, but also on behalf of our event organisers, sub contractors; entertainers; our local and international competitors; our sponsors and supporters mentioned elsewhere in the magazine and of course the public who support us in their thousands."

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All the way from learning casting in a field to a career fishing all over the world. Here, Kylemore Abbey is pictured in the background and amazing angling just minutes away.

When I was very young in the early 1970s, at the start of the troubles in Northern Ireland, my fly fishing life began. Let me tell you why one influenced the other.

I was born in Belfast and grew up in the north of the city on the Shore Road in the shadow of Cavehill, with my two sisters Lorna and Elaine and my Mother and Father. Like a lot of places at that time in Belfast, it was considered to be quite a tough working class place, you had to be hard or at least act hard to try and survive. A day at the local secondary school could be intensely traumatic, with more violence than most ordinary kids would ever see in their lifetimes, well in more normal societies that is.

I know there are many worse places in the world to be born than Belfast, believe me, but we must still remember we have a small population and there were well over 4000 people killed in the troubles and a lot more hurt or affected by them while I was growing up. I am very sad to say, a lot of those growing up were innocent souls, just in the wrong place at the wrong time and I was one of them in a way.

You do become immune to all that goes on around you and get on with life when you know no other. It's only when something happens to you, or someone close to you, that you notice that there is something appallingly wrong.

If you watch the local news each night and it tells you almost the same things like there was civil unrest and riots in some part of the town, after years you think 'not again' but a couple of seconds later you get on with whatever you were doing. It may be a kind of defence mechanism in your brain.

So while I was growing up in Belfast, like almost everyone I knew, I became immune. Immune to getting searched going into to shops, seeing trouble on the streets and on the news each night, watching army patrols and armoured police cars driving down the streets, seeing paintings of men with guns on gable walls, bomb scares and all the other stuff that went with the troubles. Maybe the most awful thing when you lived in an area like that was becoming immune to some very bad things; 10 minutes later you went out and played football with your friends or, if you were lucky, went fishing with your Father.

This may sound slightly surreal but that is the way it was. But I always thought I was lucky in many ways. As a child, my mother Maureen was a great and at times a very good influence on me. She told me to treat all people the same, that there were good and bad people everywhere and importantly for me where I was living, on both sides of



Just one of the amazing characters who have fished with Stevie Munn - here snapped with Billy Connolly on the Six Mile Water.

the so called religious divide, a divide that I was never a part of, mostly thanks to her and fishing.

My father George was also a great influence on me and told me basically the same things about good and bad people, but he also said not to go down without a fight - not as poetic with advice as my Mother. He worked in the shipyard Harland and Wolff as a fitter, a hard, dirty and sometimes dangerous job.

### From shipyard to a fly angling career

When I was sixteen, I joined the shipyard as a boiler maker / steelworker. I really wanted to go to Art College, but that was never going to happen. Aged 27, I was glad when I escaped from that place as it pushed me into a the fly angling career .

My father's greatest influence my life, was that he taught me to fish and most importantly to fly fish and strangely, this is why the troubles influenced my fishing. I think it was his way to keep me off the streets of Belfast and out of trouble.

Now something my parents did not know was that fishing also made me miss school sometimes, as the river was a place I could fish and hide away from lessons. I remember a pal and I had an old fly rod hidden in a hedgerow near our local river the Six Mile Water. Many times we walked up Gray's Lane to the Antrim Road to get the bus, the bus fare paid with our dinner money, to go to the river instead of school. Hidden in our school bags we would have a fly reel and a tobacco tin full of flies, and we would take it in turns to use the rod. One of the things I like about fly fishing is you can travel light.

We got away with playing truant like this many times until one day I bumped into my father fishing on the river - he had also sneaked off work. We both nodded and fished on as if we were strangers. We knew if my Mother found out both of us would have hell to pay.

Luckily for me my father was fly fishing mad and he started my training at a very early age, probably about six. He also taught me to dress simple trout flies on a fly tying vice that he made in the shipyard. He was good with his hands, although at times too quick with them. He also made a fly rod from a WW2 tank aerial which I still have, heavy but worked well. I learnt to cast with it, quite amazing when you think how light today's rods are, made from modern materials like carbon fibre.

### Learning to cast into a bucket in a field

My Father taught me to fly cast in a field. I had to cast a fly into a bucket while holding a book under my rod arm. If the book fell I got a wee clip round the ear, or if I ducked, which I often did, he told me off until I got it right. Maybe not the way we would teach kids today, but it worked for me and I spent many very happy hours casting at a tin bucket on Greymount Girls' school hockey pitch, at the back of my house. The hockey pitch was better than the TV or X-Box games available today for youngsters. My casting caused many of the other kids in the area much amusement. But I knew that fly fishing was for me even at that young age.

Once my casting started to improve I went fly fishing and a new world suddenly opened up. It was a better world of rising brown trout, hatching flies, rivers, Dollaghan trout, green countryside and even occasionally the king of fish itself, the salmon. These were perhaps the best gifts I was given as a child and I looked forward to getting out to the rivers wherever possible.

We used to get the bus to our local river, or sometimes we would even hitch hike or we would manage somehow to visit a different river, a massive treat for me. It was common to see anglers on buses back then dressed in waxed cotton Barbour jackets, their tackle bags and a collapsible net poking out, rubber thigh waders rolled down to below the knee and the rod in its rod bag in one hand, and maybe a cigarette or pipe in the other.

Today I still fish many of the same rivers as I did with my father, the Main, Ballinderry, but most of all on my beloved Six Mile Water. This was the closest river to us and my father was a founder member of that river's club, 'The Antrim and District.' I was a member from a very early age. I may have even been the first junior member. When I look back I see the importance that fishing has been to my life - it shaped the person I am and is literally a way of life for me and the way I earn a



Showcasing casting skills all over the world.

crust. I often wonder what would have happened if my Father hadn't introduced me to angling. What a positive influence it has been, opening up many opportunities to see the world, and meet many amazing people. I can honestly say that I love fishing now as much as I did as a young boy and I love putting something back by showing others, young and old, what it is all about.

### Fishing changed the course of my life - who knows what might happen to yours at Shanes!

And that's where the Irish Game Fair at Shanes Castle comes into the story as it's one of the easiest ways to introduce EVERYONE to the sport. ANGLING FOR EVERYONE - The NI ANGLING SHOW is an integral part of THE IRISH GAME FAIR, SHANES CASTLE, ANTRIM on the 25th & 26th June 2016.

The NI Angling Show features

fisheries, tackle dealers, boats, and representative organisations, fly tying, casting instruction and demos, competitions and there's even a put and take fishery for children.

What could be better than bringing along the family to the Fair and letting your youngster actually try their hand at angling with the very real possibility of catching THEIR VERY FIRST FISH! All around will be major information stands by DCAL Fisheries Group, the Loughs Agency and Inland Fisheries Ireland and obviously access to all the attractions of Ireland's largest country sports event set in the stunning traditional setting of the Shanes Castle Estate.

Celebrity chef Emmett McCourt, author of the award winning book Feast or Famine and a keen angler himself, will be cooking all types of game and fish dishes including Lough Neagh eels in the Flogas Kitchen - he might even



The Irish Game Fair at Shanes Castle offers wonderful opportunities for young people to learn how to tie an fly and catch a trout.

show you how best to cook the one you caught earlier!

The angling competitions, organised by top international and world champion lady angler Glenda Powell and APGAI Ireland, have great prizes sponsored by AM Angling from Newtownards. And Glenda, Charles Jardine and APGAI will carry out demonstrations and coaching. So don't worry if you are not a 'fishing Dad or Mom' - just turn up with your son or daughter and give them the opportunity to 'have a go' fishing for themselves. Fishing shaped my life and me the best pastime ever in the open air - who knows what it will do for the youngsters at Shanes Castle! Tight Lines, Stevie Munn.

Stevie Munn works full time in the angling sector as a guide, writer and qualified game angling instructor, he has appeared in many angling books, DVDs and angling shows all over the world. He has also fished many places in the world but grew up fishing on rivers and loughs of Ireland where he often guides. He runs teaching courses in fly fishing and has fished in many places, Ireland, B.C Canada, Iceland, Argentina, Norway and other parts of the world. He can be booked for Angling shows during which he gives casting and tying demonstrations. You can contact him via email anglingclassics@aol.com or get more info at www.anglingclassics.co.uk, www.Irishflyfair.com



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# **'SEE AND SAMPLE'** At the Fine Food Festival at the Irish Game Fair at Shanes Castle 25th & 26th June



Great Game Fairs of Ireland Chef Emmett McCourt and Ingrid Houwers, with Michele Shirlow, Good FoodNI and Jane Harnett and Cathy Chauhan from the Ulster Artisan group.

A huge hit with our Game Fair Audience, the Fine Food Festival showcases the very best in food products.

No matter what your taste is — there will be so much to see and sample that we guarantee to tempt the most discerning palette at Shanes.

Listed below are just some of the amazing food producers who will there throughout the Fair.



Formed in April 2015, Ulster Artisans is a not-for-profit group of artisan producers from across the nine counties of Ulster - created by producers, for producers. Whether for advice on equipment, recommendations on outlets, or a simple cup of tea, catch-up and chat, members of the group support each other wherever possible. The Ulster Artisans 'pop-up shop' featuring a selection of produce from various members will be found at the Shane's Castle Game Fair & Fine Food Festival.

### Harnett's Oils

Northern Ireland has the ideal conditions for growing oilseeds. The Harnett family know this and that's why the fields on their County Down farm are worthy of a Van Gogh painting when the crops are in flower. They grow oilseed, rape and hemp, then cold-press them and bottle them all on site. These golden-hued bottles of loveliness are so healthy! We're talking oodles of Essential Fatty Acids in the perfect ratio for the human metabolism as well as vital vitamins and terrific trace elements. Multiple-awards held for range.

### Moditions Bakery (Gluten Free)

Moditions began as a journey of love when its founder Christine Shaw endeavoured to create great-tasting gluten-free bakes for her coeliac husband. Today, she owns a dedicated gluten-free bakery full of delicious products everyone can enjoy. Production is never outsourced, and all of their cakes are baked to order just for you, handmade by their team, using only the best quality ingredients. Range includes cakes, baking-mixes, frozen bake-off items and jams. Great Taste Award Winner.

### **Our Daily Bread**

Belfast-based artisan bakery Our Daily Bread was founded in 2012 by Melanie Gilfillan and specialises in fresh wheaten and soda bread mixes for home baking enthusiasts. In June 2015, they launched 'Twice Baked Irish Wheaten Toasts' as an accompaniment for cheese, pate or dips. The new Toasts are pure wheaten and do not contain yeast, artificial flavourings or preservatives. The crisp bread thins, are twice baked to bring out the natural nutty flavours and are perfect for cheeseboards especially goat's cheese. Great Taste Award Winner.



### Cavanagh Free Range Eggs

John and Eileen Hall from Fermanagh built their first hen house in 2001 and now have over 42,000 free-range birds roaming across the local countryside. They know that contented hens lay great quality eggs so they work hard at creating the best possible environment for them. They're obviously happy hens because they produce nearly 13 million eggs between them every year and are proud winners of multiple awards.



### The Gluten Free Patisserie

More and more people are choosing to eat gluten-free these days and Katrina Lynch, a trained pastry chef, sees no reason why those people should be denied delicious patisserie and breads. What started as a cottage-industry has now grown into a thriving business. As well as supplying shops and selling at markets and events, Katrina also provides classes in Gluten-Free Cooking and Baking at Ashfield Girls High School in Belfast.



### Camran Marshmallows

Camran Artisan Marshmallows was developed by two mums with children on the Autistic Spectrum who decided to pursue their passion for quality and natural products by developing an amazing range of marshmallows. Each of their families have been fantastic guinea pigs, and they are confident the range they offer will bring a smile to your face also! Their sumptuous range uses only natural flavours, colours and preservatives. Each one is hand made to perfection to tantalise your taste buds. The majority of the marshmallows are also gluten and egg free. Handmade and hand packaged, they take pride in our product and assure that each mallow is a wonderful taste sensation.



### Miss McKeown's Tea

Boutique local tea producer Miss McKeown's embodies class and sophistication; from the aromatic, hand-selected ingredients to the nostalgic vintage packaging.

Distinctive blends include award-winners such as Heritage Breakfast, flavourful and healthy Mint Humbug, and the subtle delicacy of Pear Champagne. Their traditional range is enriched with quirkier offerings such as Goblin Market and Quatermain's Study, and Christmas favourites Warm Gingerbread and Turkish Delight. An ambitious charity donation scheme complements their focus on great ingredients and full flavours — they donate one cup of tea for every cup you buy. Careful selection of only the finest whole-leaf teas, and a commitment to superior botanicals promises indulgence in every cup.



#### Made With Love

Margaret Cooper is a woman with a passion for cooking. She started making her fudge, jams and chutneys for friends who encouraged her to try and sell them. She took the chutney to markets and school and church fairs and found that her friends were right. Keeping it truly local, everything she uses is grown herself or sourced in and around her hometown of Donaghadee. Range includes seasonal jams, chutneys and fudge.



#### **Glens of Antrim Ales**

Created by Pat and Isabella McCarry, Glens of Antrim Craft Ale & Beers is a really small brewery situated at the very corner of Ireland, across from Rathlin Island and the Mull of Kintyre. They use only natural products and spring water to produce their handcrafted ale and beers and their secret ingredients are passion for what they do, spring water and time! Pat and Isabella take care of everything on site: brewing, fermenting, bottling labelling and bottle conditioning. It's what



they like to drink: and hope you do too!

### The Chocolate Manor

The Chocolate Manor was established in November 2012 in the Coleraine home kitchen of mum of two, Geri Martin. The vision for the business was to delight and impress with unique chocolate creations, and was the first artisan producer in the province to design and handcraft a range of bespoke printed products, using the finest Belgian chocolate. In 2015 they launched the first range of printed chocolate bars available for the retail in NI. The 50g bars are available in milk and white and includes a selection of fun and quirky sayings including 'Life Happens, Chocolate Helps', 'I could give up on Chocolate, but I'm not a quitter' and more.



#### Hillstown Brewery

The big red tractor on top of the Hillstown Farm Shop is the inspiration for one of the craft beers made by Hillstown Brewery. Their Massey Red is part of a 5-strong range consisting of The Spitting Llama, Massey Red, Goats Butt, Rye Hybrid, Horny Bull Stout! The microbrewery hasn't been in operation for very long, but it's already won a Great Taste Award for their Rye Hybrid, and won gold in the all Ireland Killarney beer festival for the Spitting Llama Belgium triple beer and Silver with the Goats Butt.





### Addie's Fudge

Mum of two boys Adrianne Sibbett has turned her passion for cooking and baking into a thriving business. Since starting in April 2014, Adrianne has worked hard to develop Addie's



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Ballynahinch Road, Belfast, Northern Ireland T: +44 (0)28 9081 5535 E: info@northdownmarquees.co.uk Fudge as a premium brand using only top quality ingredients, traditionally made in small batches for a smooth melt-in-the mouth creamy texture, and hand packed in her own kitchen. The range consists of three main flavours; Butter Fudge, Strawberry Twist, and Chocolate Bailies.

### Lough Neagh Eels

Lough Neagh Fishermen's Co-operative Society Ltd was established in 1965 to represent the interests of local fishermen and by 1972 had acquired outright control of the company known as Toome Eel Fishery. It manages the fishing rights on Lough Neagh, which is home to the largest eel fishery in Europe. Traditionally, there are two methods employed in the capture of brown eels on the lough, longlining and draft netting, while a percentage of the silver eels are trapped at fixed weirs on the Lower River Bann. We have a strong commitment to the needs of our customer base and will continue to service this with quality live eels. We also focus on processing eels for outlets in Ireland and the UK. Our vision is to have Lough Neagh fresh and smoked products on menus and dinner tables everywhere.

### SOME OTHER REGULARS WHO WILL ALSO BE **THERE ARE :**

### From the Fells of Cumbria – the fantastic food from Peter Gott's Silfield Farm

Peter Gott is not only one of the longest standing fine food exhibitors at Shanes Castle but also one of the UK's top experts on 'slow' and artisan food production. Every year Peter's stand is often the first stand fair regulars visit to put in their order for his famous wild game and wild boar pies.

On display are not only his legendary pies but also all sorts of quality meat products including Wild Boar; Sausages of all sorts; Herdwick Lamb & Mutton; Dry cured Bacon; Burgers; Boneless Roasts and Wild Game. https://www.sillfield.co.uk



And of course one of our most stylish exhibitors with fabulous cup cakes is Miss Daisy Doodle! Photo Daisy Doodle.

from



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Running down through the other exhibitors there is much to interest and tempt the taste buds of the dedicated 'foodie' including great meat products from Forthill Farm; honey from the Randalstown Beekeepers; dried nuts and fruits; olives; cheeses; traditional confectionery, jams and chutneys; and ciders, beers, wines and spirits.

Old Irish Creamery and Springwell Sheep cheeses have superb ranges of cheese to delight any palate. Apart from the brewers mentioned earlier we have a great range of drinks from wines to a range of spirits, beers and ciders. We have three great ranges of craft cider from Kilmegan, Longmeadow and the Armagh Cider Company, a great range of drinks from Anzac and the new range of beer from the Lacado Brewery.

The Irish Game Fair & Fine Food Festival thanks North Down Marquees for their sponsorship.





The Lacada team with preserve maker



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### BATTLE COLOURS FLY FOR SHANES CASTLE GAME FAIR

as the Ulster Scots Agency and the Great Game Fairs of Ireland team up to bring history to life



Chief Executive of the Ulster Scots Agency Ian Crozier and Councillor Thomas Hogg 'take up arms' at the launch of the Battle of Antrim re-enactments which will take place at the Irish Game Fair and Fine Food Festival

### One of the most colourful and contentious chapters of Ulster history will be brought to blood-curdling life at the Irish Game Fair & Fine Food Festival in June thanks to support from the Ulster Scots Agency.

One of the most colourful and contentious chapters of Ulster history will be brought to blood-curdling life at the Irish Game Fair & Fine Food Festival in June thanks to support from the Ulster Scots Agency.

Re-enactors will set the mood with a skirmish in Antrim Castle Gardens, Clotworthy at 12.00 noon on Saturday 4 June, astonishing shoppers and thrilling spectators with a taste of a larger reenactment which will be a flamboyant centrepiece of the historic pageantry of the Irish Game Fair & Fine Food Festival at Shanes Castle, Antrim over the weekend of Saturday 25 and Sunday 26 June.

The re-enactors' subject will be The Battle of Antrim which was fought on June 7 in 1798 and recognised as one of the bitterest confrontations of the Irish Rebellion. Irish insurgents, led by Henry Joy McCracken and Roddy McCorley, attacked Antrim town. The battle was hard fought, but following doughty resistance by the garrison, and the timely arrival of reinforcements, was eventually won by the British although the County Governor, Lord O'Neill, was fatally wounded. The re-enactment of a skirmish in Castle Gardens will be recreated by leading players using picture-perfect uniforms, costumes, props and weaponry to create an authentic atmosphere. Looking forward to the living history lesson, Albert Titterington, Director of The Great Game Fairs of Ireland, said, "Since I was a child I have been passionate about history and country sports and I consider myself privileged to have been able to build my career around those two interests. Now I am thrilled to share that passion with a huge audience by staging a thrilling and historically accurate re-enactment of the Battle of Antrim firstly in Clotworthy's Castle Gardens and then in the magnificent and entirely appropriate setting of Shanes Castle.

"Alongside the roar and cry of the battle, at the fair we'll also be presenting a reconstruction of a battle encampment which will allow members of the public to take a step back in history to get a feel for what life was like for those who were involved. To my mind, how people ate, slept and prepared themselves for the fray is every bit as fascinating as the actual battle and I know that the re-enactors will be only too delighted to chat with visitors and share their extensive knowledge. They will also be able to put the Battle of Antrim into its historical context, something which I know will be appreciated not only by amateur history buffs, but also by the many schoolchildren who study the Battle today."

"We are delighted to partner with the Ulster Scots Agency and the local council in helping to bring an important part of local County Antrim history to life in a manner which will be both educational and entertaining. We consider that re-enactments such as this can become major tourism attractions in their own right and we hope that the two re-enactments that we are staging in 2016 can in future years grow into major attractions for their host areas and NI as a whole."

Reinforcing the opportunity to appreciate our colourful past, Ian Crozier, Chief Executive Officer of the Ulster Scots Agency, said, "The Ulster Scots Agency is delighted to be involved in the Irish Game Fair and Fine Food Festival and the reenactment of 'The Battle of Antrim.' This will be the perfect setting for a family outing for a taste of history, education and countrysports and we are looking forward to the event."

The Agency will have an information marquee within the Living History Village in the evocative setting of the old ruined Castle of Shanes Castle on the banks of Lough Neagh and will be providing musical entertainment throughout the two days from well known Ulster Scots Folk group Stonewall.

Stonewall Folk Band started out life 8 years ago, primarily as a folk group playing at various concerts, church events and weddings. They took their name from Stonewall Jackson whose family were of Scots Irish stock from the Birches in Co.



Stonewall Armagh.

The easy rapport between the bandmates has made them a hit with audiences across the province and the band has been offered some incredible opportunities as a result. For the past six years they have travelled to Atlanta, Georgia to play at the Stone Mountain Highland Games as part of Tourism Ireland's drive to attract visitors to Ireland. They have also been to Beijing, China two years in a row to play at a large St Patrick's Day Ball for the Irish Network China and have appeared on B.B.C and R.T.E. television and various radio stations on numerous occasions back home here in Northern Ireland. Their repertoire of reels, jigs and ballads ensures there is something to suit everyone. Between them they play Fiddle, Flutes, Whistles, Accordion, Guitar,

Banjo, Pipes, Keyboard / Piano and Percussion.

History will also be reflected with a Living History encampment and thrilling medieval jousting demonstrations. Visitors to Ireland's premier celebration of country sports, pursuits and lifestyle will also enjoy a continuous programme of displays, competitions and entertainments at three main arenas, together with an amazing spread of tented villages, marquees and mini display arenas together with angling competitions, air rifle shooting, clay pigeons, falconry, archery, horses and hounds live cookery demonstrations plus a wide range of retailers showcasing their country wares.

And at the end of September the Ulster Scots Agency and Great Game Fairs of



Cannon & musketry make for colourful and noisy re-enactments



Ulster-Scots Agency

Ireland will 'do it all over again' with a Battle of Ballynahinch re-enactments in the town and Montalto Estate. See www.ballynahinchharvestfestival.com

The Irish Game Fair and Fine Food Festival is supported by Tourism NI and Antrim & Newtownabbey Council and is part of the NI Year of Food and Drink 2016.

The Ulster-Scots Agency, or Tha Boord o Ulster Scotch as it is known in Ullans (another name for the Ulster-Scots language), has been given the legislative remit of the "promotion of greater awareness and use of Ullans and of Ulster-Scots cultural issues, both within Northern Ireland and throughout the island". The vision of the Ulster-Scots Agency is that Ulster-Scots should flourish as a rich, vibrant and growing culture with a global legacy that is recognised at home and abroad. The Agency has its main office in Belfast with a regional office in Raphoe, Co. Donegal an Ulster-Scots heartland area. www.ulsterscotsagency.com.

The Ulster-Scots Agency's aim is to promote a greater awareness of Ulster-Scots heritage and culture and use of Ulster-Scots language, both within Northern Ireland and throughout the island. Our vision is that Ulster-Scots should flourish as a rich, vibrant and growing culture with a global legacy that is recognised at home and abroad.

In November 2014 the Ulster Scots Agency, along with partners DCAL and the Ulster Scots Community Network launched the Discover Ulster Scots Visitor centre at 1-9 Victoria Street, Belfast in the historic Corn Exchange Building.

The Discover Ulster Scots visitor centre features new exhibitions highlighting the long standing cultural and linguistic links between Scotland and Ulster, a performance and lecture area, and public research spaces providing tourists, community groups and schools with the opportunity to learn more about the rich cultural heritage of Ulster-Scots.

The centre is part of a new Ulster-Scots hub providing office accommodation to the Ulster-Scots Agency; The Ulster Historical Foundation; the Ulster-Scots Community Network and the Ulster-Scots Library and Archive.

The centre is open daily to visitors and can be booked for evening events by contacting the Ulster Scots Community Network – 028 9043 6710 or emailing info@ulster-scots.com. You can also visit the website to find out about more Ulster Scots places to visit at

www.discoverulsterscots.com.

Come to our visitor centre and discover more about your Ulster-Scots roots or find out what Ulster-Scots events are happening across Northern Ireland and further afield. Ulster Scots publications are available for sale, as well as free Ulster-Scots literature to help you uncover more about your unique and culturally rich heritage.

Find out which heritage trails will lead you down the path to your ancestors and how the Ulster-Scots emigrated around the world to become some of the more important world leaders and entrepreneurs in history.

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# Meet the Winning Team!

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



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



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



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

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# Williams & Son, No 2 Dame Street, Dublin - Famed For Its Skill In Taxidermy

A good taxidermist is a sculptor, artist and naturalist rolled into one.

During the 19th and 20th Centuries, one of the most celebrated taxidermy stores in Ireland was Williams & Son on Dame Street, Dublin and passersby would often stop at the shop windows and admire the mounted animals placed in natural scenes. The store was run by Alexander and Edward Williams.

One of Alexander's descendants, Gordon Ledbetter, recently supplied me with information and photographs for this article. Gordon wrote an excellent biography of Alexander Williams (1846 - 1930) called 'Privilege & Poverty' (which was published by Collins Press, Cork) and in Chapter 4 of that book he devotes himself completely to the taxidermy store on Dame Street.

The story begins with a catastrophe. In June 1866, Alex's father William



Williams & Son Shop Front At No 2 Dame Street.

suffered the trauma of watching his hatter's business burn to the ground, causing the tragic deaths of six people



A very fine Otter.

inside. Now without the family's livelihood, Alex and Edward put their minds to coming up with an alternative source of income.

Their idea was initially intended as just a sideline but it became much more than that. They printed business cards which stated that Messrs A and E Williams had opened a new business as Naturalists, another term at the time for Taxidermists. Unlike other taxidermists they branched beyond birds and also prepared mammals and fish skins for display. They also cured furs prior to them being made into clothing of one sort or another by furriers. They received a good response to their initial adverts and a very positive reaction to their displays placed amid the headgear.

'In addition to native birds,' recalled Alex, 'we obtained specimens from Africa, America and Australia from time to time and we arranged some brightly coloured foreign birds with hummingbirds in glass shades, making artificial trees and arranging dyed E. G. Campbell, D.D., LL.D., Rector of Kildsrry, Philipstown.

#### MISCRELANEOUS.

A Bill U, Naturaliat, 7 threat Brauswick street-Birds and Animals Stuffed and Mounted at moderate prices.

A. Nillal, Skins of all kinds Dressed and Mounted, Christer Rugs Manufactured, by Williams and Son, 2 Dama street.

A DVICE to Ladics-In cases of allments, Zanctoline Pills are a safe and efficient remedy. Address Mr. Holmes, M.P.N., Berkoley road, Dublin.

Dikibs, Beasta, Fishes Presseved in most Bla-Rice manner, by Williams and Son, Naturalists, Stadio, 2 Dame street.

BIRDS and Animals stuffed life-like-Pheasants, fas, Grouse, Partrisige, 4a; Hawks, Owls, and Squirrels, 4a; Otters, Fores, and Baigers, 15s. Tank (late Williams). 10a Aungier street, Dublin.

BAUN for hand, iravelling, shopping, &o.; all shapes, sizes, proces, and colours.-Palais Hoyal, Anno sizeet.

BANGILES, Bracchets, Brooches, Bandanas, Blotters, Brackets, Baskets, Bottles, Biscuitieres, at Paluis Royal, 2 South Anna street.

BACHELOR (42) would like to most agreeable Lady, with some money ; widow not objected to. Address 0 754, this office.

DHEBMARING-Dressey fashionably made from 7s 6d ; Mantles and Evening Dresses equally motoraic.-Miss Dempsoy, 6 Grafton street.

DRAWINGROOM Fans in Gause, Plames, Down, Wattern, Spangle, Satin, Ac,-Palais Royal, 2 Bouth Anue atrect.

D<sup>0</sup> yop want to be saved ? Come to Gospel Meeting at 40 Westland row, Handay Evoning, 7 o'clock ; adjustation free ; no collection.

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Some taxidermy advertising in the Irish Times.

grasses and mosses naturally about them. We suggested to our parent that he should allow us to exhibit one of these attractive objects in the centre of the large plate glass window of our shop and he complied, and here surrounded by headgear of various kinds. Our first combined composition was publicly displayed. It attracted much notice by the novelty of its surroundings and was at last purchased and the money divided between us.' Spurred on by an encouraging start, they continued displaying their stuffed creatures for sale in the shop window.

# Dublin was a very good setting for their fledgling trade

Both Alex and Edward were

knowledgeable about Irish birds, as they had been encouraged to be lovers of the natural world by their father since they were children. They were also very adept at not just stuffing the birds and animals but also at arranging the animals in life poses and placing the creatures in scenes that resembled their natural habitat. Dublin was also a very good setting for their fledgling trade because there were plenty of wealthy people around of the hunting, fishing and shooting set (including those working in Dublin Castle).

They soon became friendly with a couple of well-known ornithologists, including Robert Warren, from Ballina Mayo, and Robert Barrington, from Fassaroe, Bray. The Williams brothers preserved many of Barrington's birds

for him and this renowned collection of bird skins is on display today in the Natural History Museum. Other names of note who came into the Williams' orbit included AG More of the Natural History Museum, RJ Ussher and Professor Charles J Patten. In time their store became a gathering place for collectors, sportsmen and researchers who popped in to view the exhibits, to have a chat and exchange information. As the famous naturalist Robert Lloyd Praeger (1865 - 1953) recalled: 'The firm's books contain a large amount of information relative to the identity and place and date of capture of interesting specimens, and were often consulted by ornithologists.'

In 1870 their father moved the store to No 3 Dame Street. Things were challenging in the Dublin milliner trade and a number of hatters had closed down. Williams Senior doggedly stuck to his task and managed to keep his hatter business going. Meanwhile the work of the brothers, on display in the new Dame Street premises, gained a nationwide reputation. The premises at No 3 had two windows either side of the entrance. One window was devoted to hats, the other to birds, animals and fish. Richard Barrington wrote in the 'Irish Naturalist' that a battle between the hats and the birds was being played out. Eventually the latter won out and the hats were swept away altogether.

'Another change of residence was made to the adjoining premises No 2 Dame Street,' wrote Barrington. 'The entire front was filled with interesting and attractive specimens so lifelike and natural that their novelty in Dublin attracted the attention of many foot passengers, and a group was always collected on the pavement outside the window. It is unusual for a competition such as I have described to terminate so conclusively in favour of Natural Science.' They had set up business at a good time. Collecting wildlife was fashionable and the number of taxidermy businesses was increasing, with the result that there was at least one taxidermist in many towns of a

reasonable size throughout Britain and Ireland. The firms of James Sheals in Belfast and Williams in Dublin became the two most prominent taxidermists in Ireland from the latter part of the Victorian age until well into the twentieth century.

By the 19th Century, the technique of preserving bird skins and their feathers had improved greatly. A soap made of arsenic was used which worked very well. However, some were concerned about the side effects of using something made of arsenic. They warned that it could cause coughs, colds, chronic bronchitis, soreness of the lips and nose, ugly ulcers, brittle nails and partial or complete paralysis. Despite this, there is no evidence that William Williams protected himself by using gloves or wearing a dust mask. His hands were probably very smooth as arsenic soap kills off the surface skin. Despite using this potentially hazardous soap a great deal, it did not affect William Williams who lived to the age of 88.

As well as arsenic soap, another technological improvement led to an increased interest in taxidermy, the perfection of the breech-loading shotgun in the 1850s. Another factor was the increasing number of people in the middle class, who had more money and more leisure time to pursue hobbies.

# Success demanded physical fitness, endurance, patience, skill with guns

In their 1998 book 'The Bird Collectors' Barbara and Richard Mearns explained the psychology behind the collecting craze: 'Collecting provided a convenient and socially acceptable excuse for respectable grown men to climb trees, scramble down cliffs, go camping and roam freely out of doors, pitting themselves against the terrain, the weather and wary, elusive quarry. Success demanded physical fitness, endurance, patience, skill with guns and a level of fieldcraft now rare among birdwatchers. In short, it was considered good, manly fun — and



Marsh Harrier found in Ulster.

whether practised as a hobby, lifestyle or profession it was dominated by men — female bird collectors were few and far between.'

Stuffed animals and birds adorned the rooms of many houses. In his book Gordon Ledbetter imagines what these houses might have been like: 'As a result rooms, even rooms especially designed and built for the purpose, were filled with countless taxidermy specimens of all kinds. There was not necessarily much science or order to the collecting. Acquisition was the thing, and birds that would have never met in real life found themselves perched together, a dozen at a time, in large glass cases, with not a thought of how anomalous they might look. Exhibits were rarely confined to drawing-rooms or studies. It made sense to begin with the entrance hall the better immediately to impress the visitor as to how farflung had been the travels of the owner.


Sparrow Hawks, created by Williams & Son, Dublin.

There the head of an oryx mounted on a wooden plaque might be displayed side by side with a sable antelope from the plains or Lichtenstein's Hartebeest, and perhaps half a dozen more species besides, all staring down with beady glass eyes — and if the taxidermist had done his job properly, he would have made sure to have inserted eyes of the right colour and design for each species. Not every display was the result of a hunt. There is a letter in the Natural History Museum, Dublin, probably from Lord Powerscourt who says he is intending to have a stag and a hind killed for the purpose of having them mounted — and that they will be sent to Williams & Son.'

Clients and taxidermists often opted for heads on plaques because they were cheaper and took up less space. Sometimes carcases would arrive in the store which were in a bad state of decay, but parts could be preserved. Therefore, the taxidermists transformed elephants' feet into ink stands and drinks cabinets; the feet of rhinoceroses became doorstops and umbrella stands; exotic birds were changed into fire-screens and table lamps. Queen Victoria greatly enjoyed the anthropomorphic examples of the taxidermist's art when she viewed them at the Crystal Palace exhibition in 1851.

During the days of the British Empire, an enormous amount of shot game was sent back to Europe. Some of these sporting trophies have endured the passage of time and are still enjoyed by the public. For example, a number of specimen trout caught in the early 1900s and stuffed by Williams & Son, still adorn the walls of the Lake Hotel, Killarney and a century later look as fresh and shiny as if newly caught. Alexander sometimes referred to his firm as being world famous. This wasn't mendacity on his part because the firm took in skins from all over the globe, including Australia and the Philippines.

With the death of William Williams in 1901 and of Edward a few years later, the business passed into the sole hands of the youngest of three brothers, William, who ran it until his death in 1937. After Willie died, his elder son, Teddy, ran the business until he



volunteered and joined the British Army in 1941. 'He never returned to the business in Dame Street,' comments Gordon in his book, 'which was wise. Taxidermy was no longer fashionable and it is doubtful if there was a living to be made from the practice after the war.' Teddy found a means of anaesthetising small animals for long enough to make a cast, after which the creature was released. Like his uncle Alexander he was also a talented painter.

#### Teddy Williams' death brought to an end the family's association with taxidermy

Gordon continues: 'In retirement in Norfolk, Teddy continued his work for occasional customers. He could work with great speed. It is said he could skin and mount a small bird in under an hour, a pheasant or owl in about two. "He used the same old butcher's knife for skinning all his birds, and his hands, which were huge — due, he said, to thousands of hours spent skinning, for he started at the age of eleven." He had

little interest in money — his needs were simple. He said he needed cash only for tobacco, and to his wife's chagrin he invariably undercharged for his work. She was not a woman to be crossed. Subterfuges were the better part of valour in that household. Standing in the doorway of his upstairs bird room, he said, in a voice loud enough, he calculated, to be heard by his wife downstairs: "That'll be 24 pounds", then, in a much softer voice to his customer: "Give me 17 pounds." A customer on returning to collect a Capercaillie thought the taxidermist was joking when he asked for a fiver. In the event he was persuaded to take ten pounds. He lived for his work and little else. Teddy Williams' death in 1977 brought to an end the family's association with taxidermy, going back to at least the 1840s when old William Williams collected skins around Drogheda.'

Concluding he writes, 'Although it was not to be his life's work as it was to be for his two brothers, Alexander was proud of what he had achieved with his brother Edward: "Little did we imagine at the time that we were laying the foundation for what was destined afterwards to turn into a most important Dublin Naturalist's business of worldwide reputation," he wrote in his memoirs with justifiable pride. If taxidermy was not a vocation for Alexander - he still hankered after a career in art — birdwatching would continue to remain an avid interest for the rest of his life.'

After the war, the business at No 2 Dame Street stumbled on under Mr W Connolly. Finally No 2 and the entire beautiful terrace of which it was a part was pulled down in the 1970s for the purpose of widening the street.

The work of Williams & Son represents a significant part of an important Victorian and early twentieth century legacy, most notably at the Natural History Museum in Dublin where there are some 20,000 bird skins, a significant part of this collection having been prepared by this one firm over a period of nearly three quarters of a century.



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## **Hunting Roundup**

#### Around the late season meets

#### Suir Valley Harriers

The Suir Valley Harriers' meet at Borrisoleigh, Co Tipperary, had fine rain and mist, which both militated against hounds throughout, with occasional winds not helping matters either. Huntsman and joint master Seamus O'Dwyer had on a 13<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub> couple mixed pack of Old English hounds with kennel huntsman and first whipper-in Emma Ryan assisting him. Joint masters Michael O'Sullivan and Brian Walsh were in a forty strong mounted field, over which the latter presided as Field Master. With hounds by Brosna, Macroom and Duhallow stallion hounds on view dogged persistence was to be expected and we certainly got it.

The first draw, at Phil Quinliven's in Lower Palace off the main Thurles Road, in the locally named Golden Mile, yielded the first fox. A short, sharp hunt around the Golden Mile saw this fox accounted for so Seamus O'Dwyer moved back through the village towards Knocknahorna and drew behind the Marian Hall at the old convent, which is now St Joseph's school. The covert was blank and the rain was now persistent with the mist now also worsening.

At Ollie Small's hounds put their second pilot afoot to give a good, brisk hunt, parallel to the Thurles to Nenagh Road before he went to ground just off the main road. Matters moved back to Palace at The Cross where hounds put up a brace. From here, they pushed one customer to Tom Joe Spillane's, at Burkington, who was in the mounted field. This hunt went as far as Glasha before moving right handed across the road then looping back to Palace at The Cross before crossing the road and going to ground at The Cross and being given best.

#### **Fingal Harriers**

At Ratoath, Co Meath, the Fingal Harriers' meet saw a bright, sometimes sunny, even warm, day. Huntsman Chris Smith had on a 12<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub> couple mixed pack of mostly Old English hounds, with some Louth and some Modern hounds, of Portman lineage, on view and he was assisted by whippers-in PJ Casey, Alex Lyons and Stephen Comerford. Some three dozen riders included three joint masters, Brian Biggins, Helena Dawson and Mick McGrath, with the last named acting as field master.

The first draw, at Byrne's, saw a fox immediately afoot but he was quickly headed though hounds ignored this and pushed on across Byrne's. After a short hunt this fox went to ground on the property. A move to Sheridan's saw a second pilot afoot near some old pheasant pens. He ran left handed from there before swinging right handed to



Oliver Little, MFH with the Dungannon Foxhounds at Coalisland, Co Tyrone.



"What low hanging branch?" Huntsman Chris Smith with the Fingal Harriers at Ratoath, Co Meatm.

the Ratoath to Dunshaughlin Road and into Toole's. From there the fox crossed a field into Flemington and into Hunt member Joey Madden's. This hunt continued, left handed, in to Everard's then in to Noel Eve's. Here hounds checked whereupon Noel Eve put some cattle away so hounds could draw for the line. Hounds quickly found the line on the road and hunted back in to Sheridan's with the fox seen to go to ground about two hundred yards from where he went afoot.

An expanse of NAMA land saw a third fox afoot. This hunt saw the field encounter some of the day's best fences, with hedges and blind ditches abounding on this rough land. This fox swung sharply right handed in to Tattersall's then made another right hand move across Lagore Road, towards Lagore Bog where hounds, again, checked. At this point Chris Smith stopped hounds to blow for home and, unbelievably, hailstones started but, equally unbelievably, immediately stopped. This had been a good hound day in trying scenting conditions with some demanding jumping being required. In fact, the only downside of the day is that we were now at the end of the season.

#### **Dungannon Foxhounds**

The Dungannon Foxhounds, Ireland's only registered foot pack of Foxhounds, enjoyed a mild, still day at Coalisland, Co Tyrone. Huntsman Oliver Little MFH had on a 12<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub> couple pack, mainly of dog-hounds, with whippers-in Nicholas Laverty and Paddy O'Reilly assisting him. Oliver drew towards the old clay pits, near the Yankee Star restaurant to begin the day.

Scent appeared to be at a premium but we did hear a short burst of hound music from some whinns as hounds put their first fox afoot and pushed him towards Derryvale Road from where we heard some more music. The fox then went along the side of the clay pits, watched by your correspondent and his companions Bill Montgomery and hunt secretary Colm McCrory. At this point hounds were fairly strung out but quickly came together as they went up the hill in good voice only to lose their fox as they went out of our sight.

Oliver Little then boxed them up and moved to where he drew behind the hurling club. Here Ginger 15 crossed the road on his own and suddenly opened on a fox to be joined by the rest of the pack, as a brace went afoot.

Hounds hunted one fox in a sharp hunt to Drummerrar near Willie Donnelly's, only to lose him, too, in poor scenting conditions. At this stage the Master arrived followed by hunt chairman, Stephen O'Neill who was in a vehicle, from which Tina Little's magic soup and wheaten bread were produced to refresh everyone.

Once the victuals had been dispensed with Olive Little drew at Brian Hughes's, off Drummerrar Lane and a fox then emerged from the moss behind Donnelly's but was quickly lost.

Hounds then found in Declan

Morgan's and hunted this fox to King's Island peat bogs in good voice and at pace. This fox also crossed in front of your correspondent before going back through the peat bog to Donnelly's. He crossed the bog with hounds pushing him hard into Falls's, from the Kings Island Road. They pushed him to Kane's Road past Gerard McStravick's then he recrossed the Kings Island Road to return to Declan Morgan's. From here hounds pushed their fox through Jackson's and cut across McAlinden's Burrow to the edge of the bog where he went to ground and was given best. It was now late afternoon so Oliver Little blew for home to end a good hound day.

#### **Donegal Harriers**

The Donegal Harriers' meet at Baronscourt, Co Tyrone, was hosted by their Graces the Duke and Duchess of Abercorn and it attracted a sixty-five strong mounted field with a similar number of car and foot followers.

The mounted field included sixteen visitors from the Braes of Derwent Hunt, Co Durham, led by joint masters Linda Philipson and John Brannen, as well as Oliver Little MFH, Dungannon Foxhounds, making a rare mounted appearance.

All three of the Donegal joint masters, Ger O'Riain, Donal Day and Peter Mulrine were out but wisely ceded field mastering duties to Peter Smith, TJ Maxwell and Martin O'Neill.

This incessantly rainy day saw the entire hunt take place on the Baronscourt Estate. Huntsman Derek O'Donnell put the 11½ couple mixed pack into a covert near the house and, almost immediately, a fox went afoot and hounds pushed him hard across the side of the lake to the front of the house.

There is quite a lot of forestry at this part of the estate and hounds were going well across some very heavy going. Some riders came to grief in what was later described to me as a "ditch come river" but, happily, no injuries were sustained by horses or riders.

Hounds pushed on, unaffected by the

conditions, hunting their fox hard and giving the mounted field a real challenge to stay in touch. Some of the field paused for a stirrup cup and some nibbles at the house and at this stage Lucinda Blakiston-Houston said 'goodnight.'

The background to her participation is that she was diagnosed as having cancer necessitating the amputation of her right foot, in December. She immediately determined that she would learn to ride side saddle in order to hunt and, most importantly, 'keep up with hounds.' Her trainers and mentors in this process were Lady Janey Gillespie and Nicky Corr. The former accompanied Lucinda on the day with the latter's girlfriend, Nicola Martin, completing a stylish trio of side saddle riders. So it was that, on this last day of January, this redoubtable lady was out, living up to her promise, with her proud son Harry, home from university, as a mounted chaperone. Needless to say she " retired" to universal acclaim.

Unaware of these events, hounds continued to push their fox at speed across land which was described to me by one local as 'the wettest I have ever seen the place.' Hounds spent a full one and a half hours on this fox and the field did get very strung out. They had a check for a good ten minutes, but worked out the line for themselves to get back on their fox. The huntsman had a crashing fall and, though winded, remounted to rejoin his hounds.

In his absence Ger Riain, Mark McGlinchey and Peter Mulrine had stayed with hounds, though Ger did tell me that it had taken some doing. This fox had taken everyone on a very fast tour of the estate, in extremely testing conditions, before going to ground and, deservedly, being given best at the end of this memorable day.

#### Hurworth Foxhounds

Hurworth Foxhounds' regular Luci Sutcliffe, who is to be married in August, had a hen weekend hunting with the North Tipperary Foxhounds and, like everyone else, had a smashing red letter day from the meet at the Thatcher's Cottage bar and restaurant in Ballycommon. Accompanied by her mother Claire and her sister and chief bridesmaid to be, Kate, Luci and some twenty friends, including three other bridesmaids, with three chaperones who, like Claire, did not hunt arrived in the bar in the best of spirits.

The twenty visitors were in a mounted field of fifty and were well mounted on excellent hirelings supplied by Oliver Walsh, of Flower Hill Equestrian Centre. Field master Michael O'Donohue had Oliver Ryan-Purcell MFH to oversee everything from the front rank of the mounted field.

A wet, windy, somewhat cold day did not seem to auger well for a good day's sport but huntsman Denis Gilmartin, assisted by whipper-in Brian O'Slatarra, made the best of things and, in the end, gave everyone a good day's hunting.

Denis's 12½ couple mixed pack, of mainly Old English hounds with some Modern and some Welsh blood, have certainly nicked in well together to form a workman like and hard driving pack. These hounds kept their noses to the ground until well into late afternoon.

The visitors' smiles lit up this thoroughly miserable day though, with hounds by Duhallow, Limerick and Brosna stallion hounds out, they were kept too busy to be miserable.

Prominent among the locals were several good child jockeys, with six year old Bronagh O'Leary on a twenty nine year old 13.2 pony which used to belong to former Master Jeremy Cairns, who was also in the mounted field. Bronagh's proud father, Mark, explained that the pony's temperament was more important than its size as it really looked after its pint sized jockey.

The first draw, at O'Brien's, saw a brace afoot with hounds settling on one customer and hunting him to Billy Hogan's (who was among the car followers) then on to James Harley's and Jim Hearty's where he crossed the road before looping back into Harley's and going to ground.

This fox then reappeared to run into



Rachel Torrenspence-Spence, Declan Feeney, Huntsman, Pat Turley, Chairman of the hunt (photograph by Margaret Ferguson, Lakeside Inn)

Leeson's with hounds resuming the chase. They pushed him right to Seymour's Plantation then into Tracey's, Cleary's, Moloney's and on towards Kelly's.

Our pilot turned towards Lough Derg then back towards Carrog Hill where he was deservedly given best and Denis Gilmartin blew for home.

Hounds were a pleasure to watch throughout as they covered the ground at a very fast pace, doing so until late afternoon and, when we could hear, in very good voice.

The field, especially the Yorkshire lasses, were well satisfied while not one of the fallers sustained any injury though they did have much of Tipperary on themselves, their mounts and their clothes!

The day was best summed up by Hurworth amateur whipper-in Kate Lowcock who, as she galloped past former Hurworth master and huntsman Joe Townsend, delightedly shouted "it's just like being with the Hurworth."

## East Down Foxhounds honour their oldest member

Mrs Rachel Torrens-Spence of Drumcullen House, Downpatrick gave a most generous lawn meet for the East Down Foxhounds to finish their season. This lady is 99 years young and has a very sharp and knowledgeable eye for all things hunting.

A number of distinguished foot followers included Joint Masters Craig Caven, David Sandford, with his wife Alison, Simone Beech of Ballydugan House, local farmers Ken and Ian Dickson, the Nicholson Family, long time car follower and former terrier man to the East Downs Billy Barlow and North Down Foxhounds' huntsman Barry Jones with his father Barney.

Among the small, select field, under Hunt chairman Pat Turley, were Donna Quail, Charlie McPoland and Eric Pele. Huntsman Declan Feeney had on an 18<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub> couple mixed pack which the hostess had stipulated should include 'no dark ones' as she greatly prefers light coloured hounds!

Hollymount Estate still owned by Eveleigh Brownlow, wife of the late Major Bill Brownlow former Master and huntsman of these hounds, yielded a fox. This fox took hounds on a very fast hunt with hounds in equally strong voice, out in to open country right across Drumcullen then through Nicholson's. This proved to be a very straight running fox but he suddenly turned right towards Swan Island then straightened out to run towards Hollymount Parish Church giving the field a hard job to stay in touch. After some further fast running through Steele's this fox went to ground near the old Ballydugan post office after a very fast hunt which included a two mile point. Declan Feeney then drew Ballydugan Estate but, despite intermittent hound music, there was no further business and the huntsman blew for home at 4.30pm.

This previously cancelled meet was initially to have been a visit to the hostess but she insisted on it being a meet with 'all the trimmings' and, after another feast, this indefatigable lady was off to meet with a number of her local lady friends though she did express her regret that her good friend, Diana Kirkpatrick, who was master of these hounds from 1961-1972 was now too infirm to attend.

The picturesque area of Drumcullen House and the nearby Lakeside Inn, who did the excellent catering, proved a very impressive backdrop for the East Down's final meet of the season which Rachel Torrens-Spence enjoyed more than anyone else!

### Heard it on the grapevine

IMFHA chairman Rupert Macauley and his wife, Alice, now have a second son, Billy, as sibling to Barney.

Keith Broderick, a graduate of the IMFHA Bursary Scheme, is moving from the whipper-in's post at the Ormond Foxhounds to the Kildare Foxhounds, where he will turn hounds to huntsman Chris Francis.



#### I began to feel a little in over my head as I drove down to begin work the following morning, with rabbits crossing the laneways by the dozen.

Where did the winter go? Here we are once again with summer looming, the trees budding and birds nesting. It was a seriously busy winter for me as I seemed to be catching rabbits non-stop right across the country. It seemed I had no sooner one job finished than another began and for a while it seemed I was only doing one of three things, ferreting, sleeping or driving!

Back in December, I spent two weeks in a very memorable place about as far south in the country as you can go. I arrived on a dark and wet winter evening and quickly realised why the landowner had contacted us. The place was literally teeming with rabbits. More often than not I get a call from a farmer, landowner or someone having trouble with rabbits who always tell me there are 'millions of them' and, when I do arrive for a look over the place, I find that more often than not there is nothing much to worry about!

This, however, was a different matter and I began to feel a little in over my

head as I drove down to begin work the following morning as the rabbits crossed the laneways by the dozen.

It was almost surreal as I unloaded the van in the misty rain and the rabbits sat out along the ground as far as my eyes could see. The entire area we were to cover was around 200 acres, divided by one laneway and, as it was all tillage ground and had one owner, the fences had all been removed. It was quite nice to see such an expanse of flat ground not broken by fences, hedges and drains, any of which can make an easy job all the more difficult by reducing access and making holes harder to cover and nets harder to set.

The hedges and fences had been removed and it was thought that the rabbits would go with them, however it didn't work and they remained firmly dug in along the lines where the fencing and hedges had been. This wasn't a difficult job by any means, just a time consuming one. In these situations where rabbit numbers have been let spiral out of control there is no quick fix. Any method which is to be successful takes time and time alone.

I set to it, with young Fudge and a dozen ferrets for company. I ran out the nets, dropped in the ferrets and stood well back as I bolted rabbit after rabbit on what turned out to be a fantastic warm day. Thankfully, the rabbits were playing ball and we made considerable progress over the first couple of days. I was alone up until the Wednesday when a good friend — who is also a deadly shot — arrived to give me a hand and hopefully bulk up the numbers by night with his gun.

#### A large ginger missile exploded from a hole into a purse net

As I stood on another warm Tuesday morning after laying over 100 purse nets and entering half a dozen ferrets, I was almost lost in my own thoughts when I heard a lot of rumbling below my feet. Now rabbits will rumble, but



#### Running out the longnets.

this rumbling went on a bit long and was a bit loud when, all of a sudden, a large ginger missile exploded from a hole and into a purse net, so hard in fact that it pulled itself backwards and onto its back before scrambling to its feet.

Fudge shot across the warren and quickly caught up with it, but after striking and knocking it over twice and attempting to get a hold of it, it got through a fence and down a sheer drop. I felt bad for her as she trotted back with her head down and I felt worse as I had no camera! If she had of caught him I probably would have had his head mounted due to the nature of the whole story! We continued our work after that short burst of excitement and later that evening our good friend arrived full of cheer and a humidor full of cigars, which set me wondering if he intended to smoke out the rabbits!

Working extremely large ditches with ferrets is a monotonous job, which requires one person at either side of the ditch, then the net to be run out, lifted and re-set where the last one ended. After a while it becomes quite repetitive and this area was so large and open the ditches just seemed to go on for days.

Every few hundred yards a barrage of rabbits would be thrown over the hedge by my companion from the other side, which I then gutted and legged and loaded into the van as we went along.

After a few days of this non-stop netting we were thoroughly tired of it and for a change we decided to fill up our cartridge bags and shoot the rabbits as they bolted. For the most part it worked well and what I missed my friend hit and vice versa. Shooting bolting rabbits can perhaps appear like it speeds the process up somewhat, but in reality it can lead to a lot of rabbits left behind, to counteract this we sometimes employ the use of a rabbit flapper. This is a small device of French origin made from a galvanised wire and covered in mesh. The flapper is used to cover the hole and secured with a peg. It allows the rabbit out but not back down and ensures that not only does a missed rabbit not get back down and is successfully dispatched, but more importantly that an injured rabbit does not get back down a hole to suffer a slow death.

The area was home to a lot more than rabbits and every day as we hunted we spotted a variety of wildlife, including a group of half a dozen hares which sunbathed quite regularly and didn't seem phased by our presence at all. A flock of plovers were regular visitors every morning and foxes were very plentiful as we had earlier found out! When ferreting and spending so much time out and about we are privy to see so much wildlife and my favourite is always the stoat. Now and again I have bolted them from rabbit warrens and love to see them, lightning fast and usually out one hole and in another before you can blink.

#### Murphy's Law strikes again

On our second last day disaster struck with the loss of a ferret. This is always a difficult situation but especially so when so far from home. I always carry a live catch cage in my van for such occasions and many times it has worked for me after a day or two, when baited with some fresh rabbit. Luckily it's been quite a while since I had the need to use it and Murphy's Law being what it is, when I didn't put the cage in the van to take with me I, lost a ferret. The only alternative was to paunch a rabbit, put it in a purse net and leave it at the mouth of a burrow and hope that the little Jill would catch a whiff of it and hang around until we found her.

Luckily, I arrived on the last day just after 6.00 am to find her tucked up sleeping in the mouth of the burrow

behind the rabbit: disaster averted. Ferrets can survive very happily in these sorts of areas and once I lost one for over two weeks. It had obviously been eating well as it was every bit as heavy, if not heavier, when we got her



There she is!' - Steven relieves a ferret. back!

This winter was a busy one, but also somewhat quieter around home, especially as I went from having three lurchers down to keeping only one. I made the decision to put my eldest Lurcher Ruby to sleep in early



September; such a real shame but time had just got the better of her. She was the most intelligent dog I ever owned and I had a great connection with her. Her health was deteriorating badly and after she began to loose the power in her rear legs, as well as approaching 15, I knew it was time to do the right thing. Then barely two months later my little whippet bitch, poacher's assistant and star of many game fair appearances began to be quite unwell and, after some consultation with my vet, it was decided that the best thing was to put her to sleep as well. Both of them will remain forever in my heart as they were great workers and great dogs in their own individual ways, but my old Ruby was definitely something special.

Things however, have not remained quiet for long and Fudge, daughter of Ruby and sired by a dog called Paco, gave birth to a litter of pups about two months ago and they have been keeping me on my toes over the last few weeks. Thankfully, in a few days they will be off to their new homes, all with trusted friends and people who I know will do their best by them. My intention had been to hold on to one bitch I called Bella, but the two ladies in my house named another pup and have decided that he too must stay. I was out voted! See you at Shanes Castle.

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## In The Spring

Spring has come slowly to my part of southern Scotland this year. After a long, wet winter the weather finally turned drier during March but with little warmth in the days. Still; dry is good when it comes to spring trials and grouse counts and building partridge pens ready for next season — and that is pretty much what I've been doing over the past month.

Our spring grouse counts have been promising with numbers on every beat as good as, or slightly better than last year. It has been interesting to see how the grouse react differently depending on the weather. On our first trip to the moor it was touch and go whether to start at all because there was a cold, wet mist swirling around and little sign of it lifting. The heather was soaking, even though it wasn't quite raining, but visibility was just good enough to keep sight of the pointers and setters so we decided to give it a try.

Scent was good and the dogs were finding grouse easily enough but the grouse were generally reluctant to sit once the dog had come on to point. The dogs would hit scent, swing onto point and up the grouse would get and glide away across the heather. For counting this was fine, but it made things a little difficult for the younger dogs when we would have wanted to be close alongside the dog, steadying it up on its point and waiting until we gave the command for it to go forward and produce the birds. That said, apart from a couple of half-hearted chases the count went okay and the numbers were up on last year.

## The breeze was right into our faces

A few days later, on a different estate, it was clear and bright, though the wind was fresh and chilly. Our friend Martin had brought along his Irish setter Scooby: a young dog of just seventeen months: to have his first run on a proper grouse moor, and Martin was not optimistic. Of late Scooby had been reluctant to get out and cover the ground on the hill where Martin trains him and Martin feared that he would just potter around at his feet instead of quartering properly. The breeze was right into our faces as we started out so we decided to kick off with young Scooby and see how he went with the thought in mind that we could always run him with a more experienced dog if he was reluctant to go.

We were very soon disabused of that notion. Scooby took off across the wind in a beautiful flat quartering pattern, swinging round about a hundred and

Fiona Kirk's English setter Upperwood Quiz of Woundales and Adrian Sharpe's Irish setter Tiqun Corrie in action during the Novice stake.





Irish setter Monkey pointing grouse in the spring.

fifty yards out and coming back across to find a pair of grouse, point them and drop to flush. Cast off again he soon pointed another pair, roded in beautifully as they ran ahead of him and pushed out first the cock and then the hen with all the aplomb of a Field Trial Champion. Martin popped the lead on him and professed himself 'not too unhappy' with Scooby's first run.

The grouse today were much livelier than on our first day in the mist. We

could hear cock birds calling all over the moor and see them rising and fluttering back to earth in the display flight that says, 'This is my territory: keep off!' to other grouse in the vicinity. At times when one of the dogs pointed the cock bird would stand up with his head above the heather and scarlet wattles flashing and positively shout defiance at us before flying off a hundred yards or so, fluttering down into the heather and waiting for us to move on so that he could reclaim his patch. Meanwhile the hen would be quietly slipping through the heather, unseen until the moment when the dog pressed her into flight.

One of the real pleasures of being on the moors in spring is seeing all the other birds that thrive in an environment where predators like foxes and crows are discouraged. On one beat the dogs were driven distracted by golden plover that kept rising and wheeling round the



lan Grant's pointer Bruno working grouse.



Georgina Hudson leads her young pointer Joe.

hill, then dropping back again and running ahead of the point. There were skylarks climbing vertically as they sang and one of the most evocative sounds of springtime on the moors: the bubbling song of the curlew. There were oystercatchers bustling about on the edge of the heather and the glorious sight of several pairs of lapwings twisting and tumbling through the air, as they show off to each other and the rest of the world.

### You realise that you have missed a big chunk of ground

Less welcome were the pheasants that were all too common on one beat, where the heather moor marched with rough grazing. Not that I have anything against pheasants you understand, but they do tend to run in front of the dogs and draw you on for a hundred yards or more before they finally get into the air. Then you realise that you have missed a big chunk of ground while the dog was tracking the pheasant and you have to turn back and do it or risk missing a pair or two of the grouse that you are actually there to count.

The wet winter has held back the keepers from their burning programme, so any day when the heather was dry and the wind not too strong there would be smoke rising all around as the old, rank heather was torched to make way for fresh young shoots. Having spent many hours wafting a broom along the edges of a heather fire and getting scorched, choked on smoke and thoroughly kippered in the process I had a good deal of sympathy for the distant figures labouring in the smoke, though with the modern method of cutting firebreaks with a tractor and flail it is

much easier to control a fire than when all you had was a birch broom, blistered hands and an aching back and shoulders.

Besides our own grouse counts we managed a day at one of the Spring Trials where it was good to see a rake of Gordon setters running — and running pretty well. Again, the keepers were busy burning heather ahead of us on the trial beat and the disturbance seemed to have unsettled the grouse and made them jumpy. Even so, Judges Steve Robinson and James Coyle managed to find a winner of both the Puppy and Novice stakes on the day we were watching.

Now, with March running in to April the grouse will soon be nesting and we will have to stay off the hill until the middle of July. Meantime, there is plenty of work to do on the shoot with a new partridge project under way and our special labour force of old fogeys busy building pens and making plans for the shooting. What was it Robert Burns said about 'The best laid plans of mice and men....'? Provided they don't gang too much 'agley' I hope to report further come September.

> The 'Old Fogeys' working on a partridge pen for the new project.



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#### By Frank Brophy

## A Wild Goat Hunt

It occurred to me that I had never actually hunted a wild goat.

Wild or feral goats in Ireland are usually dismissed as a pest species and receive little attention from hunters. There's evidence that they were a domestic species in the Middle East around 9,000 years ago and it's reckoned that they reached these Western European islands 5,000 to 6,000 years later. In Viking and Norman days they were valued as a source of meat and milk, while their hair provided wool and ropes among other uses. Goats are members of the Bovidae family along with cattle, sheep and antelope and males and females grow horns.

Following a conversation with some colleagues about hunting in Ireland, it occurred to me that I had never actually hunted a wild goat. I had participated in goat culls around the Blackstairs Mountains at the request of the wildlife people, but culling is not hunting.

The more I thought about it, I finally decided that the time had come to hunt a Billy Goat – probably the only species



Billy Goat culled by the Author with a .270 Mauser.

on this island that didn't feature in my Sporting Rifle register. Each and every shot fired from rifle, pistol or shotgun is



Jim Daly who arranged the hunt.

recorded faithfully in a log-book along with the date, location, weather, calibre, distance and purpose. That's just a personal foible and leafing through it from time to time serves as a reminder of really good days as well as those that were not-so-good. It also assists in recalling people with whom I have not had contact for many a year.

The idea of hunting a Billy Goat took firm root resulting in many phone calls nationwide seeking an area where a suitable herd was available to stalk. This led to a decision to travel to the West of Ireland where a good friend from earlier times was in a position to provide a day's hunting in rugged terrain.

Choice of rifle was straightforward. It had to be the flat-shooting .270 Mauser. I knew from those earlier culls that wild goats are tough creatures, similar in many ways to resilient African species, requiring the use of premium copper-jacketed soft point bullets. The Mauser is my favourite rifle of all time — it never fails. Any



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The European Mount on display. mishaps down the years were the result of pilot error, not connected to the firearm. There weren't any hard or fast plans in place as to the quality or type of quarry to be hunted. A representative specimen would suffice. I seldom collect trophies and even then only they are exceptional.

#### We eventually spotted a herd of goats higher up the open mountain

With an open mind we headed for the hills that mild March morning. I was accompanied by my colleague Jim Daly who had arranged the hunt and was familiar with both locality and terrain. The benign weather allowed heavy winter clothing to be discarded as we commenced the uphill walk. Continuously glassing all round, we eventually spotted a herd of goats higher up the open mountain, approximately two kilometres away.

The long uphill climb in their direction commenced, simultaneously trying to keep out of the goats' line of sight. We were spotted fairly smartly ---far too many pairs of wary eyes on lookout duty! Increasing our pace had no practical affect because the goats drifted higher and higher up the mountain, all the time maintaining a good kilometre between us. When we stopped to study the herd through binoculars, the goats stopped to graze. When we moved, they moved. This cat and mouse game went on for some considerable time before we stopped to discuss whether or not we could get within shooting range. The decision was made for us when the herd disappeared over the mountain crest and out of view.

Disappointed, we headed downhill to try our luck in another direction. A few goats popped up here and there, none in a suitable position for a shot. Further along the track four young males appeared behind some uphill bushes but the only shot taken was with a camera. Lack of a suitable back-stop plus their being only partially on view was not conducive to safe shooting.

#### We approached cautiously in order to glass the area

On we trudged towards lower ground, finally arriving on welcome flat terrain. At this point we took a break for breakfast before deciding on which direction to go. Jim had an idea that we might get lucky in an area near the base of the mountain where he had occasionally seen another herd. Driving cross-country brought us to a flat wooded area where we parked the 4 x 4 and headed off once more on foot. Half an hour's walking brought us to open space which we approached cautiously in order to glass the area.

In the distance a herd of goats was slowly making its way towards the woods. The group included a number of Billies and we shadowed them from adjacent cover until the distance closed to approximately 100 metres. Glassing the herd from behind a low stone wall, we both immediately selected the same goat. He was clearly an old Billy, limped badly and had difficulty keeping up with the others. His coat didn't look great either so without any further deliberation I took the shot. Approaching cautiously we saw that his ribs were visible under the coat indicating that he had not been feeding properly, so culling that particular goat had been a good decision. He had quite a decent set of horns although the other males in the herd weren't too bad either. All that remained was to retrace our steps to the vehicle carrying the lightweight goat between us. It was mid-afternoon before we finally sank gratefully into the 4 x 4's seats. It had been quite an exciting day's hunting as well as a tiring walk in the mountains.

Back home, a local taxidermist prepared a European mount and it now has taken its place among the handful of trophies on display. As usual, the day's details are recorded in the rifle register and also my game book. Jim made a video recording of the hunt and transferred it onto a CD which is a nice reminder of a good day's hunting.

## **Terrier, Lurcher &** Whippet Show Roundup

Suddenly the seasons were telling me it was that time of the year again to get our Canine friends in the show ring and on the race track for the start of the summer 2016 Dog show and Race Day's season.

#### Tommy Cullen's Dog Show and Race Day, Baltinglass, Co Wicklow, 3rd April.

It was a day to leave all our cares of yesterday behind just for one day, and head to Baltinglass and Tommy Cullen's 3rd annual dog show, for a day's enjoyment with the family and our loyal canine friends.

With the rain pouring down in buckets and the dog chorus singing in our ears, we were on the M50, trailer in tow, on









1. Gain Irish Open Overall Champion Lurcher and Overall Champion Show Champion winner April Dickenson with Cush and Judges Mickey Quinn, Tom Barry, Dessie Mackin and Gary Smith.

2. Gain Irish Open Overall Show Champion Whippet Tracy Gill with Scarlett.

Show.

4. Gain Irish Open Overall Show Champion Terrier Shane Gilmartin with Twister.

route to Baltinglass. As we approached the field, we could see very clearly there was very little parking space left. Each year this show grows bigger and better. By midday the field was full to capacity, and despite the terrible weather, there was a massive crowd in attendance

I met up with friends old and new such as Billy Craig with his winning top dogs, the Cuckoo, 007 and Carlow. Billy has a great knowledge of dogs both in the showing and racing scene, and can back this up with his many winnings over the years and indeed again on Sunday in Baltinglass.

Shadine Henegan, Michael Kerry, and family had travelled from Laois to show their beautiful dogs in the ring on Sunday. All of these good people along with many others had travelled miles to be part of this now famous show day.

#### RESULTS SHOW

Terriers : Overall Show Champion Terrier: Shane Gilmartin with Twister; Reserve Champion Terrier: Shane Gilmartin with Treacle Lurchers; Show Champion Lurcher: April Dickenson with Cush; Reserve Champion Lurcher: Sean Hayes with Sandy; Whippets: Overall Show Champion Whippet: Tracy Gill with Scarlett; Reserve Champion Whippet: Janet Duke with Oscar; Children's Handling Class: Chloe Woods with her lurcher Rusty. Supreme and Overall Show Champion: April Dickenson with Cush

#### RACING

Under 21" Elite: Billy Craig with 007; Josh O'Connor with Jess, Michelle Rafferty with Fly. Hairy Dog: Jamie Howe with Buster, Peter Cummins with Harry, Darren Kenny with Coors Light; Under 23" Working Lurcher: Stephen McGrath with Meg, Peter Cummins with Conor, Charlene Rafferty ; Under 23" Elite: Billy Craig with Cuckoo, Peter Cummins with Lexy, Fran Kenny with Mouse; Bull Cross: Shane Duffy with Belle, Brian Grady with Jackson, Alan Murnane with Roco. GI Open Over 23" Working Lurcher Sean Moore with Speedy, David Caine with Buster, Brian Mullenney with Bonnie. Gain Irish Open 2016 Racing Champion: Nicky Smith with Prince, Nicky Smith with Scooby, Michael Mc Grath with Chad; Gain Irish Open Open 2016 Whippet Racing: Susan McCann with Bella, Josh Murphy with Molly.

Many thanks to all concerned especially Tommy Culen and family and to the judges Lurchers/Tom Barry and Mickey Quinn; Terriers/Dessie Mackin; Whippets/Gary Smith; Children's Handling Class/Margaret McStay. I am already looking forward to more of the same, minus the rain, in 2017.

#### The Sporting Whippet Club NI Dog Show and Race Day Sunday 24th April

The Sporting Whippet Club NI event was held at Dumbo Park Racing Stadium

and what an event it was. Dumbo Park provides a unique combination of being interesting, educational, very enjoyable, and a real punters paradise. Although the sun shone all day, it was still a day for warm clothing.

It was great to see such a good turnout of whippets. The number of whippet pups in the ring this year was just amazing and all top quality. The whippet breed has really taken off in the last ten years.

When we started to show whippets, we were lucky to see two or three in the ring at the open shows. Now there are up to eighteen whippets in a class as there were at Dumbo Park. Changing times and all good for this beautiful all round breed of dog.

#### The Overall Show Champion of Champions and qualifier for the 5 Nations Champion Whippet at Shanes Castle

Kirsty Fyffe with Brock, Reserve Champion Janet Duke with Oscar.

Many thanks to our judge of the day Jed Donagh for carrying out his duties with impeccable judgment and fairness. I cannot forget our chairman, Janet Duke, Vice Chairman, John Mc Stay, Secretary Kirsty Fyffe, Treasurer Susan Mc Cann, Patsy McCoy, racing manager, Brian Crothers and their hard working committee for the running of their very successful first show of 2016. Thanks also to Davy Boyd and his lovely wife Kate, who came to the rescue and gained permission from the management of Drumbo Park for the Sporting Whippet Club NI to have their show at this location.



Overall Champion Whippet at Drumbo Park and 5 Nations qualifier for Shanes Castle Kirsty Fyffe with Brock.



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## Sika Hind Stalking

The new year brings many things, but for me it is the best time for hind stalking, fallow, red and of course the secretive sika.

This year I had the reds and fallow under control early so I could concentrate on my recreational stalking of sika or at least that's what I thought. My dear wife had decided at the end of the year to change the cooker and she decided to buy a new one, that works on a combination of gas and electricity. Unknown to me this was the thin end of the wedge, as to compliment the new cooker it was decided to rearrange the kitchen and I was given the job of making all the arrangements and overseeing the work, this was not part of my plans at this time of year and it was going to impact on my stalking. My time was no longer my own, the kitchen was now my master until its completion. So, coupled with poor stalking weather, my available time to go in search of sika hinds was getting slimmer and slimmer.

Trying to gather all the guys necessary to complete the kitchen is a balancing act, the right guy must be there at the right time and the next guy can't operate until the previous work is completed. So, amazingly in this type of situation, a problem arose and it related to the work top, there would be a delay in making the work top, a god send, a time to get to the hill for sika had just appeared, so I took it quickly.

I contacted my stalking companion

and he was available, so we arranged to meet at my house the next morning at 6.30 am as we had to be on then stalking ground and ready to go at 08.00 am. The weather forecast was poor,, and the radio news did not mention heavy traffic on the motorway and they also forget to mention mist and fog on the stalking ground.

We arrived a few minutes late, but considering the poor weather conditions it was not a problem. I dropped my companion off to allow him gain access to the high ground, he would have a good 35 minutes of a walk uphill before he came to the tree line and the possibility of meeting deer. I went in the opposite direction, to much lower ground but using the same process I would stalk the lower tree lie in the hope of meeting sika hinds.

#### Sika are easily spooked

My stalk would take me in a circle, but the wind would dictate the extent of the circle and the diversions I would have to take to keep the wind in my favour. Sika unlike their cousins fallow and red, in my opinion, spook very easily and the slightest whiff of a human will have them away at speed.

Having parked up and completed my dressing for the weather, I set off with the wind coming from an angle from behind to my left cheek but slightly forward to my right. This would be safe enough to allow me to stalk through a small piece of woodland and emerge on to a clear-fell where I would keep right to where it connected with a gully and a tree line.

As I emerged on to the clear fell the wind changed, now coming directly from behind me. This was not what I had planned as the wind was now blowing directly across the clear-fell where I had expected to see some hinds.

I decided to keep right, parallel to the woodland I had just emerged from and in the direction of a river bed that's marks the boundary of the property. I moved slowly, scanning as I moved, normally I would have a hound with me but she was in full season and acting quite irrational so I decided to leave her at home. She has a good habit of alerting me of the presents of deer, even against the wind, I suspect she is using fresh ground scent where deer have recently been on these occasions.

Such a pity I did not bring her on this occasion, for as I moved along the woodland I was alerted to the bright flash of white bottoms departing from the clear-fell, four at least and quite close less than 80 yards. What was significant was the lack of an alarm call





#### The hind at the river.

from the hinds, maybe they had caught my scent but had not actually seen me, I guessed - I hoped!

When I stalk I carry a tripod, an old in this case but reliable, made by bogpod but modified by me over years of use. I am very happy with it, it has served me well but I am considering the new Primos trigger stick Tripod Gen.2 as a replacement. Comments on the internet are good and as a second generation unit I would guess it has been modified to a better product. Made in the USA or China it looks a practical item. My rifle started life as a Howa M1500, in 6.5x55, I have since had the bolt polished and refitted, I have installed a timney trigger breaking at just under 2lbs. The original stock has been replaced with a McMillan and the package is accurate to 200 yards. My scope is a Zeiss 2.5-12x50. I have great confidence in this set up and I believe this contributes to my overall confidence when I go stalking.

### A small river marked the boundary of the shoot

Back to the stalk, I followed on very slowly in the direction the animals had taken and as the clear fell had been replanted and the debris heaped into rows, there was some cover protection



A long haul to the forest track.

for me as I proceeded. As I mentioned earlier, this area fell gently towards a small river that marked the boundary of the shoot, and at each side of the river there is a grass margin of about 20 or so yards. Believe it or not, standing on my side of the river — well at least all I saw — were two sika hinds looking in my direction.

The wind was not reaching them and they it appears could not make out my full outline or they would have been away like the wind. At this point I had made it to the side of a stunted spruce, this allowed me to relax and take stock of the situation.

I glassed the deer with my Swarovski rangefinder binos and ranged them at 130 yards, they were side-by-side, but heads facing towards me. There was no shot on here as a bullet passing through the deer in front could travel in any direction as it exited the body and could cause a serious wound to the second animal.

### The S&B 140 grain was effective

But deer by their nature never stand in the one position for long and within a short time one of the hinds stepped forward a meter or so. This allowed me a clear heart and lung shot although at an angle as the hind was not square on but facing me at an angle. My rifle was at this time on the tripod and I reckoned I could take the hind cleanly, so I took the shot. My aim was good, the S&B 140 grain was effective, the hind took two steps and fell over, but to my surprise there were not two but eight animals in the group, the other six were tucked in a slightly lower level that the animals I had located but even though parts of their outlines were visible I had completely missed then due to my concentration on the two visible animals.

After a wait of some minutes I went to the fallen hind and having checked for death I donned my rubber gloved and did the necessary gralloching. The hind was a yearling, in excellent condition, showing no signs of any ailments and a perfect animal for the table.

Normally with my sika it's a downhill drag, this was a little different as it was all uphill to the track which would enable to bring the jeep to collect her. A quick phone call to my stalking partner to let him know the situation, a few minutes rest and I began the uphill struggle with my prize.

No too long later, my stalking partner appeared having had no luck on his stalk and of course I offered him the honour of assisting me in the uphill drag. Twenty minutes or so later the job was completed and after coffee and a sandwich we headed home to complete the butchering of the hind. What an enjoyable morning, beautiful scenery in the hills, plenty of animals in the woods and one ready for the table perfect!



#### **Courtlough Shooting Grounds**

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## Fun, Camaraderie And Great Hunting At Beagling Festival In Cork

#### The Beagling Festival in the Castletownroche area of North Cork was a well-attended and successful week.

The organiser of the week, Jack O'Connor's general appraisal was a very positive one. 'It was a fabulous week,' said Jack, 'with a great sense of fun, camaraderie, and we enjoyed some great hunting. Many people said to me they thought it was a fantastic week and they hoped it will continue for many years.'

He confirmed that it will be held next year during the usual period of the season when it normally takes place, which is the end of January beginning of February. Personally, I would love to have made all nine days of hunting but unfortunately could only manage the first two, which were both excellent days.

The first day, a Saturday, was long and exhausting with a lot of walking

and jogging across newly-sown fields, which are energy-sapping and really hard going, in a townland not far from Castletownroche. As per tradition the host pack, the Woodrock and Blackwatervalley hunted the first day of the festival and they gave a very impressive account of themselves. A few energetic souls tried to stay with the huntsman, Stevie McDonald, following his pack for the whole five hours (while others were less energetic and watched from vantage points) and covered quite a few miles (one of the followers had a mileometer on her wrist watch and she said we had covered 15 miles). The weather was cold, the scent was excellent, and the beagles barely stopped hunting all day.

The following day's hunt was hosted

by the Park Beagles from the West Country, one of the two visiting English packs, and they put on a great show for their opening meet of the week. The Park are based in Dorset and their Joint Masters are Mrs Judy Foot, Mrs Elizabeth Elliott, and Phillip Langridge, who were all present. It was a shorter day than the previous day (three hours as opposed to five) something for which my rather weary body was pretty happy about!

## A determined run at the four foot obstacle

The huntsman, David Every, was a tall man and, as so often with English packs, he and his staff were smartly turned out (something which I always like to see but which I do not always



Stevie McDonald and the Woodrock & Blackwater Valley Beagles at Shanballymore.



WBV Joint Master John O'Connor and Whip Marie O'Connor.

copy). His footwear was studded football boots which is a good choice for beagling as it gives you grip on the oftentimes slippery ground. When we approached the first wall of the day he took a determined run at the four foot obstacle and cleared it without using his hands. It was an impressive sight, one which I wasn't going to emulate. I sensibly used my hands to surmount the obstacle. It's rare for beagling packs to catch their prey. Hares are usually too fast for the hounds. When it does happen it's often because the hare is tired or has made a mistake. On the Park's first day there was a kill about halfway through. The hare was lying in tall grass in a big field and for some reason did not move when the pack approached. When contact was made the pack dispatched the quarry in a couple of seconds, or perhaps even swifter. It's always very quick. As we hunted, the friendly members of the Park pack told me they were feeling a little worse for wear because of poor sleep and a rough ferry crossing the night before. They said they were really looking forward to their week of hunting in Cork, a week which enjoys a good reputation among beagling packs in England.

As anyone who knows me is aware, I'm a big fan of singsongs and the Woodrock Beagling Festival is well known for its good spirits and its fun singsongs. After my second day of hunting we went into a nice, friendly pub in Castletownroche where soup and sandwiches were served (and were very welcome as we were hungry following all the exercise). After we had polished off the sandwiches Jack asked the singers in the group to entertain, which everybody did. The Guinness was good as well. It was an ideal finish to the day. I was told after the festival that the participants enjoyed a singsong every evening!

I had to return to work and missed



David Every and the Park Beagles.



Jack O'Connnor Jack O'Connor, Joint Master of the Woodrock and Blackwater Valley Beagles.



Stevie McDonald (on the far left), huntsman of the Woodrock & Blackwater Valley Beagles with members of the Pipewell Beagles singing and dancing in the streets of Castletownroche.

the rest of the week, but Jack afterwards filled me in with the details. He told me that on Monday morning there was an informal Memorial Service near Mitchelstown for the late John Price, the Master of the West Somerset Beagles, another well known West Country Pack. John was a very well liked and respected Master, hound breeder (he sent many hounds over to the Woodrock and Blackwater Valley pack) and hound Judge. He judged all the big hound shows in the UK (including Peterborough) and was a Judge at the Stradbally hound show in Laois. He brought his hounds over to Jack's festival regularly and was for a time an honorary Joint Master of the Woodrock and Blackwater Valley pack (such was the depth of friendship between himself and Jack O'Connor).

James Macalpine, Acting Master of the Chilmark and Clifton Foot Beagles (CCFB), said a few words at the informal service. James said that like many of the visitors from England, he'd been to John's funeral. He gave an account of the eulogy and started by saying, 'John Price's legacy is written in the stud-books, and in the bloodlines in your kennels.' Following this everyone proceeded to the T.O. Park Community Centre near Mitchelstown and followed the Clifton and Chilmark pack for the day. The pack enjoyed good scenting conditions and pursued a few hares for three hours. Afterwards the resume was pretty positive.

#### They found in their second draw

The CCFB's country is in Somerset. Its Joint Masters are Ian Arnett MH and Poppy Arnett MH (his daughter). Unfortunately neither of them were free to come to Ireland this visit. James Macalpine was an ex-Joint Master and so stood in for them. The CCFB Huntsman is James Warnett and this was his first season hunting the CCFB hounds. 'He's been to Jack's Festival before,' I was told by a follower, 'but this is the first time with us and his own pack. 'On the Tuesday, the Park enjoyed another very good day. They found in their second draw, which was in forestry, and enjoyed an uninterrupted pursuit for one and a half hours.

'On Wednesday the Clifton Chilmark had a super day, starting from the village of



James Warnett and the Chilmark and Clifton Foot Beagles in Kilteely at the beginning of a great day on Wednesday the 3rd of February.

Kilteely near the Limerick / Tipperary border. There was a two and a half hour uninterrupted pursuit of the one hare and everyone was extremely happy afterwards.

'Next day, the Woodrock and Blackwatervalley had a screamer for an hour and twenty minutes. We think it was a Jack Hare because the distance it travelled was unbelievable. That afternoon the Park had a great hunt beside the banks of the Blackwater River. We had a great evening of hunting songs in the Rock Forest Bar in Castletownroche in the evening,' James Macalpine told me. 'It's part of the tradition of the Festival, last year it even spilled out onto the street! One pack gave Jack a musical farewell with their signature tune "Old Towler." 'Unfortunately, the hunting wasn't so good on Friday,' continued Jack. 'The weather was very poor and there was torrential rain. The Clifton Chilmark gave it their best shot but it was an average day.'

There's always a dinner dance on the Friday evening of the festival, which takes place in the Hibernian Hotel in Mallow, and 150 sat down for the event in the hotel's ballroom. 'Despite the fact we had one less visiting pack this year,' commented Jack, 'nearly as many people attended the dinner dance as last year. Seven members from the North Shropshire Foxhounds also turned up and everyone had a super night, partying into the wee hours.'

The next day the venue was the Annesgrove Estate near Castletownroche and the Park enjoyed a decent afternoon, while on Sunday the Woodrock and Cliftons combined for a joint meet and experienced a three and a half hour chase without any break in the action. 'The two English packs were very positive about their time here,' continued Jack. 'About 50 of them travelled across the Irish Sea.'

### Kilteely has a special place in our hearts

James Macalpine told me that the CCFB was formed by an amalgamation of two well known West Country packs which were called the Chilmark Foot Beagles and the Clifton Foot Beagles respectively. The amalgamation took place in 2002. Prior to that both packs had been invited to Ireland by Jack O'Connor, but it was the Clifton Foot Beagles that pioneered taking their hounds to Ireland much earlier - in 1983. 'When we celebrated the 30th anniversary of that visit in 2013,' said James, 'Jack O'Connor took us to Kilteely because it was the closest meet to where the CFB had met back in '83. Hence Kilteely has a special place in our hearts — along with having had some terrific days there since!'

James said that Jack O'Connor was present during the visit of the CFB back in '83, and has been inviting English packs over to his Festivals since 1993. 'The CFB, the Chilmark and later the combined CCFB were regular visitors to Jack's Festivals,' he remarked. 'Jack invited us over in the year we amalgamated. I always remember that in that first season it took until about Christmas before the 2 sets of hounds really worked as one pack, and people always recall that it was the shared adventure of coming to Ireland (in February 2003) that really knitted the two groups of supporters together. Amalgamations can be tricky, ours is often quoted as one of the great recent successes.'

James also reminded me that in England their hunting is limited by the Hunting Act, which means they lay trails for the beagles to hunt and are not hunting live quarry. He told me that the followers of the Park and CCFB liked the 'freedom of the Irish countryside' when hunting in Cork because there wasn't the same legal restriction.

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## **Art & Antiques**

Now the winter is well over our thoughts are with the spring and hopefully the summer months that lie ahead. With the intention of making a few pounds we should also turn our minds to what we have to sell.

While I'm not in any way advocating not putting your hand up to bid at an auction, it is always prudent to take stock of what you have and what you can now do without, instead of always feeling that surge to buy.

Many garages, lumber rooms and attics bear testimony to the 'stuff' we all bring home after a seemingly successful auction outing. How necessary it all seemed at the time to take ownership of that quirky item, that attractive chair, or even a work of local or foreign art. Yet it is hard sometimes, to explain weeks or months afterwards, what prompted us to make that spur of the moment decision to purchase.

I'm no different to the ordinary person who likes rambling around an auction room, rummaging for that elusive 'sleeper' which is going to pay the rates, or even the winter fuel bill, for the next ten years. And while it eludes me I'm usually driven to buy something else which looks like it could bring in a little profit.

That of course is the curse of being an amateur who goes along for the run and is often taken for a ride instead. Even professional dealers and others who make their living on what they buy and sell make a howler and it costs them money. But being in the game on a dayto-day basis they can always invoke the old 'roundabouts and swings' philosophy, seeking to redeem from one article what they may have lost on another.

For people like myself, spring time should really be the season to take stock of how things went during the high sales times of autumn and winter. Now is the time to get involved in a bit of 'spring cleaning.' So have a good look around that cluttered garage, the storage room and the roof space or attic. There is bound to be something which will sell. And who knows it — could sell well. Even throughout the house in general there could be an item of value residing in plain sight, silently holding on to its true worth which might only be exposed when two discerning bidders 'find' it at a sale.

## Finds from the 1980s and mid century modern

I know times have not been good in certain auction sections for several years. But premium prices are still being paid for quality item. Who would have thought that a pair of Irish George III harewood commodes would sell for £242,000 at a recent English auction while a William and Mary walnut chest of drawers with marquetry inlay would



Jack Butler Yeats' oil on panel, "Man Reading" sold at €92,000 (ADAMS)



Tony O'Malley's "Field History" realised €15,000 (ADAMS)



Martin Bros. glazed pottery tobacco jar and cover sold at  $\in$  13,000 (ADAMS)

make almost £50,000. And they said furniture prices were dead! Some experts predict that antiques and handmade goods will dominate the interior design scene this year. So it is possible mid-century modern will be over taken by finds from the 1980s.

Modern British art prices have gone sky high but only for some of the big names, people like Sandra Blow, Eric Ravilious, and Kenneth Rowntree. The hardy annuals on the Irish scene, Henry, Yeats et all still hold their own. The two centenary anniversaries — the 1916 Dublin Easter Uprising and the commencement of World War I – should provide much sales ammunition for the next six months or so.

Don't forget either the power of online buying and selling which, without doubt, will remain with us until replaced by something even more hi-tech. It is no exaggeration to predict that soon the bidders in an auction room will be greatly outnumbered by those competing against them through either the Internet or the telephone.

Yes, it makes for interesting times and I believe the months ahead are going to bring many, many more new buyers and sellers to the scene. But there is a need, greater than ever, to ensure you know something about what you are buying or selling. The old adage, Caveat Emptor, holds as good today as it did 200 hundred years ago. Having said that I know, God willing, I will probably throw caution to the wind again and bring home something to give the wife a laugh. Sure's that is the fun of it all.

#### FROM THE SALES ADAMS

Dublin based Irish auction house ADAMS catalogued its March Irish art sale with over 200 lots and proved the usual spring attraction we have all come to expect. Again the power of Paul Henry was to the fore with his "Connemara village" coming under the hammer at €119,000. It came with a pretty good provenance too, having at one time been in the collection of John



An original copy of the 1915 Proclamation made  $\in$  185,000 (WHYTES)

A. Costello, who was Taoiseach in the Irish Republic from 1948-1951 and thence by descent to the sales room. It also easily topped its high estimate of  $\in$ 100,000.

A Jack Butler Yeats oil on panel, "Man Reading" also exceed its top estimate coming under the hammer at  $\notin$ 92,000. Another Yeats, also an oil on panel, "The Well" came under the hammer at  $\notin$ 40,000 which was spot on its low estimate.

A Roderic O'Conor, "Nu Brun, Assis" an oil on canvas was expected to make  $\notin 12,000$  but came under the hammer at  $\notin 30,000$ . And it was almost similar in the case of Louis le Brocquy's "Being," a watercolour which at  $\notin 17,000$  was well above its lower estimate.

Tony O'Malley's "Field History" realised €15,000 while A Dan O'Neil, " Figures in a landscape," an oil on board was appreciated at  $\notin 15,000$  and another Paul Henry went at  $\notin 15,000$ , an oil on board, while a Norah McGuinness oil on canvas made  $\notin 11,000$  and a Maurice MacGonigal oil, a similar hammer price.

#### **Fine Period Interiors**

ADAMS Fine Period Interiors sale in February saw a Martin Bros, glazed pottery tobacco jar and cover going for a hammer price of  $\notin$ 13,000 while a French marble and ormolu mounted 'balloon' mantle clock made  $\notin$ 9,500.

A Johan Joseph Geyer (German) period painting sold for  $\notin$ 9,500 which was above its high estimate and a Irish George III mahogany long-case clock went to a new home at  $\notin$ 6,400.

Interest in quality tables was seen when an extending oak dining table

went at  $\notin$ 5,000 followed by an 18th century Queen Anne walnut veneered bureau cabinet at  $\notin$ 4,800. A Georgian mahogany log bucket with brass banded body sold for  $\notin$ 4,600, a set of four late Victorian silver tall table candlesticks at  $\notin$ 4,400 and an Irish Georgian style mahogany side table at  $\notin$ 4,200.

#### WHYTES

WHYTES History sale, saw 82 per cent of lots sold with an original copy of the 1915 Proclamation making €185,000 and a bottle of whiskey distilled in 1916 realising €15,000.

#### MEALY'S

MEALY'S two day sale at Castlecomer, Co Kilkenny saw a mahogany cased English regulator clock sell for €11,200 while a watercolour by John G. Mulvany made €4,800, an 18th century red lacquered long case clock, €4,500 and a 19th century yew wood and marquetry davenport €4,400.



This bottle of whiskey distilled in 1916 sold for  $\in$  15,000 (WHYTES)

## **Cold Iron**

With the whispered command 'get on,'Jim urged his dog forward, into a jungle of thorn-rich bramble and gorse, the kind of cover impenetrable to all but a hard going spaniel.

Four years old and seemingly inexhaustible Sprite, the liver and white springer bitch, crashed headlong through the labyrinth of dry, interwoven gorse branches, nose to the damp earth, as she quested for the exquisite scent of sheltering woodcock.

Following the dog's progress not by sight, but by the 'rough shooter's symphony' of crackling, desiccated undergrowth, Jim held high the barrels of his 20 bore, and scanned the surrounding furze for fleeing woodcock.

Having frequented this boggy heathland since boyhood, Jim knew the area as well as anyone alive, and knew too the thickets which wintering woodcock and wild pheasants preferred, and the dark pools where teal and mallard fed at dusk. Three decades of pursuing the heath's wintering game had produced a unique familiarity, and one which few other local people could boast.

Extending to an uneven 600 acres, this swathe of land was covered for the most part by dense scrub and thickets and, save for grazing by a few thinboned cattle, had known little agriculture throughout its history.

Once thought to be the haunt of boggarts, faeries, 'little people,' and with a reputation for ghostly goings on, few locals frequented the heath. Happily, this left Jim free to wander in pursuit of game, for he scoffed openly at such superstitious nonsense, and those who recounted it.

A sudden surge of activity within the gorse thicket, foretold that the little spaniel had scented its quarry, as with a soft whirr of wings, a woodcock broke from cover to twist and jink in mothlike flight, against the winter sky. The mottled wader offered Jim only the briefest of fleeting snap shots, but the seasoned rough shooter brought a halt to the bird's exit, with a well placed charge of No.7 shot.

Thrusting her speckled head from the gorse in anticipation of a retrieve, Sprite



Few locals frequented the heath with its reputation for ghostly goings on.



Jim knew the thickets which woodcock preferred.

was given the command to 'get on, fetch,' and directed onto the line of the woodcock's fall, quickly brought the still warm bird to hand. With December days being short and a watery winter sun already having reached its zenith, Jim pushed on, determined to add yet more 'cock' to the four which lay cooling in his game-bag.

### Legs weary, the light was beginning to fade

Pushing deeper into the heath, Sprite and her master explored every likely thicket, as steadily, the winter afternoon wore on. Eventually, with four brace of woodcock accounted for, legs weary, and the light beginning to fade, Jim called the dog to heel, unloaded his gun, and decided to head for home.

Turning to take his bearings, the sportsman discovered with some surprise, that in his quest for game, he had wandered much further onto the heath than he realised. Oddly, he seemed to be in an area completely unfamiliar to him! He did not recognise the stands of tall birch, or the knots of wizened larch trees which now dotted the horizon. More alarmingly, at every turn, trackless and impenetrable walls of gorse barred his way, like nature's own barbed wire.

Eventually, after having walked in circles for what seemed an age, Jim slumped exhausted onto a weathered tree stumped and, bemused, endeavoured to make sense of his situation. Approaching her master, Sprite sat between his feet, looking upward, staring into his face for reassurance. She too could sense that all was not well.

It was at this point, as Jim ran his hand over the spaniel's ears, spoke to her in a low voice, that he became aware of a strong smell of wood smoke.

Greatly surprised, he turned his head and noticed close by, a well trodden path leading through high, but neatly trimmed gorse. From behind this screen of vegetation rose a tall plume of grey smoke and, as Jim stared in amazement, the sound of a music and riotous laughter reached his ears.

Driven by curiosity, the fact that the sun had already dipped below the horizon, and the undeniable truth that he was completely lost, Jim rose to his feet, and dog at heel, walked along the footpath toward the source of the music.

Had he believed his day couldn't

grow any stranger, Jim would have been wrong, for as he passed through the arch of well trimmed gorse, he was confronted by the finest mansion he had ever seen. Well appointed and with columns at its front door, the building's windows blazed with light, whilst four tall chimney pots proved the source of the smoke.

### A finely dressed man of slight stature stepped out

Jim stood before the edifice, open mouthed, for he knew that no such building had ever existed on the heath, yet — here it was! As he gawped in amazement, the mansion's front door swung wide and a finely dressed man of slight stature stepped out from under a sheltering portico. "Good evening Sir" ventured the little man, "It is rather late to be out shooting, is it not?" As the sound of festivities, singing, and dancing, poured forth from the open door, Jim explained that much to his surprise, after a day of great sport, he found himself lost and was considering spending a night out in the open.

At this admission, the diminutive gentleman looked aghast and said that while he had food on his table and fire



#### Jim noticed the revellers' old fashioned attire of a bygone age.

in his hearth, he would hear of no such thing. The weary sportsman must come in and join his guests, warm himself by the fire, and slake both his hunger and his thirst. When he had eaten his fill, a bed would be found for him, for his host would not allow the hunter to spend a night on the freezing heath.

Although he found the situation highly surreal, fatigue and hunger weighed heavily upon Jim, and, after quickly considering the uncomfortable alternative, he accepted the little man's hospitality. However, as the weary shooter took a step towards the open door, his finely dressed host raised a bony hand and, fixing his guest with a cold stare, informed him that although he was welcome inside, both his dog and his gun must on no account cross the threshold. Aware that not all people are happy with dogs and guns, Jim accepted his host's request, and calling Sprite under the sandstone portico, told the dog 'lie down.' His unloaded gun he closed and lent against the doorframe and then strode out of darkness into the light and warmth of mansion's Great Hall.

Jim's eyes were momentarily dazzled by the brightness, as he noted that illumination was provided not by electric light, but by chandeliers bearing a thousand burning candles. Around him danced his host's other guests and, surprisingly, they too were remarkably slight of stature.

Casting his eye around the room, Jim noticed the revellers' old fashioned attire as, remarkably, each man was clad in ruffs, breeches, and tailcoats, whilst the ladies danced in full length silk gowns. His host, now mingling with the crowd, also wore clothes of a bygone age. A fancy dress party, he wondered ?

At the far end of the hall stood a great oak table which groaned under the weight of sumptuous dishes. Having covered many miles and eaten little since breakfast, the rough shooter had a ravenous hunger, so approaching the table through the dancing throng, piled his plate high with roast chicken, braised beef, and fresh baked bread. Never had he smelled anything so good!

Taking a chicken leg in hand, he raised it to his mouth, but found his arm held firm by another's grasp. Turning, he saw that he was gripped at the elbow by a young woman of normal height, who carried in one hand a jug of wine.

#### 'They take great joy in human misery and you are their entertainment'

Putting her mouth close to his ear, she whispered: "Drink as much as you like, but if you take just one bite of food, you will be trapped here in this house forever, just as I am myself. Look around you, man. These creatures are not human, but have danced and revelled here every night since the dawn of time. Call them faeries, goblins, or the little people, it matters not; they take great joy in human misery, and you, tonight, are their entertainment."

Dropping the plate upon the table as though it were red hot, Jim spun around. Already the dancers' features seemed to have changed, human faces melting into something altogether more hideous. Their tiny, delicate, hands, appeared thin and grey and were shod with wicked claws.

Gripped by panic, the bewildered man fled from the feast and toward the front door but, on reaching it, discovered that it was fitted with a handle only on the outside. Similarly, the room's windows were without catches and bolted tight shut. He was trapped!

Turning, Jim was confronted by his host, who held forth a plate of bread. In a voice filled with the chill of ages, the green skinned creature asked his terrified guest: "Surely you are hungry. Will you not take a bite?" At this the dancers screeched in fiendish laughter and Jim felt the blood drain from his face.

#### A piece of cold iron is an ancient charm against these creatures rendering them powerless

His situation seemingly hopeless, Jim was suddenly aware of the sound of whining and scratching, coming from the other side of the front door. It was Sprite. With canine perception, the little spaniel had detected her master's peril and was furiously trying to get in. Utterly surrounded by the leering crowd within. Jim looked across the rows of scaly green heads, and noticed the serving girl, jug of wine still in hand. "What in God's name do I do?" he screamed at her and, in a voice filled with anguish, she replied: "Your only hope is to find a piece of cold iron, or something that contains it. It's an ancient charm against these creatures, and renders them powerless."

Searching his pockets, the imperilled man found only a few copper coins, whilst behind him, he could clearly hear Sprite jumping hard against the outside of the front door. Taking the coins in hand, Jim hurled them at his enemies, but this act of desperation caused only mirth amongst the wicked throng. Again the plate of bread was thrust toward him, as his gimlet eyed host demanded: "Eat."

Now howling with distress, Sprite took a huge leap at the front door, and in doing so, inadvertently hooked a paw over its ornate, brass, door handle. As the door burst open, the little spaniel fell hard against the oak frame and Jim's gun which leant there, toppling the 20 bore, barrels first, into the Great Hall.

As the steel gun barrels struck the hall's great flagstone floor, a shriek of terror passed through its demonic, green skinned occupants who, as one, shrank back into the shadows and away from the dread cold metal. With the air rent by a huge clap of thunder, Jim seized his chance and sprang for the open door, snatching up his gun as he went.

Falling headlong into knee deep heather, the fugitive felt a creature spring upon his back, and spinning around, turned to throw off his attacker. No razor sharp claw awaited Jim however, as Sprite, overjoyed to see her master, was clambering all over him as he lay sprawled upon the ground. Hugging his wet nosed saviour, Jim stroked the dog's head and praised her loudly for, whether she realised it or not, the little springer had saved her master from a hideous fate.

With the pale light of a winter dawn now creeping over the horizon, Jim saw that where once had stood a grand mansion, now only a heap of moss covered boulders lay. The ungodly dancers leered no more for in their stead, in what had been the Great Hall, only a handful of dishevelled crows perched in an ancient birch tree. It was as though the previous night's horrors had never happened.

Jim rose to his feet and with the landscape now entirely familiar, steadily made his way home, with Sprite at heel. From now on he would refrain from scoffing at any who spoke of such 'unearthly' matters.
# **Country Chat**

#### It's a young dog team this year for Billy who finds a 'burning' answer to his pains.

At the tail-end of January I was out walking the hedges and woods in the lovely countryside of Lisnaskea, County Fermanagh, by kind permission of Marshal Wright, the land owner. Standing in as host was a charming young man from Belfast, Louis Greig, with LB making up the threesome.

We were walking-up a home wood with Louis on my left with his young cocker dog, LB on my right with his cocker bitch and me in the centre of the wood with my four-year-old cocker bitches Pippa and Polly, cockers obviously being the order of the day.

When my two were up and running as bona fide gundogs I never really paid much attention to them out in the field, certainly when flushing or retrieving they usually worked together. The retrieve was simply based on whoever got there first, although there are times when they would share the retrieve. Most of the ground back home in Seaforde is a combination of ditches, marsh and set-aside cover, probably much the same for most shooting clubs, but our club ground is absent of forest.

I have a little book which is as old

as I am in the bookcase cabinet somewhere and its by that old stalwart of gundogs, the late Peter Moxon. I remember reading that if you were running two spaniels, one was cast to the left and one to the right or whatever, the idea being, that they crisscrossed as they hunted and quartered, or maybe they turned as they met in the middle. In the old days I would have walked one spaniel to heel and hunted the other, resting one all the time and if they were both fit they could have gone all day. It would have been all too much for both me and the spaniels to have them quartering and crisscrossing, though admittedly it sounds easy enough in print.

Anyway, I never had suitable enough terrain to show off such perfection. Pippa and Polly on the other hand were trained to walk to heel together, but asking one to hunt and retrieve whilst her sister watched on walking politely to heel, was pushing the stress barrier beyond imagination. Besides, with those two wee rascals, casting one to the left and one to the right, would have ended up a right fiasco.

## Soft talking worked then but you'd not get away with it today

Watching the two of them hunting the open and the typical light cover of a home wood at the tail-end of January, they had me laughing out loud. They do everything together back home at kennels, so I suppose it really shouldn't have come as a surprise that when hunting out in the open, one was behind the other. Although the amusing part of it was, they were both hunting at speed in the true characteristic fashion of these little pocket rockets, whereby one was so close to the rear of the other that, had the leading bitch stopped abruptly, the one behind would have smashed into it.

I was once pulled in on the motorway by the traffic police, apparently I was driving too close to the vehicle in front. I had to do some serious soft-talking to get myself out of the pickle, almost to the extent of helping them back into their car - you wouldn't get away with it today. LB is always moaning that I shoot more than he does because I have two dogs, but in essence my two hunt as one.



On the pointer front, I am fielding a very young team this year. Heidi the German shorthaired is the oldest at just under five, she now heads the team having taken over from Tia the visla, who, along with Ceara, is now retired and off the hill. I will really miss not having Tia and Ceara with me this year but, if the youngsters are to get any experience at all, it is vital that the older ones are not doing all the work. Threeyear-old Sally, another German shorthaired, is Heidi's hunting partner, she too has a valuable couple of seasons behind her. The three young English pointers are a new addition to the team and are a first for me, being more familiar with the HPRs. All three were bred here at home, Ellie in November 2014, Jack and Jill in June 2015.

During the grouse counts last year, it was Heidi who had the bulk of the finds, she has proved herself many times over as a good game finding bitch. In fact, it was by watching Heidi that I realised how important it is that there is a leading dog on the hill - when you are hunting with more than one that is. The other four however are young and inexperienced, but it is crucial that individually they too have finds on the hills. I do not need another 'mouth to feed' that is just constantly backing the others. So, and I am sure you are all familiar with the sequence by now, they quarter, they hunt, they find, they hold point and on command they flush and like the good and the great before them, including Tia and Ceara and yes, even little Pippa and Polly, their home and place is guaranteed in the good old Lewis Hall of Fame.

Last year, I went for a medical check up. Now I don't mind telling you I am not a great fan of the medical brigade. Maybe it's the bureaucracy or whatever, but like many old fashioned males of my age group I would rather grit my teeth and avoid them.

A friend once went to a lot of bother to get an x-ray done, taking a day off work and travelling to the big smoke. Eight weeks later, they sent him a letter requesting him to do it all over again as they had lost the x-rays. I know one old dear, rooted deep in the countryside, who gets very stressed prior to a hospital appointment and even more so, when she receives cancellation letters. Anyway, when my name appeared on the big screen at my local surgery, not only did I not see it, but I didn't know such a thing existed. It was only when my full name was announced over the intercom that I jumped up and went to the doctors room.

#### Is that really your weight?

"Ok Billy, if you would take off your shoes and step up on the scales for me please." I hoped that I might hear a comment such as 'whoa, is that really your weight, you have the weight of a healthy man half your age!' Yeah, in your dreams Billy. The good doc took a quick butchers at the scales and then sat down at his computer and started tapping. I felt like a child who had spent all day building a bird table only to be ignored when his dad got home. I took myself back to my seat and put my shoes on in silence, whilst the tapping continued.

"So how are you Billy?" which is the medical equivalent of a shop assistant telling you five minutes before closing time that if you're not buying anything to close the door after you. "Actually Doctor my toenails are turning black." Now I just love the way they keep so calm no matter what you tell them. "Take your shoes and socks off and lets have a look," says he, in the same tone of voice as 'one lump or two in your coffee'.

Feeling important again, I took my shoes back off, removed my socks and flung my feet in his direction. "Did you drop anything on them at any time?" he asks as he pushed my feet away from his face. "Not that I remember," says I, keeping it short and sweet. Between you and myself dear readers, the heaviest thing I lift these days is a good auld pint of Smithwicks Irish ale, none of that tasteless liquid from the bottom shelves that they gave to the youngsters. "So you don't remember dropping anything on them?" asks the doctor again. "No definitely not" I replied.

I once got a friend's 'ride-on' lawnmower stuck when I went too far back to a grass dump, the back wheels were spinning, but fortunately my friend, who does not suffer fools gladly, had his back to me and was strimming the garden borders.

With the doctor looking at my toes and the ride-on mower in mind, I couldn't help thinking that the similarities weren't that far apart. Three toes were black, the two big toes and one of the little piggies. "You will eventually lose those nails but they should grow back again" says the doctor in the same reassuring manner as the old coffee sugar statement. As he lightly touched them again, a little light came on in my head. "Doctor, it has just occurred to me, it could well be my hill boots that are causing the problem, they may have shrunk over the years with too many soakings and my habit of setting them on top of the radiators." The doctor smiled at me and swung back to his computer, I put my socks and shoes back on, thanked him and closed the door after me!

A good shovel of coal sorted things out for me when I got home, but now I need to buy a new pair of boots. Better than the dreaded doctors I suppose.



By Simon K. Barr

Photography by Tweed Media

# **Red Stags in Scotland**

A tremendous hill stag with 15 incredible points.

Stalking in Scotland is a fine old tradition and I sought a stag of Victorian proportions.

Scottish deer stalking, as we know it today, is steeped in a rich and wonderful history that started as Queen Victoria took to the British throne in 1837. Previous centuries had seen much of the British landscape deforested for agriculture and shipbuilding, and with a dwindling habitat, red deer numbers across the UK had declined. The modern day Scottish reds Cervus elaphus scoticus, were originally woodland dwelling and were forced to fall back on the saving grace of the deer species: adaptability.

Scottish reds took to the open hillsides and mountain tops and for a variety of reasons subsequently flourished. Victorian ingenuity and the popularity of the Scottish field-sports of grouse shooting, salmon fishing and most notably deer stalking, led to a comprehensive railway network linking the deepest parts of Scotland to the rest of the British Isles long before the motor car. This also paved the way for a new method of dedicated selective deer management to maximise the quality of animals and maintain the healthy balance of the herd.

Wild deer stocks grew exponentially as their value was appreciated as the very finest of big game quarry the UK had to offer. Some new blood lines and genetics from parks in England and even Europe were introduced to the native herd to promote better quality animals and larger antlers. Balmoral Estate in Aberdeenshire, which to this day is still the Scottish retreat of the British Royal family, was purchased by Prince Albert in the early 1850s giving the new fashion for deer stalking the regal seal of approval.

This year, I decided to seek a stag of Victorian proportions. I had heard that the stag heads at the world famous Ardnamurchan Estate in Argyll were some of the largest and heaviest in Scotland with breathtaking coastal scenery to boot. Located in the Scottish west coast, Ardnamurchan is a 50 square mile peninsula noted for being completely unspoilt by man and designated by the UK government as a Site of Special Scientific Interest and an area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. The peninsula is actually the most westerly point on mainland Britain and thus the climate is of a milder maritime nature due to the Atlantic jet stream.

The ancient volcanic features underpin the soil with basalt offering a mineral rich bed for flora and fauna to positively flourish from sea level to the mountain tops. The deer at Ardnamurchan have been intensively managed for over a century. Benefitting from near island like isolation, mineral rich soil, a milder maritime microclimate and winter feeding programmes the overall herd is in fine order and one of the highest quality wild deer herds in the UK. This selective breeding and management programme promotes the best physical attributes in male and female red deer which manifests itself as strong male and female animals with spectacular antler formations often reaching 20 points with 12 to 14 being the norm for mature stags.



Niall Rowantree was to guide my pursuit.

#### The stag heads at Ardnamurchan are quite astonishing

A typical Scottish stag normally has slender lightweight brows and beams and overall antlers formations. Because generally the habitat is so tough on the hill with minimal shelter and poor food, one hill deer needs to consume twice the amount of food to just to exist than their European forest dwelling cousins. To my mind, there is a beauty and elegance to the classic light and slender Scottish stag antler formation but it cannot be denied the stag heads at Ardnamurchan are quite astonishing in comparison.

Due to average antlers weights being significantly smaller and the habitat being so different, the CIC recently reclassified the Scottish red stag as a subspecies of the red deer as Cervus Elaphus Scoticus. This reclassification lowered the points needed to reach a medal class stag across all of Scotland. This reclassification was not necessary at Ardnamurchan, the heads were already scoring medal class points against the original CIC red deer classification with frequent regularity.

The estate's herd is managed by West Highland Hunting. Sporting manager and head stalker Niall Rowantree was to guide my hillside pursuit up the 528m above sea level of the volcanic Ben Hiant mountain that overlooks the dark depths of Loch Sunart. Niall has managed the Ardnamurchan herd for 20 years and has a wealth of experience in

We climbed half way up the hill and caught our breath.





To stalk this beast would be a true challenge.

deer management across Scotland. On speaking with him before we set off up the hill, his passion for deer and the desire to produce a top quality sporting product was evident.

We climbed half way up the hill and having caught our breath, glassed a group of hinds that we ranged to 850m with Leica Geovid HD-B binoculars. The distance was such that we could not conclusively see if there were any suitable stags with them. Niall explained that given it we were in early September and possibly the early stages rutting behaviour, stags may be preparing to hold groups or 'harems' of hinds. Niall planned our route so we could approach them undetected hopefully arriving at their location with them windward of where I could take a shot. We would need to climb higher to use some dead ground to cover our approach, as is the way when you stalk with no cover but contours.

For once, the weather had been kind. I looked back from my now elevated position on the hill. My eyes taking in the stunning panorama across the loch to the Isle of Mull and its main town Tobermory. The view was other worldly with views of lochs, volcanic hill formations, ancient forests, rocky shoreline and hardly any hand of man other than the odd single track road. This was a special place, especially to be stalking.

## We reached a new position nestled amongst some rocks

As we moved closer to our proposed shooting position, the herd came back into view, they had ascended further up the heather-covered hillside. My heart now raced in the knowledge we were in full view. Our only option was to crawl forward on our bellies making sure we did not break the skyline. After a few mouthfuls of heather, we reached a new position nestled amongst some rocks. Observing over the 100 metres gap towards them, a feeling of relief washed over me. I watched a calm and relaxed group that were oblivious to our presence but sadly without any suitable stags in tow.

Undetected, like lizards, we slinked

our way back over the rocks and stalked on. A few hours passed as we stalked our way around the hill looking at other groups trying to identify a suitable stag. I was on the estate for a number more days so was happy to take my time to get my chosen animal. That day I had resided myself to the fact that I was leaving the hill empty handed but in good spirit having seen some amazing sights. It was not until we were about half way through our descent when Niall spotted a single animal on a ledge in a grassy clearing surrounded by heather. It was too far to identify how good the stag was but we both thought it was worth a closer look.

To stalk this beast would be a true challenge; the ledge was in a broadly open area on the lower reaches of Ben Hiant. The strategy was to circumnavigate the stag and come back lower with the wind in our faces. But would he still be there when we got round? The following hour was filled with the primeval delight of a hunter chasing his prey. At one point on our way round, we could make out that the animal had a more than suitable head so finally, this was it.

The final approach was on our bellies through heather. The topography meant we had lost eye contact on the stag sometime ago. We were too close to kneel up for a look, at the outer perimeter of the ledge, my calculations put us almost on top of the him now.



The curse of the Scottish midge.



I peered over the heather and saw the brilliant white tips of this stags antlers only 30ms away.

Niall decided to have a slow look, he soon sat back pointing forward gesticulating with his hands making the shape of antlers on his head. I now peered over the heather and saw the brilliant white tips of this stags antlers

#### only 30ms away. And yes, he was huge.

## I was in awe of the beast before me

We were so close but with a sitting stag no clean shot was available. I knew

the drill, an accurate boiler house shot would be the only way to shoot this monstrous animal. We would have to sit it out and wait for him to make the first move. Time slowed to a painful second counting pace as we waited. This pause



The gralloch begins.



On the descent I realised that I had taken a stag of a lifetime.

gave me an opportunity to reflect on the magnitude of the moment. I was in awe of the beast before me and humbled by the beauty of the surroundings. Whatever the outcome was to be, this had far exceeded my expectations of stalking in Scotland.

Suddenly, the bulk of this spectacular beast stood quizzically looking as though he had caught a whiff of our scent. His broadside body mass exposed a perfect opportunity and even though I was completely intimidated by this antlered unit stood before me, I focused on delivering a clean and perfect shot. My finger broke the trigger strain releasing a 150g Hornady SST round exactly where the Mauser was pointed. The stag leapt up and kicked its back legs out comforting to me all I needed to know. The charge forward quickly ran out of steam and this 300lb mass of calcium and fur dropped motionless 10 metres away from where it started. It dawned on me with a rush from my head to my toes, I had finally taken a stag of a lifetime. He was a tremendous hill stag with 15

incredible points and a broad width to the beams of the antlers. Niall made the moment all the more memorable by telling me he was pleased I ended the reign of one of the estate's old gentleman with the respect he deserved. Looking at the animal before me, I could not believe the size.

Now, every time my eye catches my trophy, I am transported back to the hill

to relive a part of my week on the western Highlands looking at some of the largest wild land mammals in the UK. I can completely understand why my Victorian forefathers were so enraptured by stalking in the hills, it is an experience like no other. If you have even a modicum of sporting instinct, I would highly recommend you get yourself to Scotland.



# **BLACK MAGIC**

#### On closer inspection it turned out the trout were feasting on less noticeable Black Gnats.

The trout fishing season in the north of Ireland tends to get off to a slow start, usually beginning with hatches of Large Dark Olives on the rivers and chironomids, buzzers on the lakes. The hatches are scarce, nothing like the duck-fly hatches of the great limestone lakes farther south like the fantastic Corrib where these buzzers can hatch in profusion. Usually there will be the odd favourable afternoon when the trout will be rising on the river, or a mild evening when they are taking the buzzers on the lakes and gradually this eases into a more regular pattern as the weather warms and the days grow longer.

Personally, I dislike advertising, but there's one advert on TV and radio which I don't mind hearing and that's the advert for the Balmoral Show. It's not that I'm interested in livestock or agriculture, I don't even go to the show, but I know that when the Balmoral Show is coming at the start of May we are entering the period of the angling calendar when everything steps up a gear and we can expect the cream of the sport.

By the time the Balmoral Show arrives the river will be experiencing regular hatches of flies, Large Dark Olives being joined by Medium Olives, Iron Blues and the odd Grannom and March Brown in the few places that they are present. Stillwaters will be having regular buzzer hatches now, usually the large dark coloured buzzers hatch in the colder weather with black and dark green buzzers prevalent and the big chironomid we call the Grey Boy. The trout will be active and expecting the hatches of insects, feeding hard to put on weight after the rigours of spawning and the long cold winter.

This period also heralds the emergence of the terrestrial insects, the Black Gnat and the Hawthorne Fly. These insects provide a bounty for the trout and can hatch in profusion bringing trout to the surface and providing the angler with great dry fly fishing opportunities.

## Black Gnats lie flush with the surface and aren't easy to spot at any distance

The Black Gnat, Bibio Johannis, is the smaller fly, it has a shiny black body, transparent wings and often hatches in great numbers. The Black Gnat seems to have two hatching periods, one in Springtime and again in early autumn around the end of August. This fly can be so abundant that trout can become locked on and ignore other foods; several times I've come across frustrated anglers on the river complaining that during a good hatch of olives that the trout were ignoring their artificial. On closer inspection it has turned out the trout were actually ignoring the olives too but were feasting on the less noticeable Black Gnats which lie flush with the surface and aren't easy to spot at any distance, a quick change to a little black pattern has brought instant success.

Hawthorne flies are the large black flies with two large gangly legs often seen swarming over the Hawthorne or Whitethorn trees as the leaves start to unfold. They seem to be energised by the heat of the sun and a dark cloud cutting out the sunlight will have them quickly retreat back to the branches until another burst of sunshine brings them back out to dance over the trees.

Both Hawthorne flies and Black Gnats swarm over bank-side trees and bushes, they are poor fliers and a gust of wind will often deposit the unlucky insects into the water where they are trapped and vulnerable. The large

A trout sips Black Gnats in the shade of a sycamore tree.



A selection for springtime - Bibio, Hawthorne Flies, Knotted Midge, Black Gnats and a buzzer for the days when nothing is rising.

Hawthorne flies make quite a commotion with their large legs which must be like a dinner bell for the waiting trout who can take the fly with an aggressive swirl. A trout feeding on Black Gnats normally takes up station in a certain area as it quietly sips the flies down so it pays to have a good scan of the water before moving on. Often the trout that rises quietly and unobtrusively is the large one which has been able to avoid detection.

Both terrestrial flies often bring the trout close in to patrol the banks especially around overhanging branches where the insects gather and the trout feel safe. These bank patrols by the trout can offer the angler some good angling opportunities if he adapts to the situation and uses the right tactics.

#### Terrestrial tactics

When pursuing trout taking terrestrials the most important tactic in our armoury is stealth. Trout feeding on the surface at close range will bolt if they see movement on the skyline, so drab clothing, no sudden movement and keeping low are all important. I like to spot a feeding trout and creep into position and just watch him rising for a while to find out his feeding pattern before making a cast. On my local lake the trout often have a regular path which they patrol and the best tactic is to wait



The Black Gnat, Bibio Johannis.

until the trout cruises away, make the cast to the area and wait for him to return to his beat, hopefully to engulf the waiting fly, this way you don't disturb the fish by casting near him and on a hard fished water where trout are easily spooked this can be important.

The fly patterns for Hawthorne Flies and Black Gnats can be simple affairs, I don't subscribe to perfect imitation and I firmly believe that a simple pattern which contains the correct triggers such as size, shape and colour, combined with a good presentation is far more important than exact copying of minute detail.

#### Presentation is the key

A simple Black Hopper pattern is all that's required for the Hawthorne and a little black F-Fly or a seals fur body, CDC or polypropylene wing and black hackle will imitate the Black Gnat. For me, presentation is key, neither of these flies sit on the water surface on their feet, both species struggle right in the meniscus, almost submerged at times and a high floating pattern will not get the response, what is required is a low lying pattern and the best way to achieve this is to use a floatant such as Gink, melt a little in your fingertips, rub it on the fly and give the fly a good rub with tissue to remove the excess, if the fly still sits too high then cut off the hackles underneath the hook so the fly sits as low as possible in the surface.

For the little dry flies I like to use a fine copolymer such as Stroft and degrease the last few feet of the tippet up to the fly, I know some anglers maintain that this is not necessary but I'm convinced that trout on hard fished still-waters can be put off by a floating tippet which throws a large shadow and on the still-water a trout has time to examine everything before choosing to take the fly.

Sometimes, the Black Gnat fall is so profuse that it's hard to single out your own pattern, so it's important to keep your eye on the fly after the cast. Occasionally, I'll tie a little white CDC on the wing as a marker so I can see which one is mine among all the naturals. When there are so many naturals on the surface accurate casting is also important and also sometimes when the chances of the imitation being taken are much reduced, to get my fly noticed I sometimes use dark claret dubbing instead of black and often I get a fish when the sheer number of naturals on the water stack the odds against me.

So when you hear the adverts for Balmoral Show, don't hesitate to dust off the rods and get out there because the cream of the season is here. It's a wonderful time to be about in the countryside; birds singing, leaves bursting out, daffodils, primroses, blackthorn and gorse in bloom and a little warm sunshine to lighten the mood. This time of year will see me sitting under the huge sycamore tree at the Boghill Dam, sipping coffee and watching trout patrolling under the branches feasting on the Hawthorne Flies and Black Gnat, before I spot a big trout and make the first cast.... Tight Lines to you all!



The Hawthorne fly, Bibio Marci, is a substantial mouthful for trout.



A nice early trout from the Boghill Dam.



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# Rainbows In Big Sky Country

Another rainbow for the Author.

## Montana - in the shadow of the mighty Rocky Mountains where the rivers are wild, the scenery is spectacular and the wildlife is wonderful.

Obtaining a fishing licence in Missoula was quite easy when Michael and I could show International permits but, as hunting is in the same category, we had to take a Bear identification test. This is mandatory since 2002 and is to protect the Grizzly which cannot be legally hunted in Montana, whereas the Black Bear, not always black, is fair game. Most anglers hope they never get close enough to apply that particular knowledge and I believe the test should be how fast can you run!

Most of the guides are happy and why wouldn't they be, anglers doing what they enjoy most and being paid handsomely to boot. They are skilful and quick to access the ability and the expectations of the angler; they work hard for their clients. Obviously seasoned fly fishers are preferred, but they will discreetly tie on 'geezer pleasers,' usually a white upright fly which is easy to see, where and when appropriate.

We fished the Clark Fork, Bitterroot, Blackfoot and Rock Creek ten years ago and fulfilling a promise to ourselves, we went back in August 2015. The Blackfoot is magical as it meanders its way through forests of tall dark timber, an unspoiled wilderness of shallows and pools, log-jam stretches and exciting rapids. Famous for the movie 'A River Runs Through It' (1992) I was never fooled into thinking that Brad Pitt was that good at casting (a fly that is). While most of the movie was filmed in California, some of the 'stand in' action happened on the Blackfoot. There were two casters involved but the shadow caster was a local guide called Jason Borger.

The rivers are big and wide and the

sky seems to go on forever, definitely big sky country. Golden Eagles, Bald Eagles and Ospreys are ever present along with Cranes, Kingfishers and American Blackbirds. We saw muskrat, chipmunks, mink, deer, garter snakes, a stag, and many beavers. The latter would swim silently up to the boat then violently slap the water with their wide, strong paddle like tail in displeasure at our presence in their territory. Beavers weigh from 80 to 100 pounds and are responsible for immense destruction in and along the banks of the rivers and streams.

## We drifted about seven miles using mostly small flies

The fishing day usually begins with a pick up around 7 to 8.30am, then a drive to the put in point where the boat is quickly off-loaded into the river. The

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We used small flies mostly size 16/20 Tricos.

craft is a 'float' or 'drift' boat specially designed for river fishing, 16/18 Ft. long and 6ft. wide with a very shallow draft. Oar powered, there are swivel seats fore and aft with knee braces to facilitate standing to cast. The drift is usually about seven miles over mostly fishable water and good guides know exactly where the best fish lie. If a single good fish is lost we move on, unlike our lake fishing in Ireland where we might go back over the drift.

Mostly both anglers fish from the same side with the boat under a controlled drift about 20 feet out from the bank in a fast current. The practice of very few casts and many mends comes into its own in this situation, keeping the flies afloat and letting the current do the fishing. We used mostly small flies, size 16/20 Tricos, male (black) and female (white or fawn), 14/16 CDC emergers, olive Comparadon (Sparkle dun), elk hair caddis and cinnamon Sedge. Our own Humpys and Wullfs worked well, as did large Sedges and purple Mayflies.

While there was seldom a dull moment on the drifts some memories are outstanding. One morning it seemed that nothing was moving and only the Ospreys were getting fish when guide Ryan Geiges pointed down river: "Some big fish eatin' ahead." It was a still, deep pool about 15/20 feet wide and 100 yards long under a bank.

We anchored a good distance upstream, then Michael and I could see the patterns of sips across the surface as fish fed on Trico spinners. Long casts were needed, reaching and mending to eliminate drag and paying out line in tiny twitches to imitate the insect in the surface film. If not taken the fly is retrieved with minimal disturbance and cast again. As the fish were ignoring my offering, Ryan suggested a trailer or dropper. A size 20 Trico tied to 12/24 inches of tippet was attached to the bend of the hook. I was too slow to react to Ryan's 'hit it' so my rod bent right down as a heavy fish broke off. His comment that it was the best fish of the trip was not meant to be complimentary.

Next time I didn't depend on movement near my top fly, but on the

loud yell of "hit it" I lifted the rod. The fish made a couple of long distance runs before I brought a beautiful 21inch Rainbow to the net. Meanwhile, Michael had caught a Cutthroat and a Cut Bow. This is a Rainbow Cutthroat hybrid with the pink body bar and profile of a Rainbow, but with bright red jowls and the strength and physique of a Cutthroat trout. He caught seven or eight fish on that day measuring 17/20 inches. Trout here are mostly 10/14 inches, 18 inches is a good fish and 22 almost as good as it gets. While 24 inch fish can be caught, that is the limit of their growth. Michael also caught a brown trout and a squaw fish officially known as the Lesser Northern Pike Minnow.

## The Blackfoot River with strong currents over rocks and boulders

On the Blackfoot, where strong currents coursed over rocks and around boulders I caught my best Cut bow. Guide Bob Powell tied on a big ugly hopper imitation with short, thick rubbery legs and deer hair body which luckily I didn't have to cast any great distance. In summer grasshoppers are everywhere, big small, green yellow or brown and stoneflies sunbathing on the rocks were up to 2ins long. What a life, they either get eaten by a garter snake or fall in the river and be devoured by a fish!

From the bank Bob calmly told me to cast about 30 feet upstream where the fast current met deep swirly water. Keeping the line under control I watched the hopper as it tumbled and



Evidence of beaver activity was everywhere .



'Smile' then put 'em back! struggled as if to climb out of the river. On about the third cast the fish smashed into the big imitation. It would have been so easy to lose this one in such wild water. Bob jumped into the river and netted my first Cut bow of 22 inches which was admired and quickly released.

Another special memory has to be an early morning wade on the Bitterroot with Will Pereira. The others were upstream on the main river, but Will suggested I might hook a brownie in a small creek with fast crystal clear water near where it entered the main river. I tied on a size 16 white hopper. There were no rises but I cast as I walked along the bank, it was a dream stream for an angler. Each cast brought up a fish, they jumped at and over the fly, hit it with their tails but refused to take, beautiful fish with big red spots on golden bodies just like Gillaroo. It came as no real surprise to learn that these trout are in fact descended from Irish stock.

The Bitterroot Valley is the site of the first permanent white settlement in the state of Montana. Marcus Daly, the 19th century copper king built the town of Hamilton. He stripped the hillsides and valleys of ponderosa pine for use in his smelters which gave way to farms, fields and orchards. Fortunately, there was no copper or gold to be mined on the riverbed so the Bitterroot escaped the pollution that ruined long stretches of the Clark Fork. Daly also built a hatchery to propagate the Irish strain of brown trout that he fished for as a boy. Their descendants thrive in the Bitterroot to this day.

Float fishing is 25% casting and 75% mending they say. Eventually I got comfortable with casting high, reaching and mending leaving the fly in the water under finger control and letting the current do the work. You only catch fish if your flies are in the water. The most exciting example of this was as we prepared for a bumpy ride down some very fast rapids. Ryan had us fishing out of both sides of the boat lifting and mending around boulders, underwater branches and tree stumps. We got some really good fish and Ryan facilitated landing them by pulling up on the shallows and dropping anchor.

On such a drift we tried for some of the bigger trout lying under the banks in holes where rapid water meets dark, deep pools. We anchored some distance away but Ryan could see exactly where a fish was moving in the churning water. His instruction to cast would be followed by one for the fish, "Eat it... eat it." I lost a couple of fish which tried his patience but hooked and boated my best rainbow of 23 inches on a size 10 Hecuba.

On another very exciting float over rapids and around log-jams which would not be for the fainthearted, I held onto the seat as Michael cast his size 14 GRHE nymph between the branches of the fallen tree. Retrieving and recasting fast he hooked a fine rainbow of about 18/19ins. The boat was pulled out of the rapid with great muscle power into calmer water as Michael successfully manoeuvred the fish away from the logjam. His tying of the GRHE had worked once more which added to his pleasure.

## After a couple of casts it was 'fish on!'

Our last evening with Bob turned out to be a unique, one-off experience. A wide dark pool with strong undercurrents was separated from the fast water by a fallen tree. At anchor about 25ft from the rapid Bob had



#### The Santa Fe railway running past a portion of the Blackfoot.

Michael working over a couple of good fish eatin' in the rapid. After a couple of casts, it was fish on. Bob lifted the anchor and rowed to slow water, then said: "As it's your last evening, let's go for the double header."

There was a fish moving beyond the fallen tree, one difficult but accurate cast and I had him. Michael's fish was well downstream by now and mine followed. Bob anchored, then got out of the boat. The water was quite warm and about two feet deep. Michael brought his fish to the left and kept him in the net. I brought number two alongside Bob on the right of the boat. He had both fish in the net, they were taken out and held briefly for a photo. Then one of the fish somersaulted out of Bob's hand into the river, that's the real story of the one that got away!

In the evening as we drifted close to the railway line we always got a double signal and a salute from the engine driver of the biggest locomotive I have ever seen. It hauled about 120 wagons



Our group at Montana Rock Creek.

and as the first engine disappeared into the distance, carriages were still appearing for about a mile down the track.

They were exciting but tiring days, and tough when there were strong upstream winds or temperatures in the 80's. The 'take out' in the evening is a repeat of the morning session in reverse, the rig having been repositioned during the day. Often we were too tired or too late for dinner but the pizza oven in the bar of the Doubletree Inn was hot till late and the beer with names like Trout Slayer, Moose Drool, IPA and Brown Ale was always cold.

From the initial visit to Grizzly Hackle fly shop and outfitters in Missoula to the cheerful greeting along the river of "Howdy, are they bitin' t'day?" From the excitement in that university town when the 'Grizzlies' thrashed the 'North Dakota Bisons' to the Saturday night 'Roots Festival' where Hughie Lewis and The News was the main attraction, Montana was another great adventure.

## Federation of Irish Salmon & Sea Trout Anglers

Conaidhm na Slat Iascairí Bradáin agus Breac Geal

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## National Executive Council of FISSTA: 'Thank You'

The National Executive Council of FISSTA wish to thank all who wrote in and commented on many of the items in our last issue of this publication.

It was the very special news story on Minister Coveney and BIM withdrawing their application for a mega salmon farm in Galway Bay that got the most comments and indeed good wishes for our campaign which we viewed as a temporary lull to allow space for the general election which has chosen a new government comprising of independents and a very new type of abstention support from Fianna Fail.

We warned that this was no time to rest on our laurels and indeed FISSTA and our colleagues in Galway Bay Against Salmon Cages kept the pressure on every influential politician to include a change of policy on salmon farming to be referenced in the programme for government that was being negotiated during the month of March. The persistence of Galway Independent Noel Grealish TD and former Mayor of Galway Thomas Welby must be acknowledged in getting the key mention on page 119 stating

"...implementation of management plans for a sustainable inshore fishery. We will also explore the potential for the development of onshore closed containment fish farming as an emerging technology."

For the first time, we now have a change of government policy on salmon farming that will assist wild Atlantic salmon and angling tourism as outlined in the 156 page plan which can be found at:

www.merrionstreet.ie/MerrionStree t/en/ImageLibrary/Programme\_for\_Pa rtnership\_Government.pdf

National Tourism Strategy

The government's programme has some eye catching ideas for the future and with their current tourism strategy aiming to attract 10 million annual visitors and annual revenue of  $\in$ 5 billion by 2025 we see angling getting the support it deserves at last.

The national tourism strategy aims to employ 250,000 by 2025 - up from the estimated 205,000 employed in the sector today and we have an assurance that angling tourism will receive investment to enable clubs play their part in delivering these jobs.

There must be no room for inshore salmon cages in our lovely secluded bay as they state:

"We will seek to set aside €100m in additional capital funding to take

the Wild Atlantic Way to the next level, including an Atlantic Blueway route, and the Ireland Way, and to invest further in developing a nationwide Greenway network."

The brown trout and coarse fishing product will get a welcome boost as the programme states that alongside Dublin, the Wild Atlantic Way and Ireland's Ancient East, the government "will direct Fáilte Ireland to develop the 'Ireland's Lakelands' brand as a separate proposition to sit alongside" Ireland's key tourism campaigns. So FISSTA will be reviewing the briefing notes given to our new salmon Minister Denis Naughten TD from Roscommon and fish farming Minister Creed from Cork to make sure there is no rowing back on these clear commitments on paper. Only time will tell if we are entering a new era for our wild salmon and seatrout angling.

The Stormont elections are also completed with a number of changes to the political climate which we hope will impact on the future of our wild fisheries as we await the appointment of ministers to the new administration.

## The Whip and Collar Driving Club held their 4th annual Show at the **Portmore Equestrian Centre**

#### **Classes and Winners were as follows:**

In hand Kerry Bog Class: Stevie Pedlow showing Bog Flashy Lad.

Welsh Pony in hand: Ormond Cool Joe shown by Walter Albert and owned by Karen McKibbin.

Class 3 was Welsh Cob in hand: won by Kerry Glenda showing Midnight Flash

**Class 4 was the Traditional Cob in** hand: winner John Weir jnr showing Rosehall Alexander bred by local horseman Norman Brown.

**Class 5 the Novice Class to any** Vehicle: Winner Zableso in the capable hands of the skilled whip Jeffrey Lyons.

The pony class: was won by William Trimble's Heartland Advantage who went on to win the Championship with George Cunningham's Luddington Isabella Reserve after winning the Horse Class exhibited by Linda Skillen.

Class 8 The Pleasure Driving: won by Joe McAleese driving Pinky.

**Class 9 Exercise Vehicle under 13.2:** was won by Wallace Shaw driving Carvalley Jewel.

**Class 10 Exercise Vehicle over 13.2:** was won by Alex Fawcett driving his majestic friesian Ludo. Alex went on to be awarded the Exercise Championship with Reserve going to Joe McAleese.

Class 11 The Donkey Class: Ashley Brown won the class with Blackberries Firecracker.

**Class 12 Private Drive under 13.2:** was won by Lewis Magill showing Aghaderg Something Special

**Class 13 Private Drive over 13.2:** won by Bellury Hostess shown by Jonathan Carnduff.

Class 14 the Country Cart: won by Ludo and Yankee exhibited by Alex Fawcett.

The Private Drive Champion: winner Jonathan Carnduff driving Bellury Hostess and Reserve was Alex Fawcett with Ludo and Yankee.

The Concours d'Elegance class was Millcottage Ben. judged by Mr Norman Brown: the winner was Alex Fawcett with his friesians Ludo and Yankee.

Class 16 the Light Trade: was won by Gordon Bell driving Bobby McWilliam's Lifford Willy to a milk float.

Class 17 the Heavy Trade: winner Terry Mills driving Millcottage Bill and

The Junior Whip: winner Ruari Creighton driving Felix. Also exhibiting on the day and awarded second place was Mark Presho driving Milltown Boy. Follow us on Facebook The Whip and Collar Driving Club and see many of our members at the Game Fair at **Shanes Castle.** 



# 'Do we have to eat a worm?'

Cooking a rabbit for the youngsters to try, one asked for 'a wing please' and that really illustrates why I encourage my cub group to try food that doesn't simply come from supermarkets.

In a previous article I have mentioned that I am a cub-scout leader. I take the responsibility seriously and, as someone who enjoys field-sports, I use any opportunity to I can to educate the youngsters about the benefits of outdoor activities and being able to make their own minds up about what they do.

Sometimes this brings unexpected rewards to me. On a number of occasions I have brought a rabbit carcass on camping expeditions with the group. In camp I show them how it is skinned and prepared for cooking. I have to admit that at times I have received odd looks from other leaders, but that does not put me off. My typical response is that my cubs know where meat comes from and that it certainly does not start off in a plastic wrapped carton in a supermarket.

Of course some kids are full of "Ah! The poor bunny, why did you kill it?" but this thinking changes when I tell them about the damage rabbits can cause to crops and I killed it because a farmer asked me to. And that's even before they find how delicious it can be as well.

As for eating a rabbit, a lot of children find it hard to believe that wild food, such as rabbit, was a staple before intensive farming and that back then something like a roast chicken was a special treat. I suggest to them that they ask their grandparents if they ever ate rabbit.

Even so, showing them how to prepare a rabbit still gets the occasional odd look from other leaders. But its funny how their opinion changes when they see the rabbit nice and brown on a spit over the campfire. I prefer to cook it



Patiently waiting for a rabbit to cook on the BBQ at camp.

this way rather than jointing it and putting it in a stew or casserole. It still resembles a rabbit as I slice off pieces of cooked meat and pass them around to all present.

Many times I find it hard to cut pieces off fast enough to fill the hands reaching out to taste it. On one occasion, a little girl looking for seconds came over to me and whispered: " Can I have a wing please?" I think that sums up why I do this.

#### Respect for animals

One problem with dealing with youngsters of cub-scout age is that the lads tend to try to be very brave and want to show off to the girls in the group. While I do give out the 'lucky rabbits feet' because I think they'll quickly end up in a bin, I never give in to the lads' requests for any other bits like heads. I asked once why they wanted it and the reply I got was 'to mess with.' These lads did not expect a talking to about respect for animals along with the refusal, but that's what they got!

A favourite evening every year is what is now our regular 'bushtucker night,' when I prepare dishes of whatever wild, edible meats I can get my hands on, either fresh or from the freezer. In the past this has included hare, rabbit, pheasant, pigeon, woodcock, venison and chicken. Many of my shooting companions are happy to contribute to this selection. Chicken





The mealworms went down a treat.

is included just to surprise them.

I simply roast the lean meat and cut it into small dices so everyone can get a taste. As we are sea-scouts and live beside the sea, I also include winkles and limpets for them to try. I avoid filter feeders like mussels, as the sea around where we live can be questionable in quality but winkles and limpets are grazers feeding on algae, that's fine. Exactly what is in the small foil boxes set out in a row before them I keep secret until they have tried them all and told us what they liked. They do have to be shown how to extract a winkle from its shell, as this is something everyone has to learn at some point.

### Crickets cooked and then dipped in chocolate

One of the first years I did this bushtucker trial, I had a number of live crickets at home and my wife was complaining about the noise. I thought it was lovely but there you go — the Boss had spoken — so the crickets had to go. I did a bit of research and realised that crickets are edible, so after a half-hour in the freezer they went into the oven for ten minutes and then I dipped into melted chocolate. They were definitely going on the bushtucker menu and the kids loved them. I did have one child say that she was not allowed to eat chocolate because she was overweight, but I caught her devouring one when she thought I was not looking.

It seems insects are the food of the future.

I switched from crickets to dried mealworms and discovered that these were even more popular with the cubs. I now only dip the ends of some in chocolate, as it is not needed as the fact that others try them gets them all interested. Now the mealworms are the first to go every year. If you have not tried them I suggest you do. As with many things it's the thought of it that puts some off, especially the adults. All



The boys and girls eager to make their bushtucker selection.

More winkles for me please!

my leaders have to partake as well of course.

This year I had a very pleasant surprise when a young cub stepped up to encourage the new ones to try the bushtucker offerings. The group of new cubs (every year we get a fresh intake) seemed horrified at the thought of having mealworms put before them. Hence the title of this piece 'Do we have to eat worms?' I said that they did not have to eat anything, but we give them the opportunity to try different things and if they do their best that's all we expect. Before I could say any more a little girl from last year asked me if she could speak. She told them to try it all. She said: "The mealworms are lovely and everything else just tastes like chicken." I took this as a great compliment. Pigeon does not really taste like chicken but it was eaten and enjoyed. Squirrel pheasant and rabbit does I suppose. As usual a couple of the new cubs took a liking to the winkles and devoured them, even taking handfuls home with them.

Maybe I should add that I have not had any complaints about sick tummies or allergic reactions from any of the kids in all of the many years I have been doing this so that says something about the freshness of the tucker and how it is prepared — all good learning points too for he young one to think about. If at some point in the future they decide to become vegetarian, well so be it, at least they will have a better idea about the origin of meat than many who make that decision.

# **Of Irish Riflemen**

A recent report of the special forces unit with the Irish Defence Forces making history after they became the first non-USA team to win the US Army International Sniper Competition made me think of several of the great Irish riflemen of the past. And it gave me the idea for a series of articles which I will pen over the next few issues of the magazine.

#### Irish Riflemen in America

I have an original copy of A B Leech's 1875 book 'Irish Riflemen in America' which tells the story of a team of Irish target shooters and their competition tour of the US. Even rarer, I have a poster produced by a local soft drinks company to celebrate their tour. One of the team was John Rigby of the famous gunmaking company and I will cover this element of the story later.

#### Timothy Murphy

That reverie led me to think of another famous rifleman of Irish extraction Timothy Murphy (1751– 1818). His life was the subject of John Brick's 1953 novel, The Rifleman.

Murphy's parents were Presbyterians from County Donegal, Ireland, who moved to Shamokin Flats (now Sunbury, Pennsylvania) in 1759, when Murphy was eight years old.

On June 29 1775 shortly after the start of the American Revolutionary War, Timothy Murphy and his brother John enlisted in the Northumberland County Riflemen, where they saw action in the Siege of Boston, the Battle of Long Island, and 'skirmishing in Westchester.' After this, Murphy was promoted to the rank of sergeant in the Continental Army's 12th Pennsylvania Regiment and fought at the battles of Trenton and Princeton. Murphy was an 'expert marksman,' defined as being 'able to hit a seven inch target at 250 yards.' In July 1777 this skill led to Murphy joining Daniel Morgan's newly formed Morgan's Riflemen.

Later that year, he was selected as one of 500 handpicked riflemen to go with General Daniel Morgan to Upstate New York to help stop General John Burgoyne and the British Army. As the battles around Saratoga raged, the British, having been pushed back, were being rallied by Brigadier General Simon Fraser. Benedict Arnold rode up to General Morgan, pointed at Fraser and told Morgan the man was worth a



The Irish Rifle Team

regiment. Morgan called on Murphy and said: "That gallant officer is General Fraser. I admire him, but it is necessary that he should die, do your duty."

Murphy scaled a nearby tree, took careful aim at the extreme distance of 300 yards, and fired four times. The first shot was a close miss, the second grazed the General's horse, and with the third, Fraser tumbled from his horse, shot through the stomach. General Fraser died that night. British Senior officer Sir Francis Clerke, General Burgoyne's chief aide-de-camp, galloped onto the field with a message. Murphy's fourth shot killed him instantly.

### James Edgar – a more local heroic sniper

Visitors to the 'Somme' stand in Gunmakers' Row at the Shanes Castle Fair can hear the full story of a local sniper James Edgar from Rann, Downpatrick.

James earned the reputation of being the 'best shot' in the 13th RIR by winning the Battalion Shooting Championships.

As one of the battalion's snipers, it was his very dangerous job to go out in front of the battalion to keep the enemy's heads down and to attempt to 'pick off' the machine gunners during a battalion advance. He recounts that just before the Battle of the Somme when he was out with a young officer and a Lance Corporal, the officer lit up his pipe and drew fire from a German sniper which broke the Lance Corporal's arm, killed the officer and hitting James in the mouth.

He recalled the horrible 'mechanical murder' at the Somme by the German machine gunners and remembered a local man writing home to say that only he and one other colleague from No 10 platoon were not killed, injured or captured.

James himself was not unscathed, as he was also wounded on the 14th February 1916 at Beaumont Hamlet and, another time on the 1st July, when a grenade exploded near him and at



#### Sgt James Edgar

home he was reported as having been killed. But after being treated in hospital in Oxford he was back in the line again and wounded again on the 1at October 1918 in Belgium.

As a sniper James had the run of the whole line and as such met many local men who he knew and many others. On the morning of the 1st July which he describes as 'a lovely morning weatherwise,' James was very busy, not only in action, but also helping get wounded and shell-shocked comrades on the bogies down to the dressing station.

The sacrifices that James and many Irish men, and indeed men of all religions, colours and creeds from all over the British Empire, made at the Somme and elsewhere in the Great War, will be featured in the Edgar family display of militaria and war memorabilia in Gunmakers Row at the fair.

# Less weight, more shooting

There are many reasons for choosing a lighter weight gun. Obviously, they're the perfect solution for ladies and youngsters, who might struggle with a standard 12 bore. Increasingly lighter guns are chosen by shooters who find them less tiring to carry and enjoy the faster handling characteristics.

**ULTRALIGHT CLASSIC - 12g from £1,900** The receiver is machined from a single block of aircraft quality aluminium alloy, with a Titanium insert in the breech face. It aims to match the strength and durability of steel but with 65% less weight.

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