

Irish COUNTRY SPORTS and COUNTRY LIFE



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40th Anniversary ALL IRELAND Game Fair - Angling Voucher inside

FORTY YEARS of PROMOTING IRISH COUNTRY SPORTS

- it's a 'ruby anniversary' for the Great Game Fairs of Ireland team in 2018



The very special and largest ever ALL IRELAND IRISH GAME FAIR



Shanes Castle, Antrim 23rd & 24th June

To celebrate the important anniversary of the launch of the Game Fair concept in Ireland in June 1979, the Great Game Fairs of Ireland team have combined the NI and ROI fairs into one very special **ALL IRELAND SHOWCASE** for **COUNTRY SPORTS** and an **ACTION PACKED FAMILY DAY OUT** at Shanes Castle on the 23rd & 24th June 2018 featuring:

- the largest Fine Food Festival with Delicious the top UK Food Magazine's Kitchen and Awards and Flogas Cookery Demonstrations by Emmett McCourt
- Battle of Antrim Re-enactment and Encampment
- Living History Village & Medieval Jousting
- Red Mills International Spaniel competitions and gundog demos & Gundog Rescue Scurry
- Feedwell International Retriever competitions and gundog demos
- International Clay Shooting
- International Terriers, Lurchers & Whippets
- Sporting Art, Country Crafts, Stickmaking and Taxidermy
- Dog Agility
- Ferrets, Falconry & Rabbits
- Carriage Driving
- Dancing Horses
- Archery
- Long Netting
- Three Action Packed Arena Programmes
- Bygones Area
- Huge Tented Village with unrivalled shopping opportunities
- 'Put and Take' Fishery
- Angling Tuition for Children plus lots of 'have a go' activities including children's games
- Game Cookery, Fishing & Sporting Books from Coch-y-Bonddu
- DAERA Licence holders admission vouchers available at your local angling shop.



The 2018 **ALL IRELAND GAME FAIR** will be the biggest and most spectacular country sports & country living event ever staged in Ireland with all facets enhanced and extended. It is an event not to be missed by exhibitors, competitors or simply those who wish to bring their families to create very special memories. See our video 'Forty Years of Irish Game Fairs' on www.irishgamefair.com or <https://player.vimeo.com/video/258116515>



**Admission: Family (Two Adults + up to 4 Children) £25 or €25; Adult £10 or €10;
Children (5-15) £5 or €5 with Programme & Parking Free.**

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www.irishgamefair.com www.countrysportsandcountrylife.com**

The Fair is supported by:





Front Cover:

The cover photograph is of Nigel Probert's Labrador bitch Slipside Danzy Jones at the Midland Game Fair.

**Photograph by Jan Evans,
Polarstar Photography.**

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Something in the news caught my eye, a petition with the catchy title 'No to More Slash and Burn!'

This was urging the government in Dublin to reconsider a proposal to change the Wildlife Act to allow for the burning of vegetation in March and the cutting of hedgerows in August and establish proper hedgerow and upland management regimes that works for farming, road safety and wildlife. The bill had been originally initiated in the Seanad early in 2016 but was never voted on because of the election.

So why write this in 'Northern' Comment?

Simple really: one set of generally unwelcome government proposals often turns up elsewhere, like here in Northern Ireland.

I checked various sources, including the RSPB's website, which confirmed that hedge cutting, coppicing or laying is not permitted here between 1 March and 31 August. Their advice is that countryside hedges should be cut in January or February if possible, to allow birds to eat most of the berry crop in early winter, and to nest safely in spring. Sound comment in my opinion.

The proposed changes to the Wildlife Act in the ROI would allow for the burning of vegetation in March and the cutting of hedgerows in August and at the time of writing (early May) and BirdWatch Ireland understood that the Minister's intention was to resurrect the regressive Bill.

The Minister had expressed frustration at the legislation's slow progress. However, I am equally sure that 'frustration' was not the least effect on much diverse wildlife which benefitted from the delay, especially highly threatened nesting birds and pollinators found in hedgerows and uplands.

The thousands who signed the petition agree that: 'hedgerows are a vital refuge for many native wildlife species in a landscape with little native woodland compared to other countries. Hedgerows provide food, shelter, nesting sites, habitat corridors and are an essential component for flood defences, preventing soil erosion and the silting of rivers as well as carbon sequestration. Our hedgerows and upland habitats need proper management, though. Landowners and farmers must be supported to manage them in a way that works for farming, road safety and wildlife.'

This decision is unwarranted, will cause a significant blow to already threatened wildlife and goes against advice submitted by Birdwatch Ireland, An Taisce and the Irish Wildlife Trust.

Many of upland habitats are of international importance, providing a range of benefits to humans such as carbon sequestration, water filtration and attenuation to protect against floods. Why then is the Minister supporting any burning in the uplands, given the fragile state of its wildlife and habitats?

When I last checked, 32,000 signed up to the No to More Slash and Burn! campaign in the ROI. Conservationists everywhere still need to keep a wary eye on legislation such as this. This magazine will do just that in Northern Ireland.

Nature Deficit Disorder - the cure can be found at Shanes Castle!

Chris Hunt, the national digital director for Trout Unlimited who lives and works in Idaho, says that nature deprivation is a real thing. He's witnessed the impacts of both being exposed to the wild - and willingly foregoing exposure.

Some children love the outdoors. On the other hand, some aren't outdoors types: they are part of an entire generation of kids who have no idea what lies over the next ridge, let alone what fish swims in what waters. And Chris says that they are part of a 'Lost Boys'



conglomerate of kids, allowed to soak into a TV or computer screen rather than being encouraged into going outside.

Nature Deficit Disorder, an unofficial 'condition' originally coined by author Richard Louv (*Last Child in the Woods*, 2008), may not be a medically recognised ailment, but Chris Hunt has seen its impacts on kids like his son. Hunt said 'There's a complete disconnect between the boy and his gaming buddies and the world that exists just out the front door. He's roaming virtual worlds

of MineCraft and killing Zombies with an ever-impressive array of virtual military weapons, all the while shouting into a microphone at an online community of like-minded kids.'

So here's the thing: has anyone else noticed this 'condition' with their own children?

From what I've seen it's pretty common around this neck of the woods as well!

What can be done to get that youngster out into nature?

My 'solution' - bring them along to the Irish Game Fair at Shanes Castle on Saturday 23 and Sunday 24 June.

It's the 40th year that the Fair has been running - the ruby anniversary - and a real cause for celebration of everything to do with the countryside, country sports and the country lifestyle.

Bigger and better than all the other fairs in the past - Shanes Castle will definitely be THE place to be in June. There's so much on offer I don't really know where to begin.

It's the Great Game Fairs of Ireland's largest ever outdoor extravaganza - bursting with family fun and entertainment with country sports and traditions firmly to the fore.

It's got galloping horses, birds of prey, gundogs, laser shooting, angling and fly tying instruction, even a 'put and take' fishery for young people who want to try their hand at trout fishing, help and advice in countrysports will be there for the asking.....and so very much more. Vintage horse drawn agricultural vehicles, clay shooting, anglers row, gunmakers row, artisan food, country clothing, vintage guns.

Main Arena action will thrill you all the day, with exciting acts like the Knights of the North, jousting in mortal combat.

You'll see a real tented village, in the shadow of the ancient castle of the O'Neills, with history re-enactors living just as they would have done centuries ago.

There's a Sportsman's Arena as well, where stars of the show come to talk about their special skills and where anyone can join in the conversation.

Hunting, shooting, fishing, beagling, clays, international working gundog displays, angling tuition, fly tying, cookery displays will be at Shanes, complete with high profile leading countrysports organisations. And while there's over 200 trade stands with a superb selection of products, country traditions will be taking centre stage.

There's a great opportunities at Shanes for youngsters to 'have-a-go' themselves at various skills like fly trying, fly fishing laser shooting, as well as getting up close and personal with gun dogs, ferrets, birds of prey, rabbits and so much more from the countryside.

Our countryside and the future of traditional country pastimes will someday be in the hands of our young people. Let's give them a good start by coming along to Shanes Castle.

And 'naturally' you'll have a wonderful time yourself!

See you on the Irish Country Sports & Country Life stand, along with the Grumpy Game Keeper. Who's that? Find out at Shanes Castle!

Paul Pringle, Northern Editor

Country Sports and Country Life Rol Comment

The All Ireland Game Fair in Shane's Castle is almost upon us and, being the 40th anniversary, it will be a special weekend indeed. I love the Game Fair for a number of reasons, including the fact that it is an opportunity to be among many likeminded souls for a couple of days.

The Great Game Fairs of Ireland normally run an annual Fair in Birr, Offaly as well, but this year there will be no fair in Birr. It's planned to hold a Fair somewhere in the midlands next year, but this year us Game Fair junkies from the midlands will have to travel to Shane's to get our fix!

I am looking forward very much to attending this great event on June 23 and 24, where I hope to meet many of the readers of Irish Country Sports and Country Life when I am manning the magazine's stand. One of the many likeminded souls I will be chatting with will be John Carmichael of the Northern Ireland School of Falconry. It will be great to meet up with John and see his fantastic display of birds. John will be demonstrating for the public the noble art of falconry with free flying displays and he will be available to chat to anyone about these magnificent birds.

Falconry is a sport which I have been fascinated with for many years. There are many fine books written about this wonderful pursuit. One of them is "The Peregrine" by John Baker. After reading a few newspaper articles that praised it in the highest terms possible, I bought a copy of Baker's book and am currently immersed in it. Like those writers of the newspaper articles, I can't recommend this book highly enough for anybody with an interest in nature. It appeals to a wide variety of readers, including hunters, birdwatchers, poets, filmmakers and composers.

John Baker (also referred to as J.A. Baker) lived from 1926 to 1987. He spent all of his life in Essex and developed an extraordinary relationship with the natural landscape of that eastern English county. Baker was so short-sighted that he needed thick glasses from an early age and was excused from wartime national service. Later in life he suffered badly from arthritis and it's believed that the medicine which he took for this caused cancer to develop which led to his early death at the age of 61.

As a young man he was introduced to bird-watching by a colleague at his place of work in the Automobile Association, and an incredible love for the natural world blossomed. He began to spend all of his spare time exploring the fields, woods and coastline of his beloved county, travelling everywhere on his bicycle and scanning the scenes with his binoculars. He kept a journal of his explorations, writing prose of the highest quality. His descriptions of that magnificent bird of prey, the peregrine, were superlative. For example, he wrote of one sighting: "I watched him with longing, as though he were reflecting down to me his brilliant unregarded vision of the land beyond the hill. I became aware of my own weight, as though I had been floating upon water and was now beached and dry and clothed and inglorious. I shut my eyes and tried to crystallise my will into the light-drenched prism of the hawk's



mind. Warm and firm-footed in long grass smelling of the sun, I sank into the skin and blood and bones of the hawk...Like the hawk, I heard and hated the sound of man, that faceless horror of stony places...[I felt the same strange yearning to be gone...You cannot know what freedom means until you have seen a peregrine loosed into the warm spring sky to roam at will through all the far provinces of light.]"

The roughly rectangular Essex patch for Baker's peregrinations was about 550 square kilometres. Much of it now lies within the London commuter belt but in Baker's day it was a profoundly rural district, a place where the older residents recall leaving their doors unlocked at night until at least the 1970s. Baker traversed the region on his bicycle using a large network of tranquil, charming country lanes.

To our modern sensibilities places like Essex seem modest, unexotic landscapes; places which we don't become enthused about or wax lyrical about. Baker shows us how wrong we are. He throws down the gauntlet to our lack of enthusiasm. His writings make the subliminal point that there are rich mysteries to be found in every parish in Ireland and Britain. His book "The Peregrine" has also been described by one critic as "a mythic story of quest for a mythic bird that is magically unconfined and yet simultaneously authentic."

The peregrine, of course, is an aristocrat among birds. It is the fastest flying bird on the planet; a glorious creature. It is one of the most successful predators on Earth, perhaps surpassed only in its transcontinental range by ourselves or the red fox. Sadly, during Baker's time the bird was only an occasional winter visitor to Essex. The raptor went through a big decline in its numbers during the second half of the twentieth century. This was due to the toxic effects of organochlorine-based agrochemicals. It was considered to be at risk of global extinction. It was this sense of impending doom which partly coloured the character of Baker's book.

Since Baker's time that trend has been reversed and thankfully peregrines are now at a number in Britain probably not seen since the 1600s. Of course many other battles for the future of the environment remain and regarding this the hunting community are no less concerned than any other group of people. Because the degeneration of our wild places and our countryside can lead to the degeneration of the hunting pastimes which we love so much. Baker offered good advice for anyone campaigning for the preservation of our countryside. He advised us to not be "soothed by the lullaby language of indifferent politicians."

He also wouldn't have had much time for our politically correct, morbidly sensitive age. For example, in his first chapter in "The Peregrine," he wrote: "I shall try to make plain the bloodiness of killing. Too often this has been slurred over by those who defend hawks. Flesh-eating man is in no way superior. It is so easy to love the dead. The word 'predator' is baggy with misuse. All birds eat living flesh at some time in their lives. Consider the cold-eyed thrush, that springy carnivore of lawns, worm stabber, basher to death of snails. We should not sentimentalise his song, and forget the killing that sustains it."

In Ireland the peregrine is “green-listed,” which means it is no longer a species of European conservation concern. It is recovering slowly since the pesticides affecting it were banned. It breeds here on coastal and inland cliffs. Some birds move into cities, where feral pigeons provide suitable prey. One was captured on film recently by a road traffic monitor looking down over the Quays in central Dublin. If you are looking for a peregrine a good spot to find them is an estuary in winter.

The most famous thing about the peregrine is its spectacular hunting technique where the bird “stoops” from high above its intended prey, with its wings held close into the body, reaching great speeds. It is possible for the bird to reach a speed of 240 kilometres per hour. I have witnessed this famous stoop on several occasions on the Bog of Allen in Offaly and Kildare. With my falconer friend and a pointer dog we walked the beautiful, atmospheric bog for hours. At times the pointer would sense a pheasant and adopt its classic position. Meanwhile, a

few hundred feet above us, our peregrine hovered, accompanying us on our ambulation like a dog on a walk. When the pointer made his move and flushed the pheasant there was a great whirr of wings from the quarry and the falconer emitted a dramatic cry. Then the peregrine stooped, plunging at over a hundred miles an hour, like a missile. Sometimes he hit and killed the pheasant; sometimes he missed.

I don't wish to end this article on a negative note, but I think it's important to also point out that things are still difficult for a number of raptors. The barn owl has been impacted by changes to farming and possibly rodenticides. The hen harrier is also struggling, even within Special Protection Areas for its conservation such as the Slieve Blooms. The number of merlins and sparrow-hawks remains uncertain.

Derek Fanning
ROI Editor

'40 YEARS OF IRISH GAME FAIRS' – THE FILM

Film maker Harry Cook, from Image Media Films, has produced a special anniversary video '40 Years of Irish Game Fairs'. Trawling back through hundreds of hours of filming to bring together some of the past highlights and look forward to some of the 2018 attractions, he has produced a thoroughly entertaining programme giving a real authentic flavour of the Great Game Fairs of Ireland. This can be viewed on our website www.irishgamefair.com or at <https://vimeo.com/257966780>



ANGLER & SHOOTER DISCOUNTS at the largest ever Irish Game Fair



The 40th RUBY ANNIVERSARY ALL IRELAND GAME FAIR Shanes Castle, Antrim 23/24th June 2018

To celebrate this important anniversary of the launch of the Game Fair concept in Ireland the Great Game Fairs of Ireland team have decided (for 2018 only) to combine the NI and ROI fairs into one huge and very special event with many new attractions in all areas, special accommodation rates, and fantastic prizes and anniversary trophies to be won outright. **The ROI Game & Country Fair, previously staged at Birr Castle, Co Offaly will return at a venue in the Irish Midlands on the 24/25 August 2019.**

SPECIAL DISCOUNTED ADMISSION OFFERS for SHANES CASTLE 2018:



NARGC and Countryside Alliance Ireland members qualify for ADMISSION for just £5 on showing their membership card.



Readers who take out a subscription to the Irish Countrysports & Country Life Magazine (cost £20 p.a.) will receive two tickets (value £20)



Licence/Permit holders qualify for ADMISSION for just £5 by presenting this voucher. To activate this voucher simply put in your permit/licence no below and present the voucher at the gate.

Licence/Permit No.....

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

Food Festival at the 40th Anniversary ALL IRELAND Game Fair gains national recognition

The Fine Food Festival - an integral part of the premier Irish country sports and living event - has gained further recognition being highlighted by the Daily Telegraph as one of only twenty 'must visit' food festivals in the UK (and the only Irish one listed). Two TV production companies have expressed interest in making it part of national programmes and Delicious magazine has

selected it - one of just eight judging venues in the UK - as the Irish venue for judging its Regional Awards.

Following last year's successful launch of the delicious Produce Awards, the Awards are back, and promising to be even bigger and better. The aim of the Awards, run in association with home appliance company Fisher & Paykel, is to search out and celebrate small-scale, artisan producers from throughout the UK.

Announcing the awards a spokesperson for Delicious said: "From the tip of Scotland to the Scilly Isles, it's this country's farmers, fishermen, butchers and artisan food producers who supply our markets and fill our cupboards with quality ingredients - and it's these that inspire us to cook the best food we can.

We needed producers to enter produce and products they're proud to make, grow and create, and readers to nominate food that's worthy of an award.

Last year we unearthed some fantastic food stories. Look out for in-depth stories on all the 2017 Produce Awards winners throughout 2018 in delicious.magazine, and read what a few of last year's winning producers had to say on how winning has made a real difference to their businesses."

The Great Game Fairs of Ireland team are delighted to host the judging team for Delicious magazine together with their kitchen at the largest ever food festival at the largest ever Irish Game Fair at Shanes Castle, Antrim on the 23rd & 24th June 2018.



Scottish Game Fair 2018

A packed-programme is announced to celebrate the 30th anniversary held on Friday 29 June, Saturday 30 June and Sunday 1 July at Scone Palace Parklands, Perthshire.

The Fair is a major fund-raiser for the GWCT and helps continue and expand the invaluable research and development work undertaken each year.

The Scottish Game Fair is delighted to announce that this year's event is in association with NFU Mutual, a new partnership and a great fit for this flagship event.

Celebrating the milestone anniversary in style, the 2018 fair will be hosting lots of firm favourites, as well as exciting new elements including a standalone Cookery Theatre, The Junior MacNab, The Hull Flush Challenge, Bushcraft and countryside skills, and a 30th party on Saturday night!

A jam-packed programme of competitions, main ring events, 'have-a-go' activities, and many other attractions for country sport enthusiasts makes the Fair a must-visit.

This year the Main Ring is brought to you in association with Brewin Dolphin. Highlights will include the Birds of Prey, Terrier Racing, The Fred Taylor Memorial Trophy for Working Hill Ponies, sponsored by Rigby & Co. and the Clwyd Axemen, as well as some spectacular displays to mark the 30th anniversary.

Elsewhere there's a lot to see and do on the scenic banks of the Tay at the fishing area; including fly-casting and fly-tying competitions, expert demos and tuition and the chance to chill out with a glass of something cool and watch all the action from



Plenty of gundog action at the Scottish Game Fair.

the Ghillies Bar. The bustling 'Fly Fishing Mall' and Fisherman's Row are the go-to places for new kit.

The Four Nations International Gundog competition returns and teams from England, Ireland, Scotland and Wales have signed up with international competitors invited for the first time.

A treat for all Land Rover lovers; the Classic Land Rover Display will make a welcome return to the Fair as part of the 30th celebrations. Don't miss their grand tour of the show on Sunday afternoon.

For advance tickets, go to www.scottishfair.com for more information and 10% discount on gate prices until 25 June.

The Barbour Classic Country Collection

A celebration of the glorious flora and fauna that can be found in the British Countryside during the summer months is the back drop for this collection.

Colours are bright and lively with navy, cloud mist, olive and light grey as a core. Iconic Barbour styles have been updated for the summer with new print linings. Much loved British birds, animals and flowers feature on shirts and printed tees for a fresh summer look.

For more visit www.barbour.com



Barbour Iona Quilt alongside the Barbour Malham Jacket

DAERA launches new Knowledge Advisory Service

The Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA) today launched its new single advisory service aimed at supporting Northern Ireland's farm and food businesses.

The Knowledge Advisory Service (KAS) will bring together existing advisory functions provided by CAFRE along with agri-environment advisory functions formerly provided by the Department's

Countryside Management Unit (CMU).

The primary role of the Knowledge Advisory Service will be the holistic development of farm and food businesses, where economic and environmental performance are inextricably linked.

This will ensure that the productivity, environmental sustainability and resilience agendas will be the primary focus. From an environmental perspective, the new service represents an opportunity for

DAERA to better integrate environmental advice into its support to the agri-food sector.

The service will be enhanced by the formation of a new Sustainable Land Management Branch, based at Greenmount Campus. This environmental branch will be delivering Knowledge and Technology Transfer (KTT) across the key areas of air quality, biodiversity, land management and water quality.

FIELDSPORTS CHANNEL TV TO FILM SHANES CASTLE GAME FAIR

Fieldsports Channel TV are on a very special mission!

They are flying in to capture all the thrills and excitement of the very special 40th ANNIVERSARY ALL IRELAND GAME FAIR on 23rd & 24th June 2018.

Not only that - for the very first time the Fieldsports Channel

Team will have their own very special stand and display at the fair.

The Fieldsports Channel will film and report on both days of the Fair, so make sure to come along and watch all the action - on and off screen!



FIELDSPORTS CHANNEL SHARE INITIATIVE

Fieldsports Channel has started a new initiative, which it is funding through the sale of shares in the company. The online TV show is using YouTube, which is watched by billions, shooters and non-shooters alike, to educate about and promote fieldsports, lifestyles and cultures across the world.

Fieldsports Channel has 150,000

subscribers on YouTube reaching around 8.5 million people worldwide.

It plans to react to fake news online and ill informed, inflammatory media, wherever it emerges.

Expansion plans include Fieldsports Australia and Fieldsports Nordic, to go alongside Fieldsports Britain, as well as films

promoting the subjects its sponsors don't usually back, such as ferreting, falconry and foxhunting.

It is using the money it raises from this share offer for programme development to support the shooting community. Visit FieldsportsChannel.tv/shares for more information.



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

Sportsden, Trimgate Street, Navan, Co. Meath Ireland
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Anglers Join In Sporting Celebration



Just some of the crowd at our stand

Inland Fisheries staff from the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs were at the Celebration of Sport event in the Bangor Aurora Leisure Centre recently.

The event, organised by Department for Communities, gave visitors the opportunity to try a range of sports and leisure activities.

Among the attractions were a virtual angling simulator, which gave visitors a flavour of what it's like to get a bite and reel in a game fish. There were also lessons in the skill of fly casting, with the public encouraged to try their hand. In addition, there were free angling goodies and a demonstration of the fly tying craft. More than 1,400 school children were among the visitors to the event.

John Blair from DAERA Inland Fisheries explained: "Angling is a sport open to people of all ages, abilities and backgrounds. It continues to be one of the most popular activities in Northern Ireland, with local people and visitors from further afield. Also, it brings a range of health and wellbeing benefits."



Making it fun helps too!



Learning how to cast a fly rod.

"What we're hoping to do is encourage more people, and young people in particular, to get involved in angling. Events such as this are a key part of that as we aim to raise awareness. Anglers will know the benefits of heading to a river bank and spending a few quiet hours surrounded by nature. But for young people, who may be more used to video games and computer screens, it might not be the most obvious way to spend your leisure time."

"However, events like this show the enthusiasm young people have when it comes to trying something new. Hopefully, it'll help to inspire the next generation of anglers."

John added: "We'll be at further shows throughout the summer, including the Irish Game Fair at Shanes Castle in June, and everyone is invited to come along."



Department of

**Agriculture, Environment
and Rural Affairs**

www.daera-ni.gov.uk



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in Northern
Ireland

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Department of Agriculture,
Environment and Rural Affairs

Causeway Exchange
1-7 Bedford Street

Belfast
BT2 7EG

SEE MORE, ACT FASTER: The new Z8i 0.75-6x20 rifle scope from SWAROVSKI OPTIK



SWAROVSKI OPTIK's new rifle scope the Z8i 0.75-6x20 offers uncompromising performance for driven hunting, with 8x zoom so that you never miss any of the action.

The latest masterpiece from SWAROVSKI OPTIK features the new VIEWPLUS 0.75x magnification for 30% more field of view.

The CLICKONE function and D-I reticle help the hunter to fully concentrate on what matters at the crucial moment. The functional accessories are perfectly adapted to the rifle scope so that it is even easier to use, and they offer optimum protection.

Intense experiences

The 8x zoom in a slim 30 mm (1.18 in) central tube makes it possible to sight in the game, even at long range. The expertly designed optics combine the 30% larger field of view provided by VIEWPLUS with optimum detail recognition.

Intuitive to use

The CLICKONE function has a tangible click so that you know when you have reached 1x magnification. This makes using the new Z8i totally intuitive. For the first time, a SWAROVSKI OPTIK rifle scope is now available with a D-I reticle.

Individual to your needs

The latest member of the Z8i family can be customized to the hunter's particular needs with the help of selected accessories.

With the EL O-Range, SWAROVSKI OPTIK has given hunting binoculars a new twist

With their striking design and bright orange colour, they stand out from their surroundings and never go missing when the going gets tough.

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EL O-Range - state-of-the-art optics, precise measurement, and ergonomic design

The PA-i8 digiscoping adapter from SWAROVSKI OPTIK: capture special moments forever

The popular digiscoping adapter from SWAROVSKI OPTIK is now also available for the iPhone® 8.

The PA-i8 is used to attach SWAROVSKI OPTIK spotting scopes and binoculars to your iPhone, instantly turning it into a telephoto zoom lens – the perfect partnership for taking effortless, enchanting close-ups.

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'GET HOOKED' ON ANTRIM & NEWTOWNABBEY

Antrim and Newtownabbey Borough offers some of the most exciting game and coarse fishing in Northern Ireland which results in anglers 'getting hooked' on our fisheries and scenic rivers.

Straid Fishery has recently been announced as one of the venues for the upcoming XVIII Commonwealth Fly Fishing Championships in September. This fantastic event will showcase the wonderful facilities on offer at Straid Fishery and will be a great venue for the competing teams.

Speaking at the launch today, the Mayor of Antrim and Newtownabbey, Councillor Paul Hamill said: "Our new angling guide will give keen fishermen all the information they need to explore our rivers and lakes. Our coastal location also means we can offer some sea fishing on Belfast Lough during the summer months. I also wish Straid Fishery the best of luck with the upcoming Commonwealth Fly Fishing Championships." For further information: antrimandnewtownabbey.gov.uk/anglingguide visitantrimandnewtownabbey.com

Very well done to Great Game Fairs Angling Consultant Stevie Munn for his involvement! And anglers everywhere don't forget to visit the fabulous displays and stunning equipment at the Irish Game Fair coming at Shanes Castle on Saturday 23rd and Sunday 24th June 2018.



The Mayor, Councillor Paul Hamill launches the new Angling Guide at Straid Fishery with Ray McKeeman (Straid Fishery Manager), Harry McAteer (Secretary of Straid Fly Fishers) and Stevie Munn (Professional Fishing Guide and Angling Consultant.)

Budding volunteers required for wild flower survey



Volunteers are being sought to monitor wild flower and plant populations across Northern Ireland.

The National Plant Monitoring Scheme is an important UK-wide survey to assess habitats and ecosystems, as well as species and diversity.

Lorna Somerville from the Northern Ireland Environment Agency (NIEA) explained: "Plants are the foundation of habitats and ecosystems, yet currently we do not have a good measure of changes in plant populations across the country. We're hoping to change this, and are seeking volunteers to help create a detailed record of wild flowers and plants across Northern Ireland."

The survey – which takes place from April to September – will look at specific areas across the country.

"Across Northern Ireland, a total of 115 squares, measuring one kilometre by one kilometre, have been randomly selected. These represent all types of terrain and habitats. We're asking for volunteers to select a square near them to monitor. If there are currently no suitable squares, you can register on the website and get notified when a square becomes available in your area. Volunteers will be provided with a survey pack."

For more information, to find out which squares are available near you, or to sign up as a volunteer, log on to the National Plant Monitoring Scheme website at: <http://www.npms.org.uk>.

STEVIE MUNN JOINS GUIDELINE

Well known professional fly fisher, qualified Angling guide and fly casting instructor Stevie Munn has recently joined and fly tackle giants Guideline.

Guideline was originally a Norwegian fly fishing brand, which has designed and developed fly fishing equipment and the Guideline brand was established in 1993. In 2001, they established their Swedish office and expanded an international business.

From the first Guideline fly rods and the ground-breaking shooting heads introduced under the name Power Taper,TM the product range has grown to contain almost anything you need in modern fly fishing.

Stevie says: "Guideline take great pride in designing and developing all tackle and clothing in-house from idea to prototype, testing and final production, selling and distributing to more than 25 countries."

"I am now part of their power team and will be promoting their fantastic products 'designed for all fly fishers by fly fishers.'"





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Birchwood Trout Fishery - the spot for fine fishing and so much more!

Birchwood Trout Fishery is situated just outside the tranquil village of Drumquin, County Tyrone and comprises four well stocked rainbow trout lakes set in rolling hills with wild hare, deer, various birds, mallard and buzzards are regularly spotted.

Mark Tierney explains why there's a real buzz about Birchwood Trout Fishery in the angling world:

"Lake 1 - is an all method lake, perfect for families to fish bait or as a training platform for beginner fly fishing anglers. Lakes 2 and 3 - are well stocked with trout from 2 to 16 lbs and, with Birchwood's own bore well, water quality is of the highest order. Lake 4 - has only been opened this year. It's a 4 acre lake averaging 26 ft deep, stocked with high quality triploid rainbow trout weighing 5 to 18 pounds. Visitors regularly land four or more 10lb fish each visit - a real test of their ability and knot tying skills!"

The Fishery has a large carpark boasting 2 tarmac disabled parking bays and paths to stands (also tarred) on two of the lakes. There are also 60 wooden platforms, just the job to make sure that tackle is kept clean, as well as providing anglers with good footing.

Mark outlined what anglers would find when they visited at Birchwood Fishery:

"Our recently extended lot cabin boasts a pot belly cast iron stove which is used every day for burning logs, so there's always a warm welcome. Importantly, qualified angling coaches up to level 2 certified are there to help with instruction. All of our staff are trained and have access NI and first aid should any problems arise.

"Tea and coffee are free of charge and we have barbecue facilities available too. Fresh sandwiches are delivered daily from a local company and we have a well stocked cabinet of crisps, minerals and chocolate.



A nice fish for this happy angler at Birchwood Trout Fishery

"We also have rods for hire and an extensive fly tying and tackle shop with tens of thousands of flies for sale to accommodate all angling tastes. Toilets on site with more being added, and each is suitable for anyone with disabilities."

Birchwood Trout Fishery opens from 8am until dusk, Thursday through to Sunday and public holidays as well. Bookings are also welcome from groups for various training days or even a friendly group competition. In fact, the Fishery hosts a number of charity competitions every year, the most recent being for cystic fibrosis when a massive £1800 was raised!

Glamping Pods are on their way to Birchwood too, so keep an eye on their

Facebook page for further updates. The Pods are expected to be operational by July and are sure to be very popular especially from visitors travelling to the area.

Mark added: "We welcome everyone from all backgrounds or whatever their angling ability, and we pride ourselves on being able to meet whatever demands our customers have - and all queries are welcomed. So why not pop Birchwood Trout Fishery's postcode - BT784PF - into your SatNav and join us for some fine angling in a lovely setting at Birchwood Trout Fishery. You'll be very welcome!"

For more information please call 02882831526 or 07712395586.

Email: info@birchwoodfishery.co.uk

Alastair (Grumpy Game Keeper) Beattie Retires

Well known Game Keeper Alastair Beattie (AKA The Grumpy Game Keeper) has finally decided to hang up his tweeds. The photo shows Alastair standing behind a magnificent garden seat - the wrought ironwork says 'Grumpy Gamekeeper' of course alongside the huge group which gathered to enjoy the sunniest day of the year so far!

Commenting on his retirement, Alastair remarked how much he had enjoyed meeting Guns, Beaters, Pickers-up and so many others over the years, many of whom he was delighted to say were now firm friends.

Alastair will be on our magazine's stand at the Irish Game Fair at Shanes Castle on 23rd and 24th June - complete with his "Grumpy Game Keeper" T-shirt. Please do come along and say hello!



The large gathering wished Alastair a long and very happy retirement



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Countryside Alliance



PSNI Set Date to End Paper Firearms Applications

In January 2017, the Police Service of Northern Ireland's Firearms and Explosives Branch introduced a new online application process for anyone applying for initial/re-grant and variation of a firearm certificate. At that time they made a commitment to keep a dual process of both online and paper for a minimum of six months.

PSNI FEB has now announced it will cease to accept paper applications from 9 July 2018. PSNI FEB recognised the need for a dual system which was required whilst the online system was fully developed. However, continuing to use a dual system (paper based and online) is inefficient as it has prevented Firearms Licensing from effectively delivering the benefits of the new online system which has led to more backlogs on all applications and also prevents further planned improvements for the future.

PSNI FEB has continued to engage with CAI throughout the development of the online process and we (together with other stakeholders) were recently asked to attend a workshop to go through some of the forms pertinent to the 'new' system.

PSNI FEB has acted pretty swiftly to queries and concerns posed by firearms applicants in relation to the new system. A number of roadshows were held last year to introduce the new system and in conjunction with NI Direct, PSNI FEB will be hosting roadshows once again this summer to allow firearm certificate holders, dealers and target club members the opportunity to see how the online application process works. These will be advertised in due course.

PSNI FEB also provided 60 internet enabled computers to firearms dealers and target clubs across Northern Ireland which in turn, will enable many firearm certificate holders to seek assistance and complete the online application whilst on their premises. CAI were one of the recipients of these computers and we are happy to assist our members as required.

Detailed guidelines have also been produced to assist applicants with their online forms and there is a 'Frequently Asked Questions' section; both located in the Firearms section of the website. A short YouTube film has also been developed which allows members of the public to go through the online process. It can be viewed at

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=btG2sSnyrJs>

There has been a lot of scaremongering in respect of the online system but please be assured help is at hand should you need it.

Getting Ready for GDPR Deadline!

On 25 May 2018, the EU's General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) rules will become law and Countryside Alliance Ireland (CAI) have been working hard to ensure we are ready and compliant!

GDPR sets the bar high for how we and our organisations look after the personal data of our customers (members), our staff and ourselves.

Countryside Alliance Ireland needs to keep certain information about our members to allow us to keep them up-to-date with our activities. In collecting this information, we are acting as a data controller and, by law, we are required to provide our members with information about us, about why and how we use members' data, and about the rights members' have over their data.

From 25 May, all CAI members (both new and those who are renewing) will receive a factsheet – 'Your Personal Data' which outlines what data we collect, why we collect this information, what we do with personal information, how long do we keep information for, your rights over your information and your right to complain. In essence, CAI wish to assure our members that we

handle their data very carefully and if they require any additional information, please contact us or go to www.caireland.org

Success Down Under Highlights Poor Decision to Exclude Shooting at 2022 Commonwealth Games

The decision to cut shooting from the Commonwealth Games in 2022 has attracted further condemnation after a fantastic showing by the Home Nations' athletes at this year's games. In total, 24 medals were won by shooters from England, Northern Ireland, Isle of Man, Scotland and Wales, working out at over 10% of the medals being brought back home. The Countryside Alliance congratulates each and every winner and competitor, who have once again demonstrated that as well as being accessible to all at the grassroots level, shooting is a sport at which British athletes excel.

The decision to exclude the sport of shooting was originally made on the basis that the National Shooting Centre at Bisley is too far away from Birmingham – even though the Manchester games in 2002 managed to incorporate the sport at Bisley and the centre is ready and willing to host the Games. However, the failure to include shooting means more than missed medal opportunities and our athletes losing the chance to compete in front of a home crowd.

Birmingham's history is entwined with the history of shooting sports and gun making, housing one of only two Proof Houses in the UK. The first gun manufacturers came to Birmingham in the 1600s, giving the city's famous Gun Quarter its name. It would be a disgrace for a city so rich in gun making history to turn its back on its roots. Furthermore, Birmingham 2022 have announced that they will be building a new aquatic centre for the games and the Alliance questions why a proposal to build an Olympic standard shooting grounds in the Midlands has not been advanced further. The exclusion of shooting has the potential to disrupt the funding of our sport, casting competitive shooting around the world into an era of uncertainty.

The Alliance strongly believes both the Birmingham Commonwealth Games Committee and the Commonwealth Games Federation need to reconsider and reinstate shooting to its rightful place at the 2022 Commonwealth Games. The success of our shooters deserves all the support and resources that the Government can provide and will be writing to both organisations as well as the Sports Minister, Tracey Crouch MP, to highlight our shooters' medal haul and ask how they intend to support shooting success in future Commonwealth Games.

Be Social Media Aware

It saddens and concerns us to feel the need once again to broach the subject of social media. More so, the thoughtless and reckless use of this communication medium; which although many see as vital to today's society may also be viewed as a curse (anti-social media)!

The written word, in plain sight, perhaps with accompanying photos is very hard to disregard or eliminate once 'posted' and the 'user' albeit with their best intentions may unwittingly be planning their own downfall.

CAI has had to intervene frequently to 'posts' on Facebook, whereby inappropriate information has been 'shared,' sometimes, giving fuel to the 'antis' who would wish to see a ban on many of our legitimate sporting activities.

Please think carefully about what information you are sharing with the world. No one may deny you the right to enjoy your legitimate country sports activities but we must all conduct ourselves to ensure we are beyond reproach. Let's take the 'anti' out of our social media posts.



Incorporating The Irish Game
Protection Association

Countryside Alliance Ireland is a highly effective and professional rural campaigning organisation. We promote and protect all country sports interests at the very heart of Government decision-making and in the media.

Countryside Alliance Ireland is the only organisation that campaigns for and protects all country sports throughout Ireland, working closely with a broad range of partner organisations.

We have developed a powerful voice that is making a real difference.

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For more information please contact Michael Wade, General Manager for your information pack and brochure.

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The Young Irish Country Sports Writer of the Year Competition

CAI is delighted to support Irish Country Sports and Country Life magazine's writing competition. As such, we are adding to the prizes by offering the competition winner a year's free under 17 membership with Countryside Alliance Ireland.

With the ever increasing use of social media and other less traditional communication forums, CAI is delighted that it's back to basics and good old fashioned writing! Good luck to all entrants.

National Rural Crime Survey

It is three years since the last National Rural Crime Survey in the UK revealed the huge cost of crime to rural communities – both financial, at £800 million per year and fear, with chronic under-reporting, anger and frustration at the police and government.

The National Rural Crime Network produced a series of recommendations and in many areas, the police took steps to improve matters. So, now, they want to know what's changed – what is the true picture of crime and anti-social behaviour in rural communities and the impact it has where you live or work.

The Countryside Alliance is backing this important survey and is urging our members, supporters and anyone living or working in a rural community to spare a few minutes to complete the survey. The results will provide a clear picture of what has improved, what challenges remain and what more government, police forces and organisations can do to support the most isolated parts of the country which is why it is important you take part to ensure your voice is heard. To complete the survey - <https://www.surveymoz.com/s3/4247493/Rural-Crime-Survey-2018>

Behind the Scenes – Actively Working on Your behalf

CAI has been busy working away behind the scenes responding to a number of consultations over the past few months. This may not be the most glamorous of work but it is however necessary. We must ensure we stay abreast and influence any proposed changes to legislation or practices and to ensure you, our members', views are heard.

These consultations have covered a wide range of subjects including the 'Department's Response to the TB Strategic Partnership Group's Recommendations to Eradicate Bovine Tuberculosis (bTB) in Northern Ireland,' 'Scoping a new forestry plan for Sperrin forests and woodland,' 'Reducing Wildfires in the Countryside' (NI) and the Derogation for pest birds under the EU Birds Directive and the Derogation process (R of I).

Irish Deer Management Forum

Countryside Alliance Ireland was asked to attend a meeting of the Irish Deer Management Forum on 27 March 2018 in Newtownmountkennedy. Matters for discussion included mandatory training following a statement from the Minister back in November 2017. Going forward, the forum will discuss what competencies are required and how such a system will be implemented.

CAI welcomes the opportunity to engage in this very worthwhile forum and shall endeavour to provide a stable and unbiased approach to problems and issues that may arise going forward.

Stay warm and dry with Schöffel's waistcoats

Countryside specialist Schöffel Country's Sedbergh waistcoats blend technology and tradition, making them ideal for any discerning gentleman's outdoor wardrobe.

Designed to keep you dry when there's a chill in the air, since it's made from 100% lambswool and boasts 40g loft-filled quilt, the Sedbergh also boasts a moisture and stain-repellent Teflon finish.

Ideal for handling anything the British weather can throw at it, the waistcoats also offer the style associated with all of Schöffel's clothing and countrywear.

The look is enhanced by Alcantara-lined plaquette and ribbed tweed back collar plus the choice of two tweeds: Sandringham and Windsor.

For functionality, look no further than the waistcoat's front two-way zip and press pop closure, its microfleece-lined hand warming pockets, open-access chest pocket plus two external flap-covered pockets. There are even two additional zip security pockets inside. Available in sizes from XS to XXXL RRP: £249.95

To find out more about Schöffel Country, visit www.schoffel.co.uk



DAERA outlines progress in tackling ammonia

The Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA) has announced further progress in its work to help farmers better protect the environment from the impact of ammonia.

The move is in response to the "Making Ammonia Visible" report produced by the Expert Working Group on Sustainable Agricultural Land Management for Northern Ireland, which made a series of recommendations on the issue.

David Small, DAERA's Director of Environment, Marine and Fisheries Group said the challenge facing both farmers and the Department on ammonia highlighted the importance of a balanced approach which supports a thriving and prosperous agri-food industry whilst protecting our environment.

"Ammonia pollution, and the associated nitrogen deposition, is damaging our environment and our most sensitive wildlife habitats. In Northern Ireland, agriculture is responsible for 93% of the ammonia emissions, mainly from slurry and fertiliser management and application. To prevent further damage and to meet national and international statutory obligations, we must start working to reduce our levels of ammonia," Mr Small explained.

"Our farmers are the custodians of the land and, as such, we want to work in partnership with them to deliver a win-win for farmers and the environment with improved biodiversity, air and water quality and profitable farm businesses. Working together to

tackle pollution is nothing new. There is a history of the Department and farmers working in collaboration to address key environmental challenges.

"The document we have published today is an initial position on the Expert Working Group's recommendations. We are fully aware the Group and the wider stakeholder community have emphasised the need for a plan on ammonia to be developed in partnership. We have taken this on board and want to work as closely as possible with stakeholders to develop a way forward on this vital challenge for the local agri-food and environment sectors," Mr Small added.

Work is already under way. DAERA has established an Ammonia Project Board which met with stakeholders earlier this year to discuss the challenge of ammonia. Further stakeholder forums for agriculture and environment organisations are planned throughout 2018 at which evidence will be gathered to inform the eventual Action Plan on Ammonia. The next stakeholder forum will take place in June.

"The task ahead is for us to work closely with the agri-food and environment sectors over the coming weeks and months to develop our detailed Action Plan on ammonia, ahead of a consultation on the draft Action Plan during 2018. Our new approach must help realise our vision for a better, healthier environment alongside a thriving and sustainable agri-food sector," Mr Small concluded.

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COUNTRY SPORTS IRELAND

Country Sports Ireland Deer Stalking Training Course accepted by Coillte

Country Sports Ireland is delighted to have received confirmation that our Deer Stalking Training Course is now acceptable to Coillte for any person hunting deer under licence on Coillte lands.

By the time this article is printed Coillte will have amended the relevant documentation and company website to reflect this new policy.

Country Sports Ireland member's insurance has been accepted by Coillte for many years and now that they accept the Country Sports Ireland Deer Stalking Training Course we are truly a one-stop-shop for all stalkers wishing to hunt on state owned forestry in Ireland.

Training Events – outstanding success!

Country Sports Ireland was very busy on the weekend of 14th & 15th of April - delivering 2 excellent and really well supported training courses at the Midlands National Shooting Centre of Ireland, Tullamore.

On Saturday 14th April we were delighted to be able to deliver our first Deer Stalking Training Course which is now accepted by Coillte.



Our Chief Executive Ronan Gorman, Firearms Advisor JP Craven and Deer Advisor David Dunne delivered a comprehensive and really well received presentation on deer law, safety, species identification, ballistics and shooting performance. Attendees then undertook a written assessment, simulated stalk and shooting test.

On Sunday 15th April the same team were joined by Mike Johnson from MacEoin Ltd who are a lead-ing supplier of predator control equipment. Mike delivered an excellent presentation on the most effi-cient (and lawful) use of traps and snares which was really well received.



Mike Johnson speaking to the group.



This complimented excellent presentations from Ronan, JP and David on law, safety, shooting performance and success in the field. Finally attendees were able to hone their shooting skills on the range and hunting skills on a simulated hunt.

Feedback from everyone who attended these events has been incredible and we are very grateful for the support of all those who attended.



Pictured after the Fox Course.

Deer Advisor Announced!

Country Sports Ireland is delighted to announce the appointment of David Dunne to the role of Deer Advisor with immediate effect.

From Roscrea, Co. Tipperary, David Dunne has been a very active stalker for more than 20 years and has been involved in professional deer culls and shooting in many European countries. David has also delivered highly regarded deer training courses and rifle shooting tuition for over 10 years and has worked in the firearms trade and held offices, including chairman of other country sports organisations.



David Dunne - CSI's Deer Advisor.

Speaking following his appointment Ronan Gorman Chief Executive Country Sports Ireland said: "We are delighted that someone with David Dunne's knowledge and experience has agreed to take on the important role of Deer Advisor to Country Sports Ireland. There is absolutely no doubt that he is one of the leading figures in deer stalking and deer stalker training in Ireland and his substantial knowledge and experience in this area will help Country Sports Ireland to further develop our Deer Programme and to offer members unrivalled access to training, events and expert advice.

Commenting on his appointment David Dunne said: "I have been a member and supporter of Country Sports Ireland for a number of years and have been really impressed with the organisation's expertise and grass roots, member focused approach. I am delighted now to be in a position to work with other active and dedicated shooting experts in the Country Sports Ireland team to provide additional support and advice to Country Sports Ireland and its rapidly growing membership."

Dates for forthcoming courses:

- 16th June** Deer Stalking Training Course, Midlands National Shooting Centre, Tullamore, Co. Offaly
- 7th July** Fox Control Training Course, Creggagh Field Target Club, Draperstown, Co. Derry
- 21st July** Deer Stalking Training Course, Midlands National Shooting Centre, Tullamore

For more information contact Country Sports Ireland

Email ronan@countrysportsireland.org
www.countrysportsireland.org

Phone: 07542 111542 087 6509598

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Hull thickness 8mm
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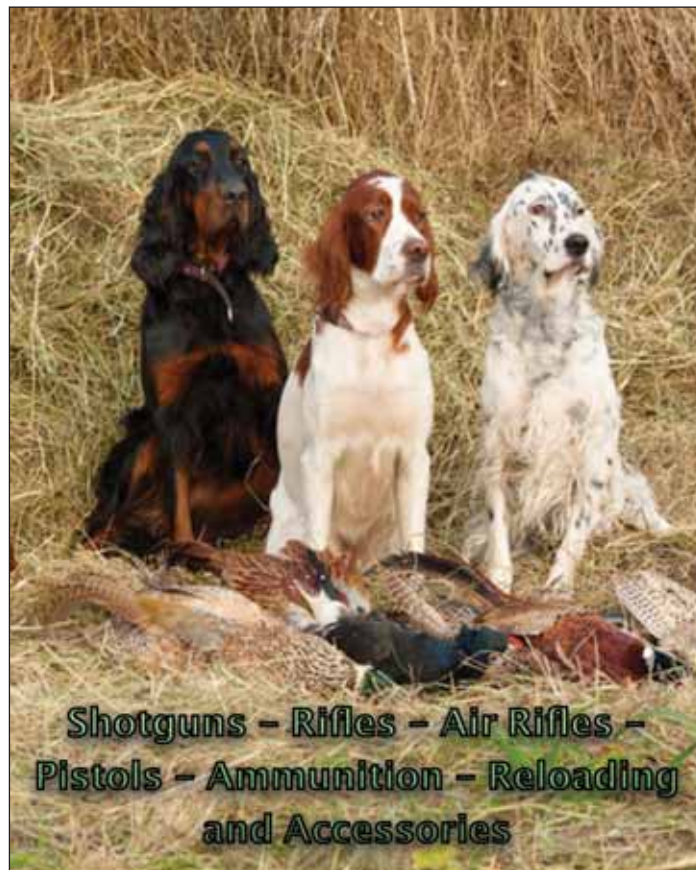
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Grouse Over Dogs

A single grouse springs off to one side.

Grouse shooting is, according to some, a sport only for the very rich, standing in their grouse butts, swigging malt whisky, smoking Cuban cigars and mowing down grouse by the hundred with their pair of Purdeys. Well, for some it may be like that, but it is also possible to enjoy a day grouse shooting without having to remortgage the house. It's called shooting over dogs.

Not just any dogs of course. Where grouse are concerned 'shooting over dogs' means shooting over birddogs - pointers and setters. The point (pardon the pun) of birddogs is that they have the best noses in the gundog world and the legs to carry those noses over vast tracts of ground. If you have an invitation to one of the great driven moors where the grouse are thicker on

the ground than fleas on a hedgehog then you have no need of a pointer or setter. Twenty or so beaters, a dozen flankers, a team of pickers-up, seven or eight other Guns plus loaders and you have everything you need for a great day's sport. I am thinking more of the sort of hill ground where you might find half a dozen coveys scattered over four or five hundred acres. If you were lucky.

This is where the bird dog is in his element because he will find those coveys for you. Not only will he find them but he will point them so that you know they are there, then wait patiently until you have toiled up to within shotgun range before he flushes them for you to shoot. Or shoot at anyway.

On the sort of hill I am thinking of, a good team of birddogs can give you the



Guns going to a point on a glorious August afternoon.



Val leads the Guns in to the first point of the day.



A moments rest on a convenient rock on top of the ridge.



Marianne with her springers was our picking up team.

best days sport you are ever likely to enjoy – provided that you love watching dogs working, are prepared to work hard for every shot that you get, are reasonably fit and content to walk all day for just the chance a half a dozen or so shots.

The rewards? There is no better place to spend a fine August day than a hill or moor with the pollen rising from the heather, the sun burning your arms and face, the dogs quartering the ground in that tireless gallop and, once in a while, the chance to walk in to where one of them is frozen on point and maybe shoot a right and left at grouse. Take last year for example.

There were four Guns: Christophe and Andreas over from Germany with Keith and Jeremy representing the home nations. Iain, Val, Georgie and Angela were handling a motley crew of pointers and setters and Marianne had her springers along to pick up – if so be as there was anything to pick.

A good chance of some shooting

We had been out the day before in the rain and, frankly, we'd struggled. The birds weren't sitting and if the grouse won't sit then all you get for your day on the hill is a long walk. But today the sun was shining, the heather had pretty much dried out and there was a good chance of some shooting provided the dogs did their stuff okay.

We started out on top of a long, hogback ridge with the ground falling away steeply on one side and the boundary along the watershed on the other. The wind was more or less in our faces and we hadn't gone more than a hundred yards before Val's English setter Rose was on point just below the top of the ridge. The Guns went in, the grouse got up and flicked out of sight almost as quickly as they rose. Several ounces of lead shot whistled after them to very little effect. A quick post-mortem that added precious little to the sum of human knowledge and then it was on again to look for the next covey.

The ground along the ridge rises and



Georgie and Joe take the Guns in to a point.

falls in a series of little humps and hollows so the dogs are often out of sight as they quarter the hill. This can be testing for handlers and Guns. You are coming to the top of a hump and you haven't seen the dog for a few minutes. This could be because he is on point just ahead of you and if you go blundering over you will flush the birds before the Guns can get in to position. You could call the Guns up and put them on full alert just in case, but then you are going to look a little foolish if you top the ridge to see the dog quartering away quite happily three hundred yards ahead of you. On the other hand, you are going to look even more foolish if your first instinct was right and there was a covey – a covey that is now sailing off over the march.

So you call the Guns forward and Heaven be praised there are birds and better still one falls to give the springers a chance to show their paces. A few minutes hunting, then the first bird of the day is in the bag and everyone is feeling happy. This is why we are here after all.

We carried on until the ridge flattened out into some wetter ground where a convenient rock was the ideal place to stop and eat lunch. The dogs enjoyed their rest for about ten minutes then Georgie's pointer Joe started to

think it was time we pressed on and decided share his feeling by howling at us. We didn't take long to eat our rolls and take a swig from the flask because the midges soon detected our presence and came out to play. Time to move on.

The afternoon followed much the same pattern as the morning. We worked on through the wet ground and then swung across the wind and along the lower side of the ridge where we had started out in the morning. The grouse were not exactly plentiful, but with the dogs covering a wide beat the points kept coming at irregular intervals. With the wind no longer in our faces it was tricky at times for the Guns. Instead of coming in from behind the dog with the reasonable expectation that the covey would be straight ahead somewhere the dogs now might be pointing across our line of march or even back towards us as the breeze swirled around the hill.

'Reading the dog'

If you can 'read' the dog in these circumstances it adds enormously to your chances of getting a shot. Of course, the handler will do his or her best to get the Guns into the right position but inevitably at least half their attention is on their dog. And you can

bet that, if you have to scramble down a slope to reach the point, or clamber through a peat hag, the grouse will flush just as you are least able to get the gun to your shoulder. You can always tell yourself that if it was too easy it wouldn't be any fun.

We worked our way back to the track and then collected the cars from the top of the ridge. The bag for the day was modest – two brace to be exact – but I counted up afterwards and reckoned the Guns had fired about forty shots between them. People occasionally tell me that shooting grouse over dogs is easy and at first glance it ought to be – simple going-away shots and all that. The thing is, no-one has told the grouse and they tend to rise where you least expect them and then dip, dive, curl and swerve as they go away. Add to that the uneven footing, the aching legs and the bank of heather the birds duck behind just as you fire and you may decide, on reflection, that the shooting isn't quite as easy as you thought.

The great thing though is that you don't have to be a millionaire, a noble Lord or a member of the landed gentry in order to shoot grouse. You just need a bit of rough heather, a couple of coveys and one or two half-decent dogs. The rest is down to you.



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SPECTACULAR 40th ANNIVERSARY ALL IRELAND GAME FAIR SHANES CASTLE 23/24 JUNE 2018 THE ULTIMATE SHOWCASE FOR IRISH COUNTRYSPORTS AND RURAL WAY OF LIFE



For 40 years, real team commitment, marketing flair, meticulous planning and bang up-to-date game fairs have ensured that the Irish Game Fair has reached the milestone of its 40th anniversary since its launch at Clondeboye Estate, in North Down, in 1979.

The historical photographs give an indication of just how many people have contributed over the years to the success of our events since Michael Dickey, Stanley Scott, the late Major William Brownlow and the late Major Donald Hoy met at the Royal Ulster Yacht Club in June 1978, to plan Ireland's first major game fair. One year later, it took place at Clondeboye Estate.

In 2018, our NI and ROI fairs will amalgamate for ONE YEAR ONLY to create an ALL IRELAND 40th anniversary showcase for Irish country sports. The ROI Fair will return to a venue in the Irish Midlands in August 2019.

IT'S A WIN, WIN, WIN SITUATION!

Now all eyes are focused on the 40th anniversary Shanes Castle event, planned for 23/24 June to make it the largest Irish Game Fair ever including:

- Irish country sports people from all over Ireland get a chance to come together to help create a massive PR showcase to demonstrate the support for the sports in Ireland.

- Enthusiasts from Republic of Ireland & GB have discounted admission and special accommodation rates to make a real weekend of it AND all exhibitors have at least one special bargain.
- Exhibitors have the opportunity to promote their products to an enhanced audience and visitors can see more trade stands & more attractions.
- Competitors can compete for the biggest ever prize fund in a wide range of international class events.
- All facets of the show, including family entertainment, countrysports, Fine Food and Living History have been enhanced to create a fantastic family weekend.
- This huge anniversary event will carry forward to the ROI event in its new 2019 location.

DISCOUNTED ADMISSION

Recognising that many of our loyal customers of the ROI event would have additional travel costs if they wished to join their fellow NI countrysports enthusiasts in celebrating this important milestone in Irish field sports history we have put

together some special discounted admission offers and we have discounted accommodation available. And for ALL countrysports enthusiasts we have the very special magazine subscription offer to get two FREE tickets to the fair.



**The 40th Anniversary
ALL IRELAND Game Fair
Shanes Castle, Antrim
23 & 24 June 2018**

**DISCOUNTED ADMISSION PRICES FOR
COUNTRYSPORTS ENTHUSIASTS**

For ROI Shooters & Hunters: NARGC and Countryside Alliance Ireland members qualify for just £5 or €5 ADMISSION on showing their membership card.

For IRISH ANGLERS: DAERA & IFI Licence/Permit holders qualify for just £5 or €5 admission by presenting a voucher available from your local tackle shop or published in the Summer edition of the Irish Countrysports and Country Life magazine.

Subscribers to the Irish Countrysports & Country Life Magazine (cost £20/€25 p.a.) will receive TWO FREE TICKETS (value £20)

See the video: 'Forty Years of Irish Game Fairs' <https://player.vimeo.com/video/258116515>
Accommodation rates from £50 per room B&B

COUNTRYSPORTS AT THE HEART OF THE ANNIVERSARY EVENT

Countrysports has and always will be at the core of our fairs, and our anniversary event at Shanes will bring together a fantastic countrysports programme of events, attractions and competitions with a prize fund unmatched in Ireland. Apart from the valuable cash and other prizes and the superb 'ruby' enhanced trophies to be won outright, there is a chance for any competitor in any of the events to become part of Irish countrysports history by becoming the 40th Anniversary All Ireland Game Fair Champion in their sport.

Full details of the competitions will be published on our web site and some of the trophies (including the Spaniels) have still to be mounted but the following gives a flavour of the trophies to be won.

ALL COMPETITIONS WILL HAVE SPECIAL 'RUBY ANNIVERSARY' TROPHIES TO BE WON OUTRIGHT (see web site for details):

For Shooting: Apart from a fantastic prizes including THREE guns to be won, there is the 'Cock & Hen Challenge' with a pair of antique pheasant trophies to be won – the Hen



for top gun on the Saturday and the Cock to be won on the Sunday. Can anyone shoot the 'left & right' and take home the two birds and perhaps two guns as well?

For Gundogs: Top prizes and real international competition on one of the best gundog courses at any fair and special Labrador, Cocker & Springer Trophies to be won outright.

For Anglers: A major angling section, including the DAERA 'Put & Take' fishery for children; fly tying and casting instruction; and a special trophy to be won outright in the casting competitions.

For Ferrets: Game Fair Championship with special trophies for racing and showing.

For Terriers, Lurchers & Whippets – all the major international competitions brought together in one location:

The 30th Anniversary All Ireland Show & Racing Championships open to all with the Show Champions qualifying for the Five Nations Championships on the Sunday evening.

Paul Pringle's 'Irish Countrysports & Country Life Editor's Challenge' for Plummer Terriers (with Special prizes and the winner qualifying for the now legendary Five Nations).

The Five Nations Terrier, Lurcher and Whippet Finals – all with fantastic prize funds.

The Mick the Miller traditional Lurcher race with great prizes including two very special trophies to be won outright.

The Director's Challenge: Whippet v Under 21" lurcher with two special trophies to be won. These are antique trophies actually won in greyhound championships.

And to celebrate the 150th anniversary of McGrath winning his first Waterloo Cup – two very special trophies for winner and runner up in the Master McGrath Challenge. Two of the finest trophies we have ever had for the fair.



The Master McGrath Trophy

Stickmaking: NI Stickmaking Championships and Displays on the CAI stand to win the Lindsay Carlisle Memorial Trophy.

GAME FAIR ATTRACTIONS

A huge number of family attractions in all areas including: an extended tented village of trade stands including several new stands; an extended Living History Festival; an expanded Fine Food & Drinks Festival including a stand from top UK food magazine Delicious, which will be making its Irish Awards at the fair; and a great range of 'have-a-go' opportunities for the whole family.

TRADE STANDS

We have the largest number of trade stands ever in all areas including the Fine Food & Craft Festival – we have covered some of the exhibitors elsewhere in the magazine and one of our regular exhibitors Paul Morgan, from Cochy-y-Bundu books has got into the theme of promoting good artisan food linked to country sports and the rural way of life by bringing an excellent range of country cooking books to enhance his superb range of hunting, shooting, fishing and countryside books.



The Cochy y Bonddu Stand.

Gunmakers Row

We have our best ever Gunmakers Row at Shanes, featuring an excellent range of guns, clothing and accessories and even ideas on where to shoot and how to improve your shooting. Some of the traders who we welcome back are **McCloy's Guns Unlimited, Ardee Sports, Elite Sports, Tommy Beattie Guns & Ammo; Smyths Country Sports, Fiedsports Channel.tv** with their own stand this time as well as filming, as well as **Michael Yardley** with his gun fitting clinic.

For the first time 'Guides Choice' (formerly River Mourne Guns & Tackle) join us, as does UK **Gunmaker Scott Wilson** with his own guns and those made by his father on display. As well, he and his apprentice are offering a gun assessment and repair service.

Get your gun assessed and fixed by Scott Wilson

We asked Scott to give us a little bit of background on his

business started by his father, himself and what he would be showcasing at the fair:



Scott with Nick Holt from Holts Auctions for whom he carries out repairs and restorations.

"I started learning about guns at a young age about 8 from my late father who was a self taught Gun Smith & Gun maker in our family business. I started working full time at 17 when I left school. My father was not just a Gun Smith he was a very good Gun maker too and made approximately 1,500 walking stick shot guns in different forms and around 80 shotguns, mainly box locks but several side locks too. Also quite a few pen guns all to his own design. He also made sword sticks & some umbrellas and sword guns too.

He was quite an inventor and made his own single trigger design which I still use today in my guns. In my over 30 years I have made 10 guns myself all box locks in 12 16 & 20g. I have been taught to be independent and to do everything myself. The only thing I can't do well is engraving but I use a fantastic ex Purdey engraver. My services include covering all aspects of wood work and I do all the chequering and re finishing as I have a great Stocker for re stocking.

I make all parts of the gun myself from solid including all springs like main springs and I am a Boss single trigger specialist. I can offer all servicing and Re proof work including sleeving barrels. All blacking and browning of barrels covered and all blacking of parts like trigger guards top lever etc. Bespoke gun cases & leather slips also made to order. Basically we undertake all work.

My girlfriend Helen Wesson is my part time apprentice and I have been teaching her for the last three years. She has become very good in a short time and she has done and she has developed real expertise in servicing all guns and truly excellent at blueing pins and screws on guns like Purdeys, Boss etc." Scott and Helen can offer a gunsmithing service on all guns."

Scott and Helen will be offering a gun assessment, servicing and repair service so don't miss this opportunity to get your gun checked over. They will also be displaying guns



The N.A.R.G.C Compensation Fund

**Ireland's foremost source of Public Liability and Personal Accident Protection
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The National Association of Regional Game Councils encourages game shooters and clay/target shooters to support the Shooting Lobby by joining a Gun/Game Club, Clay Pigeon Club or Target Sports Club affiliated to the NARGC.

With 27,000 Members, you will be joining the most authoritative voice for the sport of shooting in Ireland. You will also enjoy the protection of the NARGC Compensation Fund which carries a ceiling of protection of €10m each and every claim. The Association welcomes the affiliation of new Clubs through its RGC structure.



In addition, with the NARGC you have:

- Full-time staff dedicated to working for shooting interests
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- A Members' Magazine posted free to your home at least once annually
- Habitat and other Grants for your Club - €350,000 granted annually
- Special Funding for Grouse Projects
- Grants for the purchase of Predator Control equipment by Clubs
- Mallard/Pheasant Release subsidies for Clubs and RGC's - currently €4.37 per bird
- Research into Game and other species
- The defence of Members rights, individually and collectively, even in the Courts

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

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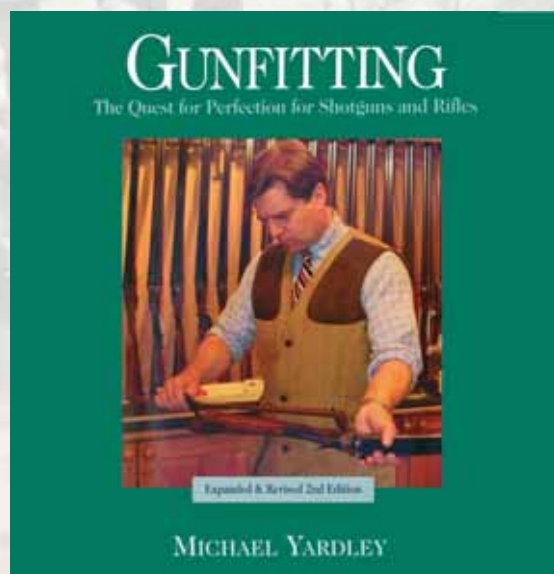
made by Scott and his father like the example below.



JOHN K. WILSON & SON
A PAIR OF PORTSMOUTH-ENGRAVED 12-BORE BOXLOCK
EJECTORS, serial no. 144729 / 30,.

Gun Fitting - get a personal consultation with Michael Yardley and improve your shooting

The Great Game Fairs of Ireland have confirmed that Mike Yardley, one of really 'big guns' in the shooting world, would be present at the Shanes Castle Game Fair.



Mike Yardley

A renowned broadcaster and writer, practical shooting coach and much more, Mike Yardley is one of the best known personalities in the shooting world. Along with gunsmith Chis Symonds, Mike will be fitting guns and testing eye dominance at the show, using the unique methods that have led him to write two books on the subject.

Without doubt, a well fitted gun is essential to good shooting and may transform performance. Many struggle on for years with ill-fitting guns or eye-dominance issues not realising just how much they are impeding themselves. And now there is a unique opportunity to sort out your gun fit before the season commences. Mike will also be available to discuss all matters related to guns, shooting and competition as well.

Mike Yardley has shot clays and game big and small all over the world. He writes on guns and shooting for The Field

and has acted as a design consultant to some of the most famous gunmakers as well making films with various television companies. His documentaries on John F. Kennedy and the Red Baron - where his vast technical knowledge of shooting is applied forensically - will have been seen by many. He has also been the voice of shooting many times when the sport is attacked in the media

Countryside Alliance Ireland will have PSNI Firearms Branch staff to discuss firearms matters

"Countryside Alliance Ireland (CAI) is again delighted to be the biggest all Ireland country sports organisation in attendance at Shanes Castle this June.

Given that this is a very special 'All Ireland Irish Game Fair', we are going all out with our marquee and playing host to an array of exhibitors including the British Deer Society (NI), PSNI FEB, PSNI Wildlife Liaison, Sunnyland Beagles and the NI Stick Carvers Club.

PSNI FEB will be on hand to answer queries in respect of firearms licensing matters, including the online application system. The NI Stick Carvers Club will be demonstrating their craft on the Saturday and hosting a competition on the Sunday. As always, one of the highlights in our marquee will be the Sunnyland Beagles who provoke much interest amongst the young and not so young alike!

CAI is very much looking forward to the Fair as it gives us the opportunity to meet and engage face to face with our members and supporters. We wish the organisers well for this very special 'All Ireland' event"

Game keepers marquee & game displays

Another 'must stop' visit at the fair must be the 'Game Keepers Marquee' co-ordinated by Head Keeper Bill Storer. Amongst the interesting exhibits are game keeping equipment, sporting art, taxidermy, vintage weapons and of course a wide range of game.

Salmon & Woodcock Pavilion

The Salmon & Woodcock Pavilion is another area where opportunities to shoot and fish are 'blended' with many other countrysports related matters.

Some of the exhibitors include **DAERA Inland Fisheries Division, the Sixmilewater Trust Blackwater Fishing, the Ulster Angling Federation, FISSTA, Delphi Fisheries, wildlife artists John Moore & Sarah Majury, International taxidermist Ingrid Houwers, ROI Firearms dealer, Centregold Ammo with a superb range of Hunting Knives, Rogers Fishing tackle** with a huge range of fly tying equipment.

And of course Ireland's only Hunting, Shooting and Fishing magazine **Irish Countrysports and Country Life**. Apart from the regular team of Northern Editor Paul Pringle and his wife Jill, there will be several guest appearances,

including Alastair Beattie (AKA 'The Grumpy Gamekeeper') and Derek Fanning the ROI editor of the magazine.

Angling trade stands, including **Rodgers, AM Angling and RLS Boats and the casting area**, are adjacent to Salmon & Woodcock Pavilion. Don't forget, demonstrations are carried out in the casting area and the Main and Countrysports in Action Arenas.

DOGS & HORSES DISPLAYS AND COMPETITIONS

All manner of dogs and horses will be featured, with displays such as Derek O'Byrne White from the Cochise Stud with his Western Riding and 'dancing' horses, Horse & Hound Displays, Horse drawn Threshing and farm animals from Johnny Fee, Dog Agility from the Glandore Club; a Pedigree Dog Show organised by the NIGDF&SS, Gundog Displays from the Red Mills Irish International Gundog team led by Willie McGaughin and Derek Davison with his Scottish Terrier Road Show.

A number of brand new horse and hound events feature in our three action packed arenas (see www.irishgamefair.com) for a full FREE downloadable programme and latest details.

Gundog Rescue and Rehoming

GDR&R are excited to be included in the Great Game Fairs All Ireland 40th Celebrations and delighted to announce that they will be running several fun events while at the same time highlighting the important rescue work that they do.



On Saturday and Sunday we are running our Gundog Scurry, so come have fun with your dog at our stand, £3 a run or 2 runs for £5. Some Great prizes to be had! Sponsored by the Countryside Alliance Ireland, Feedwell Dog Foods, Red Mills and many more.

During the Scurry, we will be running a Junior Handler Competition. Competition is open to Under 18s with own or borrowed dog (Field Trials dogs Permitted) and will be based on the Handler not the Dog. Great Prizes up for grabs for 1st, 2nd and 3rd placed Handlers.

On Saturday morning by kind Invitation starting at 11.00 am in the Countrysports in Action Arena we are Hosting 2 Dog Show events, (1) the Children's Fun Dog Show and (2) This Year we are running a Gundog Rescue and Friends Rescue dog Show, To highlight the work our Friends and our Rescue do throughout the year. In between these two shows there will be a canine First Aid Demonstration by Keith McCabe from ATS First Aid.

ATS First Aid by Keith McCabe

Keith is a fully qualified First Aid Instructor with over 30 years first aid



experience, treating a wide range of illnesses and injuries. He is a keen sportsman regularly taking part in Clay Pigeon Shooting, Wild fowling, Walked up and Driven days, Deerstalking, Vermin control and a regular participant in IPSC pistol competitions.

Aim to Survive offers flexible first aid solutions from basic CPR and Defibrillator courses up to and including Catastrophic Bleeds and Airway Management which may be extremely useful to the shooting community.

Aim to Survive has also developed a First Aid for Dog's Course which has been Quality assured and endorsed by Cathy McCourt a Veterinary Surgeon. This course has received widespread publicity from BBC Newsline, BBC radio and U105. It has also received excellent reviews from clients attending the course, these clients are from various backgrounds including professional Dog trainers to pet owners.

Jordan McGowan – his Sheepdogs & Ducks.



Jordan & Dog in action at the team Rally.

Sheepdog trainer and duck wrangler, Jordan McGowan aged 26, will be making his debut at the fair. Jordan has been training sheepdogs for almost 8 years now and has recently expanded the business (Silverstream sheepdogs) alongside business partner Linda Jones to include Sheepdog demonstrations using ducks and geese, coordinating them over and through obstacles using the dog for family events and fun days.

Jordan has a real passion and love for his dogs and enjoys the thrill of watching them advance in their training to become assets on any farm. Silverstream sheepdogs also help farmers up and down the country understand and develop a strong working bond with their own sheepdogs as Jordan offers training days from their farm based near Larne.

"Pip is our main duck dog. She has just turned four years old and has plenty of brains when it comes to working stock especially sheep which tend to have none. She had great stamina and a real drive to learn. Pip has earned her keep ten times over and for that reason will never leave my side. One in a million!

“Sue is only twelve months now and has recently just started training. She was bought from a world renowned Sheepdog trialer Kevin Evans based in Wales. She is a very speedy little article with plenty of stamina and is very eager to learn with every chance she gets. Hopefully With Pip keeping a watchful eye over her she turns out just as well once finished her training.”

New Horse Spectacular

Enthusiasts will be harnessing a lifetime passion for all things equine on June 23rd to create a massive horse and pony spectacular at the annual Irish Game Fair at Shanes Castle.



Elegance and Precision

As Ireland's biggest and most successful celebration of country sports, pursuits and interests prepares to mark forty fabulous years, the Great Game Fairs of Ireland is adding extra excitement to the ruby anniversary with the inclusion in the programme of an all-new horse show and display, staged by the prestigious Irish Hackney Horse Society.

Announcing the development, Fair Director Edwin Dash said: “Horses and ponies are at the heart of our rural heritage so, very naturally, they have always been an important facet of the Irish Game Fair experience. This year however our ruby anniversary has spurred us into action and we're looking forward to the unbridled spirit of our equestrian legacy taking centre stage.

“The Irish Hackney Horse Society has come on board to stage what will be a major - and highly competitive - horse show in the Countrysports in Action Arena on Saturday 23 June, together with a hugely impressive display in our main arena.

“Alongside these great events we'll have a range of thrilling equestrian demonstrations including thrilling medieval jousting by a top international team, the Knights of the North from the borders of Scotland; displays of European Champion Western Riding and Dancing Horses from the County Offaly-based Cochise Stud, mounted cavalry at the Battle of Antrim re-enactment and horse drawn threshing from Johnnie Fee. All equestrian life is here so, if you love horses and ponies, you'll certainly love the Irish Game Fair.”

Ian Armstrong of The Irish Hackney Horse Society Show will be managing the society's input. Delighted to be

partnering the Irish Game Fair for its ruby anniversary, he says,

“As a society our main aim is of course to promote the Hackney breed, but we will make every effort to welcome exhibitors from across the equine world to Shanes Castle this year where they will see the very best of both ‘in hand’ and ‘in harness’ competition.

“Whether you are already knowledgeable about horses and ponies or simply enjoy watching equine spectacle, there will be plenty to enjoy and we are looking forward to sharing our enthusiasm with even wider audiences. The overall champion and reserve champion will win special ‘Ruby Anniversary Trophies’ this year and we know that competition will be intense to carry home that once-in-a-lifetime honour.”

Entries are now open for competition sections which will include:

Native Pony Breeds (Shetland, Highland, Exmoor, Connemara, etc) In Hand; Native Horse Breeds (Clydesdale, Irish Draught, etc) In Hand; Welsh Cobs In Hand; Irish Sport Horse In Hand; Part Bred Horse or Pony In Hand; Rare or Endangered Bred Pony (Hackney Pony, Dales Dartmoor, etc) In Hand; Rare or Endangered Bred Horse (Hackney Horse, Clydesdale etc) In Hand; Any Other Bred In Hand; Young Handler; Donkey In Hand; Exercise Vehicle; Multiples(2 or more equines to a suitable turnout); Trade Vehicles; Country Turnout; Private Driving; Hackney Pony; Hackney Horse; Lady Whip; Junior Whip; Disabled Driver

To enter, contact Ian on 07849494958 or e-mail armstrong.in@gmail.com

MORE GUNDOG DISPLAYS

Tim Crothers- Spaniels

Making a welcome return with a Feedwell sponsored Gundog Display is International judge and competitor Tim Crothers with his superb Springer spaniels from the famous Birdrowe Kennels



Tim and some of his award winning spaniels

AND

Kieran Fox - HPRs

Also returning after a break is Kieran Fox, arguably one of the most successful Hunt Point Retrieve (HPR) handlers with

Used by Field Trial Champions across Ireland

Tim Crothers – Birdrowe
(www.birdrowegundogs.com)

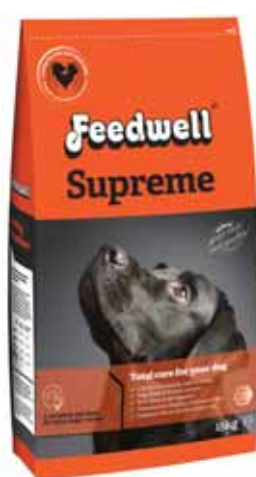


Tim has won the IKC Spaniel Championships twice; 3rd twice and 4th three times; 2nd in the British Championship twice and many diplomas; and has been a member of the CLA team and won Top Spaniel many times.

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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Kieran with one of his champion GSPs. his award winning Gramhey German Pointers. Keiran has been profiled elsewhere in the magazine and you can read why Kieran is the ideal person to take spectators through the process of training these exceptional dogs to excel in hunting, pointing and retrieving.

FOR THE CHILDREN

The fair has one of the most entertaining programmes for children of any event in Ireland with lots of opportunities for participation. The Main Arena and the Countrysports in Action arena programmes with its horses, dogs, and falcons gives ongoing entertainment for those who love animals and the opportunity for participation.

The Living History area gives children the opportunity for authentic interaction with costumed re-enactors in a setting which also hosts the Game of Thrones. And throughout the fair there are huge opportunities for children's participation including a fair ground, laser clay pigeon shooting, archery and fishing.

LIVING HISTORY FESTIVAL

The Living History facet of the fair, based in the evocative loughside setting of the old ruined castle, is under the direction of George Logan from Living History Ireland. This too has been expanded into virtually a 'stand alone' Living History Festival of size rarely seen in Ireland.

With a range of timelines ranging from the Vikings who sailed up the Bann to the 1798 rebellion, this provides not only entertainment but a truly living history experience for the whole family. This year the ever expanding encampment includes medieval traders such as our regular coin maker Grunel Moneta and Quivertock Ltd a company specialising in all sorts of replica weaponry and clothing.



George & Ingrid

"Quiverstock are purveyors of authentic hand fletched arrows and crossbow bolts, archery accessories and traditional bows. Quality padded and maille garments both off-the-peg and made-to-measure. Camp equipment including cookware, tent pegs, furniture and tents. And much more.... www.quiverstock.co.uk"



Grunel



Quiverstock

New also for this year and underpinning the All Ireland nature of the event is a visit all the way from County Kerry from the Tralee Medieval Society led by chair Helen Stacpoole. They will have three major displays including their Pavilion tent housing Lord and Lady Fitzgerald and family. Here, the ladies of the castle in their finery demonstrate fine embroidery techniques used in Medieval times as Lord FitzGerald regales them with tales of the hunt.

Their Tavern will house samples of medieval baking and non alcoholic drinks from all over Europe and a display of spices and cooking implements used in Medieval era. The public will be able to experience the chore of making 'powdered sugar' using only a pestle and mortar under the watchful eye of the Tavern Owner! There will also be demonstrations of basket making and for those unlucky enough to need Dentistry, the barber surgeon will be open for business!

For the members of the public who like to get in the Medieval Spirit, there will be child friendly crossbows to fire and axes to throw. The Merchant tent houses a display of spices and items which would have been traded in Medieval times. Available for public purchase there will be child friendly weapons and armour and crafts made by group members.

Living History Arena Displays

Living History Ireland will be mounting a series of demonstrations in an arena at the castle and in the main arena they will be mounting a tableau to celebrate the 220th anniversary of the Battle of Antrim. Against the backdrop of fife and thundering Lambeg drums, George Logan (AKA Major Seddon) will illustrate how his small force of British soldiers held back a huge United Irishmen army under Henry Joy McCracken (see <http://irishgamefair.com/living-history.asp>).



Combatants

Medieval Jousting

Galloping knights in mortal combat! One of the most spectacular living history displays is the twice daily medieval jousting displays by the Knights of the North from the borders of Scotland.



Jousting photo

UNIQUE Participation Opportunities For Children

The fair provides an action packed opportunity for family involvement (much of it FREE) but two highlights identified, other than jousting and the Living History Village, are the



Laser Shooting

Laser Clay Pigeon Shooting and the 'Put & Take Fishery'.

The laser clay pigeon shooting facilitates children and indeed the whole family to safely enjoy the experience of clay shooting using real 'deactivated' shotguns that shoot a laser at a launched clay pigeon. Totally safe and great fun where kids can beat Dad and Mum!

The very special fishing area of the fair is a mecca for children! In the Salmon & Woodcock Pavilion they can try simulated fishing on the DAERA Inland Fisheries stand and if they want to try the 'real thing' the instructors of APGAI Ireland are only too delighted to teach them to tie flies and cast before they go to the 'put and take' fishery (under the direction of Bobby Bryans of NSN) to actually catch a trout. While there they might even come across a 'very fish' leprechaun who can help them catch their very first fish.

Leprechaun



Put & Take Fishery



We invite our fellow countrysports enthusiasts from all over Ireland and GB to be part of Irish fieldsports history by making this the largest gathering of hunting, shooting and fishing enthusiasts ever. We will have done our bit to create and promote a great programme of competitions and attractions; providing a fantastic range of huge value discounted admissions and all of the ingredients for a fabulous country sports weekend – it's now over to you to help make it happen!

For further information : Call: 028 (from ROI 048) 44839167/44615416 Email: irishgamefair@btinternet.com www.irishgamefair.com Follow us on Facebook and Twitter and on the FREE to Read online magazine www.countrysportsandcountrylife.com Fair video : <https://vimeo.com/257966780>



The 40th Anniversary Game Fair Fine Food Festival - one of the largest Food Festivals in Ireland



Great Game Fairs of Ireland Chef Emmett Mc Court and Ingrid Houwers, with Michele Shirlow, Good FoodNI and Jane Harnett, Harnett's Oils and Cathy Chauhan from the Lough Neagh Fisherman's Co-operative.

In 2016 Food NI Chief Executive Michele Shirlow announced a strategic partnership with the Great Game Fairs of Ireland saying: "Supporting the growth of rural communities across Northern Ireland by promoting local produce is a key objective of Food NI.

We are delighted, therefore, to be collaborating with Great Game Fairs of Ireland and Irish Countrysports and Country Living magazine. This will provide a significant opportunity to our

growing membership of local food and drink producers to showcase the very best of Northern Ireland food and drink during the hugely successful Irish Game Fairs and in the magazine.

This important collaboration is in line with our strategic commitment to develop opportunities for our member companies to reach as wide an audience as possible with their award winning food and drink. As well as coverage in the popular magazine, the collaboration

will enable Food NI and our members to take part in the Game Fairs and thereby reach the many thousands of visitors they attract."

As part of this partnership in this very special anniversary year we decided to give FoodNI members special exhibition rates and this has not only resulted in our largest and most varied Fine Food Festival ever but increased media interest from TV production companies and Delicious, the top UK Food magazine) hosting the

judging of their Irish regional awards at the fair and bringing their kitchen to the fair. This will be supported as usual by cookery demos by Emmett McCourt in the Flogas Kitchen. We also welcomed the Daily Telegraph featuring us in their 20 top 'must visit' UK Food Festivals and being the only Irish one listed!

**WE INVITE YOU TO
'SEE AND SAMPLE'
at the stands of some of the
producers exhibiting:**

**At the Fine Food Festival at the
Irish Game Fair at Shanes
Castle 23rd & 24th June**

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 some much to see and sample that we guarantee to tempt the most discerning palette at Shanes and you can 'try before you buy'.

Our Exhibitors include:

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. <http://www.silfield.co.uk>



The Quiet Man has become the first whiskey to be matured, blended and bottled in Derry in almost 100 years and when The Quiet Man Craft Distillery and Visitor Centre opens up on Ebrington Square on the city's Waterside in 2019 it will become the first new



built distillery in Derry for over 150 years.

The Quiet Man range of whiskeys is multi award winning, with both the Superior Blend and the 8 Year Old Single Malt achieving Double Gold at the prestigious San Francisco Spirits Competition and also gathering a host of gold medals at whiskey shows worldwide.

So come along and try a sample of The Quiet Man – whiskey worth shouting about! www.nichedrinks.com

Harnett's Oil & Sea Salt

Harnett's Oils is a family run business that produces cold-pressed oils from oilseeds sustainably grown on the Waring Estate, Co Down without the use of insecticides and chemicals when harvesting. Predominately Rapeseed is grown which is also flavoured or added to fruit infused cider vinegar from Armagh. Harnett's Oils is great for dips, salad dressings, frying, roasting or as a marinade. The Harnett's also will have their own artisan batch Sea Salt which is produced using sea water from the Atlantic Ocean in Co Mayo.

Scotts Crispy Onions photo

Made with fresh onion, Scotts Crispy Onions, are a fast, hassle free way for you to add a 'restaurant' style topping or side to your meals and snacks at home. Ready in as little as 30 seconds, and with 5 mouthwatering flavours to choose from, the only hard part will be deciding what's your favourite flavour!

Scotts Crispy Onions are produced in Coleraine, as part of the locally renowned, 60 year old, family fruit & veg wholesale business, Sydney B Scott & Sons. The family has worked hard over the last few years perfecting the product and developing it's unique range of flavours. It's fair to say that Scotts Crispy Onions are 'No Ordinary Onions' – taste them and see!

What They Do Unique range of flavoured Crispy Onions

Products Crispy Onions 90g available in Original,

4 Fabulous Flavours to choose from

Place alongside meat products, sauces or ready meals



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Steak, Sweet Chilli, Smokey Bacon and Chinese Salt and Chilli flavour also available in a 35g snack pack. Original Crispy Onions are available in a 1.6kg catering tub. Can be purchased at convenience stores, independent retailers and butchers, NI and ROI. Produced under own brand for Supervalu, Centra (ROI) and Primacy Farm Butchers.

To find your local outlet or to become a stockist email sales@scottscrispyonions.com

Long Meadow Cider



Long Meadow cider is an award winning, family run, craft, cider production company based in the Orchard County of Armagh.

Theirs are true Artisan Craft Ciders made from 100% natural apple grown and harvested on the home farm, pressed and fermented over time in order to create their Medium and Blossom Burst Cider (4.5%) Limited Edition Oak Aged (5.5%) Rhubarb & Honey Cider (4%) and Seasonal Mulled Cider (4.5%).

No concentrates, colours or artificial ingredients are added to their products which are all gluten free. They have recently added Still & sparkling Apple Juice (750ml & 250ml bottles) and Apple Cider Vinegar (750ml & 330ml bottles) to their range.

They have won various awards namely The Great Taste Awards, Blas na hEireann Awards, International Cider Challenge, Food Heartland Award, Grow Make Eat Drink Awards.

Their motto "From Plant to Pour".
www.longmeadowcider.com

BlackFire Artisan Food - Makers of Belfast's Original Hot Sauces

It's a small Belfast based company specialising in the creation of unique, fresh chilli sauces, all of which are, allergen and gluten free as well as being low in calories. They contain only natural ingredients and



are free from added sugar & salt as well as artificial colours or preservatives. We grow 2 dozen varieties of peppers all year round from medium hot up to super hot as well as many of the vegetables, fruits and herbs used to create the sauces. We produce limited batch seasonal sauces too with ingredients from hedgerow and seashore including dulse, wild garlic and rose petals.

Crossogue Preserves



Simplicity combined with superiority is the key to a superb product range. All preserves are made using traditional cooking methods using the highest quality ingredients and produced in small batches by hand to maximise control procedures and taste; no artificial colourings, flavourings or preservatives are used. Although this means that production is labour intensive it results in a unique and distinctive flavour.

This continuing dedication aimed at producing a superior product has brought success in the shape of Gold, Silver and Bronze Awards for the past ten years at the prestigious Guild of Fine Food Fair held in London. In July 2007 Crossogue Preserves won 5 Gold medals in London and a fêted Bridgestone Award and was also appointed as supplier of preserves to the Ritz-Carlton Hotel at Powerscourt. Crossogue House, Ballycahill, Thurles, Co. Tipperary
www.crossoguepreserves.com

Lough Neagh Fishermen's Co-Operative Society

Lough Neagh Fishermen's Co-operative Society (LNFCS) own the fishing rights for Lough Neagh, the largest lake in the British Isles, covering an area of 400 Km². LNFCS have been in existence since 1967 and are a Co-operative, protecting the livelihood of fishermen and building a sustainable, viable future for fishing on Lough Neagh.

LNFCS manage the largest wild eel fishery in Europe and currently produce 14% of all wild caught eels in Europe, which equates to approx. 300 tonnes of eels

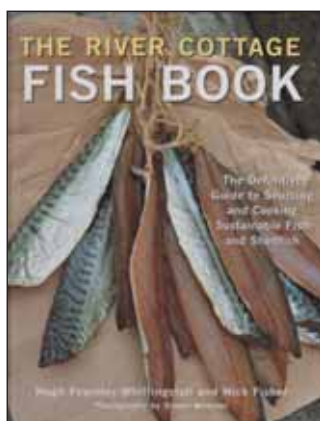
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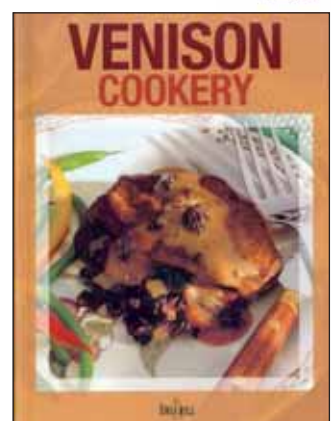
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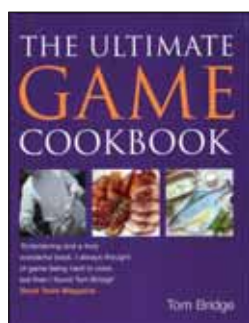
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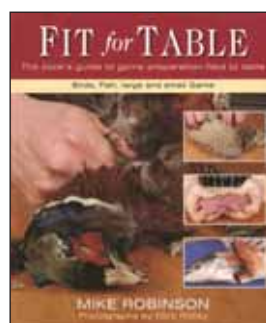
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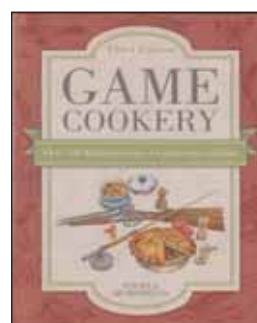
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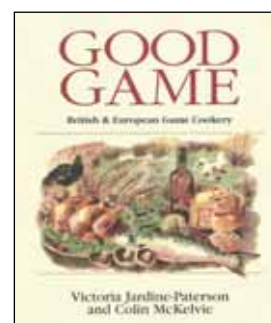
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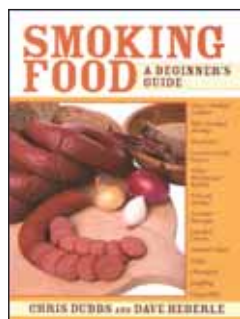
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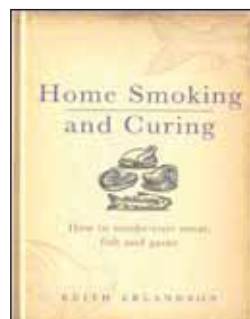
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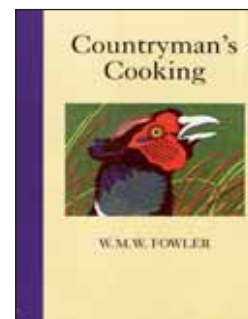
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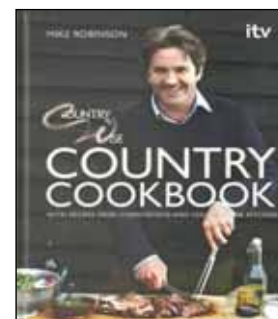
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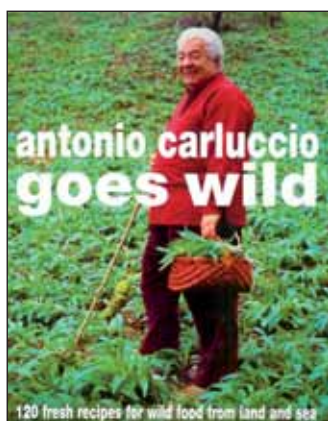
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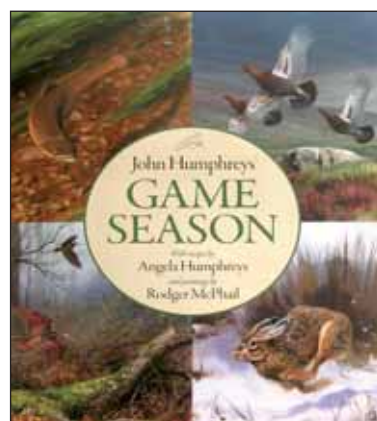
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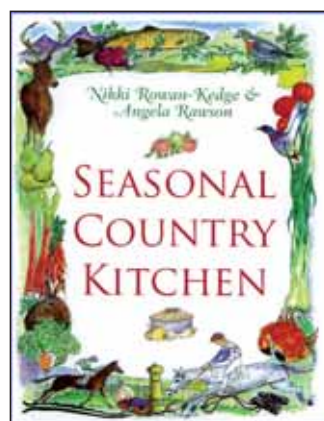
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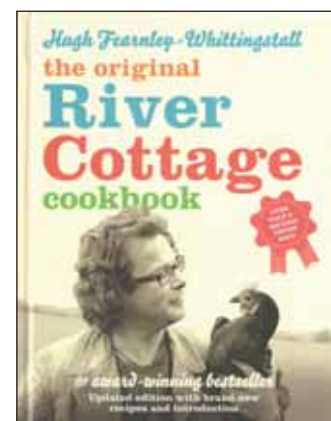
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annually. Approximately 80% of Lough Neagh eel are shipped to Holland, with a majority of the remaining 20%, shipped to London for the production of jellied eels. A small proportion are processed at the HQ in Toomebridge for distribution throughout the island of Ireland. In 2011 they were awarded the Protected Geographical Indication (PGI), recognising the authenticity & heritage of the best quality eels in Europe. In fact, Smoked Lough Neagh Eel tastes so good it was awarded 3* in the Great Taste Awards 2017!

With approximately 500 tonnes of commercial coarse fish caught annually from the Lough Neagh, LNFCS have set high standards in the processing of scale fish. There are several species of freshwater scale fish which are native to Lough Neagh including Pollan and Dollaghan (brown trout). Other species such as perch, roach, pike & bream are also fished during their seasons.

www.loughneagheels.com;

[www.twitter.com/loughneagheels](https://twitter.com/loughneagheels) Cathy Chauhan t: 028 7965 0618

e: cathychauhan@loughneagheels.com

McIvor Cider



Greg MacNeice is a fifth generation apple grower. For over 150 years his family has been growing apples in County Armagh, Ireland's 'orchard capital'. Mac Ivors Cider Co. was born in the autumn of 2009 when Greg set himself the challenge of turning the delicious apples that he grew into a truly great cider. With lots of hard work, devotion and a bit of luck, this has now become a fast growing commercial enterprise with the ciders selling in over 1,000 outlets across Ireland and beyond. Managing over 100 acres of apple orchards is no easy task but Greg learned from the best – his dad Sammy. He, like his father before him, continued the family tradition of growing the beautiful apple trees in harmony with the land that they love. Their target is to make the best cider in the world – you can sample it for yourself at Shanes Castle. <http://macivors.com>

Broom Cottage

Broom cottage is a family run business based on the



Ards peninsula in Northern Ireland. We produce a range of natural soaps and cosmetics using our own home produced goats milk, beeswax and honey. We also make a unique range of preserves incorporating home grown fruit, vegetables and honey. At Broom Cottage we are passionate about good food and ensuring our customers know where and how their food is produced by growing and using as much of our own ingredients. We enjoy providing our customers with products that they know are locally made from start to finish with enthusiasm and a passion for nature. E: broomcottage16@gmail.com

Forthill Farm

Kenny and Jennifer Gracey are continuing the Gracey tradition of farming at Forthill in Tandragee, Co Armagh, Northern Ireland. Producing the best quality free range pork and free range beef from traditional breeds.

The Gracey family have farmed at Forthill since the 1700s and during that time there have been a lot of changes in farming practices, but not always for the better. We provide enjoyable food with real taste, through a total focus on product quality, innovation and customer satisfaction. We believe food from the farm to be the new way to reclaim traditional standards.

Our free range pigs and cows are produced naturally, reared without the use of antibiotics, hormones or growth promoters. With freedom to roam in open spaces outside our animals can obtain minerals from the soil ensuring the highest quality free range pork and free range beef is produced.

At Forthill we have returned to the traditional breeds of both cattle and pigs, namely Belted Galloway and Longhorn Cattle, Gloucestershire Old Spots and British Saddleback pigs. It is our belief that the older traditional breeds produce meat of superior quality.

Our aim is to educate our customers on the healthier natural way to produce free range pork and free range beef and also provide them with an affordable way to feed their family with real meat, as nature intended.

"The difference between properly handled rare breed

meat and modern hybrids is vast - it's like comparing chipboard to Chippendale". Richard Vaughan of www.fooduk.com quoted in Country Living <http://www.forthillfarm.co.uk>

Peaky Blinder Spirits



England's famous 'Black Country', the Sadler family have been purveyors of the finest spirits since 1900. A century's worth of knowledge and passion has led the family to create this exceptionally smooth, triple-distilled, blended Irish whiskey, handcrafted spiced gin, with exotic spices and botanicals and bold rum, blended with selected spices delivering notes of orange, nutmeg, vanilla and raisin. <https://www.sadlersales.co.uk>

Kin Toffee Vodka is created in the heart of the Lake District

Our premium drink can be enjoyed straight and is superb served chilled direct from the fridge or with ice. It also works incredibly well in cocktails such as adding to prosecco, bourbon, espresso martinis are a few suggestions. It also makes a fantastic addition to hot drinks, creating 'toffeelicious' coffees and hot chocolates plus it is a fantastic ingredient in desserts and puddings such as cheesecakes, jellies, with meringues and simply poured over ice cream. <https://kinvodka.co.uk>

Kennedy Bacon



Kennedy Bacon is a small business situated on their farm in Glenhordial, Omagh. The company has 4 full time

employees. Mervyn the owner is a passionate farmer and has been involved in the rearing of pigs since his childhood.

In the past 4 years he has set about producing high quality bacon and gammons earning him the title of Great Taste Producer

He cures the bacon by hand in the traditional way, no injection or water is added at any time throughout the process. The products are all free from phosphates. This results in proper dry cured products with a full flavour of the pork emerging. <https://www.kennedybacon.co.uk>

Old Irish Creamery

Cheeses in the Old Irish Creamery range have won Gold, Silver and Bronze Awards in Dublin in 2008 and in 2009 at the worlds largest international cheese show, which is held annually at Nantwich in Cheshire, England.

Setting the standard with J.O.D. Foods A strict quality control regime is in place at the Co. Limerick facility, where product is manufactured to the BRC Series 5 Grade A standard. Only the finest cheeses are blended with the choicest of natural ingredients to produce specialty cheeses with deliciously distinctive flavours for the discerning palate

Cheeses include : Natural Irish Oak Smoked Cheddar, Cheddar with garlic and herbs, Cheddar with chilli, Cheddar with blueberries, Cheddar with walnuts, Cheddar with chive, Cheddar with Red Wine,

Cheddar with Irish Porter (Guinness), Cheddar with Irish whiskey (Jameson), Cheddar with Cranberries, select white/coloured cheddars, Vintage white/coloured cheddars and Cheddar with Curry. www.oldirishcreamery.com

Corndale Farm



Corndale Farm is a high welfare, free range pig farm based in Limavady. Establish in 2012 by Alastair Crown, They produce Northern Ireland's first range of air dried charcuterie products. Their Chorizo's and Salami's have won various awards including 2 Star Great Taste and Gold and Silver at Blas na hEireann – Irish Food Awards. They operate a farm to fork approach and ensure full traceability in all their products. They also provide unique outside catering for weddings, corporate events and private parties. A Corndale Farm hog roast is always a crowd pleaser. Products available to buy online. Details of

retailers also available on the website.

Contact: Alastair Crown 028 777 78222 (Office)

07843094876 (Mobile)

Email: info@corndalefarm.com Web: www.corndalefarm.com

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Anzac Wines & Spirits

Anzac Wines & Spirits always look forward to attending the Irish Game Fair at Shane's Castle and this Summer will be no different given the fabulous products that we will have on offer over the popular weekend. We are back with the supremacy in Irish Cream Liqueur this is Coole Swan. It's been such a hit over recent years and we know it would be missed if we didn't bring it along for you again. A blending of fine Single Malt Irish Whiskey with White Belgian Chocolate and Fresh Dairy Cream, Coole Swan is 100% natural and is regarded as one of the world's most delicious tasting Irish Cream Liqueurs. We don't just expect you to take our word for it though, come try it for yourself. In its quirky 19th century milk bottle design, Coole Swan also makes for a perfect gift.



New to the 2018 fair will be Franklin & Sons premium selection of soft drinks, an award winning range, first introduced way back in 1886. The products continue to follow the same company ethos today, using only natural flavours, extracts and colours, never including preservatives or sweeteners. By sourcing the best possible provenance of ingredients, the results are a well balanced range of drinks, deliciously different to others in the market, created with only a subtle carbonation to each variant to ensure they match well with food. Further paring attributes is the introduction of a tertiary culinary ingredient within each recipe, such as cracked black



pepper, cinnamon, star anise or crushed juniper. Don't miss these if you like the sound of Cloudy Apple and Yorkshire Rhubarb with Cinnamon or 1886 Cola with West African Kola Nut & Columbian Coffee Bean (only just 2 examples from this unique range). Team Anzac will see you there for all the fun of the fair!

www.facebook.com/anzacwinesandspirits/

Kilmegan Cider – three great ciders from County Down's Andrew Boyd

Elder Flower Cider

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<http://kilmegancider.com>

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Naturally - Antrim & Lough Neagh, the places for Craic'n Food & Drink!

Every year around the time of the Irish Game Fair & Fine Food Festival we highlight some of the other natural and heritage attractions of County Antrim and Lough Neagh that visitors to the fair can enjoy. This year Lough Neagh Tours will be exhibiting at the fair and we thought we would preview what is on offer.

Lough Neagh Tours claim to offer guests an opportunity to immerse themselves in heritage, history and hospitality around this unique lake – the largest in the UK and Ireland. Departing from Belfast city centre to the shores of Lough Neagh, an area world renowned for its folklore, flora, fauna and eel, guests are transported to an untapped

wilderness likened to the Florida Everglades. They invited us to be one of the first to experience its untouched landscape, to meet the locals and to sample the unique charm and fantastic culinary delights this summer.

We were looking for a suitable team to send on one of these tours and we thought that photo journalist

and fine food lover David Campbell and his wife Marion would be the ideal couple to explore what the Craic'n Food & Drink Tour had to offer.

'Craic'n Food and Drink' Tour - everything from buffaloes to banjos

As David and Marian boarded the Belfast Tour Company coach at 4:00 pm on a Friday afternoon, they just knew it was going to be really good. The car had been safely left at home as some drinking was scheduled, the itinerary was intriguing and, unusually for here, the sun was shining too. All we had to do now was sit back, relax and enjoy the whole experience!

David Campbell takes up the story: Ruth our guide, counted us onto the bus explaining that she had recently 'lost an American at Titanic!' and that she was loath to go through the paperwork again! Soon, we were motoring up the M2 en route to the Discover Lough



Outside the thatched Cross Keys Inn.

Neagh's Craic'n Food and Drink Tour

<https://www.discoverloughneagh.com/>

After a very quick detour to pick up another couple at Toome Park and Ride, we turned into the village for our first gastronomic adventure. Just beside the canal lock is a lovely little cafe on the site of the old Lock Keepers Cottage, and we were there to meet Kevin Johnston, a fourth generation eel fisherman who assisted by his wife had cooked us some eels to sample.

For many on the tour, this was the first taste of one of Northern Ireland's most famous food exports. Kevin explained about the Co.Operative and how the eels were fished. Served simply with a salad, warm buttered soda bread and tea, they were delicious .

Back on the bus (yes Ruth counted us on) we headed past Ballyronan, deep into the lush Ulster countryside, down narrow side roads to Ballyriff Buffalo Farm (<https://www.bigbarn.co.uk/produce/r/magherafelt/ballyriff-buffalo-25399/>). There we were warmly greeted by Mickey O'Brien and his son Barry. We had been advised by Ruth that we would need an interpreter if Mickey spoke to us, so it was fortunate that the tour was led by son Barry. In addition to a full time job, Barry helps his dad to farm, butcher and market the extremely tasty and healthy buffalo meat, sausages and burgers. The herd is unique in Northern Ireland and in addition to selling all the products to local restaurants ,and at Farmers Markets they sell by appointment at their own Farm Shop. We tried the burgers and sausage and I will be back! Future plans include increasing the herd to allow the building of a parlour and mozzarella cheese facility.

With heads counted again, it was on towards Castledawson, this time for the main food and cider



Buffalo - not exactly a common sight in this country!



Some nifty pickin' on the banjo.

sampling at The Old Thatch Inn (<https://www.theoldthatchinn.com/>). Inside, the tables were overflowing with treats including breads and oatcakes from Ditty's Home Bakery, oils from Harnett Oils Waringstown, and five different cheeses from Dart Mountain Cheese, Claudy, to be washed down with cider supplied by the Armagh Cider Company. Everything was superb and the cheese is worth looking for at specialised outlets!

As we sat around Poet's Corner in the lounge bar, Ruth read three short passages from the late Seamus Heaney, reminding me of how the very nature of his nearby home farm influenced his words and some of his most famous works. I wonder if many Ulster folk appreciate what genius he had and how highly respected he was worldwide. (armaghcider.com, dittysbakery.com, tamnaghfoods.com)

Back on the bus with our excellent and witty guide Ruth plus our driver Brian, we were transported to our final destination, the Crosskeys Inn, Grange, Toomebridge (<https://crosskeys-inn.com/>) where we were greeted by its new owner Vincent Hurl. Vincent assembled us outside on the



Prized all over the world - wonderful Lough Neagh eels.

surprisingly warm May evening and told how he had purchased and restored the Inn after a devastating thatch fire in February 2000.

Recently dated by archaeologists from Queens University, Belfast to pre1654, the oldest thatched pub in Ireland was once a coaching stop on the Belfast to Derry/Londonderry

Road. Warned to 'mind your heads and feet,' as the doors are low and the floors uneven, we were soon seated, filling the main bar. Peat burnt on the fire and musicians played traditional music. The evening passed all too soon, tasting some local beers with quirky names such as the Drunken Donkey lager, Henrietta the Hen IPA, and The Horney Bull Stout.

John, who is one of the owners explained his passion for craft brewing and how he had started brewing to make beer to give to his Wagu/Shorthorn Cross Beef herd. Apparently, in the last six weeks before slaughter they are massaged, played relaxing music and each steer drinks a gallon of beer a day! No wonder you can't buy it in Tesco! (<https://www.hillstownbrewery.com/>)

Much too soon 11.00 pm came and we were counted back on the coach — by now counting us was a necessity — and after dropping some folk off in Randallstown, we



A real treat - Armagh cider, Dart Mountain Cheese, Ditty's bread & oat cakes with Harnett oils.

were whisked back to our own drop off point close to the Victoria Centre in Belfast. We had enjoyed a wonderful experience which had certainly lived up to its promise of providing some really Craic'n Food and Drink!

The Full Lough Neagh Tours Programme



Shane's Castle Tour

Visit the ancient ruins of Shanes Castle on the shores of Lough Neagh, ancestral home of the Clanaboy O'Neills and more recently, one of the locations for Game of Thrones filming. Hear the stories of the family Banshee and see the mysterious black face on the rock. Enjoy afternoon tea at the old railway cafe where the miniature railway once stopped.

Wilderness Adventure

Our wilderness tour allows you to step back from modern life and learn how early man survived on Lough Neagh. Learn how to forage the hedgerows in our outdoor larder on the shores of Lough Neagh, learn how to build a shelter using materials found in the woods at Oxford Island then take to the water of Lough Neagh in a canoe.

Craic 'n Food & Drink Tour

On the tour, meet a local fisherman, and sample some traditionally cooked Lough Neagh eels, visit Ballyriff Buffalo Farm and learn about these amazing creatures before sampling their tasty meat, enter the Old Thatch Inn for tastings of local, ciders, cheeses & more, with a tale or two in the poets' corner. The final stop is the Crosskeys Inn, Ireland's oldest thatched pub, famed for its toe-tapping traditional music sessions.



Tour Guide Ruth reading Seamus Heaney's poem while the author looks down.

Ram's Island

Take a boat journey to Ram's Island and explore a round tower from the remains of a 1000 year old monastic settlement, and the ruins of the O'Neill family's nineteenth century summer house. Learn about the history of the Cardwell family who were caretakers for the O'Neills and explore the harbour and ruins of the family house.

Crosskeys Flyer

Enjoy a traditional evening in Ireland's oldest thatched pub; The Crosskeys Inn, famous for its traditional music sessions, and for serving one of the best pints of Guinness in the north with a fantastic selection of Irish Whiskies. The building dates back to 1654 and is one of the last remaining

traditional pubs in Ireland to host traditional music sessions.

Heartland Food & Drink

The Heartlands Food & Drink Tour takes visitors into the heart of Co Armagh. First stop at the award winning Harnett's Oils, then tingle your tastebuds as you sample some Long Meadow ciders, juices and vinegars. At Crannagael House, enjoy a delicious buffet showcasing the produce including the homemade chutneys and sloe gin. Lastly, visit Tomney's Bar to pour yourself the perfect pint of Guinness and receive a certificate for your efforts!

For further information on the tours visit the stand at the Game Fair or the website www.loughneaghtours.com/

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Leg Length: 30.5" Waist UK 30 – 47



Percussion Sologne Trousers £45

Leg length 30"
Waist UK 30 -47.



Percussion Tradition Trousers £25

Just released, percussions new tradition trouser comes in a 2-tone brown this year other than last year's Green. Designed for mild weather these DWR treated trousers to give protection against showers.
Trousers Waist UK 30 -47.



Percussion Blouson Fleece £30.00

Percussion Full Zip Fleece.
Sizes: Small to 4XL



Percussion Tradition Gilet £35.00

New Percussion Tradition Gilet.
Sizes: Small to 4XL



Percussion Rambouillet Wellington £85.00

Percussion full zip Rambouillet neoprene wellington
Sizes 39 -45



Percussion Solonge Wellington £70.00

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By Don Ryan, Snipe Conservation Alliance

Snipe Conservation Alliance

A Voice for Snipe



www.snipeconservationalliance.org



Snipe Conservation Alliance Launch

The Snipe Conservation Alliance enjoyed great support at its launch day on Tuesday 30th January at the Shamrock Lodge Hotel in Athlone, Co. Westmeath. The enthusiasm was vibrant as Dr Andrew Hoodless, Head of Wetland Research from the Game and Wildlife Conservation Trust, presented on the current status and challenges ahead for this enigmatic wader.

Although the Common Snipe is flagged as "Least Concern" in the Red List of Birdlife International and the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) due to its extremely large range, the local breeding range in Ireland and Britain has undergone a moderate decline in recent decades, earning it an "Amber status" on both islands. This is primarily due to habitat loss through drainage and afforestation of moorlands and bogs. If habitat erosion continues on its current course, the hunter's most challenging quarry

could follow in the footsteps of many other wetland species. For this reason, a number of sportsmen and conservationists from a wide range of the hunting community led an initiative to establish a group known as the Snipe Conservation Alliance.

Ecology and conservation

The Snipe Conservation Alliance is a network of like-minded enthusiasts interested in the study, monitoring, management and conservation of the Common and Jack Snipe. The aim of

the group is to provide a resource to help understand the ecology and to ultimately ensure its conservation.

As it becomes established, it is intended that the Snipe Conservation Alliance will offer support to any group or person wishing to become actively involved in the welfare, improvement and maintenance of snipe habitat. It will be a partnership process and the objectives can only be achieved through active engagement with government departments, local communities and landowners who wish to see snipe



The Snipe Conservation Alliance is a network of enthusiasts interested in the study, monitoring, management and conservation of the Common and Jack Snipe.

remain on our bogs and moors on both uplands and lowlands for future generations.

Along with the engaging presentation given by Dr Andrew Hoodless' at launch day, there were also various talks from other passionate speakers including Robert Hutchinson who gave a lively presentation on behalf of the Irish Hawking Club. Vincent Flannelly spoke on behalf of the Field Trial organisations under the auspices of the Irish Kennel Club, Jim Fitzharris represented Countryside Alliance Ireland and the Irish Red Grouse Conservation Trust and Gary Timbrell on behalf of the International Association of Falconry and Conservation of Birds of Prey (IAF).

Snipe hawking display

On conclusion of the presentations, there was just enough time to visit a

nearby raised bog to see why snipe are such a valued species and witness one of the world's most incredible hunting spectacles; the art of snipe hawking. Snipe hawking is a branch of falconry that involves the partnership of a setting/pointing, fast pacing dog, a high flying falcon and a dedicated falconer. The waterlogged, acidic, nutrient-poor open bogs provide the ideal conditions to safely fly a falcon at one of most challenging species that thrives in this landscape.

When the snipe is located by the setting dog, the falcon is un-hooded, sent skyward and urged to fly as high as they possibly can to wait for the signal from the falconer below. The falconer waits till what they believe to be the right moment where the falcon is slightly upwind, then urgently prompts the dog to flush this avian acrobat that explodes upwards with incredible

velocity, ricocheting through the sky to challenge the stoop of the fastest creature on the planet.

A fantastic afternoon's sport was enjoyed by all and despite the perfect weather conditions and countless number of snipe encountered, this mysterious and perplexing bog bleater managed to overcome every challenge issued by the falcon, falconer and dog to earn the respect of all present.

We would like to thank the many organisations that support this venture including the International Association of Falconry and Conservation of Birds of Prey (IAF), the Irish Hawking Club, Countryside Alliance Ireland, the Irish Red Grouse Conservation Trust and the Irish Kennel Club.

For more information about the Snipe Conservation Alliance please check out our website, www.snipeconservationalliance.org and follow us on Facebook and Twitter.



Getting ready to demonstrate snipe hawking.

Rorke's Drift: Facts and Fiction

The old adage of victors writing the history books (and making films) definitely applies to the story of Rorke's Drift. What a pity the Zulus couldn't read or write at the time.

One hundred and thirty-nine years ago, a battle between Zulu warriors and British troops took place at a tiny mission station two miles from the Buffalo River in Zululand, South Africa. Since then, the defence of Rorke's Drift has been heralded as a heroic feat of arms, especially as it took place later the same day as a major British defeat eleven miles away.

At Isandlwana a large army of Zulu warriors wiped out, almost to a man, an Imperial force in excess of 1000 well trained and armed soldiers in less than two hours. Since those far-off days many books have appeared re-stating the accepted version of events at Rorke's Drift. However, further investigation raises the likelihood of a

different version being more likely.

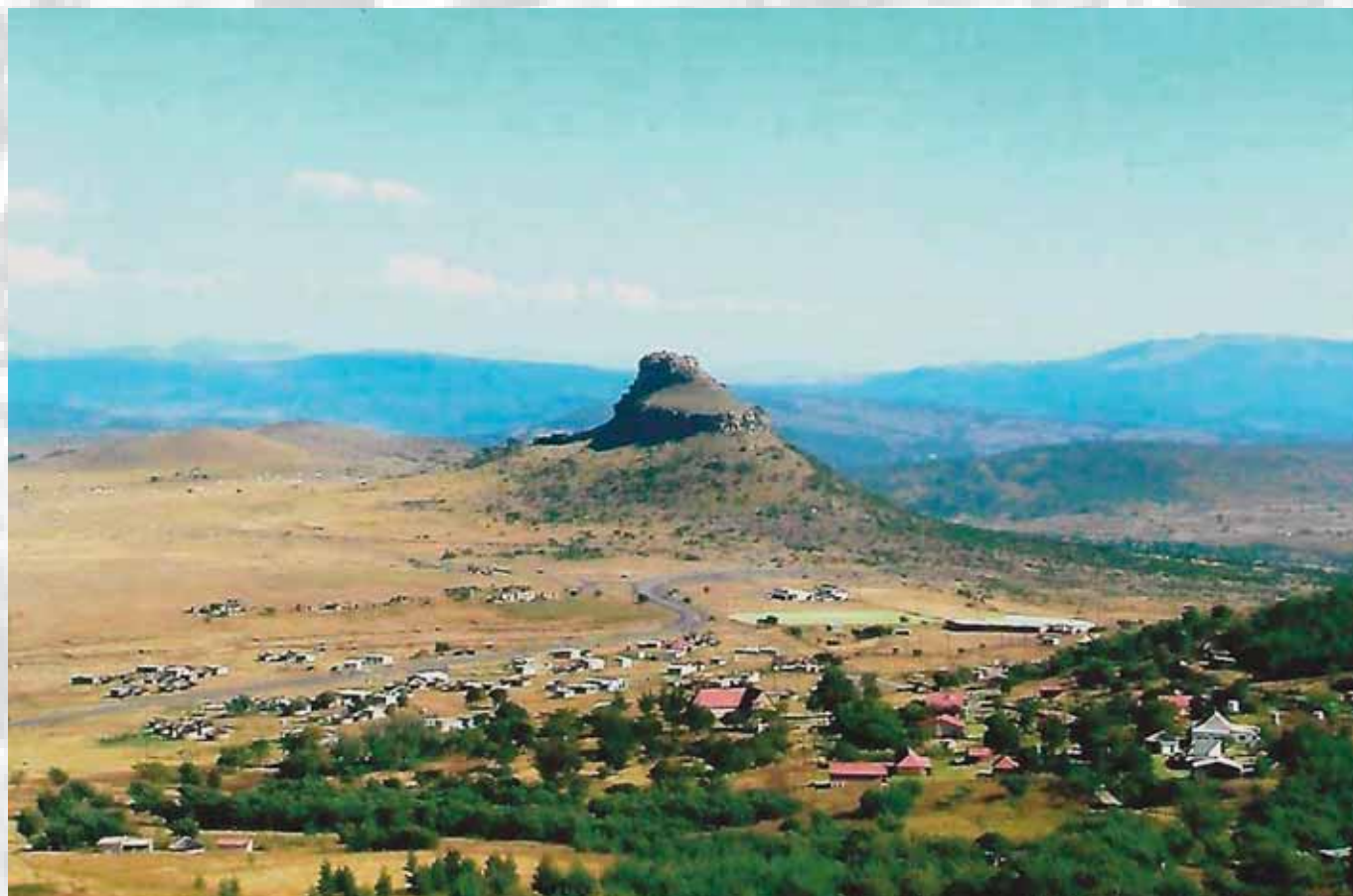
Stanley Baker's epic film 'Zulu,' which hit cinema screens in the early 1960s, portrayed events that may have made exciting cinematography, but was rather a skewed portrayal of the events that actually took place. A later film, 'Zulu Dawn,' related the morning's happenings on January 22nd 1879 when thousands of Zulu warriors stunned the entire European establishment with their unprecedented victory at Isandlwana. The Zulu regiments involved were well trained and well led. Armed mainly with Assegai stabbing spears they simply overwhelmed the British camp by force of numbers.

History tells us that the British

commander Lord Chelmsford had split his force leaving half of his men at the Isandlwana camp and heading off into the interior of Zululand, with the other half to seek and destroy the main Zulu army. History also makes it clear that Chelmsford was outmanoeuvred and the price was a shocking defeat. The facts relating to Isandlwana have stood the test of time, with perhaps one issue not being fully resolved – the distribution of ammunition.

Claims of difficulty were officially denied

Survivors' reports point to difficulties opening the wooden storage boxes causing catastrophic delays in getting spare ammunition to the defending



Isandlwana - the battle took place on the far left side of the overlooking Sphinx-like feature.



The mission station at Rorke's Drift, Shyiane hill in the background.

soldiers. These claims were officially denied at the time, yet early distribution of spare rounds at Rorke's Drift appears to confirm that a problem with opening boxes actually existed. An alteration to the boxes' design made three months later would seem to contradict official statements.

Following their victory at Isandlwana, Zulu armies are reputed to have moved on that afternoon to attack and capture the Swedish Mission Station at Rorke's Drift – an isolated spot chosen as a supply depot for the main British force. While it's accepted that a heroic defence took place there on January 22/23, combined fact and fiction has morphed into questionable legendary status.

The soldiers present were from the 2nd/24th Warwickshire Regiment – not the South Wales Borderers – mainly English and Irish, with some Welsh. Numbers vary from 135 to 141 with a reported 36 of those in a building converted into a hospital. Zulus numbers vary between 3000 and 6000 depending on whose version one reads. The defending soldiers were highly disciplined and well trained in the use of the issue single-shot falling block action .577/450 calibre Martini Henry Rifle. Using black powder charged lead bullets, it was estimated that the average soldier would be in discomfort from the heavy recoil after continuously firing approximately 15 rounds. In a life and death situation



The 2nd/24th soldiers who fought at Rorke's Drift photographed shortly after the action.

the number fired would obviously increase.

Added to this was the problem of overheating barrels causing empty cases to jam in the breech and further difficulty with the extractor tearing the brass head below the loom, leaving the bulk stuck in the rifle. Clearing these blockages was time-consuming. Each soldier carried 70 rounds in pouches, so given 110 - 120 active defenders they had an approximate total of 8,400 rounds between them. The garrison stores were recorded as holding 20,000 rounds, so the total number of bullets available was somewhere between 27,000 and 29,000. By the end of the day the garrison is reputed to have been down to 900 rounds – some versions claim 600. Taking a figure of just 110 active soldiers, given that they took casualties, each man would have to have fired in excess of 200 rounds. With nine hours close-quarters fighting as was later claimed, Zulu casualties had to have been horrific. Apparently they were not.

Further questions arise concerning the exact number of Zulus present and the level of casualties they inflicted. A total of 13 British soldiers killed does not equate with thousands of spear-wielding Zulus attacking over a mealie-bag wall throughout a nine-hour period. Of that figure three succumbed to stab wounds while 10 died from gunshot wounds!



This shows a .577/450 Martini Henry Paper-patched lead bullet beside a .303in round for comparison.

Having looted the fallen camp at Isandlwana that morning, the Zulus were in possession of hundreds of Martini Henry rifles that don't appear to have featured in any reports of this further action. Later in life Colour Sergeant Frank Bourne of the 2nd/24th wrote that he believed Zulu firepower caused most of the British casualties "killed or wounded – hardly a man even wounded by an assegai."

He also wrote that he estimated Zulu numbers at around 600 – 700. The Zulu version of the Rorke's Drift attack would appear to corroborate this. Handed down through the generations their contention is that warriors who attacked the Drift were not involved in the morning's rout at Isandlwana. Being mainly younger men they had been side-lined as a reserve and seeking a share of the glory, decided to run 11 miles to the camp and take back herds of cattle confiscated by the British. A Zulu's wealth is measured by the number of cattle that he owns. The run involved jogging 11 miles to Rorke's Drift, then swimming the Buffalo River before they attacked the mission station two miles away.

Zulus openly scoff at the nine hour siege version

Their version was that a small number of warriors attacked the camp in order to distract the occupants while the cattle were being retrieved by others.

Zulus openly scoff at the nine hour siege version, saying that within a period of two hours several groups charged the defenders to cover the movements of the cattle. Their military tactics have always centred on a buffalo head and horns encircling form of engagement, as devised by their King Chaka a few decades previously, and did not include laying sieges.

When visiting the area

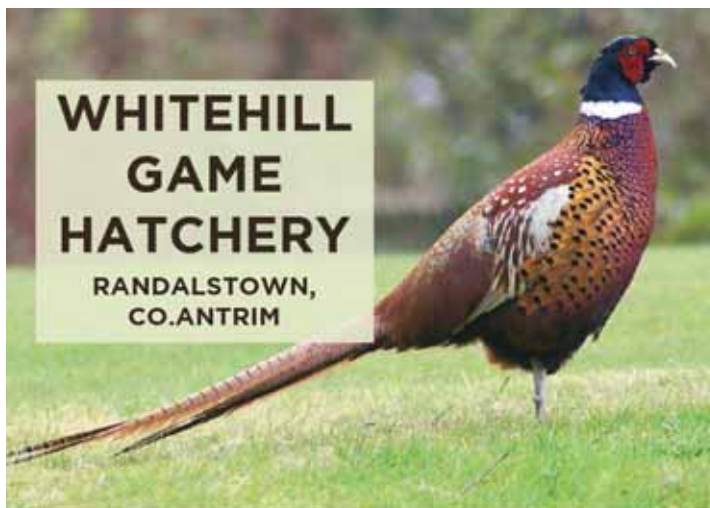
some years ago, I spoke to an elderly Zulu gentleman via an interpreter. His exact words were that his people lay great emphasis on the victory at Isandlwana - Rorke's Drift is seldom mentioned as it was only a series of skirmishes. He also claimed that the Zulus did not set fire to the hospital building where many of the fatalities occurred. They believe the conflagration was accidentally caused by defending soldiers.

Chelmsford's later generosity with Victoria Crosses (a total of 11) was not viewed kindly by many establishment figures. His statements about the Rorke's Drift action preventing an imminent invasion of Natal were considered a deflection from the morning's disaster at Isandlwana. General Sir Garnet Wolseley, sent to replace him and bring the Zulu War to a speedy conclusion, was not amused either. The report he sent to London was highly critical of Chelmsford's campaign tactics. Wolseley didn't mince his words either in relation to two Officers who lost their lives having taken flight on horseback from Isandlwana in order to save the Colours. He was less than complimentary at their leaving men to face the enemy on foot while they rode off on horses.

Repetitive recycling of Chelmsford's "facts" by many authors over the decades has added to the cult status. Truth and fiction merged into mythical status over the ensuing years, aided and abetted by Baker's film. Only last year (2017) a leading Irish daily newspaper stated that Chelmsford had been awarded the Victoria Cross for his exploits in the Zulu Wars. Nothing could be further from the truth – Wolseley made it clear at the time that he would have recommended Chelmsford being cashiered but for the patronage of Queen Victoria and Prime Minister Disraeli's desire to sweep the matter under the carpet. It was in the establishment's best interest to focus public attention on the Rorke's Drift affair, rather than the morning's defeat at Isandlwana.

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Say your piece on environmental matters!

The term environmentalist (some say tree huggers) can and does cover a whole range of opinions and not all are the same by any stretch. I have a Masters degree in Environmental science and have been actively involved in Environmental issues for many years. As you can probably gather from the fact that I have been writing for this magazine, I am also an angler and I shoot as often as I can. This marks me out as an oddity at many meetings I have attended.



First hand evidence how much the fishing industry has declined.

I became really involved with Environmental NGOs about fifteen years ago and was immediately surprised that very few had ever been involved in fieldsports or angling. I can say without fear of contradiction that many were horrified that I had hunted as a youngster both otters and hares with beagles. I did not let this stop me trying to put forward the benefits of fieldsports and many times I stated that the game associations should be involved, as these are the very people who walk the ditches while anglers keep watch on our waterways and coasts.

On one occasion a prominent television broadcaster was being interviewed for membership of this group and I asked him his views on fieldsports. He replied that he was against cruelty. He seemed very confused later when I said to him that I think all supporters of fieldsports would agree with him, and are against cruelty in my experience.

Many of the people who sit down to represent the environment with policy makers and government officials simply cannot comprehend that it was perfectly possible to have a great day's fishing and not catch anything, or a great day out without firing a shot; it's simply beyond their understanding. Now I should not paint all with the same brush but let's say the majority I have found like this. My association with a number of these groups has led some folks to conclude that I may be an 'anti' - I'm definitely not! A healthy environment is crucial to our sport, interests and jobs. Yet groups like the NARGC and the Countryside Alliance often do not have a seat at the table in some cases.

However, even now there are more people involved in environmental groups who border on the misplaced ideal side of things than folks who know what they are talking about and can be realistic in their lobbying to politicians. Unfortunately these folk can and do talk

about what is in the literature about the environment simply because they have found it on their computer screens. Some really think that environmental interests are the 'be all and end all,' and there is no room for any other activity.

Some resources belong to everyone

In 2006, I was asked to join the North Western Waters Advisory Council which advises the European Union on fisheries policy. At first the 'other interests group' was met with suspicion and hostility by the fishing industry as the industry at the time saw no reason why anyone but themselves should have any say in fisheries policy. Keep in mind that the industry representatives (Producer Organisations) represent mostly the larger boats, the majority of inshore boats, anglers and environmental interests were not entitled to an opinion where fishery matters were concerned. I approached



The Author (left) meeting EU Commissioner Daninaki was accompanied by Charter boat representative Donal Kennedy.

this with the idea that the marine resources belong to all, and all should strive for a future for all, including fishermen. There is room for all.

It has taken many years, but I feel that finally the fishing industry has realised that not everyone is anti-fishing. This has come as a bit of a shock to many in the industry as in the past many of their interactions with environmental interests consisted of some people trying to totally ban fishing in certain areas to protect wildlife. I am happy to be able to say that I believe that I have gained a certain level of trust with many of the larger organisations. If I think what they are saying is true I will back them but, if I disagree, I will disagree with them. I think they know that. The fact that I am there representing the Irish Seal Sanctuary means that whenever the issue of seals and fisheries come up someone will look at me. By now they know what I will say, I will agree with them when I agree with their point, surprising some of the NGOs present.

Yes, seals eat fish and, yes, seal numbers have increased. But several studies have stated that seals do not have a significant impact on fish stocks.

I point out that while seal numbers have increased, so have the stocks of certain fish such as Hake. Hake eat fish, so in fact do most of the commercial fish stocks. My argument is that we need to take a look at the whole picture - an 'ecosystem approach.'

Sure, seals are easily seen and easy to

point the finger at, but if other fish are eating the fish also why blame only the seals. Even when an industry member pointed out a paper by a university entitled 'seal numbers inhibit cod stock recovery,' when I pointed out that it could just as easily say 'hake numbers inhibit cod stock recovery' and he did not disagree.

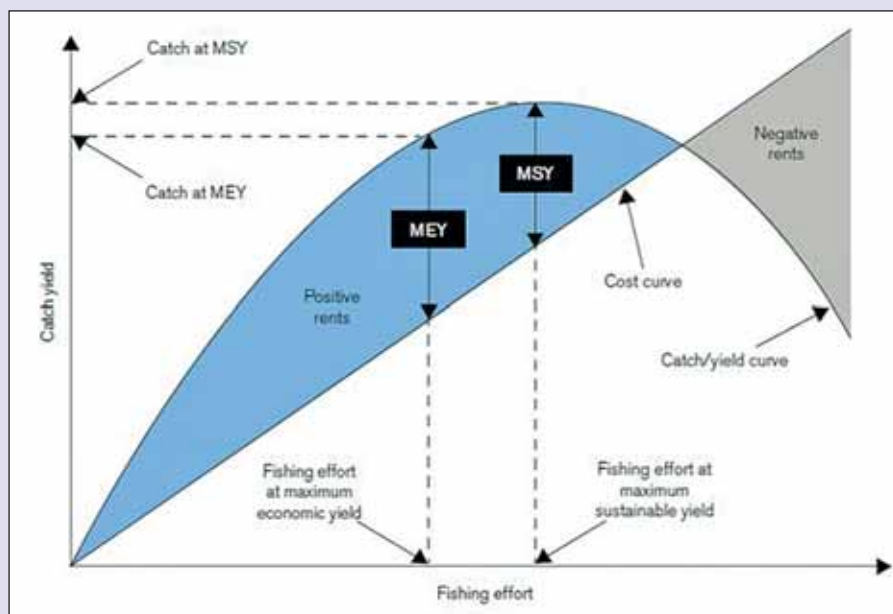
Policymaking from behind a desk

I realise that I have used examples of scientific papers here to make a point, but I am disappointed that most of the other members of the "other interest group" are academics, lawyers, or folks working for large multinational environmental organisations. Unfortunately some of these seem to have their own agenda. It saddens me to see so many people who think that they can decide their policy about environmental matters while sitting behind a desk. Even if they were regular readers of this very magazine they would learn things that simply would not occur to them.

Since its beginning, the Irish Seal Sanctuary has encouraged bridge building and communication, as we



Don't try picking up a young seal unless you have experience - they like to bite!



Economic factors of sea fishing.

have seen that megaphone diplomacy gets nothing done, other than building distrust. We have shared knowledge and learned from opposing views.

Unfortunately a lot of environmental campaigners only see one side to the issue. If there is one subject that can fire up the one sided debate on both sides it's the issue of seals and fish.

The vast majority of these folk have no experience of angling or even knowledge of how commercial fishermen spend their days trying to earn a living. My point being that fieldsports need to make their voices heard. We all complain when a new law is landed on our sport, but we must be

in the room to ask for consultation. At the moment there are few representatives of fieldsports of any kind at the tables at which I sit.

I do what I can and relay what I learn to anyone interested. For instance the data available for recreational angling catches is very poor and needs to be improved; in my view we can all expect some new rules regarding catch data in the next few years. The catch data for sea-bass had to be estimated and those in control were influenced but the commercials to vastly overestimate the recreational catch, hence the draconian rules for the past few years on bass angling.



Some bream and mackerel - data for recreational angling catch needs to be improved.

The sad case is that at the majority of the meetings I attend as an environmental representative, be it Fishery Local Action Group (FLAG), Regional Inshore Fisheries Forum (RIFF) or Advisory Council most environmental representatives attending do not contribute, but simply report back to their employers what is happening. At the Advisory Council meetings I think I am now the only person at the table who is not paid by an organisation to be there (I do get expenses from the AC to attend, but it can be hard work attending).

Why am I involved? I am a founder member of the Irish Seal Sanctuary and the Irish Whale and Dolphin Group and have lived all my life in a small seaside town which is now a commuter town of Dublin but was once a vibrant fishing port. I have seen how the industry has declined and how the changes in fishing practises have impacted on local fishermen. My kids will never see the local harbour covered in herring scales, looking like it had been dipped in glitter with nets hanging up to dry. I spent a lot of my youth on the harbour catching mackerel with cheap gear earned by selling the catch at two pence a fish to day-trippers. (Good grass roots education : Editor)

On a number of occasions fishermen have contacted me directly about concerns they have within the fishing industry ,but do not want their names mentioned so I brought a complaint to the European Commission under my own name on behalf of a fisherman. On another occasion a fisherman asked if we could do anything about the treatment of non-nationals working on some Irish fishing boats. I wrote a press release which the Guardian followed up on. That did not go down well with the industry, but wrongdoing should not be covered up. They, I must add do not agree or condone such treatment but certainly did not want it made public. In my opinion, if you want country sports interests to be taken more into consideration — then I suggest that you or your association must get more involved.

Ulster Woodturners

The Ulster Chapter of the Irish Woodturners' Guild has been active since 1992. They started at a meeting in Lisburn Leisure in 1992. They meet 10 times a year on the second Saturday of each month. After moving around various venues in Co. Antrim, they settled in 2006 into a custom made auditorium in the Wood Shed, a family woodturning business run by Sam Moore.

Our ethos is to promote woodturning. We bring in demonstrators, experienced woodturners, who give instruction to our members. We bring these demonstrators from all over the world. Mostly local turners, but we have had turners from the USA, Europe and Australia.

These demos inspire our members to make improvements to their work, to enter our monthly competitions and develop their skills.

We are exhibiting at the Irish Game Fair to promote what we do. We will be demonstrating the skills we use. We will have examples of our work, both small and

large pieces. Where to learn more about the craft and how to set up a workshop enabling someone to become a woodturner, all these questions will be answered. We can give information to visitors about woodturning anywhere in Ireland.



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RAINBOW TROUT ESCAPE - LOUGHS AGENCY UPDATE

In August 2017, heavy rain fell across the North West of Ireland, with areas receiving almost double their normal August rainfall. In fact, 63% of the average monthly rainfall for the month of August fell within an 8 to 9 hour period. The flood event caused unprecedented damage to the Glenelly, Owenkillew, Faughan and Burdennet catchments.

Flooding was widespread and the River Strule burst its banks at Newtownstewart in County Tyrone, flooding the adjacent trout farm, a commercial business licensed by the authority for land based fish farms in Northern Ireland, the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs.

An estimated 387,000 rainbow trout were flushed out of the confines of the fish farm, prompting the Loughs Agency to undertake an immediate assessment, gauging the potential impact of this escape of non-native species on the wild fish stock. The Agency is a cross-border body, charged with conservation, protection, development and promotion of the fisheries of the Foyle and Carlingford areas.

The Agency engaged the noted fisheries scientist Professor Ken Whelan

to work in tandem with its in-house science team, reviewing the situation and producing an assessment and mitigation report, drawing on his extensive experience, the evidence to hand locally and scientific literature.

Fisheries protection staff and scientists from the Agency were on the water very quickly following the flood event. They undertook a rigorous scientific survey of rivers to determine the movement of rainbow trout (direction and distance), locate any areas where the species were congregating and discover their feeding regime. A co-ordinated programme of netting and electrofishing resulted in the removal of over 500 rainbow trout. These surveys showed that the greatest density of rainbow trout were in the rivers close to the fish farm being Strule, Derg and Mourne – the two former converge not far below the farm

to form the Mourne. Interestingly, analysis of stomach contents of a sample of the fish revealed that the ‘diet’ of many of these farmed animals included a variety of ‘non-food’ items, such as twigs, stones and vegetation.

With the start of the angling season on 1st April, reports were received from anglers of high catches of rainbow trout. With such reports being picked up, the Agency recommenced netting and electrofishing, resulting in removal of hundreds more rainbow trout. Further analysis of stomach contents reassuringly confirmed that many of the fish continue to consume items of limited food value (stones, twigs etc).

A recent survey and trapping operation, resulted in a ‘bycatch’ of a sizable number of salmon and sea trout smolts. April to June is the peak smolt run with these juvenile fish making their way from natal rivers to the ocean. At this stage, the fish morph from a river form to ready themselves for the conditions faced at sea and they are prone to stress, especially if coming into contact with a net or an electric current or even human hands. Fearful of harming smolts, the Agency has temporarily suspended its plans to capture rainbow trout using nets and electrofishing.

An operational plan has been developed to put in place measures to capture escaped rainbow trout. Activity proposed includes: a rod fishing survey that will commence after the smolt run



Electrofishing and netting operation



Stomach analysis in the lab

ends and run through to next spring; a netting operation to target appropriate sites, if a concentration of fish is located; and an electrofishing programme will be trialled.

With the escape of a large number of non-native fish into its rivers, the Agency shares the concerns of environmentalists, including anglers. Although a significant risk to the riverine ecology, it is reasonable to accept that many of the rainbow trout succumbed to the sheer force of the incredible flood that propelled them out of the sheltered confines of their fish ponds. It is a fair assumption that many of the survivors sated the appetites of cormorant, heron, otter and mink. The efforts of anglers and Agency operations should reduce further the population of trout that found themselves disgorged into the Strule that August night. There is a team within Loughs Agency dedicated to the task of removal of this non-native species, a team comprising scientists and experienced fishery managers.

Salmon fishing on the Foyle is highly regarded by local and visiting anglers alike. As the salmon run strengthens, the Agency anxiously awaits any reports of

disruption of the efforts of salmon anglers. Rainbow trout often appear to be ridiculously keen to set themselves on the point of a hook. It is hoped that instances of this unwelcome fish impairing attempts to hook a salmon are not significant, with anglers continuing to enjoy great fishing in beautiful surroundings, amongst hospitable and friendly people.

Of course, as with the appearance of any non-native species (plant or

animal), rainbow trout threaten the harmony of the river ecosystem, competing with native fish for food and living space, as well as consuming fish eggs and smaller wild fish. The sudden appearance of many thousands of these fish last August posed threats that have been mitigated by nature itself through predation, the sheer force of the flood waters injuring and killing individuals, the actions of anglers and the operations of the Loughs Agency. Continued vigilance by all parties will allow effective management of the situation.

The Loughs Agency appeals to anglers to continue their efforts to humanely remove rainbow trout from rivers, imploring them to submit timely reports of catches (using the reporting sheet available from the Agency website). This information is vital in allowing evaluation of numbers of fish removed, their size and distribution. So as to facilitate research, rainbow trout over 30cm in length should be forwarded to the Agency to allow dissection and analysis (contact the Agency directly on 02871 342100 to arrange for collection). Anglers are urged to avoid discarding fish on the river banks as this can attract animals that prey on wild stocks.

For more visit <http://www.loughs-agency.org/>



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SCIENTISTS MUST FIND WHY OUR SALMON ARE BEING LOST AT SEA

The month of April always brings good news about returning salmon starting to show up in our rivers and this year is no different with good catches already recorded on many rivers and on the River Moy in particular.

However, the *Lost at Sea!* film that was screened on RTE has rekindled the debate on where our migrating smolts are going, as the majority never return home after their journey to the feeding grounds. Many blame the infestation of sea lice which they pick up as they swim past the salmon farm cages, then IFI's figure of 30% loss of smolts may be accurate enough.

However, the real onus is on us all to find out why we are losing our fish and the challenge we presented on the promotion of Deirdre Brennan's well produced film was what else could be killing these most valuable smolts in the North Atlantic feeding grounds?

Fortunately, one of the most eminent salmon biologists, Dr. Jens Christian Holst from Norway, took up our challenge by responding with a well researched presentation that identified the underestimated

mackerel stocks as a key reason for the food decline in feeding our wild salmon the vital diet they need to build them up for the long trip home.

We thank Jens Christian Holst for his frank views and for taking up our challenge by giving us another more probable reason than we have heard before. Our members have encouraged us to dig deeper with the late Orri Vigfusson last May when we decided open the debate and now to publish this thesis below. We welcome any additional comments on this very important debate as time is running out for the future of our salmon as survival figures continue to fall rapidly.

Jens Christian Holst comments

As a marine fisheries biologist, I have worked closely on the marine ecology and factors affecting marine survival of Atlantic salmon since 1991. I have seen 'Atlantic Salmon Lost at Sea' and it came to me as a scientific disappointment when temperature and climate change was the explanation for why the salmon are not coming back as they used to do.

Based on my ecosystem based research in the NE Atlantic I have developed the 'Hypothesis on overgrazing and predation' which I strongly advise you to consider in parallel with 'The temperature and climate change hypothesis' while watching the film.

The NE Atlantic mackerel stock has grown totally out of proportions, due to strong underestimation leading to too low quotas allocated, which again leads to under fishing. Because of the very large mackerel stock the food resources of amongst other whales, seals, sea birds, salmon and the mackerel itself are now heavily overgrazed. Today a 7 years old mackerel weighs half of what it would have weighed 10 years ago, a clear sign of the overgrazing. The lack of food also lead to starvation and very slow growth of the young salmon at sea, the salmon postsmolt. This make the postsmolt salmon more vulnerable to predation and disease than before the mackerel explosion.

A 30 cm long mackerel can eat a 12.5 cm mackerel meaning a mackerel can eat a fish 40% its own length. This again means a mackerel



Members of the Donegal Game Anglers into a fish on the Gweebarra River.

at 50 cm can eat a 20 cm postsmolt salmon. In other words, mackerel can prey efficiently on postsmolt salmon during much of the postsmolts first summer at sea.

Traditionally, the main spawning grounds of the NE Atlantic mackerel stock were found west of the British Isles and in the North Sea. Due to the strong stock growth, the mackerel spawning areas have swelled northwards and they now also spawn in the Norwegian Sea and in Norwegian fjords, up to Northern Norway. In May 2008, we found spawning mackerel with the marine research vessels in the Norwegian Sea for the first time, a trend which has strongly intensified in later years.

The mackerel and the salmon postsmolts both use the shelf edge currents west of the European continent to speed up their northern feeding migration in late spring, thus inhabiting exactly the same waters, and also depths. This close 'coswimming' of mackerel and salmon postsmolts during the entire 2000 kilometre migration from Irish river mouths to north of the Vøring plateau in the Norwegian Sea at 68 degrees north makes up the perfect predation opportunity for the starving mackerel on the now more

slow growing and vulnerable Irish postsmolts. Knowing this migration takes about two months I leave it to yourself to consider what the effect of predation from mackerel could be on the Irish salmon postsmolt during this migration today.

The Irish and Northern-Irish salmon has collapsed at a much higher and more alarming rate than the Norwegian salmon stocks, despite about 1.3 million tonnes of salmon being farmed in Norway. But the Irish and Northern-Irish postsmolts both have to 'co-swim' with the dense concentrations of mackerel northwards more than double the distance and period compared with the Norwegian postsmolts.

The measured mackerel egg distributions in 1992 and 2016 demonstrate the increase of the mackerel spawning stock and the dramatic increase in predation potential of mackerel on the postsmolts of Irish salmon, in perfect parallel with the collapse of the Irish salmon stocks.

At the end of 'Atlantic Salmon: Lost at Sea!' it is concluded that what we know now is that climate change has impacted directly and very severely on Atlantic Salmon at sea." In my view there is no empiric basis for such a conclusion. If we

study the development of the temperatures in the main feeding area of Irish postsmolts in the Norwegian Sea, the temperatures rose from around 1970 to 2007 and are now close to or below normal according to the Institute of Marine Research (IMR) in Norway. In the IMR 2017 'Marine Research report' (Havforskningsrapporten) it is stated on page 16: "The Norwegian Sea: The temperatures in the Atlantic water along the Norwegian continental shelf have since 2013 been close to or slightly above normal. The temperatures in 2016 were mainly above normal, except the southeastern Norwegian Sea where the temperatures were lower than normal."

The temperatures in the Norwegian Sea follows the so-called Atlantic Multidecadal Oscillation (AMO). This 60 years climate cycle bottomed in the early 1970s, peaked around 2007 and must now be expected to be negative for about 20 more years from now. Climate change may lead to higher temperature at the coming peaks and bottoms but I expect the cycling to continue like is documented in for instance sedimentation layers on the seabed all since the last ice age 10.000 years ago.



'The Gweebarra 3 on their river' - Sean O' Baoill, John Boyle and Peadar O' Baoill.

No correlation with temperatures in the Irish salmon stock collapse

So, during a period of continuous decline of Irish salmon from around 1973, the temperatures in its main feeding areas have been going up, peaking in 2007 and then down to around normal today. There is consequently no correlation with temperatures in the Irish salmon stock collapse but a very good correlation with the growing mackerel stock and its potential for predation on the Irish postsmolt salmon.

Despite the AMO having turned negative more than 10 years ago the Irish and Northern-Irish salmon stocks continue their negative spiral and fishing have almost ceased as the salmon stocks are close to or under conservation limits. In my view this situation will continue to worsen for the Irish salmon until we reduce the heavy competition and predation from mackerel.

Today the Norwegian Sea and Norwegian coast is 'filled up' with juvenile mackerel after two years of very successful recruitment from the never seen before northern spawning in 2016 and 2017. Consequently, the worst may well be yet to come for

the Irish and European salmon in my view.

To sum up, think well about it, what is most likely to kill an Irish northward bound postsmolt salmon today: temperature or a starving mackerel?

As a true and dedicated salmon enthusiast, I will strongly advise you to consider the evidence, then contact the mackerel fishing skippers of Killybegs to get their opinion on the present size of the mackerel stock compared with for instance 1992. Then ask FISSTA for action! There are two opposing hypotheses here; they must be tested very soon, thoroughly and objectively!

FISSTA CHALLENGE LOW TARGETS IN NEW RIVER BASIN PLAN

All of us in angling work hard to get cleaner water for our fish but also for everyone else as well. That is why we constantly advocate and make submissions on water management and to get Ministers and Government to get far more serious about water management as we face big fines from EU unless we change very fast.

We know this now as the publication of the much anticipated

River Basin Management Plan sets out how our surface waters and groundwater will be managed up to 2021. Half of our rivers and lakes are in an unhealthy state and the Plan proposes restoring the measly target of only 12% which just shows how serious this government is about fixing what is badly broken.

How can our members on every river and lake on this island continue to give our massive commitment to cooperate and partner with the state bodies if they are setting themselves such a small target as 12%? This threatens Ireland's images of a 'clean green' tourist destination and its capability to become a truly environmentally friendly food producer through such programmes as 'Origin Green.' It is also important to note that the Plan is almost completely silent on the coast and our inshore waters, even though the WFD extends to one nautical mile.

We are losing the momentum Irish anglers have gained in combatting pollution and it means that our river communities miss out on the massive benefits of a clean and healthy local river, lake or beach for commerce, recreation and well-being.

The recent Government plan launched by Minister Eoin Murphy TD to protect Ireland's rivers, lakes and coastal waters has been criticised by FISSTA and other environmental groups as inadequate and lacking ambition. The River Basin Management Plan falls very short of what is needed by state bodies to address persistent environmental failures that are putting pressures on Irish water systems, and anglers believe that the political will needed to support Ireland's claims to be an Origin Green producer and a future mecca for environmental tourism will only happen if they set more ambitious targets than the present 12% rectification rate to improve our 52%



Michael, Paul, Cathal, Sean and John on the Lord Mayo pool of the Gweebarra.

of rivers that fall below the 'good status' required by the EU directive.

We have had the legal requirement

Chairman Paul Lawton has stated that budgetary restrictions seem to be dictating the pace of the plan rather than the urgent need for a 'clear' healthy status' plan to develop sustainably the increased discharges from the major offenders such as public service contamination sources, sewage mismanagement, excessive drainage of boglands due to forestry planting. We have had the legal requirement under the EU Water Framework Directive in place since 2000 is to introduce new measures to bring Irish rivers, lakes and bays up to a "good" ecological state by 2021.

Paul Lawton added that this obligation has been under-resourced to the extent that half (52 per cent) of Ireland's rivers and lakes are failing to achieve the 'good status' required by the directive. This latest plan is sadly consistent with Ireland's lack of ambition to date, proposing to fix only a small fraction of these.

This plan lacks serious commitment and is an exercise in doing the best you can to stem pollution whilst a greater amount of State investment was needed to end

the discharge of raw and poorly treated sewage into rivers and bays. Grant-aid to farmers must shift so as to support farming that prevents water pollution, protects the rural landscape and contributes to sustainable flood management, rather than encouraging intensification programme not yet proven to be sustainable.

Sadly, it is left entirely to NGO groups such as FISSTA to campaign for a refusal of planning permission for fighting off another 'Archimedes Screw' hydro application that would impact greatly on the River Faughan. FISSTA extend their warmest congratulations to all concerned for this great success in protecting their river.

DONEGAL ANGLERS FACE 12TH YEAR OF CONFRONTATION AGAINST STATE IFI ON DISPUTED GWEEBARRA RIVER

The official opening of the 2018 salmon and sea-trout season on the Gweebarra River on Easter Sunday was again marked by a large crowd of salmon anglers protesting under the Donegal Game Anglers Federation banner at Doochary. Here, several confrontations have taken place, resulting in hundreds of summonses being issued, which

were dismissed last year in the courts.

These confrontations with Inland Fisheries Ireland (IFI) took place often with the back up from An Garda Síochána who have been on call for the 12th season to monitor and police the conflict. The DGAF stated: "We will continue to defend local and visiting anglers against ongoing harassment by Inland Fisheries Ireland (IFI) since the dispute erupted on the Gweebarra River in 2006."

This long running battle between the state and local game anglers on the Gweebarra has dragged on since the DGAF first rejected an attempted state takeover of our fisheries without any consultation or regard for the local club angling rights. The local Rosses and Fintown Angling clubs with the full support of all local clubs and national federations (representing over 50,000 members) of FISSTA (Federation of Irish Salmon and Sea-trout Anglers) and TAFI (Trot Anglers Federation of Ireland) succeeded in maintaining this long drawn out protest campaign to protect their waters from illegal state takeover despite IFI prosecuting some of our key members in the High Court in Dublin.

It has been an extremely difficult fight for the local anglers under Donegal Game Anglers Federation and a very serious waste of state and voluntary resources over this prolonged period of time as the state IFI fails to resolve what must be IFI's most self-harming exercise in their history.

Local anglers won another case at the end of last year, in the long battle to fight for their rights to fish their own waters, when more than 150 summonses for illegal fishing on the Gweebarra River were dismissed and Judge Paul Kelly was asked at Dungloe District Court on 14 November 2017 to rule on costs. He said the case had been in court for a

considerable period of time since February 2015 before the Attorney General's decision last March. The prosecution by IFI counsel was withdrawn at a very late stage; if Inland Fisheries Ireland hadn't the power to prosecute then, the judge said, the case shouldn't have been brought before the courts.

The defence had incurred significant expense that has yet to be determined by the courts. The judge said his decision on costs in no way related to the merits of the case itself. He had not been called on to decide the issue of fishing rights on the river, which were before higher courts. He made an order for costs in the case of all the defendants charged with illegal fishing, and adjourned the hearing to permit the prosecution and defence agree the amount of costs.

FISSTA and Trout Anglers Federation of Ireland support their local clubs in this fight for angling rights against a state regime of IFI who continue to take legal action against DGAF members using our own rod licence revenue and taxpayer's money. FISSTA revealed back in 2002 how funding seemed to be going down a blackhole with no accountability, and challenged the misuse of funding in subsequent years after that time.

MARINE HARVEST ADMIT YET ANOTHER MASSIVE ESCAPE OF 20,000 FARMED SALMON

Finally, the reasons why anglers keep catching farmed salmon in our waters can be explained if one reads the small print in an annual company report, but you have to look into the Oslo Stock Exchange reports to find it. Marine Harvest (MH) the multinational salmon farm company has finally admitted in their 2017 Annual Report that there was a major escape of farmed salmon from one of their farms in 2017.

This admission comes despite

assurances from Richie Flynn of the Irish Salmon Growers Association (ISGA), the Marine Institute and Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine (DAFM) officials, that as no escape was reported to the Marine Institute in 2017, there was no evidence of an escape.

On pages 64 of the MH report, a 2017 list of escapes from MH farms is shown. This list shows that 20,000 fish escaped from one of their Irish farms in 2017. On page 65 it describes how the escape occurred and I quote: "A total of 20 000 fish escaped in one incident in Ireland, which was caused by a slider weight ripping the net wall during net changing under strong tidal conditions."

In an email from the DAFM on the 6th September 2017 to the hard working Billy Smyth, a FISSTA NEC member and the chairman of Galway Bay Against Salmon Cages (GBASC), a Department spokesperson is quoted as saying: "The Marine Institute and the Departments Marine Engineering Division has confirmed that no report of any escape of farmed salmon has been received. The Aquaculture and Foreshore Management Division has in addition not received any report of an escape of farmed salmon."

In an email received this morning (27/03), the Marine Institute now say: "The licence conditions of salmon growers require them to report directly to the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine. To this end, we have confirmed that the Departments records indicate that one fish escape incident in 2017 was reported by the operator to the Department and other relevant stakeholders in accordance with the applicable conditions. It is understood that approximately 20,000 fish were lost in this instance."

The Marine Institute are now saying that the DAFM and other

stakeholders WERE notified of an escape of 20,000 farmed salmon last year. GBASC is shocked at this revelation and believe that the DAFM have some explaining to do as to why they denied last year that an escape had taken place. As far as we are aware IFI were never notified of any escape last year.

Richie Flynn of IFA Aquaculture and spokesperson for the Irish Salmon Growers Association also denied that there was an escape in a press statement to the media in October saying there was no escape to report. Mr Flynn has now some serious questions to answer in regard to this escape and if it is found that he misled the media and the public, then we join with the calls of Billy Smyth for him to resign.

GBASC has consistently said over many years that open sea cage salmon farms should be scrapped to avoid escapes such as this and other threats to the marine environment, in the meantime all farmed salmon should be micro tagged similar to the micro tagging of wild salmon smolts by IFI for research purposes. This would enable the relevant authorities to trace the escaped farmed salmon back to the farm from which they escaped.

DR MARTIN O'GRADY R.I.P.

Dr Martin O'Grady was Adjunct Professor sadly passed away recently with many including FISSTA paying tributes to his lifetime of work with our wild Atlantic salmon on habitat conservation programmes. He worked for the Central Fisheries Board for decades and then with Inland Fisheries Ireland until he recently retired. Over the years he produced many scientific papers and books on the need for good habitat enhancement programmes and his legacy will be his in-stream work on the removal of Selune dam in France. Ar dheis De go raibh a h-nam dhilis.



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A Tale of Three Bays



Fishing the half light on the Green Peter.

Ireland's rich angling heritage is steeped in tradition, especially the wild trout fishing which follows the pattern of the seasons and the hatches that bring the iconic Irish brown trout to the surface to feed.

Our quest brings us to diverse and beautiful surroundings from peaty bog bays, dangerous rocky reefs to stunning limestone marl bays where the bottom glows white through crystal clear water. We chase our quarry we become immersed in a world which few outside our sport will know. This contact with diverse natural habitats and the wildlife that exists there makes us realise just how privileged we are and how important it is to protect these environments which are our heritage and culture.

Sitting here on Easter Monday, snow swirling around the window outside, I can close my eyes and fond memories take me back to some of those places. The haunt of otters, grebes, herons, terns and of course the fabulous golden flanked, heavily spotted red and black, gill plates gilded with gunmetal blue, the Irish Lough brown trout. Follow me through a fleeting glimpse of what the

secret world of Irish Lough fishing can reveal.

Unforgiving north easterly winds strafe the surface of the lough carrying rain and sleet: it's April, Bog Bay on Lough Sheelin. Flanked by high peat banks of heather and gorse it's a micro habitat within the vast expanse of marl and limestone. It's peaty bottom doesn't support mayfly or sedge, but it's home to countless numbers of buzzers.

Loading the boat in Finea, the locals think we're daft to go out. Watty's Rock pub would be a far more comfortable place to spend the evening but right now we'll get the fleeces under the waterproofs and brave the elements to cross the lough before it gets too dark.

Fingers and faces grow numb, the cool wind throws spray as our boat cuts across Sailors Garden and we are glad of the shelter when the craft pulls into the bay. In a few weeks, this place will be alive with the calls of sedge

warblers, reed buntings and chiffchaffs, but for now it lies eerily quiet save for the occasional drumming of the snipe from the bog marshes and the eery rustling of the rushes. The sun is setting in the West now, the wind eases, suddenly it doesn't seem so cold. Moments later, the whining sound that gives the buzzer its name can be heard around the boat and the white engine casing is soon covered in the insects.

Phil takes the oars and we stalk quietly along the shore looking into the last dying embers of the sunset for signs of feeding fish. Passing an ancient crannog we pull in tight to the rocks, a loud suck betrays the sound of a feeding trout and eyes strain to find movement on the surface, now crisscrossed by the buzzers as they lay their eggs.

Before long, several fish are feeding in this little bay, entering the shallows in the darkness to take advantage of the banquet now lying on the surface. I spot



A mat of mayfly in the sheltered bay, too many for the trout to ignore.

a movement to my left and cast just ahead of it, marking where the flies drop as it's too dark to see clearly. Another gentle rise before my flies and my heart is pumping, I know the trout is going to take my fly and in a moment a loud slurp and my fly is gone.

A beautiful Irish trout, golden flanks glittering

Instinctively I tighten and the quiet of the evening is disrupted by a mighty splash as the trout lashes trying to shake the hook, then he bolts into the darkness. The reel sings, but after several runs he's subdued and Phil slides the net under a beautiful three pounds of Irish trout, golden flanks glittering in the torchlight. I remove the hook, admire him one more time and slip him back. Out in the darkness more fish are feeding and soon I hear Phil strike into a fish which cavorts across the water in the moonlight. And so it goes on until the buzzers stop hatching, trout stop moving and suddenly everything is deathly quiet.

The fire is crackling in Watty's Rock as we duck in for last orders, Bog Bay has given us some fine memories and some fine trout, even so early in the season.

Rusheen Bay is a sandy marl expanse halfway up Lough Sheelin, which provides welcome shelter if the wind blows hard up the Lough and is popular for lunch stops. With nothing to show for the morning's fishing, the boys assemble for lunch. It's the

Mallusk Angling Society competition day but strong winds and bright blue skies have kept the fish down. After tea from the Kelly Kettle, sandwiches and banter, the boats start to leave one by one but I don't rush, the mayfly hatch has begun.

Rowing Tommy, my boat partner, over to the rocks to fish his wet flies, I noticed a big swell running down the lough, white caps rolling outside the bay. The swell was carrying thousands of mayfly along the shore out towards Church Island; a mat of fly were building in the calm water in our quiet corner of Rusheen. Although nothing was moving I knew there were too many fly for the fish to ignore, so I pulled the boat up to the edge of the calm water and watched. The birds were cashing in on the bonanza, swans, duck, terns, squadrons of swallows hawked through clouds of mayflies.

Twenty minutes passed, then away downwind a swirl then another betrayed the presence of a good trout moving upwind toward us. I held the boat in tight not wanting to disturb him as he worked the edge of the calm water

taking fly after fly and soon there were several trout mopping up the carpet of mayflies trapped in the corner of the bay. Big spotted sides slashed in the rough wave or broad dark backs left a big whorl in the side of the wave - but trout in the calm were quietly slurping mayfly down.

Excitement was building as the fish got closer, until one came in casting range and my Grey Wulff dropped delicately several feet in front of him. He took one natural and another and then my fly disappeared in a tiny dimple. I managed to delay the strike before tightening into him and the water erupted as he thrashed the surface before bolting toward Church Island. After several runs and some sulking beneath the boat, I managed to slide the net under a beautiful five pound Sheelin trout. Another followed shortly after, then Tommy landed a huge perch on a dry mayfly and it was time to go back for the weigh in.

As I motored out to Derrysheridan a full gale met us. Tommy dropped to his knees in the bows of the boat while the spray lashed me and I prayed the little six horsepower engine would prevail in the huge waves. When we eventually got to the safety of the jetty in Finea, all thoughts of competition had left me, I was glad to be alive! However we did win the competition and I was glad to hit the pub where Arthur Guinness helped settle the nerves.

Lough Arrow is a special place with an atmosphere of its own

Nestling in a plateau ten miles above the Ballisodare River, Lough Arrow was an oasis of calm after the day spent



Tommy caught the biggest Perch I'd seen on a dry mayfly.



The fly almost shone in the dark.

fishing the Falls Pool on the river with its roaring waterfalls, bustling anglers and leaping salmon. Tent pitched, gear loaded and now the wee Evinrude was pushing the boat across the calm waters, past Ballindoon Bay with an enchanting abbey and Robert Baden-Powell's (of Scouting fame) old residence. A place rich in history and culture, historical remains litter the local landscape; it's easy to see why ancient people should settle here. Lough Arrow is a special place with an atmosphere of its own, huge ancient trees, verdant pastures, it's an anomaly in the west of Ireland where barren and infertile would be more usual descriptions.

The sun is starting to set as I pull the boat up on the island but there's no hurry on this July evening. Rod set up, coffee in hand, I can sit for a while and drink in the atmosphere. This area is a series of little bays, backed by rushes with areas of weed, outcrops of limestone litter the sandy marl bottom. Behind me the resident Canada geese are honking and the little chiffchaffs are chirping in the rushes.

I'm positioned so I can look into the western horizon to spot fish moving in

the last light and as the sun dips low everything turns a blazing red, violet and purple. The swallows roost, twittering in the reed-beds and the bats appear. Nothing stirs at first but in the fading light, buzzers start to hatch and soon the air is full of their drone. It's not long before the odd trout starts dimpling the surface but the real excitement sets in when the surface is broken by the Green Peter sedge, as they furrow their way to the shore and the safety of the rushes. At an inch long they're a mouthful for a trout and incredibly vulnerable hatching out in the open water, their journey to the shore is fraught with danger. A mighty slash in the half light signals the demise of a Peter as a huge trout engulfs it, soon the big trout will move into these shallow bays hunting the sedge.

As darkness falls I have to fish by feel and sound

My cast has two dry buzzer patterns on the droppers and a large elk hair sedge on the point. I stalk the bays in the half light, picking up the odd small trout on the buzzers, but as darkness falls I have to fish by feel and sound. I

start retrieving the flies to keep in touch, this brings the sedge into play as it twitches on the surface. By now the trout are on the Peters, it's pitch black and I can hear great trout slashing at the fly out over the lough.

Suddenly a fish engulfs a fly beside the rushes on my left. I can barely see the ripples as I lift line and cast a couple of yards ahead of him. The flies settle and I give them a twitch, there's a loud slurp in the darkness and suddenly the rod almost gets wrenched from my hands. I have to keep my fingers clear of the reel handle as it spins.

The trout bolts from the shallows to the safety of the lough and the reel sings. I pray that the droppers don't catch on weeds or rock and then the trout surfaces and rolls twenty-five yards away. Then it bolts even further, as I scramble along the shore trying to keep in touch. Eventually, after an exciting battle, I draw the fish over the net and with trembling hands unhook him. The golden slab gleams in the torchlight, big black spots and a wide back, a real moment to treasure. As I try to take a photo he revives and the big rudder of a tail drives him splashing through the shallows leaving only a wake and fond memories.

Such are the days and nights that Irish angling can deliver; a plethora of experiences to enjoy, new adventures while chasing the seasons, there is always something going on in our loughs and rivers. As one door closes, often another opens and - for the angler with time on his hands - there's always an opportunity for sport. It can be a busy season!

A twitch and he was on!

The leopard spotted fish slipped safely back.



A fly fisher's Paradise — Lough Conn

Looking south from Tolan's Bay at the north end of Conn.

The idea for this article struck me when I asked angling friends about their favourite places to fish. I was going to pick just ten venues in Ireland, North and South and put it into one article. It quickly became apparent from what I was being told that I could write a book and just ten places were never going to be enough, and the reason they were 'favourite' was not simply because of the fishing.

For example, my favourite river at home is just 15 minutes away and it's not because of the fishing - at times amazing - but because I grew up fishing it with my father. My family always considered Antrim's Six Mile Water as 'our' river, something that happens to anglers the world over. They become

attached to a piece of water and there is a part of themselves that then claims it. It's a kind of strange ownership. The great American angling writer John Gierach explains this weird phenomenon in his book *Sex, Death and Fly Fishing* in a chapter called 'I'd fish anyone's St Vrain.' If you read it you'll

know exactly what I mean when I say the Six Mile Water is my St Vrain.

So let's begin with Lough Conn, using comments from friend and fellow APGAI Ireland instructor, Trevor Greene.

Lough Conn is one of the great western loughs, which include Corrib,



Trevor and his friend Greer Ramsey drifting on a fine day.

Mask, Carra, Conn, Arrow, Melvin and Erne. These share a surrounding geology of carboniferous limestone, to produce relatively alkaline water, resulting in a rich and diverse population of flora and fauna. This richness supports healthy populations of fish, including trout, salmon, pike, perch, roach, eels and at one-time Char.

Lough Conn is large, 9 miles long and 2-4 miles wide, forming an almost hourglass shape narrowing between the Errew peninsula and Rinmore point. There is a series of islands some of which were inhabited as late as the 1960s (including Glass Island near Pontoon which had its own "King")

The nature of the lough was changed substantially in the 1960s, when a drainage scheme to prevent winter flooding was developed, along with a water supply pumping station at the northern end of the lough. The outflow was diverted to Pontoon by blasting a new deep channel, which resulted in a six-foot reduction in the mean depth of the lough. Whilst this dried up a lot of formerly good fishing areas, it also exposed many new shallows which had previously been too deep for effective angling. Many of these shallows are popular and well-known fishing areas, which combine with the shorelines and shallow bays to provide most of the best fishing on Conn.

The water in Conn has a brown tinge because of extensive peat bogs along the course of the River Deel, the main feeder stream, joining the lough at its northern end. The lough along with its sister Lough Cullin, had suffered a



A storm approaching from the southwest.

degree of eutrophication from poor sewage facilities in Crossmolina and Castlebar respectively. Those towns now have much improved sewage disposal, although it may take some time for the loughs to return to their former pristine conditions, but water quality and conditions are now much improved.

Another issue for the lough was poor recruitment of juvenile fish. This largely resulted from the silting up of the feeder streams where trout spawned. The effect was that there were fewer fish in the lough, but the remaining fish were of a much higher average size with fish coming around 1.5lb, as opposed to the long-standing average of about 0.75 lb.

Much to its credit the then Central Fisheries Board (now Inland fisheries Ireland) undertook a three-year programme of repairing the streams

under the guidance of the late Dr. Martin O'Grady. As work progressed, numbers of juvenile fish increased and the average size dropped to close to the traditional size. 2015 was notable in that large numbers of 8 -12-inch fish were taken, and this augurs well for succeeding season.

Around 2000/2003 the lough became infested by the Zebra Mussel. Many people feared that this would result in a significant gap in the food chain as the Zebra filter feeds on plankton and other microscopic fauna. The first impact was a considerable clearing of the water, increasing visibility. As with the other loughs which have been populated by the Zebra Mussel, the fishing (surprisingly) does not appear to have been adversely affected.

Conn has been regarded as one of the best fishing loughs in terms of its free-rising fish. The shallow areas are well marked, with metal poles erected near all but two shallow areas (these two are weedy rather than rocky shallows). Care must be taken near the shallows and the shorelines, as not every rock is marked and while fishing in close is not a problem in light winds, they can be dangerous in a big wave or when motoring a boat. Wearing a life jacket is a legal requirement and common sense. The season starts on 1st February for salmon and on 15th February for trout.



A beautiful Lough Conn trout.



Concentrating hard.

However, not many trout anglers venture out much earlier than St. Patrick's Day.

Conn is pretty much unique among the great loughs in that it has never been artificially stocked and the trout can be considered as truly wild fish. The lough flows into Lough Cullin and then into the River Moy and it receives a substantial run of salmon all through the year, with recorded catches more than 500 salmon per year along with over 10,000 trout.

Tactics - changing with the season

The early season (as in the other western loughs) sees anglers concentrating on wet fly tactics, either along the shorelines or very close to the mid-lough shallows. This will mainly consist of searching out the fish with shrimp and hog louse patterns.

Late March and early April, the duckfly (large chironomids) appears and, for several weeks, these will be the main type of flies used - whether dry flies, wet flies or epoxy buzzers. Conn gets substantial hatches of duckfly in certain areas, in and around the islands and bays, but it does not usually get prolific hatches outside those areas. The most notable are Bog Bay and Cloughans Bay, which both have the muddy bottom favoured by duckfly.

Around mid to late April, the first olives will appear. We normally think of

the Lake Olive at this time, but depending on the area being fished, Conn has a variety of ephemerid hatches from April to May. The bulk of these flies will be olives (including the elusive golden olive), but they can be interspersed with Sepia Duns and even a few Claret Duns (again found in the boggier waters mentioned for duckfly fishing).

The fly patterns most likely to interest trout during this period are Fiery Brown, Sooty Olive, Peter Ross, Soldier Palmer, Bibio, March Brown, Green Olive, Mallard and Claret, Duckfly, Blae and Black. Claret Dabbler and Golden Dabbler. Of these the Sooty Olive is probably the most effective of all and a Fiery Brown is especially

useful in an area where trout are found to be feeding on freshwater shrimp.

The Mayfly

Conn does not get the massive hatches of mayfly that might be found on Sheelin., but provides enough for many good meals for the trout, but rarely in banquet portions. However, the Conn trout still like the mayfly. The hatch may occasionally start as early as the beginning of May, but will usually be well established by the 20th continuing in good numbers throughout June.

While the mayfly is on in full force there can be days when adult mayfly are ignored. This may be because fish are concentrating on the nymph, or have become tired of mayfly; or because there is something tastier on the menu. Over the years I have sometimes found that fish will still happily take olives or buzzers. Moving to dry patterns of midge or olive flies in sizes 12 – 16 can often pull up fish which have ignored the mayfly offerings.

The mayfly hatch usually starts in earnest around 11.00 and can continue until 4.00pm. Wet flies in a wave is the usual method, but more anglers are using dry flies even in a substantial wave. The angler must remain aware of the switch from duns to spinners and spent flies, which can happen instantly and without warning. Failing to



Time for the Kelly Kettle.

recognise the change and responding with an appropriate spinner or spent pattern can lead to a lot of frustration!

Conn is not recognised as a great spent gnat lough but, if the wind begins to drop in the afternoon and evening, it can be very worthwhile following the spent flies down the wind lanes and work at ambushing the fish on the gnat. Artificial flies most likely to take trout at mayfly time are Green Peter, Mayfly (Hackled), Wulff patterns, Fan Winged Mayfly, Bibio, Watson's Fancy, Teal and Yellow, Golden Olive Bumble, Cock Robin, Claret Bumble, Invicta, Green Dabbler, Golden Dabbler, Claret Dabbler and Spent Gnat.

Sedges coming fully into force

After the mayfly, June and July sees fish begin feeding on perch and roach fry, but the sedge fly is making its appearance, which can be excellent using wet and dry flies. However, many anglers abandon the Lough until July when sedges come fully into force. Recently many anglers have taken to early morning fishing, taking advantage of the Caenis (angler's curse) hatches at dawn.

Some of the best fishing can be experienced from August until the season ends on 30th September. While there are ongoing hatches of buzzers and olives, sedge fishing can be excellent. Conn does not get many of the most famous sedge species (Green Peters and Murroughs) but substantial numbers of smaller sedges are present.



Trevor at the tiller.

Typically, anglers will fish patterns to represent the olives and buzzers with a substantial sedge pattern on the top dropper. Dry fly fishing with sedge patterns can often be productive in lighter wind conditions.

As with all wet fly fishing for brown trout, the greatest success on Conn has traditionally been achieved in shallower areas but, in recent years, successful fishing has been experienced in deeper waters where trout tend to feed on Daphnia. The northern half of the lough is very well endowed with shallow areas. The big shallow bays e.g. Cloughans Bay, Bog Bay and Castlehill Bay can be fished all over and fishing in these areas is possible in almost all wind directions. All the sedge patterns - Green Peter, Murroughs, Brown Sedge - work well as do the Black and Peacock Spider, Bibio, Sooty Olive, Coch-y-Bundhu, Olive Bumble, Watson's Fancy, Black Pennell, Golden Olive, Invicta, Connemara Black, Claret Dabbler and Golden Dabbler. The fly sizes fished on Lough Conn vary from size 8 to size 12, but size 10 is the most popular and useful size.

The life of Lough Conn's trout

There are two main breeding rivers flowing into Lough Conn: the Deel River and the Addergoole River (there are others but much less important ones), each having several important side streams which all produce trout.

Trout may remain resident in the stream or river where they were born if there is good feeding to be had. This will usually change as the fish grows and requires greater amounts of food. In most cases there is a downstream migration to the Lough when the fish's nutrition needs outgrow the capacity of the spawning stream to feed it and its siblings. The trout will spread rapidly though the Lough along shorelines, shallows or to weed beds. In their new home they will acquire different characteristics by adapting their colouration and camouflage to the tones and colours of the area.

Fish develop as sexually mature

adults at about two years of age. They will begin their journey towards their spawning grounds in September to October, although this is a gradual journey and not rushed affair. The trout can accurately home back to the stream where they were born by smelling out the unique chemical composition of that water. This natal homing instinct maintains the genetic distinctness of populations, even when they feed as adults in the same lake and allows natural selection to produce adaptations to local environmental conditions and, thankfully, the cycle repeats.

Stevie Munn works full time in the angling sector for Guideline Fly fishing tackle, Costa Glasses and Semperfli and as a fully qualified guide on the Six Mile River. He is a writer, qualified game angling instructor and game angling consultant, and has appeared in many angling magazines, books, DVDs and angling shows all over the world where he gives fly casting demonstrations. He has also fished many places worldwide and grew up fishing on rivers and loughs of Ireland where he often guides. He runs teaching lessons in fly fishing and host groups fishing in Norway, Iceland, Argentina and Ireland. You can contact him via email anglingclassics@aol.com or get more info at www.anglingclassics.co.uk

Trevor Greene has been fishing for almost 60 years. He mainly fishes for trout on the western loughs particularly Loughs Melvin and Conn. He also dabbles in salmon and sea trout fishing again in the west of Ireland. Closer to home he spends a lot of his autumn fishing for the Lough Neagh trout the dollaghan after it enters the rivers on its spawning run.

He has fished at inter-provincial level but prefers purely recreational fishing in a generally traditional style. That is reflected in his fly tying where he concentrates on traditional patterns saying that ".....flies only get to be traditional because they work!" Trevor has recently qualified in fly dressing through the Association of Professional Game Angling Instructors Ireland.

GRUMPY GAMEKEEPER GOES SOUTH



Owen and the Author on lower Maraewhenna.

After our escapades in Canada's Northwest Territories a couple of years ago, I decided it was time for another expedition, this time to New Zealand. I happened to mention the trip at a local fishery and was told to contact Jackie Semple, who had been to New Zealand on numerous occasions. Jackie and I met up and I was inundated with tales of huge trout, beautiful rivers and fantastic people. He supplied me with the name and address of the people he stayed with, Kaye and Keith Dennison at Glenmac Farmstay, near Kurow on the South Island.

I set off on the 12th February, two four piece rods packed in my suitcase. I was advised not to take any flies as bringing fur or feather into the country is frowned upon; any other gear such as waders must be thoroughly disinfected. Ed and Jasmine who shared my last trip had travelled down to Auckland from Canada four days earlier to stay with Jasmine's cousins in Tokoroa about three and a half hours drive away. Ed was to meet me at Auckland airport just after 5 am to collect the hire car, but unfortunately nothing had changed from the last trip – he got five past ten confused with ten past five and after numerous phone calls arrived four hours late. We were to share the driving but, you've probably guessed, when we went to sign for the vehicle he had

forgotten his driving licence and ID – 2500kms of driving to look forward to.

Although I had been travelling for 34hrs plus, Ed insisted we travel to Tokoroa via the Coromandel peninsula (only an extra 100km) and it was worth it; the views and scenery were amazing. Eventually we arrived in Tokoroa mid afternoon where I met Jasmine's cousin Jick Jick and her husband Cally, now eighty years of age. Cally has hunted and fished all his life and has even written a book on his forays. The wild pig hunting and deer stalking make great reading, and Cally's garage wall boasts an impressive array of some very big pig heads and some beautiful sets of antlers.

Off we went to the hunting and fishing store to purchase our fishing

licences. It could only happen to us – Ed asked the Maori girl issuing the licences, about her tattoos. After telling him the story behind each of the tattoos, she took him by the hand into the middle of the store where she sang him a beautiful Maori song – I've never seen that in Tesco's!

Armed and dangerous, we set off the following morning to fish a nearby river the Waihou. The nearest thing I could compare it to is a chalk stream in the jungle. We could see fish lying in the channels between the weed beds but, because of the height of the river and the vegetation, it was almost impossible to cover them.

After fishing for about five minutes we were approached by a large painted Maori wearing a feather cloak and



A beautiful Waitaki trout.

carrying a large wooden war club. When he asked to see our licences I thought that it would be impolite to refuse. He explained that the local Maoris were the guardians of the river (we could do with a few of these guys around some of the reservoirs and rivers at home). After this encounter we did manage to land a couple of small rainbows in beautiful surroundings. Cally had dropped us off and was

waiting downstream – I think he must have some Irish blood as the 2km he told us we had to walk became 7km.

Next day was spent sightseeing around some beautiful lakes, mountains and valleys – there were very few spots where Cally hadn't had an encounter with a pig or a stag over the years. We ended up at Rainbow Springs in Rotorua, an assortment of large aviaries and ponds. We were shown how kiwis

are being artificially reared and released. In a large nocturnal aviary, I got my first glimpse of live kiwis — amazing birds.

Impressive variety of landscapes and vast spaces

The things that strike you about New Zealand as you travel through the country are the variety of landscapes and the vast wild spaces. After stopping in Napier for a night, we travelled to Wellington and crossed to the South Island on the Bluebridge ferry. We just managed to cross the Cook Straits before storm Gita struck — storm force winds and four times the month's rainfall in one day. Luckily our route bypassed the coastal highway as it, along with other roads, had been closed by numerous landslides. As we drove through the South Island our hearts sank: all the rivers were in a massive flood and to cap it all the mountains were covered in snow in the middle of summer. But apart from these two days, we enjoyed superb weather throughout with the temperature in the mid to high twenties.

Stopping first in Oamaru to buy chest waders (unnecessary as it later transpired) we made our way to Glenmac Farmstay. Kaye and Keith our marvellous hosts immediately made us feel at home. Most nights, there were groups of cyclists staying at the farm so no shortage of tales and conversation. Owen, our fishing guide, called to meet us and confirmed what we already knew, that the rivers were unfishable. Luckily we had allowed for a few extra days at the farm, so we were able to relax and explore the surrounding countryside. Not far from the farm we visited elephant rocks, spectacular scenery where *The Lion*, *The Witch* and *The Wardrobe* was filmed.

On our third day at the farm the rivers still hadn't reached fishable levels, so Owen took us to a beautiful lake with large browns cruising the edges. After trying unsuccessfully to tempt them, we admitted defeat and moved to the Twizel River. This looked



Ed covering a fish on the Twizel.



Nice cock rainbow on Maraewhenna.

to be still too high, but just off the outlet of a side creek the trout were going ballistic in mid-stream. Owen said that he had never seen anything like it. Thinking that I might get washed away, I courteously allowed Ed to cover the fish. I don't know what they were taking, but after exhausting the contents of Owen's fly box we gave up and moved downstream to a pool full of Sockeye salmon. After torturing them for half an hour Ed managed to land a small salmon of three to four pounds. NB the chest waders purchased in Oamaru were discarded after a couple of hours — too warm and uncomfortable as there was a lot of rough terrain and scrub to negotiate. Wet waded for rest of week — very therapeutic.

With Waitaki still high, we moved to some small backwaters on the Maraewhenna where we could see some very large browns feeding in very little water. Owen watched the fish while I covered it. I didn't feel anything but on Owen's signal (a loud shout of lift) I struck and was into a nice brown. I tried to walk it into the larger pool below but we didn't see the branch below the surface - the trout obviously did - and that was the end of that. Back up to the top pool where almost immediately I

hooked another good fish. This time I tried to hold it in the pool, another bad mistake, and was broken again. Some of the older readers will remember Humphrey Bogart in *The African Queen*, well that's the best way to describe the rest of the day, wading through creeks and rivers, fighting our way through undergrowth and losing more fish as we went but we won't go into that.

Next we travelled to the middle stretches of the Maraewhenna, still slightly high but crystal clear. We fished some beautiful runs where we could see every fish and landed some lovely wild rainbows, the best of which were three and a half and five pounds.



Elephant Rocks where *The Lion, The Witch and the Wardrobe* was filmed.

We were fishing a dry fly with a short dropper tied unto the bend of the hook and a size 18 or 20 nymph.

Superb fish, a brown and a rainbow, both around 5lbs

At the Upper Maraewhenna, sections of the river bed had been destroyed by the recent floods, so we moved to some beautiful backwaters and creeks on the Waitaki, and were able to stalk some very large fish. We managed to land a couple of superb fish, a brown and a rainbow, both around 5lbs. The rainbows and the browns seem to fight completely differently, with the rainbows tending to take you straight to the backing, while the browns made shorter runs and used the current to their advantage.

The Waitaki was in perfect order, level down and crystal clear. We could see large browns feeding about two feet from the bank in very shallow water, brilliant to watch the large tails coming clear of the water. There was to be some serious stalking done. It's important to get the length of cast right first time. If it's too long the fly line covers the fish it spooks immediately. My first attempt resulted in a lovely brown of 5lbs. Taking turns to cover fish Ed managed to hook and then lose a bigger one.

My turn again: I could see the fish about ten metres upstream. The dry fly landed about two metres beyond his nose, over it came and the fish totally ignored it but not so the nymph. He took

it immediately and took off into the middle of the river, jumping a few times as he went. After a really good scrap and two hundred metres downstream we landed a nice brown of 6lbs. Ed meanwhile was getting stuck into some very good rainbows which were rising mid-stream. Owen our guide was over the moon — he thought we were in for a red letter day only to spot leaves and twigs starting to float down the river which was rising. The hydro dams, miles upstream, had begun generating and were releasing water into the river. We had to get back across the river at its widest point. Had we not had a guide who knew the river I think that I would have been seriously worried.

Casting into the small gaps in the willows was tricky

We decided to move to the Maraewhenna and it's worth mentioning that when we moved from one river to another our guide washed our footwear and flylines with detergent which he carried in his jeep, to try to avoid transferring parasites or pests. We found a beautiful pool about three hundred metres in length with a gravel bar on one side and willows on the other. We could see fish lying below the willows the whole length of the pool. Casting into the small gaps in the willows was tricky, but produced some excellent sport. I managed a couple more nice rainbows around 3lbs while Ed's best was 5lbs. What a day, we had definitely saved the best till last.

One of Jackie's best pieces of advice was to get a guide. Without a guide we wouldn't even have found most of the waters we fished. Owen our guide was one of the nicest, most enthusiastic people I've had the pleasure to meet. We couldn't get him off the river so we were late for dinner every night. Owen must also have infinite patience, after two days of lost fish and numerous disasters he never swore once or told us we were dozy — at least not out loud!

I won't bore you with the details of the trip back, except to say that Ed had messed up his travel arrangements



Ed trying to keep in contact in fast water on the Maraewhenna.



A lovely brown trout on the Waitaki.

again for his next flight was to Australia. But driving back to Auckland by myself I finally got my revenge. When I was handing back the hire vehicle I found Ed's shoes below the seat. I do hope the ground in Australia wasn't too hot.

The whole experience in New Zealand was amazing: the scenery, the fishing but most especially the people and long may it stay like that. Many thanks to everyone who looked after us during our trip with special thanks to Cally, Jick Jick, Kaye, Keith and Owen.



This was hooked a couple of feet from the bank.

Art & Antiques

Time does fly when you are enjoying yourself. So who would believe forty years have come and almost gone since the first Northern Ireland Game Fair was held. Well it has and a lot has been packed into those years both in game sports activities and in the art and antiques world as well.

Long ago I learned the mantra, “time means money” but it was many a long year before I was able to divorce that meaning from its connection with labour to something more material. Yes, time is valuable in many monetary ways but in the world of antiques and collectibles it can be a veritable gold mine if you know where to look. Still puzzled. Well don’t be. I’m talking about the instruments by which time is gauged, clocks and watches.

In recent years items like grandfather, grandmother, grand daughter and humble mantle and carriage clocks have fallen a bit in value. That’s not to say you wouldn’t pay a healthy price for such a timepiece at a country auction where two or more bidders must have the clock at practically any price.

But in the main most clocks have come back in value and can be considered bargains for the future. In the world of wrist watches however, the scene has been a strong one, and by all accounts is getting even stronger by the day.

No one can deny the sale of film star



Homage to John Montague by Louis le Brocqy (€80,000 at WHYTE’S)

Paul Newman’s Rolex at £13.5m certainly helped put a bottom in the market for wrist worn timepiece. Of course it wasn’t created to be a cheap, throw away item but it must certainly have given the Rolex people great satisfaction when it came under the hammer to make the highest price ever

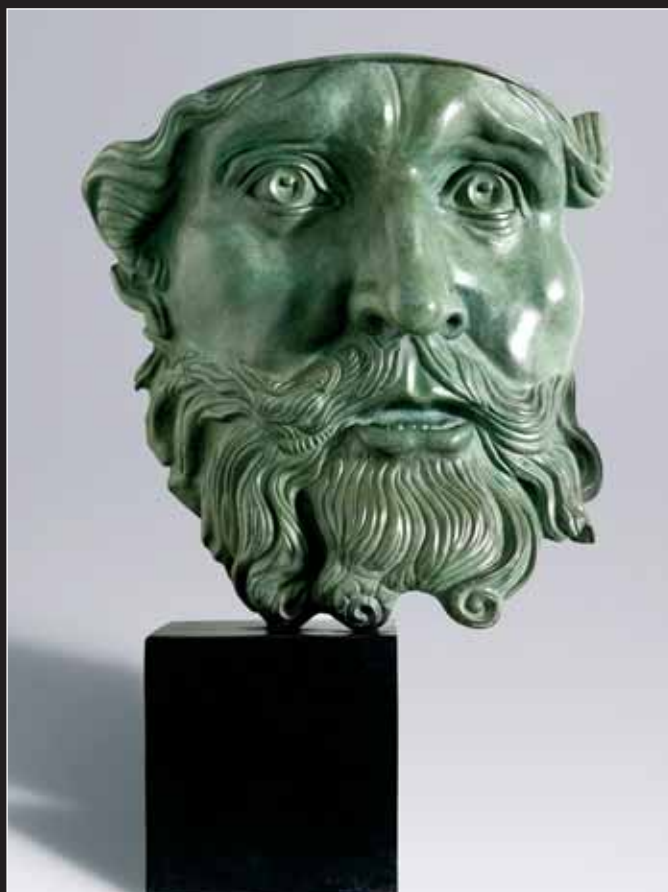
paid for a wrist watch. It was a timepiece which Newman had worn every day for almost 20 years. And it was expected to make around £1m. Surprise, surprise. A gift from the actor’s wife Joanne Woodward it was engraved with the words “Drive carefully” which was obviously a hint to his prowess behind the wheel. So it had everything going for it.. provenance and personality, both of which come with their own values.

Now that was an exceptional watch because of all this but it also helps to illustrate the current boom in the collecting of watches old and new. For in essence if you pick the right model and of course the right watchmaker, whether old or new, you can have a good investment as well as an elegant item.

And there is doubt a couple of thousand pounds invested in this way can produce a much heftier financial



Old Men Bathing by Jack B Yeats (€50,000 at WHYTE’S)



The Boru Mask bronze by Rory Breslin (€10,000 at WHYTE'S)



Colin Middleton's 'Judy' an oil on canvas (€26,000 at ADAMS)

reward than the miserly interest rates offered by our banks. Sought after watches by such names as Rolex, Omega, Patek Philippe, Raymond Veil and others can often sell for as much as a car or even a house.

It has also been proven in some cases than new watches from world famous makers can quickly appreciate in value. But it is the rare vintage models from the 1940s, complete with their original working parts that are helping to fuel today's boom. The experts say you can expect to pay from around £4,000 for a vintage watch from the 1970s created by one of the top makers. A 1958 Rolex Milgauss which had lain in a drawer for years suddenly saw the light of day at an auction and was sold for around £140,000.

But then again it is not uncommon for top-of-the-tree vintage watches to go for figures well in excess of £1m. It always helps if someone, well favoured by the public, has owned a particular item when it comes to auction. Panerai watches, which were made for the Italian army are highly collectable, not

because of their military background but because they are a favourite of Hollywood actor Sylvester Stallone. Ten years ago Italian dealers could have picked them up for as little as £500, now they can realise more than £20,000 each.

A watch may be a celebrity because of its own birth-right. But worn on the arm of the right person its value can be enhanced beyond all expectation. But be careful for there is a massive array of new watches continually coming on to the market. Sometimes they are sold by manufacturers in limited numbers which appeals to those who believe this can be a good way of making a sound investment. It can, but in many cases it will not be, as would-be collectors, anxious to protect their purchases store them safely away in their boxes and more of them survive.

Modern watches which have been discontinued and new models with long waiting lists, like the Rolex Daytona which have a delivery time of something like seven years could be reasonable investments. For human nature being what it is there are always

people content to pay a premium to take a purchaser's place in a queue jumping exercise to procure what they want without a lengthy wait to get it.

Then there are the fakes and in the world of high value watches they come in their thousands. And many are so good it takes a real expert or someone deeply involved in watch-making to detect the imposter from the real thing. The upside of this, however is, that sometimes that which has been deemed a fake turns out to be the real thing. And that is a bonus.

Recently, I have noticed while perusing online auctions a noted rise in Masonic collectibles, including watches. But that doesn't say you cannot get a bargain for a couple of weeks ago I treated myself to a pocket watch bearing some Knight Templar markings. It was a bargain at £97 I thought. And a visit to a reputable jeweller/watch repairer gave me the welcome news that it was in good order, showing signs of a recent service and was worth in excess of £400. Now that is serendipity. But it doesn't happen every day.



William Conor, oil, 'Water Buckets' (€20,000 at ADAMS)

SALES

WHYTE'S Irish and International Art auction in February was quite a successful affair, grossing just under €900,000, with 85% of lots sold.

The top prices (pre- sale estimates in brackets) were: 'West of Ireland' by Paul Henry €80,000 (€80,000-€120,000); Homage to John Montague by Louis le Brocquy €80,000 (€40,000-€60,000); Old Men Bathing by Jack B Yeats €50,000 (€40,000-€60,000); The Aran Island Turf Boat by Sean Keating €38,000 (€50,000-€70,000); Summer Night by Daniel O'Neill €19,000 (€20,000-€30,000); The Boru Mask (bronze sculpture, No 3 from an edition of 3 by Rory Breslin €10,000 (€5,000-€7,000).

There was strong evidence too of many lots exceeding estimates, with some making up to 6 times their lower estimate. Among the best performers: Philip Jones (1933-2008) Rock Separation, 2005, €3,800, (€600-€800); Henry Bruen (1856-1927) Collection of 34 Topographical Watercolours (1905-1917), €1,500, (€300-€400); Daniel O'Neill (1920-1974) In The Bar, €1,600, (€400-€600); Aidan Bradley (b.1961) The South Wall, €2,300, (€800-€1200);

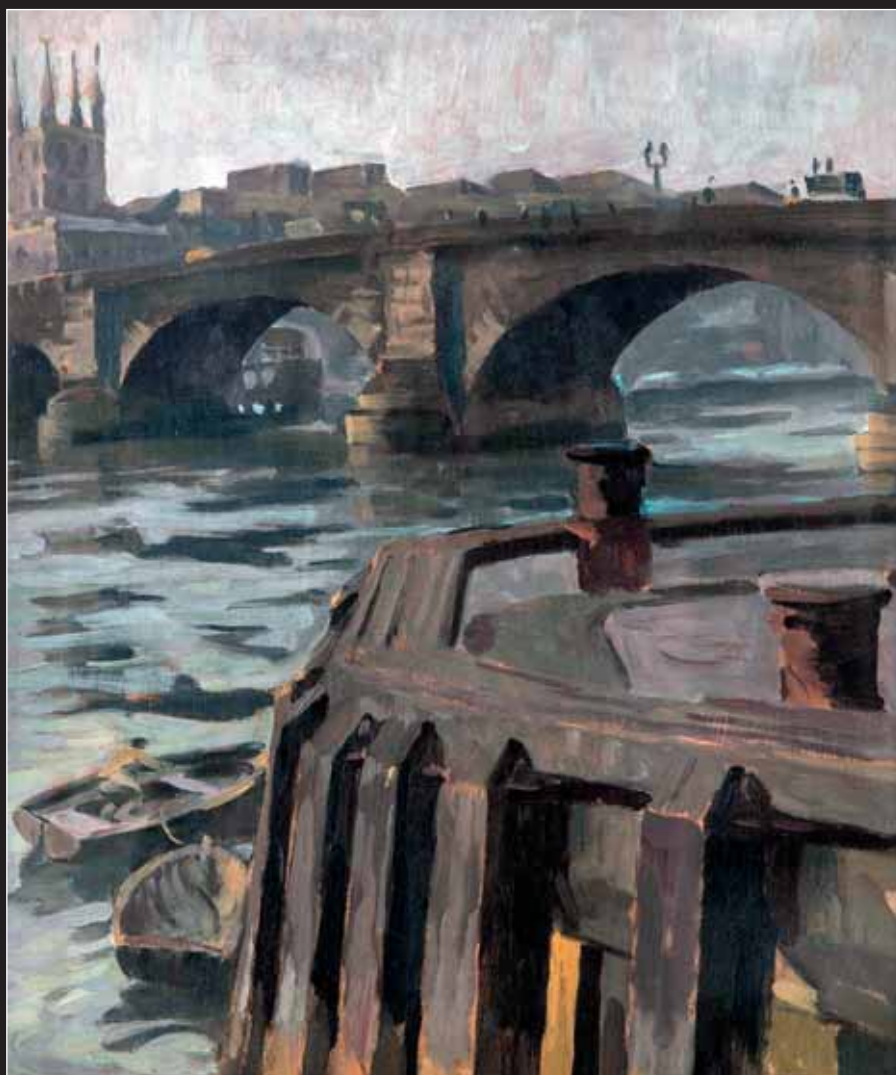
William Percy French (1854-1920) Grand Canal, Dublin, 1896, €5,600, (€2000-€3000); William Eric Horsbrugh-Porter (1905-1985) View of Wild Flowers Looking Towards the Sea, €1,050, (€400-€600); Muriel Brandt RHA (1909-1981) Along the Quays, Dublin, €1,300, (€500-€700); Richard Gorman RHA (b.1946) SLIDE, €1,000, (€400-€600); Oisín Kelly RHA (1915-1981)

Family Group, 1962, €1,250, (€500-€700); Liam O'Neill (b.1954) THREE MEN IN A BOAT, €4,800, (€2000-€3000); Cecil King (1921-1986) TWO 1, 1977, €1,150, (€500-€700).

In ADAMS March sale of Irish art a fine Paul Henry, 'Towards Achill' went at 47,000 euros while an oil on canvas by Hugh Douglas Hamilton of Maria Susanna Ormsby made 26,000 euros.

Colin Middleton's 'Judy' an oil on canvas sold also for 26,000 euros and a William Conor, oil, 'Water Buckets' made 20,000 euros. A Tony O'Malley oil realised 14,000 euros, while an oil by William John Leech came under the hammer at 12,000 euros.

Other highlights included: Margaret Clarke portrait of artist Dermot O'Brien, 11,000; Rory Breslin, Mask of the Slaney Bronze, 11,000; Colin Davidson, 10,500; Rowan Gillespie, The Cashel dancers bronze, 10,000.



William John Leech's London Bridge and Soutwark Cathedral (€12,000 at ADAMS)

High Hopes



Oxygen starved, my lungs burned, my legs ached, the lactic acid boiled my muscles.

My endeavour of the highest hunt in the world strangely had its origins in Nebraska, one of the flattest places I have visited.

There at Hornady's hallowed headquarters, a bizarre looking creature adorns the wall in the corridor not far from Jason Hornady's office. It looks like no other caprid or ovine classification. Part goat, part sheep and a demeanour that would have inspired Tolkein. It is a Blue Sheep or 'bharal' as they are also known locally in the Himalaya. This fine example was hunted by Steve Hornady in China, when one could still hunt there.

Today, it is no longer possible to legally hunt in China, but this strange creature had inspired me to find the unusual, unclassified and unattainable. Not only did I want to see Blue Sheep in its natural surroundings, but I wanted a true adventure, to tread where few had been before, to experience the expeditions of our Victorian and Edwardian forefathers and not to follow the hunter tourists trail.

The hunting in China closed over a decade ago, but a chance meeting with

seasoned Danish big game hunter Jens Kjaer Knudsen, opened my eyes to a different destination for the highest living game species in the world: the Nepalese Himalayas. "It's a really tough hunt," Jens had said, "perhaps the toughest." And when Jens, a veteran hunter with vast experience of mountainous regions across the world, says that, you know it will be a challenge.

However, the fuse was lit, and I started investigating. There's little to be found on the subject of hunting in the Himalayas, certainly hardly any reporting of it, and it took some detective work to discover how to go about it. Jens had kindly recommended Global Safaris Nepal, owned and run by the very capable and warm young Nepalese entrepreneur Samsheer Parajuli. Even with a recommended outfitter, the trip took two years of planning. A strictly controlled number of animals are hunted in Nepal every

year. Only 20 Blue Sheep and 10 Himalayan Tahr tags are sold at auction to national and foreign hunters annually. The price depends on demand with outfitters so the price really is a lottery.

Arriving in Kathmandu, I was joined by an extremely fit American hunter, Matt Fowler, who I knew only through an Alaskan guiding acquaintance. We got on immediately, hunting is a universal bonding agent that transcends camo, culture and creed. We both felt as prepared as I we could be. I had put several months of training in, walking Scottish hills and running five times a week. The space between my thoughts was filled with nerves but more consciously intense excitement.

When hunting Kyrgyzstan for Mid-Asian Ibex, I'd suffered from altitude sickness. I knew no matter how fit I was, I was indefensible to the merciless lack of oxygen at the higher reaches of planet earth. I also knew under any circumstances mountain hunting is



A Nepalese tahr.

dangerous. In Nepal we would be truly cut off from the outside world, and with Tahr to altitudes of 14,000 feet, and blue sheep to 18,000 feet, there was a lot that could go wrong. However, the reward was more than worth the risk and the risk is what fills me with cortisol and adrenaline.

One last stamp and we were clear to hunt in Nepal

We had two day's acclimatisation in Kathmandu, a dusty busy place. Buddhists and Hindus rub along well together and the atmosphere is friendly. Our first mission was to get our rifles and ammunition cleared – no mean feat in a country where it is illegal to own a rifle. We retrieved our rifles from the airport, then spent much of the day at the Governor of Kathmandu's offices. In a Monty Python fashion, we were passed from one official's office to the next, accumulating stamps as we went. After no less than ten stamps we were finally ushered to the Governor's office. The governor did his thing, gave us one last stamp and we were clear to hunt in Nepal.

Kathmandu is all about treading in the footsteps of some of our mightiest and most hallowed explorers, the

bravest of the brave, whose epic journeys are so written about. With a day to spare we chartered a plane to take us on a flyby of the tallest peaks of the world: Everest and its towering neighbours. The sight of those ultimate tops, which had seen so many toil over with such grave consequences for failure filled me with awe. We flew past no fewer than six of the top fourteen highest mountains in the world – past being the operative word, for their peaks still towered beside us from the window at cruising altitude of 30,000 ft – a strange sensation.

The following day inspired by our Everest experience, we loaded up and headed to Kathmandu the airport, where a helicopter would take us west along the Great Himalayan Range. After a Tetris-like pack of equipment, we set off, flying two hours and passing the mighty Annapurna range and two more 25,000 ft peaks.

To give an idea of distance: trekking to the Dhorpatan Hunting reserve would have taken a seven days, likely more. Landing at 10,000ft was a shock – not least because the reality of being at altitude had kicked in. The air was thin, and breathing was laboured for us, but less so for the team of 22 men who met

us at the make shift helipad. Sherpas, scouts, guides, cooks, porters and of course, a skinner. Our outfitter, Samsheer Parajuli, was also with us, as were two government game wardens, who would ensure that our hunt was in line with the licences we had been granted.

We'd barely unloaded before the helicopter was full again, carrying any locals who needed medical care back down to Kathmandu, as the region we were in had no doctors at all. It was good to think that no matter what the outcome of our hunting expedition, this good deed would come of it. The average life expectancy in the area, Samsheer told me, was 50 – a testament to the harsh life of those living remote at these extreme altitudes, eking out a living from the mountains.

While the white peaks towered above us, however, I was surprised by the mildness of the weather, and the vegetation around us. The tree-line was still way above us and not what I had anticipated. The area has a temperate climate below the raw rock faces, supporting rhododendrons, spruce, juniper and of course, plenty of muntjac.

My lungs burned, and my

legs ached

There was little time to waste on looking at our surroundings. Once the porters had loaded up, we set off quick-smart, heading downhill — the plan was to spend our first night camping at around 8,500 feet to acclimatise before we moved back uphill to start looking for animals. That first day's walk, which wasn't all that long, filled me with unease. My lungs burned, and my legs ached, the lactic acid boiling my muscles. No amount of preparation could have readied me for this oxygen starved challenge.

I guiltily watched the porters with their enormous 100lb loads including my camera equipment, that extra sweatshirt I knew I would use strapped to their heads tripping along as though out for a walk in the park. They seemed totally oblivious to the steepness of the terrain or the thinness of the air as I panted after them, intensely grateful for the trekking poles I'd brought. One thing that did keep me going: a live chicken was part of the load we'd brought with us, a mascot for the first

day at least that's destiny was likely to be a spicy one.

As we arrived at camp, the fires started and tents pitched. Our friendly mascot was promptly despatched with a khukuri and prepped for dinner as we zeroed our rifles. Our rifles affected by the altitude and shot perfectly after some adjustments. As we ate our high altitude chicken curry, we talked about the mentality of those who'd explored this area, who'd reached the top of the world. Sleep didn't come easily that night waking on the hour every hour, the nerves, excitement and altitude was all playing a part.

We started our climb at sun up the following day and had been warned it would be a big push. A big push it was. We climbed - not hiked - 4,000ft in total. My breath wanting, and my legs straining at the steepness of the terrain, it was a real battle with myself to keep going, a mind over matter job — but when the mind is plagued by self-doubt and anxiety, that is a tough one.

The terrain, was unforgiving, rocks, bamboo, pines and shrubs blocked our

path, and there were no nice plateaus that gave a rest to our weary legs. It was uphill all the way to 12,650ft, where camp two was.

By the time we arrived there, nearly twelve hours of climbing behind us, everything ached and burned, and I'll admit I was concerned and felt emotion. More than half of the climb had been on terrain that, if fallen from, would result in certain death. It was exhausting managing this level of risk in one's mind, when the riskiest thing it usually processes is crossing a road in the sleepy Scottish Borders. What had I let myself in for? Was I mentally up to it? Nausea, headaches and dizziness were plaguing me, a sure sign of altitude sickness. The picture of my two young daughters on the lock screen of my phone haunted my mind's eye as I curled into a foetal position in the downy folds of my sleeping bag. How reckless was I being? What were my options to pull the plug and get out of this ridiculous scenario I had selfishly got myself into?

Five am the next day came around as



Once loaded up, we set off quick-smart.

I had an extremely firm word with myself. I had overcome my inner demons for now. I suspect this inner challenge is something many have to battle with in the Himalayas and it would not be the last time for me on this trip either. The sweet and pleasing sound of tahr chirping sweetly echoed around camp as the sky lightened.

The herd were spotted at an angle of 26 degrees up the mountain face

A large group had fortuitously moved directly above camp during the night. This was unheard of but as the saying goes, success is when an opportunity and preparation meet. The tahr usually live just where the tree-line finished but during the rut, or connection time, as the guides called it, they move higher. We crept out of our tents, spotting the herd not above 200m camp, at an angle of 26 degrees up the mountain face. The noise of the camp moving about and preparing for the day as much as the guides tried to suppress many of the unaware Sherpas as they also arose with the sun from their tents, alarmed the tahr but not into running. They moved off quietly now, disappearing around a corner.

I grabbed my Sauer 404 from my tent, quietly loaded and, following one



In camp we lit fires and cooked high altitude curry.

of the guides, set off, climbing to follow the animals. I was intensely relieved when, on rounding the nearest corner to camp they'd disappeared behind, we saw them once more, not far off.

A short stalk, slinking along the edge of a rocky outcrop, now panting of altitude masked by excitement. We were within a rare 100m of the animals, and, after a short observation, the head guide Man pointed out a mature male. "This one," he said. It took a few precious minutes to work out which one that was, with colour tones that matched its habitat it having evolved on these very

rock faces. The animals were grazing peacefully and were no more than 100m away. I lined up the cross hairs on the animal, tried and struggled to breathe deeply, and squeezed the trigger. The bull tahr dropped in seconds. Not only had the hunt itself been short, it was close to camp, a huge blessing by all accounts. And even better, the animal lay stone dead not 100m below on a ledge.

We retrieved it, and one of the toughest Sherpas carried the entire carcass back to camp in a wicker basket amid delight from the team, who quickly set too nimbly cutting the beast up with the twelve inch khukuri blades, but not before enjoying their special treat of drinking the warm blood of the bull, a mature 12-year old animal. The short celebration was finished in moments, and the butchery took little time, too — the meat was secured in a sherpa's basket and would make up our meals for the next few days.

There was no time for delaying now, as time was moving fast and we had to make our next camp by nightfall. Another knife edge, fear filled five-hour climb, achieving another 2,500ft, took us to camp four where I collapsed, drained of all energy and drained of will. I'd achieved one of my aims, and



100 lb loads and totally oblivious to the steepness of the terrain or the thinness of the air.



The head guide pointed out a mature male and I lined up the cross hairs.

with the altitude sickness now at a worrying level, perhaps it was time to head home. I felt emotionally and physically weak. There'd be no heading

back tonight, that much was certain. I decided to give myself another stern talking to hoping that would be enough to acclimatise and complete my

mission. But as I folded my sleeping bag shut around me, I was by no means sure that would be possible. To be continued...

Fact file

Dhorpatan Hunting Reserve

Established in 1983, the Hunting Reserve extends over 1,325 sq km but is not fenced in any way, and is the only area where hunting is permitted for both Nepalese and foreigners. Altitudes vary from just over 9,800ft to close to 30,000ft. The reserve is surrounded by villages, except in the north, and is grazed during the warmer months, from February until October. Vegetation is alpine, sub-alpine and high-temperate vegetation. Apart from tahr and blue sheep, the reserve is home to Himalayan black bear, snow leopard, barking deer, and wild boar, as well as 137 species of birds, including several of the pheasant family, which are also part of the controlled hunting in the reserve.

Himalayan tahr

The Himalayan tahr (*Hermitragus jemlahicus*) is native to the Himalayas in Nepal, Tibet, Northern India and Pakistan. This wild goat has been introduced to New Zealand, Argentina and the US. With its small head and pointed ears, both sexes of the tahr have horns, with those of the female being smaller. The female's body weight is also smaller, at just over half the male's approximate 75kg body weight. Their characteristic thick, reddish coats and undercoats allow them to survive the harsh conditions of their habitat. The tahr has an even number of toes, and have adapted the unique ability to grasp both smooth and rough surfaces so typical of their surroundings. The tahr is currently on the 'near threatened' list of the IUCN with the major threats being uncontrolled hunting and deforestation, while winter avalanches also create a significant mortality factor.

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Oscar takes to the water.

Frosty mornings seem to be less frequent these days than they used to be. Perhaps it is through rose tinted glasses that I look back and seem to recall so many Saturday mornings over a winter, when a ferreter could hardly get a spade into the ground to recover a determined ferret. I feel over the last decade there has been a definite shift in the weather with wetter summers and warmer winters and those mornings when the ground was like bell iron are few and far between.

Luckily over the winter of 2017 – 2018 we had a few of those nostalgic mornings and I took full advantage and slipped out for a spot of shooting. Not being the conventional type I didn't load up a spaniel or pointer and nor did I put a 12 or even 20 bore into my gun slip. A Teckel and a 410 are my shooting partners these days, and it has made for some exciting and interesting sport as I would find out one frosty morning back in December.

Oscar, a little Teckel born and bred in County Cork from a bitch called Pepper and sired by a Teckel called Dandy, Oscar is just about two years old and he and I are great friends and have been since I collected him back in September 2016 and in that short space of time we have had a lot of adventures. Oscar slotted in well from the beginning, while not a boisterous or overly

confident puppy he was far from shy and showed his intelligence and keenness from a very early age.

His first catch at only 16 weeks old was a moth and he proudly carried it around the garden for over an hour and continually dropped it picked it up again every time the lurchers got too close. A sensible pup, he took everything in his stride and was firm friends with the ferrets within a few days, stock breaking was a breeze however, edging on the side of caution I attached a long line to him in a field full of sheep and lambs one spring morning where the farmer lets me train the dogs and he paid no interest in them at all and never has since.

I like any dog I own to do a little more than they are supposed to. Why should a Lurcher just go lamping or ferreting? I have taken all my Lurchers

beating and shooting, but my bitch Fudge always had a knack for it since a pup and Paddy Boyd and the other lads always like to see her coming on the shoot days. She doesn't really hunt the cover but will retrieve pheasants and ducks along with anything else except magpies, they have a certain smell that puts her off.

Shooting with her started quite by accident as one year the requirement in the syndicate was having a dog, I assumed a traditional gun dog, but nobody specified exactly which type so I took her with me and have since. When someone folded a pheasant 15 minutes into the morning and she outran the Spaniels, cleared a small fence and retrieved it back to me I slipped into my bag, patted her head and acted like it was a normal thing, but of course I was beaming inside!



Squeezing through 'Teckel-style'.

Of course, easily spotted pheasants and ducks landing in open fields are all very well, but when it comes to the thick cover and necessity to actually go out and find something you didn't see falling or something falling in the dark on a wet night it takes a different dog. A Labrador, spaniel or something similar would be ideal — except I had a Teckel.

This also happened by accident. I was exercising Oscar one evening along the river and had the gun when ducks began to drop in as the light fell. I was sure there would be a few more and rather than walk him back to the van and then return to shoot I made my way to the ditch, got banked in and set him on my knee. Within less than a minute two mallard crossed and we folded one. After another few minutes he had another and sat another perhaps 15 minutes and saw nothing else. I knew the second bird landed on the flat field out in front but the first was somewhere behind me.

The Teckel was attempting to drag a large mallard drake from some blackthorn

I walked off in the dark for a look and Oscar ran ahead. With a head lamp I

squinted round roughly where I thought it had landed but to no avail. After a few

minutes there was no sign of my young German aside from a bit of snuffling and snorting in a hedge close by. I climbed under, shone the torch and found him attempting to drag a large mallard drake from some blackthorn! This was to be the beginning of a new shooting partnership! Next, I shot a rook overhead, and again it fell well into some Ferns that had died back. I could see the bird but didn't show him and he rummaged and searched about until he found it but just like his kennel mate Fudge, made no attempt to lift it.

Over the last few years, I have taken to shooting with a .410 and find it excellent for everything I do. I shoot inland ducks and snipe more than anything else and walking many miles and sometimes over rough ground the little gun is a pleasure to carry. People often speak of the 'range' of a .410 and suggest that it is simply not enough for shooting 'properly' and 'it is a children's gun' which in my opinion is



The poacher's coat and .410 in the pocket.



Another rook retrieved.

quite incorrect, the gun is very misunderstood which is unfortunate. Used correctly and within its limits as opposed to worrying about its range and you will find the .410 more than effective for all but the highest pheasants. Often seen as a novelty gun or something for messing about, the .410 was allegedly the gun of the Poacher. The old drilled out Rook rifle or the folding version being among the favourites. My own is an Italian model, it folds and can slip inside a jacket pocket for easy transport. I have shot pheasants, ducks, Snipe, Pigeons and many rabbits with my .410 and the more I do the more I like it.

This year I shot almost exclusively with it and, one frosty morning back in December, I loaded it into my van with the trusty Teckel and made for the

drainage ditches of home for a shot, or as it turned out quite a few! Not lacking in intelligence as sometimes suggested about Dachshunds, Oscar has got the hang of the various shooting scenarios. He knows at night to sit on my knee or at my side until we go searching, and while walking the drains he will walk at heel reasonably well.

Drain shooting and more so with a .410 becomes a sort of skill one has to acquire in order for it to work correctly. The water levels have to come into consideration: too high and the birds will see you approaching more easily, you must keep far enough back while walking not to startle them, or too far ahead for a shot, while at the same time not keeping so far back as you miss them, making it all the more exciting! I have developed my own method of

walking the drains in semicircles a hundred yards or so apart and that leaves room for error in front or behind.

This particular morning Oscar and I set off in the rain and had folded three birds on the first stretch, followed by a brace and then a further brace on the next stretch; we were going very well indeed. Any birds that landed in the water (so long as they had some movement) he is happy to retrieve and any that landed on the field he will approach and stay with but not retrieve. It works well for me as the drains in flood are deep and wide and often difficult to retrieve fallen birds from anyway.

He sleeps in a very large wine cask

Young Oscar has developed some strange habits as he has grown, like howling and whining very quietly for about ten minutes after he gets kennelled after feeding. He sleeps in a very large wine cask with a small Teckel-sized hole in the front, very warm, very dry and quite 'European,' but also with quite an echo when he settles for the night. Following the wind down whine as I call it, he pushes some bedding over the hole and that's him until I arrive in the morning, or someone disturbs him.

His next is fences: terriers or dogs too small to jump usually go through the bottom of the wire, that would be too normal! He climbs up three squares of mesh, wiggles through and falls down the other side!

On the day in question he crossed every fence the same, and every time he heard a splash, he squeezed through the drainage wire to find the bird. Over two days, we shot over a dozen teal and we used them all. Oscar is a particular fan of the feet, waste not, want not I suppose!

A day or two after our duck adventure we had an invitation to some rabbit ground, too thick to ferret so I decided the 'Children's Gun' and the 'Sausage dog' would be ideal - and what a day we had! The scent was quite



Oscar finds a duck on the water.

obviously heavy, as Oscar hit the ground running as soon as we arrived and, within seconds of him opening up, a shot rang out on the far side followed by another. What again is quite strange is that, should he follow a rabbit or anything from the cover at full speed and it is shot, he immediately stops, turns round and goes straight back in! He worked tirelessly all day and although I left most of the shooting to my host and enjoyed watching the Teckel work, I managed a few rabbits again with the little gun.

My .410 is chambered to accept the

variations in ammunition from 1.5," 2," 2.5" and 3" Magnum. I have found that nothing other than the 3" Magnums to be of use for game shooting and used correctly they are very effective, although the high pressure of the 3" can cause disruptions in pattern in some cases. It appears now, with offerings from the major Gun manufacturers, that the popularity of the



Tracking a teal which ended up on the fence.

.410 is on the rise and this cannot be a bad thing as perhaps it may reduce the cost of ammunition, which can be a fraction more expensive than other larger calibers. Some suppressed versions of .410 shotguns are available and for my work as a rabbit controller, these would be ideal, is if wasn't

for their huge length! I have found quite a suitable alternative in the form of Lyalvale Magnasonic cartridges, designed to be used in these suppressed firearms, but which in my opinion work very effectively in standard .410 and cut the report to a mere crack, not essential for everyone but useful for some.

With the winter long gone, we can look forward to summer and certainly the upcoming highlight is the 40th Anniversary Irish Game Fair at Shanes Castle. What a milestone of protecting, promoting and defending Country Sports! It is a great pleasure to be a part of the show on a year which will no doubt be one of the largest Country Sports events ever staged in Ireland. And what better way to mark this than by arriving with a few lurchers, 'sausage dogs' and long nets and having them all in the Main Arena at the one time, who knows what could happen? It will be fun, that's for sure!



The end of a long day.

Terrier, Lurcher & Whippet Show Roundup

The First Sporting Whippet Club NI Dog Show and Race Day 2018

Ballee playing fields, situated in the shadow of the famous City of the Seven Tower, is on the outskirts of Ballymena. This brilliant setting was the new venue for The Sporting Whippet Club NI Dog Shows and Race days of 2018.

This being my first time there, my mind was filled with anticipation of what lay before me. On turning the corner I certainly was not disappointed. There before my eyes was ample ringside parking and green pastures to set up our showing rings.

Although for much of the day it was wet and windy, this did not dampen the spirits of the good canine people of the Whippet world.

There was a good turnout of whippets for such inclement weather on the day.

The raffle always generates a lot of excitement, with plenty of craic and good banter. As always, the usual suspects moaning and groaning when their numbers are not called out. Having said that the usual suspects went home with an armful of winnings. Many thanks to everybody who donated items for the raffle. All very much appreciated.

Congratulations to Rea Wilson on winning Overall Show Champion of Champions with his beautiful whippet ODIS. Reserve Champion going to Janet Duke with her winning whippet Oscar. Well done to both of you.

Many thanks to our judge, Colin

Tucker, for carrying out his duties with impeccable fairness. Thanks are also due to our chairman Kirsty Fyffe, Racing Manager Chontelle Mc Meekan and the hard working committee for running this very successful first show of 2018. Paul Morrison took some lovely photograph full of skill and happy memories. A very enjoyable day was had by all.

Roscrea Race Day, Sunday 15th April (Report by Shane Lee)

Another very successful day's racing in Roscrea. Thanks to all who supported the day and to those who entered dogs and turned up to watch proceedings. Thanks go to Albert Titterington for playing his part, Daniel Maloney for the sponsorship



Rea Wilson with Odis Reserve Champion Janet Duke with Oscar With Judge Colin Tucker.

of dog nuts & to the landowner for the use of a magnificent field. Definitely no hiding areas out there with the best dog always winning. We hope you all got home safe and enjoyed your day.

It was a cracking day's racing with some very close buckles at the top of the field. Heart stopping stuff for some owners one must say. Thanks to Pat Lee for doing a brilliant job on slipping and John Feehan for pulling the lure all day and not forgetting Calin Byrne for driving the quad up and down the field all day in not so nice weather conditions. We could not have done without Christy Behan on the day for the lovely photographs.

Results:

Winner of the Owen Juggy Ryan Nicky Smith with Scooby, Mark O Connor with Bear.

Consolation Big dogs

Winner Michael Mcgrath with Tucker, Teresa Irvine with Sandy. Under 21"

Winner Darren Kenny with Cisco, Francis Fletcher with Chase. Under 23"

Winner Stephen McGrath with Meg, Joseph McGrath with Maisy. Ned Kane (What about the Hairy Dog) Stake

Winner Fran Kenny with Teabag, Ned Kane with Scooter.

U24" Michael Carroll Memorial Plaque.

Winner Malachy McFall with Sukie, Nicky Smith with Chantelle.

Well done to all our winners & to all the other runners as well. Thanks to you all from The Roscrea Working Dog Social Club.

The Laois Lurcher/ Terrier/ Whippet Club First Annual Charity Dog Show, Abbeyleix, 22nd April

As we arrived, I could see by the atmosphere, it was going to be a good day. Stands were dotted



Fiona Devlin with MUSTY Reserve - Mark Raybould with Joker With judges Tracy Crosbie, Paul Deasey, Alan Crosbie, and John Moria

around the field, selling everything to do with dog shows and Country Sports. The raffle was one of the best I have seen so far this year. The prizes were magnificent and generated a lot of interest.

Show Results:

Champion Lurcher Fiona Devlin with Musty, Jed Donagh with Lily.

Champion Terrier Mark Raybould with Jockey, Dessie Mackin with Bank

Champion Whippet Mairead Fearon with Jill, Gail Canning with Roe

Champion Veteran Sean O Keefe with Ness

Champion Pet Jenny O Meara with Rodge

Overall Show Champion and Best in Show Fiona Devlin with Musty

Reserve Champion Mark Raybould with Joker

Racing Results:

U21" Josh O Connor with Jess

U24" Tommy Cullen with Shadow

O24" David Nolan with Missy Whippets Gladys & Alec Savage with Billybob

Open Whippet Gladys and Alec Savage with Murphy

Open Lurcher Nicky Smith with Scooby

Bull Cross Jed Donagh with Chunk

Hairy Dog Fran Kenny with Tea Bag

Terriers Jenny O Meara.

Ferrets Champion Ferrett Nicky Smith, Reserve David Nolan

A very enjoyable day was had by all.

The First Sporting Whippet Club NI Dog Show and Race Day Winners



Barry Chambers on the Podium with his winning Whippet.



Lisa Dumigan and Rea Wilson on the Podium with their winning Whippets.



John McStay with his winning Whippet pairs Jack and Jill at the SWCNI along with judge Colin Tucker.



In the Veteran Class: 1st Kirsty Fyffe with Ollie & 2nd Tracy Gill with Finlay.



Gabriel Franke and Dean Spence with their dogs.



1st Janet Duke with Oscar, 2nd Kirsty Fyffe with Flynt & 3rd Barry Chambers with Ruby.

Roscrea Race Day



Proud Winners of The Owen Juggy Ryan Trophy. (photo: C. Behan)



Under 23" Winner Stephen McGrath with Meg. (photo: C. Behan)



U24" Winner Michael Carroll Memorial Plaque Malachy McFall with Sukie. (photo: C. Behan)



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Cork Beagling Festival - Still Hitting The Heights After 43 Years

I spoke to hunting legend Jack O'Connor a few weeks after his Beagling festival in Cork this year and he reflected on several days of top class hunting during the festival. Jack is well known and much lauded in foot hunting circles having devoted several decades of his life enjoying and promoting the beautiful sport of beagling. He has organised a beagling festival every year since 1975 and in the process has provided fantastic sport for countless lovers of the chase.

I have attended the festival in Cork on a number of occasions over the last few years and this year was as enjoyable as ever. It ran over nine days at the end of January, beginning of February, and took place in North Cork and east Limerick, with its HQ being the small, charming town of Castletownroche. Two packs from England hunted on alternate days. They were hosted by Jack's pack, the Woodrock and Blackwater Valley Beagles, which has been hunted excellently by huntsman Stevie McDonald for many years.

"We had another great week," reflected Jack, "with nine days of high quality beagling from Saturday to Sunday. Over the years about 20 English packs have hunted at the festival in north Cork, bringing at times almost a hundred people across the water. Two packs came over from

England for the event, the Park Beagles from Dorset and the Pipewell from Northumberland. They loved the week and each evening after all the exercise there was socialising and sing-songs in the local pubs. The first year that packs visited this part of the world at our invitation was 1975. We met their huntmen at Game Shows, got on well and during our conversations the possibility of holding an invitational event was hatched. That first year went so well that we decided to host it every winter."

Beagling people are great people and there's always a friendly atmosphere at the festivals. "On a few occasions over the years," said Jack, "we went over to England instead and hunted with the packs there, in fabulous places like Somerset and Devon. Great hunting country with a fantastic tradition and

excellent communities."

Something of a buzz in the atmosphere

Last year I hunted every day of the nine day festival but this year I only managed to make three days. The first day was the opening meet of the festival, which is traditionally opened by the Woodrock. The weather was cool but dry. The underground conditions were wet and sometimes tough going. We met for a hot toddy in the welcoming Rock Forest Bar at the top of Castletownroche, a lovely establishment run by a friendly publican. There was a good crowd in the pub, many of them dressed in tweeds. Everyone was in good spirits and there was something of a buzz in the atmosphere, it being the opening meet of an eagerly anticipated week. There were many familiar faces from the previous year and it was nice to meet once again these acquaintances from former great days in the field. This pleasant social occasion was interrupted after half an hour by John O'Connor who announced that it was time to drive to the meet.

From the point of view of its picturesque qualities it would be hard to beat the location of our meet, which was just above the ruins of Bridgetown Priory. The Priory was constructed beside a wide bend of the Blackwater



The chase is on!



Stevie McDonald of the Woodrock and Blackwater Valley Beagles beside Bridgetown Priory, near Castletownroche in North Cork.

River. The river is broad, slow-flowing, and is flanked by trees and an imposing limestone cliff-face. There were a large number of monastic settlements in the Blackwater region during the Middle Ages. These settlements were vital cogs in the lives of the surrounding communities. For many years the ruins of Bridgetown Priory stood abandoned and almost forgotten under a mantle of ivy. Recent conservation work has been sensitively done and has revealed a series of beautiful buildings, opening a window on the lives of the monks who lived there eight centuries ago. The monks who lived in Bridgetown were Black Canons and they lived according to the rule of St Augustine, which provided a model by which one could negotiate the present while waiting for the paradise to come.

Stevie took his ten couple through a metal gate and down a large, pasture field of healthy grass towards the river and a tall,

impressive stone viaduct with a number of high supporting pillars. The viaduct once supported a rail line but it's disused now. It's considered a fine example of railway architecture and is an impressive example of our Victorian architectural heritage. Stevie went straight to the viaduct and between its

giant pillars. The ground immediately beneath the viaduct was very soggy and we sank up to our knees, water filling our boots unless we were wearing gaiters.

Shortly beyond here the hounds found in a small area of tall grass, a classic lying area for a hare; and we



David Every, huntsman of the Park Beagles from Dorset, with some hunt followers during the action.



It would be hard to beat the location of our meet, which was just above the ruins of Bridgetown Priory.

were off! Stevie's hounds did a great job for the next hour, pursuing relentlessly in a giant circle. These large circuits are the norm when hare hunting, the hare following pretty much the same route time and again.

The hare's territorial instincts are strong and hunting them follows a circular pattern on a diameter of one to two square miles or so. The hare is known as "puss" in hunting terms and is the fastest of all quadrupeds in terms of relative speed to size. She can reach her travelling speed in just three strides and within a few more strides can attain a top speed of 40mph or more. If she is fit she can maintain this speed for at least half a mile. Because of the design of her feet she can go uphill as fast as on the level, and she can make a 90 degree turn at top speed without losing pace. Her vision is remarkable, her sense of smell very acute and her hearing excellent. In other words, she has been designed by nature to give her a really good chance of evading pursuers. It's also believed that she sometimes uses wind and cover to disguise her course.

After chasing this hare for an hour, Stevie decided to move to another draw. This was a couple of miles away and was an even more picturesque spot, beside the Blackwater and with the Boggeragh mountains rising high

behind. As I viewed the hunters and the hounds from a distance, they looked impressive within the frame of this lovely landscape with its rich, fertile fields; broad river; and wild purple mountain.

Dangerous but fun!

Stevie drew blank after blank for field after field for about an hour and then we came upon two hares in the one field! This split the pack. Things became more confusing shortly afterwards when we saw a number of foxhounds intermingled with the beagles! These were the foxhounds of the Duhallows, who were hunting in the vicinity. As we brought the foxhounds back to the waiting followers of the mounted pack I reminisced about the many fantastic days' sport I enjoyed over two decades when I used to follow hounds on horseback. While it is a potentially dangerous pastime, it is hard to think of a more fun thing to do during the weekends.

That night I stayed in the Hibernian Hotel in Mallow which is an excellent base for anyone participating in the festival. The Park Beagles were in the spotlight for the hunt the next day and their huntsman David Every did a fine job, providing the best sport he could.

This was an excellent day with

several hares in the vicinity. On a couple of occasions the pack nearly caught up with the hares. As always, it was a pleasure to listen to the music of the hounds and to see the long line of the pack in pursuit. After the hunt I paid a visit to the beautiful house and estate of Annes Grove, which was a few miles away. This house and gardens is justly celebrated and is well worth a visit. It was taken over by the OPW a couple of years ago, which is a good thing. The 30-acre gardens at Annes Grove are considered world-class by garden enthusiasts. They feature native and exotic

species in a gorgeous setting through which the River Awbeg flows.

After the unfortunate intermission of a couple days' work, I rejoined the festival midweek in the east Limerick village of Kilteely, where Stevie and the Woodrock had been designated to hunt again. Last year, I enjoyed the best day's beagling in my life; a red letter day to beat all other red letter days which featured sixty hounds and unparalleled scenting conditions in attractive countryside.

Everyone had gathered here once again in the hope that it would be a good day. We didn't expect to reach the dizzy heights achieved last year but Kilteely usually produced, at the very least, a good day. Alas it was not to be. Stevie, as he always does, gave it his very best but the weather was really poor, with very strong winds, which made the scenting conditions nearly impossible. Still, I mused philosophically to myself, it's nice to be out in the countryside, enjoying exercise, in the company of friendly, likeminded people.

There will be another festival next year and two packs from England have been invited already, and Jack has asked me to extend his deepest gratitude to all the farmers who so kindly allow us to hunt over their land year after year.



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Hunting Roundup

AROUND THE MEETS



Huntsman Patrick Headdon and Whipper-In Ian McAleavey with the Killultagh Hounds at Stoneyford, Co Antrim.

The West Wicklow Foxhounds

The West Wicklow Foxhounds' biennial visit to the East Down Foxhounds took place on a cold first Saturday in February and Rupert Macauley brought ten riders and five car followers.

Former joint master of the East Downs (1990-2000) David Sandford and his wife Alison hosted a twenty strong mounted field under East Downs field master Pat Turley while Rupert had on a 10½ couple mixed pack and was assisted by whippers-in Paul and Chris Harte (sons of his joint master Christy Harte) and by Ronan Moloney.

Having something of a busman's holiday East Down huntsman Declan Feeney was on hand, in the mounted field, as needed and, the lawn meet over, Rupert first drew Myra Castle Estate. Here hounds plunged into some very deep covert from which came some strong music though neither the

mounted field nor the car followers could see hounds or quarry. Nothing came of this so matters moved to Portloughan Farm but every covert was blank and a move to Press's brought no improvement.

At Audleystown, near the Cairn, matters improved as hounds suddenly spoke then emerged, equally suddenly, onto the road from Press's bog. They ran as far as a one acre covert from which a brace broke with one being halloaed away by Declan Feeney.

Here, Craig Caven, former East Down joint master (1978-2013) watched approvingly as hounds recast themselves having briefly lost their pilot. He returned towards the covert from which Declan had seen him leave before running towards Sandford's.

This fox ran around both Press's and Watterson's switching between the two properties giving a good, bracing one and a half hour hunt. At one stage

hounds ran for three and a half miles with a now strong wind blowing scent all over the place.

Their pilot again ran through Press's and Watterson's then continued parallel to the county road towards Audleystown Castle. At this stage he was seen by your correspondent (at 5.11pm)! to head for a big hedge on Audleystown Road. As on the other side of the road is national trust property, Castleward, which includes five hundred acres of forestry hounds were stopped when they came onto the road, Rupert Macauley considering that this was the last place he wanted his hounds to enter.

Hounds were one hundred and fifty yards behind this game fox, in very good voice and, as they came over the hill towards us they were exactly on the line he had taken. It was 5.25pm as Rupert blew for home in now fading light.

Once back at the meet everyone

availed of a very welcome array of refreshments provided by Donna Quail and James Armstrong to end this good hound day.

The Fermanagh Harriers

The Fermanagh Harriers' visit to Belle Isle Estate, near Enniskillen, was repeated after last season's first visit in some fifty years, again by kind permission of Their Graces the Duke and Duchess of Abercorn.

Huntsman Patrick Murphy MH had on a 12½ couple mixed pack and I was interested to see that this included 1½ couple with Welsh blood, part of a 2½ couple draft from the Dungannon Foxhounds.

A fifteen strong mounted field, under hunt chairman Pdraig Sheridon, followed the huntsman, hounds and whipper-in Gerry Mullarkey to the first draw.

Here, hounds put a brace afoot behind John Stubbs's cottage. They settled on one fox and gave the field a fifty minute hunt right around the Estate. Indeed, with good hound music throughout, we were able to remain on Their Grace's land the whole day. This hunt ended when this good fox went to ground on the south side of Lough Erne and was given best.

The second draw, behind the walled garden, saw a hare rise to give a short,

but brisk, hunt running in a full circle before being lost back at the garden. Another hare rose from the third draw, at the West Island, presaging another short, fast hunt before it, too, was lost.

At the fourth draw, on the north side, came a repeat performance with this hare giving a short, sharp hunt before being lost.

Patrick Murphy then blew for home, in mid afternoon, as this mild day was now turning very cold and the threatened rain had also arrived.

The master told me that, the previous day, he had walked the Estate which was then covered by a coating of snow that the previous night's heavy rain had removed. Sure enough, after an excellent post hunt "feed" I drove home in torrential rain to confirm how lucky we were to have had our day.

Ward Union Stagounds

The County Club, Dunshauglin Co Meath, hosted the Ward Union Stagounds' meet, rather unusually on a Monday, with the meet being delayed until 2pm due to the weather.

Huntsman Pat Coyle had Paul Carberry, Con Kennedy and Peter Reynolds whipping-in while joint masters Gerry Reynolds and Stephen O'Connor had some forty riders under their charge.

Among a number of visitors on view

was trainer Ciaran Maher from Caulfield, Melbourne Australia, who was the furthest travelled for his visit to the Wards.

Pat Coyle drew Lagore to presage a very fast hunt to Ratoath and, seemingly in no time we were crossing the curtilage of Fairyhouse Racecourse, then on as far as Cheeverstown. Here, our pilot entered a plantation and remained there.

This had been a very fast hunt with everyone doing very well to keep up so Pat Coyle blew for home in late afternoon with the day having proved short but bracing, initially with some sunshine but also a biting cold wind throughout

Ballymacad Foxhounds

Ballymacad Foxhounds' huntsman Kevin Donohue is "off games" at present, due to a recent fall. In his absence hounds are being hunted by Alan Keogan, who acts as terrier-man and helps out in kennels. He spends his working life with these hounds and it shows as they hang on his every word and work for him.

At their meet at Killallon, Co Westmeath, Alan was assisted by Bobby Kellet and Maurice Quinn while field master Ken Farrelly had a twenty-five strong mounted field to oversee.

Alan Keogan first drew behind Killallon Graveyard where a fox went afoot to give a "three field" hunt before going to ground. At Shanks's a brace went afoot and hounds settled on one fox, from Hartstown Boring, to give a fast hunt before it, too, went to ground.

The third draw, at Kilrush, saw another fox go afoot to give a fast, circular hunt before it also went to ground, towards Clonmellon. Plunket Firs and Drewstown both proved blank before a draw of Gibney's at Kilskyre resulted in another short hunt before this pilot, too, went to ground.

The final draw, at Tom Stafford's, proved blank so Alan Keogan blew for home.

This had been quite a warm day, by recent standards, and scent was at a



Patrick Murphy MH with the Fermanagh Harriers at Belle Isle.

premium throughout though there were occasions when hounds hunted strongly and in good voice but, weather wise, this has been a season to forget.

Killultagh Old Rock and Chichester

At Stoneyford, Co Antrim, Noel and Noreen Fitzpatrick hosted the Killultagh Old Rock and Chichester hunt on a bright but cool last Saturday in February.

Noel, a former huntsman of these hounds, was mounted for the first time after recent hip replacements and did not seem to have been out of the saddle at all.

Huntsman Patrick Headdon, assisted by whipper-in Alan McAleavey, had on an 11½ couple mixed pack and field master Philip Swann had charge of a fifteen strong mounted field.

The first draw, at Michael Miller's racing stables, proved blank with hounds studiously ignoring a fast running hare and Tommy McCarthy's was also blank. The field then enjoyed some schooling thanks to Ivor McCrea, who was in the mounted field.

At Mairs's a fox went afoot and crossed Ballypitmave Road only for hounds to be stopped due to their not

being allowed into that side of the road. Jimmy and Johnny Wright's proved blank but, happily, a move to Hunts Hill Road saw a brace go afoot, with one fox going back towards Wright's. Hounds hunted the second fox over Hunts Hill Road then turned left towards White Mountain Road. A second left hand turn, back towards Hunts Hill Road, then Wright's, saw hounds lose their fox in fading scent. White Mountain Road proved blank, so Patrick Headdon blew for home as the weather had become considerably colder.

Death of Ernest McMillen

The death has occurred of Ernest McMillen, at the age of eighty-nine years.

A noted racing and rally driver and a highly successful businessman Mr McMillen was also a hunting man, whose hunting career included four years (1978-1982) in the mastership of the North Down Hunt.

Mr McMillen led the Pony Club from 1985-1991 and spent a lot of time and energy in meeting as wide a range of members and volunteers as he could. He also formed the Pony Club's centre membership, in itself a notable achievement.

His work for the Pony Club saw him become a life Vice President in 2000 and he was appointed MBE in 2004.

Despite his other achievements he was probably best known as one of a triumvirate of Northern Ireland drivers in the 50s and 60s, the other two being Paddy Hopkirk and Ronnie Adams. By coincidence Cynthia Dorman, Ronnie Adams's daughter, was also master of the North Downs, albeit many years after Mr McMillen.

Mr McMillen is survived by Conor, Rose and Patrick to whom every sympathy is extended by everyone in hunting circles, on their very sad loss.

Death of Peter Fitzpatrick

The death has occurred of a former master of the East Down Foxhounds, Peter Fitzpatrick, who was 90 years of age.

Mr Fitzpatrick, a retired solicitor, was master from 1985-1995 and still kept in touch with huntsman Declan Feeney, despite his advanced years, to keep himself abreast of things.

Every sympathy is extended to the Fitzpatrick family circle on the death of a man who was very highly respected throughout the East Down country and beyond.



Alan Keogh, deputising for huntsman Kevin Donohue, with the Ballymacad Foxhounds at Killallon, Co Westmeath.

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The 2017 Pointer & Setter Field Trials Season in the Republic of Ireland

The field trialling season comprises of the spring circuit, summer and autumn circuits and latterly there are some events over the winter. 2017 was a special year for the sport with the inaugural running of the European championship on snipe for Irish red setters in Ireland. However, it was not just the event itself, but a number of clubs in preparation for this competition ran snipe trials for the first time. The same rules apply as to grouse trials so therefore a dog cannot pass or flush a snipe. The Irish Kennel club reacting to this reality have now added the title of Snipe FTCh. Participation across field trials has increased with a number of new faces to the sport who are already making their mark. Broadly, grouse are encountered during the spring and summer circuits with pheasants in autumn.

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Hugh Brady's FTCh Malstabodarna Idun of Ballydavid won 4 open stakes on grouse (Joint Dog of the Year 2017)

The spring circuit is traditionally difficult not only in that grouse at this time of the year are extremely wild but weather conditions on the mountains are notoriously harsh and this circuit always sees a good deal of trial cancellations. However, it was a special spring for Joe Tannion who made up his first FTCh with his Irish setter Mountbay da Vinci winning the Connaught stake on partridge and Munster Pointer and setter stake on grouse also in Galway. Joan McGillicuddy's red setter bitch Int. FTCh Ballydavid Starjet of the Kingdom had a first and a second place and became the first ever snipe champion in Ireland. My own red setter bitch Malstabodarna Idun had a glorious spring winning two grouse stakes and achieving her title at 24 months.

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Joan McGillicuddy's Int. FTCh (Snipe Ch) Ballydavid Starjet of the Kingdom became the first ever snipe champion

The summer circuit builds up to the Irish championship stake and derby stakes. For red setter enthusiasts there was delight that both these prestigious stakes were won by Irish setters. The championship stake was won by Pat Reape's FTCh Ballinahemmy Mike and while scenting conditions made it a difficult stake, nonetheless this dog triumphed in challenging scenting conditions.

The derby stake was run later in the year than its traditional August date and Anthony Mulhall was successful with his red setter bitch Brackbawn Fainohe. There was significant game encountered on the day and it took a great deal of maturity to survive the course. Of note, Paraig Kiely came second with a very fancy Gordon setter dog Warrenfall Tweed.



Anthony Mulhall's derby winner Brackbawn Fainohe.



Pat Reape's FTCh Ballinahemmy Mike winner of Irish Championship stake 2017 and Joint Dog of the Year 2017.

year, and Billy Grace's FTCh Capparoe Jata.

Neil Ryan, one of the circuits most popular triallers' English setter Bold Jim of Felim achieved his title at the Cashel trials in Kinnity. Pat Dooley's three quarters Italian pointer dog Raigmore Sirocco achieved his title at the English setter trials on the Dublin mountains. Sirocco incidentally had a great Irish Championship and was right in the mix till the very end!

The European Championship was a well-planned event over two-days by



Moate which is now the ancestral home of snipe trials in Ireland. Two trials were won by Mandy Brennan's English setter dog Chieftain while the other stake was won by Christy Davitt's Irish setter Blackstairs Tess.

It was a great year of field trialling and special thanks to all the landowners, hard-working secretaries and of course the judges. As one of the oldest sports in Ireland it is gratifying to see national coverage in TG4's excellent documentary Madra na Gael and the Ear to the Ground television programmes.

With the growth in emphasis on snipe trials by my records there is now



Pat Dooley's FTCh Raigmore Sirocco. the Irish Red Setter Club and particularly Honorary Secretary Revd. Seamus O'Neill. There was generous sponsorship from Red Mills dog food. There were competitors from Britain, France, Germany and spectators from as far as Australia. The event was won by Ray O'Dwyer's Irish setter dog Sheantullagh Boss with reserve going to Aidan Dunne's Snipe Ch. Blackstairs Behenny.

The winter circuit took place in



Aidan Dunne's Snipe Ch. Blackstairs Behenny reserve in the European Championship on snipe.

three snipe champions. Joan McGillicuddy's Starjet, Aidan Dunne's Blackstairs Behenny and Billy Grace's Capparoo Jata (title applied for).

The new field trial champions were Joe Tannon's Mountbay Da Vinci, Joan McGillicuddy's Ballydavid Gaelforce of the Kingdom, my own Malstabodarna Idun of Ballydavid, Pat Dooley's Raigmore Sirocco and Neil Ryan's Bold Jim of Felim, while there was one international FTCh with Michael Houston's pointer Ardclinis Francie Frank gaining this most prestigious title.

There were further exceptional performances with George Forbes English setter FTCh Knocksmall Torv having another exceptional year winning three stakes and a further second.

European Championship on snipe winner Ray O'Dwyer with Sheantullagh Boss, J.P. Gotti and Aidan Dunne with Blackstairs Behenny



Michael Houston with Int FTCh Ardclinis Francie Frank.

Billy Grace's FTCh Capparoe Jata had another great year and won her second CACIT in Moate on snipe. Joan McGillycuddy's Starjet won four stakes (under Ire and GB rules) and a number of seconds to reach a milestone of twenty-five open stake wins. Special thanks to Aidan Dunne for compiling and recording all of the year's results. Finally, Tom Dunne a stalwart of the sport passed away at the end of the year who trained such famous dogs as FTCh's New Editions and Capparoe Boy. May he RIP.



George Forbes FTCh Knocksmall Torv.

FTCh CACIT Capparoe Jata had another superb year.



Joan McGillycuddy's FTCh Ballydavid Gaelforce of the Kingdom.

The Nigel Carville Red Mills Interview

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In this issue Nigel Carville interviews Kieran Fox

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: My first dog was a Flatcoat/Labrador cross.

Q: When did you purchase your first GSP for trialling and what was their breeding and name?

A: My first was GSP Loughview Hero in 1973, bought as an 8 week old pup. He cost £15, how things have changed since then. I trialled him mostly in working tests.

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

A: Gramhey. It is an anagram of the village I live in, Maghery.

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

A: The first trial I won was in November 1994 in Wilkinstown. It was with Gramhey Kerry Island and on pheasant.

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

A: I have only ever really trained GSPs and trialled GSPs.

Q: How many Trials have you won?

A: Probably over 20 open stakes, along with numerous working tests.

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

A: I have made up 3 Irish Field Trial Champions:

- Gramhey Ennis Beaut (Beaut) 2000
- Gramhey River Falcon (Holly) 2010
- Clonadoran Daviot at Gramhey (Penny) 2017



Irish Field Trial Champion Clonadoran Daviot at Gramhey: 2nd in her 1st Open Trial at 10 1/2 months. Winner of 5 Open Stakes in a row. Points Cup for highest placed in 2017/18 German Pointer Club of Ireland. Irish Kennel Club Section 5 winner for 2017/18. All at just 3 year old.

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

A: That's a tough question, but I would have to say all worthy champions and for me that is important. Well, each dog is unique, having its own strengths and personality. I would find it difficult to split them. Penny for example has achieved so much and is only three years old. She has won 5 Open stakes in a row. But I would find it hard to look past Holly who won 38 green stars and 6 excellent gradings. That has to be a record; not forgetting Beaut who set the high standard.

Q: Through your career you must

have met, seen and been influenced by many handlers. Can I ask you which of these handlers most influenced and impressed you?

A: Probably Gerry McErlearn would have certainly influenced me. In my early trialling days he was very successful and a great bench mark to pit myself against.

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

A: Yes, Gerry's dog Derry Air back in the 80s was a hugely successful dog.

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

A: When judging there are a lot of things to consider:

- good ground work
- under control
- works at one with the handler.

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

A: In a dog and bitch I am going to breed, I look for the following:

- good temperament is very important to me;
- from good proven working lines; and
- not noisy on the lead.

Q: You must have had many highlights as a trainer and handler as well as some disappointments. Can



Kieron Fox with his first FTCh Gramhey Ennis Beaut.

you share with us your highlights and your biggest disappointment.

A: Obvious highlights would be making up 3 Field Trial Champions, but I always enjoy competing regardless of the result. I don't consider myself having had any disappointments in trialling. If things don't go right one day, it's just something to work on for the next.

Q: Do you prefer handling dogs or bitches?

A: Results would tend to show that I have had more success with bitches, but I have also had success with some very good dogs as well. For example, my first GSP dog Loughview Hero was as good as any dog I have had with regards retrieving, but then I trained him like a Lab because at that time I did a lot of wildfowl shooting around Lough Neagh; also Gramhey Boy who won quite a few Open Stakes.

Q: If you didn't have GSPs which breed would you have?

A: Probably a Labrador, but I have great respect for all gun dog breeds and I love to see good dogs at the top of their game.

Q: On what grounds do you train

open mountain / heather ground.

Q: What is your favourite Trial ground and why?

A: Ballincorr, Co Wicklow. Not only is it a beautiful estate, I have been lucky enough to win on a good few occasions.

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

A: The majority of the trials are run on partridge and pheasants, so either.

Q: What would your advice be to anyone who wanted to get into trialling HPR breeds?

A: Go for it, but be prepared to put the real hard work in. Even great dogs need a lot of hard work. I would always encourage anyone to get involved in trialling. Even you're not in the awards, I always think it is fantastic to take part. I would say it is getting easier now to make your dog a FTCh with the recent introduction of green stars at pointing tests. I disagree with this and think a dog should obtain all points in field trials.

Q: Apart from your involvement in training dogs and judging you are well known for having given a lot back through an involvement in clubs and events. Please list the



Gramhey Boy and Gramhey Kerry Island.

and what do you like about them?

A: I normally train around my own farming ground where I live. It is mostly flat ground, rough in areas, but I like to mix my training from time to time and have to travel to find more

highlights in this for you and some of the low points.

A: I have been a member of my own local gun club for years and am presently the chairperson. I am particularly proud of the club, as it is cross community. I am also a member of the German Pointer Club of Ireland. I have also taken part, years ago, in HPR demonstrations at game fairs - Shanes Castle and Ballywalter.

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

A: Outside country sports, I like to watch and follow GAA and Rugby.

Any other comments you would like to make?

A: A big thank you to IRISH COUNTRY SPORTS and COUNTRY LIFE magazine!



Advice to would-be competitors - 'go for it but be prepared to put in some real work!'

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