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UNTIL 8th March 2013

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Cover: From a painting
'Woodcock in Snow'
by John R Moore

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

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

Country Sports and Country Life

Rol Comment

Another pheasant season has started in the Republic and, as the mainstay of many shooters, it will be a busy few months for many men and women around the country. I have had a couple of days out so far and, as usual, the results have been mixed as regards the bag but not as regards the company. I haven't shot on a driven shoot for many years and, as I get older, I enjoy the days out around the fields more than ever. North County Dublin is a magical place for me, as I was brought up on the edge of a much smaller Dublin in the fifties and I can still find enough land to shoot safely within a couple of miles of the urban sprawl which gives me a certain satisfaction. We all need to remember to shoot safely and to respect the countryside and especially when we are near cities, towns or housing estates. Many people moved into rural Ireland during the building boom with a somewhat hazy idea of the rural idyll and, unfortunately, little or no knowledge of either the countryside or country ways and sports which has created difficulties for shooters and other who use the fields.

I know that I have sung this particular song for many years and I make no apology for doing so again as in these more recessionary days, it may be just the time to invite the newcomers to enjoy your sports and pastimes when they have extra time on their hands. Most field sports can be reasonably cheap to enjoy and it won't cost you much to invite what will hopefully become a keen man or women to expand our numbers. Hunting, shooting and even some forms of angling may be seen in other countries as elitist and well beyond the reach of the 'ordinary' man or



woman. Not so in Ireland, where there has long been a tradition of huntin' shootin' and fishin' across society and we should be careful not to loose this valuable asset to 'chequebook' sporting.

I have also seen the opening meet of the Tara Harriers season in County Meath with their chairman, George Briscoe welcoming us all to his lawn meet in his seventieth season. As always it was a pleasant day with lots of good company, fine horses and handsome hounds under the hand of joint master and huntsman, Henry Smith. It is a very long time since I mounted up but they have a number of what I may best describe as 'more senior members' who can still show some fine riding and are keen

to encourage youngsters into the world of hunting the hare and the good manners of the hunting field. These are the values which we need to pass on if we are to be true to our sports. Remember, we are custodians of the countryside and its sports and we must hand them on in the best possible state we can.

One last sally and it's on the long running subject of Firearms Licensing which will affect many shooters in the Republic before the season is much older. While renewals have been improved with much of the information that you have given three years ago included, there is some concern that sending such possibly sensitive information through the post in a very obvious envelope is not as secure as it might be. The authorities haven't quite marked it 'Firearms Renewal,' but they might as well have done so! I trust my postman, and I'm sure all of his colleagues are just as trustworthy, but post has been known to be stolen or fall into the wrong hands – and then what happens?

Philip Lawton
ROI Editor

Country Sports and Country Life

Comment

Many readers will be aware of the controversial move by WH Smiths to effectively ban the sale of shooting magazines to young people by deploying a 'till check' at the checkout. Too young to shoot - too young to buy a shooting magazine it seemed. So we know what's good for you.

Now of course if you wanted to buy a gaming magazine with graphic details of nuclear warfare where people competed in a bid to end life as we know it.....well that would be fine supposedly. WH Smiths would apparently see no problem in selling those. And what about a youngster who was a car enthusiast? Obviously if they were under 17 then they would not have a licence and could not drive. Would the WH Smiths policy swing into force and stop the sale of the offensive magazine before impregnating a fertile mind with thoughts of miles per gallon, four by fours - not to mention Formula One racing? Well, no would be the answer it seems. Too young to drive eh! That will be £3.50 please!

Such idiotic policy from WH Smiths got a volatile response in the sporting press not least in the letters pages. Not on and something must be done they said and there was a stream of complaints with a Facebook campaign as well.

The Facebook campaign founder James Reynolds brings us up to date: "Although we currently suspect the policy may have been retracted, WH Smiths is still intent on denying us any confirmation to this effect. My primary concern is that at this stage WH Smiths will try to appease us, by temporarily retracting the policy whilst everyone is being proactive, yet not confirming or denying in any public statement to this effect, then quietly reintroducing the policy as interest dies down. The voice of British shooting must stay strong at this time. It is absolutely imperative that now more than ever we come together collectively and let our voice be heard."

Reynolds added: "If our voice, as it has been, can continue to be sustained, WH Smiths will not be in a position where they can continue to ignore an ever growing, campaigning, boycotting customer base. We will not rest until WH Smiths ceases its conduct, and releases a public statement to the effect that all till prompts and age restrictions on shooting periodicals have been removed. Once again I must ask too much of all supporters of the



cause and of the petition write to WH Smiths to this effect, questioning their policy and their motives. Far more important than this are store visits, we need a constant stream of information on what is happening in store daily from dedicated individuals, whether it be the result of a talk with a manager, or simply putting shooting magazines through tills to check for prompts, while explaining to the cashier what you are doing." The Facebook campaign page is www.facebook.com/WHsmithsRetractPolicyOnSaleOfShootingMagazines

On another issue, I see from Countryside Alliance Ireland that amendments were tabled in the Animal Health and Welfare Bill 2012 in the name of Thomas Pringle, Independent TD for Donegal South West, calling for the prohibition of hare coursing, the use of dogs for hunting, the hunting of stags, the hunting of foxes and the shooting of wild birds amongst others.

Outraged by such an unwarranted attack on Ireland's country sports and the rural way of life, CAI stressed it was vital that the country sports community stood united to defeat the threats and urged everyone to contact Mr Pringle to let him know their opposition. Country sports in Ireland, they said, was a vital part of the economy something it appeared that this TD did not fully grasp, never mind the fact that many thousands take part in the activities he seemed to want to ban. I also understand that HAI chairman Philip Donnelly was also very active on the issue and that Mr Pringle was inundated with emails etc.

The result now seems to be that this TD is distancing himself from the amendments as he is now saying that as the only member of the technical group who was also a member of the Joint Oireachtas Committee on Agriculture, Food and the Marine, any member of the technical group who wished to submit amendments could do so through his name, as the sponsor of the amendment/s. He said that numerous amendments had been submitted under his name, but none of which came from him. So well done to everyone for taking such swift and effective action.

Have a great sporting season, a very Merry Christmas and a happy New Year to you all.

Paul Pringle
Northern Editor

New disease could spell the end for the common ash

The Woodland Trust is calling for an immediate mandatory ban across the UK on the import of ash trees in a last-chance bid to help prevent a destructive disease becoming established in the country. The fungus, called *Chalara fraxinea*, causes leaf loss and crown dieback, and can lead to tree death. The Trust warns that it has already resulted in the loss of 90 per cent of ash trees in Denmark and is becoming widespread throughout central Europe.

Ash is one of the most common trees in Northern Ireland hedgerows. This traditional woodland species is excellent for biodiversity, and provides exceptional firewood. The pale dense timber is used for making furniture, hurley sticks and snooker cues.

The Trust believes the Forestry Commission's supportive response to the horticultural trade industry's voluntary ban on ash imports is essentially too little too late; and is calling for the Forestry Commission in Great Britain and the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development in Northern Ireland to put compulsory bans in place. Without immediate action the dieback of ash could become the new Dutch elm disease, causing widespread destruction to one of our most common native broadleaf trees.

Norman Starks, UK operations director at the Woodland Trust, said: "This is not the time for weak ineffective voluntary embargoes; we are calling on governments across the UK to put in place an immediate and compulsory ban on imported ash before it's too late. Already the sector is a year late in this voluntary ban, and the longer we wait in compulsorily banning the import of ash and preventing the further spread of ash dieback, the closer we are to seeing a UK landscape without ash trees. The Woodland Trust will no longer plant imported ash trees."

Patrick Cregg, the Trust's director in Northern Ireland, said: "We are calling for the Minister for Agriculture, Michelle O'Neill, to put a compulsory ban on imports to Northern Ireland from mainland Europe. However, this will only be effective if the Republic of Ireland does likewise. As an island we need to close our borders to this disease and we're appealing to the Minister to use her influence to request a similar ban in the Republic."

"To date, thankfully, there are no confirmed reports of the disease in Northern Ireland and we need to keep it this way. However young trees with the fungus have been found in six nurseries and four recently planted sites in England and Scotland. And if this disease takes hold, the cost and safety implications regarding the removal of infected ash trees will be huge."



*Browning of ash leaf tip caused by Chalara fraxinea fungus.
© Crown copyright photo courtesy of the Forestry Commission.*

Norman Starks continued: "Many of our tree diseases have originated from imported species and in some cases, for example *Phytophthora ramorum* which is wiping out larch trees across the UK, it's a battle that is already in full swing. We are in a position to stop this war in its tracks before it has a chance to take a hold. It is also an opportunity for the UK industry to capitalise on this and grow disease-free UK ash trees for the UK market." To find out more visit www.forestry.gov.uk/chalara

O'Neill and McEntee agree common position on ash wood imports

In early November in Armagh, forestry Ministers Michelle O'Neill and Shane McEntee TD agreed further restrictions on the importation of ash into Ireland.

Commenting on recent reports about the disease in England, and continental Europe Michelle O'Neill said: "We must do everything possible and sensible to prevent ash dieback reaching our shores. The threat is so serious that Minister McEntee and I have agreed to bring in additional measures to prevent imports of infected ash timber and firewood."

Minister McEntee said: "Scientific advice is that the movement of ash timber is a possible pathway of infection, albeit of lower risk than for plants, which we both banned last week. Even though the risk is lower, the consequences of infection are so bad that we have to take any risk very seriously."

The Ministers discussed their recent meetings with stakeholders who regularly import ash wood from infected areas. In view of the information gathered at these meetings, the Ministers said: "We believe

that the threat from the disease is imminent and we need to strengthen the legislation now by bringing wood within the scope of the controls. Officials north and south will now work over the weekend drafting further legislation to provide a proportionate response to the threat. We agree that an absolute ban is impracticable, but we believe that there are treatments of wood that will reduce the risk substantially." The Ministers agreed that the legislation would close the door for disease to be introduced on wood.



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Political Update

Party Conferences

Countryside Alliance Ireland (CAI) has attended the UUP, SDLP & DUP party conferences in recent weeks. As a rural campaigning organisation, we ensure our members interests are well represented on the political stage and the conferences are an excellent forum to allow us to do just that.



Lyall Plant and First Minister Rt. Hon. Peter Robinson MLA.

We spoke with many of the elected representatives and briefed them on current matters of interest as well as reaffirming the many benefits that country sports bring to the rural way of life.



Paul Givan MLA (Chair, Justice Committee) & Lyall Plant



Ashley Graham CAI, Alex Attwood MLA (Environment Minister) and David Agnew, CAI.

As the only country sports organisation in attendance at the conferences, CAI did not leave the parties in any doubt; we will continue to vigorously campaign for and defend the issues that directly affect our members, their country sports and the rural way of life.

COUNTRYSIDE ALLIANCE IRELAND

Love the countryside

Lobbying and Legislation

At the time of going to press, we can advise you of the following:

Tail docking exemption – CAI is delighted that after a long and hard fought campaign the Minister for Agriculture and Rural Development, Michelle O'Neill, confirmed there will be exemptions from the tail docking ban, for certain types of working dog when the final provision within the Welfare of Animals Act 2011 is enacted on 1 January 2013.

The Welfare of Animals (Dog Breeding Establishments) Regulations (NI) 2012 – CAI attended a stakeholder meeting at Stormont on 18 September 2012 and we await further developments.

Firearms Licensing (Northern Ireland) – CAI responded to the consultation on the proposals relating to changes to firearms licensing. A meeting for firearms dealers was held on 18 September in relation to the proposals, prior to our written submission on 20 September. This proved to be a useful exercise which allowed CAI to gauge the dealers' views and concerns. We shall continue to work closely with the Department of Justice, BASC and the Gun Trade Guild NI and will keep you updated.

Marine Plan (NI) – CAI was invited to a Ministerial Brief and subsequent workshop in respect of the implementation of proposed NI Marine Bill. There are many issues of concern to CAI, however, we are engaging fully to represent the views of our members.

Firearms Licensing (Republic of Ireland) – CAI continues to work closely with the NASRPC (National Association of Sporting Rifle and Pistol Clubs), Firearms Policy Unit of An Garda Síochána and the Crime Division of the Department of Justice to find an amicable solution to the current problems with renewals of centre fire pistols for target shooting.

Members' Events

Foxford's Opener to the Season

Foxford Gun Club, in County Mayo, started the pheasant shooting season this year with the 2nd Sean Wallace Memorial shoot on the opening day, 1st November. Sean Wallace was Foxford's club secretary when he passed away last year and the Wallace family kindly presented the prizes for the memorial shoot.



Peter Moore being presented with his prize by the Wallace Family.

The prize-giving ceremony was held in Bourke's Bar, Foxford and the first prize, of the Sean Wallace Shield and a supply of Massbrook dog

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COUNTRYSIDE NEWS

food, was awarded to Peter Moore for the best mixed bag (that included pheasant, woodcock, snipe, teal, and a pigeon). Foxford Gun Club would like to thank their sponsors; Jon Binley of Massbrook Dog Foods and Bourke's Bar, Foxford.

Rathcormac Gun Club and the Temple Street 4x4 Challenge for Charity 2012

Rathcormac Gun Club entered two teams in this year's Temple Street 4 x 4 Challenge which took place on the 6th & 7th of October starting in Buncrana, Co. Donegal. The challenge is a driving and navigational event with off road sections around varied landscape in Ireland's hidden corners. It's essentially a fund-raising treasure hunt, a mystery tour testing observation and navigation skills, with all the 'treasure' going to Temple Street Children's Hospital. Rathcormac Gun Club were awarded first place on the Saturday with Liam O' Sullivan and Micheal Howard, with Colman Howard and Finbarr Quirke taking the overall winners trophy; a fantastic achievement for the club.



(l/r) Robert Archibald and Jonathan Crozier main organisers along with Emma Horgan of Temple Street Children's Hospital presenting the trophies to the overall winners Colman Howard and Finbarr Quirke.

Temple Street Children's Hospital and Rathcormac Gun Club would like thank all those who sponsored them for this event.

Lead Shot (R O I)

As the debate on lead shot rages on, CAI has written to Mr Jimmy Deenihan TD (Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht) urging him to take action, for R of I to comply with the EU guidelines on banning lead shot on wetlands. CAI has stressed the potentially detrimental consequences (i.e. a complete ban) for all responsible sporting shooters if action is not taken.

Countryside Alliance Ireland has comprehensive experience on dealing with this issue as we worked very closely with the Department of the Environment in Northern Ireland (DOE) to develop legislation to implement the guidelines which came into effect in Northern Ireland on 1 September 2009. The legislation in Northern Ireland deems the use of lead shot as site specific and CAI would be keen to see this approach adopted in the Republic; in effect an All-Ireland policy which would ensure consistency throughout the island of Ireland and reduce the potential for ambiguity.

Irish Red Grouse Association - CAI Conservation Awards 2012

Countryside Alliance Ireland (CAI) hosted a very enjoyable function at the Maldron Hotel, Portlaoise on Wednesday 14th November 2012 to present the inaugural annual CAI Conservation Project of the Year Award. This Award was announced at the IRGA Conference at Moate, County Westmeath in November of last year by Marian Harkin, M E P and consists of perpetual trophy plus a €500 cheque for the winning project.

Atkinson Brothers, suppliers of vermin control equipment throughout the country, sportingly stepped in to present equipment to the value of €250 for the second placed award and the Irish Red Grouse Association presented the third placed project with a cheque for €100.

Chairman, Vincent Flannely, welcomed the large gathering to an



Walter Phelan and Pat Warner presenting John O'Halloran with 1st prize sponsored by CAI.

historic night. He congratulated this year's award winners, but added that the real winners were Irish red grouse and stated his delight that the IRGA had achieved so much in two years. Vincent thanked the Committee for their great dedication, CAI for their continued support and encouragement, Atkinson Brothers for their sponsorship and in particular Pat Warner and National Parks & Wildlife Service for their support, advice and great co-operation. Walter Phelan, who presented the first placed award on behalf of CAI (along with Pat Warner, NPWS), wanted to endorse everything good that had been said about IRGA.

The award winners were:

First place: Clifden Red Grouse Conservation Group (represented by John O'Halloran)

Second place: Keadeen Red Grouse Project (represented by Seamus O'Neill)

Third place: Peterswell/Kilchreest Gun (represented by John Leech)

Ash Dieback Disease – Chalara fraxinea

There have now been confirmed cases of Ash Dieback Disease in both Northern Ireland and the Republic.

Forest owners, forest nursery staff and members of the public are asked to be vigilant for the disease and report (with photographs if possible), any sites where there are concerns about unusual ill health in ash to:

ROI email - forestprotection@agriculture.gov.ie tel – 01 6072651
www.agriculture.gov.ie

NI email - dardhelpline@dardni.gov.uk tel - 0300 200 7847
www.dardni.gov.uk

For detailed information visit www.caireland.org

Visitor's Firearm Permit (Northern Ireland) - Change of Documentation Requirement for Applicants

An amendment to The Firearms (Northern Ireland) Order 2004 (Amendment) Regulations 2012 comes into effect on 29 November 2012. Previously, applicants had to submit their original European Firearms Pass when applying for a Visitor's Firearm Permit. However, as of 29 November, applicants may submit a copy instead. This news is warmly welcomed by Countryside Alliance Ireland. For more information – www.caireland.org

As we say goodbye to 2012 ...

On behalf of Countryside Alliance Ireland, may I thank you all for your support throughout the year. I would also like to take this opportunity to publicly thank my team for their continued hard work; 2012 provided both challenges and rewards in equal measure and I have no doubt that 2013 will once again keep us busy. To keep up to date all year round with CAI's news go to www.caireland.org and sign up to our e-route newsletter – email info@caireland.org and type 'subscribe' in the subject. It just remains for me to wish you all 'A Very Merry Christmas and a Happy, Peaceful and Prosperous New Year.'

Lyall Plant, Chief Executive, Countryside Alliance Ireland

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Big Garden Bird Watch

The RSPB Big Garden Birdwatch is a chance for everyone to get involved in simple conservation: we encourage you to count the birds in your garden, park, patio or playground for one hour and submit your results. These results help the RSPB spot problems, but more importantly, they are also the first step in taking action to help save our threatened wildlife.

The results from this year's Big Garden Bird Watch showed a dramatic change in the usual suspects: starling sightings were down 79.3%, song thrush down 68.7%, house sparrow down 55.3% and blackbirds 36%. But other species are enjoying a huge increase, wood pigeon sightings soared by 840%, collared dove 369.5%, coal tit by 263%. Wren and magpie sightings increased too.



Starling sightings were down by over 79% (photo courtesy of RSPB Images)

Findings from this garden bird survey, which is the world's biggest, show a recovery of small bird species after the two previous tough winters and also highlight how Northern Ireland's garden bird population is distinct from that of the UK - Northern Ireland has more birds per garden. The survey provides a leader board of the most-sighted birds which has shown that many small members of the finch and tit families are the most common visitors to our gardens.

Northern Ireland's Top 20 birds 2012

Species	Average Rank	% of gardens
House Sparrow	1	79.3%
Starling	2	68.7%
Chaffinch	3	55.3%
Goldfinch	4	36%
Blue Tit	5	840%
Blackbird	6	369.5%
Great Tit	7	263%
Coal Tit	8	
Collared Dove	9	
Robin	10	

There are significant differences within Northern Ireland from region to region. More chaffinches and greenfinches are seen in the west with Fermanagh remaining the best place to see them, whilst chaffinches are top of the tree in Tyrone. Conversely, some larger species such as the song thrush, robin and blackbird have not been seen as often and in smaller numbers. This decrease raises questions of the welfare of these larger birds. Robins are down here from 8th to 10th and song thrushes from 19 to 22 nationally (42% drop).

"We present a different picture to the rest of the UK so it is essential that as many people as possible take part in this fun activity," says Ciara Friers RSPB. "The Big Garden Birdwatch is crucial to understanding more about how our wildlife is faring. It will take place 26-27 January 2013 and the more people involved, the more we can learn, encourage your family, friends and neighbours to take part, why not make a day of it and make 2013 the best ever Big Garden Birdwatch!"

For more information, please contact Ciara Friers Email Ciara.friers@rspb.org.uk or call 028 9049 1547



Top tips for a safe shooting season

With the start of the shooting season with us, it is a good idea to remember that safe shooting is of paramount importance. Here are some top tips from BASC, please pass this information onto anyone you shoot with.

1. Always make sure that you are aware of where other people are before you start shooting.
2. Never park vehicles behind the shooting line on driven or walk and stand shoots. Falling game can seriously damage motor cars.
3. Make sure you know where public footpaths and rights of way are before you start shooting - remember, people could walk into the shooting line.
4. Make sure you know where power lines are on your shoot, and don't shoot towards them.
5. Make sure you know where houses or other dwellings are near your shoot, and don't shoot towards them.
6. Never take low shots into woodland, hedges or high vegetation - you don't know what could be behind it.
7. If you must walk along with your gun loaded, make sure the gun is broken.
8. Make sure your gun is unloaded before you put it into your slip.
9. Never rest a loaded gun up against anything.
10. If in doubt - do not shoot.

Northern Ireland International Spaniel Team charity donations

Ken Lindsay, Captain of the Northern Ireland International Spaniel Team along with fellow team members Willie Edgar, Louis Rice and Derek Smith have kindly donated to two charities following two bereavements.

Unfortunately, some weeks before the Game Fair at Birr, two team members suffered bereavements. Willie Edgar's Mother, after a short illness, passed away in Newry Hospice and William Thompson suffered the loss of his beloved daughter Ellen after a long illness, when she died peacefully in hospital.

Ken Lindsay said: "We agreed that, if we won the International Test, we would donate the prize money to a charity which Willie Edgar and William Thompson would nominate. In the event, we did win and with the prize of £100 plus the balance remaining from Albert Titterington's generous sponsorship, a total of £160 was made available for the charities, of which £80 went to Newry Hospice and £80 to The Friends of Drumross, a day care centre which Ellen attended. Our thanks to Albert Titterington for making this possible."

And Cathy and William Thompson have added their personal thanks to Ken Lindsay and the International team for their generous donation to The Friends of Drumross, Newtownabbey, in memory of their beloved daughter Ellen.

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The 5th Great British Shooting Show now tops a massive 200,000 sq ft of Guns, Accessories & Services!

The British Shooting Show at Stoneleigh Park Exhibition Centre, Nr Kenilworth, Warwickshire, CV8 2LG will be held on Saturday 9th & Sunday 10th February 2013. The entire event covering a massive 200,000 sq ft, will have over 300 shooting related trade and information stands, including more than 80 specific gun retailers and gun manufacturers displaying and selling all the major international brands and custom builds.

International mix of all the major shotgun and rifle brands

It's a great opportunity to check out the full range of models and specifications from the world's leading shotgun brands. Cartridges will be on sale throughout the show with most of the retailers, plus great discount deals to be had with the specialist cartridges suppliers.

Shooting Aids & Accessories

Up your game by evaluating training aids and services and check out the vast range of accessories

Breaking Clays - Kit & Competitions

With a huge range of traps you'll be able to check out new systems and all the latest innovations. For some great shooting on the day get down to the BASC Clay Line for coaching, first time shooter introductions, Browning 50 Bird Sporting Competition with some serious cash prizes, Poolshoot, first round of the Star Shot

Championships, Browning Rabbit Mania and Have-A-Go with the muzzle loaders.

Rifle Focus - A Special Feature Zone

The British Shooting Show will include a specialist Rifle Focus Zone in Gunmakers Hall 3. Add to this everything for ammunition and reloading, plus a special spotlight on the UK pistol shooting scene. Here you can discover more about long barrelled revolvers, semi-automatic long barrelled

pistols, modern nitro powder percussion revolvers and of course shooting with historic replica black powder percussion pistols.

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Save money, get priority parking and get fast show entry by buying advance tickets now - visit the website or telephone + 44 (0) 1472 241439. For more information visit www.theshootingshow.co.uk

NARGC calls for criminal investigation into shooting of a Hen Harrier in Co. Kerry

Ireland's largest game shooting organisation, the National Association of Regional Game Councils (NARGC), will be supporting full investigation into the shooting of a Hen Harrier at a winter roost site in Co. Kerry.

NARGC Director, Des Crofton said: "The NARGC condemns the illegal killing of any protected species as being not only irresponsible, but damaging to the interests of all responsible law-abiding firearms owners in Ireland. Consequently, the NARGC will be supporting the Gardaí and the NPWS with their investigations and will be calling for the prosecution of those involved as well as the revocation of their firearms. The vast majority of Irish firearms owners are responsible law-abiding citizens and would not have a licensed firearm in their possession if they were not. Any right-minded firearms owner will find this illegal act completely irresponsible and blatantly unacceptable."

The NARGC urges anyone with further information to contact their local NPWS ranger or the Garda Síochána.



Kieran Young organiser of the Mourne Terrier & Lurcher Show presenting a cheque for over £1300 to MacMillan Cancer support in memory of the late Eddie McKinstry. Eddie was a great whippet enthusiast and a keen supporter of working dog shows.

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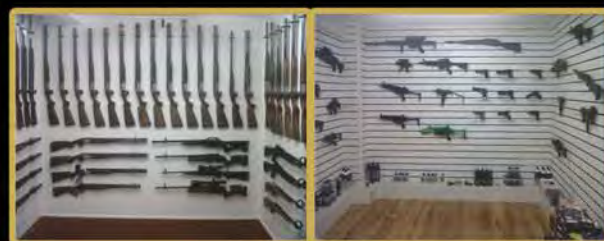
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NARGC welcomes changes to the Open (Hunting) Seasons Order



Moves welcomed to halt curlew decline

Ireland's largest game shooting and conservation organisation, the National Association of Regional Game Councils (NARGC), is delighted that Minister Jimmy Deenihan TD has acceded to our written request made on the 24th of August 2012 to him calling for the removal of the curlew from the open seasons order of species that can be hunted in the Republic of Ireland.

Although the curlew is an abundant migratory species in Ireland, recent evidence suggests that there are likely to be fewer than 200 breeding pairs, representing a 96% population decline of the species in Ireland. A European management plan for curlew has recognised that its widespread decline has been caused by the fragmentation and loss of habitat, compounded by unsustainable levels of predation during the breeding season.

Minister for Arts, Heritage and Gaeltacht, Jimmy Deenihan TD stated: "This decision will be welcomed by conservationists and hunters. It is expected that further research on this and other bird species by way of Species Action Plans will assist in understanding the factors involved in their decline."

The NARGC is also pleased that Minister Deenihan TD has taken action to remove female red deer from the open (hunting) seasons order in County Kerry.

According to the NARGC Director, Des Crofton: "This decision will help preserve the unique Kerry red deer population, which unfortunately has become the victim of unscrupulous poaching in recent years." Mr. Crofton added: "The NARGC looks forward to working with the interagency deer policy group under Shane McEntee TD, Minister of State at the Department for Agriculture, Food and the Marine in the development of a national deer management strategy."

Speaking at the NARGC AGM in Co. Laois last weekend, Minister McEntee TD stated: "As the main hunting organisation in the state, we view the NARGC as a key stakeholder in respect of deer management policy development. The issue of deer management has been gaining in significance, right across the agricultural sector over the past few years."

A Great Day at the Newry Hunt RDA Ride

Sunday 14th October turned out to be an excellent afternoon for the Newry Hunt and Riding for the Disabled Association ride, with the sun shining brightly and providing a very welcome change from the rain. The ride was set in the picturesque surroundings of the Mourne Mountains, just outside Rostrevor. A large crowd turned out to support the Newry branch of the Riding for the Disabled Association and all contributions were greatly appreciated.

There were fences to suit all levels and it provided an excellent opportunity to school both young and experienced horses. Those riders who wanted a more relaxing afternoon enjoyed the riverside trek which took in some breathtaking scenery and provided a perfect setting for those on a lead rein.

The Riding for the Disabled Association has been supporting people with disabilities, both mental and physical, for nearly forty years. It can provide both children and adults with the opportunity to reach new goals, improve their social skills and experience animals and the great outdoors. Horse riding can improve self-confidence beyond recognition and develop useful life skills; therefore it is an extremely worthwhile charity.

Sunday's ride raised £405 which will go towards buying new equipment so the participants can enjoy a wider variety of activities. The Newry branch of the Riding for the Disabled Association would like to thank Rostrevor Holidays and Newry Hunt for the use of the course and especially all those who came to support the ride. To donate to the Newry branch, please contact Philomena on 07714 990910. All donations would be greatly appreciated. Keep up to date with all their events on the Newry RDA Facebook page.



Pictured are James Bryson from Newry Hunt and Philomena Fitzgerald from the Newry RDA.



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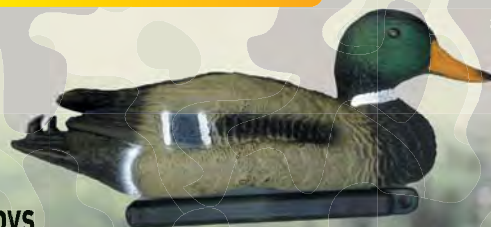
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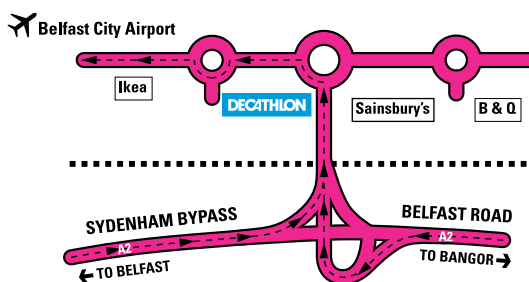


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International visitors leave Ireland with positive impression despite recession

Ardee Sports Company recently hosted an international delegation from the global sports shooting industry, which brought business people from all over the world to Ireland. Delegates from the USA, Russia and Australia visited Co. Louth as part of a seven day visit to Ireland.

Barnaul, a town in Russia, 4 hours flying time east of Moscow, is home to Barnaul Ammunition, Russia's largest ammunition manufacturer. Each year representatives from this company set up base in Europe for a week and invite their international customers to come and do business. This year, at the invitation of Ardee Sports Company, they set up base in Dublin and visitors from many parts of the world came to Ireland to secure business. One such visitor was the delegation from Illinois, USA representing Zanders Sporting Goods – one of the biggest sporting firearms and ammunition distributors in North America.

When the business was complete, the Brennan family in conjunction with Matthews Coach Hire went to Dublin and brought the remaining group of visitors to Ardee to visit the premises of Ardee Sports Company. Here they received a warm welcome from the team at Ardee Sports, a tour of the premises and also enjoyed shooting clay pigeons at the facilities on offer. The group of visitors were then taken to Darver Castle for lunch where they were also treated to a tour of the castle by owner Aidan Carville.

David Brennan, Managing Director of Ardee Sports, thanked the delegation for choosing Ireland as their business location. He also went on to say: "When I first started doing business with Soviet countries in the early 80s, the biggest obstacle was the Cold War. Today it is a great honour to be at the same table as Russian and



International visitors to Ardee pictured with Ardee Sports company personnel. Pictured front row (l-r) Denise Halpenny, Rachael Brennan, Michael Sutton (USA), Zinaida and Victor Yashin (Russia), Mavis and David Brennan (managing director), Pilan Maxwell (Australia), Tony Curran, Carol Murphy and Raymond Matthews. Back row (l-r) Eddie Gibney, Peter Byrne, Yancey Harrington (USA), Steve Denning (USA), Iakov Altergot (Russia), John Maxwell (Australia), Evgeny Kuppa (Russia), Paul Kelly (firearms dealer) and Martin Brennan.

American business people and to be able to freely transact business; twenty years ago this would not have been possible. True peace can be achieved by members of the international business community travelling to other countries and continents to establish commercial relationships to mutual satisfaction."

In the days following the visit, Ardee Sports Company received numerous correspondences of thanks at the hospitality received and business achieved in Ireland from the visiting companies.

Update on fish stocks in Lough Neagh by DCAL Minister Carál Ní Chuilín

The Minister said that DCAL has information on stock levels of eels in Lough Neagh and salmon migrating to some rivers off the Lough in line with commitments to the EU Eel Management Plans and the North Atlantic Salmon Conservation Organisation (NASCO).

Records conclude that salmon populations in the Rivers Maine and Blackwater, which both flow into Lough Neagh, are failing to consistently achieve conservation limits and are outside safe biological limits.

Scientific advice received from the International Council for the Exploration of the Sea (ICES) concerning the European eel, concludes that the European eel stock as a whole is outside safe biological limits. Robust estimates of what represents 40% of pristine eel escapement for Lough Neagh have been developed as required by the EC eel regulation.

She advised that the status of the population of migratory trout in Lough Neagh is unknown at present. She added that her Department has commissioned the Agri-Food and Biosciences Institute (AFBI) to produce a trout stock status report for the DCAL area, including Lough Neagh and its catchment. This is currently in draft form and will be published in due course.

There is currently no data on populations of pollan, roach, rudd, bream, rudd/roach/bream hybrids, pike, perch, tench, stone loach, gudgeon, minnow and stickleback which make up coarse fish present in Lough Neagh.

AFBI has also engaged a PhD student to carry out other research on Lough Neagh that, when completed, will provide information on the location and population levels of fish species in the Lough. The results of this will be published in due course.

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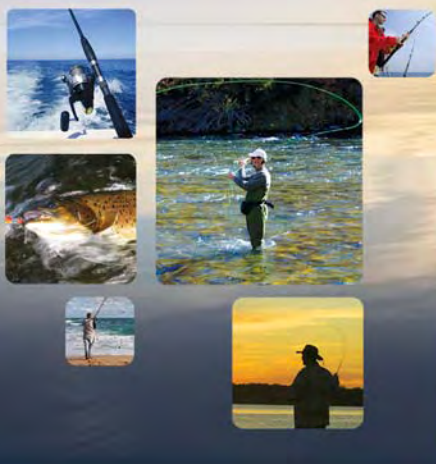


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John R Moore – Artist

Over the last four issues we have featured the works of John R Moore, from Cullybackey, Co Antrim on the cover of our magazine. From the iconic painting of the 'Salmon on the Glendun River', via 'The Massereene Hound' and a very 'Regal Stag' to our current cover of 'Woodcock in Snow' John has created an uncanny likeness of his subject. A self taught artist John's background in the family butchery business and as a keen naturalist from childhood have helped him have a rare understanding of the structure of animals and the nature of their habitats.



A visit to his website www.johnrmooreart.com will demonstrate to readers the wide range of his talent from birds of prey, through song and game birds, to foxes, horses, dogs and fish – he captures them all on canvas.

We have been delighted to have John exhibiting with us at the Great Game Fairs of Ireland in 2012 and even more delighted to work with him to raise funds for our sporting organisations. The 'Salmon on the Glendun River' painting which was the iconic image of our very successful 2012 'Year of the Salmon & Trout' theme with John's agreement was donated together with limited prints to FISSTA for their young anglers' programme, while limited edition prints from an earlier woodcock painting and limited edition prints from the current cover will both go to Larry Taaffe and the National Woodcock Association of Ireland. The framed No 1 print of the first woodcock painting by John commissioned by the magazine raised €850 for the woodcock association and with John's permission we intend to assist Larry again with donating a framed copy of the No1 print and the bulk of the limited edition. So if you like the painting give Larry a call to reserve your copy.

John sometimes has paintings in stock and will take commissions for virtually any bird or animal painting. He can be contacted via johnrmoore@gmail.com or by calling 028 25880856 or 07754591132

Hooked Live! returns to Citywest



Checking the fish stock at Citywest is Mark Ryan, Show Director.

Organiser Mark Ryan informs us that year's event on the weekend of 2nd & 3rd February 2013 will have a fantastic line up of angling talent and celebrities covering game, coarse and sea angling. This year's stars include Gordon from Hardy & Greys, Paul Young from Hooked on Fishing, Jim Hendrick from Probassfisher.com and Gary Bell from gbflyfish.com. APGA Ireland will be in attendance with a host of well-known Irish anglers, guides and fly tiers.

Mark said: "Hooked Live! is all about sport fishing and catching big fish. We have made every effort to bring you a top class line up of the best angling talent, guides, venues and tackle retailers who will be able to help you achieve your dream of catching the Big One."

Unique to Hooked Live! are our two lakes, which are well stocked with quality rainbow trout. Visitors can enter "The Big One" lake fishing Challenge and win fabulous prizes, or watch our expert demonstrators show off their skills with fly casting and lure demonstrations.

Visitors to Hooked Live! can also sit in on one of the many seminars presented by some of our top anglers or watch our fly tying demonstrations covering salmon, trout, pike and bass fishing.

At Hooked Live! we pride ourselves in bringing the visitor the latest and greatest in all things angling but with an emphasis on quality and innovation.

Co-located with Hooked Live! is the Sporting Gun Show where visitors can browse the exhibits featuring sporting guns, clothing and accessories. End of season bargains a-plenty.

For updates and a full programme of activity which will be published soon. www.hooked.ie

Weekend packages and group deals are available on our website. Why not stay over on Saturday night, meet all the celebrities and enjoy a feast of angling.

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Woodland Trust

The report details the many benefits, including financial benefits, of planting trees on unused areas of the farm. It includes case studies of local farmers who are already reaping the fruits of their tree planting efforts.

Farming is an important part of our economy, with around 27,000 farms in Northern Ireland covering around one million hectares of land. At a time of financial challenge, the Woodland Trust brings a refreshing message to farmers, citing woodland as a reliable, growing and valuable investment for the future.

The Woodland Trust is offering farmers and landowners all the advice they need to get their planting underway and has teamed up with Michelle O'Neill, Minister for Agriculture, to launch its new free colour booklet 'Trees for farms in Northern Ireland.'

The report details the many benefits of planting small areas of native trees on less productive parts of the farm and gives guidance on sources of funding. For a start, trees, woodland and hedgerows provide winter shelter and summer shade vital to the welfare and productivity of livestock. Trees also improve water quality and reduce the risk of flooding. And today, more and more landowners are planting for wood fuel, with two to three hectares of native woodland providing enough fuel to heat a typical farmhouse.

Included are case studies of three farmers who have planted trees in order to manage their farms more effectively, plus a foreword by renowned Ulster Farmers' Union President, Harry Sinclair.

Mr Sinclair said: "Whilst trees and farming can often be seen as contradictory and competing land uses, thoughtful use of trees on the farm can have real benefits in supporting good husbandry. There are good examples of where farmers have taken advantage of the grants available and have planted trees, making use of unproductive corners or strengthening hedges and shelter-belts. These are now reaping real benefits providing shelter and shade to livestock and crops, and wood fuel for the farmhouse or for sale."

Minister O'Neill added: "In line with Forest Service aims to promote economic and environmental benefits, provide recreational opportunities and to secure a steady expansion of tree cover, I am



Agriculture Minister Michelle O'Neill joins Patrick Clegg of the Woodland Trust to launch the Trust's new document 'Trees for farms in Northern Ireland.'

delighted to launch this booklet. Woodland is a growing and valuable investment for the future and I would encourage farmers to consider integrating tree planting in their farm business. The booklet includes good case studies about farmers who have already benefited from their forestry investment and I hope this will encourage others to consider tree planting which will complement our forestry strategy." The document is available to download from www.woodlandtrust.org.uk/farming

To request a hard copy, or to find out more, telephone 0845 293 5689

IRELAND ANGLING SHOW 2013

The Ireland Angling show will be back in Swords for it's 14th year, on the 16th & 17th of February 2013. The Ireland Angling Show, has become a major national event for Anglers throughout Ireland and the UK.

Mara Media have announced that the 2013 show will coincide with the Irish Specimen Fish Committee Awards Day, which will be held at the Bewleys Airport Hotel, Dublin on Sat 16th 2.30pm -

4.30pm With the Ireland Angling Show and Awards Day taking place over the same weekend, this should facilitate Anglers from around the country being able to attend both events.

New to the show for 2013 special guest and sea angling expert Mike Thrussell, no stranger to Irish waters, Mike will be sharing his knowledge and skill with demos and workshops. Bob Nudd MBE, another regular visitor to Irish waters, will also be part of the show team for 2013. Bob is well known as being one of the UK's greatest anglers,

with an extensive list of championship titles behind him

Returning for a third year will be the ever popular Hywel Morgan and his talented daughters

Yasmin and Tanya. Hywel is a world fly casting champion and has fished competitively around the world winning numerous titles. Hywel also has an impressive background in TV fishing shows. While professional guide-fly casting instructor and angling writer Paddy McDonnell will be giving some talks at the show on Fly Fishing for Salmon. A host of well know angling experts will also be available with demos and presentations on every aspect of Angling, Sea, Game and Coarse.

A huge selection of tackle and trade stands will offer products to suit every budget.

Mara Media would like to thank the angling community for their support throughout 2012 and their continued support in 2013.

www.irelandanglingexpo.ie



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Packed lunches and evening meals are available. There is also a wide selection of hotels, guesthouses, and B&Bs in the area, if that's your preference.

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To get full benefit from the session, a two-hour booking is advisable.

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Co. Kerry's red deer's international importance

Damian Hannigan of The Wild Deer Association of Ireland (WDAI) writes that the Association recently held a number of events in Killarney, Co. Kerry highlighting the international importance & current threats facing Co. Kerry's unique red deer herd.

Dr Ruth Carden, National Museum of Ireland and UCC gave a talk entitled 'Ireland's ancient red deer' to a large attendance on 20th October. Ruth's presentation followed an extensive study started in 2007, supported by a number of organisations and individuals including the WDAI. The study involved the comparison of DNA samples taken from Co. Kerry's red deer herd and comparing them against red deer DNA sample from various herds around the world along with ancient DNA from red deer bone and antler fragments found in caves in various parts of Ireland, these samples are believed to be thousands of years old. Ruth's research shows that Co. Kerry's red deer is in existence since Neolithic times more than 5,000 years ago, making them truly Irish and unique.

Poaching and threats

To sustain the genetic heritage of these unique and ancient red deer requires a population of between 600 - 1,000 animals. Current numbers are estimated to have fallen to below 500 with herds outside the Killarney National Park decimated in recent years by poaching and illegal trophy hunting, where the head is removed for taxidermy and the carcass dumped, despite red stags in Co. Kerry being protected. Furthermore the IUCN (World Conservation Union) Red List of threatened animals states that a population is threatened if it does not contain at least 1000 individuals capable of reproducing. The red deer in Co. Kerry would be considered as 'Near Threatened' and require immediate protection. Based on these facts and the feedback from our members who manage deer in Co. Kerry along with other stakeholders, we have been in communication with Minister Jimmy Deenihan in recent weeks, requesting the removal of red hinds in Co. Kerry from the 2012/13 Open Season Order.

Kerry's Red hinds to be removed from Open Season Order

On 22nd October, Minister Deenihan announced that red Hinds in Co. Kerry are to be removed from the 2012/13 Open Season Order. The removal of red deer from the Open Season Order will not alone protect their future as those who engage in such criminal activities as poaching and illegal trophy hunting do not adhere to Open Season Orders or indeed our wildlife laws. Until such time as meaningful data on red deer in Co. Kerry is available and an appropriate management plan is put in place to combat poaching, illegal trophy hunting, along with managing sika deer numbers and pet farms with other red deer species to ensure hybridisation does not take place, can we ensure the survival of these unique deer and maintain a balance between deer and local land uses.

Members of the Wild Deer Association of Ireland, who are licensed deer hunters, play an important role in the management of a sustainable deer herd in Co. Kerry and nationally. Comments of deer reaching 'unsustainable levels' or 'increasing deer populations' are unhelpful and contrary to the overwhelming view of those who actually manage deer and the 22nd October announcement by the Minister for responsibility of our deer herds. Others who know very little about deer ignore the poaching epidemic and threat to deer stalking for future generations, in favour of self gain and a populist view to non deer stalkers. Our objective is to 'promote and encourage efforts to improve the management and conservation of our deer population and its habitat' for future generations.

Red deer rut walk

On 21st October we held our annual red deer rut observation walk in the Killarney National Park. Our guide this year was Peter O'Toole, Conservation Ranger with NPWS, who has an extensive knowledge of Kerry's red deer based over 30 years working with deer. We had a large attendance from all regions along with representation from the

Northern Ireland branch of the British Deer Society. The event was very much a family event and thankfully the terrain suited all ages and those who indulged the previous night! Following a talk by Peter on the history of the deer within the Park, we were lucky to see some large stags at close quarters, who seemed to be enjoying the Kerry sun rather than getting down to the business of rutting.

Following our walk we completed a report with Seán Mac an tSíthigh for RTE and TG4 television on deer poaching and Co. Kerry's red deer, which aired on the main news bulletins on 22nd October. We are pleased to note that over 140 people attend both events from all backgrounds of deer management. We are only too aware of the harsh economic times many of our members find themselves in and, like all our events, both days were free of charge. Plans are already afoot for our Red Deer Rut Walk 2013! For future details on all our events 'like' us on our Facebook page and 'follow' on Twitter, or visit www.wilddeerireland.com/events



Some of the people who attended our red deer rut walk



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Cooperation Leads to Major Success for Irish Red Grouse on Boleybrack Mountain, North Leitrim

Cooperation between a local gun club, hill sheep farmers and wildlife groups is beginning to bear fruit in a small part of County Leitrim. The recent annual survey of the Boleybrack Red Grouse Project counted at least 85 grouse on Boleybrack Mountain this autumn. This compares to only three calling Red Grouse males encountered when the project first started in 2007.

The success behind the Boleybrack Red Grouse Project directly relates to the creative partnership between Glenfarne Gun Club, the National Association of Regional Game Councils (NARGC), the National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS), the Golden Eagle Trust, Coillte and local sheep farmers. Previous funding had come from the Heritage Council and NPWS. However, earlier this year a full-time Red Grouse Gamekeeper was employed on the project site through joint funding from the NPWS and the NARGC.

The annual survey results indicate that Red Grouse on Boleybrack have responded well to the active management of heather and the protection of breeding and roosting Grouse from fox and crow predation. Small scale notified and controlled burning, during the designated burning season, has improved the quality of the heather and replaced uncontrolled fires during the nesting season. The cooperation with the commonage owners and hill sheep farmers grazing the mountain has also been a key aspect of the success to date.

Despite the ongoing restoration of Red Grouse numbers on Boleybrack Mountain, the Irish Red Grouse population has collapsed by 50% in the last 30 years. This is down to several factors, including decades of damage to Irish bogs as a result of afforestation, agricultural intensification, predation and a lack of any management. The decline of Irish Red Grouse also coincides with the loss of many other threatened ground-nesting birds, such as the breeding Curlew.

Local people's outstanding success with upland management

Minister for the Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht, Jimmy Deenihan T.D., stated: "My Department's staff in NPWS have been working closely with the National Association of Regional Game Councils and Glenfarne Gun Club in a



Minister for the Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht, Jimmy Deenihan T.D., (centre) spotting grouse on Boleybrack with NARGC's Des Crofton (right).

conservation project that is a welcome success. Red Grouse have been in decline in Ireland for at least 100 years and have been the subject of legal action from the European Union against Ireland. Even more heartening than this success is the way it has been achieved and the way it has helped to build a bridge between the hunters, nature lovers, farmers and the local community. While conservation costs involve ongoing investment, the main resource here, which is the local people, have delivered outstanding success. I see this project as the standard for best practice in upland management, and I hope to build on it."

Des Crofton, Director of the National Association of Regional Game Councils (NARGC) said: "This remarkable community effort, on a relatively tight budget, may be another sign that slight and agreed management changes in Irish mountains could benefit farming, tourism, hunting and wildlife goals alike, in a more inclusive manner, whilst also recognising the fragility of upland heather areas. The success of this project has led to a unique partnership between stakeholders that are currently working together to ensure that appropriate agri-environmental measures are put in place for Red Grouse and other ground-nesting birds during CAP Reform negotiations."

Irish Cattle & Sheep Farmers Association

(ICSA) member and local sheep farmer Tommy Slevin said that: "Boleybrack's sheep farmers have developed a sense of ownership and pride in the mountain's Grouse, numbers of which have visibly increased as a result of this project." He also believes that the project brings wide-ranging benefits: "There has been a notable increase in the survival rate of new-born lambs due to predator management. Heather management provides good quality nutritious heather for sheep and local walkers are more conscientious about keeping dogs leashed thereby preventing them from worrying sheep. The presence of a gamekeeper on the hill can minimise the likelihood of sheep rustling, and provides an early warning to the farmer of any sick or straying sheep."

Senator Michael Comiskey, Seanad Spokesperson on Agriculture, Food and the Marine, stated that: "The Minister has indicated that this project, the first of its type in the country, could be used as a template for other areas and that is a true compliment to all those involved." He added: "I will be working with Minister Deenihan and Minister Covney to consider a new upland management scheme as part of the post 2014 CAP programme. A scheme such as this could be funded under Pillar 2 of the CAP and could be very effective for farmers, biodiversity and tourism in the Irish uplands."

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COUNTRYSIDE NEWS

Estate Salmon Fishery Newsletter 2012 season

Mount Falcon Fishery opened with a salmon for Sales Manager Shane Maloney. The fish was taken on worm as the water started to fall after a late April flood. With the June rain came the salmon, a mix of late run springers and grilse.

The June total from the Mount Falcon stretch of the Moy was 28. Amongst those who caught fish were the Philippe Kerbrat group from France, who had three fresh salmon. The Goode Party had good sport on Cunninghams in the last week in June, taking six fish of up to 10lb.

In July the floods brought an abundance of grilse and salmon into our beats, and in total 279 were taken for the month. The high clean water in the last two weeks of July meant that conditions were perfect for the fly. Those enjoying success with this method included, Martin and Maeve Davison 11 fish, Gary Perks 9 fish, and the Bill Whitwell party 26 fish.



During September the fishing was at times difficult, yet on other days the fish 'switched on' and anglers enjoyed some excellent fishing. The Martin party had excellent fishing over their three days. In total they caught 46 salmon.

September's total was 184 fish, with the season's closing total of 715 fish up by 112 on the 2011 total.

Season 2008 2009 2010 2011 2012 5 yr average Rod Catch 401 543 1069 603 715 667

Three Rivers update

2012 saw the launch of our Three Rivers package, enabling anglers to come and stay in a self-catering lodge for four nights and have the opportunity to fish exclusive private fly waters within easy reach of Mount Falcon.



Chris Ryan

Some good quality, well made fish were taken during this period, as can be seen in the above Photo of Chris Ryan with a 9lbs fish on the fly from the wall pool.

August began well but as the month progressed fish became a little harder to catch. The Whitwell Party rounded off their weeks fishing with a catch of 32 salmon. The Jordan family had 25 salmon for their stay, including 11 fish on the fly.

Nick Fisher (Channel 4 – Screaming Reels) enjoyed a family break at Mount Falcon and both he and his two eldest sons all had salmon from the Mount Falcon water. The Uriate Party from Spain worked hard to take 19 fish for their three day visit in the last few days of the month august total was 204 fish.



A good Owenduff sea trout is released.

Spring fishing on the Erriff, Owenduff and Carramore Lake was exceptionally good. Each of these waters yielded good spring fish to our guests. Quality sea-trout were also present on the Owenduff and in total 42 salmon and 46 Seat trout were taken by Mount falcon guests.

The quality of the fish and the fishing is matched only by the wild setting through which the rivers flow.

For more information please contact
Stuart Price, Fishery Manager.
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See Page 35 for SUBSCRIPTION FORM



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3 Rivers Spring Salmon - Fly Fishing Package (May/June)

4 nights in one of Mount Falcon's Luxury Self catering Lodges with 3 days Salmon fishing.

River Erriff (1 Day)
Carrowmore or Beltra Lake (1 Day)
River Owenduff (1 Day)
(Includes boat & ghillie for lake fishing) ONLY €630 pps

3 Rivers Summer Salmon - Fly Fishing Package (July/Aug/Sep)

4 nights in one of Mount Falcon's Luxury Self catering Lodges with 3 days Salmon fishing.

River Erriff (1 Day)
River Moy M/F (1 Day)
River Owenduff (1 Day)
(Includes boat & ghillie for lake fishing) ONLY €680 pps

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Irish Fly Fair & International Angling Show 2012 Galway Bay Hotel, November 10th & 11th 2012

Irish Countrysports & Country Life magazine attended the fair to promote our 2013 Great Game Fairs of Ireland and Ireland's premier hunting, shooting and fishing magazine. It was great to see most visitors to the fair walking round with one or two back issues of the magazine. We know that our participation at the greatest number of events where we meet

our customers certainly pays dividends in underpinning our premier position in the market with both our magazine and our events.

This year the fair had changed organizer with Stevie Munn taking over from Mara Media. I felt attendance was similar to previous years but Stevie had put together a

better mix of exhibits; a good programme of seminars, displays and demonstrations; a huge number of international fly tyers and overall created a very pleasant atmosphere. So overall Stevie's hard work paid off and he can look forward to developing the show further in 2013. Well done Stevie!



Organiser Stevie Munn in the Fly Tying Hall.



Irish Countrysports and Country Life & the Great game Fairs of Ireland had two stands.



A very active salmon preservation team - Noel Carr from FISSTA with some of the team from NSN who were in attendance.



Arthur Greenwood and the APGAI team ran a superb junior fly tying programme.



Stevie Munn with Suzanne Campion Head of Business Development IFI.



Mark Patterson, brand manager Ireland for Loop tackle with Johnny & Keith Creelman from Outdoor & Country Sports, Coleraine who will be playing a big part in the Great Game Fairs of Ireland 2013.

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Sponsored by Connolly's RED MILLS. Meet at 07.30 a.m. at Glenarm Estate Car Park, Glenarm, Ballymena, Co. Antrim (Both Days)

Friday 28th & Saturday 29th December 2012

Judges: Mr. David Lisett & Mr. Tim Crothers Referee: Mr. Danny O'Neill
Entry Fee: €50.00 per dog. Entry should be with the Hon. Sec. on or before 16th December 2012. Applications for Entry Forms are invited from owners of suitably qualified dogs. (Owners of Dogs qualified after 16th December should contact the Hon. Sec. by phone). All enquiries and entries to: Thomas O'Connor, Tel: 353 (0) 852020171

In the event of less than 17 qualified dogs wishing to enter the Championship, then only one day will be necessary, i.e. Friday 28th December 2012. Competitors only will be notified should this be necessary (See Regulation No. 23).

SPECTATORS ARRIVING LATE MAY NOT BE PERMITTED TO JOIN THE COMPETITION UNTIL THE LUNCH BREAK

The I.K.C. Championship Stake for Retrievers 2012

The 2012 Irish Kennel Club Retriever Championship Stake will be held at Drumbanagher Demesne, Poyntzpass, Co. Armagh on Friday 28th and Saturday 29th December 2012 by kind permission of Mrs. Joan Close and the Close Family and Mr. Brian Byrnes. The Championship Committee is very grateful to our generous hosts for facilitating the Irish Retriever Championship at this superb venue.

The Drumbanagh Estate Shoot is highly regarded among sportsmen for its quality high driven pheasant and duck shooting. It is a magnificent venue not only from the scenery aspect of the Estate but also the challenging ground and cover which will test the best retrieving dogs in Ireland over the two days. Drumbanagher is a walled demesne situated a few miles south of the scenic village of Poyntzpass in the county of Armagh. This will be the 45th running of the Irish Retriever Championship and will be the first occasion that Drumbanagher Demesne has graciously hosted the event. Once again this year Massbrook Pet Foods, Cashel, Foxford Co. Mayo are generously sponsoring the Retriever Championship. We are grateful to Massbrook Pet Foods for this generous financial support and to Richard and John Binley who have always been generous patrons to the field trial fraternity. We wish to extend our grateful thanks to Massbrook Pet Foods for this continued sponsorship and we hope that all gundog owners will support them in return by purchasing their nutritious products. We are also grateful to Mr. Albert Titterington and the Irish Country Sports and Country Life magazine for their continued support of the championship. Once again this year Mr. Albert Titterington will sponsor the trophy to be retained by the winner of the championship and the magazine also sponsors a years free subscription to the magazine for the first four placed dogs in the Championship, as well as a free subscription for the

four Judges and the Host. The Judges for this years Championship will be Mr. Michael Corr (Co. Monaghan), Mr. Aidan Daly (Co. Down), Mr. Dermot Donnelly (Co. Tyrone) and Mr. Michael O'Connor (Co. Cork). The Head Quarters for the 2012 Irish Retriever Championship will be the Carrickdale Hotel & Spa, Carrickcarnon, Dundalk, Co. Louth. Competitors and spectators can avail of special rates for the duration of the Championship negotiated by Mr. Jim Perry, Chairman of the Championship Committee and Mr. Raymond Rocks, for the benefit of all attending the event. Two nights B&B & two evening meals is available for €110 pp sharing. A very attractive and competitive rate. There will be a single supplement of €10 per night. Please call Carrickdale Hotel & Spa at 042 - 9380900 to make your booking quoting the above rates and for booking reference mention the Irish Retriever Championship. It is advisable to book early to ensure your reservation at the Carrickdale Hotel & Spa to avoid disappointment. Anyone wishing to enquire further about the Championship or wishing to place advertisements in the Championship Programme should contact the Vice-Chairman Mr. John T. Malone at 087 6672325 or 059 8633718 after 7 p.m. We are pleased to bring the Retriever Championship to Drumbanagher Demesne for the first time and all gundog enthusiasts are welcome to Drumbanagher to enjoy the spectacle that is the Irish Retriever Championship. John T. Malone

Cobh Field Trial Association Open Stake

The Open Atake Field Trial for Spaniels on Saturday 17th November 2012 at Ballyleary, Cobh, Co Cork by kind permission of Mr J J Frahill.

The steward of the beat was the Club Chairman Mr Finbar O'Driscoll and judges were Mr Liam Dundon and Mr Dermot Cahill, who very kindly stepped in to replace the nominated judge who was unable to attend. Cork Field Trials Association have been running spaniels trails on this superb spaniel ground for over 30 years. As usual the club had a very experienced team of guns.

The trial commenced at 9.30a.m. on a beautiful sunny November day and the supply of game was consistent throughout the day giving each dog an opportunity to excel.



L/R Brian O'Hara (Winner) Donal Creamer, (2nd & 3rd) Finbar O'Driscoll (Chairman), Dermot Cahill (Judge), Liam Dundon (Judge) D Bowman (4th).

1st Mr Brian O'Hara's English Springer Spaniel bitch Windarra Tess who was graded excellent.

2nd Mr Donal Creamer's Black Cocker Spaniel bitch Poole Green Abi graded excellent.

3rd Mr Donal Creamer's Brown Cocker Spaniel dog Cheweky Giggas graded very good.

4th Mr D Bowman's English Springer Spaniel bitch Lisloran Diamond after a run off with Ms J Coughlan's English Springer Spaniel dog Holly Drive Eduardo of Tobyhill who was awarded a COM.

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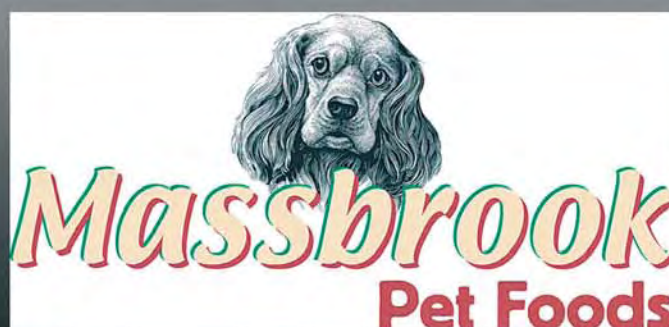


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The National Woodcock Association of Ireland

Larry Taaffe Hon. Secretary of the NWAOI bring us up to date on the information to hand on the Irish woodcock scene.

First, our apologies to all our Cork enthusiasts, as we omitted to include Cork in the list of counties which furnished wings for last season's wind analysis. We have updated our records to show the involvement of Cork in the report.

Woodcock sightings in the spring summer months have again yielded some new information, woodcock were sighted in Co Kerry at breeding time also a number of sightings in both south and north Wicklow.

Our absence at the Birr game fair was unavoidable due to a weekend of planned family commitments from months earlier, but next year we hope to have a special occasion, as the NWAOI will be ten years old in 2013, a major milestone in the history of woodcock monitoring in Ireland.

Also in June 2013, the AGM of the European federation of Woodcock Associations will take place in Ireland and the National Woodcock Association Of Ireland will act as hosts for this event. On day two of the Conference, an open day which will see presentations from many European woodcock groups and this day of information on woodcock should not be missed if you have a deep interest in this amazing game bird.

Further details will be advised when all arrangement's are completed, but the weekend for the AGM/Conference is 12th, 13th, and 14th of June 2013. To allow our association to fund the European AGM we would ask you all to consider any form of assistance, both physical and financial, or indeed items that could be used for

auction or for a raffle to allow us to accumulate some additional funding.

We already have some exciting items, a days duck shooting on the Wexford slob, a days driven woodcock shooting, a bag limit will apply to this prize, and also an original oil painting of a peregrine falcon by David L Prescott, which is valued at £4000 sterling and we will auction this item.

We have recently received results of wings which we had sent to the Game and Wildlife Conservation Trust group two seasons ago for isotope analysis. A further report which analyses the make up of wintering

woodcock in Ireland will be available and I shall distribute this to you all when we receive it.

As I write, we will be shortly beginning the new season for woodcock shooting and we have no doubt that many Irish woodcock hunters treat this bird with great respect but there are some who do not and in particular some hunting guides in the western part of the county continue to flight woodcock for foreign tourist shooters, despite this activity being unlawful and negatively effecting to our woodcock numbers.

We have solid information in this regards on the deck of the relevant department and we actively seeking a change in the law which will be of benefit to our migratory game species.

And finally, membership fees are due €30. We understand that in the present negative financial times we are way down on your list of priorities, but if you would like to support your sport through us we would be very grateful.



Willie Edgar



International gundog handler, judge and trainer is now taking bookings for training all breeds of dogs both for competition and as shooting companions. Willie will also assist in sourcing suitable pups, trained and part trained dogs. At Stud Liver & White ESSD – powerful hunting dog with a superb and rather unique pedigree.

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New Country Sports Organisation

Country Sports Ireland has been launched with membership open to anyone resident in any part of Ireland and they claim to have teamed up with a 'leading global insurer to develop an outstanding £5 million (€6.4 million) public liability insurance package that provides comprehensive cover for all major country sports activities at the cheapest rates available in Ireland.'

Director Ronan Gorman said: "Country Sports Ireland was formed in response to the persistent challenges to many aspects of indigenous country sports and the need for much greater resources and expertise focussed on addressing these challenges. Country Sports Ireland brings together a team of people who have enormous experience and expertise in the representation of literally every aspect of country sports throughout Ireland for many years. I believe Country Sports Ireland can make an important contribution to the promotion and protection of all country sports at a very important time."

The organisation is also seeking to appoint a number of Regional Representatives across Ireland to assist with member recruitment and to provide local expertise which will help support its work to protect all local country sports.

For further information email Ronan at ronan@countryportsireland.org or call +44 7542 111 542 or visit www.countryportsireland.org

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Please enrol me for the special anniversary subscription rate at a cost of €25 or £20 to include two tickets (worth £20) to the Shanes Castle Fair 29th & 30th June or two tickets (worth €30) to Birr Castle Game Fair 30th August/1st September 2013. Please specify which tickets you require: Shanes/Birr
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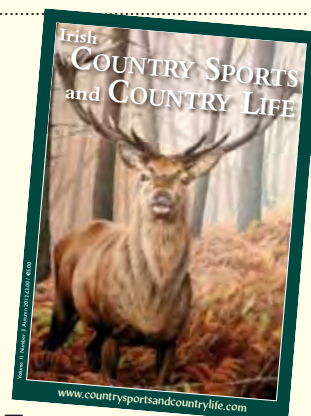
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The Great Game Fairs of Ireland brand moves forward in 2013

In 2012 the Great Game Fairs of Ireland brand took on the worst of the weather and the recession and with the help of our loyal customer base have emerged with a brand new plan for expansion in 2013 and an even better value package for our customers!

We delivered three excellent fairs in 2012 in spite of the appalling weather at Shanes Castle and Birr Castle. Around that time other major events were being cancelled including the mighty CLA Game Fair, the Great Yorkshire Show and the Scottish Fair.

Meanwhile the Irish Game Fair at Shanes Castle attracted substantial crowds and the Irish Game & Country Fair at Birr Castle had a record crowd for any Irish Game Fair ever - a major achievement given the weather conditions!



The heavy rain did not deter Shanes Castle crowds in 2012 - just imagine what we have in store for the new SUPER FAIR in 2013!

The careful and professional wet weather planning, including roadworks, paid real dividends and patrons and traders were very little inconvenienced. They had good access to their stands before and during the fair, customers found shopping an easy and enjoyable experience, while excellent parking and easy exit added to the experience. Unlike some other events ground conditions were good and remained so. While we would prefer to 'order' good weather in 2013 we know we can cope with bad!

New innovations, such as 'The 'Year of the Salmon & Trout' theme caught the imagination of the angling community and trade - including keen salmon angler and Deputy First Minister Martin McGuinness and led to the finest outdoor Angling Villages seen at any Irish Fairs. This was so successful that the theme and enhancement of the Angling Villages will continue within a new combined shooting and fishing theme of the 'Year of the Salmon & Woodcock.'



Just one of the crowded shopping aisles at Birr in 2012 - looking forward to a 'three day plus' programme in 2013.

We think it extremely fitting that as the premier Irish game and country fairs celebrate their 35th anniversary, their theme should reflect the premier Irish fishing and shooting species. This comes almost full circle as we celebrate yet another important anniversary - 30 years of publishing.

AND our first major publication was the 'Irish Fieldsports and Angling Handbook' with as its logo - the Salmon & Woodcock! This was followed by gundog books, 'the Irish Hunting, Shooting and Fishing' magazine and of course by Ireland's most read country sports magazine ever - Irish Countrysports and Country Life magazine - both hard copy and web editions.

Another innovation was the addition of the Flavour magazine Fine Food Festival and this too will be repeated and enhanced with the largest display of fine food and game & fish cookery at any Irish fair. And of course, hints on how to cook salmon and woodcock by celebrity chefs.



The Flavour magazine FINE FOOD FESTIVAL was a huge success in 2012 and will be at least twice as large at the fairs in 2013.

Awards at Shanes Castle 2012

Director Albert Titterington says that one of the most pleasurable parts of the Shanes Castle and Birr Castle events is the presentation of the Irish Countrysports and Country Life 'Lifetime Commitment' Awards to people who have made a major commitment to the defence or promotion of countrysports. Albert always states that they are also a commitment to further work! Another tradition that has grown up around these awards is the Lindsay

Carlisle Stick Awards. Lindsay 'Stickmaker to the Great Game Fairs of Ireland', and Albert agree on who the recipients should be and this year Lindsay really surpassed himself with some very finely crafted sticks including a rather unique one for Irene Titterington and a superb one for Albert.

The presentations were made in the main arena by Jim Shannon, MP, a great supporter of country sports.



ICS&CL Award went to the No to Salmon netting group - a lobbying body which did magnificent work on salmon preservation in 2012.



ICS&CL Award to Arthur Greenwood, Vice Chairman of APGAI for his work with encouraging young anglers.



Eugene McGregor gundog organiser receives a fine Carlisle stick.



Lindsay Carlisle explains the design of the stick he made for Irene Titterington.



Lyall Plant, Director CAI responding to the award of a stick with Jim Shannon, Lindsay Carlisle & Albert Titterington.



Lindsay explains to Albert Titterington how he made his stick.



Albert and Lindsay with the very finely crafted stick he received from Lindsay to mark his 50th Game Fair.



Lindsay presents a stick to Operations Director Edwin Dash.

Now for the really creative innovations: TWO NEW IMPROVED 2013 GAME FAIRS

THE LARGEST EVER IRISH GAME FAIR

A new IRISH SUPER FAIR will be created by combining the Ballywalter Game Fair with the Irish Game Fair at Shanes Castle on the 29th & 30th June 2013.

The Shanes Castle site because of its many advantages, was chosen as the site for this new 'Mega Fair.' The Shanes Castle site is not only a beautiful and historic site but has an excellent central location with road, rail, air and sea access; very practical internal roadways; excellent and well drained main site and car parking and the room needed for the necessary expansion of the stand and attraction base.

The additional resources that will be committed to this new fair will mean that the new IRISH GAME FAIR & FLAVOUR FINE FOOD FESTIVAL will have a much greater promotion and marketing budget; more demonstrations and displays including the operating of THREE action packed arena programmes; more competitions especially of an international nature; a much greater prize fund; and a greatly increased number of trade stands.

The Irish Game & Country Fair at Birr Castle becomes part of an Irish Country Lifestyle Festival with a three day programme.

Having set records for crowd attendance in 2012 in spite of the weather the organising team have fully embraced Failte's 'The Gathering' programme and are putting plans in place to stage not only the premier game fair in the ROI but also the largest and most imaginative celebration of the Irish countryside and its lifestyle and rural traditions.

The theme will be based on how people from the whole of Ireland and ex pats can come together to celebrate the rich history, traditions and pursuits of the countryside.

The programme will start in Birr the week before the fair, culminating in a three day programme that

should not be missed. Friday 30th August will feature an activity day where readers can enjoy all manner of country pursuits in the beautiful Shannon and Mid Ireland regions culminating into superb Georgian evening entertainment. Then on to an enhanced Irish Game & Country Fair at Birr Castle on the 31st August and the 1st September 2013.

The new IRISH GAME & COUNTRY FAIR & COUNTRY LIFESTYLE FESTIVAL will really bring the concept of Irish country sports and country life to an all Ireland and international audience so do make your plans to have a good holiday experience around the dates of the 30th & 31st August and the 1st September.

AND a CHRISTMAS PRESENT from the team

Next year sees the 30th anniversary of when we entered the country sports publishing market, which has led over the years to producing the longest continuously published and premier Irish country sports journal - the magazine you are reading now!

To mark this anniversary and to celebrate the innovations associated with the two 2013 GREAT GAME FAIRS of IRELAND, we have decided to offer a really fantastic offer for readers to enjoy a YEARS SUBSCRIPTION TO THE MAGAZINE (four seasonal issues posted out to you) with FREE admission for TWO people to one of our GREAT Game Fairs of Ireland.

The very special offer, open to the first 1,000 people who send in the form published in this magazine, is very special: for JUST £20 (or €25) you get a year's subscription to the magazine PLUS two tickets to Shanes Castle (Cost £20) or two tickets to Birr (cost €30).

If you want to treat a friend to a present they will remember all year or simply one that you can look forward to all year - don't delay!

The Great Game Fairs of Ireland 2013

Announce the following innovations

The largest ever Irish Game Fair



will take place at Shanes Castle, Antrim on the 29th & 30th June 2013
when the Ballywalter Game Fair and the Irish Game Fair will combine
to form a **SUPER FAIR** - under the title

THE IRISH GAME FAIR & FLAVOUR FINE FOOD FESTIVAL

www.irishgamefair.com

There will be many more attractions, three arenas, new international
competitions and an extra £15,000 in prize fund.

www.irishgamefair.com

Irish Game and Country Fair



Birr Castle, Co Offaly 31st August and the 1st September 2013
will include an extra activity day on the Friday 30th August and be marketed
as **THE IRISH GAME & COUNTRY FAIR & COUNTRYLIFESTYLE FESTIVAL.**

www.irishgameandcountryfair.com

Tel: 028 (From Rol 048) 44839167 or 028 44615416

See the 2012 Great Game Fairs of Ireland on www.fieldsportschannel.com and www.dogandcountry.tv

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Christmas Gifts for the country sports person in your life

McCloy's Guns Unlimited have you covered this Christmas

Stuck for a present for the sportsman or woman in your family? Or perhaps you are shopping for that extra special item of country clothing - just for you. Well we think your search could well be over.

everything you need to turn a shooting day into a really special occasion.

There really is no need to venture out in the old gear that's been your faithful companion for as long as you remember but now lets you down just when the rain starts.



At McCloy's Guns Unlimited they have what many people consider to be not only the best selection of clothing in the country, but also the widest range of



What you want now is style, cut and functionality and that is what's on offer at McCloy's.



The very latest from top manufacturers such as Harikla, Lakson, Seeland, Musto, Le Chateau, and Beretta is stocked at the keenest price and there is so much to choose from too.

What you will find when you come to the luxurious new shop and showroom in Toome is that everything is there for you to try. No wondering if it will fit, or whether you prefer one brand to another.



At McCloy's Guns Unlimited you can browse to your hearts content and, if you do require advice, the trained staff will be delighted to help.

As far as clothing is concerned there is everything for the shooter to keep them warm and cosy from head to toe in real style.



Browse the boots, compare the coats, survey the stockings and maybe head for the hats. Whatever you are looking for it will have been specially selected to match our customers' requirements.

Who knows - with a superb new outfit for the shooting season you might well feel in the need for a new gun too. Oh and did we mention it before - that's what McCloy's do best as well!

Merry Christmas from everyone at McCloy's Guns Unlimited and a very Happy New Year to you all.

The shop is well worth a visit but for those who wish to shop from the comfort of their own home you can also do so at www.mccloy.com

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Barbour – Country Classics for Christmas



Barbour say 'Tis the Season to Give Barbour' as the classic lifestyle brand offers an exciting selection of jackets, knitwear and accessories for all the family this Christmas. From stylish shirts, warm knitwear and statement accessories that promise to keep the whole family warm all the way through the winter season, to the iconic Barbour jackets, perfect for a day of country sports - Barbour has got Christmas all wrapped up for you.

For Her:

Lady Jane Gloves RRP: £39.95

Elegant and luxurious, Barbour's Lady Jane Leather Gloves are the ideal gift for her this Christmas. In classic black or rich chocolate leather, with the famous Barbour tartan fleece lining, these gloves promise to keep her both warm and stylish.



Candale Fair Isle V Neck RRP: £69.95

It wouldn't be Christmas if there wasn't a Fair Isle Jumper featured somewhere! Barbour's classic Candale Fair Isle V Neck offers an incredibly stylish take on this seasonal favourite.

Thornton Blazer RRP: £229

In 95% wool and 5% Cashmere, the Thornton Blazer offers both warmth and style, and with its traditional tweed finish, it's the perfect option for a lunch or dinner in the country.

Sporting Cotterdale 3-in-1 RRP: £379

A gift for all seasons, the Sporting Cotterdale 3-in-1 is an all-weather jacket that features an internal detachable

waistcoat - ideal for shooting or country pursuits, whatever the weather.

For Him:

Classic One Pocket Shirt

A staple piece in Barbour's Men's Lifestyle Collection, the Classic One Pocket Shirt comes in an array of beautiful checked styles, with colours ranging from the subtle and rich olive and merlot, to bolder shades of turf and navy - a shirt that promises to become a firm favourite. Sizes S - XXXL

Sporting Zip Thru RRP: £119

Barbour is known for its durability and warmth, and its knitwear delivers just this. The Sporting Zip Thru is a 100% lambs wool chunky knit with a luxurious soft handle - a functional yet stylish piece.

Leather Medium Travel Explorer RRP: £279

In durable outer leather and with a traditional tartan lining, the Leather Travel Explorer bag is a stylish overnight bag that promises to be a trusty travel companion for many years to come.



Sporting Featherweight Climate

Made from a tough and robust GORE-TEX® Ripstop outer, the Sporting Featherweight Climate is extremely lightweight but with the added addition of a soft and warm inner fleece, it's ideal for driven and rough shooting and comes into its own in colder weather. With plenty of freedom of movement and a removable hood, this jacket is extremely versatile.

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For the Kids:

For boys, the Lynton Pullover is the perfect winter warmer – a fuss-free but utterly soft and warm cotton cashmere blend crew neck in charcoal, navy or chilli red. RRP: £44.95

For girls, the Owl Intarsia Knit in 100% lambs wool is set to become the favourite jumper of the season. RRP: £49.95

Hunter hats with shearling inner linings also make ideal stocking fillers for the boys, whilst the girls love the cute-factor of the Ellie Bobble Hat in bright pink and grape. RRP: £24.95

Country Casuals from McBride's of Temple

Mc Bride Fashions is family run business which has been selling high quality clothing to its customers for over 40 years. Based at the Temple Shopping Centre, Carryduff Road, Temple, Mc Brides has built an enviable reputation for supplying high quality garments at highly competitive prices.



One of Northern Ireland's largest leather and sheepskin retailers, McBride Fashions also stock a wide

range of country casuals for all countryside enthusiasts. Their experience in researching and working with leather and other fabrics and listening very carefully to customers' views and needs, McBrides is able to offer customers a totally unique standard of service.

Other than leather and sheepskin (including sheepskin rugs) they have become a large supplier of country casuals including Toggi, Jack Murphy, Target Dry, Hunter Boots, Sherwood Forest and other quality produces for the countryside enthusiast.

Open Monday to Saturday 9.00am to 5.30 pm and with free parking a stress free shopping experience is provided.

For further information call 028 9263 876 follow us on Facebook or go to the new look website www.mcbridesfashions.com.

Charlie Keenan Countrywear is also based in Toome and is a virtual emporium of all types of outdoor clothing, protective wear and quality army surplus.

The range of clothing includes the value for money Sherwood and Big Bill ranges and with the current wet weather an absolutely essential range of footwear including extensive stocks of possibly the most comfortable and convenient to wear Wellington on the market the Muckboot.

The materials are all very flexible making them easy to put on and take off, and offer the utmost in comfort to the wearer whilst protecting from the worst of the weather providing a warm and dry environment for the feet.

They are available in sizes 4 -12

To see some of Charlie's other products visit www.charliekeenan.com

Click Now for Christmas Gifts and Country Classics from Jack Murphy's best ever Collection



This year Jack Murphy devotees will be able to buy their favourite styles online just in time for Christmas. Irresistible Irish country clothing brand, Jack Murphy's new e-commerce website is currently showcasing its Autumn/Winter 2012 collection of chunky knits, wonderful waxes, trendy tweeds and awesome

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details in store)



Jack Murphy's Country Classics.

accessories – arguably their most distinctive, eclectic and sumptuous range to date.

To celebrate, customers shopping online at www.jackmurphy.ie can save 20% on luxurious faux fur and contemporary tweed styles during the month of December with Jack Murphy's online festive fashion promotion.

Responding to popular demand, Jack Murphy has set up the retail website so fans who don't have a Jack Murphy stockist close-by can now bag their favourite pieces from the comfort of their own home, ensuring they can have both style and substance this season at the click of a mouse. For those who still enjoy the traditional shopping experience Jack Murphy also has an online stockist search facility where you can find a stockist near you at the touch of a button.

Christmas gift shopping for friends and family, or perhaps even for yourself has just become a whole lot easier. Jack Murphy believes online shopping should be an enjoyable experience, so they have made the process as easy as possible with single-page checkout (SPCO) – intuitive, fast, secure and simple!

So go on-line today and check out Jack Murphy's irresistible winter collection, featuring chunky cable knits, classic wax jackets with thoughtful detailing, luxurious tweeds, opulent faux furs, colourful quilts, cosy padded jackets and a magnificent accessory range. All are absolute must-haves this season, whether you are living the coveted country life or even just loving the country look.

A Christmas Collection to make your Wishes come true!

Christmas is getting nearer and what will you do for shopping?

This winter, at McKillens of Church Street, Ballymena, boots are very much in demand with long leg boots very much to the fore. Casual boots are very popular especially snow boots which are a must. Fashions are all about warmth and fabric and many of the collections offer great value for money and if its slippers you want McKillens have a massive selection to suit all.

For the men there are new styles in shoes from all the major fashion brands and in the Christmas Gift Shop on the first floor, there is a wonderful variety to help you chose the right present. On the ground floor the Handbag Shop is full of temptation for all ages.

McKillens of Ballymena has always been famous for quality and service and this winter is no exception. Why not visit McKillens of Ballymena and treat yourself for Christmas!

And finally a year long gift from us to the first 1,000 readers who apply

To celebrate 30 years of publishing and 35 years of organising game fairs we offer you a fantastic package of an ANNUAL SUBSCRIPTION to Ireland's premier country sports magazine AND two tickets to one of Ireland's premier game and country fairs for just £20 or €25. What a gift to give to a friend or yourself! See our advert elsewhere in the magazine.



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Charlie wears Hoggs Wax Indian Hat £25
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Tay



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

Size 4 -13 Price £90

Torray



The Torray is a premium field sports boot with the Mossy Oak break-up camouflage pattern over the full surface of the boot. It has additional rubber overlays for reinforced toe, heel and Achilles areas.

Breathable Airmesh Lining with extra fleece lining for superb insulation and comfort.

Size 4 -13 Price £120

Esk



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

Size 4-13 Price £90

Tay Sport



The Tay Sport has been specifically designed for country sports wear. It has a sticky rubber sole with 5mm cleats and phylon mid sole with additional rubber overlays for reinforcing toe, heel and Achilles areas. Breathable Airmesh Lining with extra fleece lining for superb insulation and comfort.

Sizes 4-3 Price £110

Thurso



The Thurso 3.5 Field is a field boot combining a new style with cooling technology. The HYPER-VENT Airmesh lining has a diamond structure and is open faced to double the cooling effect by allowing air to pass more freely around the lining.

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Greta



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

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The Lune Ankle Boot is a high ankle boot suitable for field sports applications for comfort and warmth whatever the weather. It is lightweight and durable with a Breathable Airmesh Lining.

Sizes 4-13 Price £70

Everest



Grisport Everest a brown leather or Olive Nubuck walking boot from the Italian manufacturer.

Sizes 36-47 Price £75

Timber



Grisport Timber Hiking Boot are constructed from waxed Italian 'Dakar' leather and lined with a SpoTex Waterproof and Breathable Membrane. They also benefit from taped seams and a Lightweight Trekking Sole.

Sizes 4-0 -47 Price £65

Ranger



Grisport Ranger is a hunting/ shooting country sports boot, a quality leather Italian-made boot, with a waterproof and breathable lining and beautifully padded throughout for wearer comfort. The Ranger also has a anti-slip vibram sole and pre-waxed leather for extra protection. Weight 1685g

Sizes 40 -47 Price £140

Trapper



Alpina Trapper is an Italian made boot constructed from high grade leather with an innovative Frasson sole with self cleaning cleats. The mid-calf style features a deep, protective rubber rand, soft kid leather cuffs, and metal lacing hoops throughout.

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Pointer & Setter Championship Stake

Kinnitty Moors,

25th and 26th August 2012

It would be nice to report that Saturday, 25th August dawned bright and fair, but such was not the case. After such a miserable summer that really would have been too much to expect and the early Saturday morning light showed heavy fog on the hill. Nevertheless, the large crowd were hopeful as always. With the Meet at 8.30 am and small details seen to, the draw was made in the Community Centre. There was a full card of 50 entries with 4 Reserves. Of the entries six were withdrawn leaving the reserves to take their chances and 48 dogs went into the hat, including two reserves, the remaining two not being present. The breakdown by breeds was 26 Irish Red Setters, 5 Irish Red & White Setters, 5 English Pointers and 12 English Setters.

For the 19th year in succession, the Stake was sponsored by RED MILLS of Goresbridge, Co. Kilkenny who have been magnificent and unstinting in their backing of the Championship since 1993. The excellent programme produced by RED MILLS showed that there were 25 Field Trial Champions competing in this year's event.

This year's Judges were Richard MacNicol of Halkirk, a great supporter of our Championship and a previous winner and judge. Richard competes every year. Edward Flannelly was making his debut as a judge. In some ten years at Field Trials he has achieved remarkable success. Charlie Neeson gallantly stepped in when the selected judges and reserves could not oblige and Charlie had also judged the event previously.

The drive to the hill is always full of anticipation. This would be a hard two days with all the dogs seriously tested and with 25 Field Trial Champions competing this promised to be a top class trial. The fog, often the bane of field trials everywhere, but Kinnitty especially, obligingly departed soon after arrival with the weather for the rest of the day mostly fine, apart from a few showers with a good northerly breeze. There was little time lost with the fog departed and the first pair of Carol Calvert's English setter and Steve Robinson's Irish setter were put down at 10.15 am with Steve Robinson's IRSD Coldcoats Star claiming the first find. Nearly every brace

of the first round had a chance of game. This was due entirely to excellent stewarding and ground management. However, as often is the case, there were only four clean finds noted by the gallery. Dogs are hot and excited and the little bit of luck that is always needed in such circumstances seems to desert at the time of most need. There were some great dry runs, though, and these dogs would see further action on the morrow. The last brace had run by 5 pm which meant that the judges had seen 24 brace of dogs, a magnificent achievement.

The Championship Dinner was well attended at Kinnitty Community Centre. This had been an old decrepit building when we started to run trials at Kinnitty in the early 80s. In fact, one competitor thought he might buy it to turn into a residence. However, the local community rebuilt the house and added a fine hall to serve the area's needs and it is ideal as a headquarters for the Championship. The caterers surpassed themselves in producing a truly excellent meal. Chairman, Jim Sheridan, had a short few words and Bill Connolly of RED MILLS presented his trophy for Most Stylish Dog of the first day to Kieran Walsh's English setter Blackstairs Geronimo. Again, the after-dinner chats were special and this is really what the whole thing should be about. I have learned to totally disregard the topic of 'The Overnight Talking Dog' but, strangely, there was no such talk this time. Everyone realises that there would have to be another hard round put in and that accompanied by a little luck

Sunday morning did dawn bright and fine and the judges presented their list. Only 17 dogs survived overnight and went into the draw for a second time. Then it was a rush to join the cavalcade back up the hill for the Second Round. As with the previous day, the weather was obliging, although the wind had changed to the southwest, there was ample game and there were a further six finds for the judges to consider. But the Championship is all about the entire performance of a dog over two days. Two dogs, Rev. Seamus O'Neill's IRSD Mountbay Dan and Pat Reape's IRSD Lisdovogue Aileen were called for a further run and an end was called to another excellent Championship.

There is always an electric air of excitement in the Community Centre before the results are announced.

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STAY AHEAD OF THE GAME



Carol Calvert with Glynlark Apollo pictured here in 2011.

(photo courtesy of Susan Stone)

Vincent Flannelly presented his Award for the IKC's 2011 Dog of the Year to Pat Reape's IRSB Lisdovogue Aileen. The Hon. Secretary recorded sincere thanks to the judges, official Guns Leslie Maher and Declan Whelan, Stewards of the Beat Jim Sheridan, Neil Ryan and Paddy Collins and was fulsome in his praise of Stewards Vincent Flannelly, Christy Davitt, Billy Grace and Pat Rohan as Control and Call Up Stewards. RED MILLS, now Sponsors of the Championship for twenty years, were due particular and grateful thanks, as were National Parks & Wildlife for the use of the ground.

Results

1st Ms. Carol Calvert's IRSD FTCh Glynlark Apollo (Glenlark Flynn x Rushfield Santa). The Winner put in two excellent rounds of hard running and quartered very well. He had a find on a pair near the end of his second run. Classification – Excellent

2nd Mr. Joe McGill's E.S.B. Penny Rock Flight (Carrickphillip Don x Toryview Ewing) Had excellent running in both rounds, but particularly noteworthy for her run in rough ground in her first down. Had a find on a small covey in first round. Classification Excellent.

3rd Pat Reape's IRSB Lisdovogue Aileen (Mayo Keano x Lisdovogue Behy). What a consistent dog! Winner for the previous two years, Aileen had finds in both rounds and is running as well as ever. Classification Excellent

4th Rev. Seamus O'Neill's IRSD Mountbay Dan (Lisdovogue Prince x Gardenfield Lady). Again, excellent running over two rounds from a dog returning

from injury. He had a great find in his second down. Classification - Excellent

In summary, Charlie Neeson, as Senior Judge, said that very little separated the first two dogs with third and fourth not quite matching this in overall performance. This is Carol Calvert's first win. She has competed with good dogs every year without achieving a win. The dog was bred by Carol and was already a Field Trial Champion.

A largely unsung hero of the Championship is the Official Gun who walks every step with the judges and is on hand to shoot when required. This year Leslie Maher of Cashel walked after twenty-four brace of dogs on the first day. He went home that evening, no doubt very tired, but was called out to work almost immediately. He got to bed sometime around 3 am, yet was up again after a few short hours. He drove to Kinnitty, a trip of some seventy-five minutes to be there for the second round draw and carried the gun all day again. Such dedication tells its own story.

Over the years it would seem that I report roughly the same thing with only the people and dogs changing plus some small added improvements to the organising and running of the event. This Championship was well organised and well run with Officers and Committee working in unison. The grouse situation was brilliant despite the bad summer and, while the only really happy person was the winner, nonetheless everyone involved in the organization and running of the 54th Championship Stake may take satisfaction in a job well done.

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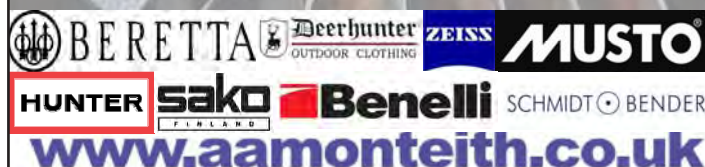
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Partridges At The Moyle Shoot

All summer I couldn't wait for the shooting season to begin as this year we had booked our first day partridge shooting at the Moyle Shoot, near Islandmagee in County Antrim. I had heard quite a few stories from others who had shot there before, retelling of the challenging shots, trying to shoot partridge blazing over cliffs, with the wind behind them. From one perspective it was quite daunting, as partridge can be a challenging shot alone, never mind being driven from a height. Not only that, but I was quite nervous as I hadn't shot much over the summer (as usual you always have to have your excuses prepared) but, looking on the bright side, it would definitely help to get me back in the swing.

We arranged to meet up beside Carrickfergus Castle before travelling in convoy up to the shoot. A few of the guns had shot there before and were supposed to remember how to get there ('we must have missed a turn somewhere' was the excuse) but after a few minor detours we arrived on time. Thankfully the site was well marked by the Ballylumford Dolmen.



The Guns pictured with the Druid's Alter in the background.

According to Wikipedia it is known locally as the Druid's Altar, and could be 4000 years old, or the remains of an even earlier passage grave. It is a dolmen consisting of four upright stones, with a heavy capstone and a fallen stone within the structure, which may have been put there to block the entrance to the tomb. Artifacts have been recovered from under the dolmen by archaeologists and it would appear to have stood over a burial chamber from ancient times. A wall plaque at the site describes the dolmen as a single chambered grave

erected about 2000-1600 BC.

On arrival, we were greeted by David Ford, who organises and runs the shoot, something he has done very successfully for a few years now. We started the day with coffee while David went over the safety briefing. Due to the nature of the shoot Guns were 'live' on peg and we were warned that, towards the end of a drive, when you heard the whistle you had to keep guns pointed upright, because the whistle meant that beaters were close and there was the necessity to take extra care. As usual each drive would end with the sounding of a horn. Briefing over, questions answered, we drew pegs, instructed to move up two places after each drive.

With everyone raring to go we headed out to get ready for the first drive and as customary there's always someone who has to forget something, in this case my Dad and his welly boots: no, they were not in the car - they were at home. He was fortunate that we had great weather with the sun blazing and while this meant less mud for him, needless to say Guns could have done with leaving the tweeds behind and packing sun glasses.



Waiting for the drive to begin.

At our first drive, we were placed at our pegs in a wide field surrounding a steep hill. I began on peg number five, with Thomas Welshman to my right and Ken Perrot to my left. Very soon after we arrived on our pegs the partridge started flushing over us in steady bursts, along with the one cheeky pheasant that must have known he was still out of season. This was great because it helped me get used to the partridges' speed and figure out where I was shooting. I could tell Thomas needed no practice because he was bringing the birds down with ease, whereas the few I shot tended to be taken from slightly behind me. We three seemed to be best placed for this drive while those further down the

line were shooting at any birds that broke away fast and curling and were very difficult for Guns to get to grips with.

Taken by surprise

The second drive was quite a densely covered hill with many trees on the top and plenty of cover surrounding each of the pegs at the bottom. This time I was on peg number seven, which meant I had the furthest to travel along the line and was placed in a position where I would try to shoot any birds that decided to break back. I have to say the beaters did a great job, pushing the birds forward and I got to listen to plenty of other shots ringing out down the line, although a few times I was taken by surprise at the sound of a bird racing over my head, after which I came to the conclusion, maybe speed shooting isn't my forte.



Richard Edgar getting on terms with an early bird.

Drive number three was our last drive before we stopped for lunch and had to be one of my brother Mark's favourite drives. This drive was based around a large open field, with the pegs placed half way up the slope. To the right you had a power station and behind us lay the second drive area, from where many of the birds had been flushed.

Paul Pringle and Mark were at the middle two pegs

and that definitely seemed the place to be. As soon as the birds started flushing, Paul and Mark were straight onto them and started dropping them effortlessly, even at their height and Paul with his twenty gauge. From watching I think that they could have done with a loader and I believe Mark even shot himself out of cartridges! At least the dogs got plenty of work.



The Author with Shoot Manager David Ford.

For lunch we all headed over to Larne Golf Club and on arrival David kindly bought us all a round of drinks while we waited for the delicious hot stew and rolls to arrive and there was even plenty for those who wanted seconds.

Great for birds breaking off at speed

Fed, watered and refreshed, everyone was raring to go with the prospect of two more drives in spectacular scenery with plenty more shooting in prospect after a short drive around the coast.

When we arrived we had to walk up a path circling quite a stony hill, with peg markers placed along the way. My peg was on one of the far edges with a gun to my left and one slightly behind.



(Above) Thomas Welshman was on top form right from the start.

(Below) Swing and follow through at a fast curling bird.



Again it was a great spot for birds breaking off and the speed the birds was remarkable. I remember chatting to one the guys picking up here because he had an astonishing dog with only one eye. The dog had lost its eye after an accident the previous shooting season; even with the injury it hadn't deterred the dog and it still did a great job retrieving. Shooting came thick and fast again and the Guns agreed that this was another spectacular drive for the 'partridge specialists.'

The final drive was perhaps the shoot's most famous, and the one I had already learned that everyone always looks forward to. To say it was different would be an understatement as it is a steep climb down the cliffs before you reach your peg down beside the sea, with rocky cliff faces all around you in a cove. I had heard stories of how picturesque and unique it was with flowing waterfalls and seals looking for an easy meal; definitely something you wouldn't find anywhere else.

An 'interesting' scramble down for the cliff drive



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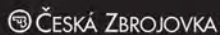
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The Moyle Shoot wishes everybody the best for the 2012/13 season.

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For more information, or information on The Moyle Shoot you can contact us on the above details, or alternatively: www.gunsonpegs.com



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There was excellent dog work throughout the day.

At this drive our shooting party was split in two, with four Guns clambering down to be placed below a towering headland, with three forward and one to the rear. The other Guns were placed behind us, separated from my party by rocky promintories, one gun at a waterfall, and the others strategically placed around corners behind him. There was one thing in common: our necks needed to be craned upwards to breaking point if we were to glimpse the rocketing birds which momentarily flashed over cliff faces at lightening speed.

My peg meant that I was supposed to shoot in the rear group, but my Dad kindly offered to swap me his peg, so that I could experience the excitement of being in a prime position, and after a bit of persuasion by some of the guys picking up I took him up on his offer.

A steep walk and the most amazing drive

Mark, Paul and I got to shoot front cliffs, while my other brother James, Thomas and my Dad were positioned behind to try for partridges which swirled around and over cliffs veering from the seaward side and from the high front. The views were striking, you could see all the way along the coastline looking at features of arches and pillars and I even remember seeing the Ailsa Craig as it was such a beautiful clear day. We had quite a steep walk down to the pegs and at the bottom we stood on a stony beach with three cliff faces surrounding us and the sea out to our left. Mark was placed forward, on the stones beside the waters edge, with Paul standing a little further to his right, while I stood behind to

shoot any birds that passed and Thomas on the front left at the seaward side.

The drive was amazing with a constant flow of birds blazing over from such a height. You had to be on guard because the noise of the sea took away any sound of the bird's wings. Mark and Paul did a great job and on a few occasions I had to be careful to not get hit by a falling bird. You could tell the birds were flying at some height because even after they where hit many fell on the tops of cliffs behind us. I had a few of my favourite shots on this

drive and instead of seals coming out to watch we had a couple of canoeists stopping to watch the shoot. I could hear bangs coming from the rear so I was glad that everyone was getting plenty of shooting. Not only that but even in these difficult conditions, just like on the other drives, the dogs had some excellent retrieves. I'm sure it must have sounded like a war zone, with the barrage of all the cartridges from us and the sound of all the shots behind in the distance.

Too soon it was time to clamber back to level ground and there was great buzz among all the Guns. David kindly invited us all back to the shoot HQ for coffee where, as the bag was assembled and counted, we learned that the total was seventy-eight, no mean feat for the seven guns given the quality of the birds even so early in the season. The Moyle Shoot had certainly lived up to its reputation, the shooting had been first class and the organisation second to none, and we were left with great memories of an awesome shoot with very testing birds in stunning surroundings. And isn't that what a days's shooting should be all about!



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South Africa's Kruger National Park

The Crocodile River with Elephants drinking in the distance.

Despite having been in the country twenty-eight times over the years, I had never visited South Africa's famed Kruger National Park. However, all that changed last May when our latest hunt in Limpopo Province finished. On returning to Johannesburg all hunting gear was packed away, rifles dismantled and stored, and armed only with cameras we headed off through the Lowveldt via Dulstroom, on into the Highveldt for a week's touring and sightseeing.

Driving with my wife and two South African friends through some of the most spectacular scenery on earth, it took almost two days to arrive at Kruger National Park's Phalaborwa Gate. I was already familiar with the hinterland having hunted Cape Buffalo in the Phalaborwa district in 2006. Registration at the Gate office was straightforward as our booking had been made several months in advance and included two Rondavels (circular African chalets) in Satara, one of the many camps dotted around the Park. These camps include restaurants, shops, accommodation and are surrounded with high fences to prevent access by wild animals. Strict safety regulations are in operation for visitors' protection outside the camp area. These include staying inside your vehicle except in designated areas where even then it is at your own risk, as well as arriving back at camp before the gates are closed for the night.

Kruger Park is 380 kilometres long and averages 60 kilometres in width, a total land area of approximately 20,000 square kilometres of pristine Africa, inhabited by an incredible volume of wild animals and 238 species of birds. Impala roam the territory in large herds, as do Buffalo, Elephant, Rhino and just about every animal that one would associate with an African environment. Hippo and crocs inhabit the rivers and riverbanks. The Park is named after Paul Kruger who was elected President after the First Boer War in 1883 and thereafter spent many years in untiring efforts to secure the future



Impala Ram.



Blue Wildebeest accompanying some Zebra.

of Africa's wildlife. In 1898 the area between the Sabie and Crocodile rivers was proclaimed The Sabie Game Reserve and later expanded into what is the current Kruger National Park. The Park's objectives are threefold: conservation of priceless wildlife, protection of the local inhabitant's interests and discreet development of the Park's amenities.

Guaranteed game viewing required early morning starts, so queues of vehicles waiting for camp gates to open at dawn was the order of the day. Within minutes it's possible to be in an area bereft of human habitation other than the occupants of your vehicle – the only one in sight. Most roads are metalled with a small number of dirt tracks leading to water holes and riverbanks. Although it's possible to drive for several kilometres without spotting any wildlife, the herds are somewhere within the vast expanse of veldt or savannah that stretches to the horizon. We had numerous sightings of Lion, Leopard, Cheetah, herds of Buffalo, Wildebeest, and never-ending groups of Impala, Zebra, Giraffe, with occasional glimpses of both White and Black Rhino. The latter are slightly shy of humans and with good reason. The proximity of the Park to Mozambique exposes it to the predations of poachers that frequently prey on the rhino population. Park Rangers patrol non-stop in an effort to contain this and as their efforts are well away from the main tourist areas, visitors are not aware of it.

Poachers are left for the Jackals

One morning I spotted a group of white 4 x 4s with canvas tops parked convoy-style just inside one of the camp gates, looking a bit official. On strolling over for a peep I discovered that each vehicle contained a number of soldiers, all well armed. One spoke perfect English and was eager to answer questions. The men, he told me, mount regular foot patrols to apprehend poachers and sometimes are involved in fire-fights



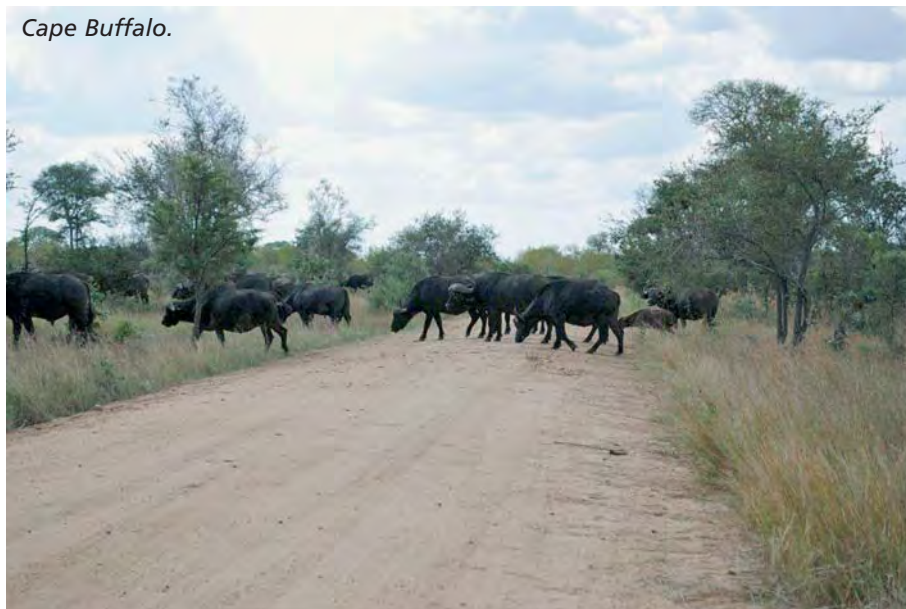
Lunchtime at a safe area.

with them. All this takes place far from roads and hearing distance. Another hazard facing the soldiers on foot is the possibility of becoming a big cat's next meal! With a little prompting, it was made quite clear that poachers are left for the Jackals, a warning to their comrades across the border of their possible fate. I was sorry that I asked! A decision was taken recently to expand Kruger Park over the border into Mozambique. It has to be assumed that the additional poaching problems that this will attract were taken into account when representatives of both governments met.

A Lioness slinking across rocks to a spot in the sun

Animals have the right of way on Kruger's roads which makes for good photographic opportunities if a pride of lions stroll by. One morning we came across an entire Lion family stretched out on the roadway. The metalled surface holds heat longer than bare earth and lions take advantage of this. Filming or taking photographs from a 4 x 4 with open windows can be risky. While animals are accustomed to traffic, any opening of doors or leaning out can be construed as a threat – with tragic consequences. We filmed Lions and Buffalo herds as they strolled past the Toyota on all sides. Other species were less venturesome, opting to remain

Cape Buffalo.



off-road but well within camera range. One of the highlights was spotting a lioness with bulging flanks having polished off an Impala for dinner, slinking across rocks to a spot in the sun where she flopped down for a siesta. She had to know we were watching because she laid on a show, rolling this way and that, looking in our direction – a photographer’s dream.

Accommodation in the camps is first class; each rondeval is fully equipped and has a barbecue outside its door. Fridges are located on the veranda behind a locked metal screen designed to keep raiding monkeys away. One evening we were treated to the sight of a Honey badger making its way along the line of chalets as it searched for food. It had probably squeezed in under the fence. Nice to look at, but quite capable of a bone-crunching grip on someone’s shin or leg. Shops have a good selection of local artefacts and the restaurants are of good quality. Guided night game viewing drives are available – a large truck equipped with searchlights is used. Outside the camp perimeters, the terrain is just pure Africa, more or less as it was back when President Paul Kruger founded the reserve. Management of the area is very impressive and a credit to the South African authorities. Anyone who has an opportunity to visit the Kruger Park should take advantage – it’s that good!



Lioness strolling by.



Elephant in the Savannah.



The Kruger’s comfortable Rondevals.

EUROPEAN HUNTERS' DAY – NOVEMBER 3rd 2012

*Albert & Irene Titterington joined a very enthusiastic gathering
at the Abbeylax Hotel, Co Laois.*

On Saturday November 3rd, thousands of Irish hunters celebrated European Hunters' Day. The day coincides with the feast day of hunting's patron saint, St. Hubert (circa 656 – circa 728). To mark the occasion in Ireland, the National Association of Regional Game Councils (NARGC), in partnership with the Federation of Associations for Hunting and Conservation of the EU (FACE), hosted an extensive public celebration for hunters and anglers from throughout the island of Ireland in Abbeylax Manor Hotel, Abbeylax, Co. Laois.

St. Hubert's Day is traditionally celebrated across Europe where thousands of people attend special masses and celebrations to honour the patron saint of hunters. During these festivities, special blessings are said for the safety and success of hunters and the health of their animals. The epicentre of these celebrations is in the town of St. Hubert, Belgium, where the annual colourful festivities draw crowds of 10,000 or more.

The celebrations were attended by a variety of public figures including John McGuinness, T.D., Chairman of the Public Accounts Committee and Dr. Yves Lecocq, long-time Secretary General and Senior Policy Advisor to the Federation of Associations for Hunting and Conservation

of the EU (FACE), which represents over 7,000,000 European hunters.

NARGC National Director and European Hunters' Day spokesperson for Ireland, Des Crofton stated: "European Hunters' Day is an informal and joyous celebration of a way of life for millions of people throughout Europe. This year we extend a warm welcome to our fellow fieldsports enthusiasts from Northern Ireland. Aside from its cultural and social importance, recent studies have shown that Irish hunters spend over €111 million annually in the Irish economy and that hunting creates a range of ecological benefits for threatened species, such as Red Grouse and Grey Partridge, through habitat management and the control of predators".

It was good to see representatives from all Ireland's country sports including a superb and very colourful mounted display by the Laois Hunt with nearly 80 mounted supporters, birds of prey from the Irish Hawking Club, gundog and their handlers, anglers and a number of exhibits including one from the Irish Working Terrier Federation.

A lavish venison game lunch with mulled wine was also provided 'on the hoof' to attendees and a number of presentations made including crystal to Turlough Coffey to mark his retirement as FACE Ireland secretary and copies of Michael Twist's book *Sporting Memories* to the two distinguished guests.



The Laois Hunt had a very impressive and smart turnout.



Our very hospitable hostess from the Abbeylax Manor Hotel.



Ray, Katelyn, Trevor and Gordon Shore, Portlaoise
Picture: Alf Harvey, supplied from NARGC



Damian & Eleanor McElholm (Warrenpoint), Irene Titterington.
(Downpatrick) & Noel Carr (Donegal)



The Irish Working Terrier Federation mounted a display.



Mr & Mrs Ed Power came to support the day.



Holly and Pauline Bowe, Rathdowney, Laois with Ruby.
Picture: Alf Harvey, supplied from NARGC



Conor, Darragh and Ruairi Mooney, Offaly Regional Game
Council members.
Picture: Alf Harvey, supplied



(Top) L-R Turlough Coffey, Noel Carr, Des Crofton, Irene Titterington, Yves Lecocq, Oliver Russell and Sean Doris.

(Bottom) Dr. Yves Lecocq, Secretary-General Federation of Associations for Hunting and Conservation of the EU; John McGuinness TD; Des Crofton NARGC; Sean Doris, chairman NARGC; Turlough Coffey and Oliver Russell, Chairman FACE Ireland.

Picture: Alf Harvey, supplied from NARGC

(Left) Laois Hunt members head off.

Picture: Alf Harvey, supplied from NARGC



ROAD TRIP FOR THREE

I was asked if I would like to write a travelogue on my annual 'doggy' adventures around the UK which began with an all night drive from Stranraer to Weston Park for the Midland Game Fair back in 2006 with my pup Colt. That was to be the beginning of something I am now addicted to: touring UK Game Fairs. Since then I've been to almost all the main fairs around Britain, in all sorts of horrendous and glorious weather, from Selby 2008 wakening up with tents caved in with snow to being roasted at Sandringham in 2010. Now, as much as I enjoyed camping I fancied going further afield and buying a motorhome gave me the means to do that. In 2010 I decided on a full tour on the mainland taking in as many game fairs as possible, but little did I realise what an experience I was about to have. A complete novice to motor-homing I had a lot to learn but was enjoying the challenge. Fully loaded with everything I needed, and both my dogs Colt and China we set off for Stranraer.

Up north along the west coast, I was aiming to cut across to the north east coast to Glamis Castle then head south to the border. Scotland appeared in all its glory from morning to evening! Over the Forth Bridge and through Edinburgh to meet the A1 southbound, I got to Morpeth then Bedlington. How fitting to have met an old woman who had bred Bedlington Terriers for 50 years! She lamented how she was down to her last one as her years 'were rolling in faster now.' That was a 45 minute chat that I'd love to have stretched a wee bit longer.

My first game fair was a week away so I wanted a touring site with open ground where I could run the dogs when the sun cooled down. Egton was a good site which bordered a private airfield covered with rabbits. Only the second night in Colt chased one into a copse then spotted a squirrel which he tried to climb a tree after...result no rabbit, no squirrel, but Colt with and



What a way to travel for Colt and China.

injured toe. He'd opened an old injury that would keep him from running for a few weeks. Disaster already. One dog down and not a race run!



Up hill all the way: Harewood House for the Yorkshire Game Fair.

Soon it was time to move off and get ready for Harewood Game Fair on a stunning estate close to Harrogate. But, before that I had a date at Whitby...with fish and chips and a walk around the Abbey, which incidentally was used at the beginning of the Hammer Dracula movies. Anyway, fed and watered it was time to get to Harewood.



Whitby on the North Yorkshire coast viewed from the Abbey.

Race day and 300yards uphill towards the manor itself. Miss China decided she didn't like it and refused to leave the line. What a nightmare! Earlier I'd heard people commenting on both my dogs so there were big expectations. Well, didn't China scupper that one haha! Sunday was a different day and she lead the field to the line. The highlight for me was catching up again with Paul Sagar, the famous Saluki man. Paul is able to trace his Salukis lineage back through history; his dogs are legendary but Sadly he is no longer with us.



Robin Hood Bay



The Major Oak, Sherwood Forest

Monday morning, I was southward bound, Sherwood Forest to see the Major Oak, hideout of Robin Hood then off to my sisters for a serious laundry turnaround. Great timing as her village had a beer festival on. Result! Just how can you beat a Beer Fest and Indian food before narrowly avoiding a thunder storm? A lane facing Hilary's house split huge flat fields in half, one side sugar beet, the other a cereal field hiding a few deer. Later the next evening China mysteriously slipped her lead and coursed one for a while through crops taller than her, so luckily it got away but it took a while for her to give up. I was glad of the result to be honest.

Seals bellowed like ghouls in the night

Onwards and eastwards back onto the coast at Hunstanton through to Sea Palling. Postcard perfect with its tiny canals holding various craft watched over by windmills, almost lost in time. My site was tucked up tight against a marshy shoreline where seals bellowed continuously like ghouls in the night.

After a few nights here I had arranged to meet up with a friend who had recently taken over a woodcutter's cottage near Bungy in Suffolk. What a place, sitting 600 yards back off the road, with a lane from which I could see hares, pheasants and partridges in fields each side. A torturous couple of days lay ahead for my dogs as I daren't let them off lead.

Time to move on to Ashford in Kent then Folkstone, followed by sliding westwards along the South coast to



Sea Palling, on the Norfolk coast

Camber Sands. Such a beach. All that pent up energy and frustration Colt and China had bottled was released in a couple of 40 mph flypasts kicking up sand like a stray Exocet missile. The historic tiny town of Rye was two miles from my site so I spent a couple of days having touristy-type walks around it. Cobbled streets with house and shops straight out of a Dickens novel, each facing each other almost meeting at the top with their leaded windows and dormer fronts.

The World Cup was due to begin so I had my priorities: a site with good TV reception. The next game fair was Motcombe and I need to get set up close by. After stopping in the New Forest for a couple of nights I travelled through Salisbury to Shaftesbury and settled down on Saturday night to watch England play the USA. Sunday came quickly and the next thing I knew it was race day!

Motcombe was more of a country fair then game fair, very horsey oriented with every other pony girl being a Lucinda or Felicity..some gorgeous fillies too! A great venue with sunshine on tap, I was made to feel more than welcome by Dorset Lurcher Club who ran events like clockwork. With no waiting about between events, everyone was able to have time around the fair and relax. Colt won his heat and I was happy with that but I



Check these doors from a street in Rye, East Sussex Rye.

pulled him from the final as his toe was still looking a bit tender. China put a display on and was at her best. It would be another week before their next race so it was time to get back to relaxing again, next stop Torbay on the South coast. Devon, land of Cream Teas.

Me cultured? Errr no, but I did find myself nipping in and out of art galleries and museums looking for sighthounds or greyhounds. Taking photos inside these places got me two ejections and a verbal at a third but I still managed a few sneaky shots mind you!

My next site was Wembury just outside Plymouth. I met up with a friend who showed me some lovely places to eat and walk dogs. Her favourite was Mothecombe Beach so whippets and lurchers were released on a sunny evening and mayhem ensued! I'd been asked to judge at Scruples Whippet and Lurcher show near Tavistock where we camped on site and dined on stew which a few of the women made; lovely people and a well run show.

I'd always enjoyed Rick Stein's cookery programs on television and there was one of his eateries in Padstow.



St Ives Beach, Cornwall.

Cornwall so you can guess the next port of call after meeting friends at St Ives for a run along the beach there. What a beach too; it has to be the best in the UK. If you want white sand and blue skies make your way to St Ives. Northwards along the coast lies Padstow, with its quaint little harbour circled by shops pubs and Rick Stein's fish restaurant and bakery.



The delightful Padstow Harbour was a magnet for tourists.



Rick Stein's restaurant is well worth a visit.

Where I stayed for a few days had sand dunes galore edging onto rabbit-filled fields. With two more events still to come I daren't slip my dogs at night for obvious reasons but each lifted a couple after a nice chase during the morning, just enough to keep their interest up on their holidays. Porlock Horse Show in Somerset was a glorious place for a fair, where winding single path roads eventually led me to the gates of the field. All sorts of events for dogs took place, even a Labradoodle show.



Lambourn Downs were sizzling in the mid C20s.

My final event was Lambourn Hunt Show in the chalky Downs of Berkshire. The temperature was mid 20s and only beer cooled us down. The day finished with a huge BBQ and a walk to the local pub. All day, a passage of race horses went from paddock to paddock on the other side of the hedge..everyone a potential Goodwood winner - or so they would say.

What a way to finish off my doggy tour of Britain. Trophies, some stunning scenery, I'd stayed in areas I had only seen on postcards and met all sorts of rogues, villains and incredibly interesting folk. It took me weeks to get the trip out of my system but I knew my next ones would be a bit special as the 'Road Trip for Three' would become 'Road Trip for Four,' as I'd be collecting Rebel, Colt's son when I got home.

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Paul Pringle interviews Tom Gardiner

A countryman in Belfast

Many will be familiar with the name of Gardiner Brothers, Waring Street, where they have been wholesale jewellers for many years. But what many won't know is that at the centre of that flourishing company sits Tom Gardiner, who despite many years right at the heart of Belfast's business community has always kept his country roots and beliefs.

I met with Tom in his Waring Street office to talk about his love of the countryside and to hear something about the Gardiner Brother's history as well, learning that Tom's father Samuel and his brother William started the firm on 13th October 75 years ago in 1937.

"My father always believed that 13 was his lucky number and as it happened he was right. We weren't in these premises but just a stone's throw away at number 12 - Blitz Square - where we remained for over 40 years," Tom explained. "We now employ 15 people but when the business began all those years ago it supplied watch parts to all the watchmakers in Belfast. We had a man who went round them all twice a day collecting and then delivering back all the mechanisms. There were scores of watchmakers at one time in Belfast, but nowadays you'd be lucky to find two in the city. With the advent of electronic watches they simply died out, not to be replaced. If you need one now you'd need to go to England. We had our own watchmakers in the old days, and we probably trained most of the ones in Belfast as well."

Tom Gardiner said that today the bulk of the business was connected with the diamond trade and interestingly the supply of trophies near and far. And his eyes lit up as he mentioned that his trophies had gone to some very important occasions in the world of clay pigeon shooting and cricket and other sports, for example uniquely remodelling the Northern Cricket Union Cup when it suffered loss due to a fire and they supplied the

major cup presented for winning the Irish Rugby League. "But I think however that the NCU cup would be the most memorable that we have ever created, particularly due to the workmanship involved," he added.

I had picked up on his reference to Blitz Square and Tom said that a Lancaster bomber sat there during the war to show the population exactly what was defending them: "A morale booster," he said. "The Square ran across from Waring Street to High Street and every Friday and Saturday night the auctioneers would arrive to shout their offers for everything from needles to canteens of cutlery - the original 'Flash Harry spivs' I suppose. Interestingly too in the current building you can still see traces of the very first structure there, which was one of the very oldest buildings in Belfast," he added.

Tom came in to the business at 17 years of age, 58 years ago and still likes to come in a couple of days a week, old habits die hard I suppose. But Tom is no city slicker, despite operating the successful business for so many years.

"My grandfather farmed just outside Dromore, in County Down and that's, I suppose, where I got my love of the countryside. I spent all my summer holidays there painting barns, whitewashing it was in those days. My grandfather lived in a whitewashed thatched house too, running his dairy farm, along with big flocks of chickens which I fed and then collected the eggs.

"Looking back even then I particularly loved springtime when birdlife starts to increase and it's just the same today. I think it's good that hedges are being left by farmers nowadays and it makes a big difference to habitat and nesting."

Fishing also played a big part in Tom's life: "Like most boys in my day I started literally with a bent pin and progressed to flyfishing which I enjoyed all around the country, but particularly on the River Maine. I was eventually honoured by the Maine Angling Club with Life Membership - maybe



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75 Years of success - Tom Gardiner with some of the fine selection available in his Waring Street business.

because I fished there so often, especially at the creameries. At the creameries was a family called McCready and one of them had only one arm. His name was Albert and he was one of the best flyfishers I have ever seen and he and I would catch our share of fish, especially in September time when the Dollaghan were running. But that was long before the dredgers came in to 'straighten' the river's course and ruined the fishing for us. That's modernisation for you, I suppose."

Tom has always firmly believed in 'putting something back' in the sports that he loved. A big clay pigeon fan, Gardner Brothers has supplied umpteen trophies over the years as well as trophies for Tom's other loves, cricket and rugby. And in practical terms he has reared pheasants, improved habitat and controlled vermin to help the balance of nature.

"I still rear pheasants and release them. I don't shoot any more but I love the whole rearing thing and seeing the



Some of the prizes and commemorative objects.



One wall where 'time' doesn't stand still.



A selection of quality watches on display.

pheasants pop up all over the countryside around me. They are persecuted in the wild - not by people - but by the huge upsurge in predators not least by the explosion in numbers of buzzards. In my younger days you would never have seen a buzzard, but nowadays you see half a dozen anywhere in the country," he added, shaking his head, "never mind the upsurge in magpies. We have bird feeders everywhere at home but the magpies have predated our songbirds out of existence."

Tom said that some people didn't understand the balance of nature: "They see a magpie thinking what a lovely black and white bird - which it is - but if they saw the damage they do they might change their minds. I remember one day in particular, I was in my garden and a magpie knocked down a songbird and pecked its two eyes out on the ground before I could do anything about it, and that must be replicated all over the land. Well, maybe that's not what the conservation bodies want to talk about is it? But they should in my opinion."

I asked him if he had had any dogs in the past and his eyes lit up as he recalled the many springers that had been by his side on shooting forays: "I've always had springers which mostly I trained myself, but the best was an Ardoon dog which I bought trained from Alfie Nicholl, an amazingly talented local trainer. The dog, Jet of Ardoon was its Kennel Club name, was trained in the moonlight as well as the daytime. A joy to handle, Jet was the most obedient dog and the best worker I ever had and despite many others over the years, I always knew I'd never have better."

Tom is still a member of Kettlebottom Gun Club, near Lough Neagh, but nowadays is happy to watch others both in the field and at the clay shoot. Looking to the future of country sports Tom is buoyant: "Look at the shooting success we had in the Olympics last summer and you'll see too that there are many more youngsters coming into the sport. Importantly, they'll learn that it is not a gun that does the damage, it's the person behind it. And that will serve them well whether at clays or shooting over the fields."

Suddenly there was a knock at the office door and Tom paused to bid me farewell before rushing off to deal with the latest developments in a major diamond delivery, pausing only to conclude: "I have tremendous memories of a lifetime of shooting, fishing, birdwatching and conservation, but these days I have great craic trying to bowl straight at the Cave Hill Bowling Club, rather than cast straight or shoot straight."

The interview over, I left convinced that we will still have Tom involved in countrysports and conservation in some way or other for many years to come. And the countryside will be a better place for it.

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Plus Twos W.A.S.

Many's the time I got the answer W.A.S. when I was travelling around the place with Aunt Irene in my youth and asked that favourite of youngsters - where are we going? It stood for 'wait and see' and Plus Twos has often used it on the twins, Ivan and Sap, when they become more pestering than usual. This time it was Superintendent Farlow who used it when I asked was there any news on who might have been taking a pot shot at the squire, as it still concerned me even though there had been no repetition and, as far as we knew, no further poaching.

I had been waiting for three weeks for any news and Farlow was keeping his cards very close to his chest, so close that neither Dillon nor Purdey knew anything either. Penny had been doing a bit of work helping with a new breeding pen that Purdey had persuaded me to build so that we might have a few birds for next season. Dillon couldn't wait to do a bit of business with an old pal who reared pheasants by the thousand and he was probably going to make a few pounds on the deal, but if it actually put birds on the shoot it would be the first time in years that there had been more than a handful to shoot. Well, it kept Penny where we could see him and, with Purdey supervising, he couldn't get up to much. His friend, McGlinchy, had returned to wherever he had come from and with him his very silent dog, so he slipped from our minds for now. It was going to be a bit of a rush to have the pen up to scratch in time but Griff Penny was useful with a hammer and didn't mind long hours as long as he was making a bit of tax free money. Lots of jobs are done around Woodless on the 'tax free system,' otherwise we couldn't afford them and the thought of buying expensive wire or nails and then paying VAT on them hurts my sense of pride as the squire of Woodless. It's bad enough that some Jack in

Office in the government charges me tax on the Australian money which is all that is keeping the place going at the moment, but to have to pay tax on any money we spend really goes to my heart.

The pen was duly finished just before the twins arrived home on holidays from the over expensive boarding school and took great pleasure in helping shepherd the poults out of the back of Dillon's van and into the pen. I had spent a small fortune on feeders and drinkers and all sorts of electric fencing which both Purdey and Dillon assured me were essential if we were to see any of these birds ever reach a shooting day. Of course, there was also going to be extra hours patrolling for vermin whether it was feathered, four or two legged and they had my head in a spin with all their talk of the good old days when they could have used man traps and live rounds in the trip guns! Could you imagine the trouble I'd have been in? There would have been bodies littering the estate and they wouldn't have been pheasants either.

'Curried anything' washed down with a stiff whiskey or two

The twins, under the encouragement of Dillon, were doing some of the daylight patrols armed with a pair of rather worn but serviceable single barrel guns which Griff Penny had worked magic on in the gunroom. When Dillon found them in the attic under a pile of long forgotten shooting coats they looked like rusty gas pipes but, by the time Penny had scrubbed, oiled and scoured them, they were more than passable. I couldn't see them pleasing any regimental sergeant major but they seemed safe enough as long as you didn't use some highly charged load meant for long range geese. Certainly the twins were delighted with their new found 'responsibility,' even if I thought it better to be as

far away as possible from them when they went walk about! After a few days of misses they began to bag the occasional magpie and even a few pigeon which, when they stopped turning them into minced meat, were welcomed as manna from heaven by Mrs. Reilly. Now Mrs. Reilly can be irascible but she has a soft spot for the family and thinks of the old days when I used to bag a few rabbits or pigeon and deliver them to the back kitchen door so she could feed the 'Major' his favourite of 'curried anything' washed down with a stiff whiskey or two. Things were going so well I let Dillon persuade me to go out with the blighters one morning and even single barrelled



They talked of the good old days when they could have used man traps

weapons in their hands are frightening. He had drilled them well enough but teenagers are an excitable lot and while Sap, who you will remember is actually Stephen Adrian Philip is rather easy going, his sister, Irene Victoria Ann Naomh, better known as Ivan is a candidate for the Wild West Show. When Ivan sees a chance she takes it and quite a good snap shot she is too, but it can be unnerving to say the least.

We were walking along the edge of the pen and everything seemed quiet so I decided to have a puff or two of my pipe and let my mind do a little wandering. Letting the mind wander around Woodless is never wise but this was worse than usual. The little whirls of smoke were drifting on an almost invisible wind and thoughts of having some pheasants for the season were drifting through the upper labyrinths of what passes for my mind as the growing pheasants pecked about contentedly and then there was a bang. Ivan had let fly just beside my left ear as a stoat foolishly wandered into view and the stoat was no more, but my hearing wasn't much better. I might add that stoats weren't protected then and it's a pity my hearing wasn't on the

endangered list because it took days of shouting 'What?' at all and sundry. Dillon thought it hilarious, as did Purdey, until I started using it as a means of ignoring the pleas for yet more money to drain the coffers.

Dillon suggested that I might be better going out with the poachers rather than my twin terrorists so I decided to do a little quiet study of the old papers and game books with the assistance of Esso's latest young lady from her work in London. This girl had turned up one night just in time for dinner and was introduced as the new nanny as the business in London

was a bit slack at present, it being the 'business' Plus Twos had never really got to grips with! Anyway, she was a rather nice girl and with excellent manners which would be a godsend if she could manage to inculcate them into the children – one hopes? I left the keepers to do the keeping and started on the dusty tomes of Woodless past with the aid of Charlie who turned out to be little or no use with a notebook and not much better answering the telephone. Now I could have done with a good telephone answerer if only to keep away the unwelcome callers who seem to think that Plus Twos is a sort of unending charity giver who has shekels to dispense at will. It's bad enough when it's the Rector or even the Bishop but it has to stop when complete strangers come on the line on what Charlie informed me was a 'cold call' – more like a damned cheek! Do you know I even had one from some frightful person asking if I would donate to some group who wanted to ban hunting! Well, I ask you?

About the best that could be said for Charlie was that she was pleasant and did actually know the alphabet and could read decent handwriting. The old game



I had spent a small fortune on feeders and drinkers and all sorts of electric fencing.

books had been kept by a series of gamekeepers who had benefited from the Primary School Act and old fashioned school teachers and wrote in the most classic hand. It didn't take too long to realise that the FitzGerald Bourkes were never much use at running Woodless as either a farm or a shoot and horses were a regular form of ruin. It didn't seem to matter whether it was hunters or chasers, the flat or the local hunter trial, they could pick a loser at one hundred yards. They used to bet on the bag with a monotonous ability to get it wrong by dozens if not hundreds and whatever money came slowly into the estate left it at high speed. Can you imagine the Major conning Aunt Irene into putting a couple of hundred on the Derby in 1950 on some old nag at 100 to 1. I'm sure he told her some story that convinced her that it was a sure thing: it probably had only three legs! On another occasion Aunt Irene spent a grand or so on a dinner party for the local hunt after one of their hunter trials and she had already put up a substantial prize for the fastest pair home. Well, the

game books turned up a few oddities like the day Irene's grandfather had three birds down with one barrel; unfortunately it included a brace of pheasants taken on the front lawn and his mother's pet parrot that was enjoying a little winter sunshine through the drawing room window. Obviously this wasn't the only generation in Woodless to suffer at the hands of a certain run of bad luck, carelessness and even a touch of insanity. There were enough close shaves over the years to fill the local District Court on a weekly basis during the shooting season and with the twins I doubt if those days are completely over.

Working, even on dusty old tomes, with attractive young ladies is rather pleasant and Plus Twos is not much different from other men but, of course, there was

no hanky-panky - noblesse oblige and all that. Now that's not what Dillon and Purdey thought as I spent days avoiding them and their moaning pleas for cash and in no time at all I had Esso laughing merrily when she told of the rumours that were being whispered below stairs. I was shocked and even more so that she found it so funny. However, I was a little crest fallen when she added that there wasn't a hope of Plus Twos with that sort of thing.

And as always, when Plus Twos takes his eye off the ball or worse still the estate, there is trouble ahead and it came sooner than I expected and in a rather gilt edged package! Just wait till you hear this one!

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With a lurcher by my side

The season is in full swing, my dogs young and old have been on the rabbit job for a couple of months now and we are enjoying every minute of it. The ferreting has been busy, but by night we have been even more active. Young Fudge and I have spent a lot of time freelancing throughout the countryside nocturnally. The sport has been good and we have had some really enjoyable nights out.

Back in late September, conditions looked good after our evening walk, so Fudge and I made ready to bag a few rabbits with the assistance of our deadly beam of light. It took a little more time to get ready than usual, I pottered around the house looking for those odds and ends that get left up over the summer months and which I had forgotten on my first few nights out. A sling to carry rabbits, my Opinel knife and a few spares for the lamp to keep in the van, as these wonderful pieces of expensive technology have a great habit of blowing a bulb 15 miles from home in the horizontal rain!

The dogs take a few nights out to get going as well, it's not to say they don't do anything over the summer, in fact they probably do just as much for exercise, but it does take them just a few nights out to get into the swing of things.

As we stopped outside the farm yard a wet cold nose poked into the back of my neck and I had to laugh. Fudge is very inquisitive, or just plain nosey might be a better term. Rather than sit down in the back like the other two, she will stand up and watch out the window for an entire journey no matter how far I drive, twisting her neck if she sees something and cocking her ears at cats and other dogs out the window as we pass. Every time I brake she is so engrossed in what's ahead she doesn't realise and bumps into the back of my neck.

I opened the rear of the van and she skipped out, gave herself a shake and I put her slip around her neck, the lamp cord over my neck and off we set. I hadn't got right through the gate as I flicked the lamp and a rabbit looked back at us, flattened himself and pulled his ears tight to his body, squeezing lower and lower down, trying his best to keep out of sight. This is what we old rabbit lampers call a squatter or a sitter. The rabbit doesn't want to make a run for it and thinks by sitting tight he won't be spotted and by some dogs he won't, so sits as tight as possible to the ground allowing us to literally walk right up almost nose to nose with him before he looses his bottle and makes a break for it. But then there are other dogs, those educated or 'made' dogs which know when there is no movement there is still a rabbit. My old bitch Ruby would know instantly when a squatter was on and would walk up the beam like a cat, never looking directly at the rabbit and at the last minute, lift it right out of its seat. A truly brilliant skill and so fantastic to see. Unfortunately young Fudge hasn't quite got the knack like her mum and as much as I tried to get her to see the rabbit she couldn't. I let her



Watch carefully young'un.

off the slip and she walked right past the rabbit, almost touching it with her foot, I called her, she turned around and the rabbit took off, but it got no more than ten yards before she struck it, juggled it a little and held it tight to the ground until I reached her to dispatch it. I have found with Lurchers that they either lift squatters or don't, and experience sometimes makes little difference.

I flicked on the lamp, one rabbit sat and the other broke

We walked another few yards and a rabbit shot across in front, it was a good hundred yards to the fence and Fudge bowled him just under half way there, another one for the bag and I returned her to her slip. The wind was getting up and there was a little rain, just ideal. The lights of the village faded as we walked and I began to warm a little. I spotted a few pairs of eyes ahead and I hissed Fudge as a warning and the tension tightened on the slip. We moved along the hedge line and got a little closer, I slipped her, gave her a split second to make some ground flicked on the lamp, one rabbit sat and the other broke. Luckily Fudge stepped on the sitter as she pursued the runner and as it rose up she struck it and we had number three in the bag.

The night was going well and we moved on, crossing a few fields as the wind got a little higher and the rain a little heavier. The young had now exerted sufficient energy that she became a little more settled and I took her off the slip completely. Molly, my young whippet works off the slip entirely and makes more catches for doing so. She will walk a little ahead and when the lamp comes on makes the decision herself. Too far and she won't run, if it looks right she will. She has sufficient experience and sense now at four years old to understand the job, whereas before if she saw something at 300 yards she took off after it. It took a while and a whole lot of lamping but we got there. A dog working off the slip, by your side, making catches, retrieving and

jumping fences along with you becomes an absolute pleasure to lamp with, a real genuine rabbit catcher. My intentions are to get young Fudge working the same, and it's working for the most part, but she does need that little burn off just to take the excess energy and excitement out her beforehand.

Fudge struck; that was it

Our next field was high with grass, three rabbits were sitting tight along the bottom. Without warning two made for the hedge and she pursued, the rabbit hit the ditch and she followed, then back out across the field, into another ditch and she yipped in frustration, it jumped into mid air over a small pile of stones, Fudge struck; that was it. I got the rabbit from her and swung the lamp round to find the third still sitting. I walked her up to it, encouraging her to look down all the time, the rabbit sitting tight and... boom! Fudge lifted it straight from the seat - by accident rather than design, but it's all experience.

We were going well, five run and five catches, so we took a breather. I love lamping alone, just the dog and me, there is nothing to beat it. As we sat, Fudge tucked in tight to me and I looked over the lights in the distance - there was nowhere I would have rather been. To work so closely with your own dog by night, just the two of you and a beam of light, is something unexplainable, that only the initiated will ever understand.

I began to feel the cold so we moved on, crossed a few fields and came to a small field full of rushes. I urged Fudge over and as I flicked the lamp to find my bearings I saw plenty of amber reflections. There were also some cattle in the field but we had been through them before and they were pretty steady and not too bothered by us. It does pay to be careful lamping with cattle in a field as sometimes a lamp and a dog running stirs them up something crazy, especially young cattle, and its all to easy to end up with an injured or dead dog, or injured or dead self. There is no contest between a small rabbit lamper (four legged or two) and a 700lb. cow.

I slipped Fudge almost immediately and she snapped up a lovely three quarter grown rabbit in only a few short yards. There were plenty more around so I quickly relieved her of it and sent her on to the next. A little more testing, this rabbit spun through the rushes and out the other side leaving the little bitch in the dust. But she soon caught up again, closing in along the hedge until the rabbit broke through with the dog in pursuit. There was now no rabbit, no dog, but a loud squeal inside the hedge and a large yellow tail backed out, and I think she was grinning as she made her way back.

We had seven in the bag now and moved on towards the big hill, on to what would be a real test of speed for the young bitch. On this patch of ground the rabbits sit a little under

100 yards from the hedge. We get in front of them and cut them off, but it's a job for the dogs and they have to go straight out and the rabbits always turn and run straight towards the hedge, but it's all downhill, short grass and all in favour of the rabbit.

Fudge missed the first and second, but literally scooped the third at the mouth of the hole and struck another, looking very much like her mum in doing so. Fudge has a great strike but occasionally goes in a little too quick and over stretches herself, leaving no room for error should she miss there is never time for a second go. The whippet on the other hand will wait and wait and wait for a strike until the time is just right, but often runs out of time.

By now we had nine rabbits and Fudge was really going well. I was pleased for her as she ran well, the rabbits worked her well and she caught more than she missed. I decided to try to end on a good note and try for one last coney before heading home.

We crossed into another field on another hill, three rabbits got up quickly and made down the hill. I could hear the docken leaves and longer grass whip her shins as she ran through them such was the power in her stride. A black rabbit in front was gaining a lot of ground and Fudge was giving it every screed of power in those muscular back legs. The rabbit made a quick jink, she struck probably a little too soon, the big long yellow neck stretched out. She slipped, loosing her balance, went sideways, rolled onto her back over and over again and slid along, smashing into the fence with a huge crash...My heart sank, I thought the worst; a split second went past and my blood went cold. Almost in slow motion she struggled to get to her feet, tilting and moving her head. I squinted my eyes in the light and as she turned her head I could just about make out something stuck in her jaws - black rabbit. A great ending and now it really was time for home.

Merry Christmas.

The rabbit thinks we can't see him!



Art and Antiques

While Irish paintings may not be attracting the record breaking prices they once did and fine furniture is having its ups and downs on the sales floor books appear to be making prices once unheard of. Dublin based WHYTE'S held a massive sale of books, stock from the estate of the late antiquarian book dealer James Fenning and receipts were said to total €230,000.

According to auctioneer Ian Whyte, while 64% of the 1,400 lots sold, that figure rose to 83% when measured by value. With the sale came an end to over a century of Dublin book-selling by the Fenning family and the top lot sold was a rare copy of a pamphlet by Jonathan Swift titled 'A proposal for giving badges to the beggars in all the parishes of Dublin,' published in 1737, which came under the hammer at €7,400 (€6,000-€7,000). A set of five Jane Austen novels (the first one-volume illustrated editions of 1833) made €3,500 (€1,500-€1,800) and another volume, 'Views in Affghaunistaun (sic), a collection of sketches by Sir Keith Jackson made during the first Afghan war and published in 1841 sold for €3,100 (1,500-2,250). A copy of the Bible, printed in Dublin in 1714 made €3,400, significantly above its estimate of €600-€800.

The rising value of books is further exemplified by



Paul Henry oil, 'The bog at evening' (Sold at ADAMS)

Oxfordshire based Jonkers Rare Books who are selling first editions of Ian Fleming's James Bond stories for phenomenal prices Their spokesman said: "Since the early seventies the demand among collectors for Fleming's first editions has been insatiable and consequently prices have risen steadily. We can chart the rise of a fine copy of Casino Royale through some of the copies we have sold over the years with the book making £3,000 in 1993, rising to £50,000 last year.

"Of course there is more to a collection than one book and the rest of the Fleming canon has kept pace with its trail blazer. Collectors have become more discerning, showing in the greater price disparity between really fine copies and the rest but as supply gets smaller and smaller and the demand remains as voracious as ever the rise in prices shows little sign of abating. A first edition Diamonds are Forever would set you back £2,500 while a first edition of Thunderball can be picked up for £850."

DANIEL'S VIEW

According to Daniel Clarke, of ROSS'S in Belfast, the Irish art market has experienced a serious realignment in recent years and he feels buyers and sellers should take heed of what has happened. "Having said that I must add we are



Louis Le Brocquy's 'Procession with Lilies,' (Sold by ADAMS)



Kenneth Webb sold for 16,000 called 'Horse fair, Ballinasloe'

still selling between 70-75% in our sales and if estimates are correct there is no doubt pictures will continue to sell," he says. But he stresses people have to be realistic and consider the market climate at present. "Of course occasionally the really outstanding picture comes along and it will sell no matter what the market conditions are at the time." Daniel says silver is selling exceptionally well and gold too, at an all time high, is also doing very well. On the furniture scene things are not as rosy. "Furniture sales are static for a couple of reasons, firstly because it is not coming out into the sales room and secondly because of the state of the housing market. Until the housing market recovers I think this will continue but then again when an exceptional piece of Irish furniture comes to market it commands the high price it deserves."

Turning to ROSS's on-line sales he says these, now in their second year, continue to do well. "We are having very successful on-line sales of paintings and we are extremely pleased with the way in which they have been

going. We are selling affordable paintings and I think some of the people who are purchasing them will be the big collectors, spending thousands of pounds on their purchases in ten years time. We have conducted on-line jewellery sales, with all items catalogued by a professional gemologist, and we would hope to continue with these in the future too."

GEOFFREY'S THOUGHTS

Geoffrey Simpson, who runs Viewback Auctions in Omagh, always keeps his eye on the sales road ahead and over the years I have valued his reading of the auctions scene. He told me: "We have never been busier, working twice as hard but doing it for a third of what we were getting five years ago! Quality still sells, but not at the big money of the past," he added. "The reproduction merchants and dealers in oil lamps, ruby lamps and 'Irish Art' etc. may not have realised yet that the recession means that their wares just will not sell at the inflated prices of yesterday."

"Now, everyone is an expert because of eBay, Gumtree, etc., and when one person puts a Singer sewing machine online for £500 everyone else immediately assumes that theirs is worth a similar figure."

"Our business continues to function as we are not run by so called 'dealers' who continue to try to dictate ridiculous reserve prices on objects that are out of fashion or have little merit - usually in the genre of collectables. We try to conduct sales from vendors where the buying public have a chance of actually buying items

at a reasonable price and reserves, if they exist at all, are set by the auctioneer at a sensible level."

"So my advice is educate yourself, learn to recognise the bargains that are out there in terms of Georgian and later furniture, 19th century porcelain and forget the modern tat. Money in the bank is worth nothing. Spend it wisely on proper antiques - they will come good in the long term. Things have never been cheaper. The trick now is to live long enough for them to come to fruition again if investment is the objective. In the meantime, more people can enjoy quality objects at knock down



Jack Butler Yeats' 'The boat builder' (sold by Adams)



Sheraton style metaphoric dressing table. (sold by ADAMS)

A fine Gareth Morphy portrait (sold by Adams)



prices and they should go out to sales and do just that."

Seems like sound advice to me.

SALES RESULTS.

ADAMS' September sale of important Irish Art brought out an excellent Louis Le Brocquy, 'Procession with Lilies,' an oil on canvas which sold for €320,000. A Paul Henry oil, 'The bog at evening' made €150,000 while another went at €64,000 while Jack Butler Yeats' 'The boat builder' sold for €62,000 with another going at €55,000 and a Kenneth Webb making €16,000.

In an earlier sale of fine period furniture and

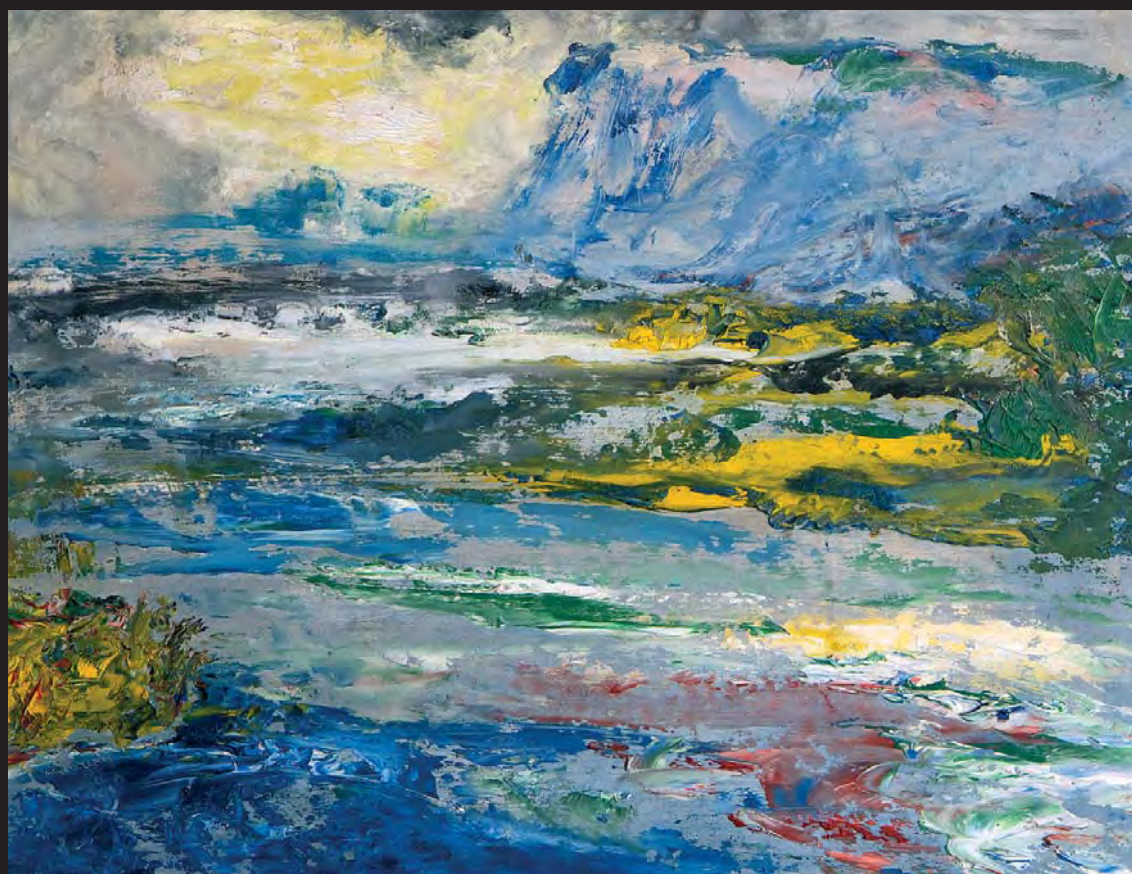
decorative arts, ADAMS sold an Edward VII gold and silver specimen coin set at €3,800 followed by a 19th century North European bronze of a classical youth at €3,000 and a Victorian inlaid and brass mounted walnut credenza at €2,600.

The Slane Castle Country House Collections sale saw an impressive Chinese blue and white jardinière going for €30,000 followed by an early George I English pier glass at €26,000 and a Garret Morphey portrait at €21,000. Other lots include a George II inlaid walnut secretaire tallboy at €18,000; an early 20th century Sheraton style metaphoric dressing table at €17,000 and an Irish George II pine and oak side table at €16,000.

ROSS's October sale of Irish art saw a William Conor, 'Girl eating an apple' wax crayon selling at £14,000 followed by Sean O'Sullivan's 'Galway farmer', an oil at £6,000 and two other Conors, at £5,200 and £4,200.

A William Percy French watercolour drawing went at £3,000 with a similar price paid for a Noel Murphy oil. Other lots included: Tom Carr, £2,500; Maurice C Wilks, £2,300; Ian Cumberland, £2,100; James H Craig, £2,000, Colin Davidson £1,900; Hector McDonnell, £1,800;

Charles McAuley, £1,800; George Campbell, £1,500 Carol Graham, £1,400; Andrew Nicholl, £1,300; Sean McSweeney, £1,200; and Kenneth Webb, £1,200.



'My River' was another Yeats (sold by ADAMS)

How 'Natural' Is Game-finding?

Anthing 'natural,' like motherhood and apple pie, is good news. All the word's connotations are positive: so already you are thinking of something 'wholesome,' 'worthy' and 'without contrivance.' With things natural we are, in short, firmly camped in 'what you see is what you get' territory. And if there's one sentence from Field Trial Regulations that folk can quote without checking, it will be that Judges "should take natural game-finding to be of the first importance in Field Trials." So, we're dealing with something really fundamental here: so much so that it has the status of a never questioned truth.

Consider it for a moment, though, and things are not so simple, not least because the natural game-finding mantra is so often used as a stick to beat those who try to combine game-finding and handleability. It is an

argument that has ever been with us. So here, writing in his 1947 book 'Retrievers,' is B.B.Riviere talking of those who write: "disparagingly of 'Field Trial Dogs' as compared with 'ordinary shooting dogs.'"

However misplaced, that disparaging argument never goes away and part of the reason for its persistence, surely, is that it is so much easier to define natural game-finding in terms of what it is not. So it's the dog which, emphatically, is not over dependent or lacking in drive and initiative and it is assuredly not part of a team where the handler, rather than the dog, typically finds the game. Whilst control at the service of game-finding can enhance performance in the field, control so comprehensive that it stifles any hint of flair is rightly condemned. And Field Trial Regulations are absolutely clear on the matter.

But, if too much control - or rather inappropriately deployed control - is an absolute disaster, does it mean that the absence of it is unalloyed good news? Somehow,

I don't think so. After all, if natural game-finding just consisted in dogs doing what comes naturally (remember that old song 'All you gotta do is act naturally') they would just be running about. In relation to gun-dogs, at any rate, the notion of 'the natural' as something devoid of contrivance, something which is, as it were, just as it comes, is thoroughly misleading. As we educate our gun-dogs we go in for a great deal of contrivance. And I don't just mean all the things encompassed by that marvellous old phrase 'yard training.' I mean natural game-finding as well.

If we take the collection of runners, for many the gold standard when it comes to natural game-finding, it's certainly the case that for some, perhaps most, of the operation the dog will be working unaided. And it's certainly the case that runners are sometimes lost as a result of ill-judged interventions from handlers which lift the dog's head just when it needs to be settling into its work. Here, more than at any other time, trust is of the essence.

The epitome of 'doing what comes naturally'

But, just as hounds have to be entered and learn their craft so the celebrated 'runner getter' has to start somewhere. So, although the performance ends up by



Alan Rountree with Waterford Edward of Tasco at the 2007 Championship.

looking the epitome of doing what comes naturally, in reality it's the outcome of the care taken early on to introduce and develop the notion of working a line. Balls, dummies, cord and so on are the contrivances which we use to produce the natural.

'Produce the natural.' If that seems paradoxical, it shouldn't. It shouldn't because, wherever we look, we see the same relationship manifesting itself: something which we regard as characteristic of natural game-finding proves to be a potential or capability which the dog has, to whatever degree (and there's no denying that some are more gifted than others), which has been specifically nurtured by the training process.

Take any quality which we admire and which we are likely to see as part of the definition of natural game-finding and we'll find, more often than not, that it's the result of carefully nurturing, sometimes subverting and invariably redirecting in some way a dog's natural impulses. We greatly value, and rightly so, a dog that will hold ground, that is, persist in its work in a controlled way, even though success is not coming its way. Our efforts to encourage that in early training include getting the dog used to the idea of hunting again a piece of ground it may think it has already thoroughly done. Admirable it certainly is, but it's anything but natural. A dog left to its own devices would be off to try somewhere else.

In fact persistence, so often a precondition for displays of natural game-finding, really is something that has to be built up over a period of time in a gradual and very conscious way. None of these qualities exists in some ring-fenced domain of its own of course and initiative and drive can both, to a degree, be nurtured and will make the attainment of high levels of persistence easier. The important thing to appreciate is that many manifestations of natural ability in the mature dog will be the happy outcome of early efforts to nurture and direct the potential which decades and decades of breeding has created.

This was dog work as pure poetry

So, when in 2009 I was asked to contribute a special memory to the Programme for 100th year of the International Gundog League's Retriever Championship, I had no hesitation in going back ten years to the conclusion of the 1999 Championship, also held on the Parker family's Blankney Estate. After the final drive most birds fell in a low crop of Lucerne. Each dog, sent in numerical order, collected and then Bert Taylor's Styperson Dipper - who would go on to win - was sent again. A cock bird was made to look easy, but when Alan Rountree was sent next to the left no bird could be found and FTCh Tasco Trinket began systematically to quarter the whole field. Facing the

fierce wind when necessary, this was dog work as pure poetry with handler intervention needed only when her intense concentration was momentarily broken when a hare she had come upon went away.

Following her, John Halsted and FTCh Ulstare Style similarly worked the ground thoroughly but to no avail. So, no bird had ever been found but the two FTChs had delivered a sequence of work verging on the sublime - working ground methodically, analysing every shifting wind and questing ceaselessly for a nuance of scent which might signal the possibility of a find. This was dog work, stripped to its essence and totally uplifting. Game-finding at its most natural, you might say: but you would surely more truthfully say that it was the product of careful preparation and a depth of experience which only work in the field can bring.

So, taking "natural game-finding to be of first importance" proves to be a vitally important statement of priorities rather than a literal truth. Natural game-finding is not something entirely different from training and control. It's part of a package where all the elements are utterly interdependent. As that great dancer Gene Kelly put it: "If it looks like you're working you ain't working hard enough." Not for nothing do the Field Trial Regulations say: "usually the best dog seems to require the least handling. It appears to have an instinctive knowledge of direction and makes a difficult find look simple and easy."

You might almost say that it just did things naturally. But, with Kelly's dictum in mind, you'd probably have to add that it was the product of much hard work.



John Halsted accepting a retrieve from Cherry Finlan's FTCh Dargaffin Fliss of Snowdell.

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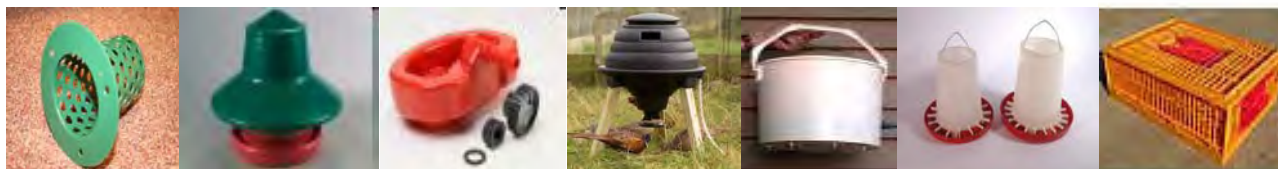
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FROM THE BOOKSHELVES – SNIPE

Many of the great sportsmen of the past were also great naturalists who spent almost as much time observing all aspects of their quarry species. One such shooter/naturalist was Brian Vesey-Fitzgerald. Vesey-Fitzgerald began his career as a journalist with Reuters. He then became the naturalist on the staff of *The Field* magazine, becoming editor from 1938 to 1946. He devoted his time to writing and broadcasting. Apart from wildlife, cats and dogs, he had particular interest in the countryside in general, gypsies, fairgrounds and boxing. He showed sympathy with both poachers and gamekeepers. He was the author of *British Game* (1946) and it is to this book and his chapter on Snipe that we start off this series on our game birds.

Vesey-Fitzgerald states that there are three species of snipe found in the UK & Ireland: the Great Snipe (*Capella media*); the Common Snipe (*Capella gallinago gallinago*) and the Jack Snipe (*Lymnocyptes minimus*). He describes the Great Snipe: "The great snipe is a passage-migrant and a scarce one at that. Personally I have never seen a great snipe on the wing in this country, though I have seen a few in the poulterers' shops. The bird does visit us regularly in the autumn (mainly our east and west coasts) and probably regularly in the spring also, but it does not stop, and so is generally missed. Inland it is very uncommon indeed, but I am by no means sure that it is so uncommon on the coast. It sits astonishingly close, and I know experienced shore-gunners who maintain that without a dog you are much more likely to walk over them than to put them up. As I say, I have never seen one on the wing in England, but I have seen them in Norway and Denmark. There is no possibility of confusion with the common snipe, for the great snipe rises silently, flies directly and for no great distance, and is altogether a larger and darker bird with a noticeable amount of white on the sides of the tail."

In fact the Great Snipe's breeding habitat is marshes and wet meadows with short vegetation in north-eastern Europe including north-western Russia. Great Snipes are migratory, wintering in Africa. The European breeding population is in steep decline. An amazing bird radio tracking has found it can fly huge distances up to 4,000 miles without stopping with a 'cruising speed' of up to 60mph.

I have had the advantage of Vesey-Fitzgerald in that I have seen one in flight and had the opportunity to examine one at close quarters. When we were shooting grouse in Skye many years ago en route between two moors we were told that we could also shoot snipe (in Scotland season starts 12th August). My old golden - an inveterate and very capable hunter on snipe and woodcock - put up several on the edge of a little wood and having shot a couple I pushed a little deeper into the wood, where he held and hunted very hard in an area before pushing up a much larger lighter coloured bird which unlike the other birds had a much flatter straighter flight. It went about 80-100 yards before dropping and I followed on, very interested to see what it was. Initially I thought it might be a woodcock.

On we went and similarly to before the dog held an area before pushing the bird back over my head. This time as I mounted on it I had a much better view and thought it was simply a very large common snipe. As I swung with the bird I saw an unusual flash of white and realised that it definitely was something different and thus held my shot. I was very glad I did because when I reading the game book in the hotel - I found an entry by the sporting writer Marchington who had noted: "Saw Great Snipe today - very rare!"

A few years ago I was shooting at Thrumster Estate in Caithness and they had a stuffed and mounted specimen which I was able to examine close quarters and note the differences to the common snipe. Apparently they had been quite common on the estate in the past. Like the Great Snipe, the population of Common Snipe which most guns are reasonably familiar with is in decline. In fact one of the greatest declines in my lifetime of shooting has been my opportunities to shoot snipe.

Two full days without crossing the same ground twice

As a young shot my quarry species were basically snipe, woodcock, rabbit and pigeon with a few pheasant days provided by the then Forest Service of Northern Ireland. I was fortunate to have three good snipe shooting areas and I and my then shooting partner would often spend a full day strolling for miles over unspoilt bogland stopping only for a pub lunch. We could put in two full days without crossing the same ground twice. Unfortunately those grand snipe shooting bogs have given way to rural housing and agricultural 'improvements.' Instead of weekly or fortnightly

shooting opportunities for snipe I might now get just the odd shot on a mixed day although we did have a few excellent days at walked up, driven and snipe from boats at Belle Isle Estate.

Fitzgerald goes on to give an excellent description of the Common Snipe, its habitat and behaviour:

"Every countryman knows the common snipe, if only because of its drumming or bleating. It is a dark striped bird with a very long straight bill. The upper parts are richly mottled and barred with black, reddish-brown and buff, and it is the buff edgings to the feathers I that give the effect of the longitudinal stripes on the back. The crown I of the head is black with a central buff stripe, and the sides of the head I are brown with buff stripes above and below the eye. The neck and I the breast are buff with brown markings and the flanks are light buff or dirty white, with more or less distinct white bars. There are narrow white tips to the secondaries, and the tail, which is barred somewhat irregularly with black and red, also shows a little white at the sides. The legs are pale green. 'Sabine's snipe' is merely a melanistic variety of the common snipe. The great snipe has sixteen tail feathers, the common snipe fourteen, and the jack snipe twelve. The number of the tail feathers is commonly regarded as diagnostic, but the number in the common snipe is by no means constant. I have shot common snipe with sixteen tail feathers, and I have shot common snipe (all, by the way, melanistic, the so-called "Sabine's snipe") with twelve feathers. On the other hand, I have never seen a great snipe that had not sixteen feathers, nor a jack snipe that had not twelve.

The drumming sound is exactly like the bleating of a goat

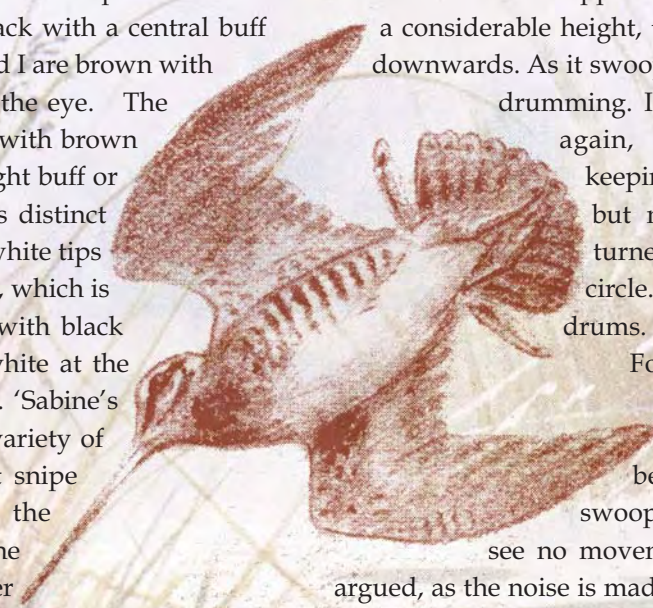
One of the best-known sounds of the countryside in spring - in damp country at any rate - is the drumming or bleating of snipe. This is not the love-song of the bird, but is part of the display commonly associated with territory. Most birds have very definite love-songs (though some are only noises), and the snipe's is a monotonous chicka-chick (that at least is how it sounds to me, though most of the bird books describe it as jick-jack), which is uttered on the wing or on the ground or when perched on a rail or post or the dead branch of a tree (I have never seen a snipe perch on a branch bearing leaves), and besides being the love-song it is also used frequently as a note of alarm. The drumming sound is exactly like the bleating of a goat - in Gaelic the bird is called Gabhar-athair (goat of the air),

Meann-an-athair (kid of the air), Gabhar-reodhtha (goat of the frost) or Gabhar-oidhche (goat of the night), and in Welsh Gafr-wanwyn (goat of the spring), Gafr-y-gors (goat of the marshes) or Dafad-y-gors (sheep of the marshes) — and how it is produced has been the cause of much argument; still is the cause of much argument. There are three theories: that the sound caused by the air passing through the funnel-shaped wings strikes the two stiff outer tail feathers, causing the drumming: that the sound is vocal: that the quivering wings cause the sound.

This is what happens. The bird takes wing, rises to a considerable height, turns on its side and swoops downwards. As it swoops it produces the bleating or drumming. It flies up again and swoops again, flies up, swoops down, keeping a rough circle, generally, but not always, with the breast turned towards the centre of that circle. And each time it swoops it drums.

For a long time it was thought that the sound was made by the bird's wings rapidly beating on the downward swoop. But careful observers could see no movement of the wings. Yet, they argued, as the noise is made on the downward swoop it must be produced in some way by passage through the air. In 1856, Meves, a Swedish naturalist, noticed in the downward swoop that the two outer feathers stood out at right angles to the rest. He fastened a pair of those feathers to wire on the end of a stick, swished the stick through the air, and found that he could reproduce the sound of the drumming. Sir Philip Manson-Bahr, in 1907, experimented in the same manner, but-with feathers stuck in a cork which he whirled round his head on the end of a string. He, too, produced the drumming sound. His conclusions were generally accepted, and later still—round about 1920—Mr. Eric Parker corroborated his evidence when he fitted the tail feathers to an arrow, shot the arrow up into the air and produced the drumming sound as it fell. That the two outer tail feathers produce the drumming is the generally accepted theory."

He goes on to describe the courtship rituals/breeding of the snipe: "The drumming flight is not the only aerial evolution performed by the snipe during courtship. All sorts of other stunts are performed, the most remarkable of which is that of turning over on the back and gliding with open wings for some little distance either in ordinary rapid flight or during the course of a drumming display. The usual zigzag sexual chases common to many birds are also performed, and there are



many variations in flight. On the ground males display before females with drooped wings and spread tail, and I have watched males circling round a crouched female alternating their walk with stiff little sideways jumps. Drumming, however, is not confined to the breeding season. I have more than once heard and seen snipe drumming in August, and the latest date on which I have heard and seen the performance is November 6th - that was in 1938. The earliest date on which I have seen and heard it is February 18th 1927.

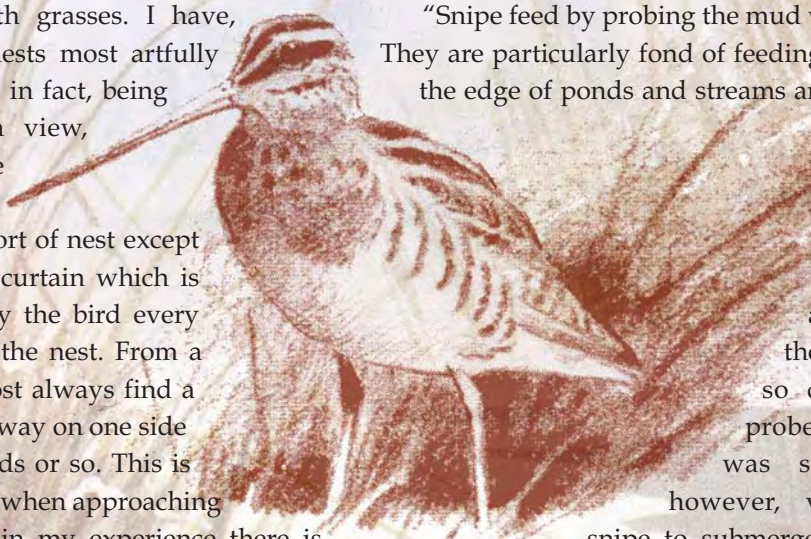
"Snipe are early breeders. Eggs in late March are by no means uncommon, though early April is more usual. Eggs have also been found in August, so in some cases at any rate the bird is double brooded. The nest is almost always situated on damp or marshy ground. It is no more than a hollow in a tussock of grass or a clump of rushes—and is lined with grasses. I have, however, found snipe's nests most artfully concealed, the actual nest, in fact, being completely hidden from view, with an entrance at one side over which the rushes (I have never found this sort of nest except in rushes) form a sort of curtain which is most carefully adjusted by the bird every time she enters or leaves the nest. From a snipe's nest you will almost always find a well-beaten path leading away on one side for a distance of three yards or so. This is the route taken by the bird when approaching or leaving the nest, and in my experience there is never any variation in the route from the day the bird begins to sit until the chicks leave the nest. No snipe ever drops directly on to her eggs, and no snipe, given any warning of approaching danger, ever flies directly off her eggs. Always she alights two or three yards from the nest and walks up the pathway, and always when leaving she steals down the pathway before taking wing. The result is that the track before incubation has proceeded very far is plainly visible to an observant eye. The eggs, usually four in number and olive-grey to olive-brown in ground colour boldly blotched with sepia, are very large for the size of the bird. They are incubated by the female alone for about three weeks. The young leave the nest as soon as they dry, and it is said that they are tended by both parents and fed from the bill at first."

On the feeding of snipe: "Snipe are much less frequently seen in the open than most waders. They are largely crepuscular in habit (they may be nocturnal), and they spend most of the day resting or sleeping in the cover of thick grass, rushes and so forth. But they do also feed in the daytime, for I have often watched single birds doing so in the mud by the streams and ponds near my

home, and more than once I have watched parties of half a dozen or so feeding unconcernedly on the saltings in broad daylight. The food is mainly composed of worms, water-snails of various kinds, and insects. They also take in a certain amount of grit in order to aid the digestion. Snipe are birds of ravenous appetite, and they lose condition rapidly if the food supply falls short. Snipe in a period of prolonged hard frost are very skinny creatures, and at the beginning of the shooting season they make remarkably poor eating. An August snipe is proverbially a rotten table-bird, ill-flavoured and thin. This, I feel sure, is because during the summer months insects form the greater part of their diet. Snipe prosper on a diet of worms and water-snails.

The bill is driven right into the mud

"Snipe feed by probing the mud with their long bills. They are particularly fond of feeding in the wet mud at the edge of ponds and streams and in the thick ooze of bogs and sewage-farms, but they will also wade in shallow water, and I have seen them feeding in water so deep that at each probe the whole head was submerged. It is, however, very unusual for snipe to submerge their eyes, which are set very far back on the head, when feeding. The reason for this—and it is even more noticeable in the woodcock—is obvious enough. If you watch a feeding snipe you will notice that the bill is driven right into the mud and buried as far as the frontal feathers. If the eyes were placed in the normal position they would stand a very good chance of being buried, and even if they were not they would not be much good for seeing. As it is, the bird can make the most of its long bill and still see all that is going on around it. But the search for food is carried on out of sight. Food has to be found by touch, and the snipe's bill is admirably fitted for the purpose. It is extremely long—sometimes between 2 and 3 inches in a bird that measures only 10 inches in all—and it is very pliable and very sensitive. If you examine the bill of a freshly killed snipe you will see that the end is bulbous and swollen and quite smooth. A bill dries and shrinks very quickly, and you will then see that it is pitted with a number of tiny depressions. If you were to take away the outer skin—an easy job—you would find that it is honeycombed with a multitude of little cells. You can see these cells (they are hexagonal) quite easily with an



ordinary magnifying glass. These little cells are nerve containers, and they are joined up with the great sensory nerve of the face. It is by these nerves contained in the elongated bill that the snipe finds its food in the thick mud and ooze. All the snipe that I have seen feeding have been remarkably unconcerned, moving in a slow, even stately manner, and probing the mud around them in a most methodical manner. I have, personally, never seen any of the jerky movements of the head so often described, and the movements are quite different from those of a feeding sandpiper. Sometimes the bill is buried only a little way, say to half its length, sometimes right up to the frontal feathers, but always it is slanted away from the bird. Sometimes it is in the mud only for a moment and is then withdrawn and immediately thrust into it again, but often it is thrust right into the mud and held there for a second or so, the bird remaining motionless the while. I have never seen a snipe bring food to the surface, and I imagine that almost all the food is sucked up in the mud."

On snipe as a sporting quarry - the flushed snipe: "A flushed snipe rises with a hoarse grating cry, very properly described in all the bird books as scaap. It springs into the air and then zigzags in rapid twisting flight close to the ground for some distance before rising to some considerable height and making off in direct and yet more rapid flight. A common snipe, once flushed, usually puts a good distance between itself and the cause of the disturbance. If taken unawares, not by any means a common occurrence, it will as a rule crouch and refuse to fly until the last possible moment, but snipe have remarkably good eyesight and remarkably good hearing, and they are generally on the wing while danger is yet some way off. The flight is extremely fast, with very rapid wing-beats, but I do not for one moment agree with the estimates of 120 m.p.h. and more. I would content myself with saying that the sportsman is not likely to fire at many faster birds. In alighting the snipe is fond of dropping from a height - alighting by gradual descent is, I think, uncommon - and at the last moment it raises its wings high above the back in the attitude common to many waders. On the ground it walks deliberately with the typical horizontal carriage of waders and with neck drawn in and bill pointed downwards. In spring and summer at any rate it is fond of perching on rails, fences, bare branches of trees, walls, gates and so on. The habit is a common one, but seems, judging by the number of letters I receive every spring describing it as something most unusual, to be little known. Generally speaking, the snipe is rather a solitary bird. When shooting it is much more usual to flush snipe singly than in pairs or parties, but during migrations the birds move in parties or 'wisps' of half a dozen or so. Larger parties are uncommon but do occur, and I have

once put up a large party of snipe. This was in Galway. I flushed one bird which went off scaaping for all it was worth, and suddenly there were snipe everywhere, all scaaping like billy-ho. I estimated that there must have been fifty or more (it is just about impossible to count snipe under these circumstances), and they all broke away to my left. About a hundred yards farther on I flushed another bird, and again snipe rose all around me, scaaping hard. And this party I estimated at twenty or more. The date was September 15th, and I had not got a gun with me."

Where do these resident birds go?

Resident breeding: "I have observed snipe year by year on a marsh very close to my home for some twenty years now. And this is what happens. Very few birds breed in the marsh: there are perhaps eight to a dozen nests each year. If you walk the marsh carefully in the first half of July you will find plenty of birds: in the latter half of July comparatively few. In the first ten days or so of August you will be lucky if you put up two or three birds, but after that one day may find many birds in the marsh, the next none or only a few. This sort of thing goes on into early September when the marsh fills up and most days will find a few birds in residence (remembering always that the snipe outside the breeding season is a chancy bird), but from mid-September until the beginning of October, generally towards the end of the first week in that month, the odds are that you will draw a blank day after day. A snipe on this marsh is a rarity indeed in the latter half of September. The foreign migrants begin to come in October, and from then onwards the marsh is subject to the usual vicissitudes of snipe ground anywhere, but the latter half of September is blank. What I believe happens is this. The snipe that breed with us are at the northern limit of their range, and breeding accomplished they migrate in a southerly and south-westerly direction. That movement is, I believe, common to the whole country. But before this migration proper commences there is a good deal of purely nomadic movement, which may be local or may not. This movement is undertaken by the birds of the year, who do not wait for the adults to complete their moult, but set off on their own in small wisps towards the end of July, moving from feeding ground to feeding ground. The young birds of my marsh move off at the end of July, and for the first ten days or so of August I am left only with a few adult birds. After that I am visited by wandering parties of young birds, perhaps even by my own home young ones returning. In September the migratory movement proper commences, and the marsh fills up with birds that are moving steadily south or south-west. By the middle of September they have passed through, and there is a

blank until the foreigners come in. Where do these resident birds go? If their movement were a local one of only a few miles one would expect suitable snipe country in the neighbourhood to receive additional birds at this time—for that matter one would expect to receive birds from neighbouring snipe country oneself. I certainly receive none, and so far as I know, and I am pretty certain that I would know, my neighbours do not receive mine. Perhaps the birds move on down towards Devon and Cornwall: I believe myself that most of them go overseas."

On habitat: "You may find the common snipe almost anywhere in this country provided only that the ground is wet. They like swamps and open grassy marshes, they like the boggy patches on hillsides, they like the peat moors, badly drained rushy fields, the borders of lakes, pools, streams and reservoirs, they like sewage-farms. They are to be found on the salt marshes of the coast, even occasionally on the shore itself, feeding right out to the limit of the ebb. That is a wide enough range of habitat, and you might think that any boggy ground would hold its snipe. But that is not so. If a marsh does carry a breeding population then you can be almost certain that birds will breed there year after year—birds born on the marsh returning to breed on it, as I think—and you will, in my experience, find the nests in very much the same position year after year. But that is just about all that is moderately certain about the snipe. Outside the breeding season there is nothing certain about them at all. I know excellent damp grounds, truly deserving the name marsh, which never hold a bird; I know many small damp bits of ground that hold snipe if there are any snipe about; but I do not know any ground in England of which I could say that I would be certain to find snipe there on any winter day I chose to visit it. In Ireland you may take your boggy acres of shooting purely for the snipe: you do not, if you are wise, do that in England."

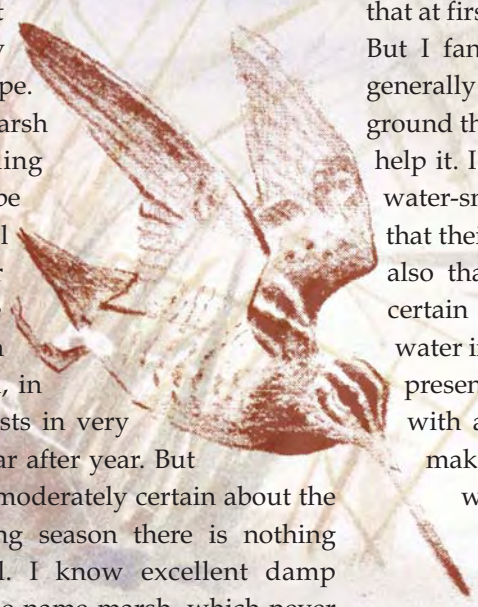
When you go out in the morning they are gone

The uncertainty of snipe: "Nobody knows why snipe are so uncertain. We talk about certain aspects of the moon, and in this we are not altogether foolish, for it is known (though I doubt if many of us when we talk about the moon are aware of it) that lunar rhythm does affect worms in some degree: we talk about north-east winds—but we do not know. And it is quite certain, in

my part of the world, that a nice soft southerly wind, warm and friendly, is just as likely to make the snipe leave as a hard northeaster: that is, if the wind has anything to do with it at all, which I doubt. Snipe are night feeders in the main, or at any rate feeders in the late evening and very early morning. Often you will know that there are snipe on the marsh in the evening, and when you go out in the morning they are gone. There may be frost in the air, there may be a bitter northeaster or a gentle southerly breeze, the moon may be full or new, the fact is that they have gone, and we were not about in the night to see what made them go. And had we been about in the night it is long odds that we would be any wiser.

"And why is it that one bit of boggy ground will hold snipe if there are any, about, while another, apparently just as suitable, will never hold any? I think that the explanation of this lies in the sort of food the marsh provides. The major portion of the snipe's diet is made up of worms, and worms are to be found everywhere, so that at first sight this theory does not appear very sound. But I fancy that snipe eat' more water-snails than is generally realised, and I believe that they do not go to ground that is devoid of water-snails if they can possibly help it. I do not know that any full ecological study of water-snails has ever been made, but it is well known that their distribution is very variable. It is well known also that certain sorts of water-snails occur only in certain sorts of water, so it seems to me that it is the water in the marsh and not the marsh that controls the presence or absence of snipe. If this is so, it should, with a little care and a lot of study, be possible to make snipe grounds attractive to snipe, and so within reasonable limits ensure a constant supply of the birds."

The jack snipe is no longer a legal quarry in the UK but is still a legal quarry in Ireland and obviously at the time Vesey-Fitzgerald was writing was a legitimate quarry: "The jack snipe is a much smaller bird than the common snipe and with a relatively shorter bill, and unlike the larger bird it rises silently. It does not twist and turn so sharply after rising, and rarely flies more than a short distance before pitching again. Altogether it is not unlike the landrail in habits, for though it possesses great powers of flight it will not fly unless it must. When flushed the flight is not unlike a butterfly, but I did once put up a jack snipe that immediately rose to a great height and set off in the general direction of France at a very great speed, an exceptional occurrence. Generally it is so reluctant to fly that it will crouch motionless until it is almost trodden upon, when it gets up with a breathtaking suddenness right under one's feet. On more than one occasion I have come upon jack snipe at my feet, and they have shown



no alarm but remained there with bills pressed along the ground, and tail feathers, dark with lovely pale edges, fanned out, quite immobile, until having gazed my fill I have bent down to touch those shining feathers. Then they have got up and flitted rather than flown away, and dropped down again within fifty yards. Seen thus at one's feet the jack snipe is a very beautiful bird with its upper parts glossed with green and purple, and the longitudinal buff and chestnut streaks distinct upon its back and wings, and a broad buff stripe over its eyes. Incidentally, the central buff streak is missing from the dark brown head, and this, if you see the bird on the ground (which is not always easy as it loves thick cover), is sufficient to distinguish it from the common snipe.

"The jack snipe is a winter visitor and passage-migrant. The birds reach our northern and eastern coasts about the second week in September, and the movement, which reaches its peak about the middle of October, continues until the end of November. They generally reach the Hampshire coast early in October (my earliest Hampshire record is September 4th and my latest April 7th), and emigration from this coast continues until late December. The return movement commences in March, and the passage north continues until late in May. There have been many records of jack snipe in summer and many suspected instances of breeding, but no authentic record of breeding has yet been reported.

Going out for a day after snipe... take plenty of cartridges

"Widely distributed, but decidedly local, the jack snipe is much more common than is generally realised. It is usually a solitary bird and it likes thick cover, and this coupled with its great reluctance to get on the wing means that it is less often seen than, from its numbers, it might be. I would be inclined to call it common in Hampshire even though it is comparatively rarely seen, and I have known numbers on my own particular marsh. Even when numbers are 011 the ground at the same time it is still the rule to put up one bird at a time, and I have only once seen a wisp of jack snipe. They are hard-weather birds and mind severe frost much less than the common snipe, and I think they secure a good deal of their food in the form of seed from the ground.

"It is generally said the jack is an easy bird to shoot. It

is also an extremely easy bird to miss, and I think this is because one always expects it to act like a common snipe and it never does. The common snipe, of course, is a difficult bird to shoot, and I think my advice to anyone going out for a day after snipe would be take plenty of cartridges."

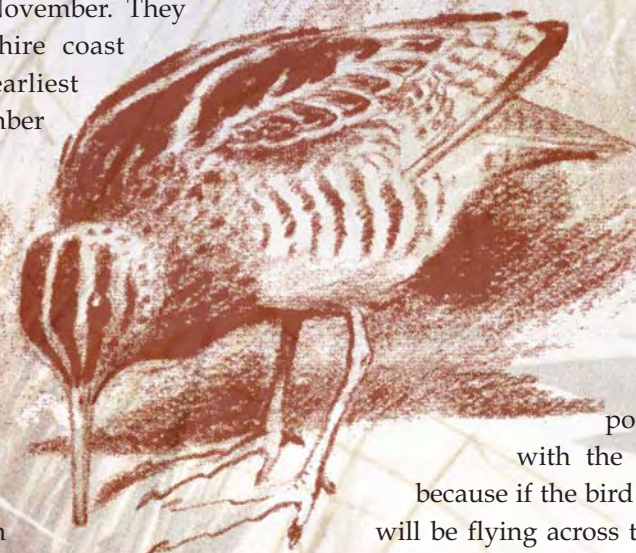
Advice on shooting: "There is always much difference of opinion as to the best way to walk up snipe. Most people seem to be of the opinion that it is best to walk down wind because the snipe, like most other birds, will get up against the wind if it possibly can, and so just possibly may fly past the gun. Personally I have never had any success walking down wind. Snipe are very wary and have excellent hearing. Also I have found that birds walked down wind are very wild, and even if they begin their flight into the wind they turn round quickly enough and go away down wind at a tremendous pace.

Approach against the wind almost invariably means closer approach, but it does not mean easier shooting.

However, nine times out of ten the nature of the ground governs the means of approach, and it is probably best to ignore the wind altogether. Personally I like to approach cross wind if possible (preferably, of course, with the wind on my left-hand side), because if the bird does start off into the wind he will be flying across the gun, and his acrobatics are then not quite so disconcerting, though disconcerting enough."

Interestingly I classify myself as a very average shotgun shot and compared to my brothers who were fair clay shots I would have been the poorest of three. But where I really did come into my own when shooting with them was at snipe. As a slower shot I think I probably take the birds after their first fast evasive action and have an easier shot or perhaps with them being a smaller bird I take more care with the shot or possibly simply because to kill them they do not necessarily have to be in the centre of the pattern. Whatever the reason I have always enjoyed reasonable success at snipe shooting whether it be walked up or driven.

As a biologist myself, I found much to interest me in Vesey-Fitzgerald's treatise on snipe and I trust you did too. I would intend to delve further into my bookshelves to look at other sporting quarry. But we are always delighted to hear from readers with more up to date observations of the species and - if anyone has snipe shooting of any type available - I'm your man....!



Around the Terrier & Lurcher shows

**The Irish Game & Country Fair, Birr
Castle, Saturday 25th and Sunday
26th of August**

Birr Castle is a large castle in the town of Birr Co Offaly, the seat of the Earls of Rosse. The Seventh of whom still lives in the castle to this day and there has been a castle on this site since 1170. From the 14th to the 17th century, the O'Carroll family was in residence. After the death of Sir Charles O'Carroll, Sir Laurence Parsons was granted Birr Castle and 1,277 acres of land. When Parsons took over the Castle, he engaged several masons and a large work force in the construction of a new castle. This construction took place at the gatehouse of the site. 'Flankers' were added to the gatehouse diagonally at either side, giving the Castle the plan it retains today. And what a beautiful venue this is for the annual Irish Game & Country Fair.

We had an early start on Sunday morning, with the alarm clock going off at 4.00am. After dogs walked, trailer and car loaded up, we set off with Mickey and Michael Quinn from Lurgan. We headed for the motorway and at Newry we were joined by Rab Greer and a car load of men from Newtownards, Co Down, who also followed us all the way to Birr. We arrived at Birr Castle three and a half hours later around 9.30am and hooked up with all the rest of the good northern people who had already travelled down the day before for the racing. This was the start of a beautiful day for us at Birr, with the weather being brilliant for most of the day, with the exception of a few small showers in the late evening.

We had a good walk around the game fair, had our breakfast in Foodies Marquee restaurant, which was delicious and good value. We visited Charlie Keenan and Outdoor Experience and on around the many marquees and food halls on site we picked up some good bargains along the way.

I stopped with Emmett McCourt who was hard at work with his beautiful, tasty food, but still made time to have a chat with me. It is nice to meet nice people. On along the way I met up with Paul Pringle and his lovely wife, who were really enjoying the show. Paul remarked to me, how friendly the people were at Birr and

commented on the lovely Fair atmosphere and I would have to agree with him 100%. I spoke to Neil Cooney at the I.W.T.F site. Neil is such a nice person and so dedicated to the cause. Keep behind him lad and lasses, because Neil truly has your interest at heart.

There was a very large crowd in attendance at the show, so I just arrived back in time for the digging competition. Starting at 12.30 and it certainly drummed up a lot of interest and attracted a very large audience. This was one of the highlights of the day in my opinion. The audience got into action with the diggers, cheering them on and giving them loads of encouragement all the way, while their ladies supplied them with water. As the last seconds were counted down, you could feel the air of excitement among the crowd. What a great moment. Spades and pickaxes laid down, the digging was measured and the winners were declared.

Congratulations to Paddy Gilmore and Shane Larkin the winning team. Also congratulations to the other teams of Peter Morgan and Dee Maguire, Shane Gilmartin and Keith Breen, Sean Fowler and Seamus Baird.

Racing Results from Saturday:

Whippets: Gavin and Ryan Wright with Bolt

Terrier Crossbred Novice Race: Charlene Rafferty with Buffy

Lurchers Under 21: Fiona Devlin with Angel

Over 23: John Humphries with Rebel Under 23: John Humphries with China

Novice Race: Donie Troy Roscrea

Terriers: First Liam Toal Second Bryan Scully with Barney

A big congratulations to John Humphries, Gavin Wright and Donie Troy and Liam Toal on your big wins. All great dogs and wonderful people.

Some random results from the showing on Sunday

Family Dog Show - Children's handling class. First: Calum McHugh **Second:** Poppy McVitty

ROI Champion Terrier: Declan Wallace

ROI Champion Lurcher: Michael Quinn (This also qualified Michael to go forward to the Five Nations at Birr Castle) Reserve: Jed Donagh

Congratulations to both men, and both worthy winners and well done Michael's dad Mickey Quinn was one happy fellow and a very proud father.

ROI Champion Whippet: Mark O'Neill

Overall ROI Show Champion Birr Castle 2012: Declan Wallace Reserve: Mark O'Neill



The Irish Countrysports and Country Life & Massbrook Five Nations Finalists and Judges.

And now on to the Five Nations, the 'Big One' of the day

Here are the 7 qualifiers who competed in the final:

Graham Brennan with Gypsy

Fiona Devlin with Maverick

Steven Dummigan with Dash

Michael Quinn with Paddy

Kieran Lynch with Storm

Michael Hicks with Mo Chara

Eimear O'Meara with Heidi

And the Winner was none other than our own Fiona Devlin with Maverick, from Dungannon in Northern Ireland. Fiona, a very worthy winner. It is great to see us females taking our place among the greats in the canine world. Congratulations and I am sure a bottle of vino was opened in the Devlin household last night.

Reserve went to Graham Brennan with Gypsy from Dublin. Gypsy has done Graham proud on so many occasions both north and south. PS Congratulations to yourself Graham and Ann on the occasion of your engagement, and may you have many happy years together.

And finally, I would like to congratulate the brilliant judges on the day for a job well done. Neil Cooney, Paul Reynolds and Seamus Cairns, The Judges in the 5 Nations Kieran Young, Pat Lee and

Steven Mc Gonigal, you all did a first class job and carried out your duties with fairness and perfection. To the Roscrea Team, a very efficient crew of people who carried out their duties at the show with sheer grit and determination, and in a very professional manner. A special word of thanks to David on the Roscrea team, who kept me updated with the results. Thanks David. Bluebell (Deirdre McCoy) and Billy Harpur were there clicking away with their cameras and capturing the moments of glory.

I always leave the best to last and this accolade goes out to Albert J. Titterington and his lovely wife Irene and their co-directors for a great weekend in Birr. Albert without you and your brilliant team of helpers this

would not be possible. So many of our canine folk look forward to your Great Game Fairs and now through the dark cold days and nights of winter and when the snow hits the window, we will gather round the fire, and reminisce about moments of glory at your Game Fairs and elsewhere who gave us so much joy and entertainment during the year. Albert, may you continue to run your top Game Fairs for many years to come. You do so much for country sports and work so hard behind the scenes to make things happen. Of this we are truly grateful and look forward to seeing you again in 2013.

Feile Camlough Dog Show Saturday 4th August 2012

Camlough, is a picturesque village in South Armagh, watched over by Camlough Mountain and Slieve Gullion. This magnificent scenery is mirrored by the famous Camlough Lake, which is two miles long and nestles between these two mountains. Camlough, is situated on the periphery of the Ring of Gullion and is an area of outstanding natural beauty and rich green countryside. The village has become very popular with visitors in the summertime, who find a warm welcome in the village, and especially at the annual Feile and Dog show, which has now become one of the highlights of the year in the town.

On Saturday 4th August from early morning, people with dogs and trailers in tow began arriving at the venue in the village. The sun shone all day and the wee people played to their hearts content in full view of their parents. As well as the dog show, there was a wide variety of entertainment for adults and children.

As I strolled around the field, I stopped off at Pets Corner. It was a real treat to see the little happy faces of the children, as their eyes could not believe what they were seeing - donkeys / Alpacas / Shetland ponies/pigs/rabbits/snakes/a goat/Soay Sheep/hens and geese. What a menagerie. There were also pony rides and further up the field bouncy Castles.

Here are some random results from Saturday.

Racing Results

Lurcher Racing

Lurcher Pup Race: 1st Charlene Rafferty with Fizz
2nd Michelle Rafferty with Zena

Under 21s: 1st Deidre McCoy with Paris 2nd Fiona Devlin with Angel

Over 23s: 1st John Humphries with Rebel 2nd Fiona Devlin with Maverick

Under 23s: 1st Nigel Greer with Sunshine 2nd Rose McCoy with Luna

Whippet Racing: 1st Patsy and Deidre McCoy with RIO

Greyhounds: Tom Barry with Jack

Hurdle Final: 1st Steven Dummigan 2nd Deidre McCoy

Whippet Pups: Sophie Harpur

Whippet Hurdles: 1st Gavin Wright with Bolt 2nd Kieran Neeson with Jess

Showing

Pet Class: First Clodagh Dunbar Second Katie Hatton
Whippet Champion: Jason Dunwoody **Reserve Champion:** Rose McCoy

Champion Terrier: John Heslip **Reserve Champion:** John Heslip

Lurcher Champion: Michael (Mickey) Smith **Reserve Champion:** William Hill

Greyhounds: First Morgan Barry Second Ethan Barry
Overall Puppy Champion went to: Charlene Rafferty with Nina.

Overall Best in Show: Michael Smith

May I take this opportunity to thank Pearse O'Hagan, his lovely wife, and his team of helpers for a most enjoyable day and a brilliant show. Thanks to all the judges and everyone who carried out their duties with efficiency.

National Country Fair Dog Show, Borris House, Co Carlow Sunday 5th August 2012

It was an early rise for us, with the alarm going off at 4.30am. Dragging myself out of bed, to the sound of the dawn chorus, we loaded up the car and headed for Carlow. We met up with some friends in Newry and continued on up the road to the Apple Service Station near Dublin, where we all got our breakfasts, which filled us up for the day. Guess who just walked in while we were having our breakfast. None other than Liam Toner, still with one arm in plaster but as usual bouncing with energy.

The weather was not too kind to Carlow. I was told the rain bucketed down on Saturday all day, and left the ground in bad condition. We arrived in Carlow four hours later, and immediately headed up to the Fair for a look around. There were quite a few stall holders on site. We visited Charlie Keenan and also headed over to Richard Caddell of Outdoor Experience from our own home town, Portadown. Lindsay Carlisle was there too with a great variety of walking sticks and all of superb quality. Husband John requested Lindsay to create a walking stick with a whippet head. We met up with some old friends and also made some new ones. Matt and Catherine Slevin made their way up from Wexford, Mark O'Neill was there and went home with a big prize under his belt for his Champion lurcher. Gregg Murphy came all the way from Donegal, and I also saw Terry Moore, Joe Boggs, Barry Holland and his talented daughter Nyklia, all from Strabane. Great to meet up with you all again.

The show commenced at approximately 12.30 with the racing coming first and the showing immediately afterwards. The weather did not dampen the spirits of the show goers. The racing was well supported. There

were over 100 Lurcher, entered in the show ring. Whippets, terriers, and strong dog classes were considerably smaller than Lurchers, but all in all a very successful show. I was doing ring steward, so I did not get any results.

Many thanks to Graham Brennan, Kevin Maguire, John Mc Stay, and Timmy Halpin for a job well done. Poor Graham, you must have had a sore back yesterday, having to judge over 100 dogs. Many thanks to the photographers Dessie Kelly and Deidre McCoy. This National Country Fair and Dog show would



Show winners and judges at Camlough



Ciaran McManus with Tiger
Overall Best in Show and
Supreme Show Champion went to
John Heslip With Sam

The Digging Competition took place after the showing: Winners The Wesley Lawlor Paddy Gilmore team

The digging competition was great craic and I always enjoy this part of the show. There was quite a lot of hard work and organisation

Show Winners at Borris House

not be possible without good organisation so congratulations to Derek Lutton and the organisers, committee and helpers of the National Country Fair for a job well done. As for the Dog Show, what can I say that would praise these 3 men enough. Ian Davison, Justin Hill, and Ben, you carried out your duties and organisation of the show on Sunday, despite the bad weather, with quality and precision, and to a very high standard.

Shannagh Working Terrier Club Dog Show Saturday 18th August 2012

A few miles outside the Village of Clough, Co Down set in the shadow of the beautiful mountains of Mourne, was the venue for the annual Shannagh Working Terrier Club Dog Show. The sun shone with not a cloud in sight as we made our way through the winding roads and beautiful countryside of this wonderful home land of ours. Although the crowd was medium size in attendance, the craic and camaraderie was good. There were many of the usual show goers there and quite a few new people whom I had the pleasure of meeting on the day.

The show commenced at 1.30pm starting with the Racing.

Champion Lurcher: Ciaran McManus Reserve: Adam McCrissican

Champion Terrier: John Heslip with Sam Reserve:

went into setting this show up at such short notice. All credit goes to these two gentlemen, Paddy Gilmore and Sean Fowler for doing a wonderful job and giving so many families a day out to remember in the heart of the Mourne. The judges were Steven Morgan and Mick McNabb who were firm but fair and sent so many satisfied and happy people home with smiles on their faces. Judging in an any area is not an easy job, and on this occasion you both came out with top marks. A job well done. We cannot forget the farmer who gave the field for the show without which would not have been possible. And of course 'Bluebell' Deidre McCoy was there to record the day and snap that winning moment. An unforgettable day, with good company and I am already looking forward to the same next year.

32 Counties Champion of Champions, Barrontop Farm, Donemana, Co Tyrone, Sunday 9th September 2012

We started off from Portlough at 8.30am, with Mickey Quinn and his son Michael joining us at our house. The morning was bright and clear and no rain in sight at this stage. We stopped off at the Motorway Restaurant near Dungannon for our breakfast and was joined there by Janet Duke, Tracy Gill and Deirdre and Patsy McCoy then headed on our journey to Barrontop

Donemana with trailers and dogs in tow. As we came in sight of Barrontop the heavens opened and the rain came down in bucketfuls. When we arrived in the field at Barrontop, it just looked like the end of the world, because I have never seen rain like it, belting down, and continued all day and on the way home again. There were a few small intervals from the rain, but only a few. I glad I wore my boots. However, the inclement weather did not dampen the spirits of the show goers who turned out in



The top dogs and handlers at Shannagh.

large numbers. George McGerrigle owner of Barrontop was there helping everybody to get parked safely. Barrontop is a children's paradise and caters for children's parties and groups all year round with play areas, animal farm, pony and tractor rides, and indoor play area.

There was a good turnout of terriers, lurchers, whippets, hounds and gundogs. It was nice to meet some old friends and I met Catherine Slevin, husband Matt and their little son Luke, a nice talkative little boy and a credit to his parents. Concepta Melaugh was there, with her daughter and her little granddaughter Bailey Melaugh. The Wright family were there from Donegal, as were the Farrell family and Gregg Murphy, the Lynch brothers, Gerard and Kieran and son Michael from Strabane. There were so many other people with families I spoke to on the day, too many to mention and all lovely friendly people out to enjoy the final show of the season at Barrontop. Some had travelled from Tipperary, Cork, Donegal, Naas, Monaghan, Portadown, Lurgan and Armagh. What a mix and what an interesting sport to be involved in.

The racing started at approximately 1:00 PM. As the weather was so bad it was impossible for the ring helpers to write down results but I managed to get a few results at ringside as follows:

Overs: Pat Lee with If Only Res: Shane Gilmartin with Joey

Unders: Fiona Devlin with Diva Res: Nigel Greer with Sunshine

Whippets: Gavin and Ryan Wright with Bolt Res: Michael Quinn with Blue

Show Results

Overall Champion Lurcher: Fiona Devlin with Maverick Reserve: Darren Martin with Missy

Overall Champion Terrier: Matt Slevin Reserve:

Terry Moore

Champion Whippet: Davy Best Reserve: Janet Duke

Overall Best in Show: Davy Best with Penny Reserve: Matt Slevin with Mutley.

Big congratulations to both Davy and Matt, and the two top dogs. A car load of trophies went back to Annaghmore, Portadown, and Slaney Valley in the County Wexford.

I'd like to thank Barry Holland and Joe Boggs, committee and helpers Nykila Love, Kayleigh Love, and Stacy Love for running this show so well in adverse and terrible weather conditions. George McGerrigle, the owner of Barrontop Fun Farm had his heart in the right place as usual. While we were out in the rain, George was inside preparing stew for us all. George many thanks for your kindness, hospitality and beverages and I can honestly say It was most welcome and very thoughtful on a cold and rainy day. Thanks to the Judges, Ian Greer, Nigel Greer, Joe Boggs, Seamus Kearney. Matt Slevin, and another Judge whose name I did not get. You all conducted your duties with great efficiency. And finally, finally, I could not end without thanking our resident photographer Deirdre McCoy for taking photographs all year, and bringing us much enjoyment.

My thanks too to the North West Terrier, Lurcher, and Whippet Club for their presentation of Galway Crystal to me for my contribution and write ups to their shows this year. I can honestly say I enjoyed every minute of it. I appreciate this thought and gift from the bottom of my heart, and will treasure this beautiful gift. You also extended your thoughtfulness to my colleagues Deirdre McCoy for her photography, and Janet Duke for promoting Whippets and Whippet shows in Northern Ireland and further afield. Our sincere thanks.

A special presentation was made to the Man of the Day, Terry Moore, founder member of the North West Terrier, Lurcher, and Whippet Club, and a lifelong member for his work with the club over the years. Terry is one of nature's gentlemen and a most worthy recipient of this award.

The Sporting Whippet Club of NI Sunday 16th September at Dunsilly Kennels Co Antrim

Ideally situated in the shadows of the famous green Glens of Antrim, and deep in the heart of the Irish Countryside, lies the townland of Dunsilly, Co Antrim. This was the perfect setting for the Sporting Whippet Club NI show. The venue for the show as usual, was at Dunsilly Kennels and what a day that was. As Dunsilly kennels is situated of the M2/M22 at junction 1,



Davy Best with Penny and Matt Slevin with Mutley.

this is a superb venue and easily accessible to the motorway. There was a reasonably big crowd there, and except for a few showers, the weather was on our side for a change.

Graham and Lynn Meek was there bright and early, and had the Barbeque set and lit up, and busy cooking the burgers, as was Paul Reynolds preparing the game and Venison stew on the gas fire. The group of musicians arrived with their gear, and within a half hour of arrival, had all our hands waving and feet tapping to their lovely music. They played something to suit everybody and such a talented group. One avid show goer Phillipa Robinson took the fiddle into her hand and played along with the group. Brilliant Phillipa, you have a hidden talent for music, and we enjoyed listening to you and the group. The show started at approximately 12.30 with the grading first.

After the grading, the barbecue got into swing, and what a spread was laid on. All types of salads, burgers, 2 different types of stews, breads, and all washed down with white or red wine. Goody bags were given to every child in the field. Heather Reynolds, Paul Reynolds wife made a beautiful, very large cake for the occasion, and everybody was offered a slice accordingly. I must say it was so tasty, I had 2 slices. After the barbecue, the showing began and was then followed by the racing.



Show Champion - Paul Reynolds with Chieftain.

Show Results

Best in Show: Paul Reynolds with Chieftain. Paul, Chieftain owes you nothing, and has done you proud on many occasions. A top Whippet. A big congratulations and well done.

Reserve best in Show: Tracy Gill with Ash. Well, what can I say about the lovely Ash, that I have not said before. Ash is a beautiful Whippet, and has a great winning future ahead of her. A big congratulations and well done.

Members Class: Allanah Harpur with Misty. Allanah, you are a real rising star, and a force to be reckoned with at the shows in years to come, with your winning Whippet Misty. A big well done Allanah, and I am sure dad Billy and sister Kirsty were real proud of you as we all are.

Big congratulations to all winners above and well done

Overall Show Champion of Champions: Davy Best with Penny. A well deserved winner and a real gentleman. Well done Davy and Penny, and a big congratulations. We are all so proud of you including your wife Valerie. We all know how much you love Penny, she is such a lovely Whippet.

Racing Results

Adult Racing Champion of Champions 2012 went to a real star and a wonderful person: Michael Quinn with Blue. Michael, you are a real Champion and a very worthy winner. A big congratulations and well done. This was the cup donated by the McKinstry family in memory of the late Eddie McKinstry, a founder member of the Sporting Whippet Club Michael, Eddie would be very proud of you today, keeping his memory afloat by winning this beautiful cup. Dad Mickey is away home to give it pride of place on the sitting room mantelpiece.

Overall Puppy Racing Champion of Champions: Tracy Gill with Ash.

This brilliant puppy has won many trophies both in racing and showing in her young life. A real winner there Tracy, and may you and Ash go on to win many more. A big Congratulations to you both.

A full list of showing and racing results are on Hunting Life and Face book.

Finally, may I thank our Chairman and the hard working committee for the great day of Showing, Racing and Barbeque provided on Sunday and all the work they carried out also, at all the other show days during the year. We had a great committee this year, and all carried out their duties with respect and precision. A special thank you to the show judge of the day Patsy Mc Coy, and Overall Champion of Champions 2012 Judge, Stephen Mc Gonigal. We all know judging is not an easy job, but you both carried out your duties with due courtesy and professionalism. For that we thank you. At this point we cannot forget the man who makes all our show days possible, Victor Mc Donald the owner of Dunsilly. A heartfelt thanks Victor for all your help and we hope to see you again in the new year. Our resident photographer Deidre Mc Coy was on hand to capture our moment of glory. We do appreciate your photographs Deidre and they give us such joy when we see our photograph up on Facebook or Hunting Life.

Truly from the bottom of our hearts, thanks to

everybody who donated gifts for the Charity Raffle, which was a roaring success. The final figure from the Charity Raffle was £250, which is going to Macmillan Cancer Support. I can say without fear of contradiction, this is a charity very close to every persons heart. Thank you all for your generosity.

Another donation of £200 was made on the day by the Sporting Whippet Club NI to the Heart, Stroke and Chest Support, a charity chosen by the owner of Dunsilly Kennels Mr Victor McDonald. These people save so many lives, and another very worthy Charity.

As the showing and racing year comes to an end, and the hunting season begins, I will look back on 2012 with the fondest of memories and a tear in my eye. I made many new friends in the Canine world, I am cancer free now for 20yrs, and the happiest memory of all on the 9th of June, our first beautiful grandchild came into the world, Maddie Marie McStay, a beautiful little girl, a gift from God.

As I conclude now, I look forward to meeting up with you all again for the banter and chat in 2013 God willing. Keep safe to then and God Bless.

Mourne Race Day Saturday 3rd November Mourne Race Day raised funds for MacMillan Cancer Care

I jumped out of bed bleary eyed, opened the blinds, and although pitch black outside it was time to load up the dogs in the trailer, and begin our journey to the beautiful Mourne countryside. We stopped off at Gilberry Fayre outside Gilford, where we met up with Deidre, Patsy and Rose McCoy for a most enjoyable breakfast.

Arriving around 11:00 am the weather was good but the air was icy cold. It was a day to be well wrapped up against the icy winds coming in over the nearby calm sea. Mourne countryside is awesome, with its high mountains, sheep, wildlife including ravens, red grouse, peregrine falcons and of course the Irish hare. There was a large crowd from north and south of the country and I met up with quite a few old friends. Liam Toner was there in his glory, such a pleasant young fellow and always willing to give a helping hand. Kieron McKinley was flag waver at the starting line and did a great job - another up and coming young sportsman to watch out for. I had a chat with Frutas, Polecat and Ged Donagh, Michele and Charlene Rafferty and John Humphries. Lovely interesting people enjoying a good day's racing and a chat. This event was run under the rules of the NILRC, thus setting the standards for racing in 2013. Registration and height measurements were taken of all dogs taking part, after which racing commenced at approximately 1:00pm. There was a very high calibre of

racing on Saturday and the competition was good, filled with fun and excitement.

Overall Racing Results

Whippets: Patsy McCoy with RIO, **Under 21:** Rose McCoy with Zola, **Under Elite:** Rose McCoy with Diego, **Over Elite:** John Humphries with Rebel, **Under lurcher:** Paddy Mc Carthy with PIP, **Over lurcher:** Jed Donagh with Scamp,



Rose McCoy won both the Under 21 and Under Elite Classes

All winners received £50, Trophy Plate, and a Bag of Food. A massive thanks to all the sponsors. Without your help these days would not happen for the charities. Congratulations as well to all the winners. Thanks go to Tango, Tom Barry, and Nigel Greer for running such a successful and trouble free race day for a wonderful cause. Tango, the late Eddie McKinstry would be very proud of you, whose designated charity this Race Day was run for. I cannot forget the man of the day Graham Meek and Joanne Young, who gave their time on Saturday to help the club out and make things run smoothly. Graham and Joanne you both done We could not off done without you or indeed Patsy Mc Coy who also worked tirelessly on the line. Deidre McCoy and Billy Harpur were there too snapping away. It was very evident the team spirit there on Saturday, everybody working together to achieve the same goal, to run a very successful day, making it most enjoyable for young and old. I am really looking forward to more of the same next year.

On behalf of all clubs around the country, A very Happy Christmas to all our canine friends and show goers in Ireland, England, Scotland and Wales, and please God we will all meet up again in 2013.

Hunting Roundup

Around the meets

Newry Hunt

The Newry Hunt kennels at Drumbanagher was the venue for their opening meet with sole master Mrs JE Close sending everyone off with a heartening stirrup cup. The recent heavy rain had abated to allow honorary huntsman Mr Mark McIlroy and his 20 couple mixed pack to move off in bright, but cool, weather.

A hack out of Drumbanagher to an old railway tunnel saw the first draw blank but drawing on around the mouth of the tunnel saw a fox afoot the second time Mark drew through it. This fox gave a good hunt with, in the end, a one mile point being recorded which, considering the conditions, was a good distance.



Ms Jenny Copeland with the Newry Hunt

Hounds pushed their fox as far as the Fort at Lissummon where he turned left to eventually become lost in some kale. At one time a second fox went afoot

and hounds briefly split but were quickly reunited to continue hunting their original fox. The going was anything from very wet and heavy to absolutely bottomless and the fifteen strong mounted field did well to keep up with Mark McIlroy and his two amateur whippers-in, James and Ian Bryson, all three being noted horsemen.

In Knockduff, a hare was briefly afoot and once again the Newry hounds, despite some Harrier blood having been bred back into the pack, ignored her. Hounds drew steadily right across Knockduff as far as the Duck Pond and then back into Knockduff without success. In late afternoon the rain suddenly appeared and, though it wasn't heavy, Mark McIlroy blew for home so everyone hacked back to the meet where, wouldn't you know it, the rain just as suddenly stopped.

The season has now started but the weather is going to be a very influential factor in its progress.

Tynan and Armagh Hunt

Tynan and Armagh Hunt's opening meet, three days later, at O'Toole's Pub between Armagh and Newtownhamilton, took place in bitingly cold bright but dry weather. Huntsman Keith McCall had on a 14 ½ couple mixed pack of mainly Old English hounds, including drafts from the Hurworth, in North Yorkshire



Mrs Angie Phelps, wife of the Tynan's Whipper In with her son Samuel (aged 9) at O'Toole's pub.

and from the County Limericks, which he tells me have settled in very well.

Keith, assisted by amateur whippers-in Andy Philips and Philip Singleton, led an eighteen strong mounted field under field master Roy McCall to the first draw at Crozier's Hill, but this proved blank. Roy rides a good horse on a loose rein and in a snaffle so he takes everything in his stride enabling him to give the field a good time despite this blank draw.

At McKee's paintball shooting range hounds also drew blank and the third draw at a wood on the right hand side of Foley Road proved no more productive. The huntsman then assured me that he was moving to the Waterside at Seagahan Lake 'which always has a fox.' Thankfully he was proved right as car follower Cecil Smith hollored one away. Initially, hounds could make little of it but then got into their stride to push this fox hard after first losing him on one side of the road.

Having been recast on the other side of the road hounds refound their fox to hunt over Paddy McKee's, then Kyle McCall's and Brian McKee's. Throughout this hunt this ground was very heavy to bottomless in places with horses and riders working very hard to keep up with these tenacious hounds.

Hounds pushed their fox on and back to Crozier's Hill, where he was headed on the road before going back up Brian McKee's land and being headed by Cecil Smith. This caused him to turn back towards Crozier's Hill where he went to ground and was given best. Scenting conditions did not appear to be great but there were foxes afoot with the huntsman's twin brother Kyle, spotting a brace in one field and hounds were very briefly split before Keith got them back together though they could make nothing of either fox.

Home was blown in late afternoon before light faded and we found some welcome, warm refreshments back at O'Toole's.

With all three masters, Brian Dougan, Wilson Faloon and Stephen Watson together with honorary treasurer Maud Black out, there was a definite air of authority about the mounted field and plenty of good examples for the younger riders to emulate - which they did!

One of the most famous land marks in the Ballymacnab townland, over which most of today's hunting was done is the Bull's Track at the junction of the main Armagh to Newtownhamilton Road.

It is claimed that a black bull was flung by St Patrick from the nearby Armaghbreague Mountain, after it had demolished St Patrick's church three times. The bull landed here and a mark resembling an imprint of the bull's foot is now seen as a tourist attraction with a monument of the bull's head as a marker. One thing is sure - the bull did not land on ground as soft as today's going!

The Killultagh Old Rock and Chichester Hunt

The Killultagh Old Rock and Chichester Hunt's opening meet at Lennymore outside Crumlin Co Antrim was also new huntsman Mark Casserly's debut with the Hunt. Mark had on a 15 ½ couple mixed pack and was assisted by amateur whippers-in Chris Berry and Patrick Grinter while a twenty strong mounted field, including both masters Mrs Frank Boyd and Gary Clugston,, was under field master Miss Charlotte Calvert.



Mrs Frank Boyd Senior Master with the Killultagh Hounds.

A dry, cool even cold day didn't appear to have much scent about it and the first draw at The Gulf was blank. The huntsman then drew a laneway at Thistleburrow where car follower Herbie Andrews saw a brace go afoot. One fox ran towards Lurgan Road while the other one made towards Lignite with some hounds hard on. They were recalled and the united pack drew back again towards the meet putting another fox afoot. This fox ran towards Lignite on more or less the same line as the first hunted fox with hounds hard on his brush across Aghnadarragh townland. After a brisk hunt, where hounds were in good voice this customer went to ground in the same drain which one of the first brace had been seen to enter. Having gone to ground this fox was given best and the huntsman drew Game Crop on foot but it was blank so he drew on alongside the River Crumlin in an effort to show further sport but to no avail.

Home was blown in late afternoon to allow a safe return to the meet.

Fermanagh Harriers' member killed in hunting fall

The Fermanagh Harriers' recent meet at Killeevan, Co Monaghan had a tragic sequel with the death of a very popular member, Willie McClean, after a fall. Willie fell at a jump where he was unable to break his fall and he

landed on his head, suffering head trauma and a broken neck. CPR and other first aid was rendered until his removal to Cavan Hospital, in the Republic, from where he was transferred to Belfast's Royal Victoria Hospital in which he died six days after the fall.

Willie McClean who died after a fall hunting with the Fermanagh Harriers – keeping an eye on a young rider



Having taken up hunting some five years ago to join his daughters Rachel, Rebecca and Ruth, who all hunt, Willie had displayed the resolve and strength of purpose he brought to all his endeavours, not least in his plumbing and agricultural contracting work.

A huge turnout at his funeral including a guard of honour from Hunt members and from members of the Lakeview Riding Club, showed the very high regard in which this decent, honourable, Christian man was held. Peter Little, who was riding with him at the time, said Willie showed 'boyish enthusiasm' for the new season and this was one of many facts reflected in a moving address in the church by Fermanagh Harriers' joint master Johnny Vance.

Every sympathy is extended to Willie's wife Shirley and their daughters Rachel, Rebecca and Ruth in their tragic and untimely loss.

New Huntsman at the Killultagh Old Rock and Chichester Hunt

The Meath born Mark Casserly has been appointed huntsman to the Killultagh Old Rock and Chichester Hunt. Having hunted since childhood Mark went to work for Meath Foxhounds' master Jan Farrell 'doing' her horses on leaving school. He then moved to the Meath Foxhounds' kennels where he continued as a groom before becoming first whipper-in, to John Henry, a role in which he spent some nine seasons.

Mark spent a season whipping-in to Alan Reilly at the Louth Foxhounds before getting the Killultagh job. He has already made his mark at the kennels and is, like everyone else, keenly looking forward to the new season into which he takes the best wishes of all connected at the Hunt.

Ward Union Stag hounds hold a successful Open Day

If anyone had any doubts about the Ward Union Hunt's popularity with, or importance to, the Co Meath rural community these would surely have been dispelled by the Hunt's open day. The kennels at Dunshaughlin were a positive hive of activity as huntsman

Pat Coyle welcomed the huge crowd including, most impressively, many young adults who seemed to be bursting for the start of the season.

A varied programme of events for children was matched by attractions for the adults – twenty-eight couples of hounds, some one hundred and seventy deer and the hunt horses, whose loose boxes bore a list of names of corporate and individual sponsors.

Introductions and explanations over the crowd was broken down into groups of about twelve, each of which was then assigned a whipper-in, or other hunt official, who gave a conducted tour of the kennels, deer parks and paddocks. Pat Coyle said afterwards that they had had even more guides than last year and that most of them had taken at least three groups on the tours.

A horn blowing competition for the children was won by Colm Kiernan (13) in the face of some very stiff competition, not least from Pat Coyle's son Joseph (10). Everyone then watched hounds being fed before returning to the front yard where the barbecue and bar staff did even more business than they had been doing beforehand. This was a highly successful event which showed the Hunt in very good light and has had a highly beneficial effect on its relationship with the local community.

Death of John Pickering.

John Pickering, former huntsman of the East Down

Foxhounds, the Golden Vale Foxhounds, the Oriel Harriers and the Bermingham and North Galway Foxhounds, has died after a period of illness.

Perhaps best remembered for his time with the Bermingham and North Galway Foxhounds as huntsman to Lady Molly Cusack Smith MFH, during which period he was known to occasionally rebuke this formidable lady, once reminding her that he and not she was the huntsman to which she replied: "You are quite right Pick".

A large man, who rode very light, he was a good horseman and hound man and was a character by any standards.

John's funeral took place at the Cathedral of the Assumption in Tuam, Co Galway and marked the end of a very colourful, even charismatic life.

Death of Killultagh Hunt stalwart

The death, at eighty years of age, of Marie Corr has robbed the Killultagh Old Rock and Chichester Hunt of a stalwart supporter whom many regarded as the doyenne of their Hunt. Having hunted in childhood and early adulthood, mainly with the County Down Staghounds, Marie married engineer Charlie Corr and the young couple left Northern Ireland for India where Charlie had secured a job.

Sadly Charlie soon suffered a debilitating illness and they had to return to Northern Ireland where Charlie was lovingly nursed, by Marie.

Hunting with the Killultagh and involvement with their Pony Club, of which Marie served as District Commissioner for many years, became the focus of her life even when she could no longer ride to hounds. This year Marie's remaining horses died one by one and their deaths were, in many people's opinion, why she suffered an acute stroke and from which, despite excellent hospital care, Marie did not recover.

Away from equestrian interests Marie was highly skilled at knitting and creating tapestries and had such excellent skill with a pen that she often wrote for Horse and Hound under the non de plume 'Man at the crossroads.'

Marie Corr was a woman of wit, wisdom, kindness and generosity of spirit who is already very much missed by a wide circle of friends of all ages, many of whom she mentored through the Pony Club and beyond.

At her interment it was noted that the road on which the cemetery is sited was called Horse Park and that, on the other side of the hedge from her grave, there is a floodlit sand school enabling her to continue monitoring young riders.

Every sympathy is extended to her brother-in-law John Corr and his wife Mairead in their sad loss.

Death of Dorothy Murdoch

The death of Dorothy Murdoch, former Master of the North Down Harriers as they then were, brought to an end this remarkable woman's battle against cancer. Despite the diagnosis this ebullient woman did not let the disease affect her energetic lifestyle. Rather, she continued to display her usual generosity of spirit and consideration for others, traits which were so generously displayed and so greatly appreciated by those who benefited from them.

Not least among the beneficiaries was the Irish Injured Jockey's Fund, for which she consistently outsold all other volunteer sales people – even in the depths of her illness Dorothy could be seen at Point to Point meetings maintaining these sales figures for Calendars and Christmas cards in aid of the fund.

A central figure in the local racing scene, Dorothy brought her usual level of energy, commitment and dedication to promoting the sport. With her husband, Alex, she worked very hard to keep the North Down Hunt's Point to Point in the public eye, not least by hosting it for so many years at their Mount Alexander property. In fact, so popular did this meeting become that it was known, locally, as the Comber Races! Dorothy's standing in Comber was also greatly enhanced by her tireless work on behalf of Comber Group, Action Cancer, of which, sadly, she was to become a beneficiary.

As Master of the North Down Hunt, Dorothy brought authority to the role and her commitment to and generosity towards the Hunt did not end when she left the mastership as she remained a notable benefactress.

It will be no surprise to those who knew Dorothy that her funeral proceeded as she wished it to. A private, family service in her home was followed by interment in Comber cemetery, where the North Down's huntsman Tom Haddock blew 'Gone Away' on behalf of, not only the North Downs, but of all hunting people who had known Dorothy. In the afternoon Second Comber Presbyterian Church overflowed for a memorial service as, in another example of how popular Dorothy was, the Rev Roy Mackay allowed Church of Ireland minister, the Rev Colin Hall-Thompson, a long standing family friend of the Murdochs, to take the lead role in a lovely service.

As I left the church hall, where I had spent over forty minutes at a tea reception after the service, I saw that there was still a queue of people down the side of the church waiting to speak to Alex, his daughter Julia and son Andrew.

Every sympathy is extended to Alex, Julia and Andrew on their very sad loss which has been so greatly felt across a very wide and varied circle.

Country Chat



Daniel, Billy and Lawrence on the grouse moor in August.

Billy's willpower is tested and a Scottish grouse trip hits the spot, but will he ever get that Sussex hen chick?

You will recall that I was given an English pointer a while back, and if she worked out I agreed to buy her from her owner. I had her with me three times this year in Scotland, twice at the grouse counts, March and July, and then back in late August along with Ceara and Tia. Larry, Daniel and myself had booked two day's walked-up at the grouse on a moor belonging to Blair Atholl estates, on the outskirts of Pitlochry. This was to be Daniel's first time on a grouse moor, he had never shot grouse before, let alone shooting over pointers. Larry and I had the poor lad all hyped up over the speed of the birds: "You approach the pointers with the gun at the ready, the moment the birds shoot out of the heather, they are out of range within seconds," I told him.

It was Spot the English pointer that found a pair of grouse first; I shot one flying to the left, Larry lower down the hill to my right, shot the other flying across his

front. About half an hour later, Spot found again, backed by Ceara and Tia. This time it was Daniel's turn, a lone cock, which he shot cleanly as the bird rocketed away directly behind him. It was a superb shot, especially as it was his first ever grouse. He sent his labrador Grouse for the retrieve. I was pleased for him, his first trip to Scotland to shoot grouse and he would remember that bird for years to come. I had got Larry a little cocker spaniel bitch, bought from Kieran Fox, and the little dog hunted really well. Larry rested her in the tall heather and allowed her to quarter over the good stuff, and several times she found and flushed grouse, but none were so memorable as the last bird shot on the second day.

With David the keeper, armed with a camcorder and Daniel watching, the little spaniel hunted a small piece of heather. Around and around the little dog went, sticking to the same piece of ground. "She's going to wear that piece of ground out," joked David. "I know there is definitely something here," said Larry. After what seemed a lifetime, a hen grouse flushed, Larry had

it with his second shot, then dropped the little dog by whistle, indicating to Daniel to send his dog for the bird. What a finish to the two day's grouse shooting. I asked Daniel on the trip home, if he would go back next year: "Absolutely," said he.

As already highlighted in the autumn edition of this magazine, the commercial side of shooting, especially in Scotland, is becoming more expensive as each year passes. Walked-up grouse shooting for example, coupled with travel and accommodation is rapidly shifting out of the reach of us ordinary mortals, unless of course you are 'in the know' or one of those who earn as you spend. Fortunately, walked-up and driven game shooting is available on our own doorsteps at very reasonable prices, with hospitality and great craic thrown in for free. With commercial shooting, I no longer associate with those greedy sods who year after year, shoot the bulk of the bag, whilst some poor crater, through no fault of his own, shoots few or even none at all, but still has to pay the same. Nowadays I keep company with a selected few, but more importantly, the arrangement is only pay for what you shoot and that works out well for everyone concerned.

I am sure none of us will need reminding of the amount of water that was heaped upon us and the sodden lands in the last few months of yet another wasted summer. Even some of the golf clubs had to close to drain the greens. It was relentless at times. Cereal farmers in this patch of County Down finally managed to harvest their crops albeit late in places, relying heavily on the grain dryers which were going day and night. Rory, a local farmer, whose fields we depend upon so much to keep our little club alive, would be ploughing up the stubble the first that opportunity allowed. He got married this year and had to put off the honeymoon until after the fields were harvested.

Around the last week in August, Steven and I decided that we had better get a supply of pheasant pellets, fresh water and about a ton of old wheat to feed the ponds, over to the pheasants pen for storage, before Rory started ploughing up the stubble fields that led to the pen. I had phoned Rory earlier to ask permission, hoping that he wasn't lying on a sun-drenched beach somewhere or holding hands over a candlelit dinner in some picturesque setting. In fact, it's highly probable, that the only disturbance he was likely to get on his honeymoon, would have been me, wanting to know if it was OK to drive across his land. Anyway, permission granted, here I was leading the way in my little Land Rover Defender, pulling a borrowed and heavily laden trailer. Steven followed up behind in his father-in-law's Mitsubishi Shogun, with four-year-old son Jack propped up on a bag of grower pellets. I don't mind telling you, that it was seriously touch and go that we actually made

it to the pen at all as it was like driving across a bog. To be fair, Steven can handle all manner of vehicles and machinery and is just as comfortable sitting behind the wheel of a tractor or JCB. I on the other hand, for all my adventures in the Highlands of Scotland, would find it very easy to get bogged in on a tennis court.

With my face splattered in mud, for I was nervously watching the front wheel and had to open the side window and, with the food safely transferred to the pen, I enquired if we should be going back by the same route. "No I think we should go back over the stream this time," said Steven, probably sensing my apprehension at doing the whole thing all over again. At one stage the twin axle trailer had two of its wheels up in the air, but it wasn't skill on my part that kept it from turning over, for so concerned was I at getting the jeep through the soggy ground, there were times I forgot I was pulling a trailer. As I washed my face in the water drinker, young Jack had a natter with me: "Billy" "Yes son." "Billy, Daddy said I could go duck shooting with him, but I don't want to shoot any baby ones." "Good boy, you let Daddy make sure of that." "Billy will you shoot the wee birds in here?" "Oh I'll have a go when they are older. They only stay in the pen for safety til they get released into the wild and can take care of themselves. Then when the shooting season begins we'll have a go. But that's a long way off and we have a lot of work to do to look after them til then." "I see," he said, "I'm looking forward to helping with that." Another youngster taking his first steps in country sports.

I called over at my friend Larry's house one evening,



*The sportsmen of tomorrow:
Jack McKelvey with younger
brother Matthew and Rusty.*

to enlist his joinery skills to the doggy department of my jeep. "You'll come in for a cup of coffee," he said afterwards. The last time I called in with him at such a request, I had to get a lift home at three in the morning. "I think I should be getting down the road," I said. "Och you have plenty of time," says he. Needless to say there was no more mention of coffee, but he handed me a chilled glass of wine when I was still on my feet. I flopped down on the settee with glass in hand, resigned to my fate and as always with the two of us, the craic was mighty. He woke me the next morning at 7:00 am, still on his settee. A few years earlier, I had spent a day with him and his father and it was like this. At about eleven o'clock in the evening, the pair of them manhandled me from their work's van to the front door, then rang the door bell and scarpered. When the wife opened the door, I was sitting on the doorstep like a bottle of milk, with my little spaniel tied to my leg, though it could be argued that there was more life in a bottle of milk. Well bless her, she was good enough to untie the wee dog, take her inside...and close the door again. I had to go back to Larry's later in the middle of August, to give him and young Daniel some sort of an itinerary for a two day walked-up grouse trip, and was having sleepless nights thinking about it. But I arrived home, sober as the

proverbial judge for ten o'clock. I phoned him up the next day and thanked him for such a lovely evening! The power of will power or maybe lack of temptation!

He rang me up one evening, looking to borrow an incubator, the idea being, to rear a few chicken eggs which I would supply, as he thought it would be fun for the two young daughters. I borrowed Steven's incubator and gave Larry two dozen eggs to set in the incubator, taking instructions from Steven and passing them on to Larry and eventually about six eggs hatched. I was more worried than he was about the eggs hatching as Larry said if the eggs didn't hatch, he would be putting it around that both of Lewis' Sussex roosters were not up to speed. Well, he put it another way but not for you to read dear readers. I called up one evening a few weeks later to see the hatch. He had them in an empty water tank, with heater overhead which I thought was a good idea. When I peeped in I had a shock, well actually a sickener really, for among the pure bred white Sussex chicks, was a beautiful little healthy buff coloured Sussex hen chick, which I have been trying to rear with my lot for years. But the rogue won't give it up, not even for two white Sussex hens in return.

May I take this opportunity to wish you all a merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.

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Emmet McCourt - a Chef at the top of his 'game'

Top Chef Emmet McCourt is well known internationally for his love of game cookery using locally sourced ingredients whenever possible. At all the Great Game Fairs of Ireland his 'Go For Game' cookery demonstrations have played to packed audiences throughout the day. And the rush for samples after each cook-in confirmed that the public could not get enough of his mouth watering fare.

So popular was the 'eels' feature in the last edition of Irish Country Sports and Country Life, with some wonderful dishes fresh from Lough Neagh, we wanted to ask Emmet to give readers something to tuck into now the game season was in full swing.

By a strange coincidence, the grapevine had been in full working order at Titterington Towers and we had just received glowing reports of a game-based extravaganza, cooked by Emmet for a shooting party lead by top gun dealer Donal McCloy.

We asked Emmet to share some of his expertise and he selected three recipes: Inishowen Rabbit with Dulce and Onion Poundies, Grants Streaky Bacon. Next, Loin of Venison with Blackberry, Celeriac Puree, Potato Fondant

and Baby Carrots; and finally Emmet's Game Pie.

Everything can be easily obtained in the game season and with Emmet's recipes there is no excuse for not cooking up a storm with some delicious, free range food.

Inishowen Rabbit with Dulce and Onion Poundies, Grant's Streaky bacon. Next, Loin of Venison with Blackberry, Celeriac Puree, Potato Fondant and Baby Carrots

Ingredients

1 saddle of rabbit boned out and trimmed
1 best end of rabbit (two - three bones) French trimmed
1 leg of rabbit - boned out (leg bone jointed, cut and retained for ballotine)
Rabbit kidneys and livers 200g
Pork mince 300g
Chicken fillet minced 200g
Port 1 measure
Dry white wine 150ml
Grants streaky bacon 200g
1 clove garlic
Chopped shallots 100g-Chopped scallions 100g

Inishowen Rabbit with Dulce and Onion Poundies, Grants Streaky Bacon.



Cognac 10ml
 1 small bunch of thyme
 Chopped rosemary 5g
 Rabbit bones 500g
 Chicken bones 300g
 Tomato paste 50g
 Water 2 litres
 Carrot, onion celery leek 300g Mirepoix
 Turnip 300g trimmed diced
 Cream a drop
 Potatoes 200g peeled chopped
 Dulce soaked and simmered in boiling water for 1 hour
 Diced butter 100g
 Pistachio nuts shelled and chopped 100g

For the stuffing

Place the pork and chicken mince into a bowl, chop the rabbit liver & kidneys adding to the stuffing. Sweat the shallots and garlic in butter with the pistachios chopped thyme and rosemary; add to the stuffing when cooled. Add the port, mix and season. Add a little cracked egg to bind if necessary. Fill a piping bag with the stuffing and leave in Fridge

For the saddle

Lay the streaky bacon out on squares of tin foil and cling film, place the saddle on top, season the inside of the saddle. Pipe enough of the farce inside the saddle, along the middle as not to overload. Roll the foil slowly with the rabbit saddle turning both ends as you go, to form a sausage shape, tie both ends tightly. Leave to set in fridge. Place the saddle on a tray and roast in an oven 180 or gas 5 for 15 to 20 minutes, allow to rest before carving.

For the rabbit ballotine

Proceed as for the rabbit saddle without the bacon, leaving a cleaned and chopped leg bone in the rabbit protruding from the top. Pipe the farce along the inside. Roll as for the Saddle. Leave to set in the fridge. Braise in stock until cooked 10 minutes.

For the sauce

Roast the bones until well coloured in the oven, deglaze with the brandy. Add the water. Brown the mirepoix in a frying pan.

Add all ingredients to a heavy based sauce pan and bring to the boil, simmer for 3 hours skimming occasionally. Pass through a fine sieve. Reduce by halve. Monte au burre before serving

For the turnip puree

Braise the diced turnip in chicken stock until tender. Pass through a fine sieve add a knob of butter and chopped rosemary when reheating. Season to taste.

For the poundies

Boil the potatoes until tender, drain and pass. Add the butter, milk, chopped cooked dulce and chopped onions. Season to taste.



Loin of Venison Blackberry, Celeriac Puree, Potato Fondant and Baby Carrots

Loin of Venison Blackberry, Celeriac Puree, Potato Fondant and Baby Carrots

Ingredients

(Serves 4)

1 Venison loin, Trimmed 1kg
 1 Quarter of Celeriac, peeled and chopped
 200ml Cream
 1 glass of Port
 200ml Game of Beef Gravy
 1 small onion diced
 4 large potatoes peeled
 150ml chicken stock
 500g baby carrots peeled washed
 100g butter diced
 50ml melted butter
 50ml Brighter Gold Rapeseed oil For Frying
 Blackberries 200g
 Salt & Pepper to season

Venison

Wrap the venison loin in cling film and tie at both ends to form sausage shape. Leave to set in fridge. Slice the Venison into steaks through the cling film. The cling film will hold the Venison's shape while cooking. Season the venison with salt and pepper on both sides. In a non-stick pan add the rapeseed oil and heat until smoking

.Panfry the venison on both sides and cook to your liking. Finish in the oven if preferred. Remove the Clingfilm before cooked retaining the pan for the sauce.

Blackberry Sauce

In the pan, add a knob of diced butter .Fry the diced butter without colour, stirring the base of the pan to retain the venison sediment. Add the port simmering to deglaze the pan of meat juices .Reduce by half, and then add the blackberries and gravy .Reduce further until the sauce is slightly thickened. Add a knob of cold diced butter to glaze the sauce before serving. Serve with cooked baby carrots.

Celeriac Puree

In a saucepan, sweat the chopped celeriac in butter .Add the cream bring to the boil,turn down the heat and simmer until soft .season with salt and pepper. Add the cooked celeriac and cream to a blender. Blend until a fine puree is achieved. Pass through a sieve, reheat before serving with the venison.

Fondant Potatoes

Season the potatoes with salt and pepper. Slice the potatoes with a circular cutter. Fry the shaped potatoes in a non-stick pan with the rapeseed oil and a knob of butter, until golden brown. Transfer the potatoes into a non-stick sauce pan; add the melted butter and chicken stock. Cook on top of the stove or in the oven. Baste occasionally until tender.

Emmett's Game Pie



Ingredients

Medium pie dish

1 puff pastry sheet, enough to cover base and top of pie dish

Egg wash, 1 egg yolk, a drop of water

For the filling.

Hare loin 1lb diced

Rabbit leg or saddle off the bone Diced 200g

Pheasant breasts 2 diced

Wood pigeon breasts 4 sealed and cut in two

Woodcock or Snipe breasts 2 sealed and cut in two

Venison loin Diced 500g

Streaky bacon diced 200g

Beef Jus or Chicken Gravy 1/2pt

Port 3 measures

Red wine 5 measures

1 Carrot peeled and roughly chopped

1 medium onion diced

2 cloves of garlic chopped

Juniper berries 1 tablespoon

Fresh Thyme 1 small bunch tied

Brighter gold rapeseed oil

Salt and pepper to season

Method

Line the pie tin with puff pastry and cut to size, prick with fork and set in fridge to rest, in a heavy based pot add some rapeseed oil, sweat all the vegetables without colour. Add all the game to pot excluding the pigeon and woodcock .when the game is sealed add port, red wine and gravy, add the thyme, juniper berries and bring to the boil and reduce the total volume by half, season with salt and pepper and add the sealed wood pigeon. Allow to cool before filling the pie dishes with the filling. Cut the puff pastry to fit the dish and cover the pie dish. Tie in the sides with a knife and brush the top with egg wash. Cook in a moderate oven GAS 6 .180 c for 30 to 40 mins until golden brown. Serve with potatoes and vegetables.

Emmett's Game Pie.

Philip Lawton reports on F.A.C.E's 35th Anniversary Celebrations

FACE which is the body in Europe which represents all forms of hunting throughout Europe have celebrated their 35th anniversary this year and I had the great pleasure to be present with the Irish delegation in Brussels in September. The delegation was led by Des Crofton of the NARGC along with some of their officers and it was several days of meetings, conferences and some sightseeing.

Des Crofton was elected as a Vice-president of FACE and this shows the importance with which Irish field sports are seen on the mainland of Europe. Various discussions and debates took place between delegates from 27 countries and the logistics of organising such an event were a great credit to Yves LeCoq and the staff at FACE headquarters. Yves has served as Secretary General for many years and has now retired from this onerous position where he has left a standard of commitment which will be difficult to follow. Over his time, as Secretary General, he has lobbied members of the European Parliament and EU civil service to great effect on behalf of hunters, shooters and anglers and, as so much of the rules and regulations which affect our sports now originate at a European level, this has become increasingly essential. Yves will still be working with FACE in an advisory capacity which will be of great value to his successor, Angus Middleton. Angus is not a new face in the organisation and has several years experience under his belt so the organisation and the sportsmen and women of Europe should be in safe hands.

Many Irish hunters, shooters and anglers know little about the work of FACE as they don't see it to be a 'local' organisation, but rather just another part of the European political system which doesn't seem to affect the man on the ground, but Europe now has more authority over local matters than many of us realise. Various directives which come from Brussels or the parliament in Strasbourg are put into Irish law before we understand their potential and as I have always said: "What suits the Po Valley may not suit the plains of Kildare or the mountains of Donegal." It is essential that all field sports followers support FACE through their individual organisations if our voices are to be heard and our concerns made known in an appropriate forum in Europe. There have been numerous instances of changes in quarry lists in recent times which are based on mainland European needs but seem to have no sense in

Ireland but we still find them enforced here. Imagine how much worse it would be without representation at this level!

FACE GENERAL ASSEMBLY - 6 SEPTEMBER

The representatives of the European hunting world from 25 countries gathered in Brussels for the annual FACE General Assembly on Thursday 6 September. The intensive meeting covered a broad range of topics impacting on hunting in Europe, with FACE Members discussing its activities in FACE's 12 work areas, each crucial to hunters - ranging from Member Services, to Animal Welfare & Health, Firearms & Ammunition and of course Nature & Wildlife Conservation. The wide variety of issues discussed is representative of the importance and breadth of the EU's influence.



Top table members at the FACE Members General Assembly Meeting.

FACE Leadership Elections

FACE is the largest democratically representative body for hunters in the world, with elections for its President, representative Board and Bureau taking place every three years. Each country represented within FACE receives one vote. The Board is composed of the 5 biggest hunting countries as well as 6 representatives covering each of Europe's regions (see graphic at end for new composition 2012-15).

Gilbert de Turckheim was unanimously re-elected by the FACE membership as FACE President. As FACE President during the past 9 years, Gilbert has chaired FACE's main gatherings and led the organisation through a time of great change. His success in the role has made him by far the longest-serving President FACE has ever had.

FACE's long-standing Secretary-General Yves Lecocq officially stepped down after 28 years in the role and FACE's Chief Executive Angus Middleton who has led

the FACE Secretariat in Brussels for the past 4 years was unanimously named FACE's Secretary-General, thus consolidating the two roles.

The intensive meeting was followed by a special evening Reception in the heart of Brussels' EU Quarter where FACE Members Delegates celebrated with key officials from the European Commission and Parliament, long-standing FACE personalities, partner conservation organisations and industry representatives.

35 YEAR CELEBRATIONS DAY - 7 SEPTEMBER

Member of the European Parliament & President of the European Parliament Sustainable Hunting Intergroup Véronique Mathieu opened the Day by expressing her deep support for FACE and its aims in a speech where she also paid homage to FACE President Gilbert de Turckheim before he took the floor for the President's Address.

EU Environment Commissioner Janez Potocnik gave the day's key note address, congratulating FACE on its achievements and also provided points of consideration as well as a perspective on specific issues such as Large Carnivores, Natura 2000 and Invasive Alien Species. The Commissioner took questions from FACE Members and provided an opportunity for open dialogue between the

European hunting representatives and the leader of European environmental policy.

The Commissioner appreciated FACE's contribution and constructive role in the conservation of Europe's nature. He emphasised the positive impact FACE and its members have made since 1977 and its exemplary dialogue and collaboration with other conservationist stakeholders. He especially mentioned the Sustainable Hunting Initiative as a "very good example of constructive dialogue between all different parties involved and shows how much can be achieved through proactive involvement and cooperation." Commissioner Potocnik concluded his speech "by thanking you once again for your involvement and support, your constructiveness and readiness to help and cooperate."

Yves Lecocq, FACE's longstanding Secretary General of 28 years, charted the history of hunting in Europe with a dynamic session – FACE: 35 Years in the Making, reflecting on the great milestones for hunters and other conservationists in Europe since 1977. The presentation included interventions by FACE founding fathers, personalities and longstanding partners. This Celebrations



Busy multilingual conference hall with representatives from all European hunting traditions.

Day was more than the chance to reflect on the past, but rather to draw on the 35 years of knowledge and experience in the evolution of hunting and conservation in Europe so as to best inform our shared future.

Building on this invaluable experience gained through FACE's Members and Partners, the European hunting community engaged in an interactive thought-provoking panel discussion on The Outlook for Hunting featuring high profile speakers including eminent wildlife biologist John Linnell, key officials from the European Commission Nick Hanley and Eric Peters. The session was moderated by Dr. Michl Ebner, a long-standing Member of the European Parliament and now Honorary Member of FACE. In contrast the Members' General Assembly the day before where FACE's work was discussed in technical detail, this session looked at the greater picture of hunting in Europe and raised the big questions surrounding our future. The panelists agreed on the great challenges that await hunting and hunters in Europe, to be shaped by political and economic factors, the future of the EU, and our ever-changing society and the impact of mass urbanisation. The benefits hunting does have for society and the potential it has to offer Europe in the 21st century were also outlined. Consensus existed on the importance of clearly profiling the benefits of hunting and finding a dialogue with the public and also other conservation stakeholders so as to improve understanding and sustain hunting in the future. A prominent message was that in these challenges lie great opportunities.

Judge Nicholas Forwood, EU Court of Justice provided the verdict of the day, noting the importance of the 35 year retrospective session, and quoting British historian Arnold Toynbee of the rise and fall of civilizations "History not used is nothing, for all intellectual life is action. Like practical life, and if you don't use the stuff well it might as well be dead." Forwood highlighted the political life of FACE, and the fact that organisations thrive together when they have a clearly identified common purpose. He drew on the message that any 'enemy' of hunting needs to be identified as a problem or issue rather than a specific

group – something that FACE has done with great success in the past 35 years, finding the common ground with seemingly opposing groups. The critical impact of perceptions of issues was underlined, and how best to manage the public perception of hunters and hunting in an ever-changing and rapidly urbanising world whilst continuing to provide a solid scientific base for the activity. Forwoord gave his judgment by recalling Véronique Mathieu's opening words: FACE has shown over its last 35 years that it is indeed "a reliable partner with great added value." Forwoord judged that "the added value is still going to be necessary, even more so than in the past and I personally hope as I'm sure everyone in this room does that we will see that contribute to a revaluation of the hunter in the eyes of the average European citizen."

The high-profile nature of the speakers, panelists and participants reflect the impact and recognition FACE has achieved in the last 35 years - the benefits of which are felt not only in Brussels but in every hunter's experience in Europe. As FACE steps forward for European hunters, to address an increasing number of challenges, it does so with a breadth and depth of shared experience, and a deep appreciation of its Members, the individual hunters they represent, of Europe, of nature, of people and of politics.

FACE President Gilbert de Turckheim closed the day by conveying vivid pictures of the individual hunter – whether it be a Finnish hunter, waking at dawn and heading out with his dog in freezing conditions or a Southern European hunter who waits all summer for the passing of the birds – reminding us all to think upon the passion that unites hunters. "Hunters are absolute determined to engage in the discussions and dialogues so as to ensure the future for the beautiful nature and hunting of Europe."

While there was plenty of work done at the conference there was also some sightseeing which had a relevance to our sports and included a visit to part of the famous Ardennes Forest – a vary large part of which is still a 'wild place' with both game and predators that have roamed the land for millennia. With good management it has become a Mecca for both hunters and wildlife enthusiasts where all the main European wild animals can be studied. Deer, wolves, bear, and even lynx roam freely and the preservation of such an enormous area in its natural state is a great credit to both state and voluntary bodies. When you think of forest terrain you naturally think of thick concentrations of trees but this magnificent project contains natural heath, bog, marsh and grassland as well as wonderful stands of both mature and nursery trees making up a vast resource for European wildlife.

We finished up the day trip with a visit to the Basilica



Interior St. Hubert's Basilica, the patron saint of hunters. of St. Hubert which is situated in a delightful village. St. Hubert is the patron saint of hunters, among others, and his story is worth a separate piece which I will write at some future date.



Sean Doris (NARGC) and Philip Lawton lighting candles in St. Hubert's Basilica in memory of past hunters.

On our way back to Brussels we were entertained to a wild game lunch in a traditional and idyllic village in the forest and then to refreshments at Yves' house where we met his elegant wife who has been such a support during his career.

A special thanks to the members of the Irish delegation of Des Crofton, Sean Doris, Barry Sullivan and who made the trip so pleasurable. It was also an experience to meet other field sports journalists from around Europe. We're not on our own and we would do well to learn about the hunting traditions of our neighbours. It was a trip to remember and a valuable lesson in the internationality of our sports.

Federation of Irish Salmon & Sea Trout Anglers

Conaidhm na Slat Iascairí Bradáin agus Breac Geal

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FISSTA 2012 AGM DOMINATED BY THE DARK CLOUD OF SEALICE

The scene for the FISSTA's AGM was completely different in that our venue was the same as the Irish Fly Fair which took place in the Galway Bay Hotel during the 11th November weekend. The timing of our AGM coincided with the public consultation period for the Galway Bay Salmon Farm and fitted in with our campaign of public awareness seminars which begun last May in Menlo Park Hotel Galway.

Our Chairman Paul Lawton set the scene by welcoming all especially the keynote speaker Dr Roderick

O'Sullivan who over the two day event summarised what was proposed in BIM's Environmental Impact Study and how it would impact on our world of angling and salmon. The meeting agreed that the outlook was bleak should these ill thought out plans ever come to pass as it was feared that the migrating smolt would become infested never to return. It was agreed from the sentiments of all speakers that we would be failing in our duty to angling and salmon if we did not do our utmost to oppose this major threat.

The AGM agreed that we convey the grave concerns of our delegates attending the Annual General Meeting of FISSTA to the Chairman and board of Inland Fisheries Ireland. The meeting heard presentations on all developments by our National Executive Council and marine environmental consultant Dr Roderick O' Sullivan who updated us on the dangers of the new fin fish farm to be located at the eastern side of Inish Oirr should BIM get their application granted by Minister Simon Coveney TD.

FISSTA delegates endorsed a detailed action plan and programme to continue to oppose BIM's application and refute certain claims in their Environment Impact Statement. It was agreed to engage in the process through various key partners who have campaigned with us and succeeded in the past. Concern was expressed on the



Billy Miller, Belfast with an 8 pounder on the Glen River, Donegal.

failure of IFI to lodge their submission in time and regard this as a great disadvantage to the consultation process as the applicant did not have to respond to the submission later posted on your website.

Delegates pointed out that this put our voluntary organisation at great disadvantage as it means we do not have the strong rebuttal information that could equip us to lodge the strongest possible objection. The Chairman and Secretary defended their position to refrain from joining in the public criticism of IFI on the various media sites as this would deflect our concentration from the problem. Some members of the NEC stated their disappointment that our input was not sought before 2nd October deadline, and request that IFI address the omissions before submitting their new submission before the deadline on December 12th when it is hoped that a wide range of objections will be lodged.

Our AGM concluded with unanimous agreement for all FISSTA clubs to "to mobilise their efforts in a coordinated campaign to protect the wild Atlantic salmon from extinction" and in that aim we acknowledge that we are heavily dependent on the IFI advice to ensure that the valuable natural resources of inland fisheries and salmonid angling in particular are conserved, managed, developed and promoted (and not wiped out) in their own right to generate positive return for the community and the environment.

CHAIRMAN PAUL LAWTON'S ADDRESS

Please accept our good wishes and kind thanks to all delegates attending our AGM in Galway today. It is now 12 months since I was elected Chairman and at that time we were hopeful that we could see some small improvements to the stocks of our wild Atlantic salmon and sea trout. Sadly, our main objective in the return to abundance of the wild stocks is still very far off. However, we must strive to attain that abundance of salmon and none of us must be complacent in expecting nature alone to deliver this goal. There are many challenges for the Inland Fisheries sector and perhaps we

expect and depend on our state authorities to protect, manage and conserve our sensitive stocks but our members pay the most expensive state license in the world so that our fisheries are protected and resourced properly. After a season of very poor patrol and policing activity I am saddened to report that we got very poor value for our money. Last year at our AGM Minister Pat Rabbitte TD stated: "I know we share common interests for the future of the Inland Fisheries Sector and I hope the new structures now firmly in place under the direction of the Inland Fisheries Board will herald a new era for us all to prosper. I appreciate the key role FISSTA play in advising the Board of IFI and the newly formed National Inland Fisheries Forum from which we all depend on to deliver an improved angling product." Sadly, NIFF nor any other body have not improved the angling or fish stocks and today is your opportunity to discuss why we will not tolerate another year of inaction.

We face the greatest threat to our wild fish with the new plan from Minister Coveney to increase tenfold the farmed fish cage production starting with the Galway Bay application already underway.

NASF MESSAGE TO FISSTA FROM ORRI VIGFUSSON

Firstly may I convey my very best wishes to all my friends in FISSTA clubs all over Ireland and I hope you will have a most productive meeting in Galway today. I congratulate the National Executive Council for your excellent work in lobbying for our wild Atlantic salmon and for your continued support to me and NASF over the many years. I regret that I am unable to attend today but we are launching a new film called 'A Celebration of Salmon' in London at present. Our work continues with a minor victory already achieved to end mixed stock fishing in the Norwegian waters. Salmon rivers in Ireland have shown a small improvement since the buyout of the driftnets by the Irish Government in 2006. Last year I noted that the reopening of the mixed stock fishery at Castlemaine

continues to take valuable fish and it proves we must never take our eye off the netting issues.

I thank FISSTA for their lobbying work to end the North coast nets and I still follow and enjoy the Facebook pages set up under the title 'No salmon nets in Irish waters' as a good example of the new publicity tools we should use to get our message across. We must continue to highlight the draft net extensions into August and rod extensions into October as anti conservation and ill thought out - as if we have the luxury of abundance. I thank the FISSTA NEC for their assistance and support in lobbying. I commend your very active involvement with fellow NGO's on the international stage



A seal feasting in the River Lee.



NSN's Mark Tierney and a young supporter on the NSN stand.

where most of the key decisions on Irish salmon are made or not made as the case may be too frequently. This is where your fish farm fight will be won and

I will support your campaign wholeheartedly in every way as I did on the drift net campaign. This year, NASF continues to buy out or lease out nets from Greenland, Faeroe Islands to the UK and we hope that with the help of Russian pressure, Norway will soon make the welcome decision to end mixed stock fisheries once and for all. The fact remains that NASF is now conserving all the fisheries that NASCO was created to manage, yet the EU should recognise this work by funding it as the benefits are obvious as anti conservation and ill thought out - as if we have the luxury of abundance.

MOTIONS DEBATED AND PASSED AT AGM 2012

1. In light of the Cohen commission findings and new migratory knowledge from SALSEA that confirm the serious habitat damage to wild salmon, that FISSTA must redouble their efforts to convince this present government to end their finfish farm plans in the open marine.

2. That FISSTA encourages and organises both itself and all other supporters (individuals and groups) opposed to the new salmon farm threats to take full advantage of the forthcoming NASCO meeting in June 2013.

3. That FISSTA executive be empowered to investigate potential strategic alliances that will strengthen the federation similar to the Dutch model.

4. That FISSTA finance sub committee explore potential funding from business firms to promote our sport.

5. That FISSTA explore ways to monitor the management of our fisheries by state authorities in light of the impending threats to our wild salmon resource.

6. That FISSTA encourage protection staff to find new hi-tech ways to detect commercial poaching in 2013.

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

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Have one of mine!' - Pat O'Flaherty and Chairman Paul Lawton at the fly fair in Galway.

TAOISEACH SAVE OUR SALMON!

The Galway Fly Fair had a great atmosphere and set the scene for a very productive FISSTA AGM as the delegates attended in much greater numbers than previous years. Perhaps it was their concern for the stocks as the bemusement and genuine fear was evident from the questions from the floor took place. Many asked how Minister Coveney could allow the wipeout of a whole species to the Galway rivers by locating a mega farm in Galway Bay near Inis Oirr. It was felt that divine intervention was needed from someone above him so the man from Mayo seems our only hope to avoid the impending disaster. The Taoiseach will need no lessons from the Tourism Minister Michael Ring and all the Ballina anglers who have developed a hard won tourism business down the years right up the Moy Valley where many make their annual pilgrimage to catch the elusive salmon. FISSTA have always been given a warm welcome and that is why we have held many of our protest rallies there under the direction of our President Josephine Egan and ably supported by Michelle Mulherin who now serves Mayo as a TD in Dail Eireann. Thankfully the Mayo people support the salmon and will not be found wanting when the going gets tough as it seems to be right now as we stand at the edge and face into the abyss of toxic salmon cages. We must resist Minister Coveney's lead to take one giant step forward into it and instead take a giant step backwards so that our wild Atlantic salmon species is protected for future generations. After all, the Minister must have regard for biosecurity, environment and tourism. But above all, we must protect existing jobs before we displace them for a fraction of what we have now.

Despite the long established differences of opinion between anglers and fish farmers on their 'pollute to produce' methodology, fish farmers like the Chairman John Friedriksen of Marine Harvest loves his salmon angling as much as any other sportsman and admitted that salmon cages should not be located near the estuaries where migrating smolts will be

infested by sealice. Locating them further out to sea on their migratory path as in Galway Bay proposal is just as damaging, but scientific advisors to the Ministers differ, so our wild salmon smolts die. The immediate solution is to locate them onshore or closed contained where waste and disease can be managed like any other fish factory.

FISSTA network of clubs on the main salmon rivers have been opposing and objecting to fin fish farming applications since their successful campaign against the ESB owned Salmara farms in the mid 1990s when our seatrout collapsed. This new fast track application system is a blatant conflict of interest in that Minister Simon Coveney announced his intentions for ten monster fish farms and then got his BIM to apply to himself for a license, the same Government department that is responsible for regulating the activity.

Our dependence on Inland Fisheries Ireland to protect wild fish is now in question as BIM refused to accept a late submission on 3rd October. FISSTA have called on BIM to respond to IFI submission immediately and before the 12th December deadline so the public consultation can benefit from the BIM response.

FISSTA have raised public awareness by holding rallies in



Dr Roderick O'Sullivan explains the impact on wild fisheries.

Cork, Ballina and two in Galway, the latest in Galway Bay Hotel Salthill where large attendances heard of our fears articulated best by Dr Roderick

O' Sullivan, the renowned water quality expert with many publications to his credit.

The BIM application and EIS mentions no dangers of pollution, sealice or chemical cocktails as if no such problems will occur. But nobody knows who will get the tender - not even BIM. But many believe that of the 17 companies who have tendered expressions of interest so far, the favourite is Marine Harvest. This is the same company who recently announced the closure of fish farm sites in Lough Swilly and Mulroy Bay due to the outbreak of Amoebic Gill Disease (AGD) which is caused by high water temperatures. Will Galway temperatures be different? The closure of Mulroy Bay to the middle of 2014

for cleaning out suggests that the climatic conditions are not conducive to such unsustainable industrial production. FISSTA questions the ability of Marine Harvest to manage further sites such as Galway Bay if they fail so badly outside of their headquarters on the shores of Mulroy Bay. Galway Bay is our Alamo and we must not fail the wild Atlantic salmon and seatrout.

2013 SEASON TO OPEN WITH FAR TOO MANY RIVERS STILL CLOSED

The draft regulations have been published and a 30 day consultation to end in mid December is now underway which allows any club or angler to question or object to the findings as advised by the Standing Scientific Committee and signed off by Minister Fergus O'Dowd TD. At the FISSTA AGM the members questioned the criteria and consistency of the decisions for to keep closed some rivers as outlined below. It was agreed that once again at National Inland Fisheries Forum level and directly with Inland Fisheries Ireland level to pursue a work plan so that the potential salmon spawning capacity is improved in every river for 2013.

Further information at www.dcenr.gov.ie/natural, where an updated list will be posted after January 1st 2013.

Rivers Total Allowable Catch for each Fishery district

Dublin: Dargle 0 Closed; Upper Liffey 0 Closed; Lower Liffey 0 Catch and Release; Vartry 0 Closed;

Wexford: Slaney 0 Catch & Release; Avoca 0 Closed; Owenavorrhagh 0 C&R

Waterford: Barrow and Pollmounty 0 Catch & Release; Nore 5,548 Open; Suir including Clodiagh, Lingaun, and Waterford, Blackwater 2,371 Open; Colligan 0 Catch and Release; Corock R 0 Catch and Release; Owenduff Closed; Mahon 0 Closed; Tay 0 Closed; Lismore Blackwater (Munster) Glenshelane & Finisk 6,631 Open; Bride 0 Catch and Release; Lickey 0 Closed; Tourig 0 Closed; Womanagh 0 Closed

Cork: Owenacurra 71 Open; Lower Lee 1,830 Open; Bandon 1,162 Open; Ilen 628 Open; Mealagh 192 Open; Coomhola 185; Open Upper Lee 0 Closed; Glengarriff 127 Open; Argideen 0 Catch Release; Owvane 399 Open; Adrigole 0 Catch Release

Kerry: Roughty 622 Open; Blackwater (Kerry) 0 C & R; Sneem 691 Open; Waterville 403 Open; Caragh 1,106 Open; Laune including Cottoners 4,758 Open; Maine 1,709 Open; Castlemaine Harbour 1 6,395 Open; Behy 0 Closed; Emlagh 0 Closed; Owenmore R. 210 Open; Croanshagh (Glanmore R. & Lake) 124 Open; Sheen 0 Catch and Release; Inny 500 Open;

Kealinya 0 Catch and Release; Lough Fada 0 Catch and Release; Owenshagh 0 Closed; Cloonee 0 Closed; Finnihy 0 Closed; Owenreagh 0 Closed; Emlaghmore 0 Closed; Carhan 0 Closed; Ferta 0 Catch and Release; Owenascaul 0 Catch and Release; Milltown 0 Catch and Release; Feohanagh 0 Catch and Release; Lee 0 Closed

Limerick: Feale including Galey & Brick 1,992 Open; Mulkear 1,304 Open; Maigne 0 Closed; Shannon River 0; Closed Fergus 0 Closed; Deel 0 Closed; Owenagarney 0 Closed; Doonbeg 0 Closed; Skivaleen 0 Closed; Annageeragh 0 Closed; Inagh 0 Closed; Aughyvackeen 0 Closed

Galway: Corrib 4,235 Open; Aille (Galway) 0 Closed; Kilcolgan 0 Closed; Clarinbridge 0 Closed; Knock 0 Closed; Owenboliska R (Spiddal) 0 Closed; Connemara Cashla 446 Open; Screebe 0 Catch and Release; Ballynahinch 1,473 Open; L. Na Furnace 0 Catch and Release; Ballinakill Erriff 520 Open; Bundorragha 328 Open; Common estuary 2 611; Open Owenglin (Clifden) 362 Open; Dawros 571 Open; Culfin 245 Open; Carrownisky 0 Catch and Release; Bunowen 0 Catch and Release; Owenwee (Belclare) 0 Catch and Release; Bangor Srahmore (Burrishoole) 0 Catch & R; Carrowmore Lake 572 Open; Owenduff (Glenamong) 2,159 Open; Owenmore R. 174 Open; Common estuary 3 2,161 Open; Newport R. (Lough Beltra) 305 Open; Glenamoy 285 Open; Owengarve R 0 Closed; Muingnabo 0 Closed; Ballina Moy 26,009 Easkey 863 Open; Cloonaghmore (Palmerstown) 0 Closed; Ballinglen 0 Closed; Brusna 0 Closed; Leaffony 0 Closed

Sligo: Ballysadare 3,214 Open; Drumcliff 85 Open; Garvogue (R. Bonet and L Gill) 512 Open; Grange 0 Closed

Ballyshannon: Duff 286 Open; Drowes 2,656 Open; Eany 326 Open; Glen and Owenwee 285 Open; Erne 0 Closed; Eske 99 Open; Abbey 0 Closed; Ballintra (Murvagh R) 0 Closed; Laghy 0 Closed; Oily 0 Catch and Release; Bungosteen 0 Catch and Release

Letterkenny: Owenea/Owentocker 1,281 Open; Gweebarra 417 Open; Clady 120 Open; Tullaghobegly 99 Open; Crana 635 Open; Gweedore (Crolly R) 385 Open; Ray 0 Catch and Release; Lackagh 0 Catch and Release; Leannan 0 Closed; Bracky 0 Catch and Release; Owenamarve 0 Closed; Glenna 0 Closed; Swilly 0 Closed; Isle (Burn) 0 Closed; Mill 0 Closed; Clonmany 0 Closed; Straid 0 Closed; Donagh 0 Closed; Glenagannon 0 Closed; Culoort 0 Closed

Drogheda: Boyne 0 Catch and Release

Dundalk: Castletown 0 Catch and Release; Fane 264 Open; Glyde 0 Catch and Release; Dee 0 Catch and Release; Flurry 0 Closed

How do you measure up?

Anglers tend to be competitive folk. Whether a specimen hunter or a match angler we are constantly trying to push the boundaries by catching the bigger fish or the heavier bag. Even those of us that are pleasure anglers still like to measure our success by keeping records of our personal bests in each of the species we fish for. So how do we go about keeping tabs on what we catch? Well, if you are from Ireland or the UK, the traditional way of measuring fish is to weigh them. Weighing fish is so built into our value system that certain species have a magic number attached to them such as a 20lb pike, 10lb bass or a 2lb roach.

The most obvious example of our attraction to measuring fish here in Ireland is the production of the Irish Specimen Fish Committee's yearly report which lists a set of both record and specimen weights for each species and also the names of the anglers who have caught specimen fish in that year. In fact, so conservative are we Irish anglers that there was a near public outcry a few years ago when the ISFC changed away from listing fish weights in pounds and ounces, preferring to list them in kilograms. The fact that most of the rest of Europe has been using kilos for years did not matter. We like our pounds and ounces here in Ireland and after much clamor, they were reinstated in subsequent reports.

But is weighing fish the most appropriate way to catalogue our catch? I regularly speak to anglers from

continental Europe and they often have a very different take on how to record their catches and it is length measurement that is the preferred method for many of their species. Mention that you caught a 20lb pike to a continental angler and you may not get the response you anticipated but tell them that you caught a 1 meter pike and they will know exactly what you are talking about.

In many cases, a length measurement is more practical from the angler's point of view. Weighing necessitates having a scales and a weigh sling and a bit of messing about to get the fish in and out of the sling. All of this can result in excessive handling for the fish and/or undue time out of the water. For length measurements, one needs only to carry around a tape measure or similar device. Or, even more practical, you can measure off a section of your rod to the desired length and mark it accordingly.

In fact, there are some inherent problems with the weighing of fish when it comes to fishing on boats. Because of the constant motion of a boat, it is impossible to get an accurate reading from a weigh scales. For this reason, the ISFC stipulates that any fish that are to be claimed as specimens must be weighed on land. This causes obvious problems for the conservation minded angler as it generally means that the fish must be killed in order to be claimed as a specimen.

For that reason the ISFC has recently opened the door to allowing a length measurement of fish to be used to claim a specimen instead of a weight measurement. This is being done on a trial basis at the moment and it is only for one species, Tope, which is caught in abundance off



This pike is easily seen to be a 100cm plus fish



This spurdog would have to be weighed on land to be claimed as a specimen. (Photo courtesy of Michael McVeigh)

the Irish coast but is rarely claimed as a specimen due to the problems I mentioned above. Should it prove successful, there is no reason other species commonly caught in our waters such as Blue Shark or Spurdog could not be included.

For specimen hunters, things have become a bit more complicated in the past year. In order to be considered accurate, all weigh scales have to be certified on a yearly basis. The certification process is performed to a high level of accuracy with the result that many scales fail the test and it is difficult to find a brand that is completely reliable. Furthermore, until 2012, the Legal Metrology Service has certified anglers scales free of charge. However due to staff cuts they can no longer provide this service free of charge. Anglers must now source an

organization that will provide the service commercially. One organization has agreed to do it for €50 and while there may be other cheaper alternatives, it still leaves a bit of a hole in your pocket if you add it up over the years.

It is in the competition scene that we are really seeing the practicalities of using length based measurements and this has been pioneered in the saltwater environment. Nowadays, most measurement-based competitions are determined using a measurement of fish length and great effort is made to ensure that the fish are returned to the water as soon as possible.

It's not only in the saltwater that this shift away from weighing fish is occurring. Many pike angling competitions are now run based on measuring length



Coarse angling matches are not suitable for length measurements.

rather than weighing fish. During some boat competitions which were run based on weight of fish, sophisticated setups using barrels & aeration had to be used to keep pike alive until they could be weighed. This practice has caused much controversy and no matter what way you look at it, it probably caused undue stress to the fish. Now, with a measure and a digital camera, pike lengths can be accurately recorded and verified with the winner being chosen based on length. Easier for the angler, better for the pike.

Trout angling competitions have been notorious for the wastage of fish as strings of fish are brought back to the 'weigh in' and are often discarded thereafter. As we all become more conscious of the impact angling has on the limited fish stocks in our waters we have to change our modes of thinking on these events. The recent Fly Fishing International held on Lough Sheelin used a points system based on fish length to minimize the impact of the competition on the lake. In fact, it is only in coarse angling matches that the practicalities of the fishing seem to mitigate against length based measurements as the number and small size of fish caught would seem to make such measurement impracticable.

So with most of Europe having

already shifted towards length based measurement of catches, it seems that we in Ireland are finally beginning to follow suit. With that in mind, IFI recently commissioned a batch of fish measuring mats that can be used to measure the length of a fish accurately. They are made of a soft and smooth PVC material and should do little harm to the fish, especially when wetted in advance. We have been giving them out as prizes in various competitions and they seem to have gone down well. If any anglers are interested in purchasing one we do have a limited supply available at a price of €35 (not cheap I know, but they were manufactured in Ireland and the price equates to cost + VAT + postage). If you are interested, please contact publications @fisheriesireland.ie.

It will be interesting how the weight versus length debate evolves over the next few years. My guess is that we will continue to move towards length measurements, particularly for species such as pike or tope where there are very practical reasons to do so. Who knows, some time in the future the ISFC report may have as many

specimen lengths as weights, but going on past form there will probably still be arguments raging over whether we list them in inches or centimeters!



Just because the trout season is coming to a close and winter is approaching there's no reason to put your fly rods into cold storage. Ireland's great lakes provide excellent fishing for pike all year round.

For the most up to date angling information on who is catching what, and where, log onto:
www.fishinginireland.info



The Mighty Midge

Andrew Griffiths traces the history of his favourite rod, an old Hardy Jet Midge, and contemplates its retirement.

My favourite rod is an old Hardy Jet Midge I picked up second hand a few years ago now. It is not my most recently acquired rod. Neither is it my most expensive rod. But as other rods have come and gone, it has remained, by some way, my most fished. The Hardy Jet Midge is a fraction over six feet long and constructed from glass fibre. It is simplicity itself, a toy of a rod, yet perfectly scaled for the small, overgrown streams that I most frequently fish.

It is a joy to take out onto the river. I am told that the action is more like split cane than a modern carbon rod. Never having fished cane, I will have to take other people's word for that. What I do know is that it has a slow, lazy action that goes right the way down to your shoulder. It is impossible to rush when casting this rod. It throws wide, open loops and is perfect for fishing a team of two spiders. The through action makes the rod roll cast like a dream, and it can turn over a length of line that you would think impossible from a rod of this size.

An eight ounce brown trout is a common catch from this stream and again is perfectly to scale as the rod bends to the pull of these small, wild fish. Latch on to the occasional specimen of a pound and you've got a real rod-creaking fight on your hands.



The Author's beloved Hardy Jet Midge

I picked up the Midge from Bakewell Fly Fishing Shop, Derbyshire. Its proprietor, Peter Arfield, knowing I was always on the lookout for something a bit different, reached into a dark corner of his shop and produced the Hardy Jet. It was love at first sight. It cost me sixty pounds.

I live within casting distance of my small stream and one of the appeals of the Jet is that it is short enough to leave strung up and hanging on my wall. The rod is becoming a collector's item now and an offer of a hundred pounds on the riverbank has made me wonder if I shouldn't just leave it hanging there

Love at first sight

What is the best end for a rod? Should it be retired gracefully and become an object to be admired and enjoyed, its fishing duties given over to a newer model? Or should it be allowed to do what it does best, however falteringly, and be fished until the bitter end? The more these thoughts occupied me, the more intrigued I became by the history of the rod. I asked Peter the identity of the previous owner, and it was game angling instructor and demonstrator, Karl Humphries. Karl bought the rod from Tommy Cooper's Gunshop in Hanley, Stoke-on-Trent, back in the early eighties. Like me more than twenty years later, he fell in love with the rod as soon as he saw it.

I asked Karl if he had any special fishing memories with the Jet, and he told me the most memorable moment would have to be when hooking - and banking - a 9lb Kelt when nymph fishing in April on the River Dee. Caught with a six foot, three and a half weight glass rod!

Hardy recently reintroduced a range of glass rods. In the modern incarnation though, they have added 10% carbon, to improve the recovery rate, and to add that little bit of extra fizz.

Would I choose to swap, if offered? The answer is no, I wouldn't, I would hang onto my old Jet with all its wear and trembling imperfections. As it bends into another eight ounce trout I can think to myself, 'you don't fool me, not now we both know about that 9lb Kelt on the Dee, you're tougher than you look.' But, talking to Karl made me realise something. Karl has a habit when buying tackle of buying it in pairs. He still has in his possession the twin of my rod, differing only by one serial number, and in mint condition, never fished. Theoretically at least, I could choose between a mint Hardy Jet Midge, and one of their newer glass models. Which then?

My Hardy Jet Midge rod was manufactured in the early 1970s. Later, Carbon largely replaced glass for the manufacture of fly rods. Carbon rods were considered

faster, capable of throwing tighter loops for distances, and altogether zippier.

A glass rod with a twist, a twist of carbon

Although not a direct reproduction of the famous Jet Midge rod, Hardy's new 6 foot 3 weight glass brook rods are not far off. But, it is a glass rod with a twist, a twist of carbon, if you like. So what difference does this 10% carbon make to the action of the rod, compared to the old 100% pure glass Jet Midge? I managed to prize my mate Pete's clammy fingers off his six foot glass brook rod for long enough for me to have a play.



Hardy Glass rods - the modern twist is a little carbon.

It still has a nice, slow action compared to an all carbon rod, and the brook version is light as the touch of a feather, again perfectly to scale on a smaller stream. And the roll cast, if anything, is a little better than the old Jet, with that smidgen of carbon zip. The main difference for me is in the recovery rate. The whole set up just feels that bit tighter. If the action of the rod was a sound, the

old Jet would be an echo that faded distantly away, whereas that touch of carbon in the new brook rod would have an altogether cleaner chime. In fishing terms, it makes for an even finer and more accurate presentation in the tightest of small stream spots – you can put your fly bang on the nose of even the most bijou of trout.

What the brook rod shares with the Jet though, is an ability to make that tiny fish feel like a monster. As Pete says, with one of these in your hand, and an eight ounce trout at the other end, "You can feel their little heart beat." The other thing Pete says, is: "Give it back."

Which is a shame, because I really don't want to. Some refer to their fly rod as a 'wand.' If it were so, I would wave mine and wish for one of these, it is the perfect rod for small stream fly fishing. The Hardy glass brook rod will certainly be finding its way onto my Christmas list. Oh, and team it with the Hardy Perfect reel for complete small stream bliss. Well, it is Christmas. And we can all dream.

As for my own Hardy Jet Midge, no, it won't get left and forgotten on the wall. I have decided to fish it to the bitter end.

But not because the rod is 'old', as some rail against modernity. I shall fish it because when I do I hold in my hand not just the day, but also the road – and the rivers – travelled. And over time, that gathers its own very special kind of stardust.

(All photographs by the Author except the Hardy Glass rods photo which is courtesy Hardy & Greys Limited)



Andrew's Tungsten Head Stonefly Nymph.



And the real thing - Stonefly resting on a boulder.

Shark in the Dark

After a long winter, this summer I decided that I would introduce my fishing and shooting companion Damian to shark fishing. I used to do an annual trip to the Co. Cork coast in pursuit of these beautiful predators and have caught many over the years. However, a return to college as a mature student, marriage and kids meant that it has been many years since I tried for shark. A typical shark trip means a day on the water far from land and, as I live near Dublin, this entails at least one overnight stay. We do not get blue shark on the East Coast, but to say Damian has never caught a shark would be wrong. He has many fine tope, bullhuss and smoothhound to his credit, caught from his own boat off the County Dublin coastline. For the past few years I have suggested a trip to the south coast with this boat to try for shark from it, but work commitments has always prevented it from happening to date. I have told him for years that he won't believe the colour of a blue shark in the water.

This year, in late August, I realised that the summer was drawing to an end and the idea of a shark trip again occurred to me. Of course it was September before I got around to doing something about it. I thought that I would contact a chap we had met while lake fishing,

Ross Macklin, whom I knew was an enthusiastic angler and very knowledgeable on all aspects of angling, having over fifty specimen fish to his name from fresh and saltwater. Needless to say he jumped at the chance of accompanying us. From here things got a bit rushed as it turned out that Damian had only one free weekend open and that was the next weekend.

I contacted Ross to see if he could find a charter boat to take us out and he got back to me with the news that the only open boat he could find was going out on Friday evening at 6:00 pm for a full night's shark fishing until 6:00 am on Saturday morning. He was very excited about the prospect of night fishing for them, something neither of us had done before. He said that he would ring around and try to get some more anglers to bring down the costs, as the charter would be prohibitively expensive for just three of us. He soon got back to say that he had seven anglers confirmed, so we were on to go. I must admit that the more I thought about it the less enthusiastic I became about twelve hours around twenty miles offshore in a relatively small boat in the dark. Ross said that the boat had had great fishing the previous weekend. Would it be rough? Would it be cold? Or I could stay at home and watch telly. Choice made.

First revelation was how quick it is possible to drive to Cork from Dublin and we arranged to meet up with Ross at the Lough in Cork. We met on Friday afternoon and made a stop at a supermarket on the way to get some

grub for the night. Here we met with our fishing companions, mostly university graduates or studying for a PhD, all younger than Damian and I, all first rate and a pleasure to spend a bit of time with, all also experienced anglers. Horhay (Jorge) was Spanish and had travelled from Belfast where he is studying



Skipper preparing the rubby dubby.



The big albacore tuna head is swung into action.

for a PhD: he got the chorizos. I got some olive oil and pasta. We had some portable stoves, as we were not sure what would be on the boat.

We need not have worried as, when we arrived on the Reen Pier near Unionhall, there waiting for us was the Jorree Jade, a modern twin hulled charter boat with loads of deck space. A comfortable cabin equipped with microwave and electric kettle and plenty of seating to spread out on if necessary. She also has two powerful spotlights mounted to light up the deck area and the console had the full suit of modern electronics.

We had brought our own gear but the boat had everything if we needed it. Our Skipper was Kevin Collins and he was looking forward to the trip as much as anyone. First stop was for mackerel. They were not as obliging as they usually are, but we managed to get enough fairly quickly along with some other species such as ballan wrasse, small pouting, small whiting and a few decent pollack. Damian caught his first ling, which was about seven pounds weight, and Mossie added

another of a similar weight. As we headed out to begin our drift for Shark the light faded. Traces were sorted out and the merits of different hooks and trace lengths were discussed. I choose to go with a size 16/0 circle hook, a short wire trace and a heavy mono rubbing trace of about ten feet in length. Others just had a long wire trace with no mono straight to the hook.

Rubby dubby prepared

When we reached the mark, Kevin set to work, getting the rubby dubby prepared, a quantity of Albacore tuna frames from the nearby commercial fishing harbour along with some tuna blood and oil. This went into a drum along with bran and a good few chopped up mackerel. He then pounded this mix with a tool which both cut and mixed up the contents before putting it into a perforated drum. This drum was hung over the side, just at the water level so as the boat rocked the drum was dunked in the water and the mix washed out. One albacore head was enormous and simply had a rope tied from it and was hung over the side of the boat. Only those who know rubby dubby, chum or chervy can imagine the smell. We hoped that it would attract not just

shark but also garfish and if we were lucky a stone bass or two. As we waited for the slick to develop Jorge cooked up the chorizo in oil and in a buttered sandwich made a great stomach filler. The oil joined the rubby dubby. I had managed to leave the pasta and olive oil in the car on the pier but we had some vegetable oil as backup.

Kevin the skipper had another trick up his sleeve, which was new to me anyway, as he hung a waterproof light in the water beside the boat. I have read in US magazines that they emit a green glow which is supposed to attract fish; commercial longliners use glowsticks of the same colour on their lines. Kevin said that if there were herring about they would be attracted to the boat. The light lit up the sea with this eerie green light and when a garfish showed up it looked very odd as it snaked its way through this light as if in slow motion. The pieces of rubby dubby could be clearly seen leaking from the barrel and forming the desired slick.



145lbs blue shark held by skipper Kevin Collins, Mossie, Padraig Kavanagh and Luke Harman which was photographed before release.

It's strange in the dark when you cannot see the horizon and the boat is moving as you have no reference to the horizontal. Luckily we all quickly got used to this. On Kevin's advice we agreed to put out only four baits and share the rods between us. I have been on boats where too many rods were fishing and chaos and tangles ensued when a fish took a bait. It was not long before someone shouted 'shark' and everyone scrambled out to see whose reel was running. Jorge took the rod and struck the hook home. He was into the fish and played it well as it made repeated runs. This fish had rolled on the trace as they sometimes do when given even a hint of slack line and Jorge was not used to the drag system on Ross's reel. As he played it the trace unwound from the fish and as it was not a large fish it was soon brought from the back of the boat to the gate at the side where Kevin pulled it onboard. One side of the deck had been kept clear of gear and the fish was laid there for measuring once the hook was removed, then the tag was put into the dorsal fin, photos were taken and the fish released. This was soon established as the practice for every fish and all swam off strongly with a tag attached and leaving only its length and girth with us, along with a great memory.

The reel started to click and then run

Even before Jorge's fish was aboard my reel started to click and then run. Damian took up the rod and holding the reel until he felt the weight of the fish, it was only then that he pulled into the fish. With a circle hook you must let the fish hook itself. It is easy to pull the hook from the fishes mouth if you strike too soon. Damian quickly had the fish under control after a few strong runs. It too was tagged and released. This turned out to be the smallest shark of the evening. About half an hour later another take as Mossie's rod bent over. We all were at the side watching as another shark

casually swam up to the side of the boat in the green glow and swam off again. At first we thought this was the hooked fish but it was not. We all felt sure it would take one of our baits. But Mossie's fish was landed, tagged and released and no sign of the other fish. Ross's rod went again soon after and he quickly had the fish under control and heading for the gate. Again just as this fish was being landed Mossie's rod went again. Paudge grabbed the rod and bent into the fish, This fish immediately went deep. In my experience a sign of a big



Ross Macklin and his stone bass, also called 'wreckfish'.

fish, as this reel had braid on it Mossie stood beside Paudge and kept an eye on things. Paudge was doing fine until the braid started pulling under the line on the reel and sounding like it could catch. Mossie then took over and by allowing the fish to take some line got the reel free, then getting line back under tension he was able to gain on the fish. We all know by now that this was a big fish. When eventually we could make out the white underside of the fish deep in the water we were proved correct. As he pulled the fish aboard Kevin said this is an eight footer. It was unhooked and measured in at two meters forty-two centimetres. With a girth of eighty-eight centimetres. This worked out at one hundred and forty-five pounds, the biggest shark Kevin had caught all season and certainly the biggest I have ever seen taken from Irish waters.

Shortly afterwards Luke was hooked up and again the fish went deep. This proved to be another big fish estimated to be around one hundred and twenty pounds in weight. Luke was using a barbless circle hook which slipped out once the fish was aboard. Seeing two shark over the ton was a first for me, but due to the lights you could not really appreciate the full beauty of these magnificent fish, as the colours were not apparent. I know that blue shark glow with an iridescent indigo blue colour, which cannot be described when seen in daylight, but they were magnificent fish nonetheless, and it had been a trip to remember.

Then Luke got another run and I was called to take the rod, a very generous gesture, as I was the only one who

had not caught a shark. Luke's reel had a lever drag system, which was very useful when the shark made a strong run. Anyway, I got this shark in and it proved to be my first blue over two meters, at two meters and five centimetres. But it was fairly skinny and estimated at seventy-four pounds. I was delighted. Towards daylight it did get very cold and the wind picked up, possibly breaking up the slick, which Kevin had kept going all night with regular topping up of the barrel with fresh rubby dubby. Even in a moderate swell the boat proved to be a very stable platform, whereas I believe an ordinary mono hulled boat would have rolled all over the place and been very uncomfortable. At 6:00 am we reeled in and Kevin dumped the washed out rubby dubby and lifted the light. Within seconds Ross had a bite on his rod, which he had not yet removed. It was not a shark, but a beautiful stone bass which had taken his shark bait. Almost seven pounds in weight and a great end to a great trip with great companions. Jorge told us that where he comes from in Galicia, this fish is famed as the tastiest fish in the sea. It certainly is one of the prettiest with white markings against a slate blue/grey body. Everyone had caught a shark and had a great time, new friends had been made, What more could you want from a Friday night.

For more information on the charter boat 'Joree Jade' call Kevin Collins 353(0) 86 825 9171 and Lee Vally Angling Services for any sea or freshwater angling in Cork area 353(0) 920 8742



The Author (left) pictured with his first blue shark over two metres.

Trout Fishing in Iceland



The author with a fine fish but he is still hopes for a 'King' trout.

Iceland: The name itself does not sound tempting for fly fishing as it conjures up a country which is cold, windy with glaciers and with several active volcanoes. Indeed, some may imagine that Iceland is 'just an island' in the middle of the Atlantic Ocean. However, the fact is that Iceland is one of the most exciting places that offer some of the best fishing anywhere in the world.

Despite Iceland becoming famous for good salmon rivers, many overseas anglers are still not aware of the fantastic trout fishing which is available in both rivers and lakes all around the country. However, in recent years more and more anglers have discovered that the fishing in Iceland offers one of the best experiences that one can imagine.

The attraction of fishing in Iceland is that not only does it offer superb value for money, but it also the fact that there are many very experienced guides who know where the big fish can be found. While the choice for fly fishing anglers is huge, the purpose in writing this article

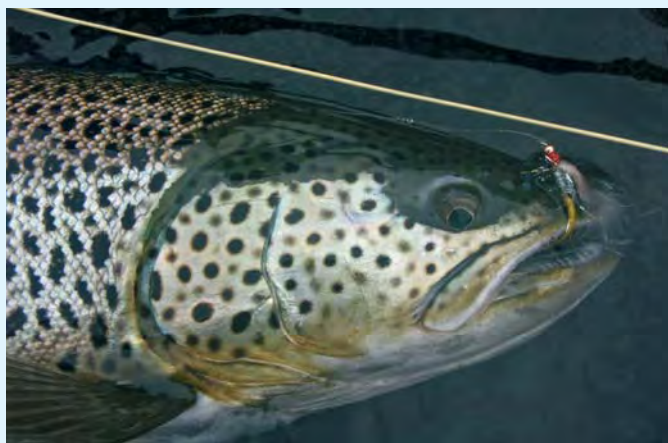
is to describe 'the kings' of all fresh water fish that can be caught in Iceland.

Thingvellir, home of 'monster brown trout'

Lake Thingvellir is the second biggest lake in Iceland, reaching 114 metres at its deepest point. The brown trout that live in Lake Thingvellir can reach an incredible size. Records show that it was not uncommon to catch 20 to 30 pound (9 kg to 14 kg) brown trout. There was a setback to fishing when the Steingrimsstöð hydroelectric plant was built in 1959 at the southern end of the lake, which had an impact on the brown trout population there. But the lake is starting to regain its reputation as a lake with 'King' trout now being caught quite regularly.

The trout population has been increasing steadily in the past few years, thanks to ongoing support of the Icelandic Government. Thingvellir is again becoming known as the lake containing monster trout and there is every chance that if you are fishing in this lake you will catch the largest fish of your life.

Brown trout up to 14 kg have been caught here in past few years and there are rumours that there are even



This is just one of the superb trout which were returned unharmed.

bigger fish. Fishing in Lake Thingvellir last year was very good with 12 kg trout and several at 9 kg being caught, even though I know that many anglers won't talk about their catch and where they have caught them.

I have previously been successful in catching quite a large number of brown trout in Lake Thingvellir but had never caught any real monster fish until this spring when I caught my biggest brown trout which was nearly 17 pounds (7.7 kg) and quite a few fish that were over 11 pounds (5 kg) and many fish over 8 pounds (3.5 kg) - but I'm still waiting for my 22 pound (10 kg) brown trout. I should also add that while I had seen several 'King' trout during the year, I hadn't had any luck until that fishing trip.

I remember it well; it was a Monday morning and I needed to get a break from work, clear my head and challenge some of the big monsters in the lake that have been swimming in my head for many days.

While weather is always a factor in Iceland, I had great day for fishing: right temperature, little wind,

maybe the wind was too light, because those bigger fish can be spooky when you cast your line over them. I saw a big group of trout close to shore, approximately 40 or 60 trout in all. I was very nervous and thought I cannot let this opportunity slip through my fingers. Fish were even rising for some caddis on the surface everywhere. What a sight. I remember thinking that I only dream of days like this.

I started to fish and after my third cast one trout took my dry fly. Boom, what a take. Two tail jumps and then a 50 metre run into the deep blue lake. After a 15 minute fight I landed and returned safely a beautiful 9 pound (4 kg) brown trout.

After little break, the trout started feeding again from the surface. I caught and released six more brown trout in half a day of fishing. The smallest was 5 pounds (2.5 kg) and the biggest 11 pounds (5 kg) and I missed some too. I even had an opportunity to catch my own 'King' trout which I estimated to weigh more than 20 pound (10 kg) trout. That fish followed my homemade streamer a few times but without taking my fly, but this simply made me even more keen to visit Lake Thingvellir again in the very near future.

If any readers are thinking of a visit, the prime time for fishing the lake is from 1st May until 15th June and at the moment there are rods available from 3rd of May until 1st of June.

Dreams hopefully will come true.

For more information and details of guided fishing trips and day tour fly fishing in Iceland please visit

www.flyfishinginiceland.com

www.flyfishinginiceland.com

or E-mail info@flyfishinginiceland.com



Iceland offers some of the best angling in the world.



MOONLIGHT SHADOWS

Come a certain time in the fishing season, usually the end of August and into September, an urgency comes upon me to be abroad in the fields and streams. Perhaps it's Lughnasa, the changing of the seasons, a primeval instinct to gather a harvest before the lean cold months of winter but, whatever ancient spirits are at work this time of year, there comes a strong message which calls me to be near my beloved lakes and rivers. This is a wonderful time to be out in the countryside and Nature's bounty is becoming increasingly apparent with the trees heavy with berries and fruits, wheat and barley golden ripe for harvesting, the mushrooms and fungi mysteriously appearing and an abundance of wildfowl, wood pigeons and rabbits. The rowan berries and haws are showing bright red, the snowberries white and purple sloes have a bloom while the abundant ripe blackberries are being enjoyed by pheasants and foxes alike. The trees and hedges are touched by the reds and golds of early autumn.

There is also a certain sadness at this time of year as our summer visitors gather to move south to warmer climes and the little swallows and martins which have kept us company all through the summer are forming flocks in readiness for their migration.

This year has been so busy with work in the factory that I hadn't noticed the weeks flying by, when suddenly I got a strong urge to be out in the countryside and it was only then that I realised that yet another fishing season was rapidly slipping away. The weather had been stormy and wet, but I just had to get out so I booked a few days off work and threw an old outboard and the fishing gear into the back of the car, pointed her west and was soon heading for Sligo. As I drove down through Fermanagh and into Leitrim it just dawned on me that I should have paid more attention to the weather forecasts as each river I crossed seemed to be in full flood, though the hydro station on the Ballisodare River usually ensures that the river is kept at a fishable height.

On arrival at the river I could see that it was very high but just about fishable, possibly a little dangerous for wading but I would just have to make the best of it. I spent two days slipping and stumbling along the swollen river and although I was catching the odd grilse, I was exhausted and usually when fishing this river I can go upriver for a couple of hours to relax and fish for trout but on this occasion trout fishing was not an option in the swollen currents. I longed for some peace and relaxation and just then it occurred to me that Lough Arrow might offer just what I was looking for. The changeable weather was not ideal and it was too late in the season to expect much but sure it would be a change of scenery and you never know with fishing!

Having called in with local expert, Francie White to



I tied on traditional well hackled flies.

sort a boat, I drove the ten miles to Lough Arrow. I was hoping there might be a few sedge flies still about later in the evening and having baled the boat and mounted the outboard was soon motoring up the little Unshin River into the Lough. There was not another angler in sight and crossing the first bay I had to take shelter as a heavy squall lashed the surface of the water, things weren't looking great for angling tonight! Fortunately after the squall had passed the weather settled and a big rainbow appeared as the shower blew down the valley. I had heard of the hatch of 'Peters,' a large green sedge fly which appears before dark but had never witnessed it before and because of the lateness of the season I wasn't sure it would happen at all; but it was good enough to be out in a beautiful, quiet place and, as the evening improved, Arrow showed what a stunning place it can be. I motored around for a while looking for signs of fish or a likely location for a sedge hatch and then I pulled up in a sheltered beach and lit the Kelly Kettle for a brew.

It was so good to be in such a tranquil, timeless place

As the smoke from the Kelly Kettle rose through evening air I was thinking what a fertile place this was, lots of tree cover and rich pastures, not the type of country one would normally associate with the West Coast of Ireland. There were many species of insects on the trees and water surrounding the boat; olives, sedges, midges, crane flies, black gnats, even the odd out of season mayfly but none in such abundance to induce a rise of trout. It was so good to be in such a tranquil, timeless place after the hectic schedule of twelve

hour shift work of the previous months.

Although it was a nice evening to be out on the Lough, very little was happening as regards fish rising, just an occasional rise but nothing to track down and cover. I had noted a few clumps of rushes way out in open water, which I imagined might be a good place for fly activity, but as the night drew on a light breeze blew up and the air became chilled, so as darkness fell I decided to head for home particularly as I didn't know the Lough and I would have negotiate the entrance of the river alone and in the dark. Not a job for the faint of heart! I got on the oars and positioned the boat for a quick drift along the edge of the rushes which would take me out into open water and in the direction for home. Darkness seemed to be falling quickly but as the last rays of the sun glowed on the horizon something buzzed past my face. Then I became aware of another then another! It was actually a hatch of sedge taking place; I couldn't believe it as I'd given up hope but it was really happening. Even more amazing was the fact that suddenly trout had appeared where ten minutes previously you'd have sworn there wasn't a fish. Quickly, I got on the oars and moved to the top of the drift and was soon casting the flies in the direction of the aggressive splashy rises. The Green Peters appeared to be hatching in the open water and scuttling across the surface to the rushes, creating a little wake as they went and judging by the ferocity of the rises there were some big fish on the fin.

I had tied on two traditional, well hackled sedge patterns and as I came across the first rise within range I cast the flies slightly ahead of the fish and retrieved with a long pull to create a wake like the natural. But although



This one snatched the fly aggressively before making a run across the boat. Soon the action was fast and furious.



them even though it was almost pitch dark! The next trout I covered I didn't retrieve at all, just kept in touch with the flies and he nearly pulled the rod from my hand. The action was fast and furious with several fish brought to the boat and more lost and for a frantic half hour it was non-stop action until the hatch of sedge stopped as suddenly as it started and the trout vanished again.

I reeled in the line and stowed the rod safely. All of a sudden I noticed how cold the breeze was and immediately felt alone in a huge expanse of water with a full moon shining down. As the little outboard

Another Arrow beauty quickly photographed and returned.

there were plenty of follows, nudges and splashes, frustratingly there were no successful hook-ups so I changed tactics and switched to smaller elk hair patterns which we use at home and which sit much lower in the water perhaps more like a sedge in the process of hatching and when it is very vulnerable. Soon I had the flies ginked and degreased the leader when a large trout slashed at a fly to my right and as soon as I covered him he aggressively snatched the fly and made a run across the front of the boat and out into the open water where he jumped several times and threw the hook. My heart was pumping hard and at least now I had more confidence in my flies. I noticed that there were sedge flies everywhere and there were plenty of trout taking

boat toward home I reflected on how fortunate I was to enjoy such a unique spectacle as this late sedge hatch and although I didn't contact any of them, there were some huge trout moving, maybe another time! Unfortunately it wouldn't be this season for the cool, damp weather would be bringing insect hatches to an end but if I'm spared for another season then I'd like to spend another magical evening in the twilight on a magical Lough Arrow fishing the Green Peter in the Moonlight Shadow!

Editor's Note: Michael Martin of the Six Mile Water Trust received the Countryside Alliance Rural Hero Award 2012.



The next took without me even retrieving the fly and he nearly pulled the rod away.

Mullet with a fly rod

Mullet are exasperating at the best of times and even more challenging when targeted with a fly rod but the more people rise to the challenge, the more we are learning about how to get them to take an artificial. Mullet are a common sight in virtually every harbour, estuary and bay around the British

Isles so there is no shortage of water in which to find them. Their movements are fairly predictable too, as they follow the tide in or out and mill around in the shallows, or stew the flow in deeper water.

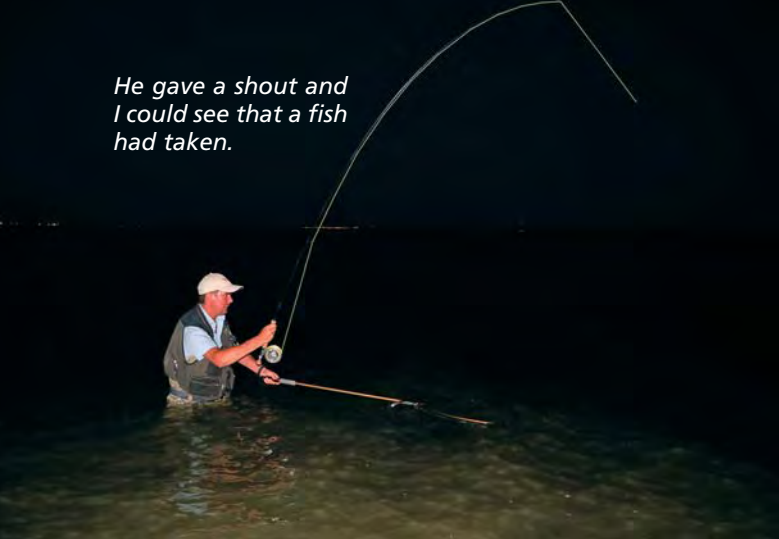
On the south coast we have got one area sussed and can catch on a fairly regular basis. I met mullet maestro,

Colin McLeod, at one of his spots in the late afternoon. The tide wasn't ideal as it was still ebbing but there were fish present, running out of the river on the last of the flow in literally a few inches of water. Their bow waves visible from 50 yards away. We stood at the outflow, where the river met the tide and cast the tiny flies in front of the fish, in the hope that one might just snaffle a final morsel before going into limpid mode to await the flood tide, when the feeding cycle starts again. None took, but it got our casting arms going.


One benefit of the late tide is that it coincides with the sun going down



A selection of the flies which we tried included small grayling patterns and trout flies.



He gave a shout and I could see that a fish had taken.



Almost at the net.


and being shy fish mullet are more confident and bolder in fading light and when there is a bit of cover from having a bit of wave on the surface, like many fish. We had both, so were confident of getting some takes. Getting the fish to take the fly is just the first hurdle, mullet are such strong fighters that getting one to the net is another thing altogether.

Against the dying rays of the sun the tide turned and began to advance up the shingle beach at the mouth of the small river. We could see the v-shaped waves amongst the natural ones, showing us where the mullet were getting restless as they sensed the increasing depth as the tide flooded. We stood in deeper water casting in to the shallows ahead of any fish we spotted. The technique is very much sight fishing, find a fish and drop your flies carefully a foot or two in front of it. If there is a small group so much the better as there is then shoal competition and the chances of one of the fish taking are increased.


The flies are small grayling patterns and trout nymphs, a red headed Diawl bach on the point and a small pheasant tail or grayling bug on the dropper. The flies are to represent small invertebrates such as sand hoppers, shrimps and other marine life that mullet feed on. Size #14 and #12 seem to be the most successful even though the mullet have quite large mouths and could easily suck in a larger offering, it is the tiny offerings that get taken more readily. It is a wonder they can see them in the dim light and amongst the detritus being washed about in the shallows, but find them they do, as do the baby bass that inhabit the same water. It isn't always

baby bass either, we have had some sizeable bass take these minute food imitations, 6lbs is the biggest!

We were fishing about 50 yards apart, Colin was on the end of small spit of shingle that the fish were having to negotiate. Suddenly he gave a shout and I looked over to see his rod bent into a hard running fish. I wound in quickly and went over to take the pictures, it couldn't have been choreographed better, stood silhouetted against the sunset playing a fish! The initial run saw the end of Colin's fly line disappear out through the rods and out of sight. The mullet must have taken off at least 75 yards of line, one has to be careful when playing these fish as the hook hold isn't always great. If you get them in the thick, rubbery lips then it is a strong hold, but many times the hook has the lightest of holds and kid gloves are required. After four or five strong runs Colin started to take control and guided the gleaming fish towards the landing net. His prize was safe in the mesh and we admired the deep, striped flanks of the fish as it lay in the shallows before taking the hook out, which had found a purchase perfectly in the top lip. A few moments of holding the fish upright in the water to regain its balance and then it powered off into the darkness. The adrenaline rush of hooking and playing one of these fish has to be felt to be believed, they fight like nothing else in temperate waters, including salmon! This one was only a 3lber, imagine the power in one of 7lb or 8lbs and there are double figure fish out there too. The sporting prospect of those is almost unimaginable and they are right on our doorsteps too. If you like a challenge in your fishing, mullet have to offer one of the greatest.



A fine fish is safely in the net.



The fish was safely returned after a few moments to regain its balance.

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Good work to restore grouse and upland birds

After decades of neglect I have been tremendously encouraged by the great work going on, on both sides of the border to restore grouse and other upland birds to our moors. For some years, now top civil servants and landowners have been making a big difference on Glenwherry, a mid Antrim moor, where grouse numbers increased dramatically after the appointment of a professional gamekeeper. I feared that there might be an element of too many cooks spoiling the broth at Glenwherry where the RSPB and others might not have been so convinced as their colleagues across the border of the clamant need to drastically reduce predator and raptor numbers by all legal means. But I am glad to say my fears appear to have been unfounded. With men like Tom Dunne well known to field trial enthusiasts as Secretary of the Irish Red Grouse Association, there was always likely to be a balanced and more widespread approach in the Republic. And so it has proved with groups of committed workers doing all that the can to solve the predator problem across the border.

I met Lee McManamon, former keeper at Glenwherry, and I know what excellent work he did during his tenure there. But I always thought he was likely to lose the battle against such raptors as hoodie crows and magpies. I thought that hard as he tried to clear the Glenwherry 'island' of these pests the job might prove too difficult for even an operator as skilful as Lee. I know that other field sports people across Northern Ireland are doing their best to stem the tide of raptor pollution – often at considerable expense – But I thought that as soon as they got rid of a few scores of hoodies and magpies their place would soon be taken by raptors from areas where nothing was being done to curb them.

When I was at primary school nearly 80 years ago, there were only two trees within a five miles radius of our home where hoodies nested. The late Andy McClintock, Lord Glentoran's keeper pointed them out to me and commissioned me to shin up Maguire's Bush and Jamie Kane's sycamore to remove the young ones. At that time a lot of farmers would use Rodine rat poison round their potato pits and corn stacks and the resultant dead rats were not great feeding for the few magpies that might have fancied a bit of rat.

I have been delight to hear from Tom Dunne that members of the Irish Red Grouse Association are pursuing a robust policy of raptor control. I think that in time that will help vulnerable species on both sides of the border. Tom told me that NARGA is actively engaged in 31 projects throughout the Republic

Antrim based College of Agriculture Food and Rural Development (CAFRE) in partnership with the Irish Grouse Conservation Trust (IGCT) and the RSPB have been managing the CAFRE hill farm at Glenwherry for the benefit of red grouse according to a sustainable integrated management plan since 2008. I am told that results have been very encouraging with red grouse numbers building year on year. As part of the CAFRE Centenary celebrations and to provide participants with an update on the Glenwherry Hill Regeneration Project an all day conference was organised at CAFRE's Greenmount Campus in Antrim in October, where interest from farmers and field sports enthusiast was enormous. Topics included heather management, legislation, red grouse, gamekeeping upland management under Agri-environment schemes and project monitoring. A session chaired by Adam Smyth from the Game and Wildlife Conservancy Trust (GWCT) provided delegates with the opportunity to air their views and partake in relevant discussion of these topics.

Most of remaining red grouse population limited to areas of blanket bog or heath

In the Republic scientists provide a lengthy report on all aspects of moorland management. I quoted liberally from it in my Saturday column in the News Letter and farmers told me they found it most interesting. Obviously, the more hill farmers know about what goes on above and below their heather, the better. The report said that in Ireland, most of the red grouse population remaining is limited to areas of blanket bog or heath, with just two per cent of the population existing on

raised bog. Wet flushes are important in providing insect larvae in the summer which provide food for young chicks and hence are integral to their survival. Fragmented habitat supports lower average densities of grouse⁶ and it is likely that the extensive losses that have occurred on raised bogs in particular, are a result of habitat loss and fragmentation.

The report said: "The Irish red grouse is under threat of extinction largely as a result of changes in land use and loss of habitat." But, significantly, it added: "Complex historical changes in land ownership in the 1800s, which led to the decline in the number of grouse keepers in Ireland, may have accelerated declines in grouse numbers due to a reduction in the amount of land being managed specifically for grouse."

Red grouse at CAFRE hill farm Glenwherry



The Early 19th Century Dublin Gunmakers Soldier On

Having previously referred to the 1794 & 1796 Dublin Trade Directories it has been established that the Dublin gun-trade before 1800 had been undergoing a steady expansion from the early part of the 18th century. However, due to the political decision to close down the Irish Board of Ordnance following the Act of Union of Great Britain and Ireland in 1801, much of the work carried out at Dublin Castle and by the subcontracting city gunsmiths was transferred to the mainland. Cost was a factor, as well as political expediency. This had a dramatic effect on the Dublin gun-trade, reducing the number of gunmakers by fifty percent to the twelve listed below. The gun-trade would take another 30 years to return to pre-1801 levels.

In history they say the further you can see back the further you can see forward and at this time, 1806 the whole Irish economy was in decline. Maybe we have an insight here as to the current stagnation within the world economies and the period involved with this type of 'correction?'

Dublin Gunmakers listed by Trade Directory in 1806

John Alley	19 Fownes Street	1804-1807
Nicholas Clarke	35 Capel Street	1796 - d. 1811
Thomas Edwards	190 Abbey Street	1799 - 1800 & 1804 - 1810
Thomas Fowler	18 Capel Street	1806-1811
Thomas Haskey	29 Upper Ormond Quay	1805 - 1808
Michael Hutchinson	8 Dame Street	1785 - 1811
Farrell McDermott	2 Abbey Street	1797 - 1810
Daniel Muley	28 Parliament Street	1794 - 1811
Thomas Pattison	1 Clarence Street, North Strand	1799 - 1807
John Rigby	19 Suffolk Street	1784 - d. 1818
Stuart Thomas	124 Capel Street	1805 - 1806
Trulock Thomas	23 Barrack Street	1804 - 1810

John Alley (1804-1807), through an advertisement placed in the Dublin Evening Post of 12th January 1805 states that he had recently returned from the 'arduous'

campaign in Egypt. Alley also utilised the same wording for his trade label. He was proud to detail those he served under, Col. Charles Holloway and George Koehler. Holloway on his return became Commanding Engineer for Cork County a post he took up in March 1803. Holloway was knighted for his services overseas and once in Cork oversaw the building of Fort Westmoreland on Spike Island. George Koehler, Deputy Quartermaster General, died of fever in Egypt in December 1800. Interestingly, this original Alley trade label in fig 4 was found twenty-five years ago pasted in a case containing a pair of duelling/officers pistols by another Dublin gunmaker John Gray. This was common practice throughout this period as gunmakers took in guns for repair and would leave their own business card/label in the case as an advertising aid.

IRISH ARMORY, 19, FOWNES-STREET,
WITHIN TWO DOORS OF DAME-STREET.
JOHN ALLEY, who had the honour of serving during the whole of the arduous campaign in Egypt, under the immediate command, and with the attested approbation of General Koehler and Colonel Sir Charles Holloway, as one of the principals of his Majesty's million of Artificers to that country, respectfully begs leave to inform the Nobility, Gentry, and Gentlemen of the Army in particular, that he is now very extensively engaged in the Gun-making business, and that in consequence of the very great experience he has long had, and of his having enjoyed opportunities, from his peculiar situation in life, in inspecting and appreciating the various processes adopted in the first manufactories of arms in the world, he is now enabled to offer for sale such a variety of *Shooting Pistols, Rifles, Duelling and Travelling Pistols and Pistolets, Muskets and Matchlocks*, with *Musket Locks to print without fail*, as, on inspection and trial, the connoisseur will find, unite in an uncommon degree the various recommendations of *elegance, durability and correct shooting*. He presumes to invite the curious to arms to examine a *Mameluke Rifle*, which, from *Powder and Egyptian* materials, he constructed in the highest style of Oriental finishing at Grand Cairo; and begs leave to add, that it is his settled determination to make himself responsible for the superior excellence of every article of his manufacture, and to demand, at once, but the very lowest price.
N. B. Apprentices wanted, and Furnished Apartments to be Let—19, Fownes-street.

John Alley advertisement placed in the Dublin Evening Post dated January 12th 1805 (unfortunately virtually unreadable).

However it read as follows:

IRISH ARMOURY, 19 FOWNES'S STREET within two doors of Dame Street.

John Alley who had the honour of serving during the whole of the arduous campaign in Egypt, Under the immediate command, and the attested approbation of General Keohler (sic) and Colonel Sir Charles Holloway, as one of the principal of his Majesty's mission of Artificers to that country, respectfully begs leave to inform the Nobility, Gentry, and Gentlemen of the Army in particular, that he is now very extensively engaged in the Gun-making business and that in consequence of the very general experience he has long had and of his having enjoyed opportunities from his peculiar situation in life, of inspecting and appreciating the various processes adopted in the first manufactories of arms in the world, he is now enabled to offer for sale such Fowling Pieces, Rifles, Duelling Pistols and Pistolets, Muskets and Musketoon with Magazine Locks to prime themselves as, on inspection and trial, the connoisseur will find, In an uncommon degree the various recommendation's of elegance durability and correct shooting. He presumes to invite the curious to arms to examine a Mameluke Rifle which from and Egyptian materials, he constructed in the highest style of oriental smithing at Grand Cairo; and begs leave to add, that it is his settled determination to make himself responsible for the superior excellence of every article of his manufacture and to demand, at once, but the very lowest price.

NB. Apprentice wanting and Furnished Apartment to be let. 19 Fownes's Street



Trade label for John Alley utilising a similar wording as his advert from 1805.

Unfortunately the majority is unreadable with the naked eye.

Thomas Edwards (1798-1811) was the son of William Edwards. William Edwards was apprenticed to Matthew Collins, Dublin (1770) and ultimately John Twigg in London (1770-1774). Therefore, Thomas Edwards would have had a substantial apprenticeship himself having this link with three doyens of the 18th century gun trade.

Thomas Haskey (1800-1808) is listed as trading from 16 Upper Ormond Quay from 1800-1804 and thereafter at 24 Upper Ormond Quay until 1808. Strangely a pair of his duelling pistols have been found engraved in error "H. ASKEY." These pistols are clearly Irish duellers and the author can find no other listing for a gunmaker of this name. A genuine engravers error that was left for posterity.



Some detail of this Haskey gun



A fine pair of flintlock saw handled duelling pistols by Thomas Haskey marked "Dublin" to the top flat. The lock showing the full rainproof pan, roller to the frizzen spring. It is possible that this maker traded later than the given dates or possibly the "French Cocks" were added later as this style of cock are normally attributed to Irish firearms from 1815 onwards. Private collection.

Michael Hutchinson (1771-1811 and Francis Lord took over the business of Matthew Collins on Collins death (1770). Hutchinson married Jane Lord 9th September 1771. From 1776 through to 1784 Hutchinson is listed at 40 Dame Street alone thereafter at 8 Dame Street (1785-1811.) Francis Lord, Hutchinson's father-in-law no longer appears in business after 1775.

John Rigby (1783-1818) is a well known gun-making

name and the history of the Rigby family has been extensively written by D.H.L Back in "Great Irish Gunmakers, Messrs Rigby" 1760-1869. In 1806 John Rigby was trading at 19 Suffolk Street, the premises he moved to from College Green in 1784. We deduce from this advertisement that he was engaged in a 10 year apprenticeship commencing circa 1773. It is believed John Rigby was trained by either Edward Dalton or Thomas Trulock or possibly by both at differing times.

There certainly is a link with all three of these gunmakers within College Green in the 1770s.

R I G B Y, G U N - M A K E R,
Removed from No. 14, College-green, Dublin,
RETURNS his sincere thanks to the public, his friends, for the distinguished preference shewn him since his commencement in business, and begs leave to inform them, that he has removed to No. 19, Suffolk-street, within four doors of Grafton-street, where his friends will be supplied, as usual, with all manner of FIRE-ARMS, (of real Irish Manufacture) whether plain, rifle, machine, or magazine Guns or Pistols; double or organ-barrelled Guns or Pistols, containing what number of barrels any gentleman may chuse.
 RIGBY thinks it entirely unnecessary to attempt to puff off his work, either by challenges or otherwise, as he finishes his best work himself, and the acknowledged superiority of his abilities as a workman, by the most eminent masters in Dublin (who employed him for upwards of ten years) and some of the most honourable testimonials which he can produce) of his care in executing the orders he has been honoured with, has established his reputation beyond the aid of a puff. (16)

John Rigby advertisement of 1784 notifying of his move from 14 College Green to 19 Suffolk Street, Dublin.

Farrell Mc Dermott. (1795-1827) was one of the most prolific Irish gunmakers producing high quality duelling pistols at this time, only eclipsed by Rigby because of the sheer volume of weapons produced by what was to become the "first" house in gun making in Dublin.

McDermott is sometimes spelled with a single "T." He traded from three addresses although the 1 & 2 Abbey Street address may have been purely door number changes McDermott's initial address was 35 St Mary's Abbey (1795-1796).



Pair of Percussion Officers/Duelling Pistols by Farrell McDermott. circa 1825 with 8 inch round sighted barrels and set triggers. Authors Collection.



McDermott label on ebony pot. No2 Abbey Street (1795-1811).



A Percussion duelling pistol with gold cartouche for McDermott, Dublin.



Percussion pistols built on flintlock side-plates - note "McDermot" with single "T"

Thomas Trulock (1788-1831) traded at the following Dublin addresses:

1788-1790	12 Barrack Street
1791-1795	26 Barrack Street
1796-1803	50 Barrack Street
1804-1810	23 Barrack Street
1811-1816	53 Barrack Street
1818-1831	50 Barrack Street

The history of the Trulock/Truelock dynasty of gunmakers is complex and certain aspects of the history are uncertain. However, Matthew M. Schneiderman wrote a very informative article in the 'Gun Report in June 2010' which corrected many misconceptions and errors... including some of my own! What is clear is that this Thomas Trulock listed in the 1806 directory traded from various establishments within Barrack Street and was the son of Henry Trulock (Grocer). He was apprenticed/trained by his uncle Thomas Trulock, who is listed as Sheriffs Peer/Alderman/Gunmaker, trading 1760-1798. A sad note to add is that this Thomas Trulock (1760-1798) in later life suffered from poor mental health, at the time described as lunacy, and committed suicide by shooting himself. On a more positive note the Trulock name has been associated with the Dublin gun-trade since the first decade of the eighteenth century when John Trulock moved his business from London. Not until the appearance of Trade Directories/Almanacs in Dublin circa 1740 are we given clear evidence of profession, trading dates and addresses of artisans. In this instance we first come across the Trulock name in 1760 and thereafter an almost complete listing through to 1916. The author does have a full record of all the trading addresses for each of the Trulock businesses for

this period, although as stated, the genealogy has yet to be fully understood.



A later trade label for Trulock Brothers circa 1867, the descendants of Thomas Trulock of Barrack Street.

Author's note: My thanks to LM for photography. Any mistakes herein are my own.

Our next port of call will be the Dublin Trade Directory of 1820 where we find the gun-trade in expansion mode, including fourteen new gunmakers and the introduction of listed barrel makers. For further reading on the gunmakers of Ireland please refer to "Irish Gunmakers" by Richard J. Garrett available from ramrodantiques.co.uk Tel: 07818 470123.



WHERE THERE'S MORE TO COUNTRY SPORT THAN SPORT.

You can take the majesty and beauty of the Cork Blackwater for granted. You can take the numbers of glistening salmon as read. You can take the 16 private beats of the Blackwater Lodge as some of the best on the river. But on top of all that there's the comfort of the Blackwater Lodge itself. Now concentrating on the prime months, we're open for residential (Guesthouse B&B) bookings from July 16th, but our self-catering accommodation and waters are open all season. Flick through your 2013 diary and mark a few days on the Cork Blackwater. Contact Ian Powell for info and bookings. Where in the evenings you can put the 'port' back into 'sport'.


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 GUESTHOUSE & FISHERY

Upper Ballyduff, Co. Waterford, Ireland. Tel: 058 60235

email: info@ireland-salmon-fishing.net Web: ireland-salmon-fishing.net

Louise McClean - leading Irish artist in willow

‘Bringing an ancient traditional craft like basket weaving out of the past and into a meaningful position in today’s modern world,’ was the huge challenge which has brought out the very best in local Portrush artist Louise McLean, the owner-driver behind the very successful Atlantic Craft business. Louise and her art have featured on many television shows, including a live broadcast with the then President of Ireland, Mary McAleese, on behalf of the Samaritans. Louise’s slot was not only meeting and presenting her award to the President, but also the nerve wracking task of speaking and explaining the unique, creative process behind her work, live in front of a huge 3,000 strong audience.

In 2005, Louise was runner up against over 4,000 entries in the ‘Britain’s Craftiest Person’ TV talent showcase, a live phone in and vote event like today’s X Factor. Her exhibit was a huge three foot willow coffee cup, still used to this day by the Northern Ireland Hospice to show people that they are there for them, to share a cup of coffee and to chat things over. In October this year, the very same giant coffee cup was used very prominently to support the Macmillan’s ‘World’s Biggest Coffee Morning’ event. Her very successful tradestands at all the Great Game and Country Fairs of Ireland events will be familiar to readers and in the online world her fan base has rocketed to over 12,000 followers within two years.

“We aren’t restricted to traditional basket weaving,” explained Louise who has championed a contemporary genre of artists in willow. Some of her commissions have included life sized cows in willow, a set of four foot tall violins, figures to recreate the legend of the Giants Causeway and the Finn McCool story, and an entire family of... wild boar!”

And who is buying these pieces? Louise’s client base is as varied and wide as her range of products. From celebrities including Fern Britton of the This Morning television programme, Alison Hammond of ITV This Morning fame and the famous Scottish interior decorators and TV presenters, Colin McAllister and Justin Ryan. Corporate clients include the Causeway Museum Services, Local Enterprise Agencies and Councils and the Samaritans. Of course there’s a story

behind each one: Fern Britton bought her three foot long candle holder from Louise live on her TV Show, the Scottish lads bought a giant, personal St. Brigit’s cross and Alison Hammond a unique willow star. At the Tulip Festival in Glenarm Castle, Louise met Father Eugene O’Hagan, from the acclaimed classical musical trio The Priests and, sure enough, he also couldn’t resist a unique Irish basket. James Burnside, the internationally renowned flower arranger and lecturer just insisted on not one or even two, but three of Louise’s giant violins for his own home.

Willow is a fabulous natural medium for her art

Louise explains that the willow, which she grows herself, is a fabulous natural medium for her art: “Willow is very sustainable; indoors it has a virtually indefinite lifespan. Even with today’s technologies, basket weaving still cannot be mechanised, so all those pieces which you see, are all handmade and unique. The craft dates right back to the ancient times when people wished to carry or store things. The hand working and weaving of local materials is a worldwide phenomena, it existed back in ancient Egypt in the time of the baby Moses in the floating waterproof basket. India, China and Europe have all cultures of basket weaving using local resources and so, of course, has Ireland,” she said

Louise’s own journey has included workshops in New Zealand with the renowned Maori flax weaver Ali Brown, using their native flax, a broad leaved, tough, fibrous plant. In a sense, this journey with natural local products may have started earlier when Louise travelled the length and breadth of Ireland and the UK, winning numerous dog shows with her fabulous English setters. Was it competitive? Not half and Louise enjoyed winning the Scottish Setter Society Championship and qualified for Crufts with Benson Bruno, the Pride of Malin. Like Wonder Woman, Louise has successfully combined raising her five happy children with husband Trevor, and her commercial and ‘craft life.’ And after the show dog phase it was now ‘adult education phase’ for Louise. Starting with vocational courses in glass painting and restoration, then came a professional Diploma at Coleraine University in 3D design in the Creative Arts. Louise won the overall University prize that year, being the first ever graduate to use willow as her medium for 3D design. Her very first piece was a life sized sculpture in willow of ‘Swans from the River Bann.’

Louise's relentless schedule has seen her competing very recently, in the very final stages, selected from thousands, on RTE for a National Craft award. She was the only female artist, and moreover the only Northern Ireland artist to win through to the top three basket-weavers. This showcase event was based on designing and producing a basketry product which had to be marketable, relevant and unique. Exactly up Louise's street. Whilst the final results are still top secret, the fact is that since the event, Big Mountain Productions have been up shooting much more TV footage featuring Louise at work in her home studio 'Atlantic Craft' in Portrush.

The local inspiration

Inspiration originates from the coastal heritage around her. A rich blend of the rugged North Antrim coastline's wavy contours and unique sedimentary layer deposits, combined with warm memories of family outings at the beach, when everyone became a beach comber and discovered unusual treasures like smooth shells and pebbles, and pieces of fishermen's lobster pot corks, nets and ropes. Can you imagine a better showcase piece of art, to present to the golfers or even

President Obama, as a unique memento of visiting Ireland, than a coastal basket.

Designing and producing the product may be her passion, but Louise spares no effort is in selling either. Taking her lead from her late father Fred Ackerman, who owned the "Alf's Walk Around" chain of stores, and who taught Louise on the shop floor, from the age of eight, all about marketing and selling, Louise's approach is progressive, energetic and well planned. As well as selling extensively online and through Facebook, Louise sells from her home studio and at Belfast Victoria Square Market at the weekends. Of course the Great Game Fairs of Ireland just can't be missed, especially for the high end market, nor any other craft fair, horse show or vintage car rally. It really is an incredibly busy and exciting lifestyle, all hustle and bustle, and Louise just wouldn't have it any other way. Winning the prestigious 'Best Style in the Garden' award at this year's Hillsborough Garden Show convinced Louise that her policy of searching out new markets was the correct one.

So what about future plans? Louise has organised and almost finalised an exciting series of exhibitions for her work over the next twelve months. Again the idea for the exhibitions arose from a humble beginning, at a very small craft fair in the tiny village of Portballintrae on a cold, grey October afternoon. Piece after piece after piece from Louise's coastal creation series started selling. As stocks quickly vanished, husband Trevor was hastily despatched back to the studio to bring all remaining stocks back with him, but it was relentless and the entire collection of thirty-three pieces soon sold out. Were they all priced too cheaply? No, because everything was at the usual price which Louise charges through the week in her Atlantic Craft studio and each weekend at Belfast Victoria Square market. So what was the mystery? Louise realised most of the Portballintrae customers were in fact enhancing and personalising their holiday homes in this coastal resort. Quite simply, they had never seen her coastal range before and it was exactly what they wanted. Understandably, Louise's exhibitions now will be focused all around Ireland's coastline towns where such holiday homes abound! And with the Christmas gift theme now in full flow Louise is working almost round the clock to fulfil her annual commissions of Christmas themes in willow.

Finally Louise added her sincere thanks to all her patrons for their support throughout 2012 and looks forward to many more commissions and meeting many new and old 'crafty' friends all over Ireland in 2013.

Weaving her magic: Louise brings a unique talent to her work.



AJ's Angst

Frank opinion on the issues facing the Irish country sports scene

Casting a critical eye on countrysports matters:

As it is the season of goodwill I will try to mainly give plaudits rather than brickbats, but unfortunately I feel some are necessary and might help some people/organisations make better New Year's resolutions.

Firstly a plaudit



To Deirdre McCoy, photographed above with me at Moira, for sending a little bit of summer to me and with Margaret McStay for helping to deliver some great canine news in magazines and forums.

A brickbat to Animal Welfare organisations that stray into promoting or encouraging an animal rights or anti hunting agenda

As a biologist, conservationist and animal lover, I am the first to applaud the good work done on animal rescue, treatment, rehabilitation and rehoming done by animal welfare organisations and I am always one of the first to put my hand in my pocket to support this work. I think few readers would disagree with me when I say that if these organisations focused on this sort of work we would all give them what support we could. However, where we as country sports people take issue with them is when they start to leave the welfare agenda and start developing an Animal Rights or anti hunting agenda.

Two recent incidents of this certainly raised my hackles. The first was what were in my opinion the extremely ill advised comments by the Chief Executive of the RSPCA when he intervened in the debate over the proposed badger cull.

The UK and the RSPCA's response to the proposed badger cull

During the BBC Panorama programme, 'Badgers: Dodging the Bullet?' Mr Grant said the spotlight of attention would be turned on marksmen and landowners who gave permission for the badger cull to take place. "They will be named and we will decide as citizens of this country whether they will be shamed," he said.

The Independent reported that the RSPCA had called for a boycott of dairy products from parts of the West Country where badgers will be culled, saying that farmers and landowners should be made to feel the 'commercial consequences' of allowing badgers to be shot on their land.

And that Gavin Grant, the chief executive of the RSPCA, also said tourists should make the areas a no-go zone. "Those who care will not want to visit areas or buy milk from farms soaked in badgers' blood," he said. "Dairy consumers should be saying: I will not buy milk from areas where they are culling. Landowners and farmers allowing this to happen on their land have to realise there will be commercial consequences."

While it is reported that Mr Grant had suggested that the cull should be opposed 'by all legal means' it was no surprise when it appeared that the more extreme elements of the animal rights lobby decided to take more direct action and target these people with threats of physical violence.

Why did the RSPCA get involved? – was there going to be any element of cruelty involved in culling the badgers? No, there was not as the cull was to be carried out carefully by trained marksmen.

Was there any threat to the badger species? – NO there was not – the badger has no natural predators and unlike the fox no systems of control. Their populations in some areas have reached almost pest proportions with the concomitant threat to cattle. One simple scientific fact is that the more badgers there are, the bigger the threat of spreading TB to cattle.

Would a badger cull affect the incidence of TB in cattle? – YES, while it would not stop it completely but it would stop a huge number of cattle having to be slaughtered. Does TB in cattle pose a threat to humans? – YES it does. While less of a risk now due to pasteurisation of milk it still can affect humans.

In 2007 The Lancet reported that Bovine TB still poses a threat to human health. The journal reported that six people in the Midlands had contracted TB

after one had been in contact with either infected cattle or unpasteurised milk. One of the patients died from the infection.

Northern Ireland and the USPCA

Once again the USPCA, which does excellent work in terms of animal welfare, and I do applaud their additional pro active work on attempting to close down puppy farms, etc., also appears to have taken on a more pro-active anti hunting role. Obviously there has been a high profile involvement in Operation Meles but unfortunately this would appear to have been extended to target legitimate forms of hunting. My own position on so called badger baiting is simple – the badger is a protected species and should not be hunted by any means. And in any form of hunting, I abhor causing any unnecessary suffering to any animal. Should badgers be controlled? I do think there are too many badgers in the country and as with any animal whose population is spiralling out of control this should be looked at, but this is an argument for another day. And of course if they are to be controlled it should be done humanely along the lines of the proposed cull in the UK.

However what I saw at close hand this week was a case of where I consider the USPCA appeared to totally overstep the mark in that they were involved in an operation where a genuine hunter, hunting legitimate quarry had his dogs seized for 10 months. The person was prosecuted and could have risked losing his dogs, being banned from keeping dogs and, as a consequence, denied the right to pursue a legitimate interest.

It was on USPCA advice that the dogs were seized by the police on the basis they were in need of urgent veterinary treatment and the owner was prosecuted by the PPS. The matter ended up in court this week and, as I had volunteered to give evidence that the one dog, that I had seen personally just a few days before it was seized, was in excellent condition, I heard the whole case.

What a waste of PPS funding, police time and resources and court time and it was quite ironic that the USPCA witness did not show up! The case ended up with it being accepted that three of the dogs involved, including the very valuable lurcher about which I gave evidence, did NOT need urgent veterinary treatment. And there was a dispute between the two vets as to whether the fourth animal did or did not.

In fact, apart from the USPCA appointed vet treating two of the animals with a precautionary three week course of antibiotics and an antiseptic wash – there was no further treatment needed – and in fact the dogs did not revisit the vet either for appraisal or treatment. As the defence counsel suggested, a more appropriate action for the USPCA person was to recommend that the dog owner take

one of the dogs to the vet.

Instead the owner was deprived of his dogs for 10 months, the animals were put under unnecessary stress and possibly exposed to infection, etc., for 10 months; the owner was put under tremendous stress and there was a huge waste of public money and time over what in my opinion was a hugely unnecessary operation.

Thankfully the magistrate found for the dog owner.

I trust the PPS and PSNI have learned from this debacle and will be a little more critical of accepting the USPCA assessment of such situations without allowing the owner to immediately produce their own independent professional assessment. I would urge the USPCA to concentrate on pursuing their very laudable welfare work and steer well clear of an anti hunting agenda.

Another new Irish countrysports organisation – only time will tell whether it deserves plaudits or brickbats!

It is too early to pass judgement on the new organisation Countrysports Ireland but it made me think that perhaps I should put on paper what I personally like and don't like about our existing shooting organisations in NI. By and large I think they do a good job – but could they be more representative of their members interests?

As noted elsewhere in the magazine Ronan Gorman has started up a new organisation, Countrysports Ireland to represent country sports enthusiasts. I have worked with Ronan in the past and found him to be an eloquent lobbyist on behalf of country sports interests and whilst I am on record as saying I think there are too many country sports organisations in Northern Ireland, others argue that it is important to have choice. And it is a fact that many country sports people are not members of any organisation.

In my previous look at our existing organisations I stated that, while in my opinion there were too many organisations, they all appeared to be lacking somewhat in democracy. And I would certainly not favour a single undemocratic organisation where members' voices are not heard and their opinions not sought.

Ronan's entry into the market raises the questions: What is wrong with our existing organisations, how can they improve and in what way could Ronan's organisation make a positive contribution rather than just compete for members with other organisations?

Let us look at the main Northern organisations which represent game shooting interests: Countryside Alliance Ireland is the largest organisation and unlike other NI shooting representative organisations does publish a claim of its membership numbers. It also has the benefit of being broadly based and operating on

an All Ireland basis, as well as having important UK linkages to a major organisation. It has a local staff, a hard working chief executive and, to be fair, since the time when I offered mild criticism it has certainly upped its game in terms of PR and lobbying - including, as is reported elsewhere, it was the only organisation to attend all political party conferences. It offers membership services including insurance at a reasonable price and does espouse a form of democracy in that members can vote periodically for a proportion of the board. But the majority of the board is appointed and of course it does concern me that I, as a long standing member have never had any real opportunity to vote for the most recent past or current chairmen or even meet them! Now, I do know most of the people on the CAI board personally and I know that most of them are active and committed country sports people but I, for one, think most would like to see their mandate endorsed at an AGM and I am sure most members would like the opportunity to voice their opinion on the stewardship of the organisation at such an AGM.

I do recognise that CAI has made some efforts to connect to individual members by holding a series of open seminars last year, operating an active website and Facebook page, publishing newsletters, using the columns of this august magazine and on putting on impressive 'meet the public' displays at the various game and country fairs. In fact I suppose my only major criticism of CAI's operation in NI is why no AGM?

The other two large organisations on the island - FISSTA and the NARGC - each stage an AGM, and board members and officers are expected to put themselves forward for election or re-election. In my opinion that is how a representative organisation should be run.

In NI there are two organisations representing the gun trade and the gun trade/public interface - the Gun Trade Guild NI and the Northern Ireland Firearms Dealers Association. I helped set up the former organisation and at one stage it had a buoyant membership, a fully functioning committee elected at an AGM, and was fully representative of the majority of the gun trade in NI. The NIFDA which was originally a bit of a splinter group, in a submission on the Marine Bill (NI), claims to be 'the largest gun trade association in Northern Ireland' and so it would seem that the current GTGNI appears to be rather a shadow of its former size and status, and something of a 'one man band.' In my opinion it certainly would be more beneficial for the trade to be represented by one vibrant and truly representative organisation representing the interests of the complete gun trade in NI and, where relevant, the trade/customer interface. It should be possible and very desirable to bring the two organisations together again.

Once again there are two organisations claiming to primarily represent NI shooting interests. These are BASC and the Scottish Association for Countrysports (SACS). BASC does have a local office plus excellent technical backup from the HQ at Marford Mill. It appears to be fairly active across a range of fronts and activities but faces a huge handicap in terms of attracting and keeping members because of the costs of membership. In a tight money situation I think many shooters will forgo the undoubted benefits of the excellent range of expertise in a wide range of areas provided by BASC HQ in favour of cheaper options. Again members have little input into the decision making of the organisation, as there is no local AGM and the local committee is appointed.

BASC do have a measure of outreach to members through their FASTTRACK ezine and through exhibiting at game and country fairs and activity programmes, but again no local AGM.

Although one can attend the UK AGM and stand for election to the national council this realistically is not an option for most people. If BASC NI members are not to be effectively largely disenfranchised compared to their UK colleagues, perhaps BASC could consider holding an NI AGM or organising the national AGM in rotation around the regions.

I find it rather bizarre that SACS is operating in Northern Ireland at all - as its name would imply it is based in, and would appear more interested in Scotland and Scottish matters - apparently rather treating NI as a fund raising appendage. It appeared to have been brought into NI by the organisers of the National Countrysports Fair at a time when they were being very critical of BFSS (now CAI) and BASC and certainly these organisers appeared to hold great influence in terms of its elected officers and policies and practices. SACS does offer good insurance cover and I understand it still has 'elected' officers in Ireland and operates an ezine but with very limited and restricted NI content.

Its major weakness is that it does not appear to have either a staffed office in Northern Ireland or a particularly large staff in Scotland. And my main concern about SACS is that it has a seat on a number of forums in NI and, at these, appears to be represented by someone living in Scotland!

I feel that this organisation should either demonstrate its commitment to Northern Ireland by including the name in title and opening an NI office or perhaps withdraw to its base in Scotland.

Certainly this is where I see an immediate opening for the new Countrysports Ireland organisation which is Ireland-based and can field an able Irish representative active and well versed in Irish sporting matters. By offering a broadly similar package to SACS, I could see Ronan picking up quite a bit of SACS NI membership.

Whatever the future of Ronan's organisation I

would hope that in terms of being representative of its members interests it adopts the NARGC and FISSTA model of holding local AGMs and having an elected committee.

The aforementioned are my personal perceptions of the organisations in NI that are involved in representing country sports' interests. If any organisations views my perceptions as being in anyway unfair we are happy to publish a full profile of the organisation its activities, aims and objectives.

Having voiced my criticisms a new opportunity for readers to voice theirs.

We have not previously had a letters page because we felt that as a quarterly magazine arguments voiced in one magazine could rather fester over the three month gap and disputes could be ongoing over quite a lengthy period of time. However from the spring issue we are producing a new monthly 'update' section in the online version of the magazine including a readers' page. So anyone wanting to voice their opinion can contact me on irishgamefair@btinternet.com We will also carry news and reports on events being planned.

The Great Game Fairs of Ireland will be even greater in 2013!

As an academic and international consultant business strategist I believe in monitoring the environment and taking strategic decisions that not only make the best use of our companies' resources but also will deliver benefits for our customers. Thus, the Great Game Fairs of Ireland in 2013 will have very different and greatly improved shape.

Firstly, having proved that in a summer where many major events were cancelled we can run successful events smoothly under virtually any weather conditions at both our two main venues of Shanes Castle and Birr Castle, we have decided to concentrate on these two fairs and extend both.

Our plan for Northern Ireland is to combine the Ballywalter Game Fair and the Irish Game Fair at Shanes Castle into the largest Game Fair ever seen in Ireland – THE IRISH GAME FAIR & FLAVOUR FOOD FESTIVAL. The new fair will take full advantage of what is undoubtedly the best game fair site in NI with the provision of a greatly extended programme of events, attractions and competitions. The Flavour Fine Food Festival will become one of the largest in Northern Ireland, there will be three arena programmes operating, more country sports exhibitors, and a greatly enhanced prize fund.

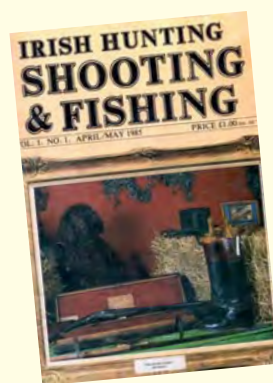
The fair at Birr Castle will also be extended to allow customers to enjoy three days of entertainment with an activity day on the Friday and lots of other attractions and entertainment planned within a three day country lifestyle festival. The new

event is part of Failte's programme 'The Gathering' designed to attract more international visitors to Ireland and thus the new IRISH GAME & COUNTRY FAIR and COUNTRY LIFESTYLE FESTIVAL will have a truly international programme of attractions, entertainment, displays, exhibits and competitions.

This year our theme will be based on the two iconic quarry species of Ireland: **'The Salmon & the Woodcock'** and both themes will be heavily featured at our Great Game Fairs of Ireland.

More history in the making

I must thank all of our team for their efforts in delivering three very good Great Game Fairs of Ireland in 2012 and helping me pass the milestone of 50 Irish game fairs. This year's theme of the Salmon & Woodcock reminded me that another big anniversary is fast approaching that of reaching the milestone of 30 years of country sports publishing.



Firstly with the *Irish Fieldsports & Angling Handbook*, plus other gun-dog and sporting books, then the continuous publication Ireland's premier country sports publication, firstly under *the Irish Hunting, Shooting & Fishing* title and now under the *Irish Countrysports and Country Life* title. The magazine, through the buoyant sales of the hard copy version and the fantastic surge in readership of the online version, is without doubt the most read Irish country sports and country living magazine ever. And of course our 2013 Game Fair theme of the **'Salmon and Woodcock'** was also the theme for our Irish Fieldsports & Angling Handbook!

We thank our loyal customers for their support for the magazine and the fairs and we have decided to make a very special Christmas /Anniversary offer, detailed elsewhere in the magazine, of two tickets to one of the two fairs at Birr or Shanes Castle plus a year's subscription to the magazine for just £20 or €25. This exceptional value package will be made available to the first 1,000 applicants and would obviously make a fantastic Christmas present to yourself or to a sporting friend.

Finally may I wish every reader a very Happy Christmas and hopefully 2013 will be a better year for you all - both financially and 'weather-wise'.

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John Wilson

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