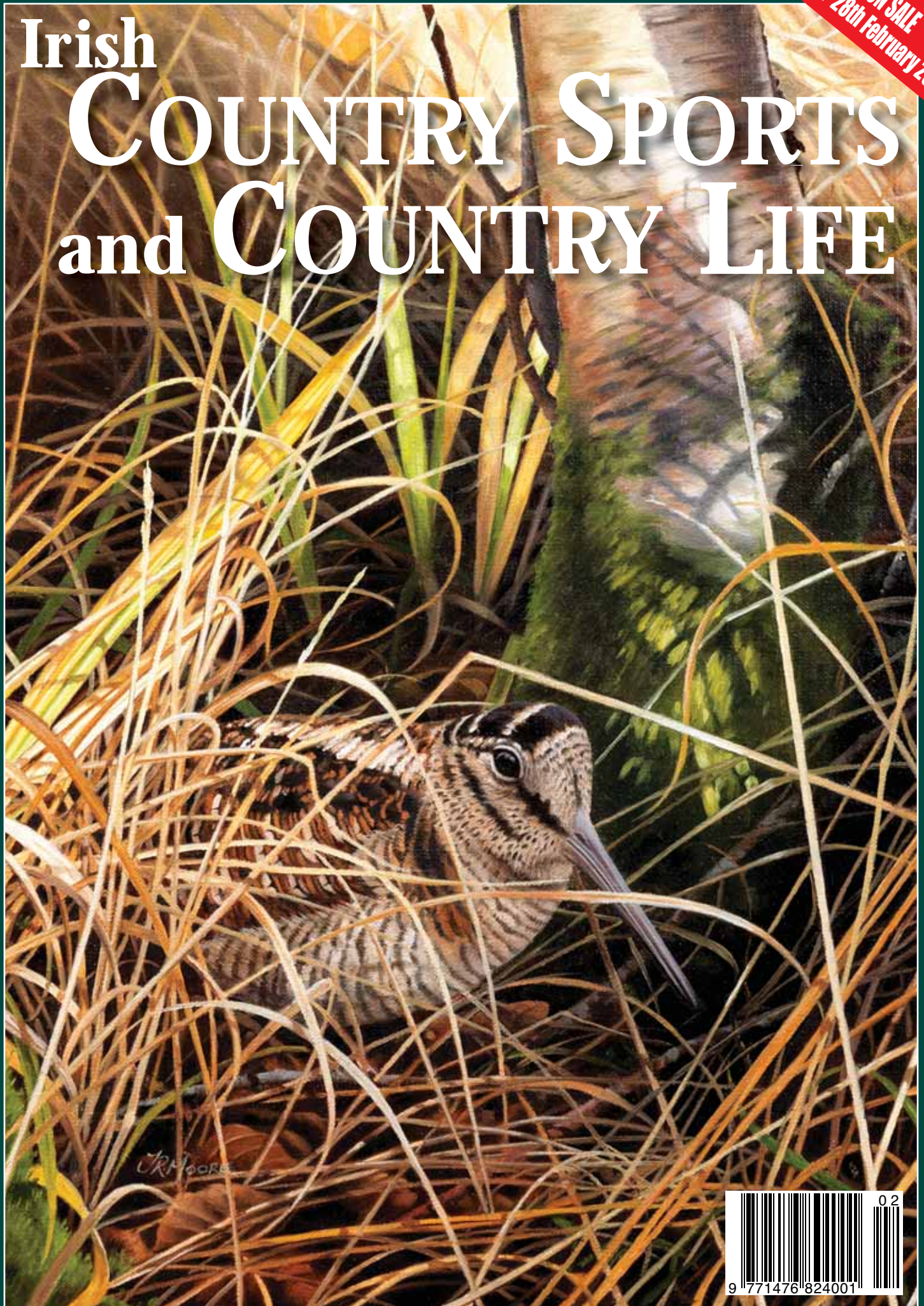


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Cover: 'Winter Woodcock' from an oil painting by John R. Moore

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Country Sports and Country Life Rol Comment

During the summer, the Animal Health & Welfare Act was passed into law and it's an act which has been partly welcomed by the hunting and shooting fraternities. The act was much debated and as so often the small anti-hunting lobby was very vocal during this period. Much to their chagrin neither fox hunting, hare coursing nor any other fieldsport, was threatened by the new legislation. The antis are of course livid because anger and lack of reasonable debate seems to come naturally to them. Despite all their shouting from the rooftops, the government decided to do the right and sensible thing.

The act also covers the subject of tail docking and during the Autumn tail docking became a heated debate, because the Minister said he would shortly announce details of those dogs which would be exempt from the tail docking legislation in the act. Veterinary Ireland expressed its disapproval of these proposed exemptions which would permit tail docking in certain instances; and would permit trained persons, and not just vets, to carry out the operation. As with so many debates surrounding animal welfare there was a great deal more heat and emotion than calm and reason in the tail docking discussion. A little bit of detached reasoning displayed how incorrect the emotional debaters were being.

The NARGC (National Association of Regional Game Councils) said during the autumn that they were giving their backing to the exemptions to the animal welfare bill which were being proposed, as they could see they made perfect sense. Des Crofton of the NARGC said that while there would be a general ban on tail docking it should not extend to certain dogs such as those used in shooting. The bill being proposed was the same as the bill currently in existence in the UK.

Veterinary Ireland was very exercised by this subject and put huge pressure on Simon Coveney, Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine, to not permit this exemption for certain working dogs. Unfortunately, their pressure paid off because at the end of November Minister Coveney announced that under the new Animal Health and Welfare Act 2013 the docking of dogs' tails and removal of dew claws by non-veterinary professionals would not be permitted. The Minister also confirmed that any procedures carried out for purely cosmetic reasons would also not be permitted. Consideration would be given to the docking of certain breeds but only if scientific evidence showed that it was of a welfare benefit. The three national animal welfare organisations, Dogs Trust, the ISPCA and the Irish Blue Cross which lobbied together with the Veterinary community welcomed the Minister's announcement and congratulated him and his officials on the Animal Health and Welfare Act which was the most extensive piece of animal welfare legislation since the foundation of the state.

Reacting to the news Des Crofton said this outcome was 'disgraceful.' He said the Minister had pandered to the view of only one side in this debate without either he or the Agriculture Department hearing the far bigger group of people affected from the other side of the debate. 'This is what we have all too often come to expect,' said Des, 'from what has now become a duplicitous Fine Gael.' He called on all members of the hunting, shooting and fishing world to give their Fine Gael TDs 'absolute hell.' Des pointed out that the Minister had made his decision without talking to a single hunting group. He said the Minister had now driven the practice underground with no hope of enforcement. 'He has also ensured no co-operation with any future legislation – why would



any hunter co-operate or trust him? He has pressed the button to resurrect RISE just in time to target Fine Gael candidates in the local elections!'

Prior to the introduction of the Animal Health & Welfare Bill, legislation allowed for any person to dock the tail of any dog. This was of course a totally unacceptable situation and had to be changed. However it was also obvious to many that to not allow exemptions for hunting dogs such as spaniels, pointers and terriers would be an erroneous thing to do. During the Autumn, prior to the Minister coming down on the side of Veterinary Ireland, the NARGC pointed out that at the moment tail docking was

being carried out very effectively by trained people who weren't vets. In September Veterinary Ireland threatened sanctions against vets who carried out docking operations and not every vet agreed with Veterinary Ireland's position on this. Tail docking is in fact a non-skilled procedure and people can be trained to do it. For years dog breeders carried out the procedure perfectly adequately without any veterinary assistance. The procedure of course cannot be carried out after the dog is older than four days.

'The vets are screaming blue murder,' said Des Crofton when speaking to me in October, 'and we are very concerned that their opinions may sway Minister Coveney to not sign the bill.' He added that at the moment it is perfectly legal to tail dock working dogs in Northern Ireland. 'Therefore people will cross the border for tail docking. Secondly, banning it will drive the practice underground which would be very bad for animal welfare. If the practice goes underground it means there will be no legal structure to govern training, the age limits for docking or the breeds affected.' Shooting dogs are docked because they are vigorous tail wagers who are called on to do a huge amount of work in heavy, thorny cover. Tail docking prevents damage to their tails when they are in thorny cover. When springer spaniels or pointers suffer damaged tails because of unforgiving undergrowth it is a painful event for them and healing sometimes takes a long time. What the NARGC wanted was legislation which firstly, restricted those people permitted to carry out tail docking to just trained persons; secondly, to restricts the breeds to which this applies to only three of the working breeds and thirdly, restrict the procedure to taking place within four days of birth. The NARGC rightly pointed out that in essence, the practice of tail docking was now moving from being unregulated into a regulated legislative structure. 'For anyone to suggest,' said Des Crofton in October, 'that this is not a major improvement is to ignore the facts. However, if there is a total ban then the largest group of dog owners in the country, i.e. hunting groups, will be alienated and it is likely that many of them will not cooperate when it comes to compulsory microchipping of their dogs.' He said a complete ban would in fact leave matters considerably worse than they presently were, which would be a bad outcome for animal welfare.

One aspect of the Animal Health & Welfare Act 2013 which has not pleased hunters and shooters is the fact the Act requires that every dog in the country is registered by a micro-chipping system. The micro-chip costs about three Euro and the cost of having it inserted by a vet will cost about 50 to 60 Euro per dog, which would be a prohibitive cost for many. However the government has recognised this problem and the Act states that microchipping may be carried out by suitably trained people and not just vets. The NARGC has already taken the first steps in setting up a training scheme which will be provided at a low cost to its members.

Derek Fanning
ROI Editor

Firearms licensing - a poor relationship?

Firearms Licensing still seems to remain a burning issue with our readers, many of whom have made their views known to us since the whole thing came under the spotlight with the review of firearms licensing consultation exercise.

And let me say straight off that many people do appear to have grave doubts about the way the process has gone so far.

That worry seemed to have some substance when BASC NI's own website carried the news that relationships between organisations such as themselves and the Police Service Northern Ireland's (PSNI) Firearms and Explosives Branch had taken a nosedive.

After meeting the Northern Ireland Justice Committee on 17th October 2013 BASC NI's website said (some way below a banner headline about the Committee again rejecting an increase in firearms licensing fees): "The breakdown of the relationship between organisations such as BASC and the Police Service Northern Ireland's (PSNI) Firearms and Explosives Branch was again highlighted as a major hurdle and the Committee stressed the need for the Department of Justice (DoJ) and PSNI to engage with stakeholders and address their issues of concern."

This had been picked up by our callers who were worried by what they saw as another very unhelpful development and they asked us to see if we could find out what it was all about by going straight to the PSNI and the Department of Justice.

The PSNI said: "Engagement is central to the ethos of the PSNI and a meeting is planned with firearms stakeholders in the near future. This meeting is expected to be the first in a more formal process of engagement meetings with firearms stakeholders. The process will build on the previous engagements that PSNI's Firearms Branch have had with individual firearms holders and businesses, as well as the NI Firearms Consultative Liaison Committee."

"PSNI recognises that there are a lot of strong feelings on the issue of firearms licensing. It is vital that we engage with our stakeholders to move forward on this issue to meet the needs of public safety and the desires of legal gun owners and businesses."

Meanwhile the Department of Justice told us: "DOJ is unable to comment for or on behalf of PSNI or any of the Shooting organisations. At the request of representatives of the shooting community the Minister has met with them and DOJ officials met with representatives from BASC, Gun Trade Guild NI and Countryside Alliance."

And when they replied they added that a further meeting was scheduled in November for the NI Firearms Control Liaison Committee - so at least at the time we asked them things were still moving forward.

Interestingly, nobody in DOJ or the PSNI took the opportunity to deny that relationships with the folk that claim



to represent us were at an all time low and the reference to 'strong feelings' by PSNI seems to be usual media code used in situations where a 'recovery' was hoped for if not necessarily expected.

We have watched to see if BASC NI make any further statements regarding bridge building with the powers that be, but have not seen anything as yet to make us breathe a sigh of relief.

And you know what? As someone in the office pointed out - why are the readers choosing, in increasing numbers, to contact us to find out on their behalf about the

way things are going and what may be happening behind the scenes? I'll let the questions rest there for now.

While we simply investigate and report on the way that readers' interests are taken forward by representative organisations - in all aspects of country sports, not just firearms legislation and we report the facts fairly - we have noticed increasingly a clamour for us to consider a more active and directly representative role. Country sports enthusiasts' interests are already represented by a number of very hardworking, active bodies - and I don't single out any particular organisation to comment on either to praise or criticise - although I must admit that CAI has been my organisation of choice for many years.

But the fact remains, if you simply look at the numbers (we don't know how many members BASC have in NI or indeed how many dealers the GTGNI claim to represent - these appear closely guard-ed secrets - why?) we can safely say that we have some 75 - 80,000 readers per issue a buoyant Facebook group; and some 55,000 plus members of the public attending the Great Game Fairs of Ireland north and south annually then maybe, just maybe, another form of representation is something to be considered in more depth. Not to mention the fact that our lines of communication still appear to be intact and functioning correctly!

Good news and more for readers

Reports are coming in of the game season so far being really great for Northern Ireland sporting enthusiasts. A good breeding season and a decent autumn have seen great returns for small shoots as well as the bigger estates. Good reports of the Scottish shooting scene have also been arriving and you can read more from Scottish writers Linda Mellor and David Hudson in this issue. And another new writer from Scotland is brought to you with an unusual tale from the great Julian Schmechel - definitely not one to be read by anyone afraid of ghosts!

Thanks to all our readers who have helped us retain our position as the leading countrysports and country lifestyle magazine in Ireland.

A Very Happy Christmas and a Very Sporting New Year to you all.

Paul Pringle
Northern Editor



Even Bigger, Even Better and Now a Full 3 Day Show. The British Shooting Show 2014

There's everything for every shooting discipline at the next Great British Shooting Show held at the Stoneleigh Park Exhibition Centre in Warwickshire, CV8 2LG on Friday 14th, Saturday 15th and Sunday 16th February 2014. It's now a FULL 3 Day Event, with over 300 exhibitors for 2014, and covering a massive 200,000 sq ft, the show is run by shooters for shooters. And the organisers say it's the biggest public gun show in Europe.

Guns, Guns and even more Guns! You'll see thousands of Shotguns, Rifles, Airguns, Scopes and Optics, Specialist Shooting Accessories, Clubs and Associations. Information stands, Ammunition & Reloading Plus all specialist Feature Areas.

Shotguns: Whether you are looking for a new or used fine English sporting shotgun, a competition gun or one for general field sport there will be a huge selection on display and for sale at prices to suit every budget.

Rifles: With such a varied discipline as rifles everything is catered for. So whether you're into stalking or hunting, vermin control, precision target, big tactical up to .50 cal, mini tactical .22s, gallery and western shooting, or even historic military rifles you'll be spoilt for choice. Plus don't miss the Target Shooter information stand and all the reloading and ammunition supplies.

Airguns Extravaganza - The Airgun City Arena: A fantastic area with all the important airgun manufacturer stands, top UK retailers with plenty of show only offers, a massive try before you buy 30 lane rifle range, the NSRA 10 metre Olympic match ranges, competition and "sharp shooting" pistol ranges, the IPAS fast fire range.

Scopes, Sights and Night Vision: Now undoubtedly the biggest and most comprehensive showing you'll see anywhere all at one time. All the big international and specialist brands will be there with new innovations and new products, so it's a great opportunity to check everything out and get all the latest info.

Plus Much, Much More: Add to this the Gamekeepers and Gundogs area and Knife Block, Accessories,

Activities, Demonstrations, Information Points, Clothing and Shooting Aids etc and you've got the lot!

Advance Tickets on Sale Now: Don't miss out - either telephone the ticket hotline on + 44 (0) 1472 241439 or go online to www.shootingshow.co.uk save money and get fast entry. For more information go to www.shootingshow.co.uk

Barbour unveils a specially designed Dog Walking Jacket as part of its new Barbour Country Collection



The Beagle Dog Walking Jacket is part of the new Ladies' Barbour Country collection

British Lifestyle brand Barbour is further endorsing its position as the creator of practical, fit for purpose yet stylish garments by creating a jacket that has been specifically designed with the dog walker in mind.

The Beagle jacket, designed by Head of Barbour Sporting, Helen Barbour, is based on Helen's own research of what dog walkers require from a jacket. This Ladies' jacket features specially lined pockets, handy D-rings and unique fabrics that are ideal for wearing on a dog walk, whilst not compromising on style. In a unique waterproof breathable fabric with interior quilting to protect against the elements, the Beagle also includes hidden whistle pockets, removable pocket linings for doggy bags and d-rings to attach your dog's lead, Belted and featuring subtle Barbour branding, the Beagle offers a stylish option for dog walkers.

The jacket features as part of the brand's new Ladies' Barbour Country collection: a capsule collection featuring elegant outfits designed to be worn when off-duty in the country, including quilted jackets, tweeds, shirts and fleeces.

Vice Chairman of Barbour and Head of Barbour Sporting, Helen Barbour, commented: "From walking my own dogs, I realised that there wasn't a jacket that offered all of the features that a person walking their dog might benefit from having. The Beagle Jacket is the solution for this, with unique features that assist the dog walker whilst still ensuring that they look and feel stylish."

For further information please visit <http://www.barbour.com>

All Ireland Champion Whippet

Charlene Rafferty has pointed out that in the report on the All Ireland Terrier & Lurcher Championships in the Summer edition of the magazine her win with Lush in the Whippet Race (under 21") was not properly labelled as being in an All Ireland Championship Race. Although her dog is KC registered, Charlene chose to run in this race rather than the All Ireland Championship race restricted to KC registered whippets. We congratulate Charlene on her win, apologise for the omission and are delighted to state that Lush is the reigning All Ireland Championship under 21" Whippet until of course Ireland's longest running and most prestigious Terrier, Whippet and Lurcher Championships take place at Shanes Castle, Antrim on the 28th & 29th June 2014.

Lush - the reigning All Ireland Championship under 21" Whippet.





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The West of Ireland Spaniel Club Open A/V Spaniel Trial

The West of Ireland Spaniel Club held an Open A/V Spaniel Trial on Tuesday 5th November 2013 at Brownhall Shoot, Ballintra, Co Donegal by kind permission of Mr John Hamilton and Mr Eddie Ward, both of whom must be acknowledged for their continued friendship with our club.

The Trial was judged by Mr Ken Lindsay from Co Down, Mr Pat Greene from Co Roscommon and Mr Des Donnelly from Co Meath. The Guns were Mr Pat Foley, Mr Larry McElinden, Mr Matt Bateman and Mr Pat Cox.

There was a full card of 16 dogs which interestingly consisted of 7 Springer Spaniels and 9 Cocker Spaniels. The Trial was run mostly in the fantastic mature woodland blocks which run alongside the endless avenues and tracks and the quarry of predominately pheasant were in great order. The ground was testing in parts and the dogs had to work hard to produce the game which the guns dealt with efficiently. The Judges did an ex-celent job and gave all dogs ample time to prove themselves. The trial ended with five dogs being called to the water. There was great jubilation in the Smyth camp when the winner was announced, as this win made Glenseskin Dusty up to a Field Trial Champion.

The prizes were presented by our Chairman, Mr Allan Mitchell.

The results were as follows:

1st No. 14 - Mr Anthony Smyth from Co Louth with Glenseskin Dusty (ESSD) was presented with The Towers Bar Cup.

2nd No.4 - Mr Clifford Todd from Co Down with Timsgarry Ninian (CSB).

3rd No.7 - Mr Christy Murphy from Co Mayo with Churchview Chunnel (ESSD)

4th No. 13 - Mr Brian O'Hara from Co Dublin with Windarra Tess (ESSB).

Certificate of Merit was awarded to No. 8 Mr Brian McConnell from Co Mayo with Drumreenagh Janequin (ESSD)

The West of Ireland Spaniel Club are currently compiling a database for distribution of Schedules, etc. Anyone not already on the mailing list, wishing to receive Schedules and Entry Forms should email their details to westofirelandspanielclub@gmail.com.



The Winner, Anthony Smyth, pictured with gamekeeper Eddie Ward.



Second place went to Clifford Todd (left).



Third place was awarded to Christy Murphy (left).

New SLC - Perfection meets tradition



The 8x42 model from the SLC range of binoculars.

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£1000 raised for Parkinsons Support



Club Secretary Chris McElroy is pictured along with Lisnalea's President Aubrene Willis and Chairman is Mervyn Willis as the fund raising gets underway

The public came along to try their hand at Lisnalea Rod and Gun Club's Open Day in Markethill, County Armagh, where together with Armagh Lions Club they raised £1000 for Parkinsons Support in Northern Ireland.

Lisnalea Rod and Gun club, Markethill has seven assorted firing ranges which covers all disciplines of shooting both indoor and outdoor for its membership of over 800 and holds shoots at least once a week where members old and new can join in with shooting competitions as well as taking part in their various social and fund raising events. Armagh Lions Club has been raising funds for charity throughout Northern Ireland for various Charities. The Armagh Lions Club is a part of Lions Clubs International, a network of volunteers who work together to answer the needs that challenge communities.

For more information on Parkinsons visit www.parkinsons.org.uk or by call 0808 800 0303

The Tallest tree in Ireland since records began crowned at Powerscourt Estate in Wicklow

A Douglas Fir along Powerscourt River Walk at Powerscourt Estate in County Wicklow has been officially recognised as the tallest tree in Ireland since records began by leading tree expert, Aubrey Fennell. The tree stands at 61.5 metres, or 202 ft, towering above well-known landmarks including Dublin's Liberty Hall (59.5 metres) and Niagara Falls (51metres).

The Douglas Fir is an evergreen coniferous tree, named after the Scottish botanist David Douglas, who first introduced it to Europe from North America in 1827. The Douglas Fir at Powerscourt is the first tree to surpass 60 m in Ireland and is the seventh-highest tree in Europe. It has been an Irish champion for over 20 years, overtaking other trees in Ireland including a Sitka spruce in Shelton Abbey and Curraghmore.

The seventh Viscount Powerscourt went on a tree spree in the 1860s and 1870s, planting an abundance of trees at Powerscourt including Sequoia, Sitka spruce, Monterey cypress and Corsican pine that have all now reached heights of 40 to 50 m. Located along Powerscourt River Walk, the tree is open to the public through annual membership of Powerscourt, and to guests staying at the Powerscourt Hotel. They are very privileged to enjoy the glorious woodland trails along the Dargle River walk and Ireland's own 'Avenue of Giants' that rivals all other contenders in Europe.

The champion tree at Powerscourt is included in Aubrey Fennell's newly published book 'Heritage Trees of Ireland' available now from Collins Press. The book is the result of 15 years of searching, recording, photographing and measuring over 10,000 trees for the Tree Register of Ireland. For more information on annual membership of Powerscourt, visit www.powerscourt.ie



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Firearms Licensing Fees Rejected by NI Justice Committee

Countryside Alliance Ireland (CAI) continues to engage with the Northern Ireland Justice Committee and other stakeholders as the issue of firearms licensing fees come back on the Committee's agenda. On the 17th October the Committee once again rejected the Department's proposals to increase the cost of a Firearms Licence from £50 to £121 and the dealers' licence fee from £150 to £528.

The Justice Committee also considered other items on the agenda such as young shots and the banded system for one on one off transactions. Indeed, the Committee felt that the Minister should obey the will of the Assembly and allow young shooters to participate at any age. However, the previous debate in the assembly on young shooters failed to rely on the specific issues of supervision and that is why the Minister did not enact the change. CAI feel that a new approach to young shooters is now in place which is supported by CAI, the Gun Trade Guild NI and BASCNI that puts supervision and accountability at the forefront, ensuring that our sport is conducted in a safe and professional manner.

Lyll Plant, CAI Chief Executive said: "We are grateful for the support of the Justice Committee in dealing with these many issues over the past year and I would stress that we all seek the same outcome. An outcome that will provide a suitable and safe vehicle for firearms licensing combined with a suitable cost structure providing value for money." We shall keep you updated.

FACE Ireland – Newly Elected Office Bearers

Following on from the recent FACE Ireland AGM, CAI is pleased to announce some new appointments within the Committee.

CAI's Chief Executive, Lyall Plant, has been nominated and appointed as Honorary Secretary of FACE Ireland. Lyall commented: "I am pleased to be able to accept this new position and look forward to working with the other members of the Committee. I would hope that these new appointments will only improve what is already a respected organisation and I, for one, welcome the opportunity to be a part of Ireland's hunting future."

John Flannery, of the Irish Foot Harriers Association, is the new Chairman of FACE Ireland and Philip Donnelly, Chairman of the Hunting Association of Ireland, has been appointed as Director of Hunting with Hounds.

Muntjac Deer - A Rapidly Growing Menace in Northern Ireland's Countryside

Muntjac Deer are causing severe concern in Northern Ireland and a recently held information evening in Newtownards (hosted by NIEA and Quercus) served to highlight the serious problem they cause and the immediate need for their control (and ultimately eradication). Interesting and informative presentations were given by Professor Jaimie Dick, Marianne Freeman and Kayleigh Hogg. The meeting was then open for questions which the speakers ably answered.

Professor Jaimie Dick, a leading expert on muntjac in NI, was keen to emphasise the threats these creatures pose; not only to flora and fauna but also public safety. Now he is appealing to members of the public to get involved in the battle against this invasive alien species before it becomes too firmly established to eradicate and begins to cause millions of pounds worth of damage; as has already happened in Britain.

Muntjac cause damage to forestry and gardens, road collisions and are dangerous to dogs and people. They are even responsible for helping drive native plants and birds closer to extinction as they voraciously devour the vegetation. Eleven photographs of muntjac using camera traps have been taken on the Ards Peninsula, where they are particularly concentrated and three carcasses have been recovered. However, these animals are very hard to detect (day or night) and experts are sure these findings are just the tip of the iceberg. Scientists at QUB warned back in 2008 about the dangers of allowing muntjac to become established and now their predictions have come true, with the animal breeding in the wild in Northern Ireland. The scientists are surveying land across the Ards Peninsula, to get an idea of where breeding populations are and eventually carry out culling programmes.

COUNTRYSIDE ALLIANCE IRELAND

Love the countryside

This tiny, non-native deer is the smallest in the UK and has copper-brown fur, with darker markings on the legs and face, which vary depending on gender. They have a hunched posture as their haunches are higher than their front. Males will also have antlers during the autumn although these are straight and short at around 10 cm. Bucks also have large canine teeth which protrude and are used in fighting.

If you have seen a muntjac in Northern Ireland then please log onto Facebook and record your sighting (www.facebook.com/NlMuntjac) or email Marianne Freeman (mfreeman02@qub.ac.uk) with the details.

CAI Attend NI Party Conferences

Whilst autumn usually means the start of the hunting season, it also spells the start of the party political conferences in Northern Ireland. CAI attended the first of these; the UUP Conference which was held in Belfast on 19 October.

These events present a wonderful opportunity to liaise with political representatives and discuss concerns and specific interests that we, and our members, have in respect of current issues and we were delighted to chat to Party Leader, Mike Nesbitt MLA, Jim Nicholson MEP and many other supportive MLAs and party members.

We are aware that politicians cannot be expected to be knowledgeable in all areas and therefore part of the reason we attend such events is to inform and educate the parties and their members as regards to Ireland's country sports. The interaction with the political representatives and party members allows us to answer any questions they may have and we can dispel any inaccuracies that may arise.

Why Not Head to a Point to Point this Autumn

Autumn has arrived yet again and whilst the majority of the country may not be pleased to wave goodbye to the long summer we enjoyed, the country sports community's eyes light up hearing talk of Halloween and the hour changing. Whilst the drawbacks of winter are the long, dark evenings, they are made so much more bearable by the contentment achieved after a good day's hunting, whether it is with hounds or gun.

Another group who look forward to the autumn are the handlers training horses for the point to points. When everyone else is starting to think of holidays these hard workers are already bringing their horses in to prepare for the first meetings of the autumn season.

Point to points are an integral part of a hunt's fundraising. They are also an excellent way to pass a weekend afternoon. Ireland is renowned for using these races as a stepping stone for racehorses which are heading to the track.

With an increasing number of challenges to country sports and the rural way of life, everyone involved in all field sports needs to support each other and work together to protect our sporting future. So, this season, why not support a hunt and visit your local point to point, you may be witness to a star of the future. For a full list of point to point fixtures visit www.p2p.ie

Irish Wildlife Crime Conference

CAI attended the inaugural Irish Wildlife Crime Conference in County Meath on 14 & 15 September. The Conference was organised to bring like minded organisations together with the aim of tackling wildlife crime in Ireland. CAI is an active member of the Partnership for Action Against Wildlife Crime in Northern Ireland and representatives were present to give the NI perspective and discuss initiatives that have been implemented.

PAW NI was set up in 2007 and is a multi-agency body, comprising many organisations who work together to combat wildlife crime. The 'steering group' of member organisations provides opportunities for statutory and non Government organisations to work together to reduce wildlife crime by raising awareness and promoting effective enforcement.

The poaching sub group of PAW NI (which CAI chairs) recently published a deer poaching leaflet and this will be distributed throughout Northern Ireland to help raise awareness.

Politicians get the country sports message from CAI



CAI with

1. Michael Nesbitt, UUP,
2. Danny Kennedy UUP
3. Alasdair McDonnell SDLP,
4. Patsy McGlone SDLP
5. Paul Givan DUP
6. Ian McCrea DUP
7. Diane Dodds, MEP and First Minister Peter Robinson, DUP

ANOTHER NEW WRITER THIS ISSUE

We are very pleased to welcome another new writer to Irish Country Sports & Country Life this month

Julian Schmechel is a 48 year old freelance sporting writer from Speyside in N.E. Scotland who has been interested since boyhood in all branches of fieldsports, as well as the countryside, country lore and traditions, natural history, heavy horses, old farming practices, etc.

And here's the thing - Julian can claim some Irish blood as he tells us his granny came from Co. Waterford.

Chatting to Julian, he confessed that he's also a great fan of that master of the traditional ghost story, M.R. James and would you believe it - his story in this issue tells the tale of ghostly goings on at a shoot. We love it and hope that you do too!

Julian's currently writing a sporting chiller based on an incident recounted to him by a friend, some years ago. The event took place whilst duck shooting on a lonely bog, (to which he will not return alone) and even now the tale makes the hairs bristle on the back of my neck. We'll have more on that story in due course.

Black & Lizards launches new photographic online shop



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Black & Lizards, the only independent specialist photographic retailers in Belfast, have been serving the photographic needs of Ireland since the 19th century. They have now launched an online shop at www.blackandlizards.com

On the online shop, you will find an extensive range of products from cameras and photographic accessories for beginners and professionals alike with brands including Nikon, Fuji and Panasonic. We also stock a full range of telescopes, binoculars, astroscopes and spotting scopes from brands including Hawke, Opticron, Swarovski, Skymax and Celestron.

Black & Lizards photographic shop is the ideal stop for finding the perfect Christmas gift for loved ones, with fantastic offers and competitive pricing.

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CIC Ireland Announcement: CIC Trophy Evaluation System

Des Crofton, Head of Delegation writes to say that since its inception in the late 1920s, the International Council for Game and Wildlife Conservation (CIC) Trophy Evaluation System (TES) has established itself as the leading trophy scoring system throughout Europe, and further afield. In particular, the CIC system represents the benchmark of European trophy evaluation.

However, since the 13th of September 2012, the CIC has in place a set of Trophy Measuring Rules and Regulations as part of the restructuring of the old TES. This is part of the transition from the old Commissions structure of the CIC which ceased to exist following the 2010 CIC General Assembly in Dubrovnik and was replaced by the current divisional structure, which comprises three divisions: Applied Science, Policy & Law, and Culture. The CIC trophy measurement system is part of the Applied Science Division.

The new CIC Trophy Measuring Rules and Regulations can be downloaded from the members' section of the CIC website: www.cic-wildlife.org. Under these Rules and Regulations, only Certified CIC Measurers and Senior International Trophy Judges (SITJ), in possession of a Certified CIC Measurer ID card, are eligible to measure trophies on behalf of the CIC and to award CIC points. Together, all SITJ make up the Trophy Evaluation Board (TEB) which is part of the CIC Division Applied Science and cooperates and coordinates its work with CIC Headquarters, National CIC Delegations, CIC Coordination Forums, official National Hunting Associations and National Trophy Evaluation Associations registered with the CIC. For details of the tasks of the TEB please consult the Rules and Regulations. A full list of Certified CIC Measurers, including SITJ is available in the members section of the CIC website: www.cic-wildlife.org.

For more details on the TES, please consult the Trophy Measuring Rules and Regulations, available in English, French, German and Russian as well as the announcement on the CIC website: <http://www.cicwildlife.org/2013/11/cic-trophy-evaluation-system-4-november-2013/>

Following the aforementioned restructuring, CIC Ireland is pleased to announce that CIC will conduct a two day course on 9th and 10th December next to train and accredit official CIC Ireland head measurers. The training will be conducted by:

Doc. Dipl. Ing. Josef Feureisel, Ph.D. - CIC Senior International Trophy Judge (Czech Republic)

Professor Dr hab. Roman Dziedzic - CIC Senior International Trophy Judge (Poland)

Dipl. Ing. Dusan Krajniak - CIC Senior International Trophy Judge (Slovenia)

It should be noted that currently, there are no CIC accredited head measurers in Ireland and anyone purporting to be accredited by CIC is perpetrating a falsehood. Accreditation can only be authorised by CIC Ireland on completion of the certified training programme. In addition, only accredited CIC Head Measurers will be in possession of a Certified CIC Measurer ID card and trophy head owners should not hesitate to request inspection of this card when presenting heads for assessment.

CIC Ireland head measurers will conduct trophy head assessments and the issuing of CIC certificates and medals as appropriate following the training and accreditation. A list of CIC Ireland Head measurers and their contact details will shortly be posted on the NARGC and other approved websites.



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PARTNERSHIP CREATES CONSERVATION SCHEME ON SIX MILE WATER

Michael Martin, Six Mile Water Trust and Antrim & District Angling Association writes that Northern Ireland's latest conservation effort is a river habitat enhancement scheme on the Six Mile Water which involves the use of almost seven hundred tonnes of rock to provide bank protection, groynes & spawning redds in the river and planting of trees on the banks. The project was made possible because of a partnership formed by NIEA, Lagan Ferrovial contractors of the A8 road to Larne), Henry Boyds Quarry, Rivers Agency, DCAL Fisheries, landowner Ross Kenny & family and Antrim & District Angling Association and Six Mile Water Trust.

The angling and conservation bodies managed to secure a £10,000 grant from NIEA and have received excellent support & advice from experts from DCAL fisheries but the most surprising thing was the willingness of local business to become involved and assist in the project. Lagan Ferrovial have supplied several items of plant machinery plus drivers and also given the services of an experienced environmental engineering consultant Steven Adamson. Angling club funds will pay the remainder of the bill but we would never have been able to embark on such an ambitious project without the expert help and services of the other partners. This scheme has converted a previously uninhabitable area of river into an oasis for fish and aquatic life.

For years arterial drainage schemes to free up more agricultural land and prevent flooding have ravaged the Province's beautiful rivers and streams, the fishing and wildlife which Northern Ireland was once famed for. Recently conservation and angling groups have been involved in habitat enhancement projects to try to provide areas where wildlife can again thrive. Anglers and shooting clubs are heading the campaign to conserve our rivers, wetlands and hedgerows but what is good for ducks, pheasants, trout and salmon is good for all wildlife and everyone can benefit.

The Six Mile Water has suffered terribly over several decades but recently has seen a reversal in this trend and with the Six Mile Water Trust & Antrim Anglers working closely with NIEA, Antrim and Newtownabbey



Councils, N. I. Water etc and the river is rapidly improving to provide an angling and leisure amenity and a haven for wildlife. The Trust engage in Litter Lifts, Anglers Monitoring Initiative for Invertebrate Sampling, pollution monitoring, erecting nest boxes for birds, Invasive Species monitoring, lobbying at Stormont, etc., and welcome new members (see our website). Local MLA Danny Kinahan has helped champion the case for conservation and has been a great inspiration for the Trust over the years.

Unfortunately there is little new money available to agencies such as NIEA so we feel that it is important for the public to form groups such as river trusts, take the initiative and work with local councils, government agencies & business to start a programme of improvements in the various catchments. We believe that partnership is the way forward to improve all Northern Ireland's river catchments and would advise everyone who cares about the countryside and it's wildlife to get together, speak to NIEA and form a RiverTrust.

Big Garden Birdwatch is back!



It will be all eyes to the skies on Saturday 25 and Sunday 26 January 2014, as people across Northern Ireland take part in the RSPB's annual Big Garden Birdwatch. The activity is the biggest garden wildlife survey in the world and last year almost 600,000 people counted the birds in their garden, including more than 10,000 in Northern Ireland. This year, participants will be hoping that further declines of garden favourites recorded last year have slowed down.

Starlings hit an all-time low in the 2012 Birdwatch, but their numbers then sunk by a further 16% last year. Numbers of house sparrows, which are of high conservation concern, dropped by 17% in gardens compared to 2012, whilst bullfinches and dunnocks fell by 20% and 13% respectively. These worrying declines mirror the findings of the State of Nature report which was launched earlier this year by 25 UK wildlife groups with the backing of Sir David Attenborough. The report revealed that 60% of the wildlife species included in the report are in decline, and that one in ten of these could be on the road to extinction in the UK unless something is done to save them.

And this year, for the first time, participants are being asked to log some of the other wildlife they see in their gardens too. The RSPB wants to know whether people ever see deer, squirrels, badgers, hedgehogs, frogs and toads in their gardens, to help build an overall picture of how important our gardens are for giving all types of wildlife a home.

Participants don't have to count these other species over the Big Garden Birdwatch weekend, just tell the RSPB whether they have ever seen them in their gardens, at any time of year. To take part, people are asked to spend just one hour at any time on Big Garden Birdwatch weekend noting the highest number of each bird species seen in their gardens or local outside space at any one time. They then have three weeks to submit their results to the RSPB, either online at www.rspb.org.uk/birdwatch or in the post.

Some birds have had better fortunes over the years. Sightings of popular species like blue tits, great tits and coal tits have increased since the survey begun in 1979. Goldfinches, which were absent from the Big Garden Birdwatch top 15 in the early years, have featured regularly as a top 15 species since 2004.

From 16 December 2013 you can register to take part in Big Garden Birdwatch 2014 at www.rspb.org.uk/birdwatch

National parks not happening now says Durkan

The Environment Minister, Mark H Durkan, has announced that he will not be taking forward enabling legislation for national parks at this time.

Explaining his decision, the Minister said: "I am of the view that the concept of national parks has much to offer Northern Ireland. National parks could boost tourism and boost the economy, while helping to protect and promote our unique environment in the North.

"I do not though, want to impose national parks on people. While it is clear that the idea of national parks in Northern Ireland enjoys some level of support, many of those living in proposed national park areas have not yet been won over by the argument in favour of them. Nor have all the political parties at Stormont, meaning that enabling legislation would have little chance of successfully negotiating the Assembly process.

"While the timing is not yet right for the introduction of national parks legislation, the importance of protecting and promoting our environment is too great to simply ignore. I will therefore continue to seek other opportunities to promote and protect our wonderful landscapes and historic buildings for the enjoyment and benefit of locals and visitors alike."



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Tom Fulton Visits Tagit Fishing Club

Tagit Fishing Club is based off Mountain Road, Newtownards Co Down, on a lake kindly granted for its use by the Strangford Wildfowlers. A model of cross community friendliness the Club has sixty five adult members and thirty five young members who, in all, range from three years to eighty nine years of age. It has taken £8,500 in cash and three thousand man hours to put in place fencing and pathway stands for the anglers with the path itself comprised of recycled chipping pellets. A further £2,000 was expended in stocking the waters to add to the four hundred fish given by the Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure.

In all, the club has available a variety of fish comprising rainbow trout, brown trout, tench and carp paid for by the members. It is a registered charity with trustees but does not yet have a bursary scheme in place.

The Strangford Wildfowlers have been very supportive in the development of the Club which has a cross border and a multi ethnic theme having participated in a competition against Republic of Ireland and Polish teams. Tagit members have dug in their pockets in their attempts to install toilet facilities for disabled members and spectators. Owning a total of twenty sets of rods is something they seek to improve on but priority is being given to supplying life jackets, which must be worn by all members under the age of sixteen years. Eight bailiffs have Access N.I. and Child Protection qualifications while five trained first aiders add to safety as do Health and Safety Regulations and Fire Wardens. These precautions provide an ideal environment for the enjoyment of fishing under the umbrella of the Club Constitution.

The club has competed in a cross border Peace Competition for the last two years, firstly in Carlow and then in Newtownards with the third one again being held in Newtownards, at which it is hoped that six or possibly even eight teams will compete. These teams have groups for up to twelve years, twelve to nineteen years and a Senior League for everyone over nineteen years.

Each member is supplied with copies of the Country Code, Angling Regulations, a Fish Identification Pack and a Fish Fact File. These documents are updated as required with all members expected to keep abreast of these updates. Club regulations stipulate that each trout



TAGIT Fishing Club officers John Sloan (President); Scott Lonsdale (Secretary) and Gary McFee (Treasurer).

caught must be landed and then returned by net and the club leadership is determined to develop a fishing complex in the greater Belfast area which will have Day Tickets for the waters and the Tagit Club is well on its way to being a template for such a complex.

Access

The intention here is to add access roads to all pegs, a shop, a cafe, an education/seminar centre, showers, six units each to sleep four people and flood lighting. This is a one million pound project which has support from a variety of bodies and individuals. In all, it could take three years to come to fruition but, with the Department of Social Development and the Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure lending support, hopes are high. The Club is open to everyone and is seeking to start a fishing workshop for ethnic groups, such as Polish adults and children, who have a sizeable and interested number of people in Ireland, as well as other ethnic groups. The overall aim is to develop teams to compete against each other in 2014 and beyond. From putting stoneways in by hand, leaving grass to sustain feed for insects, as well as sweeping each stand for ground bait which is then thrown into the water to discourage rats, there is a sound eco system in place which is observed by everyone. The Club is an excellent organisation which has impressive aims, thorough procedures in place and it is an example of how successful a Club can be under proper leadership and is a member of the Ulster Angling Federation, the IADA, as well as the sports charity Sported and is striving for Club Mark recognition. Jim Shannon, the local MP and a confirmed countrysports enthusiast is very supportive as is the First Minister, Peter Robinson MP, while further support from the South Eastern Education and Library Board has also been forthcoming.

I left Newtownards with the distinct impression that this Club deserves every encouragement and success in its efforts to become a template for any similar club.



An ideal environment for young anglers at the TAGIT Fishing Club in Newtownards

46th IKC Retriever Championship

The 46th IKC Retriever Championship sponsored by Connolly's Red Mills will be held in BALLYNATRAY ESTATE, YOUGHAL, Co.CORK on the 28th & 29th December by kind invite of Mr Henry Gwyn Jones and Head Gamekeeper Mr Martin O'Riordan.



The superb Ballynatray Estate in Co Cork.

This is the first time that the Retriever Championship will be held in Ballnatray Estate although the venue has been used previously for the Spaniel Championship.

Judges this year are Joe McGivern (Armagh), Ronnie Farrelly (Monaghan), Roy Rankin (Armagh) and Declan Mc Carthy (Cork).



HQ is based at The Quality Hotel & Leisure Centre.

HQ for the Championship is The Quality Hotel & Leisure Centre, Redbarn Beach, Youghal, East Cork, Ireland Telephone: +353 24 93050 www.qualityhotelyoughal.com

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Putting Game on the Menu at the Cuan



We are delighted to report that the Game Evening staged at the Cuan Guest Inn, Strangford, organised in association with BASCNI, was a great success and owner and head chef Peter McErlean has decided to retain it for 2014 in his busy schedule of special events. So an early date for your 2014 diary is that it will take place on **Saturday 1st November 2014!**

We would like to commend BASCNI and CAI for their initiatives in encouraging restaurants to 'put game on the menu' and if any restaurant or hotel, like the Cuan, is planning to do this please contact us and we will be very happy to flag it up to our readers. You can't really get better publicity for such an initiative as having it publicised in Ireland's most read hunting, shooting, fishing and country lifestyle magazine.

We were sorry we missed the game evening as we had other commitments but intend to take advantage of some of Peter's other great speciality evenings, for further details see: www.thecuan.com

Owner/Head Chef Peter McErlean with Robert Crofts (BASC) and a brace of fine Portavo Pheasants. BASC NI supported the Cuan in this initiative.



The Ireland Angling Show

From Grace McDermott, Event organiser, Mara Media comes news of the Irish Angling Show scheduled for 15th & 16th February 2014 at the National Exhibition Centre at Swords:

"The Ireland Angling show has grown over the last 15 years to become the country's premier Angling event and is a firm fixture on the calendars of anglers throughout the country. The show has an amazing range of product for all anglers and all budgets....I have brought together a great mix of tackle trade and manufactures showcasing new products and innovation, while supporting the Irish Tackle dealers..... whether you are looking for a bargain or investing in the latest cutting edge design and technology....the Ireland Angling Show has it all.

"Mara Media have grown the show to bring together all aspects of angling, Sea, Coarse and Game under one roof, where visitors have the opportunity to meet angling celebrities and experts from all over Ireland and UK who are on hand to share knowledge, advice and tuition."

Some of the celebrities include Henry Gilbey and Mike Thrussel, World Pairs Champions, Cathal Hughes and Philip Jackson, Hywel Morgan World Champion Fly Caster will be back with talented daughters. Other 'friends of the show,' Glenda Powell, Mary Gavin Hughes, Stevie Munn, Jim Clohessy, APGAI Ireland

and many more will be sharing advice and giving tuition free of charge. And for those visitors to the show with an interest in Fly Tying, a selection of World Class Fly Tyers will be on display practicing their craft.

Children are most welcome at the Ireland Angling Show and a large interactive area is designated to teach and encourage kids to pick up a rod. A visit to the Dublin Angling Initiative Kids Zone is a must for families.

For the second year, the Irish Specimen Fish Committee will be hosting the Awards day on Saturday 15th at the Bewleys Airport Hotel at 2.30 pm. Shuttle Buses will run between the Hotel and the Show to facilitate visitors wishing to attend both events.



The Angling Show - Catch it at the National Exhibition Centre, Swords.

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Henry Gilbey



Mike Thrussell



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International Taxidermy Success for Ingrid Houwers

Ingrid Houwers from Bangor has rapidly gained a well deserved reputation for producing taxidermy work of the very highest standard, as countless visitors to the Great Game Fairs of Ireland will know already, having watched her create stunning displays at Shanes Castle, Antrim and at Birr Castle, Co Offaly.

Now there is international recognition for her talent, having gained the official title of International Accredited Taxidermist at The Taxidermy Championships of the Netherlands.

Ingrid explained: "The Championships are held once every two years in different locations. This year they were held in the Natural History Museum in the Netherlands, on the 9th of November. The Championships allow competitors to gather Master points if their entry achieves a certain score. Two years ago they were held in the Ecodrome, where my 'Courting Bee-eaters' achieved second place and gained three Master points as well.

"Despite being inundated with work and being amazingly busy with my work displays at the Great Game Fairs of Ireland, with the Championship deadline looming I decided to do two pieces - a Red-tailed Hawk on the gauntlet, ready to take off, and an Egyptian Plover in its alleged symbiotic relationship (there is some debate on this relationship).

And then came the great news for Ingrid who was delighted when her father, who attended the ceremony, reported that both pieces had received 'Honorable Acknowledgment,' and thus master credits; the Red-tailed Hawk got three Master credits, and the Plover' one. "Even better, it meant that my Master credits have now passed a certain point, giving me the title International Accredited Taxidermist," she added.

The pieces are on display from 2nd November to 8th December in the Museum of Natural History in Leeuwarden, The Netherlands. Photos by Erik Bargeman.

E: ingrid@taxidermy.nl Call: 028 9145 7944 (Mobile: 075 2318 5498)
www.taxidermy.nl



Egyptian Plover



Chartreuse cascade

It is always fascinating to see a real craftsman at work and to chat to someone with a great knowledge of their craft and so we were delighted to exhibit beside Irish Fly Craft at the St Hubert's Day Celebrations, organised by the NARGC at the Abbeyleix Manor Hotel.

Irish Fly craft is based in Abbeyleix, County Laois, Ireland. It is run by Jimmy Tyrrell who is a professional fly dresser with over twenty five years of experience tying flies for clients around the world.

Jimmy has a large selection of flies that you can choose from his website, if you wish to order any flies. It would be impossible to show all patterns, so he will gladly tie flies to order. If you have any special requests, please feel free to contact him.

He is a member of the Partridge Pro Fly Tying team and The Partridge company are renowned for their quality hooks, so all Jimmy's flies are tied on top quality hooks and materials.

And if you want to test his flies, Jimmy also runs a guiding service for both novice and experienced fly fishermen or women and teaches river craft on the rivers in and around County Laois, for brown trout and Salmon. Fishing tackle can be hired and permits arranged. Fly tying classes are also available, or you can combine the two. Fly fishing and fly tying day groups are also welcome.

There is also very good accommodation in the area to suit everyone's pocket, including of course the very sporting Abbeyleix Manor Hotel.

To contact Jimmy: Tel 086 8451257 Email irishflycraft@gmail.com or visit www.irishflycraft.com



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The Adam Yard, Templepatrick, Co. Antrim, Northern Ireland.

GUIDE PRICE: 497,500 GBP.

The Adam Yard is one of six exclusive homes created in the former stableyard of the Castle Upton Estate, Templepatrick. Designed by Robert Adam in 1789 and restored in 2000, with uninterrupted views over parkland to the South Antrim Hills. Templepatrick is 6 miles from Belfast International Airport and under half an hour's drive from Belfast City centre.

Ballyrisode Beach, Toormore, West Cork, Ireland.

GUIDE PRICES: between 250,000 Euros and 1,500,000 Euros.

An unique opportunity to acquire lands with beachfront and plots (ruins) in West Cork, totalling 37.27 acres / 15.08 hectares. Offered for sale in 3 lots or as an entire holding. Located 7 miles / 11 km west of Schull on the Mizen Peninsula in West Cork.



Islay House, Bridgend, Isle of Islay, Scotland.

GUIDE PRICE: in excess of 850,000 GBP.

Islay House is one of Scotland's most magnificent mansion houses with a superb outlook over Indaal Lough and out to sea, within a stunning island setting of 28 acres / 11.3 hectares. The house dates from 1677 and is situated near the village of Bridgend. Islay Airport is 7 miles away.

The Gledfield Estate, Sutherland, Scotland.

GUIDE PRICE: 8,000,000 GBP.

A magnificent and traditional Highland Estate centred on an historic country house dating from the early 18th Century with exceptional mixed sport. Totalling 6,981 acres / 2,825 hectares, of which 2,219 acres / 898 hectares is commercial forestry, the estate also includes 8 houses / cottages and a farm comprising a range of traditional stone buildings.



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For fishermen, Optilabs' 'Henley' and 'Canoe' frames are proving to be particularly popular due to their super-lightweight frame that floats if dropped in water. These can be fitted with a number of different lenses but polarised is always the top choice for fishermen. Optilabs can supply standard polarised lenses in a range of tints, or choose Optilabs' stunning Ultra 2000 (Drivewear®) lenses which combines amazing light enhancing properties with phenomenal horizontal polarisation to give outstanding performance in both low light and bright sunshine.

The latest addition to the Optilabs collection is the Switch which is everything you need in one sports pack! The Switch comes with 6 interchangeable polycarbonate shields (3x mirrored, 1 x yellow for low light, 1 x polarised and 1 x protective clear shield) plus an optical insert for prescription wearers. The Switch is amazingly lightweight and has as an innovative frame design allowing arms to be unclipped and replaced with an adjustable headstrap. Perfect for fishermen!

Prices range from £89.95-£295.95 (depending on frame and lens option)

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Optilabs also offer a range of other glasses for other country pursuits. For Shooters, Optilabs' Zeiss glasses are a must!



Black Switch Silver Mirror

Ash Dieback - how many know the facts?



Almost three quarters of people quizzed in Northern Ireland have heard of ash dieback, compared to just over half in the UK

Just over half (54 per cent) of those taking part in a UK-wide survey have heard of ash dieback one year on from the discovery of the disease in our woods. A YouGov survey commissioned for the Woodland Trust asked the public whether their awareness of threats to trees and woods from pests and diseases had increased over the past 12 months, with half (50 per cent) responding that their awareness had not changed. However, two-thirds (66 per cent) did agree that tree disease and pests were serious issues that need to be tackled. Those quizzed in Northern Ireland generally fared better, with 72 per cent having heard of ash dieback and 73 per cent agreeing to the importance of tackling tree pests and diseases.

Woodland Trust Head of Conservation Austin Brady said: "Even with significant media coverage in the last 12 months it appears the Woodland Trust and other bodies need to do more to raise awareness of the threats our trees and woods face from pests and diseases."

The Woodland Trust is tackling ash dieback and other diseases by ensuring that from 2014 all trees it plants and provides will have a detailed provenance and be UK or Ireland-sourced and grown. It is also working with partners including the Forestry Commission and National Trust on the 'ObservaTREE' project to make use of citizen scientists across the country to help identify and verify potential tree disease cases.

Since the discovery of ash dieback in England last autumn, Northern Ireland has seen 90 premises confirmed positive – 87 of these are recently planted sites, with three in nursery environments.

Find out more on the Woodland Trust's website www.loveitortloseit.org.uk

Members of the public are asked to report any signs of ash dieback and other tree disease to the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development. Telephone 0300 200 7847 or email afib.planthealth@dardni.gov.uk



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Grow your own fuel with funding from the Woodland Trust

When the temperature drops, heating bills can soar, meaning that staying warm can have a sizeable impact on your back pocket. According to the Woodland Trust, hundreds of people are avoiding the increasing cost of traditional fuel supplies by growing their own firewood. And the charity is currently offering free expert advice and funding to help get tree planting underway.

Thanks to the Trust's 'MOREwoods' scheme - supported by Biffa Award, Calor and Dorset Cereals - would-be tree planters can now apply for support to cover up to 60 per cent of the cost. It's a simple scheme, with minimal paperwork, aimed at landowners wishing to plant a minimum of one acre.

Gregor Fulton, the Trust's operations manager, says: "The increasing focus on energy - where it comes from and the cost - means that planning your future energy needs now is certainly advisable. If you're lucky enough to own a piece of land, depending on what tree species are planted, you could be coppicing your own firewood within a decade. Trees, of course, bring other benefits too, from enhancing the look of unused land to providing much-needed homes for wildlife. The benefits start from the actual day of planting, with insects starting to colonise and attracting birds and mammals higher up the food chain. The Woodland Trust will check that the land is suitable for planting, and offer advice on the woodland design and choice of species. Birch, for example, grows quickly but the wood also burns faster than other species. Some landowners will be eligible for grant-aid from Forest Service's Woodland Grant Scheme. Those who don't qualify for government funding can apply for support from the Woodland Trust. In either case, we'll offer straightforward advice



and will point you in the right direction."

Home-grown firewood can, with careful management, be available within seven to 15 years of planting, with annual sustainable supplies thereafter. Around two to three hectares of new native woodland will produce enough fuel to heat a typical three-bedroom house.

For a copy of the Trust's new wood fuel leaflet; to apply for funding; or to simply find out more call 0845 293 5689,

Email woodlandcreation@woodlandtrust.org.uk or visit www.woodlandtrust.org.uk/firewood

The 38th Irish Kennel Club's AV Spaniel Championship 27/28 December 2013

The 38th IKC AV Spaniel Championship will take place on the Friday 27th and Saturday 28th December 2013 at Shanes Castle, Co. Antrim.

This beautiful estate played host to the IKC AV Spaniel Championship in 2005, with the number of competitors taking part yet to be surpassed. We are invited by Lord O'Neill through his son, the Right Honourable Shane O'Neill, who has given the Championship committee an open and very warm welcome back this year.

Head Keeper Bill Storer is in control again for the 2013 Championship, with pheasants being the main quarry, along with a sprinkling of partridges and rabbits, over ground which is woodland with bramble patches and overgrown stick piles.

RED MILLS, the internationally well known animal food manufacturer, have once again sponsored this event. Its Managing Director Mr. Bill Connolly, who has handled and competed at pointer and setter trials and holds a couple of spaniels in his kennels for his hunting days, knows well the level of commitment from all the handlers and organisers involved to make this event successful and is already looking forward to another successful RED MILLS IKC

Championship for spaniels.

HQ is the family run Dunsilly Hotel, situated only minutes from the Championship grounds. They fully understand the requirements for those attending and there are plenty of green fields for spaniel exercise close by. A special weekend room rate has been negotiated for those attending the Spaniel championship, so book early to avail of the offer.

Judges are Mr. Victor McDevitt, Co Down and Mr. Dermot Cahill, Co.Cork and Mr John Dowling from Co. Limerick will act as the referee.

Victor McDevitt has a long association with spaniels, his prefix 'Glendevitt' having won trials with many spaniel societies and Victor won the IKC AV Spaniel Championship in 1985 with FTCh Inlers Rose of Glendevitt. A member of the "A" of the IKC spaniel judges list for more than a quarter of a century, he has been prominent in developing a greater awareness of the necessity for understanding the rules and regulations of the Kennel Club for the spaniel breeds.

Dermot Cahill, who has had a lifetime association with gundogs, has a fondness for cockers as his first spaniels were cockers, but in

those days cocker trials were unheard of in Ireland so they were his hunting companions. Dermot, is well known for running the Nire Valley high bird pheasant shoot, which has hosted many spaniel and Labrador trials and also the IKC AV Spaniel championship in 1994. He still runs a small shoot in Co.Cork allowing several societies to run spaniel and retriever trials on this ground. His experience over years of working with and handling spaniels gives him the credentials to be one of the most practical judges for a championship.

Our referee, John Dowling, has a wealth of knowledge where spaniels are concerned, having won the AV Spaniel championship in 1986 with FTCh Sprucehill Alfie and has continued to be involved as a competitor and judge at spaniel trials.

All enquiries for information on qualifications and entry schedules for the championship should be directed to: The secretary, Mr Larry Taaffe, Effoldstown House, Lusk, Co. Dublin

Phone mobile: 00353 87 6837569 or email larrytaaffe77@gmail.com

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European Hunters' Day Lunch

Irish Countrysports and Country Life magazine and the Great Game Fairs of Ireland were delighted to attend and exhibit at the European Hunters' Day on 3rd November in the Abbeylax Manor Hotel, Abbeylax. This event to celebrate the feast of St Hubert of Belgium, who is the patron saint of hunters, was hosted by the NARGC and the Irish Masters of Fox Hounds Association.

Around 200 hunting, shooting, hawking and fishing enthusiasts turned out and they were treated to a superb game luncheon, including pheasant, partridge, pigeon and venison with appropriate accompaniments and a glass or two of mulled wine.

It was a happy relaxed family occasion, hosted by NARGC chairman Sean Doris, who introduced the guest speaker Tom Hayes, TD, Minister of State at the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine. Mr Hayes paid a very warm tribute to the work of the NARGC and articulated his full support for country sports and the rural way of life. Apart from the content of his speech, his very obvious empathy with the countryside and its sports people was evident as he mingled and chatted warmly to the people present. Sean Doris presented him with a copy of Michael F. Twist's book 'Irish Sporting Memories.'



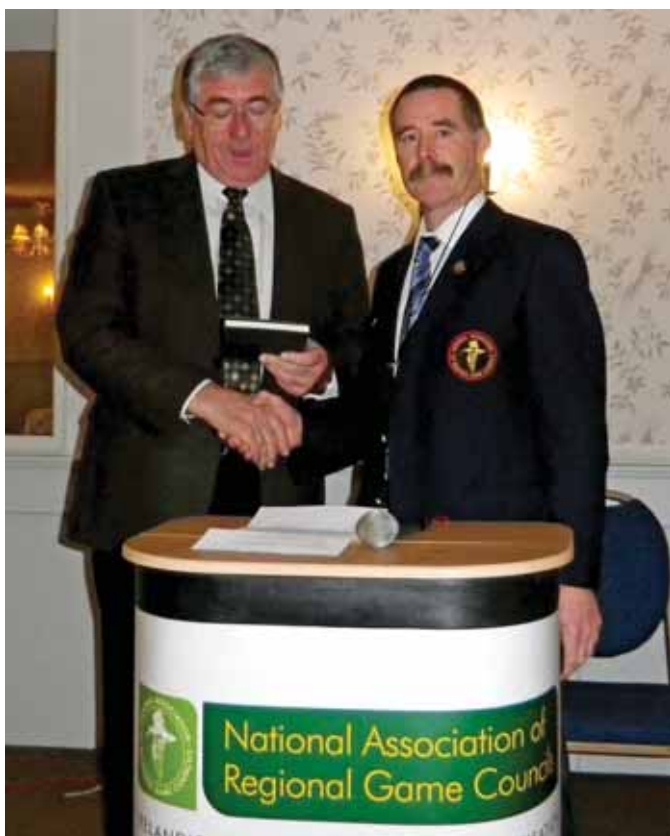
The Ladies from the NARGC 'Shop'



Some NARGC 'Top Brass'



Not quite feeding 'the 5,000' but a good crowd for the game buffet.



NARGC Chairman Sean Doris presents Tom Hayes, TD with a copy of Irish Sporting Memories



An excellent game buffet prepared by the chefs from the Abbeylax Hotel.



Our charming hostess from the Abbyleix Manor Hotel dispenses a warming mulled wine.



The Minster chats to David Lalor, IMFHA.



There was a great exhibit and a strong team from FISSTA.

Our Cover Painting

Our cover painting 'Winter Woodcock' by John R Moore is a fantastic 16"x12" oil painting on linen and readers have the opportunity to own this fantastic painting by making an offer in an around £1200. This is a rare opportunity to own a cover painting that has appeared on the cover of Ireland's premier hunting, shooting, fishing and country lifestyle magazine and as such represents a potentially excellent investment.



John is also happy to take commissions of any sort of animals and landscapes of your choice with original paintings starting from £250 and limited edition prints from £35.

There will be an exhibition of John's work at WWT Castle Espie, Comber on 15th March - 27th April + John's contact details are: 028 2588 0856 / 07754591132 email: johnrmooreart@gmail.com

Arrests following investigation into deer poaching

As part of an ongoing operation, with the assistance of the National Parks Wildlife Service, targeting deer poaching in Counties Wicklow, Carlow and Kilkenny, Gardai have arrested three males.

Gardai from Bray, Wicklow and Baltinglass supported by officers from the Regional Support Unit carried out a number of planned searches in Carlow Town and the in Rathvilly, Co. Carlow this afternoon. During the course of the searches three males in their 20s were arrested and evidence seized. The three males are currently detained in Carlow and Thomastown Garda Stations under the provisions of Section 4 of the Criminal Justice Act 1984.

A spokesperson for the Wild Deer Association of Ireland, a representative body for licensed deer hunters said: "We welcome today's arrests, our organisation actively supports the authorities on such operations and we would like to congratulate An Garda Síochána and NPWS for their work resulting in today's arrests."

"The illegal killing of deer (poaching) which mainly takes place at night with the use of firearms or large dogs is now at unprecedented levels nationally and deer numbers are decimated in many areas".

The increase in deer poaching is mainly due to the current economic climate, where poachers can sell deer killed illegally. Often deer are killed in unhygienic conditions and then sold into our food chain, which in turn creates significant health risks for consumers. Poachers also put local communities at risk.

For further information contact – Damien Hannigan, Secretary, Wild Deer Association of Ireland PO Box 31 Middleton, Co. Cork. 087 2496987 www.wilddeerireland.com

Cultivating Resilience in the Face of Ecological Change

The Worldwatch Institute suggests increasing the resilience of our social, economic, and political systems to adapt to a changing climate. Worldwatch is an independent research organisation based in Washington, D.C. that works on energy, resource, and environmental issues. The Institute's State of the World report is published annually in more than a dozen languages

In the past decade, approximately 200-300 million people have been seriously affected by natural disasters or technological accidents each year—a staggering figure that is bound to only increase in the coming decades. It is becoming clear that a failure to make political systems pay attention to climate challenges might lead to massive population displacements. In *State of the World 2013: Is Sustainability Still Possible?* the Worldwatch Institute discusses the imperative to prepare for such disasters and outlines how we can move forward on the path toward resiliency.

"The repercussions from environmental degradation do not occur in a void," notes Michael Renner, contributing author and senior researcher at Worldwatch. "They interact with a cauldron of pre-existing societal pressures and problems."

Building up a globalised and industrialised market economy and growing our food in globe-spanning mono-cultures may increase efficiency, but such practices also decrease resiliency. Many societies are now at risk of either short-term or permanent displacement due to both environmental and non-environmental disasters.

"Of course, disasters of all kinds are nothing new," remarks Laurie Mazur, contributing author and nonprofit consultant. "But the current era may be one in which their frequency, scale, and impact are greater than anything our species has previously confronted."

In *State of the World 2013*, contributing authors discuss an array of strategies and case studies that offer lessons for surviving and coping with the coming calamities that may result from climate and other ecological changes.

Recipe for resilience. In order for societies to be truly resilient able to mitigate and withstand disturbances and recover afterwards socioeconomic practices should include redundancies, so that the failure of one component does not impact the entire system. Modularity is also critical, in that individual units retains some self sufficiency when disconnected from the larger networks. Other characteristics of resilient systems include diversity, inclusiveness, tight feedbacks, and the capacity for innovation.

Adjusting and adapting. We must consider how the physical changes that take place on Earth will translate into social and economic changes. Adaptation can help reduce vulnerability by way of disaster and famine early-warning systems, livelihood diversification, drought-tolerant crops, restoration of ecosystems, flood-defence infrastructure, and crop insurance.



Cultivating social capital. Social capital, the sum total of resources, knowledge, and goodwill possessed by everyone in a network, provides a web of connections that communities can use to obtain relief and reconstruction aid. Members in well-functioning communities are best able to organise support, articulate their needs, and work together to rebuild and stabilise.

The Cuban Experiment. Over the past two decades, Cuba has moved to the forefront of sustainability. In 2006, it was the only country in the world rated as having achieved "sustainable development" in WWF's Living Planet Report. Although it is materialistically poor, it has First World education, literacy, and health care. The Cuban example proves what many wealthy nations are hesitant to even consider: that high material consumption does not necessarily equal human well-being. Cuba represents an alternative where material success as measured by energy consumption is secondary, while other quality-of-life issues are given priority.

A global paradigm shift is in order. We must not only alter our outlook on consumption and realign our consciousness with sustainability, but also begin to integrate policies and practices that diversify and strengthen our social, political, and economic domains.

For more information visit http://r20.rs6.net/tn.jsp?e=0016KQJc_Z3RUMzyng8wXZ1NGlMBPSehD8vr2ESlqrlmqqskQJnbBNpEZZ0xLwK-oHqwhprpm9zc7-7i4jXDXY_Sl694YMBWEONZb8JchGm3pSfnfDU6UJwKWc15gAj0L4E5UFH5O2s=.

Authors of mentioned chapters include:

- Paula Green, founder and senior fellow at the Karuna Center for Peacebuilding, professor at the School of International Training, and author of Chapter 33, "Shaping Community Responses to Catastrophe."
- Laurie Mazur, D.C.-based writer and consultant to nonprofit organisations and author of Chapter 32, "Cultivating Resilience in a Dangerous World."
- Faith Morgan, executive director of the Arthur Morgan Institute for Community Solutions and co-author of Chapter 30, "Cuba: Lessons from a Forced Decline."
- Pat Murphy, research director of the Arthur Morgan Institute for Community Solutions and co-author of Chapter 30, "Cuba: Lessons from a Forced Decline."
- Michael Renner, senior researcher at the Worldwatch Institute and author of Chapter 31, "Climate Change and Displacements."

Jack Murphy has Men covered for winter

The Autumn Winter 2013 menswear collection from Jack Murphy features uniquely irresistible Irish country and lifestyle clothing with a timeless sense of style. Encapsulating all the rugged beauty and romantic charm of the Irish landscape and designed for the country way of life, the essence of the collection is reflected in its range of textured fabrics and rich colour palette. Sufficiently robust to withstand the punishing Irish weather, yet tastefully designed in warm earthy hues with attractive and clever detailing, the Jack Murphy menswear collection is both practical and smart; perfect for the style-conscious country man.

Jack Murphy knows that men may need a jacket to cover a variety of different uses and occasions and this is even more important for those of us who live and work in the countryside. So whether you're racing, fishing, shooting or walking your dogs Jack Murphy has a wax, waterproof, quilt or tweed to cover all occasions, come rain or shine, as well as a host of luscious layers to coordinate with so you look the part when you are indoors too.

Teamed with a country check shirt or sweater from this season's Jack Murphy men's collection and topped off with a smart flat cap or a dashing hat, any one of these jackets will have men feeling and looking great. Always synonymous with style, quality and durability, Jack Murphy has something for every man this season.



Tomas Tweed Shooting Jacket.

A beautiful new coat from Jack Murphy available at a surprisingly reassuring price is one fabulous way to help you enjoy the winter.

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Feedwell Sponsored Gundog Events



Comber Wildfowlers raise money for Cancer Charity

Comber Wildfowlers Association Gundog test was staged at Rosemount by kind permission of Bill Montgomery. This year it was staged in aid of the Northern Ireland Cancer Fund and through the generosity of the competitors and sponsors Feedwell, KM Trailers and the Great Game Fairs of Ireland raised £400 for the charity.

Results: Prelim: 1st D. Rogan, 2nd S. Hutchinson, 3rd W. McGaughin
Novice: 1st S. Hutchinson, 2nd R. McKnight
Advanced: 1st R. Griffin, 2nd D. Beattie, 3rd G. Mathews, 4th P. Archer

Ulster Golden Retriever Club Trials sponsored by Feedwell

The UGRC (FT Sec Thomas Brady) organised three trials in 2013 including a Novice at Meigh by kind permission of the Bernish View Gun Club, Albert Titterington & guns); an Open stake at Castle Dillon by kind permission of the hosts William Heslip and Barry Mills and a Open Stake at Drumbanagher by kind permission of the Close family, Brian Byrnes and the guns.



Novice Stake winner Meigh: Philip Turner.



Open stake Winner Drumbanagher: John Williamson.



Open Stake winner Castle Dillon: Billy Lundy

Labrador Retriever Club of NI Novice Stake sponsored by Feedwell

The Labrador Retriever Club of Northern Ireland held their 12 Dog AV Novice Stake, kindly sponsored by Feedwell, at Larchfield Estate by kind permission of Mr G Mackie, family and Guns on Wednesday 20th November. Steward of the Beat Mr Alan Coates and Chief Dog Stewart, Mr H. McCarroll.

1st Mr John Paul Rankin with Brian Fig, Lab Dog 10/7/11 (Lesser Burdock Arrow of Maignmor X Birdrow Bianca)

2nd Mr John Williamson with Gordon's Gealic Prince, Golden Retriever Dog 25/5/11 (Birdsgreen Sweet Reward of Castleman X Gortons Island Lass)

3rd Mr Gary Willson with Astraglen Paddy, Lab Dog 19/4/11 (FTCH Delfleet Neon X Astraglen Fable)



(Above)
The Club secretary,
Winner and host.



(Left) Some of the field.

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Damian Newman



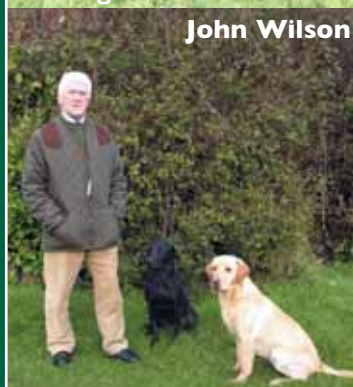
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ROBERT RUARK - The legend Lives On

In 1953, Robert Ruark's book 'Horn of the Hunter' was first published in the U.S. and rapidly topped the New York Times best seller list. It went on to become an inspiration for generations of hunters across the world. This year a new Sixtieth Anniversary Edition has been launched by the Safari Press and currently is eagerly being bought by hunting enthusiasts everywhere. The great attraction about Ruark's writing is how he tells it - describing what he sees and feels in plain everyday language, not shirking his own shortcomings as a marksman or hunter.

Robert (Bob) Ruark was born in 1915 in North Carolina, where hunting and shooting for food was a way of life. Coming from a not too-well-off family that survived the Depression, his later occupations included sailing with the merchant marine and as a sports writer on a local newspaper. During WW2 he was a gunnery officer in the US Navy on Atlantic convoys, returning in peacetime to the newspaper world to write a highly acclaimed syndicated column in the US Press. Four novels written by Ruark in the late 1940s sold particularly well, undoubtedly aided by his celebrity status. He made a considerable fortune from this and used it to fulfil one of his life's ambitions - going on an African safari. In those days a safari required a minimum of one month and often up to three months. Ruark's first, in 1951, was of two months duration in Tanzania (then Tanganyika). Ernest Hemingway, well known at this stage for his pre and post-war safaris was one of Ruark's heroes. In the course of writing about his first safari Hemingway described the ability of an African tracker named Kidogo to such an extent that Ruark decided that he too wished to avail of this man's services. Kidogo tracked for a Professional Hunter, Harry Selby, who in turn worked for the world renowned Ker and Downey Safari Company. Ruark thus came into contact with Selby who would become the world's best known PH due to the exposure he received in Ruark's books. As a result Selby had safari bookings five years in advance. Both men became lifelong friends - Ruark even being invited to be Godfather to Selby's son Mark.

By his own admission Ruark's major failing in life was his fondness for alcohol, which eventually killed him. His endless visits to bars, particularly those frequented



Robert Ruark with Karamojo Bell's .450/400 Jeffrey double rifle.

by celebrities on New York's Stork Club circuit was ruining his liver and rapidly shortening his life. It's no secret that the African safaris helped prolong Ruark's life; some who knew him believe by as much as ten years. He hunted all the major species including the Big Five - Buffalo, Rhino, Elephant, Lion and Leopard - although he was far from being a crack-shot with a rifle. In his books he ridicules his inability as a marksman, highlighting one day in particular where he fired five shots from a Springfield .30-06 at a Thomson's gazelle, only hitting and killing the unlucky animal with shot number six. Having successfully hunted Cape Buffalo he coined the phrase that a Buffalo looks at you 'as if you owe him money'! Where others boast of their shooting ability, Ruark made no secret of his lack of skill with a rifle.

Clarity and wit

This honesty, evident throughout all of his books is what made Ruark one of the greats in the world of safari writers. He described the long hard days, the animals he saw and hunted, managed to get himself mauled by a lion, but above all wrote it exactly as he saw it. Life in the hunting camp, travelling endless miles over bumpy dust tracks or crawling through the tall grass, being scared, fluffing easy shots - all is described with great clarity and wit. He was not a trail blazer like those who had opened up the "dark continent" over half a century previously -



Karamojo Bell's .275 Rigby rifle.

men such as Bell, Selous, Boyes and Sutherland. In linking up with Harry Selby, Ruark had access to a world that even then, few were privileged to know. Selby had served his apprenticeship with another great in the African safari world – Philip Percival – and curiously, Percival had been Hemingway's professional hunter. In a further link with the past, Percival had served his time with Alan Black who had known "Karamojo" Bell. Walter Dalrymple Maitland Bell is regarded as the greatest hunter of all time and his prowess with a .275 Rigby rifle is legendary. Another connection was established in 1945, when Selby returned from WW2 and went into the safari business; Percival took him to meet Black who already held a niche in safari history. The story goes that, in the late 1800s, Kenya's notorious Lord Delamere employed two hunters to lead safaris into Somaliland. One was an African man, the other was Alan Black and to avoid confusion between the pair, Black was referred to as the "White Hunter." Thus the term White Hunter entered the English language. These days it has been replaced with the more politically correct Professional Hunter.

These historic connections were not lost on Bob Ruark. In 1956, while on his way to Nairobi he stopped off in London to visit the Westley Richards shop. Two rifles on display caught his attention – both had been owned and used by Bell – the famous .275 bolt action Rigby and a Jeffrey .450/500 double rifle. He bought both on the spot and had a plate inscribed and fitted on the Rigby dedicating it to his godson Mark Selby. Ruark presented the Rigby to Selby and it was used for even more years in Africa, including Uganda – Bell's old hunting ground – the very rifle that "Karamojo" Bell had used on so many of his elephant hunts. It's owned by an American collector these days and is still in use!

Troubled

Robert Ruark was an artist who painted vivid verbal pictures of his many African safaris. He has been described as a troubled man who was changed by Africa during a period when Africa itself was changing. He witnessed Kenya's 1952 Mau Mau revolution and rampant poaching that had its roots in high places and he was not reticent when it

came to speaking his mind. He reported on both issues in the world's press, while his then latest book, *Something of Value*, did little to endear him to the authorities. Unlike Hemingway, Ruark did not

take up arms and join in the hunt for the Mau Mau. In 1963 he was officially barred as an undesirable individual from entering Kenya. On his very last visit he had departed by air from Nairobi just prior to a warrant for his arrest being served. In less than one decade he spent more time on the Dark Continent than collectively most non-locals will in a lifetime. His African days were over.

During the early 1960s I bought Ruark's books as each became available. The paperbacks (all that I could afford) were read from cover to cover several times over before being loaned to others. Needless to say they never came back! The staff at Eason's bookshop in Dublin kindly located further copies including *Horn of the Hunter*, *Use Enough Gun* and *Uhuru*, but they too have gone wherever it is that paperbacks go. These days, hardback versions feature on my bookshelves along with others of African lore. Undoubtedly Ruark's stories were a major factor in spurring-on my decision to go on safaris; like countless thousands of others, I too wanted to see, do and experience the adventures that he had written about. In the mid 1980s I found myself in Palamos on Spain's Costa Brava – the very place that Ruark had chosen to settle in three years prior to his death in 1965. Having decided to try and trace anyone who knew him, I visited the local gun-shop, considering it an ideal starting point. Incredibly, despite Ruark being laid to rest in Palamos, the people there had never heard of him!



Bell hunted elephant with the little .275 rifle.

Book Reviews

Feast or Famine:

A Cultural Food Journey of the North West of Ireland

Published by Guildhall Press (Derry)

by Emmett McCourt

Watching top Irish Chef Emmett McCourt at the Great Game Fairs of Ireland many thousands of people have had the chance to see one of the greatest exponents of the culinary art in action. Always keen to source the very best in local produce for his creations, Emmet has always said when it comes to food and drink, the North West of Ireland has a heritage second to none.

Now, everyone can experience that fascinating heritage of food and history, meeting many of the characters involved along the way in a superb new book written by Emmett himself.

Hot off the press and just in time for Christmas, 'Feast or Famine: A Cultural Food Journey of the North West of Ireland' is quite simply unique and a 'must read' for anyone with even half a notion to explore our local cookery cultural heritage.

Emigrant farmers from Derry and Donegal were the first to plant the Americas with seed potatoes and apple trees. They carried their recipes with them too – and their descendants fed both sides in the Civil War. The Scots-Irish from the North West didn't forget their distilling skills either, producing whiskeys, bourbons and moonshine across the Southern states. And fishermen from Inishowen,

who settled on the New England coast, helped found some of the finest fishing ports in the New World.

For many years, Derry chef Emmett McCourt has been researching the importance of his hometown's contribution

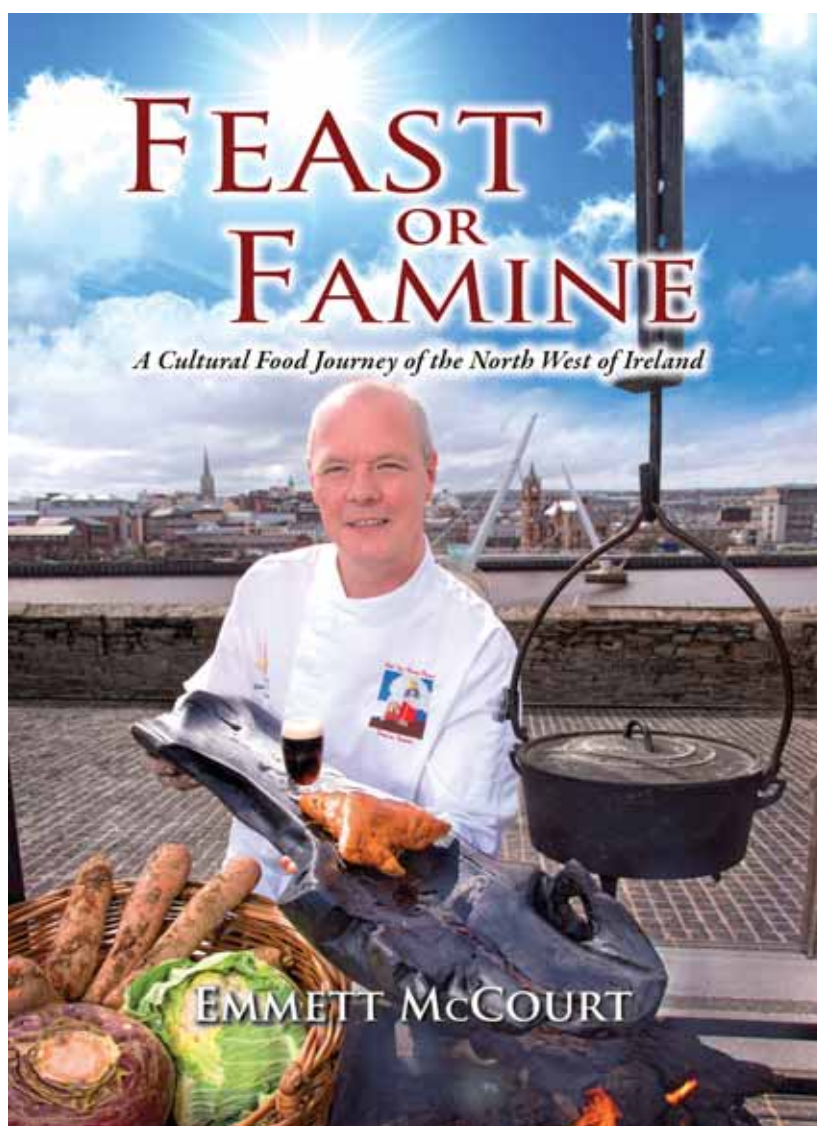
in terms of world cuisine. He has recovered age-old recipes, revived traditional cooking techniques, and rediscovered long-forgotten Irish treasures such as the lumper potato.

Feast or Famine takes you on an historical tour of McCourt's North Atlantic home-place and explores just what makes this area such an abundant source of food and drink.

The author recalls the heady days when Lough Swilly was the herring capital of the world, Magilligan was world leader in rabbits and Derry city was producing millions of gallons of whiskey for the US. But he also records, using first-hand testimonies, the devastation wrought by

the Great Famine in the 1840s. In the course of his travels McCourt cooks some brilliant meals, meets some fascinating characters and visits some of Ireland's most celebrated food-spots – and a few unsung ones as well.

The book is published in hardback with dust jacket, full colour inside and is available directly from the Author signed or from Guildhall Press. For more information please visit www.ghpress.com



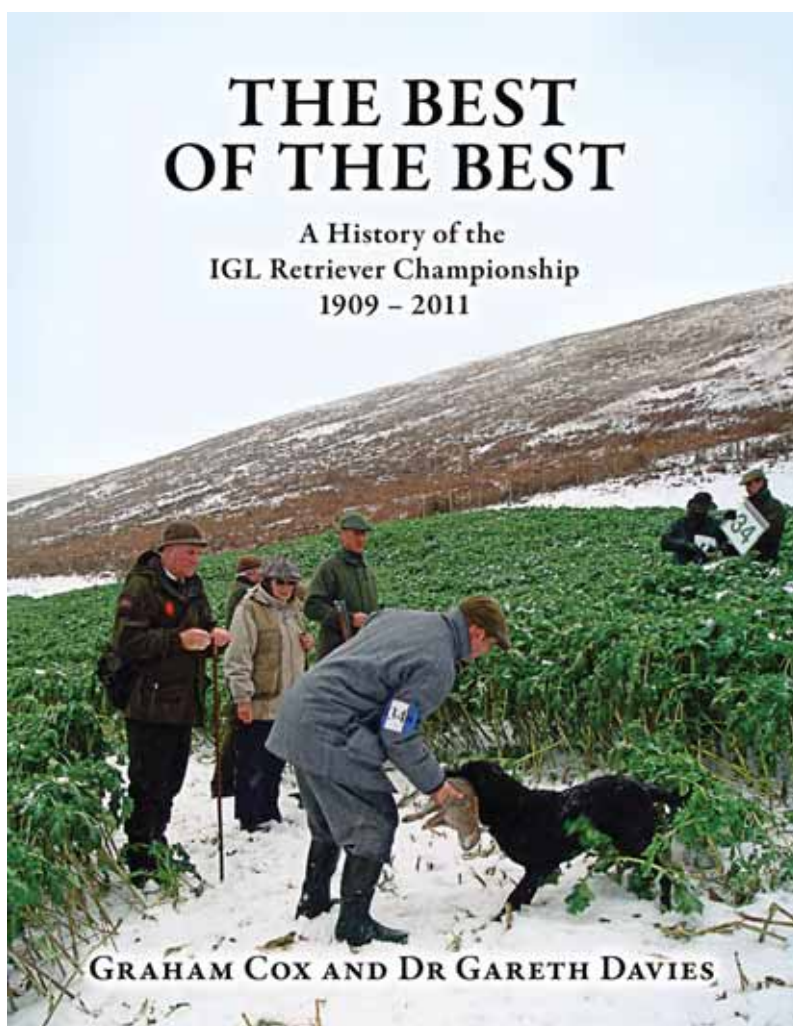
The Best of the Best - The IGL Retriever Championship 1909 – 2011

A landmark book has just been published giving a unique insight into the International Gundog League's Retriever Championship over the past century. As readers will know, the IGL Championship is the premier event of its kind in the world, so the title *The Best of the Best* is particularly apt. In *The Best of the Best* we find a detailed analysis of records and discussion of significant changes over the past century along with extensive illustrations. Written by Graham Cox and Dr Gareth Davies, *The Best of the Best* provides a wealth of information that makes it particularly valuable for anyone interested in breeding and delving into the competition's records

The foreword, written by Her Grace the Duchess of Devonshire DL, Deputy President of the International Gundog League (Retriever Society) says: "The Best of the Best often captures that mix of elation and disappointment that I know well: not least in the seven years from 1994 which included two seconds and other placings for my mother's FTCh Ulstare Style and the centenary year of 2009 when my own FTCh Roberto Rannaldini of Bolton Abbey won the IGL Retriever Championship and the Captain A Glen Kidston Challenge Cup. This book, which presents so much more than a list of award winners and also-rans, is a work of reference which readers are sure to return to again and again."

The 416-page hardback, with over 150 colour and black and white photos, chronicles the fierce commitment to excellence that has characterised this premier event since it was first run in 1909. Extensive research underpins a compelling narrative and a thorough account of the patterns of excellence that the competitive record reveals. The analysis in the book provides many startling insights, some of which dispel prevalent assumptions about preconditions for success. The fourteen appendices include over 150 pages of tables that elaborate and extend this analysis. As well, there are the running cards and results of each of the Championships from 1909 to 2011, an invaluable resource for anyone with an interest in breeding.

The Best of the Best is a fascinating story about the men, women and dogs that have coloured the competition and influenced the development of working retriever breeds over the past century. The history of the Championship's



origins and an overview of its formative years are followed by detailed accounts of each Championship since 1984. Key images throughout the book bring that story to life.

Graham Cox is Senior Lecturer in Social and Policy Sciences at the University of Bath. Since 1978 his six trial winning Golden retrievers have included FTCh Littlemartston Comma of Wydcombe and FTCh Holway Martina of Wydcombe who gained their titles in 1990 and 2011. An A Panel Judge since 1988, he has judged extensively abroad and in 2012 judged the IGL Retriever Championship. A member of the Kennel Club's Field Trials Sub-Committee since 2003 he is now its Vice-Chairman.

Dr Gareth Davies, a retired Civil Engineer, is a Kennel Club 'A' Panel Judge and has been involved with gundogs for over 20 years. His interest in the IGL Retriever Championship spans many years. Throughout this period he has put together a very comprehensive database, which forms the basis for the majority of the statistics contained within this book. He has represented Wales many times on the International stage.

Arkle The Legend of 'Himself'

by Anne Holland

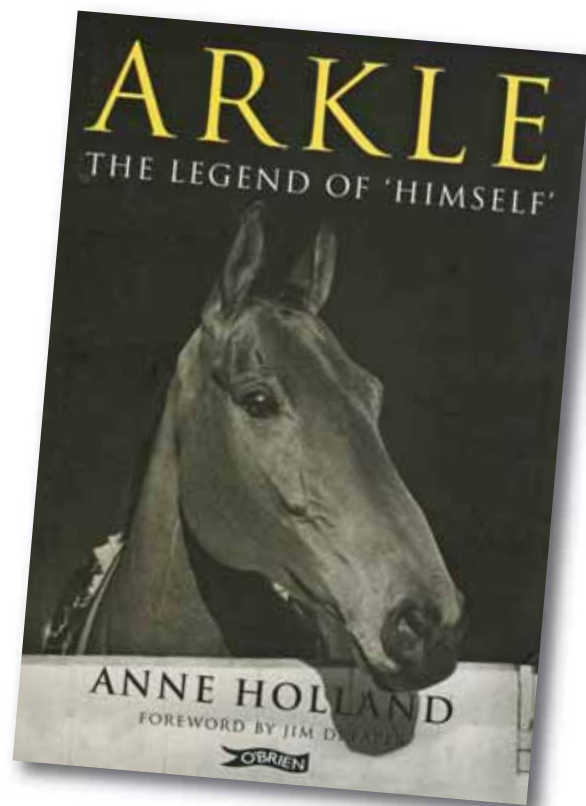
A fascinating new biography of the legendary racehorse that was Arkle - his incredible career, his great wins, the people in his life.

To celebrate the forthcoming 50th anniversary of Arkle's first great win at Cheltenham, Anne Holland's fascinating new biography looks over his career, his incredible wins, the people in his life and the ongoing and enduring interest in this legendary horse.

Arkle's win at Cheltenham in 1964 marked the start of an incredible campaign by Ireland's most legendary racehorse: the horse by which all other horses are measured. A half century has passed since a string of incredible wins including the Cheltenham Gold Cup, Irish Grand National, Hennessy Gold Cup, King George VI Chase and the Punchestown Gold Cup created the legend, and that legendary success has never been surpassed.

Author Anne Holland once again proves herself an expert at uncovering fascinating stories and anecdotes. Says Jim Dreaper in Arkle: 'Anne Holland, herself a very accomplished and knowledgeable horsewoman, has discovered so many stories and opinions about Arkle that even I had not known. In spite of my family connection with Arkle and with most of the main players in his career, I am left wondering 'How had I not known this or heard that?'

A treasure trove of story and imagery, a must for the many fans of 'Himself.'



Price €18.99 0r £16.99 Further Information From:

Ruth Heneghan P: (353) 1 492 3333 / 087 296 4744 / E: ruth@obrien.ie The O'Brien Press, 12 Terenure Road East, Rathgar, Dublin 6 www.obrien.ie

Dr. Anthony O' Halloran reviews 'The Sporting Gun's Bedside Companion' by Douglas Butler

Game shooter, biologist, teacher, farmer and author, Dr Douglas Butler has been a tireless pro-hunting advocate in Ireland for many decades writes Dr. Anthony O' Halloran and *The Sporting Gun's Bedside Companion* is his third book in just six years. It's a collection of short stories, twenty-two penned by himself, with guest eight contributions from his shooting companions.

Readers will be taken to a diverse range of places including Buckinghamshire, the Isle of Sky, Wexford, Aberdeen, Laois and of

course Tipperary. A cast interesting human characters such as Phil (Irish) and Pawel (Polish) will be introduced. Canine characters such as Jameson and Fiach become leading actors. Readers will find themselves rough shooting, flighting ducks and high on the mountains pursuing elusive grouse. As such, diversity is a defining feature of this collection.

It is indeed an ideal bed time read, equally suitable for those occasions when the reader can steal a half hour or so from an otherwise busy day. Butler himself accurately describes the book as follows: 'The stories in this book are essentially reflections of great days in

great places, the birds that dwell in them and, all important the companionship of like-minded people.' Some of the incidents recorded are simply hilarious and other occasions readers will simply wish that they could have shared in a special moment or indeed that they could shoot as well as Butler and his sons. Inevitably, there is also a tinge of poignancy as readers realise that some of the places and people described no longer exist.

I suspect that another collection will appear in the not distant future. Published by Merlin Unwin in hardback, *The Sporting Gun's Bedside Companion* deserves a wide audience.

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Art and Antiques

ON LINE OR OFF LINE THE SALES GO ON

The auction scene, like lots of other things in life is changing. Who ten or so years ago would have thought the Internet, with all its ramifications, would on a world-wide daily basis have been playing such a significant role in selling everything from a needle to an anchor and much more besides.



Clontarf Castle,' by Joseph Mallord Turner (sold for €65,000 by Adams)

Northern Ireland's premier auction house, Belfast-based ROSS'S has first-hand experience of this phenomenon as auctioneer Daniel Clarke tells: "I would not say that on-line sales are taking over completely from the traditional auctions we have all come to know and love over the years. But there is no escaping the fact these sales are now playing a significant part in peoples' lives. In fact every telephone, iPad or computer is a gateway to a sale somewhere.

"At ROSS'S we are no exception. At the moment, early November, we have no less than two online sales proceeding. On one we have some 800 paintings and on the other lots and lots of quality jewellery and silver items. Of course on-line bidding may not suit everyone. There are still many who like the atmosphere of a traditional auction house sale. But there are many others too who like being able to bid and buy or sell from the comfort of their own living room. What surprises us about the on-line scene is this. When it started we expected it would be taken up by a lot of young people, but we have found it has been embraced also by many who would now be 'silver haired.'"

Commenting of the auction sales scene in general he adds: "The lack of housing mobility is still having an affect on things and will continue to do so until it changes. We are still holding our quarterly Irish art sales which continue to attract quality works and we



George II Irish carved giltwood table, circa. 1740 (sold by Adams)

find in paintings, as in everything else, you have to have quality to attract top prices.

"Silver and jewellery items are selling well. Of course silver and gold markets are very high and that helps too. But furniture is sluggish at times, another casualty of the housing scene."

LURE OF THE COUNTRY HOUSE SALE

We all love the atmosphere, the tension and the chase of an auction house sale. But place a few hundred lots in the setting of a fine old Irish country house and the scene is an entirely different one. The ambience transports one back to another age; it is no longer a sale but an opportunity and a privilege to be invited to buy, whether we need that particular period piece of furniture, that individual painting or desirable collectable.

Such was the case when ADAMS staged a fine two-day Country House Collections auction in Slane Castle, County Meath in mid October. Hundreds of patrons attended the event and left receipts of almost two million euros for their purchases of fine art and antiques.



Mahogany chairs (sold by Adams)



Miniature Victorian red lacquered postbox (sold by Adams)

The stately home of Lord Henry Mount Charles, was a fitting sale-room for the various items which had been brought from three significant Irish houses, Somerton, near Castleknock, Co Dublin; Arbraccan, Co Meath and Beaulieu, Co Louth.

As usual fine pieces of high quality furniture sold well with a high price realised for an attractive George II Irish carved gilt-wood table, circa. 1740 which made €90,000 against a low estimate of €80,000.

A pair of mahogany chairs, made €23,000 while a

miniature Victorian red lacquered postbox standing about 60 cm high made €5,500.

Among paintings, a watercolour, 'Clontarf Castle,' the only recorded Irish scene by the English artist Joseph Mallord Turner made €65,000 which was almost double its estimate. A set of fine prints, Views of the City of Dublin by James Malton made €15,000 while a watercolour by Co Meath artist Mary Battersby, a King Bird of Paradise made €1,100. It was something of a surprise when a set of three dressing table metal boxes, of French origin and from Beaulieu House sold for €8,600 against a high estimate of €400.

Silver lots also found strong bidding and the Broughshane Cup, which commemorated the founding year of the Broughshane Racecourse in Co Antrim in 1751 went for €25,000 while a pair of modern silver table centrepieces, in the form of pheasants and made in



Mary Battersby's 'King Bird of Paradise' (sold by Adams)

London by William Comyns and Sons sold for €9,500.

Then there was the Chinese white jade vase, described as Qianlong period. It made €38,000 against a high estimate of €15,000.

BANK SALE

When the ill fated Anglo Irish Bank created a collection of paintings over the years, little did it think those acquisitions would have to be sold in so short a space of time. But the ways of the financial world, just like the real place, are fickle and just over 100 lots from the walls of offices and corridors in the bailed-out entity came under the



The Broughshane Cup, which commemorated the founding year of the Broughshane Racecourse in Co Antrim in 1751 (sold by Adams)

hammer at ADAMS auction house in Dublin this autumn.

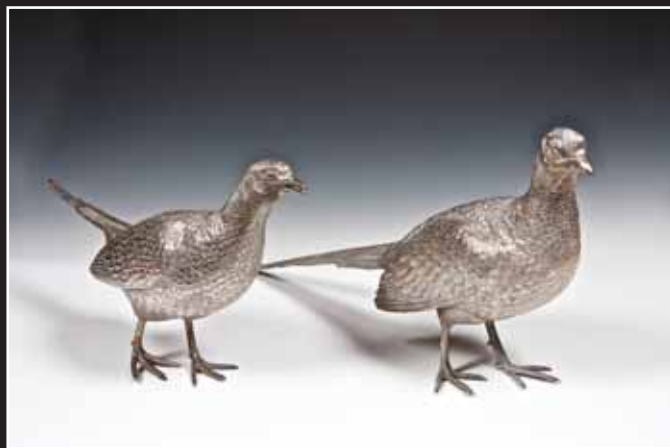
And by all accounts the sale was quite a success with over 200 bidders competing for the corporate art collection. Around 93% of the lots were sold and raised €281,000 which was well over the expected €200,000 mark.

Included in the 134 lots up for sale were several paintings by some of Ireland's best known contemporary artists, including Louis le Brocquy, Martin Gale, Stephen McKenna and Felim Egan. Valued from 50 euros up to €12,000 were watercolours, street scenes, prints, sculptures and photographs.

Stephen McKenna's 'Basket and Vessels' commanded much bidding interest and went at €17,000 which was the highest price achieved.



One of the Views of the City of Dublin by James Malton (sold by Adams)



Modern silver table centrepieces, in the form of pheasants and made in London by William Comyns and Sons (sold by Adams)

Half a dozen others by Pauline Bewick – wildlife scenes – sold for a total of €44,900 while Sean Scully's etchings went for over their estimated with one, Raval No 1 making €6,600.

An ADAMS spokesperson said there had been many internet and telephone bids to the sale adding: "We were delighted with the results which once again proves that collections with interesting provenance are very much sought after by collectors."

Some time ago, the Anglo Irish bank had donated 18 works of art estimated at €160,000 along with the signage which hung over its Dublin headquarters, to the Irish Museum of Modern Art.



BEAT THAT BANK NOTE

Talking about banks always brings money into the equation and WHYTE's late summer sale of History, Literature and Collectables certainly put currency on a strong footing. For a somewhat small banknote, in need of much TLC stole the scene. The 'Ploughman' Northern Bank ten pounds note which was estimated to make between €4,000 to €6,000 sold for a staggering €14,000 to make many of us start rummaging around to see if we had another cached away somewhere in a family bible of other secure hiding place.

I'm afraid such searches are probably in vain for the not, signed Knox was one of only 8,000 believed to have been issued, making it one of the scarcest of the



The 'Ploughman' Northern Bank ten pounds note sold for a staggering €14,000 (sold by Whytes)

Ploughman series. But while it was described as having 'tears, stains, and was brittle' this did not deter bidders who certainly had a good run for their money.

WHAT A FIDDLE!

Who would have thought a violin reputedly played by the bandmaster of the ill-fated Titanic would make a world record price at auction. But seven years of research and tests paid off at Titanic specialist auctioneers Henry Aldridge and Son's sale when the instrument, expected to make somewhere around £300,000, sold for £900,000.

The previous record sale saw a 32-foot plan of the Titanic, used in the inquiry into the sinking of the liner in 1912, make more than £220,000 two years ago.

The violin, a gift from his fiancée and which was reputed to have been played by Wallace Hartley as the doomed vessel went down had been earlier on view in Belfast and in the United States. And it only took around ten minutes to sell the violin.

(Left) Chinese white jade vase, described as Qianlong period made €38,000 (sold by Adams)

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Hunting Roundup

Around the Meets

The Dungannon Foxhounds' meet at Cappagh, Co Tyrone, suffered heavy rain throughout which began as we were on our way to the first draw at Top Pond, Cappagh and only finished when Home had been blown.

Despite being a foot pack these hounds cover a phenomenal amount of ground giving master and huntsman Oliver Little and his whippers-in, Dermot McCann(15) and Stephen O'Neill much to do to keep in touch with hounds. For once, I approve of the use of two way radios in the hunting field!

Oliver had on a 10½ mixed pack mostly of Welsh breeding but with a leavening of Modern English blood all combining well in their work and giving us some excellent music to keep everyone abreast of events.

Hounds first drew the forest beside the reservoir at Altmore but, despite their working hard and needing little interference from their huntsman, they drew a blank.

A series of draws around Altmore and Cornamaddy townlands also proved blank so Oliver made the decision to box hounds across to the far side of Cornmaddy. Hounds again showed their ability to draw coverts without any undue interference and their independence and concentration were again evident as we watched them cover the whole townland where there was so little stock out. These hounds live cheek by jowl with goats and sheep at their kennels and, in fact, are often feed with sheep in with them. This pays dividends with their single mindedness in their work. As hounds drew across Turnabarson they suddenly put a fox afoot and very hound was "on" immediately and in very good voice. A fast hunt ensued right around this townland then back through Cornamaddy and on to Eskragh Hill where this enterprising fox was accounted for.

I had travelled to the meet with Bill Montgomery, Chairman of the NI Masters of Hounds Association and we had been driven around by Colm McCorry the hunt secretary who now invited us back for some very welcome soup and, as we arrived at his home, the sun broke out to assist with the considerable drying process - better late than never!

Around the puppy shows

James Armstrong MFH welcomed a large crowd, on a lovely sunny day, to the East Down Foxhounds' kennels, at Seaforde, where judges Roddy Bailey from Co Wexford and Townley Angel, from the Louth Foxhounds, had three couple of doghounds and four couple of bitches from two litters to consider.

Huntsman Declan Feeney and whipper-in Ian Donoghue had put in a lot of work to make the day go well and the judges played their part before giving James Armstrong the following decisions to announce.

Doghounds

1. Malton Middleton Gunner 07 Marigold 06, 2. Malvern Sibling of Malton, 3. Marshall Sibling of Malton

Bitches

1. Sago Bailey 10 Stable 05, 2. Salary Sibling of Sago, 3. Marion Sibling of Malton

Not only have the East Down Foxhounds gained a new professional whipper-in but James Armstrong has been joined in the mastership by local businessman Brian McConville, whose first public appearance in his new role this was.



Huntsman Kevin Dow showing the new entry at the Ballymacad Foxhounds Puppy Show.

Late Shows

The inaugural puppy show of the Tynan and Armagh Hunt attracted a lot of local interest from a broad cross section of people to their kennels at Seagahan, Co Armagh.

Judges Dr Ken Livingstone and his wife Lucy Leigh Livingstone, joint masters of the neighbouring Armagh and Richhill Beagles, had 1½ couple of doghounds and 2



Tynan & Armagh Huntsman Keith McCall with judges Dr & Mrs Ken Livingstone at the Tynan & Armagh Puppy Show.

couple of bitches for their consideration – all well shown by huntsman Keith McCall. Decisions were swiftly made and announced as follows:

Doghounds 1. Guardsman Gunner 10 Bramble 09, 2. Goblin Sibling of Guardsman.

Bitches 1. Gravity Sibling of Guardsman, 2. Gravy Sibling of Guardsman.

Gravity was then declared Champion Puppy with Guardsman as Reserve Champion.

The Tynan and Armagh intend to build on this very successful debut puppy show and Keith McCall already has a good idea of the sort of pups he will be breeding.

At the North Down Hunt former master Mr W H C Montgomery (who was in the mastership here for twenty five years from 1963-1988) and Kenny Henry, who hunts the Meath Foxhounds' doghound pack, had 5½ couple of doghounds and 8½ couple of bitches on which to adjudicate.

The good weather remained with us enabling the usual large North Down crowd to watch as the judges made their necessarily incisive decisions to enable Raymond Mitchell MFH to announce the following placings.

Doghounds

1. Capital Curre & Llangibby Capital 05 Mendip Backlash 10, 2. Pendle South Shropshire Pedlar 05 Packet 08. 3. Cable Sibling of Capital.

Bitches 1. Perfect South Shropshire Pedlar 05 Valid 10, 2. Peaceful Sibling of Pendle, 3. Canvas Sibling of Capital.

The dog-hound Capital was then declared Champion puppy with Perfect as Reserve Champion.

New Kennel Block unveiled at East Antrim Hunt's Show

In the current financial (and political) climate any Hunt making a major investment is to be applauded and the East Antrim Hunt showed their confidence in the future of the sport when they unveiled their new kennel block on the occasion of their Puppy Show.

Everything is now under one roof and, having first visited these kennels as a child in 1952 I saw a huge difference in today's model which Huntsman Patrick Headdon has had a substantial hand in planning.

Mrs JS Brown (Sunnyland Beagles) who is President of the Irish Masters of Beagles Association and

Miss Charlotte Calvert (Killultagh Old Rock and Chichester Hunt) had five couples of doghounds and eight couples of bitches, from six litters, to appraise.

Interestingly all six litters were by one stallion hound, President 10, which certainly made for a very level new entry.

After due deliberation our judges passed the following placings to MC Mr George Logan for his announcement:



TF3 Judges at the East Antrim Hunt Puppy Show were Mrs JS Brown and Miss Charlotte Calvers

Dog-hounds

1. Wiseman President 10 Mayhem 09, 2. President 10 Ballad 08, 3. Rapier President 10 Lazy 08,

Bitches

1. Graceful President 10 Gorgeous 09. 2. Racket Sibling of Rapier 3. Gauntlet Sibling of Graceful.

Sole master Mr Robert McKnight then formally declared the new building "Open" enabling everyone to enjoy a conducted tour from which we all emerged highly impressed.

This was my last puppy show of the year and it is a sign that the new season will soon be upon us – bring it on!



Rupert Macauley MFH showing at the West Wicklow Foxhounds Puppy Show.

Irish Masters of Foxhounds Association Seminar attracts 100-strong audience

IMFHA chairman Rupert Macauley was delighted when a seminar after their AGM attracted a one hundred strong audience to the Horse and Jockey Hotel, in the eponymous Co Tipperary village.

Rupert opened the seminar by introducing Countryside Alliance chief executive Barney White-Spunner who gave an insightful address on the position of hunting in Great Britain, which had many of those present very appreciative of the situation in Ireland. Solicitor Barry O'Driscoll gave an equally informative talk on a variety of legal points before Chris Ryan, master and huntsman of the Scarteen (Black and Tans) Foxhounds, spoke about his requirements of an amateur whipper-in. Professional huntsmen Derry Donegan

(Tipperary Foxhounds) and Kevin Donohue (Ballymacad Foxhounds) then joined Chris Ryan in a question and answer session on the huntsman's position and requirements and, more importantly, why the huntsman has such re-quirements.

This was an excellent and instructive evening which was very well received by those in attendance and Rupert Macauley hopes to increase the attendance for the next seminar.

Stork news

Rupert Macauley MFH (West Wicklow Foxhounds), Chairman of the IMFHA and his wife Alice, now have a baby son, Barney, to keep them busy!

All three are doing well!

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Characters and camaraderie in a smoothly run shoot



Some of the shooting country in Birr Castle Demesne.

Birr Shooting Syndicate (also known as the Derrinsallow Syndicate) is a well known and much acclaimed club in the midlands and during October they showed me their smoothly run shooting operation, with its well-kept pheasant pens, carefully reared pheasants and attractive estate. This is pleasant ground to tramp around with gun and dog, or stand in a field while beaters drive the birds into the air away out of their comfort zones amidst the crops.

On a sunny day the landscape feels a little like paradise with rolling fields, abundant deciduous trees, the spires and rooftops of the elegant town of Birr in the distance, and beyond that the long purple line of the Slieve Bloom Mountains. On the sunny autumn day that



Three members of the Derrinsallow Syndicate (L/R) Seamus Pierce, Michael Smith and Chairman Seamus Glennon.

I walked the club's grounds it looked lovely.

I was in the company of three members of the club, Seamus Glennon, Seamus Pierce and Michael Smith. Seamus Glennon is the Chairman, Seamus Pierce is the Treasurer. The secretary is Brendan Mannion. The chairman had very kindly invited me out several years ago for a couple of days roughshooting with the club, and I remember the abundant game and the craic amongst the club-members. They were all good shots and took their pastime seriously but they were there to enjoy themselves and weren't going to get over-serious. I remember that both days were roughshoots as opposed to driven. I prefer the former because there's a bit of a walk through the country involved and I like to watch, to feel, the excitement and the energy of the dogs working through the undergrowth, acting like they are furiously determined to please their masters. I remember bagging my first snipe on a day



Flying away from their feeding grounds in a corn field.



Birds flying beside Tullanisk Wood.

out with the Syndicate. My first snipe after about 30 attempts!

The Syndicate was formed 18 years ago by John McDonnell, Seamus Glennon and Seamus Pierce. John McDonnell is very well known amidst the shooting fraternity of the midlands and he has been shooting all his life. The chairman told me that John is well known in the locality for keeping good gundogs. There are ten members of the Syndicate and they enjoy excellent sport throughout the season. Outside guns do join the Syndicate for a day's cracking sport from time to time.



Feeders in one of the pens.

The club sells two days' shooting annually to supplement the running costs. The Club also organises the very successful Clay Shooting competitions during the Irish Game & Country Fair in Birr Castle each year. These clay competitions are noted among shooters as being well-run events. The clayshoot at Birr Game Fair had the highest cash prizes of any clay shoot in Ireland this year.

Seamus Glennon showed me all the areas which are part of the Syndicate's activities. We walked through the lovely autumn hues of Tullanisk Woods near the Banagher Road just outside Birr and he showed me the release pens for the pheasants, which were well appointed and well kept places. The club clips the young pheasants' wings to stop them wandering away from the release pens and being lost. After a few weeks in the pens the pheasants have matured to the stage where they can fly over the fences.

Once they have left the release pens behind they often head towards the crop fields which include maize and



Beating in a crop field



The duckpond is a natural attractor.



Tullanisk House, once the 18th Century dower house for Birr Castle.

Seamus Glennon is in his 50s and has been shooting all his life. As Chairman of the syndicate he is kept busy every week looking after the tasks associated with ensuring the smooth running of the club's facilities. He doesn't look upon tasks such as the rearing of the pheasants and habitat management as a chore but says it is something which he enjoys. He told me that he started shooting at the age of 10 and his Dad, also Seamus, was a lover of the pastime.

Seamus runs a wholesale operation in Birr which has been in his family since his grandfather, Seán, began the operation in 1927. He recalled that when he was a boy an employee in the company was a member of the local gun club as well and reared pheasants in the Glennons' garden. Seamus grew up with pheasants and shooting a prominent part of his environment. It is no wonder therefore that he took up shooting as a hobby.

The Birr Shooting Syndicate meet every Sunday and start their day's sport at 10 o'clock. They may shoot five or six drives each Sunday and 150 to 200 birds may go into the bag during each day's shoot. Seamus brings his



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One of the Syndicate's dogs about to enter a covert.

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two springers or his lab for the shoots.

Between beaters and guns 40 people may be part of a day's shooting with the Derrinsallow Syndicate. The day is broken up by a visit to the Hotel where the shoot participants tuck into hot food, such as Irish Stew, enjoy tea or coffee and then set out for some more sport. The club also organises a Game Night in the County Arms Hotel, Birr at the end of each season in February. Derrinsallow started these annual Game Nights 15 years ago and they are popular evenings with a large crowd of people attending and enjoying a wide range of delicious game produce.

The Chairman added that the Syndicate is very grateful to Birr Castle Demesne which allows them to shoot over the Demesne's land. He also praised Sean McGuinness, the Head Forester of the Demesne, who, he said, is very helpful. I asked him what it is that he enjoys about his hobby. "I really enjoy watching the dogs working and the excitement of their work," he said. "I also greatly enjoy the fresh air, the countryside and the camaraderie."



They recently converted stables for their purposes and called the building 'The Hotel'.



Another beautiful part of the shoot.



Flying back as the light begins to fall.



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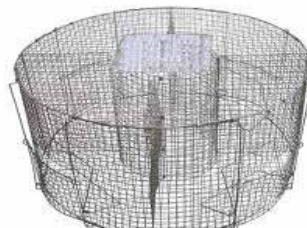
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Feathered Apes or a ‘Murder’?



Rooks are distinguishable from crows by their longer pointer beaks.

The Japanese students that gather at the pedestrian crossing across from the university in Sendai, north of Tokyo, have little interest in the behaviour of the bird above them. It is neither bright nor colourful enough to delight them, or rare enough to distract them from their chatter. It is, after all, only a carrion crow. In their hurry to get to lectures, they do not see what the bird is doing and so miss a remarkable display of avian intelligence. The crow is cracking open and eating walnuts — but its method takes some beating. First, the walnut is dropped onto the pedestrian crossing into the path of oncoming traffic. A car drives over the nut and cracks it open. But the crow waits. Only when the lights change, and the traffic stops, does the bird swoop down to safely take its prize. Yet this crow is not the first to behave in such a way. It has learnt its behaviour from others. In Sendai, crows all over town are feasting on walnuts in the same way.

Not that zoologists are surprised. They've known for some time now that crows are smart. Aristotle may have placed corvids way below apes on his Great Chain of Being. But today's scientists haven't. There's no

shortage of anecdotes about crow intelligence. For example, in Sweden, crows have mastered the art of fishing: they wait for fishermen to place a baited line through a hole in the ice and then when the fishermen move off, they reel up the line and eat the bait, or hooked fish, on the end. Or how about the students at the University of Washington who netted some crows for a research study only to find that on releasing them they were hounded by the birds for years. And then, of course, there's Betty, a captive New Caledonian crow at

Oxford University, who presented with a thin metal wire and food in a long narrow tube, fashioned the wire into a hook to retrieve the food. It's not without good reason that one Cambridge professor, Dr Nathan Emery, has called them feathered apes.

But this comes as no surprise to me. You see my first pet was a crow. I learnt early on that they are clever birds. My crow was called Storm. He fulfilled all the criteria of being the perfect pet. I could stroke him and coddle him. We played games. If I ran he would half hoppity-hop, half fly to keep up: he loved to be by my side. But because his place was outside



Young Emma

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– my mother would not allow him into the house – he took to tapping on the kitchen window to get my attention. If I wasn't in the kitchen he'd peer in through other windows and, if the opportunity presented itself, he'd come inside. My brothers' would threaten to shoot him with their air rifles: but in the end he ate the poison that we'd put down for the rats and died. I was devastated.

My fondness for crows is not shared by many. Most gamekeepers I know abhor them. After all their habit of predating game bird eggs and nestlings does not make them endearing. Farmers don't care for them much either. They accuse them of eating their crops, even eating their lambs. The first charge seems fair, the second less so. The only scientific study on lamb predation by hooded crows found that of 297 lamb deaths in Argyll 48% died of starvation, 22% were stillborn, and 9% died of disease. Crows had attacked 48% of the lambs, but examination revealed that only 17% were alive at the time, and these lambs were severely enfeebled by starvation before being attacked.

Antipathy comes from other factions too. In 2010, the Game and Wildlife Conservation Trust embarked on a study to investigate predation by crows on farmland birds and songbirds, with the support of the Songbird Survival Trust. The charity claim that the decline in populations of these birds may be due to the expansion of crow numbers. The on-going study involves the culling of crows during nesting periods from a number of sites. Criticism of the cull has come from various organisations, including the RSPB and the British Trust for Ornithology, who claim that the underlying cause of farmland birds and songbirds' population decline is more likely to be due to loss of habitat and a decline in invertebrates.

Crows are members of a widely distributed genus of birds, *Corvus*, in the family *Corvidae*: a cosmopolitan family that contains crows, choughs, nutcrackers, ravens, jackdaws, jays, magpies, and rooks, with whom crows are often confused. Some avoid confusion by recalling the adage, 'If there's more than one crow they are rooks, if there is only one rook it's a crow.' But to my eye the crow is the far more beautiful bird. The rook, with his baggy trousers and longer pointer beak, has nothing on the crow in the sartorial stakes.

Unlike rooks, crows are solitary nesters. Both sexes build the bulky stick nest in Spring, high

in the treetops away from predators. For 18-20 days the female will incubate four-six eggs during which time she is fed by the male. They are dedicated partners, and will mate for life. Juvenile crows often remain with their parents until they acquire a mate of their own, and help raise subsequent nestlings.

Outside of the nesting period, crows are sociable birds and will join together in communal roosts to exchange information about food sources, for protection and, in the case of juvenile or single birds, find mates. It is a well-organised, collaborative community. So it is somewhat dichotomous that the collective noun for a group of crows should be a 'murder.' The origins of the term are unclear. Old folk tales of crow parliaments where crows judge and kill a single bird are largely unsubstantiated.

In myth, the crow has always been outshone by its bigger, sleeker corvid cousin, the raven. During the Great Flood, Noah would have done better to send a crow to seek dry land than a raven. The raven didn't come back – so Noah gave up the corvid family and sent out a more obedient dove. Similarly, Charles II's astronomer, John Flamsteed, did not consider crows a significant enough species to protect Charles's kingdom from rack and ruin. It was ravens who got the plum job in the Tower.

But there have been moments of glory. In Van Gough's last painting, it is a flurry of crows that scatter the canvas, bearing away from the wheat field, into the inky black sky. In Dickens, *Oliver Twist* 'cuts over the fields...straight as the crow flies.' Playwright Robert Greene could think of no better insult than to describe young Shakespeare as 'an upstart crow' alluding to the birds' power of mimicry. Nick Nolte has one as a pet. Aesop wrote a fable about them. Germaine Greer is a fan.

There's no shortage of them. Crows inhabit the entire planet except for the Polar Regions and the southern tip of South America. That was always a blessing for me after Storm died. I'd see him everywhere. Others, I suspect, aren't so happy about that.



A predilection for songbird and game bird eggs does not endear crows to many.

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Seasonal Photographs – Autumn

With this issue we launch what will be a regular reader's photographic competition based on photographs reflecting the season passing. So we start it at Autumn – next issue will be Winter. Each photograph printed will qualify the photographer for a free annual subscription to the magazine. We would like readers to vote on them with the winning photographer receiving a special prize and all readers voting going into a draw for a couple of tickets to the Irish Game and Country Fair at Shanes Castle, Antrim on the 28th & 29th June 2014.

Photographs and votes should be sent to irishgamefair@btinternet.com.



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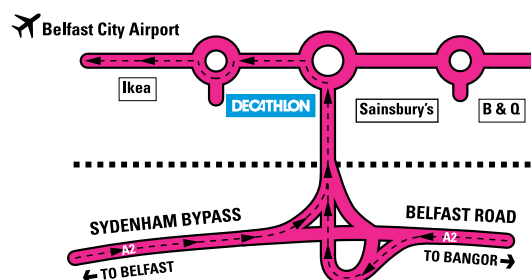


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CHATSWORTH INTERNATIONAL RETRIEVER TEAM EVENT 2013

The Chatsworth International Retriever Event was held at Chatsworth Estate Derbyshire by kind permission of the Duke and Duchess of Devonshire. The Estate has been owned by the Cavendish Family for over 16 generations. It was held on the 30th & 31st May 2013 with a Gala Dinner for all teams on the Thursday Evening.

The event was run by the English Kennel Club and Ann Heading, the Chairperson of the Gundog Working Group, was in charge. Ground in different areas of Chatsworth Estate was used both days and while the retrieves were challenging, they were not too difficult and one would expect to face them on a daily basis when either trialling, or just rough shooting.

The International teams consisted of United Kingdom, Ireland, Netherlands, Denmark, Switzerland, German, Italy and Norway.

Day 1 of the two day selection tests was in Dromantine College grounds & judged by Damien Newman, a two time Irish Retriever Championship winner and Jimmy Black, the handler and trainer of many Champions. All the dogs that were selected to return for the second day scored 80 or higher on the first day. Day 2 was held on the moor just outside Newry and what a day it was. All the retrieves on both days were testing, but very fair to both dogs and handlers. After a final discussion the Irish Team for Chatsworth 2013 was selected as follows: captained by Declan Boyle it included Declan Boyle, Nigel Carville, Sean Diamond, Sean Nolan, and Stephen McFadden.

The test at Chatsworth was divided into two days with the first day on the moor. The first four teams did a mock walkup outlining four retrieves for all handlers, three marked and one blind. The remaining four teams did a mock drive. Each of these handlers and dogs had four retrieves each too, only all of them were blinds. The role reversed after lunch.



The Irish Team at Chatsworth.

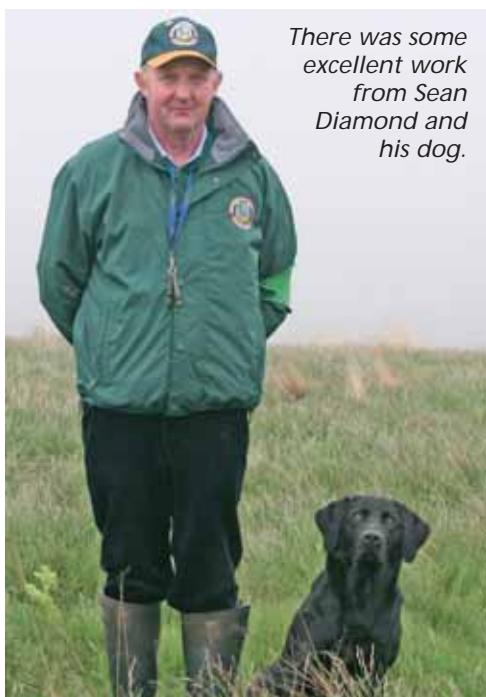
One can only say the display by Sean Diamond and his dog did the Irish team proud. They showed great team work and were leading into the next day.

The second day was more like a working test, with Ireland not doing so well early on, but being great competitors they pulled their way back very well. Unfortunately, Ireland came second to Great Britain, captained by Richard Johnston, by 7 points but what an achievement!

The team was very well looked after through sponsorship from the following people: Albert Tittertington, (Irish Countrysports & Country Life Magazine), RED MILLS (Engage), Newry Veterinary Centre, Countryside Alliance Ireland, Lagan Valley Vets, Sean Kearney and Phil McGarrity Cars. Please support

these sponsors as they made the participation of the Irish Gundog Team at Chatsworth International Retriever Event possible. Well done and thank you to all concerned.

The Chatsworth Team selection over two days had been very well organised and credit must go to Declan Boyle for his organisation, his judges and back room team. The competition was very well run by the organising committee headed by Ann Heading and her team of helpers, judges, caterers, dummy throwers and many more behind the scenes. I am already looking forward to next year's event.



There was some excellent work from Sean Diamond and his dog.



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Country Chat



Griffon pointers, on a moor in Perthshire.

*Billy muses on minor breeds, praises Shoot Captains and decides
Mr Fox is Public Enemy No 1.*

Back in July, which now seems a lifetime away, I was in the Whitebridge Hotel, Aberdeenshire, sharing a few pints with a Scottish gamekeeper and his son, who is also a keeper, both of them employed in the nearby estate. The young keeper, who is the same age as my own son, 24, was thinking of getting himself a dog. "Billy I was thinking of getting myself a Griffon pointer and wondered if you knew anything about them?" "Very little Scott, but I do know that you and your father's main line of work, is pheasant and partridge, mostly driven over standing guns and if you are beating with the rest of the team, they will be constantly stopping to allow for you and your dog, which to be fair to the poor dog, would be used entirely in the wrong set up," said I. "It would be spending the best part of its time stuck in a kennel," reminded his father.

I was over there counting grouse on two different estates and the four pointers, two German, one English and the Hungarian Vizsla, were tireless in their task. They not only worked as a team when required, but also independently to each other, covering a wide area of the moor. I was really pleased with them, they never faltered, despite the heat, and the only help I would have yearned for, would have been a fellow handler with pointers or setters for company.

I once took part in a minor breeds retrieving test, more out of curiosity than a competitive challenge. I have no idea in what breed or breeds the judges excelled, maybe they were well clued-up with all the breeds present, but then again, straight forward retrieves should not be too daunting a task for a well-trained gundog anyhow. But my bone of contention has got nothing to do with the judges or the retrieves, which to be fair were simple and well thought out. No, my gripe is the terminology, 'minor breeds.' Minor to who or what?

Collins dictionary refers to the word minor as 'lesser or secondary in size, or importance of others of the same kind.' A hunting gundog, irrespective of breed, that flushes game simultaneously as it hunts or quarters, would obviously be expected to hunt within range of the gun. As pointers or setters stop and indicate game, they are expected to cover a wider area, taking in more ground. I had eight huge beats to do on the six days

hunting grouse, the four pointers found over 800 grouse between them and, even with working the pointers, I am sure I lost half a stone in body weight.

It has been said, that the perfect gundog breed all rounder has yet to be produced, despite the beliefs of numerous kennel-blind owners of all breeds. But my point is this: a bus load of the more common breeds, would be no use whatsoever to me on a grouse moor - unless of course they were accompanied by their handlers - especially where game is scarce or spread over a huge area. Grouse shooting, be it walked-up or driven is often portrayed by the field sports press and in field sports literature as the very pinnacle of game shooting. When I was shooting over pointers (HPRs) on a grouse moor back in September, the only one to get any shooting, was me. By the end of the first day, I had to ask the handlers of the (MCBs) to allow me a little space for a 'comfort break!'

Shoot Captains

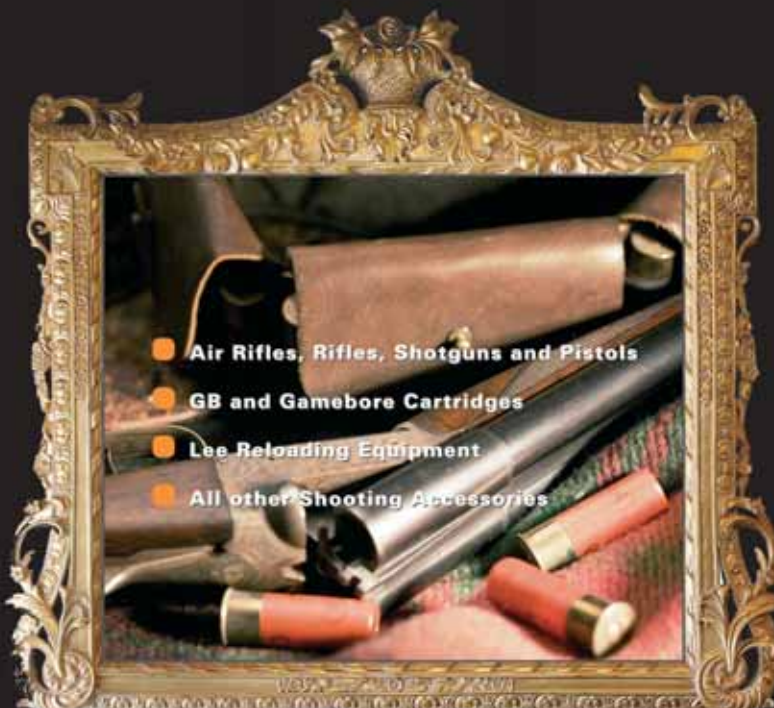
And staying with horses for courses, our little shooting club in Seaforde has been running for some thirty odd years. About ten years or so into its existence, I sneaked in, first as a self-appointed beater and then as a fully paid up member. Somewhere along the way I took the hump over something trivial and rather foolishly left the little club. Then a few years back, with cap in hand, I was lucky enough to be allowed back to the fold. Now, there is nothing prestigious or grand with this little club, in fact as rough shoots go, our shoot captain himself would define ours as 'rougher than rough,' sometimes we have to swap game bags, or give up the contents of one's gamebag to its rightful owner, as our choice of breeds are't to choosy over who's game they retrieve.

But this little club and of course some of its members have been going strong for a very long time and for a multitude of reasons, but for none more so, than for one very special ingredient, the shoot captain. If I have learnt anything at all in the field of my chosen sport, it is the importance of a good shoot captain, and it is no exaggeration to state, be it through accident or design, the long and successful existence of this little club, is solely down to having a good shoot-captain in control. I once asked him and without reservation, when his time is up, who the blazes will we get to replace him?

A few years back I lost one of my white Sussex hens to



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a fox, she had built up a clutch of eggs in a thick and low lying shrub and when the time was right, proceeded to incubate. I had never seen her slipping away each day to deposit her eggs and it was only during roll call one morning that I actually noticed that she was missing. When I went looking for her, all I found was a trail of feathers from her little nest to the killing ground, to say I was annoyed would be an understatement, I detest being caught out by a fox, like I was a bumbling beginner. So, roll call is now morning and evening, any fowl missing by lights out I let the pocket rockets loose - the cockers all three of them - and go and search for absentees. Obviously locking them up every evening is routine, but for several years now I have also left the magpies alone, they find the eggs that I don't, which prevents the free-range ducks and the hens from building up a clutch. Temporary truce it may be, but for the time being anyhow the magpie is an ally, while the fox remains number one villain.

And speaking of villains, every now and then I play host to Larwence Brannigan Jnr., chaperoning him about the local ground. It doesn't matter a jot, if we see little or indeed bag little, I always offer a good slug of sloe gin around to keep his spirits up at the end of the day. One year, both of us found ourselves stranded at the wrong end of a large pond, whilst my cousin was at the other side trying to retrieve his dog. "Why don't we borrow this boat?" asked LB. "Won't the owners be looking for it?" says I. "Och now don't be daft" says he, "sure all they have to do is row it back to this side again!" "Aye, I suppose so....." I replied.

A few mallard and a good sprinkling of teal

At the tail-end of last season I took him duck shooting on an evening flight to one of our little marsh ponds, although there wasn't a lot came in, although a few mallard and a good sprinkling of teal presented themselves. On several occasions LB was getting himself all flustered, swinging the gun in every direction without much success, while I stood behind him tee-heeing. We went out as we came in, with an empty game

bag. Several nights later, shooting over the same pond, the shoot captain and a member shot two mallard and a teal. When I told LB what they shot, he remarked that they mustn't have seen much either. "Yes thats correct" I said, "they saw a lot less but shot a lot more than you did!"

For two years now, friends and I have descended on Seamus Timlin's Woodhill clay pigeon shoot, situated at the back of the Hunting Lodge Inn, just outside Irvinestown. Its a challenging wee shoot, with the traps and stands set within the forest. Admittedly, clay pigeon shooting has never been my forte; you present yourself at the venue at the date and time indicated, moan to anyone within earshot, that you're not that great at clays, and just get on with it. But this is no run-of-the-mill clay pigeon shoot, the emphasis here, at least on our day, is on fun and lots of it, very quickly you forget all about the skeet waistcoats, coloured shades and ventilated trap guns.

An old 'Coggie' and the 'Dirty Dozen'

This year, twelve of us met up for breakfast in a small cafe at Fivemiletown, I had contacted the local police to that area a few days earlier, for that weekend just happened to coincide with the G8 Summit just up the road. We had a whale of a time and fair play to all the lads on the day, for they shot extremely well, some brandishing old, favourite relics, one lad in particular fielding an 1892 Cogswell & Harrison s/s. Prior to this shoot and before buying the gun, he had only put a box of shells through it, but even more incredible, despite the lack of handling and familiarisation with this old pedigree master piece, he actually came second in the results. Seamus could not have done enough for us and it is a really big thank you, not only to him and to young Gary, but to all the lads who turned up.

When reading out the results at the end of play, Seamus, as is his nature of course, was kind enough to avoid blushes and diplomatically announced the top three places only. But alas, there is no escaping to the nearest pub from this bunch. One of them asked Seamus for the results and then proceeded to read each one out

loudly, that is, from first place, 'down to twelfth,' and believe you me folks when I tell you, I now know how a poor beast must feel, when it's standing outside the door of an abattoir!

Finally, may I take this opportunity to wish you all a happy new sporting season.

Seamus Timlin with the 'Dirty Dozen'.



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Horse Racing in Port Louis

When most people think of Mauritius it's as a 5* tourist destination or the ultimate honeymoon retreat. However, there is much more to this tropical island destination situated in the southern hemisphere near the Tropic of Capricorn off the south east coast of Africa.

The Mauritius Turf Club was established in 1812, making it in fact one of the oldest turf clubs in the world.

With strong links to its South African counterpart and much movement between the two. It was the home of the long since extinct DoDo; Portuguese explorers were the first people to land on it's sandy beaches and savour the taste of the bird and, in fewer than eighty years after the islands discovery, in 1507 the DoDo was extinct!

The Dutch came next and settled for about 100 years then left. In the 1700's the French renamed the island Isle de France and indeed their legacy still remains with most people speaking French and many landmarks still retaining their Gallic names. When the British took control during the Napoleonic Wars English became a second language, after this in-dependancy loomed and the inhabitants eventually broke their Commonwealth ties in 1992.

Mauritius is the result of a gigantic underwater volcanic eruption which is no longer active. It is surrounded by miles of sandy beaches and the lagoons are protected from the open sea by the worlds largest coral reef.



Final instructions are given.



A carnival atmosphere everywhere.

When it was discovered it was home to some of the world's rarest plants and animals and was covered with native dense forest. With the arrival of mankind, engaged in the spice trade, the island was pillaged and domesticated animals were introduced these elements led to the downfall of native species.

Now, for us travellers, Mauritius is home to the World's Top Luxury Destinations. Le Touessrok, this distinguished resort is the height of cool, modern with elegance and is imbued with the warmth of tropical

Mauritius making it truly one of 'The Leading Hotels of the World.' Lying on a beautiful stretch of sandy beach looking out over tranquil Trou d'Eau Douce Bay it is a perfect holiday

and base to visit the island's many outstanding sights or spend a day at the races.

As with all 5* residences it offers a fabulous range of facilities, water sports, an 18 hole golf course designed by Bernhard Langer on Ile aux Cerfs, The Givenchy Spa and seven restaurants where a gourmet feast awaits you and only in Mauritius can you enjoy Black velvet for Breakfast, the array of food is jaw dropping. Probably Le Touessrok's *Pièce de résistance* is Manganie, a private island all for you with 4k of sandy beaches like talcum powder accessed by your own private boat. Le Touessrok is on the east side of the island, the staff are divine, charming and so helpful, no task is too great, and all accommodation is serviced by 24hr Butler Service to tend to your every need. A perfect bolthole for The International Jockey's Festival of Racing.

The world's top jockey's congregated at Camp de Mars to contest the title. Teams from France headed by Stephane Pasquier and backed by Olivier Peslier; The Southern Hemisphere Team was lead by Johnny Geroudis, with Hugh Bowman and Noel Callow who went on to win the title; The Mauritius Bicentenary Team with Rye Joorawon riding in the captain's colours and The Rest of the World Team with Christophe Soumillon as captain, William Buick, and their third was Mickael Barzalona, the 21 year old who shot to prominence winning the English Derby on Pour Moi in June 2011, making him the youngest rider to win a British Classic since Walter Swinburn 30 years earlier. Each team had three riders and competed over two days.

At the end of the first leg Australia, Southern Hemisphere, was heading towards a quiet day at the office, when Callow aboard 'Please to Progress' won. On



The final stretch.

day two, racing was boosted by high drama, thrilling finishes and an unfortunate twist of fate Australian jockey Hugh Bowman, after having won three races and placed in others, was taken to hospital after a bad fall and fellow Australian jockey Noel Callow emerged the acclaimed winner. During the two days, lady riders from all over the world competed for the World Ladies Championship; the 'Fegentri' they are adored and, indeed as we left the track, their transport was being mobbed by adoring fans, the girls were lapping it all up.

This is a very glamorous event. Sun Resorts are the main sponsors and attract an international audience in the finest of couture, hats are an essential accessory for day two and the atmosphere is electric. The course is located in the middle of Port Louis and everyone turns out to enjoy the spectacle.

When you travel Air Mauritius, who incidentally are



This was close run thing.

joint sponsors of the racing, 1st Class and Business passengers have the use of Sky Team Lounge and, on

arrival to this designer retreat, a live wall greets you. It is planted with an array of exotic plants from table height to ceiling as if by design to prepare you for the flora of Mauritius. You can settle before your 12hr flight enjoy complimentary food and beverages along with fine international cuisine. The Oxygen bar offers a generous selection of red and white wine and a wellness centre can soothe away your aches and pains. By invite the VIP area is exceedingly well stocked with exclusive vintages and champagne. This is one very sophisticated way to pass your transit time at Heathrow.



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I make approximately 200 walking sticks each year during the winter from October until the end of May. I then sell these sticks at Game Fairs and Agricultural shows throughout Ireland. I started this in 2004 and became aware of the problem of sourcing stick making materials locally. While attending a horn bending course in the North of Scotland with Martin Hyslop of the Highland Horn Company he asked me if I would be interested in selling his Stickmaking materials in Northern Ireland.

I stock a large quantity of Stickmaking materials and currently have a sizeable stock of rams, black buffalo and cow horn, also antler crown and thumb pieces. Stick ferrules, collars and spacers in a range of sizes and materials. Preformed handles for walking sticks, crooks and marker sticks in both wood and horn. Seasoned straightened shanks in Hazel, Chesnutt, Crab-apple and Ash.

Customers can contact me to arrange to visit my workshop in Killyleagh, County Down to purchase my handmade sticks or stick making materials.

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The Red Mills Interview

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with Nigel Carville

Top Irish gun dog trainer and field trialler Nigel Carville said that, when he first started reading our magazine many years ago, the first pages he turned to featured the 'gundog interview' - some straight talking with the creme of the gun dog world. And we thought that this was certainly something that today's readers might like to see back again, with Nigel doing the interviews.

FTCh Ballyellen Cody and FTCh Gortinreagh Clancy with Ger Devine and Colin Organ - both dogs achieved their titles in 2012.

The initial interview has been a massive hit with a loud call for 'More please!' Not only that, readers have been delighted that we will target top UK and Irish dog owners - not just gundog owners - but owners of other sporting dogs including terriers and lurchers.

In this issue Nigel interviews Ger Devine from the famous Gortinreagh Setter Kennels.



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Ger with Cody's son Gortinreagh Excel who won a Puppy, a Novice and an Open Stake in 2013 before reaching two years of age.

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

A: My first dogs were terriers and lurchers which I got interested in as my brothers had them and I was brought up with them.

Q: When did you purchase your first setter for trialling and what was their breeding and name?

A: My first English Setter to be entered in a Field Trial went by the name of Louie. He was bred from the King of the Dandies line by a local Garda sergeant Jackie Conaty. However the first dog I acquired purely for trialling, having seen Johnny Geoghegan's dogs run, was Ardvalley Flight, a son of Storeskars G'Snorre, who became my first champion.

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

A: Gortinreagh is my prefix. It is the name of the townland where I live.

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

A: The Ulster Irish Red Setter Club and Donegal Field Trials Association had been running trials for years on the farmland around Raphoe under the control of Raphoe Gun Club. I had helped out at the Trials, carrying the gun and so on for several years when I decided to enter Louie in the up-coming event in 1990. He had a good find on a pheasant and put in some nice

running to be awarded the Open Stake at my first attempt.

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

A: Louie recorded my first win at my home Trial.

Q: How many Trials have you won?

A: I haven't kept a record of wins. I generally only run trained dogs on for a season or two after they achieve their title at most, as I get more fun out of bringing on young dogs, so I'm sure if I had kept dogs like Int. FTCh Gardenfield Warrior running for longer I would have recorded significantly more wins than I have.

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

A: To date I have made up 13 Field Trial Champions (10 English Setters and three Irish Red Setters) some were lucky enough to become both Irish and GB Field Trial Champions:

FTCh Ardvalley Flight
IntFTCh Gardenfield Warrior
IntFTCh Lefanta Kira
FTCh Lefanta Tinka
FTCh Stanedge Brave
FTCh Stanedge Bracken
FTCh Ballyellen Cody
FTCh Ballyellen Cara
FTCh Gortinreagh Eppie
FTCh Gortinreagh Dixie
IntFTCh Heather Breeze
FTCh Princess Nisha
FTCh Gortinreagh Clancy



FTCh Gortinreagh Dixie and his brother Gortinreagh Dale.



Int FTCh Gardenfield Warrior in Scotland.

Q: Which of your dogs to date would you rate as your best dogs and why?

A: All the dogs had their particular strengths and were suited to different conditions and challenges. My overall favourite has to be IntFTCh Lefanta Kira. Kira was a very small ESB who greatly resembled her maternal grandmother FTCh Lefanta Cindy who was Johnny Geoghegan's Irish Championship winner in 1989. They were both small bitches who didn't know they were small. Their hearts were huge. I really enjoyed running Kira as she had everything I want in a dog. She had immense speed and her desire to hunt was unbelievable. She would take on a very wide beat and it didn't matter how tough the ground or how

heavy the heather, she just seemed to glide over it. I never saw her give up. She was really exciting to watch and when she held it together she was unbeatable. However, she also had a mischievous streak which led her to throw away trials too. She was named most stylish dog on the first day of the Irish Championship on three occasions and

on all 3 times she just took on too much ground on day two to survive. She also was keeper's choice at Bollihope in the British Champion Stake. She was a super rough shooting dog outside of trials and was a class retriever to boot, the complete package. However, the dog I would rate as my most reliable to date, with class and power to burn as well, would be one of my current team: FTCh Ballyellen Cody, who is also a pleasure to run, but not quite so stressful as Kira! Cody was named the top dog in the UK in the Pointer and Setter section of the Tower Bird awards for 2012.

Q: Through your career you must have met, seen

and been influenced by many handlers. Can I ask you which of these handlers most influenced and impressed you?

A: The handler for me who is head and shoulders above everyone else in the field of Pointers and Setters is my good friend Johnny Geoghegan from Co Waterford. Johnny's success with his Lefanta dogs is unlikely to be equalled. In a career spanning just 20 years from his debut in 1983, Johnny's impact on the working English Setter breed and his success as an individual is impressive. He made up 27 champions in those years and with his careful imports of Norwegian blood changed the face of English Setters for ever. What sets him apart from other breeders and handlers, is the fact that he never stood still. His dogs' careers were short, perhaps only one or two years at most. He came out every year with several new pups and it was only a very short time before they gained their titles and were then retired from competition shortly after. Several of his dogs gained their titles at 20 months of age. He got great satisfaction from seeing the young dogs progress and have success. It is this approach to trialling that I admire and try to emulate. Once a dog has achieved its title, the challenge for me is gone and the satisfaction in winning is not what it was, as the dog is only doing what it has been trained to do. My thoughts at that point turn to the next young hopeful in the kennel.

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

A: All the Lefanta dogs of Johnny Geoghegan were eye-catching. Johnny wouldn't appear at trials with a dog he didn't feel was a real contender, he wanted the full package, style, speed, hunting ability and wouldn't settle for anything less. I didn't have the privilege of seeing some of his early Champions like the great Norwegian dog Storeskars G'Snorre or Lefanta Cindy, but I was a real fan of his Knocksmall Moose and the great Lefanta



Rommell. My own Gardenfield Warrior was a son of Rommell and shared many of his father's traits, being a hard-headed, never-say-die sort of dog who presented the ultimate challenge, but also gave huge satisfaction when they put it all together. Maurice O'Mahony's Pointer Dog Darinish Wishbone and Paddy Collin's Pointer Dog Boston Jingo are two pointers I have greatly admired. They came out early and caught my eye. They had style in bucket loads and were consistent in their success. Both these men are handlers I admire, who really "know" a dog and understand the finer points of



The three Ballyellen dogs bred by Red Mills' Bill Connolly - Ballyellen Colleen, FTCh Ballyellen Cody and FTCh Ballyellen Cara.

producing a good dog. Their dogs were finished to a high standard that is unfortunately not as common as it should be. In Red Setters, the two animals who really impressed me were Carol Calvert's brother and sister pairing - FTCh Glynark Playfair and IntFTCh Glynark Mary Kate. Both these dogs were intensely competitive and very powerful. Their game sense was fantastic and they could find and produce birds from distance and at great speed. I bred my FTCh red setter Princess Nisha to Playfair and the mating produced my next red FTCh Gortinreagh Clancy. Clancy has now been bred to Mary Kate's powerful son Glynark Glorious Twelfth and I'm looking forward to working with the pups.

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

A: I look for a dog with natural hunting ability and style. Not everyone appreciates style like I think they should. There are dogs with the heart to run, but with a gallop that is not pleasing to the eye. To my mind these dogs cannot compete with a dog with good movement and natural attractiveness. A good gallop makes it easy for a dog to negotiate tough terrain and make it look easy. To me it is essential. I also want a dog to be 100% committed to the hunt. He should leave the handler with a power and determination and should be alert and hunting hard from the moment he is released. Good ground treatment is also a must have. Whilst this is

partially a training issue, a dog with the brains to hunt for its handler will adopt an attractive quartering pattern, only breaking its cast to check scent. A dog that is erratic and loose in its pattern, or bites off too much ground on its turns, no matter how fast it is, will not figure highly for me when I'm judging.

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

A: The hard work being put in by many of our hosts has ensured that game for our trials is much more abundant at most venues and so trials have become a much more thorough test for dogs, allowing many more dogs to have opportunities to display their pointing abilities and hopefully rewarding the best running dogs with game pointing opportunities, making trials much less of a lottery than they once were.

On the negative side, common sense can sometimes be lacking. I see rules as guidelines, they are there for a reason. For example, being steady to shot is necessary to ensure the dog's safety if it were being worked on a shooting day or dropping to a flush on the out-cast where the dog couldn't wind the birds as it was never behind them, that is there so that the guns can go to the steady dog in the hope that some of the covey still remain for a shot. However the application of the rules has become too black and white in some cases, insisting a dog physically drops to an outcast flush and not being happy with a dog remaining motionless in a crouched position is losing sight of the reason for the rule in the first instance.

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

A: Making sure the dogs have been prepared properly with the correct nutrition is the foundation of success. When we begin the summer circuit of trials, the dogs are required to put in several months of hard work; even travelling around the circuit takes its toll on dogs and they tend to lose condition, so I feel it is essential to have the dogs in really good condition before they begin trialling each season and then to make sure they have the best of feeding to maintain a high level of fitness (but not fatness) to see them through the season.

Q: What food do you use and why?

A: For years now I have fed Red Mills Racer to all my dogs. Dogs needing an extra boost will be fed on Red Mills Excel and I have also used Red Mills Engage. These foods contain all the necessary ingredients to keep the dogs in tip-top condition throughout the long season. They remain fit and sharp, their coats stay in good condition and they maintain their stamina with ease; they are easy to get fit as they have the correct fuel to allow them to run to fitness.

Q: As well as a handler you have established a

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

A: In Red Setters we have been forced into using CLAD and PRA tests although I have never known cases of either in our working dogs. The working English setter is lucky in not having any prescribed health tests, but again I am unaware of any health problems in our working English Setters. Those who are serious about the breed only select the best of their working dogs to breed for the next generation and the best performers tend to be free from ailments; had they issues such as hip problems, they would not be top performers so knowing and understanding the breed for many generations is probably the main reason we have no major health concerns.

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

A: My main concern when deciding on what animals to breed is knowing the capabilities of the proposed parents. A pedigree is fine, but only a small part of the story when planning matings. We are all aware of times when International FTCh bred to International FTCh has just produced rubbish. We are also often bombarded with ads for pups from so and so's line, listing all the many FTChs in the pedigree. This may work, but runs a greater risk of not working as the breeder is breeding purely on pedigree - names on a page - and trying to sell pups on other people's reputations. What made breeders like Johnny Geoghegan and John Nash great is their ability to choose breeding partners with characteristics that complemented each other from their knowledge not only of the parents, but also of the dogs behind the proposed parents.

If you want a Ballyellen dog, go directly to Bill Connolly; if you want a Boston dog go to Paddy Collins; if you want a Gortinreagh, come to me, but don't be tempted to find one of these genuine articles, bred with years of experience and understanding of many generations of dogs in each line, in kennels whose breeding stock are animals several generations away from the real thing and are the results of matings haphazardly thrown together to look good on paper.

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

A: There have been lots of highlights and special moments with different dogs. It was a memorable moment when Bill Connolly introduced me to his three untouched yearling pups Cody, Cara and Colleen. I could see immediately that they were something special

and I was thrilled to be allowed to work with them.

This year I have had the extreme satisfaction of seeing Cody's daughter Eppie develop into a really super dog. When I said I'd have her ready for the Puppy Stakes in 2012, my assertion was met with disbelief. However she made her debut in the English Setter Club Puppy Stake at Eggleston Moorn in July last year at the age of 8 months. She really enjoyed herself and had a super find which saw her being placed third behind a pup that was a full year her senior and the dog that won the GB Champion Stake in 2013! She progressed nicely at home and claimed her first Open Stake at 11 months of age at Glennoo in Co Tyrone. She came out in the Spring and won her second Open at Dalmagarry Estate in Scotland to gain her title at 16 months old. As I've said, my main satisfaction in trialling, is developing the youngsters and Eppie's success was the perfect example of what I aim for. She went to her second puppy Derby in GB aged 20 months and in searing temperatures had a couple of excellent runs and a good find to clinch the Derby, that she had a good crack at winning 12 months earlier. She was the first Field Trial Champion to achieve this feat.

My biggest disappointment also happened this year. I am a firm believer in the fact that you must like and have faith in your own dog and if a judge doesn't happen to agree with you on a particular day, the dog is no better or worse for that. However, to be told by a senior judge that my dog was top dog on the day but was being excluded on 'a technicality,' which I have never seen enforced in this way before, really shook my faith in the whole trialling system. I felt it was a very negative approach to judging.

Q: You have been mainly associated with training setters, what qualities do you look for in your own dogs?

A: I have already mentioned that style, drive and good groundwork, hunting ability, game sense and a strong setting instinct are essential ingredients for a dog to have if I am going to work with him.

Q: Do you prefer handling dogs or bitches?

A: I have absolutely no preference; reading a dog's particular attitude and personality is key to training it effectively and there is no difference for me as to whether I work with dogs or bitches.

Q. Have you trained any other breeds?

A: I have enjoyed a good level of success with my Irish Red Setters and I also have trained and used Springers for rough shooting. I trained a German Shorthaired Pointer bitch to Field Trial standard and was looking forward to competing with her when a bad injury terminated her field trialling career before it had begun!

Q. Why do you think the English Setter is the breed most suited

- a. to your training methods
- b. for overall trial success

A: I enjoy English Setters because they mature quickly and have a good temperament. Being early developers they all tend to be good game-finders and many from the lines I work with are eye-catching and stylish

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

A: I would probably move to Springers, if I was moving outside of the Pointing and Setting breeds. They are more suited to the rough shooting we tend to do in Irish conditions.

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

A: I do a lot of basic training in local meadows, which have snipe and the occasional pheasant in them at different points of the year. It lets me look at young dogs and assess what natural quality is there and decide if it's worth working with at quite a young age. I also really enjoy my trips to Co Durham, that's real grouse country and an excellent resource for finishing the training of the young dogs.

Q: Do you take the dogs grouse counting? If so, where?

A: I prefer not to undertake extensive grouse counting with my trial dogs.

Q: What is your favourite Trial grounds and why?

A: We are very lucky in the Pointer and Setter world to get to visit some very special places in the moorlands of the British Isles and Ireland. I love to visit the Scottish Moors in the Highlands, where there is a nice steady supply of game, but not generally too dense so the dog still has to work hard to find it and display his stamina in doing so. The Lochan Estate in Perthshire, under the management of my friend Colin McGregor, is somewhere I always look forward to visiting. His dedication is typical of the highland gamekeeper, bordering on the obsessive. Tillypronie in Aberdeenshire is another lovely moor, where the heather management makes it a pleasure to walk and the supply of game is excellent. Meeting with keepers such as Derek Goodwin, whose knowledge of his ground and interest in the setters is keen, is also a pleasure.

In Ireland we are spoiled with venues such as the Dublin Mts, Kinnitty and Monaghan where dogs can really open up and show their running abilities and stamina. In the North, the traditional grounds of Murley Mountain, Co Tyrone and Slieveanorra, Co Antrim are places where a dog's tenacity is tested. The keepers, Philip and Fred, welcome us

back year after year. Coming onto our calendar in more recent years is the excellent Moor at Glenwherry, where our new keeper Conor is already showing his commitment to continuing to develop the moor. The partridge set up at Glennoo, Co Tyrone, under the management of Tom Woods, is providing a whole new set of challenges for Pointers and Setters and we are thriving on that.

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

A: It's hard to beat the wild grouse as the premier quarry for pointer and setter trialling.

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

A: I enjoy clay pigeon shooting and like to follow boxing outside of setters. However I don't have much free time for anything other than the setters. Outside work, most of my spare time is devoted to working with the dogs, keeping the trial dogs in peak condition during the trial season and then using the off-season to work with the youngsters. Success only comes from putting in the effort.

Q: How have you got on this season?

A: I have had a good 2013. Since we began in the Spring I've been in the awards with 8 dogs. Seven dogs have won between them 11 Opens, one Novice, three Puppy Stakes and the Derby Stake and three dogs have gained their FTCh title.

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

A: I would advise anyone interested in getting involved with trials to attend as many trials as possible. Ask questions and listen. There'll be many thoughts and opinions offered, so it's necessary to be selective. They should try to develop an 'eye' for a dog, seek to develop an understanding of style, recognise serious hunting ability, develop an opinion of what appeals to them, rather than just getting caught up with the dogs or the breed that are most successful at any given time and then seek out a pup from proven lines and parents accordingly.



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The Irish Kennel Club's Championship for Pointers & Setters

on Kinnitty Moors Saturday, 31st August

and Sunday 1st September, 2013

sponsored by Red Mills

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The 55th Renewal of the IKC Pointer & Setter Championship at Kinnitty had some firsts. It was Edward Flannelly's first Championship as Hon. Secretary and you'd never think it with everything run with smart efficiency. It was also the first time that French dogs - 13 in all- competed making it even more of an International Stake. It was also RED MILLS 21st year of continuous sponsorship of the event and the usual bag of gifts was presented to each competitor.

There was a full card with four reserves. The breakdown was 28 Irish Red Setters, 2 Irish Red & White Setters, 6 Pointers, 15 English Setters, 3 Gordon Setters. With three owner/handlers crying off there remained a total of 48 dogs to compete for our most prestigious prize. With the Draw at 8.30, everyone got away smartly and the first brace were down at 9.30.am.

This year's Judges were Billy Grace from Nenagh, Vincent Flannelly of Moate and Hugh Brady from Athenry, all seasoned in officiating at trials, but rookies in this event. Their workload was long and diligent and over the three rounds they actually judged one hundred dogs! Official Gun for the first day was Declan Whelan who always carries out his duties expertly and with a minimum of fuss.

The wind direction meant that the ground up to the

mast had to be stripped towards the mast which meant extra walking, but all dogs were given a fair opportunity to show their wares. Twenty brace had game on their beats to their advantage (or detriment) with 42 grouse and 5 snipe met. The only way any dog can give a true overall performance is to have grouse on its beat. A cool day with a stiffish breeze and dry underfoot meant that scenting conditions had to be good, but what (and thankfully) do we really know about it? With every brace run and 5 finds in the Judges Books, 'Stumps' was declared at 6 pm followed by a forty five minute walk back to the cars. Possibly it was because of the tricky wind, but the overall standard of dog work on the first day was not really excellent. Of course there were some excellent runs, but some of the dogs seemed unable to grasp their opportunity.

The traditional Championship Dinner could have had a better attendance. When you consider that of the thirty who sat down to the usual excellent fare, fourteen were French visitors, so you might wonder what happened to the rest. This is a social occasion that will surely die if better support is not forthcoming. Admittedly, I was not there, but would have been if circumstances had allowed.

Ger Divine's ESD **Ballyellan Cody** was awarded the trophy for 'Most Stylish Dog of the First Day' and was presented with the beautiful RED MILLS Trophy by





Eugene Brennan of RED MILLS. The IKC's Award for Dog of the Year 2012 was shared between Aidan Dunne's **Ikerrin Crouch & Hold** and Carol Calvert's **Glenlark Apollo**, both red setters. Then it was a case of watch for what the morning brings. The Secretary, unusually, gave the list of dogs required for the morrow. Up to now, this had been given on the Sunday morning and for some it had always been a case of 'Sunday Morning Coming Down.' Many hopes for another go were dashed and the hat would hold just 24 numbers for the second day.

So it was back to the hill on Sunday morning and onto the now traditional Championship Ground towards Clear Lake. The wind was from the same quarter which suited this ground better. At the lunch break all 24 dogs had been seen and another five finds had been added. On resumption, ten dogs were called for a third round. Some improved or were consistent, others not so and the books were closed.

On the way back to Kinnitty and opinions were varied. Taking nothing away from the award winners, this Championship did not sparkle overall. That happens. Formalities are always mercifully short before results were declared.

Results:

1st: Mr. George Forbes' ESD **Ballyellan Moss**
Classification: Excellent

This October '09 dog displayed super running over two days and three rounds. Had a joint find and was perfect in every way

2nd: Mr. Kieran Walsh's ESD **Blackstairs Geronimo**
Classification: Excellent

Excellent two days and had joint find with winner. Overall lacked a little of winner's even quartering.

3rd: Mr. Ollie Kelly's IRSB **Cummer Grace**
Classification: Excellent

Had fantastic running overall, but the bitch's find lacked a little

Reserve: Mr. E. Flannelly's IR&WSD Shannonbally Barry
Classification: Excellent

Had a good find, but lacked a bit in running and search.

Diploma of Honour: Mr. Pat Rohan's PD **Behamore Harry**

Mr. Aidan Dunne's IRSB **Cynros Wennol**

Some personal thoughts and reflections...

- The large gallery were interested in seeing how the French dogs would operate on alien terrain. Some very good, some not so good, just like our own.
- Nice to see Bill Connolly receiving a trophy even though he did not run a dog! He was the breeder of the winner.
- John Geoghegan of RED MILLS and Lefanta fame, a previous winner, was on hand to present some of the prizes.
- Steve Robinson came and tried, but had no luck this time.
- Richard McNichol who competes every year could not come because of a traffic mishap- thankfully he was not injured.
- Jon Kean had another excellent reason for his absence – the celebration of his mother's 80th Birthday. And there was me always thinking that she was his sister.....



A Laird's Revenge



Peg numbers having been selected, guns were asked to prepare themselves and move on to the first drive of the day.

Colonel John Archibald MacRoberts was a retired soldier, a corrupt MP and a total bore. He was also that least admirable of things; a greedy gun. Standing at his peg, he would happily shoot the birds of neighbouring guns as they burst from cover to right or left, while being completely untroubled by feelings of guilt or his appalling lack of sportsmanship. His excuses for such behaviour were loud and numerous, but never good enough. Perhaps unsurprisingly, invitations to shoot on the Highland's finer estates seldom journeyed through the Colonel's letterbox. A fact that caused a degree of irritation to the dishonourable Member of Parliament.

One particular estate upon which Col. MacRoberts longed to shoot had always remained barred to him. Famous throughout Scotland for the quality of its driven pheasants, Glen Drummond was owned by an aged laird, who was a sportsman of the old school. This guardian of his ancestral home also believed that gentlemanly behaviour on a shoot day was paramount. As a result, no matter whom the Colonel had tried to bribe or blackmail, he had never managed to experience the estate's high birds and legendary drives. The old laird was determined that MacRobert's well worn brogue, would never tread there.

It was with considerable interest then that the Colonel learned from the morning newspaper, of the passing away of the Laird of Glen Drummond. How fortuitous thought MacRoberts, that the old boy should snuff it in late December, when the best of the driven pheasant shooting was still to come! Swiftly he put his

Machiavellian plan into action. When one had stalked the corridors of power for as long as the Colonel had, it wasn't difficult to find a lever with which to gain an objective. A fellow MP with one too many skeletons in the cupboard, conveniently held an invitation to a driven day in January on the late laird's estate. Being well practiced in the art of blackmail, MacRoberts had little difficulty persuading his victim to be unavoidably detained on the day in question; as well as recommending him as replacement Gun. Smugly satisfied, the colonel could easily imagine himself killing high birds as they rocketed over his peg, (or that of his neighbours) from the near vertical slopes of Glen Drummond's towering hills. Attending to his daily routine of falsely claiming expenses, and making empty promises to his constituents, the colonel stared longingly at his office calendar and dreamed of the shoot to come.

So it was that on a crisp January morning, Colonel MacRoberts strode into Glen Drummond Lodge like a conquering hero. There, with a voice almost as loud as his tweed shooting suit, he made his presence known to all. Shocked by the appearance of one with such an appalling reputation, the other Guns assembled in the Great Hall did their best to avoid MacRoberts. The Head Keeper simply shook his head, and muttered that the old Laird would spin in his grave at such a thing. Prophetic indeed.

A blazing fire roared in the cavernous hearth of the great hall, but in spite of this the colonel found himself gripped by a sudden chill. Taking a crystal decanter from the hall table he helped himself to a dram of malt whisky, and moved a little closer to the fire. As he stood with glass in hand, portraits of past lairds glared down at him with malevolent eyes, and even the room's oak



The Head Keeper simply shook his head and muttered that the old Laird would spin in his grave.

panelling seemed to close in upon him. Peg numbers having been selected, guns were asked to prepare themselves and then move on to the first drive of the day.

Unsettling atmosphere

It was with a sense of relief that MacRoberts left the unsettling atmosphere of the Great Hall, but the condition of his nerves was further aggravated, when a freak gust of wind slammed the lodge's heavy oak doors firmly behind him. This was indeed an odd occurrence on so still a morning, and one which could so easily have left the colonel with a badly broken ankle. Somewhat shaken, MacRoberts consoled himself with the fact that he had drawn peg No.5 on first drive of the day. This he felt sure, would put him in the thick of the action, and bring him the majority of the shooting. Now to sample some of Glen Drummond's legendary birds!

Sadly for the colonel however, The Larches Drive did not unfold as he had hoped, for most of the birds inexplicably passed over pegs 1, 2, and 3, avoiding the centre of the line altogether.

His frustration was further increased when on the second drive of the day, The Birch Bank, not a single pheasant came within shot of him on peg No. 7. For an excruciating 15 minutes, MacRoberts had to endure the sight of pegs 2 to 5, consistently knocking high birds out of the heavens. It was almost more than he could endure! Not even his habit of poaching birds from neighbouring Guns would help, as they too were also out of the shooting.

The Lochans Drive did at last allow MacRoberts to kill several goodish birds; an achievement which would have been even more admirable, had he not shot the

high curling cocks directly over his neighbour on peg No. 2. Quite unabashed by this blatant act of selfishness, the colonel said he thought his neighbour had been reloading at the time, and probably hadn't even spotted the approaching birds. In spite of these protestations however, all present recognised a bounder when they saw one. In an atmosphere of disapproving silence, the guns made their way through an avenue of tall lime trees, and on to The Mausoleum drive.

Named after the imposing granite structure at its heart, this drive was considered to be Glen Drummond's finest, and one which MacRoberts had long yearned to experience. The mausoleum itself was well over 250

years old, surrounded by a high stone wall, and housed the earthly remains of every one of Glen Drummond's lairds. This included the old gentleman recently deceased.

Feeling frustrated at having missed out on so much of the morning's sport, the colonel was placed on peg No.3 by the estate's well mannered under keeper, and instructed not to move. MacRobert's peg was situated at the eastern end of the lime avenue, and a mere 40 yards from the ivy clad walls of the mausoleum. Seeming to touch the very clouds, the giant trees rose up before the colonel, giving the impression that one was standing at the bottom of a deep, leaf filled, canyon.

The kind of birds he had dreamed of shooting

From pockets heavy with cartridges, the colonel loaded his well balanced sidelock, and waited in trembling anticipation for the drive to commence. Steadily the whistles and shouts of approaching beaters grew louder, as legions of strong January pheasants exploded from cover. Awestruck, MacRoberts stood wide eyed as streams of spectacular birds sailed high over the towering limes. Shots rang out up and down the line of Guns, but at the colonel's peg there was only silence and mounting rage. These were the kind of birds he had dreamed of shooting, and so far not a single one had passed anywhere near him! Hopping from frustration, he looked on as bird after bird sailed over the mausoleum only 40 yards to his left. Ignoring the under keeper's instruction to remain at his peg, MacRoberts picked up his cartridge bag and dashed toward the granite structure.

Although crumbling quite badly, the wall

surrounding the ancient crypt was too high to climb, but on rounding the corner, MacRoberts discovered a tall wrought iron gate set in the west wall. Sturdy in spite of its age and condition, the gate was of ornate design, and supported by huge granite pillars on either side. On top of each of these stone supports sat a great, grinning, stone hound, of immense proportions; silent and severe guardians of the dead. MacRoberts grasped the ring handle before him, and turning it with surprising ease, swung the gate open wide.

Striding in, he threw down his cartridge bag, closed his gun, and immediately began shooting. Both the number and quality of birds far exceeded his expectations, and the voluminous pockets of his shooting jacket were soon emptied of cartridges. Turning to open his cartridge bag, the colonel momentarily glanced toward the mausoleum building, and noticed something very odd indeed. There, not 20 feet from where he stood, a single column of spiralling white mist was rising from the earth. MacRoberts stood transfixed. Pheasants now forgotten, the corrupt MP looked on as the phenomenon grew in height, and began to sway from side to side, before moving slowly but inexorably toward him.

All around, shots rang out as the drive went on, but the high stone walls concealed the horror unfolding before MacRoberts. Now only a few feet from the bewildered colonel, the moving column of vapour began to take form, as skeletal human features became apparent. A bony arm with pointing finger stretched out of the spiralling mist, and as a cold sweat enveloped the terrified colonel, the sunken face of the late Laird of Glen Drummond leaned out to meet his own.

Panic rising, he gripped the handle

With an inhuman scream, MacRoberts dropped his gun upon the grass and fled to the wrought iron gate. With rising panic the M.P. gripped the rusting ring handle, but discovered that it would not turn. Looking over his shoulder, he saw that his supernatural pursuer was upon him, so with all his strength he wrenched at the unmoving gate, over, and over again.

Had he not been so blinded by terror, the colonel might have noticed that his hysterical attempts to open the gate, were in fact causing the mighty stone hounds on top of the pillars to rock violently. Weakened by over 200 years' exposure to the elements, the old lime mortar that held these leering canines in place, now had little strength. Half mad with fear, Colonel

MacRoberts felt the grip of a bony hand upon his shoulder, and in desperation, gave the mausoleum gate a mighty heave. With this, the granite hound directly above him gave up its perch of over two centuries, and toppling, struck the colonel a mortal blow to the skull.

Found by a picker up at the end of the drive, the colonel lay dead within the mausoleum compound, his head crushed beneath the immense weight of a grinning, decorative, stone hound. Appalled that such a thing should happen at Glen Drummond, the Head Keeper cancelled the rest of the day's shooting, and immediately called the police.

The Coroner's report concluded that Colonel John Archibald MacRoberts MP, had died as the result of a tragic accident, but recommended that the Mausoleum be fenced off, and signs erected to warn people against entering so dangerous a structure.

The case did however have one mysterious feature which defied explanation, as neither the police pathologist nor the coroner himself, could explain how all of the late colonel's finger nails came to be torn clean out. This fact was made even more baffling, when an investigating officer later discovered the bloodied items, firmly embedded on the inside of the rusting, mausoleum gate.

Sleep well, Dear Reader.



Shooting his neighbour's birds showed MacRoberts for what he was - a bounder!

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My sporting year



Balbirnie's Cock Day.

My first pheasant shoot of the season took place at Balbirnie Estate, Fife in glorious sunshine. It was hard to believe it was October when walked across the stubble fields with our shirt sleeves rolled up. The weather was such a stark contrast to the end of the previous season in January on the traditional cock shoot. The cock shoot is a much-loved end of season day where all the beaters and picker-ups get the opportunity to shoot only cock birds. It is also one of those shoot days when the car gets left at home. I recall the day very well, the air was clear and fresh, you could see for miles over the Fife landscape as we battled our way around the estate in the knee deep snow. After the shoot we returned to the cabin for a delicious four course meal prepared by Mhari, the gamekeeper's wife. The details start to get a little fuzzy as my powers of recollection were somewhat influenced by the whisky. George Wallace started playing his bagpipes as the party got into full swing and continued into the wee small hours of the following day, apparently!

I love being out before dawn on frosty clear mornings over the winter and spring months. I went roe deer doe stalking with Johnny Readhead, a deer stalker from Woodmills Shooting, in February; it was a beautiful

morning to be out, the air was so fresh and the ground crisp with frost. We stalked the edge of woodland but the frost had crisped the fallen leaves making it nigh on impossible to be silent. As the land opened up with only big clumps of gorse for cover Johnny spotted a young roe buck, quickly we tucked ourselves in to the gorse to watch him. The wind was in our favour but he knew someone was there and wanted to investigate. The sun came up as we stood back and watched him walk down the fence line towards us, constantly trying to pick out our scent. After a while he seemed to get bored of trying to find us and headed away off so we broke cover and carried on. We spent the next hour or so stalking a roe doe to no avail. We walked for a few more miles towards a plantation and found two does browsing on the young trees. There was no cover in the open field so Johnny stalked in closer on his elbows and took a shot around 175 yards, one doe went down and the other ran off.

The weather turned cold and snowy again in March but it didn't stop the deerstalking fair from going ahead at Kelso in the Scottish Borders. I travelled down from Fife to attend the event, the first event of its kind, solely dedicated to deer stalking. It was a great weekend with over 40 exhibitors, talks and demonstrations. I spoke to many stalkers who had travelled from all over the UK and Europe to attend the two day event. Organiser and deer stalker Brian Lile was delighted by the success of the event and has made great progress for the 2014 fair.

The warm summer weather ensured visitors turned



Another fine retrieve at Balbirnie.



Can anything be nicer than shooting in Scotland's October sunshine.

out to the game fairs, unlike 2012 when many game fairs were cancelled due to the wet weather. I was one of the official photographers at the GWCT Scone Game Fair and enjoyed spending the first day photographing Olympic gold medal shooter Peter Wilson MBE. The Moy field sports fair in the Highlands also benefited from two days of glorious sunshine.

I was invited to a day of Fishing on the Dee July, but the downside of the dry weather conditions meant there were very few fish about. We had more success

on the Tweed in September though. The Tweed is such a spectacular location; I spent a day photographing Tony Spacey of Game Angling Consultancy on the Ladykirk Beat. It rained for most of the morning but conditions were favourable and a number of fish were caught. After our Bothy lunch the rain pushed off and the sun came out. The following day Tony caught, what he described as 'a fish of a lifetime,' a beautiful fresh fish 17lb.

In addition to my monumental day in August shooting grouse over pointers, I was also a photographer on a number of driven grouse days. A day of driven grouse on the Fasque estate stays fixed in my mind as the wind speed exceeded 75mph on the hill tops.



Stalking with Johnny Readhead.

The grouse were unstoppable turbo charged missiles. Head Gamekeeper Mark Ancliff looked after us with fresh coffee and bacon rolls on arrival then lead the procession of 4x4s up the steep slopes to the hill tops. Three great drives in the morning but the birds were making the most of the wind. We held onto our hats as lunch was prepared from the back of a Range Rover by one of the gun's chefs. The wind showed no sign of slowing down after lunch. That afternoon we tucked ourselves into heather clad butts. The grouse were up, over and away in the blink of an eye. Very testing conditions but the guns did well to bag a few.

Mark Robson of Pigeon All Day Long invited me out for a full day's shooting with his five German clients. We met up at the Lomond Hills Hotel in Freuchie, Fife, a very popular hotel if you are shooting or stalking in Fife and the surrounding area. First on the agenda was a dawn Goose flight. We drove to a stubble field not far from Loch Leven where Mark set up the hide on the edge of a ditch. He set out decoys and started to call the geese as we were tucked behind the hide. In less than an hour 23 geese were bagged, these guys were excellent shots! Mark's black Labrador, Sabre, was kept very busy retrieving the birds. By 8am we headed back to the hotel for a well earned breakfast. Afterwards we spent the day at Balbirnie Estate for driven pheasant and duck.

I needed my passport for a trip to France for a day of driven wild boar. Mark from Stalking in England had organised the trip and asked me to join them. I drove from Fife down to Norfolk, met the shooting party and we all headed off to France in a minibus via the Channel tunnel. The following morning we arrived at the Parc de Baviile, south of Paris where we were greeted by the hunt organiser, Yann Lirzin. After an intensive safety briefing we put on



The Deerstalking Fair was another highlight for me.



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our high-vis vests and entered the 4,000 acre walled forest. There were 20 guns, all positioned in high seats around the forest. Packs of dogs were used to drive the wild boar. Each gun had to carry a hunting horn and announce his kill. As the first drive got under way you could hear barking dogs and blasts of horns. We had a total of 6 drives, shooting 14 boar and 3 deer. In between we had a leisurely four course meal with wild boar casserole as a main then a buffet in the evening. It is the most exhilarating hunting experience I've had to date and I look forward to going back.

The pheasant shooting season is going well and I looking forward to January and perhaps some challenging winter weather to stir things up. I hope to be back out on the rivers with more fishing dates and out in the wilds to enjoy deer stalking. Roll on 2014!



Scone Game Fair and a delighted Susan Fowles meets Peter Wilson on her birthday.



Tony with his ghillie on the Tweed.



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Boxing Day Race Meeting at Down Royal in support of the Jonjo Bright Trust – First Race 12.30pm (approx.) and Admission £12

Boxing Day at Down Royal is the other great Christmas tradition and has become a firm favourite for both families and racing enthusiasts alike. This year Down Royal is proud to be running the Boxing Day Race Meeting in support of the Jonjo Bright Trust. There will be a collection at the turnstiles and a specific hospitality package available for those wishing to support the Trust.

The seven strong racecard provides an opportunity to wrap up warm and beat the 'Boxing Day Blues' with some top quality National Hunt racing. Our gates open 11.00am with the first race kicking off at 12.25pm (approx.) and the last at 3.30pm (approx.). Concession admission is £10 and children under 16 receive free admission. Entrance tickets will always be available at the turnstiles on the day. For further information on the fantastic work done by the Jonjo Bright Trust or to make a donation please go to

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A Scottish Sporting Year

Grouse over pointers on the hill.

When does a sporting year start? Is it on the 12th of August when the first grouse takes to the air, or later, perhaps November at the first pheasant shoot? Maybe it is in the early spring when the river opens for fishing? Somehow it is much easier to define an ending rather than a beginning, and for me the sporting year ends when the last shot is fired at the last cock pheasant on Keeper's Day at the end of January. And if that marks the end one sporting year then logically the beginning of the next must come with the first foray with rod, gun or dog after that.

The usual first outing for Georgina, me and the dogs comes in March when we start spring grouse counts. These are very weather dependant: in 2013 we managed only two days of a planned ten before the heavy snow forced us to cancel the rest. There is a special magic though to getting back onto the hill for the first time in months – our grouse shooting is usually over by late September – when there is a touch of spring sunshine, the cock grouse are strutting about defending their territories and the pointers and setters are shaking the stiffness out of their limbs as the heady scent of grouse fills their noses.

By early April the grouse begin laying, incubating their eggs and rearing their young. While the hill is out of bounds for the next three months the river is certainly

not. From my garden I can look out across the Annan valley with the hills dividing the Annan from the Nith as a backdrop. Both rivers are justly famous for the quality of their salmon, sea trout and brown trout fishing and, unlike some of the more exclusive rivers farther north in Scotland access to the fishing is readily available by the day, the week and the season. Fishing has rather taken a back seat for me over the past few years. Keeping a small shoot, working with the pointers and cockers, writing and taking photographs for books and magazines all in addition to the day job left little time for rod and line, but next year, freed from the grind of nine to five, I intend to remedy that situation. The nearest beat on the Annan is only a mile or so from the door and, while salmon and sea trout runs are unpredictable there is excellent brown trout fishing throughout the season.

Come July the summer pointer and setter trials begin and we start grouse counting in earnest. The first week or so is spent in County Durham where heather moorland stretches for mile after unbroken mile and the grouse is the sole focus of the shoots. Later we move a few miles west towards Cumbria to count on the famous Whitfield estate where first class pheasant and partridge shooting follows the early season grouse days. It is a revelation to drive up to the high moorland and see the sheer number of ground-nesting birds : curlew, lapwing, golden plover and oyster-catcher: that benefit from work of the keepers controlling foxes, crows, stoats and the



Grouse away from Georgina and Ziggy doing summer counts.

like. It is a stark contrast with un-kept moorland where a few black crows are the only birds you will see.

Grouse counts in summer are not only for the benefit of the shoot but also help us to get the pointers and setters fit and ready for their real work of finding birds for Guns. It must come as a stark contrast for the dogs when we start shooting because our counts are mainly carried out on driven moors where we may find thirty or forty coveys in the space of a single morning. Then we move north onto the Perthshire hill where we have been working our dogs for shooting parties for nearly twenty years and they have to get out and work really hard to find any grouse at all. This is true bird dog work with the dogs covering great wide beats, the Guns working hard for every chance of a shot and five or six brace in the bag representing a really good day. Climbing through peat hags, battling long heather, midges, the heat of the sun (sometimes) and the wind and rain (more often), carrying gun and game bag, lunch, spare cartridges, waterproofs, camera and binoculars and, hopefully, a few grouse, by the end of the day your legs will be aching and your throat dry though it is unlikely that your shoulder will be sore from firing too many shots.

As autumn creeps on and September arrives we start shooting partridges on a little shoot a few miles up the Annan valley. With a few friends we decided to experiment with partridges

about ten years ago and released a couple of hundred redlegs onto a piece of hill ground mainly covered in bracken and rush. Despite some misgivings the birds held well and now we shoot on six Saturdays in September and October thus extending the season by a couple of months before the main quarry – the pheasant – is ready to shoot. Our partridge shoot is a mixture of driving and walking up with fourteen Guns sharing the shooting and the beating alternately. We don't expect a big bag: anything over twenty partridges is a good day: but the real attraction is to be out with the gun and some good friends in the autumn sunshine. Or rain.

Once the pheasant season starts in earnest my time is fully committed between beating, loading and, on alternate Saturdays, shooting on the little shoot where I am the part-time, voluntary and unpaid keeper. On our shoot the bags are modest: a fifty bird day is one to remember: and we share the beating duties as well as actually shooting, but the syndicate has been running for over twenty-six years now and most of the Guns have been members from the start. There is no guarantee that you will actually shoot anything on a shoot day: you might fire a full box of cartridges or you might end the day with clean barrels depending on the luck of the draw, but over the season things tend to even out.

Contrast that with the Balgray and Raehills shoots where I go beating and



Cock grouse in spring.



Guns and beaters at the end of a partridge drive.

loading throughout the season. A small day on either shoot would see a bag of perhaps a hundred and fifty pheasants with the average being closer to double that number. Beating on these shoots is a serious matter: not the rather light-hearted stroll through the woods with dogs running wild that passes as a beating line for our little syndicate. Coverts are blanked in and pheasants shepherded to a flushing point with the beating line, flankers and stops being tightly controlled by Tim and his keeping staff and woe-betide you if you don't follow instructions to the letter. The quality of the pheasants though has to be seen to be believed with several drives that can test the very best of shots. If you can kill birds cleanly and consistently at High Rise, Snake Wood, Mosscaister or Cleugh Heads then you can confidently tackle high pheasants anywhere.

As beaters we don't see that much of the actual shooting, birds generally being flushed high above the Guns who are generally out of our sight down in the valleys. Some days though I am asked to load and from this privileged view point it is possible to appreciate just how good those

pheasants really are. Loading takes two forms: double guns is the traditional format with a matched pair and the loader changing weapons with the Gun so as to enable him to deal with birds that are gliding in quick succession over the peg. At other times a single gun is used and the loader stands ready to insert cartridges into the breech as the gun is opened and the spent shells ejected. This certainly speeds up the rate of fire somewhat, but quite often our job is not so much to load



Irish setter on point.

the gun as to keep an eye on the man behind it.

Driven pheasants, when they are coming thick and fast can represent a real challenge to the inexperienced shot and the steadying influence of a loader, gently reminding the Gun to keep the barrels up and not shoot at birds that are out of range, plus offering a little bit of ballistic advice is good for the peace of mind of the stops and beaters (who may be dangerously exposed on some drives) as well as helping the Gun to enjoy some success with pheasants that are anything but easy. It is also the only time I am liable to get my hands on a Boss or a Purdey.

Field trials also take up a bit of my time. I have covered the Pointer and Setter Champion stake for many years now, reporting and photographing it for some of the shooting press. Last year I also had the pleasure of going to the Retriever Championship and seeing some great dog work on the beautiful Cawdor estate. With the Retriever, Springer and Cocker championships all in Scotland this season I am planning to cover all three and looking forward particularly to seeing those feisty little cockers strutting their stuff.

Things hot up towards the end of the season when Keeper's Days come round and the erstwhile beaters, pickers-up and loaders get the chance to stand in the line and try to shoot some of the pheasants themselves. Generally cocks only, these days are the highlight of the shooting season for me and bring us nicely full circle to the end of January and, soon afterwards, the start of another season.

And that, apart from the odd day deer stalking, is pretty much how I spend my sporting year in this corner of Scotland. It's a hard life, but somebody has to do it.



Birds away from the Guns.



High birds at Balgray.



A fine pair of English setters.

For more information about the shoots
Balgray and Raehills shoots: stuartandrew.robertson@googlemail.com
Whitfield shoot: sporting@whitfieldestate.co.uk
River Annan fishing: www.riverannan.co.uk
River Nith fishing: www.rivernithfishings.co.uk

Readers Reflections

Dr Andrew Rynne writes about his trip from Ireland to the Highlands



You know how people just love to discuss and argue about what form of shooting offers the greatest challenge or delivers the greatest satisfaction? Each has their own favourites of course. Some will say woodcock shooting beats them all while others will declare snipe shooting is the ultimate test. Teal on a windy day is another great favourite. Whenever this, perhaps jaded, subject comes up, I never have to reconsider or think twice. Walked up grouse shooting in the Scottish Highlands is and always has been my absolute all-time favourite.

There are many reasons for this. They have mostly to do with the spectacular ambience that accompanies you every step of the way. The honey smell of heather. The ever changing and interesting flora carpet spread out at your feet – sphagnum moss, bilberries, green grey lichens, and crowberries. The easy conversations between guns and keepers. The dog work, picking under difficult conditions. The stunning scenery. The heather-burn patterns on neighbouring moors. To me this is as close to heaven as I'm ever likely to get. Not surprisingly such places were held by some as secret where neither bad manners nor bad language was tolerated. This may only be as it should, though the latter can be difficult to observe following a really bad miss!

Then of course there's the actual shooting itself. What I absolutely love about this type of shooting is the anticipation, the need to be alert always, on your toes. At any moment a covey of grouse may explode from under your feet or just out from you or even behind you. Or they may come back at you high and fast and enormously challenging. I miss these all the time, but that's hardly the point. It is the endless variety and diversity of shot, the unanticipated sudden call for action, that makes walked up grouse shooting so utterly absorbing and exciting.

I had been organising trips to Scotland for nigh on twenty years, up to five years ago. We always went to the same estate, to that around Balintore Castle in Angus. What this place lacked in bird numbers was more than compensated for by camaraderie and good cheer over long alfresco lunches. However, in time, as these things do, this shoot fizzled out and we were left with trying to find something comparably. This proved a more difficult task than one might think. However, when a Web search gave me a list of Scottish sporting agents my problem was instantly solved. Maybe there is something to be said for Google after all! After

contacting a few of these agencies, Davis and Bowring LLP Sporting quickly came up with the goods and suggested we take two days at Candacraig Estate up beside Balmoral and the town of Ballater in Aberdeenshire. This was, as it turned out, a very good call indeed. Also we were to stay in a little roadside hostelry called The Inver Hotel some half-hour drive from our estate. This too turned out to be a gem. They catered for our every whim including providing us with pack lunches each day. And as if that were not enough, the landlord insisted on contributing to our lusty singsong that evening with an exquisitely vulgar English folksong. That's what I'd call a proper Innkeeper!

Candacraig's shooting

As for the shooting itself, all I can say is that I have never seen it better and I've been at this for a while now. Candacraig is a professionally run sporting estate. It has everything from a warm welcome to a dedicated reception room for the guns, a large cold room for the game and an amphibious transporter called an Argo 8 x 8. On top of a hill, where several drives converge, they have a roomy lunching hut. What more could you ask for?

We were six guns, three keepers with five or six dogs. Our bag limit was twenty brace per day which we all thought was sufficient if not indeed generous. By early afternoon on the first day we were up to twenty-three brace and that was after a leisurely lunch and a late start – it was hard to find the meeting place the first morning.

The next day the Gods were smiling on us with a fine sunny day and a light breeze, perfect for our needs. The great thing about having your own party of friends on a grouse shoot is that you can set your own pace on the steeper slopes. This is hugely important when you are not, speaking for myself only of course, exactly in your first flush of youth. Our guides were gentle and relaxed, the day memorable. In less than an hour after lunch we were at our bag limit and our guns broken and emptied. If I may say so I thought we shot quite well or in any event did not let the side down as it were.

While we do have grouse in Ireland our problem is that moor ownership tends to be fragmented making proper grouse management all but impossible. This would particularly apply to winter heather burning. We are fortunate then that the best grouse shooting in the world is available to us within a day's journey. We would like to thank the Candacraig Estate keepers and the Inver Hotel owners for their warm Scottish welcome and for making this shooting trip so memorable. Thank you. We will be back again, God willing.

*Opposite Page - Starting out at Candacraig,
(photograph by Lorcan Rynne)*

Bringing Back a Childhood Memory

My nephew Nathan Jefferson Dalton recently learned the meaning of the word futile. It was not learned from his parents or a dictionary but from a gundog named Sam. Like most five year old boys, Nathan is energetic and adventurous. Walking with him through the fields adjacent to my home in County Tipperary, he can be at least fifty yards ahead of this forty-six year old in mere seconds. One minute I am glancing towards the Knockmealdown Mountains, the next I see this diminishing figure with fair hair tossing from side to side disappearing in the distance.

Nathan is a quick learner as is evidenced by his ability to confidently climb over gates. Gripping the bars tightly with his hands and legs, he has become particularly proud of his climbing skills. He is also very courageous perhaps, too much so of late. My efforts to help him over gates and through gaps are met with increasing resistance. Nathan is clearly an outdoor child. I have no doubt that he will accompany me one day with a gun in his hand as we pursue game in these same fields.

Some days Nathan and I enter another world. The fields become a vast ocean. In the distance, we spy pirates and ships. A hedgerow becomes a place of refuge. If a battle ensues we are always the winners! On other days, we pause and chat with Gerard Cunningham's ponies. Harvest time brings particular benefits. The bales of straw provide an ideal hiding place for a young boy. We also have a favourite tree which provides either shade or shelter depending on the weather conditions.

Sam is a springer/setter mix aged three and he is a pent up white ball of energy. The product of a spontaneous one night stand, he is a handsome dog. He can combine moments of extreme

boisterousness with those of submissive gentleness. Possessing an uncanny ability to jump walls, I am convinced an equine gene lurks within him. Blessed with a superb nose, the wildest of cock pheasants cannot outsmart this dog. Possessing no fear of heavy cover, or deep drains he pursues his quarry with relentless vigour. He is strong; very strong. I have observed him handle a flooded River Suir as good as and better than any Labrador.

In short, he is a dream dog. Few dogs entered our kennels with as much potential as Sam. He is the perfect all-rounder required for the kind of rough shooting we participate in. One minute he could be flushing a cock pheasant. Minutes later, I could be asking him to cross a flooded Suir to retrieve a heavy drake mallard. Is there a catch? A lack of training on my part has meant to my regret much of his potential has been wasted. More on that sensitive subject in a future edition!

I took Sam and Nathan for a walk recently. Proving somewhat unresponsive to my commands, Sam roamed far ahead. Nathan on my encouragement pursued Sam. However, on each occasion as Nathan was about to catch up with him, Sam took off searching for a fresh rabbit scent. It was as if a three year old dog was teasing a five year old boy. After many failed attempts, Nathan learned the meaning of the word futile. However, with



An unusually well behaved Sam relaxes beside Nathan in a stubble field.

GUERINI

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PHOTOGRAPHY BY DON BRUNT

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Sam has clearly inherited his sire Buddy's Springer energy.

my help Sam was also to learn the meaning of this word.

As we entered another field, I spotted Sam engrossed in what was obviously a very fresh rabbit scent. From experience, I know that Sam can become so fixated on a fresh scent that he becomes impervious to his surroundings. Encouraging Nathan to approach Sam slowly and quietly, I was confident that the capture would be complete. Within seconds, Nathan had captured his incessant teaser.

Vivid childhood memories

Nathan's pursuit of Sam brought back one of my most vivid childhood memories. The episode took place at the opposite end of our village in a place called Marlehill. On walks with my mother, Mary O' Halloran, the sight of lambs in Boyle's farm fascinated my four year old mind. I must have asked farm owner John Boyle at some point whether I could keep one of the lambs. On a spring day, we encountered John Boyle on the road beside his farm. By chance one of the large fields by the roadside was teeming with ewes and lambs. John no doubt sensed his opportunity for mischief. "If you can catch one of the lambs you can keep her."

Wasting no time, I found myself enthusiastically chasing elusive ewes and lambs around a big pasture field. The flock scattered in all directions. I can still hear John's husky laugh as I began the chase. I cannot recall feeling sad at the futility of this chase. What has stayed with me is the utter amusement John derived from the entire episode.

John Boyle was a character. To this day, he crops up in local conversations regularly. My maternal grandfather Jackie (The Cobbler) O'Mahoney a World War One British Army veteran and long-time official of Ardfinnan G.A.A club was a close friend of John. Winning a county junior medal with Ardfinnan G.A.A club in 1934, John was also an ardent supporter of Arsenal. In fact, he made several trips to Highbury. John passed away in 1983. In later life, I became close friends with John's sister, Kitty. An easy lady to grow fond of, Kitty passed away last year aged 102.

Returning home from our walk, I put Sam on the leash. Nathan and Sam had run enough for one day. For my part, I had not anticipated that the antics of a five year old boy and a three year old gundog would link me to a childhood memory.

Derek Fanning visits Lakeland Shooting Centre, Mullingar

Lakeland Shooting Centre near Mullingar is famous throughout Ireland for its excellent clay pigeon range and its wide selection of the very best guns in the business.

The Centre is run by father and son team Tom and Niall Kirwan who are outstanding shooting centre managers as one would expect, as both have shot for Ireland and as such have an excellent appreciation of what clay shooters want and expect in a shooting facility.

International experience and an international shooting facility

Tom and Niall shot for Ireland in the '70s, '80s and '90s. Tom first shot for Ireland in 1977 and Niall shot on the national team in the 1990s. They didn't go to the Olympics but shot in competitions against the UK countries. To get onto the Irish team you have to participate in a number of qualifying shoots. Lakeland offers one of those qualifying shoots.

'Shooting is my only hobby,' said Tom. 'I turned my hobby into a business. We are both milking machine technicians and I worked as a milking machine

technician all over the midlands and west of Ireland as far away as Sligo. I spent 46 years in that business and gave it up five years ago. I was doing it as well as running Lakeland. Niall started to develop this business and I resigned out of the milking machine business.'

We walked round the acclaimed clay pigeon shooting range which is used by the Irish Olympic shooting team for training. The range includes an Olympic trap layout which has 15 machines in a line. Each machine is at a different angle, a different height, offering a wide range of clay trajectories including down the line, automatic ball trap, and sporting (which is more like game shooting where you have clays coming across or coming over your head).

The range is voice activated, therefore the shooter is not waiting for somebody to press a button. When he calls 'pull' into the mike the target is released. ('Pull' came from the old fashioned machines where you had a rope and an operator would pull the rope to release the clay).

The shooting range operates under a very handy card system, whereby you pay for a card and you insert it in a machine. The shooter then has a certain amount of shots according to the amount he paid. 100 clays is 30 Euros. You can get as many as 425 clays on the card,



The Olympic trap layout with 15 machines in the line.



Niall (on left) is holding a Blaser R8. It has a thumbhole stock with leather inlay for good fit and comfort. This rifle retails at 3,700 Euro and has a change barrel system. Tom is holding a Mauser M03 bolt action rifle. Both the Blaser R8 and Mauser M03 are excellent hunting rifles.

which costs 127 Euro and 50 cents. 'You can put as many people as you like on this one card,' explained Tom. 'It is the only one in this country of its type. We sourced it in Italy a few years ago.'

Lakeland has also hosted the NARGC All Ireland championships on three occasions, which is the biggest shooting competition in Ireland. 612 competitors took part this year. The NARGC championships take place during July. 24 counties participated this year and Wexford won the competition.

What really interested me was the superb range of guns and accessories stocked by the Kirwans and especially the high quality Mauser, Blaser and Zeiss brands for which they are sole Irish distributors. As one would also expect from their technical backgrounds the Kirwans are excellent technicians when it comes to servicing and fixing guns. They were proud to show me their technician training certificates for Blaser guns, which means they are qualified to service Blaser guns. As we were chatting a customer came into the store to collect a beautiful Browning shotgun which the Kirwans had serviced by inserting a new ejector. The Browning in question was a top of the range, Belgian, handmade gun and would cost 22,000 Euros!

Sole Distributors.....

Tom and Niall are extremely proud of their sole distributorship in Ireland for Blaser, Mauser and Zeiss. Zeiss is the best-selling scope in the world. 25,000 people work for Zeiss which manufactures high-quality lenses. 'They are regarded as the best scopes in the business.'

Equally acclaimed are Mauser who have been making rifles for 140 years. 'Mauser are a German rifle manufacturer, and are one of the best names in the business. Blaser also manufacture outstanding rifles and quality shotguns.'

Proud to be Blaser specialists

When I visited Lakeland Shooting Centre Niall showed me a Blaser R8 rifle which is a large calibre rifle extremely suitable for deer-stalking. The Blaser R8 has a very smooth, pleasingly-smooth, straight-pull action. It costs 3,300 Euros which, because Blaser are top of the range, is not expensive for what you are getting. Rather uniquely the Blaser R8 is a change-barrel system which means it can take a wide range of calibres. The barrel is easily removed by pressing two studs. You then put on another barrel which can take a different type of bullet / calibre. The gun can take from a .222 REM to a 10,3x60R (which is a massive calibre). The R8 possesses 38 calibres in the one action. A .222 calibre of course would be good for shooting small game such as foxes or rabbits and the big calibres such as a .308 are good for deer stalking; or a .3006 for wildboar; up to the really big calibres which would be suitable for big game hunting in Africa. Therefore the R8 Blaser rifle would be an ideal rifle for shooting small game in Ireland right up to big game on the plains of Africa.. Plus, regarding safety the R8 rifles have a safety drop-out action which means that you can put the magazine in your pocket and the gun can't be used by anybody.

The R8 is Blaser's lowest-costing rifle in Lakeland and they have a wide range of other types of Blaser rifles.



Blaser F8 Rifle with Zeiss Scope.

Tom told me that the day before my visit they sold a Blaser rifle for 15,000 Euros. The 15,000 Euro rifle of course wouldn't be any better in practical terms than the R8. The extra cost arises because of the cosmetic effect. In the more expensive rifle models there is better quality timber and better craftsmanship. Tom showed me a picture of a hand-engraved rifle which is worth 200,000 Euros, which could take two years to make. Last year at a show in Nuremberg an Italian hunter hunter bought a rifle for 230,000 Euros.

Therefore, as most shooting aficionados reading this will know, if you want a rifle for all needs from small to big game then the lower-priced Blaser models are just as good as the more expensive ones. The more expensive ones look better but there is the same action, the same robust features. Blaser are also robust rifles and are able to take a bit of punishment. Niall showed me a photo of a hunter using a Blaser rifle in very difficult, freezing conditions - very impressive!

Lakeland also stocks Blaser shotguns and Niall showed me a lovely-looking 12 gauge shotgun by the company which possessed a full modular system which means that you can change the barrel so if you wanted you could attach a 20 gauge barrel, if you wished to use a different size cartridge. This shotgun was called F3 and was a high-grade model, boasting grade 7 timber, and was therefore worth 7,000 Euro. One of the features I liked about this Blaser shotgun was its adjustable stock which means you can adjust the stock downwards, up, right, left. The adjustable stocks means it's a perfect, comfy fit for your cheek.

It's also possible to adjust the weight of the F3. Some clay pigeon enthusiasts prefer their gun lighter or heavier in front. The F3 has weights in the stock which can be moved back or forward. 'The

Blaser F3 has the market at the minute,' explained Niall. 'The top shooters in the world are using them including the top shooters in Ireland. Nearly every major clay competition in Ireland has been won with a Blaser gun this year. The F3 is the best selling gun in this price range in Ireland.' He pointed out that the ICPSA (the Irish Clay Pigeon Shooting Association) had an AIB all star awards and of the six nominees four of them were using Blaser guns.

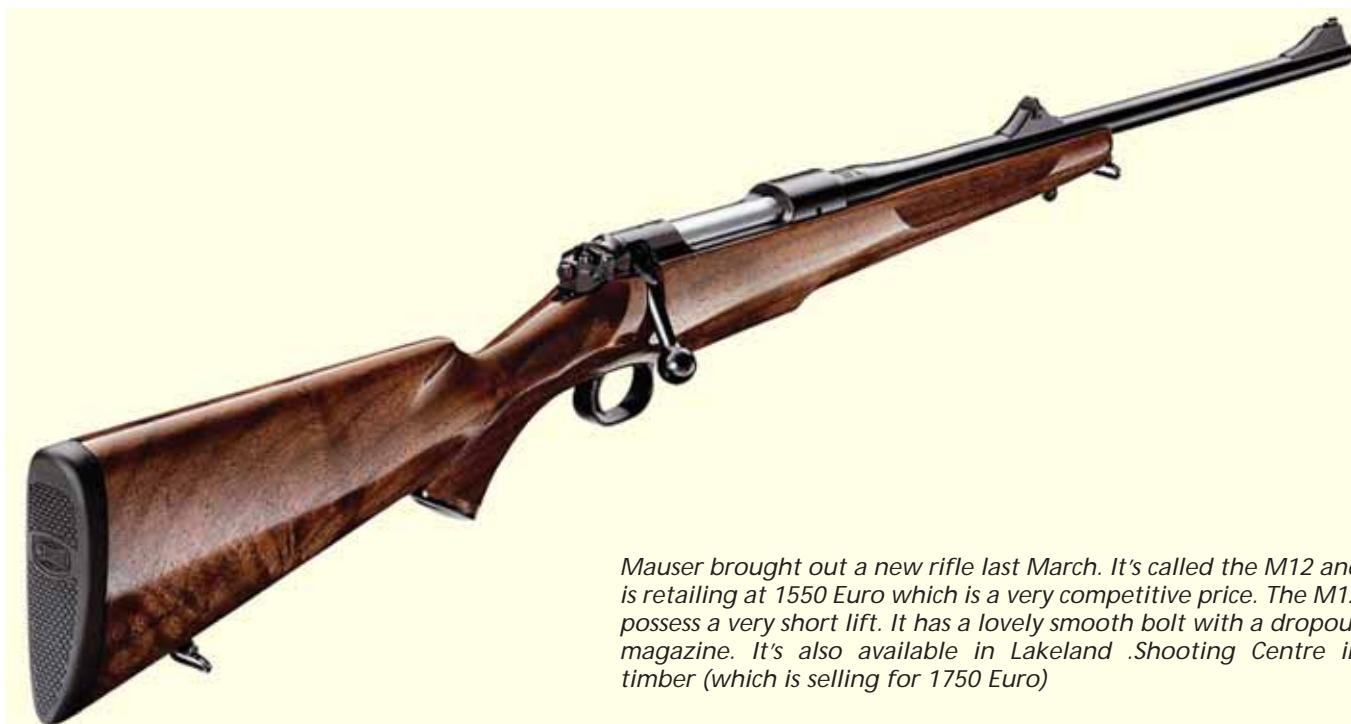
'We started as a dealer for Blaser,' explained Niall, 'and we have been distributing them since 2011. We started buying them first as a dealer from the UK agent. And then we got the dealership which meant that we could buy them direct from Germany. And then six months into that year, in the same year, I obtained the distributor contract from Germany; which means we are going straight to the factory in the town of Isny in Southwest Germany. Because we are buying them as a distributor from Germany rather than as a dealer we are getting them at a lower cost.'



Blaser F3 Baronesse shotgun.



Blaser F3 Huntress Shotgun .



Mauser brought out a new rifle last March. It's called the M12 and is retailing at 1550 Euro which is a very competitive price. The M12 possess a very short lift. It has a lovely smooth bolt with a dropout magazine. It's also available in Lakeland .Shooting Centre in timber (which is selling for 1750 Euro)

Mauser and Zeiss sole distributor

'We are the only distributor of Mauser guns in Ireland and we have been doing that job since 2008.

'We are also the sole distributor for Zeiss optics in Ireland since 2006. Zeiss is a German company and has been making optics for 165 years. These optics are perfect for deer stalking in Ireland or big game hunting in Africa.'

He showed me a Zeiss scope which the company brought out in March 2012. 'It is called the Victory HT,' said Niall. 'It comes with scotch glass which is the clearest glass in the world. The scope therefore has 95 per cent light transmission. The nearest scope to rival it would have a 92 per cent light transmission. The company is installing the same glass in their binoculars. Again, Zeiss scopes are the number one scope in the world. The Victory HT costs 2285 Euros.'

Beretta dealer for the Midlands

Lakeland also stock a wide selection of magnificent Beretta guns. 'Regarding Beretta,' continued Niall, 'we are working as a dealer for the midlands area.. We started working as a dealer for Beretta in September of this year. There are a number of other Beretta dealers around Ireland but Lakeland is the only dealer in the midlands.'

He showed me a lovely o/u shotgun by Beretta priced at 1870 Euros. This Beretta 686 is ideal for game shooting and enjoys a good reputation. It's a reliable, all-round gun and is one of the store's big sellers and has an agreeable balance and feel.

Ammunition and Accessories

Ammunition is an important part of the shop. 'We

import Fiocchi and RC ammunition direct from the factory in Italy,' explained Niall. 'They are top brands and we are the sole distributor for those brands. They are used in the Olympic games. Most of the medal winners in the Olympics used either Fiocchi or RC.

'In clothing we stock the Blaser range, along with the Deerhunter and Browning ranges. We import Blimey boots from Spain which are considered a very good boot'. He showed me a pair of Blimey boots retailing at 55 Euro. Blimey manufacture a handmade boot. We find them the best wearing and best quality boots that we have stocked. One of our customers has been wearing the same pair of Blimeys for 17 years.'

I left Lakeland Centre with the distinct impression that Niall and Tom have developed a fantastic centre for shooting enthusiasts of all kinds to select the clothing and guns best suited to their needs. Visitors can be assured of a warm welcome, good knowledgeable advice and the opportunity to handle some of the top brands in the world.

Lakeland Shooting Centre
is well worth a visit in person or online:
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ANGLING TAKES A BACK SEAT TO FIGHT FISH FARMERS

Following another successful Galway Fly Fair at which we once again met our friends and fellow sports people in what was a most enjoyable and pleasant weekend. So, the close season time is being used to review and plan for 2014 which opens on January 1st once again. Instead of completing the usual tasks to re-equip the tackle stocks, more and more time is being diverted to the campaign that everyone is talking about as we still await the decision by Minister Coveney on the Galway Bay Fish Farm application.

Over the past year, we have conducted eighteen public awareness events, the last of which was picketing the Good Food Ireland Awards at the Shelbourne Hotel in Dublin where Marine Harvest sponsored the Seafood Restaurant of the Year Award. The media exposure received by FISSTA and the Friends of the Irish Environment was astounding and proved to all who participated how much support our campaign has all over the country.

The open letter which we distributed read as follows:

Open Letter to Good Food Ireland Annual Conference

We have come to your Annual Conference to ask you to boycott farmed salmon this Christmas and arrange for substitutions by products that are less harmful to the environment, to wild fish and indeed to the consumer's individual health.

The arguments and scientific research that supports our concerns are detailed on our website www.fissta.com and on the websites of many other groups here in Ireland and around the world. Many arguments, such as the impact of farmed salmon lice on wild salmon mortalities, have been well known and documented by eminent scientists here in Ireland, across Europe, and in Canada. They have been the subject of ignored scientific recommendations to separate farmed salmon from wild salmon since 1994, as we are against open net pen salmon farms in our bays that are on the migratory path of the wild Irish salmon.

Disease, parasites, pollution, all of this could be controlled if farmed salmon were raised in closed contained systems which could be located in many derelict sites in harbours around along our coast, providing much needed employment without damaging anything. The additional cost of running these units is balanced by their ability to capture the faeces and use it to produce energy to power their systems rather than relying on the natural environment as a waste repository, something authorities would never permit on land.

On animal welfare grounds alone it is hard to support this form of farming. Tens of thousands of farmed salmon were killed this summer by a mass of jellyfish. While Government agencies were quick to point out that this is a 'natural' phenomena, it is not natural to trap millions of salmon in cages and have them stung to death when in the wild they would have 'naturally' avoided these jellyfish.

Slow Food international does not support the use or sale of open pen farmed salmon. No true organic standards support the use of biocides as a regular treatment for parasites as is the standard practice in this industry under the guise of 'veterinary medicine.'

We urge you, even if only to protect your own valued name as the standard bearers of good Irish food, to support our boycott and say with us 'Not On My Plate This Christmas.'

Thank you for your cooperation.

Yet any signs of hesitation from the top brass seems far off, as the mega fish farm plan seems to be still firmly stuck in the minds of the politicians who want unsustainable fish farm jobs but are not counting the loss of sustainable angling tourism jobs. The climatic factors were reviewed recently at a conference in Iceland and Ireland's Marine Institute scientist Paul Connolly stated 'a key area we are looking at our new strategic plan is developing aquaculture. This co2 impacts the ocean and on the plankton, the zoo plankton, and right through the food web. We know these changes are happening but we don't know what the changes will be.' So the experts do not know and we are expected to gamble on our wild resources for fish farming.'

WILD ATLANTIC SALMON IN DANGER OF WIPEOUT AFTER FRESH WATER SUPPLIES ARE TAKEN FROM RIVER FOR TREATMENT OF DISEASE AT CLARE ISLAND SALMON FARM

Our Federation has protested and lodged complaints to both Inland Fisheries Ireland and Mayo

County Council at the damming of a river on Clare Island. We view this as another action that disrespects and disregards all environmental regulations that protects our wild fish habitat. FISSTA is extremely alarmed that regulations guarding our fresh water sources for our wild salmon and sea trout habitat are being further ignored by fish farmers as they attempt to treat more outbreaks of Amoebic Gill Disease at fish farms all along the west coast of Ireland.

Recently, fish farmers made emergency applications to both Donegal and Mayo County councils for renewed supplies of fresh water to treat the increased outbreak of Amoebic Gill Disease in several of their cages in both Fanad in Donegal and Clare Island off the Mayo coast. FISSTA, whose angling membership is on the main salmon and sea trout rivers of Ireland have been campaigning against Minister Coveney's ten mega fish farm plan and in particular with the BIM application in Galway Bay in which they lodged a 35 page objection to last December. FISSTA remains ever vigilant and opposed to any development that damages the wild Atlantic salmon habitat.



Clare Island - FISSTA protest at blocked river

How much fresh water supplies will be required to treat 15,000 tons of farmed salmon in Galway Bay should Minister Coveney grant this licence? The future for Irish salmon appears especially bleak in the face of new policy that will allow unbridled development of offshore open pen salmon farms to increase production from 14,000 to 150,000 tonnes in the salmon's migratory channel off the west coast. The first mega farm is planned for Galway Bay, a mecca for domestic and international tourists. It's time for government to rethink its obsession with open net pen salmon aquaculture, which contributes to declining salmon populations, and displaces anglers, commercial fishermen and tourists wherever it operates.

It is over six months since the scientific debate on fish farming was put to bed by Dr Costello and we have received no positive response from the state boards to date. We have asked five other Ministers with a protective brief for our wild salmon to intervene with Minister Coveney TD to refuse his BIM application for the first of ten fish farms that will wipe our angling tourism industry that generates €500m. for inland and coastal areas especially for the west of Ireland.



Billy Smyth, Caroline Lewis and Brian Curran wear masks to highlight the pollution that may threaten Galway Bay if the fish farm goes ahead.

The data TDI study commissioned by Inland Fisheries Ireland on July 18th will clearly confirm our views that our angling supports over 10,000 jobs annually with the majority involved with the salmonid species. There is widespread dispute among our state scientific advisers on the impact of water quality and sealice which angers our federation and all in angling. However, the intervention by a very independent and leading expert on



Chlann Ui Chulainn of the Aran Islands wing of the protest at the Shelbourne.

Marine Ecology to warn the Minister for Food, Agriculture and the Marine of the dangers of sea lice emanating from offshore salmon farms. Minister Coveney cannot ignore the mounting evidence that BIM and the Marine Institute have totally misrepresented the threat posed to wild salmon by sea lice and farmed salmon escapees emanating from the proposed Galway Bay farm,

It is important to note that Mark J Costello is an Associate Professor at the Leigh Marine Laboratory in the University of Auckland, New Zealand, said he was compelled to write to Minister Simon Coveney due to misleading reports as to the risk of sea lice in the media. In his letter to Minister Coveney, Prof. Costello said that salmon lice emanating from farms have been linked to mass fatal parasite infestations called 'epizootics' on wild salmon, trout and their relatives in Ireland, Scotland, Norway and Canada. They have only been reported in locations with salmon farms.

Prof. Costello, who studied for his Bachelor's Degree at NUI Galway, further noted that, when large-scale sea lice infections occur, they can be difficult to control and that wild fish up to 30 km away from a farm could be infected by lice from the farm. "Sea lice...have proven difficult to control on farms, especially large farms, because it is difficult to treat all fish simultaneously against the parasite, and where several farms occur in the same area due to cross-infection," wrote Prof. Costello. Prof. Costello, a former Chief Editor of the European Register of Marine Species, said that, if there were a million fish on a salmon farm with one egg-bearing louse each, the farm could release up to 500 million lice larvae. "A key consequence of this is that on large farms, it is possible to keep the number of lice below what is harmful to the farm fish but they may still be producing a lot of lice larvae."



Ruairi O Cualain from Inis Oirr travelled to Dublin to lend support.

The harmful effect of sea lice has been one of the main bones of contention in the ongoing debate over proposals to locate a €60 million organic salmon farm in Galway Bay, off Inis Oírr. Bord Iascaigh Mhara (BIM), the State body that is applying to Minister Coveney for a licence for the salmon farm, continues to argue that the risk posed by sea lice is minimal, while FISSTA and Inland Fisheries Ireland have maintained that the risk posed by sea lice to wild fish stocks is significant.

We need you to support us and IFI in this serious threat to our wild stocks and clean marine environment of which your Department depends heavily on for increased tourism revenue.



Senator Trevor O Clochartaigh, Galway, visited the protest at the Good Food Ireland Awards.



Tom Moran of the Fergus Anglers and Richard Behal from Kerry at the protest in Dublin.



The Lady with the Lamp guides FISSTA protesters.

VIVE LA FRANCE!

Early in November a wave of violent demonstrations erupted in Brittany in the food industry over the announcement of an 'ecotax' that was to be imposed next year. Thankfully our Celtic cousins, the Breton farmers, having long earned the reputation of being the most volatile region of the entire republic of France, demonstrated their alliance and determination by wearing red berets on protests, and claimed it would make their products less competitive. So President Hollande sent his Minister to Brittany to try to calm things down.

Besides meeting the 'Bonnets Rouges,' Stephane Le Foll the Minister of Agriculture also met Mr Vincent Gelamur, director of Armorik, a successful salmon smoking company who want to build a land-based salmon farm in Finistere. Armorik is determined to secure a regular supply of high quality farmed salmon by building the first land-based farm in Europe; clean and sustainable, virtually no antibiotics and pollution-free. No wonder, Marine Harvest, the largest salmon farmer in the world is partly pulling out of Brittany as their policy to date is to reject any production method that adds to the cost or is subjected to the waste management regulations which only apply on land and not in the marine. Minister Stephane LeFoll was impressed with the project and invited Vincent Gelamur to further talks, to assist and discuss the company's new plan to invest some €10 million in the project and for which he sought support from the French government. Some very positive press generated from this meeting and later Seafood Source, a global aquaculture organisation, commented that the salmon farming industry needs to move towards closed containment systems," whilst a French salmon conservationist said that if we want to have a salmon farming industry that is less damaging for the environment and for furthers the conservation of the wild Atlantic salmon stocks, then this is the way."

Surely it is time for Simon Coveney representing the Irish Government to sit down with his French ministerial colleague to clean up the salmon farming industry once and for all.



Tony Lowes from Friends of the Irish Environment led the protest along with FISSTA at the Good Food Ireland Awards.

FISSTA WELCOMES SLOWFOOD DECISION TO CLARIFY FISH FARM POLICY

Proposed organic salmon farm in Galway Bay

Following queries from members and other interested parties, Galway Slow Food Convivium has studied the proposal to site a huge organic salmon farm in Galway Bay and is understood to be concerned about the adverse effects such a development could have. The convivium is fully in favour of establishing a

sustainable aquaculture sector and feels that there is huge potential for the region to develop such an industry given the clean water and resources available on the west coast. However, it is of the utmost importance that any such development is approached with care for the environment and existing fishing and tourism interests. Having regard to the Seven Pillars of Slow Food, the Convivium Committee has studied the proposal at length, examined the environmental impact assessment prepared by BIM and attended consultations with all interested parties involved.

Over the last forty years intensive culture of finned-fish species such as salmon has been carried out using open-cage systems in fjords (Norway), in sea-loch (Scotland) relatively sheltered bays (West of Ireland) availing of the perceived endless supply of clean, coastal waters. Research into alternative closed land-based units has led to the establishment of some units in Norway and British Columbia. However, open sea cage systems are still being constructed.

Why the concern?

Open cage fish farming imposes a series of specific pressures on:

- (a) The immediate marine environment
- (b) The local wild salmon population
- (c) The local sea trout population and its associated angling tourism
- (d) The international fish populations and the biodiversity of oceanic food chains
- (e) The existing tourist industry and its associated employment in the region.

The immediate marine environment

The siting of fish farms must cause minimal disturbance to the local ecosystem i.e. they must be located in deep water, in areas of high water flushing, away from existing salmon runs and away from vulnerable or protected species or habitat such as maerl produced by coralline algae. The proposed site of the Galway salmon farm causes concern on almost all these aspects.

Open cage farming naturally results in the production of faecal and waste food matter which deposits as a fine sediment under the cages in poor water flushing conditions. This particulate sediment can physically clog the gills of sedentary and pelagic marine organisms and additionally, this nutrient rich sediment places enormous oxygen demands on the surrounding seawater. These altered environmental conditions lead to degradation of the habitat and could even lead to the development of harmful algal blooms. The sheer volume of waste matter from large open sea farms defies the principle of environmentally responsible food production – the second basic tenet of the Slow Food Principle – the ‘Clean’ of the Good, Clean and Fair ethos. In some open cage farms, anti-fouling treatment of nets and cage structures involve the use of chemical anti-foulants, generally copper based. These are a further assault on the local ecosystem and responsible management would and should include physical non-chemical anti-fouling practices.

The local wild salmon population

The siting of a densely stocked salmon farm closer than the well acknowledged and advised limit of 20 km to adjacent established salmon rivers and sea runs will lead to negative effects on the local salmon population. Sea-lice are naturally occurring crustacean organisms that attach to the soft tissues near the dorsal and caudal fins of salmonid fish. A mere 12 specimens on a smolt can cause mortality. It stands to reason that the more hosts (farm fish) available, the more the infection of parasites. Farmed fish are

treated externally or are given medication in their food to deal with the problem but the local fish become infected. Treatment involves the use of emamectin benzoate (Slice®) among other pesticides that are particularly toxic to lower level organisms. Regulation of parasite treatment and its frequency has been a contentious issue in established fish farms not only in Ireland but in fish farms on a worldwide basis. In spite of this, the most eminent scientists in the field hold wildly divergent views on the possible impact of such a huge scale fish farm on wild salmon stocks. Research has been carried out on salmon smolts migrating through aquaculture bays in the west of Ireland. Some were pre-treated for sea lice and others were not. The results showed that the rate of return as adults one year later was almost double for those that were pre-treated versus the non-treated smolts. It proves that treatment works but it is unfeasible in wild populations and not desirable from an organic point of view in farmed fish. The presence of pesticide residues in farmed salmon causes much concern on an international level.

Escapes from salmon farms are inevitable. Atlantic salmon have long beguiled the angling and wildlife confraternity with their ability to seek out the stream where they were spawned. This behaviour is part of the genetic imprint of the wild stock. Poor cage management, storms and predation are factors which can lead to escapes. Because wild Atlantic salmon have a different genetic composition from the farmed genetically engineered strain of Norwegian origin interbreeding of native stock with escapees in our short coastal streams will lead to a dilution of the native gene pool. This will lower their innate resilience to the stress of their oceanic travels and interfere with millions of years of evolutionary behaviour that exists in the native stock. Loss of adaptability could lead to loss of species.

Disease is a consequence of industrial farming and currently there are two serious diseases rampant in the fish farming industry. One, infectious salmon anaemia (ISA) is a virus that causes severe anaemia in salmon and the fish eventually die. Amoebic gill disease is caused by a rise in water temperature and overcrowding in fish cages and this disease which originated in New Zealand has now reached Ireland, shutting down fish farms. Infected fish have to be destroyed on site and this could potentially wipe out fish farms and cause an environmental disaster.

The local sea-trout population and its associated angling tourism

As a co-salmonid, if a native sea trout population comes into contact with farmed salmon, they will readily become infected with sea lice as described above. Anglers in the west of Ireland have proof of the collapse of the sea trout fishery in the 80s and early 90s, a disaster that coincided with the opening of coastal salmon farms in the Connemara region. Apart from the biological disaster, the effect of this collapse was felt widely in the angling tourism business that this fishery supported. Angling related tourism is an important industry in the Galway area employing a considerable number of people during the season. If wild salmon and sea trout stocks are decimated this industry will collapse. Tourism is the lifeblood of Inis Oirr beside which one half of the proposed fish farm will be located. There are serious concerns on the island about its impact on the tourist industry.

The international fish populations and the biodiversity of oceanic food chains or when fish is turned into feed

As recently as 14th May, the process of turning huge quantities of wild fish into feed for farmed fish and other animals was discussed at Slow Fish Genoa 2013. The conversion of one form of high quality protein into a more expensive form at such a high cost

questions the rationale of this form of fish production. The near collapse of the Peruvian Anchovy Fishery in the 1990s was highlighted by Patricia Majluf of Cayetano Heredia University in Peru. The collapse of the fishery led to its ecological and social degradation. The International Fishmeal and Fish Oil Organisation (IFFO) disparagingly described the anchovy as a small, bony and oily fish with little or no demand for human consumption. They justified their capture on an immense scale for fishmeal and oil production. Luckily in 2006 the CH University launched an Eat Anchoveta Campaign to promote human consumption and a sustainable approach to the fishery of this tasty, delicious, cheap and nutritious fish. Why should this valuable resource be converted into fishmeal which has a feed conversion ratio higher than that of wild salmon but at what cost to the environment? On a global scale, the destruction of a species close to the bottom of the world's most productive food chain - the oceanic upwelling system - amounts to high seas treachery and environmental destruction.

Michèle Mesmain, Slow Food Int., has said that the efficient way to supply much needed protein is to fish at levels that have low environmental impact. It is always better, more equitable and more sustainable to use fish, our last great wild food for people instead of feed. This belief has also been aired by Prof. Daniel Pauly, University of British Columbia who states that humans should be eating the wild fish stocks instead of farmed salmon when he was discussing the role of certain form of aquaculture in reducing pressure on wild stocks of fish.

Organic Status

Salmon farming, as it is currently practised, does not appear to meet with the key organic principle of sustainable production. While it was originally believed that fish feed for organic farms would be (a) trimmings and fish from certified sustainable fisheries with full traceability or (b) trimmings from human consumption fisheries supplemented with certified responsible feed from a sustainable source, it was hoped that there would be an increased substitution of marine proteins with vegetable alternatives. However, the MCS states that no feed grade fisheries have been certified as sustainable. They emphasise that removing wild capture organisms and small fish from the ecosystem has severe adverse ecosystem effects. The provision of organic status to a product which has such suspect sustainability status is incredible. In fact the organic certification of salmon farms is even controversial within the organic movement itself.

Sustainable alternatives

We feel that Ireland could and should be a leader in aquaculture development internationally. Currently there is a move in other major fish farming countries such as Scotland, Norway and Canada to land based fish farms where conditions and effluent can be monitored and dealt with and there is no endangerment of wild fish stocks. Scotland is setting up the world's largest on-shore salmon farm to supply high end clients like Marks and Spencer and Selfridges. There are also on-shore farms being established in Norway and Canada. BIM has rejected this approach as being too expensive but if they are successful abroad there is no reason why they shouldn't work here. However, on the down side, new environmental problems may arise, problems associated with energy and water consumption. There is also potential to create long term sustainable jobs in oyster and shell fish production by ensuring our coastal waters are clean and unpolluted. As is stated by Slow Food International's Slow Fish section "All too often,

intensive fish farms have a negative social and environmental impact. Fish farming must return to less intensive and more responsible methods that respect local ecosystems." The 'blue revolution,' as the growth of aquaculture is sometimes termed, must become green. Ideally it should have local ecological sustainability, a low carbon footprint and be healthy and nutritious. (Slow Fish - Well farmed 2013)

St Hubert's Day

There was a very useful opportunity to meet together at Abbeylax, where the NARGC hosted a most enjoyable St Hubert's Day celebration.



Left to right - Noel Carr, Sean Doris, Minister Hayes, Donal O'Doherty FISSTA and Albert Titterton, Great Game Fairs of Ireland & Irish Country Sports & Country Life.

RECORD SEATROUT FOR FISSTA CHAIRMAN

A record fly caught seatrout was caught on Lough Currane on 1st October 2013 by a well known Cork angler and FISSTA Chairman Paul Lawton from Lee Salmon Anglers. Paul was fishing with local anglers Liam Ellis and Peter Muldoon landed and released an amazing hen sea trout of 14.75 lb.! The fish measured 89.5cm long with a girth of 45 cm. The capture was notified to IFI and here is the comment received back from Dr Willie Roche. Based on previous length and weight information for specimen sea trout from Lough Currane Willie Roche from Inland Fisheries Ireland estimated that this enormous sea trout weighed 14.75 lb. or 6.69 kg. This estimate was based on length and weight information from 57 sea trout from the Lough Currane system over the past three years and was provided by the Irish Specimen Fish Committee.

In 2011 UK angler Sean Smith had a specimen of 13.31 lb. (6.04 kg), a record sea trout for the fishery, which was 83 cm in length. Lough Currane has been the most consistent producer of large sea trout for many decades and the record for the lake has been broken a couple of times in recent years.

Paul Lawton has worked hard for the conservation of our wild salmon and seatrout for many years and it is a fitting message from the Gods that he has been bestowed with this national honour. When told that he had to kill the fish to claim his Irish Specimen badge he protested by immediately releasing the fish as photographs on Youtube will prove. After he hung up his rod at season end, he then received a prize for a hole in one at his local golf course. Corkonians need no encouragement to brag, but there is an extra swagger in his step since these two recent milestone achievements. Well done Paul!

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SEASON 2014

While it is usually May before the season gets into full swing on Mount Falcon's Moy stretch the 3 Rivers Package now offers anglers staying with us the opportunity of an early spring fish on the fly from the Owenduff, Erriff, or Carramore Lake.



Once again we will be offering 4 night packages with 3 days fishing based on 2 anglers staying in a self-catering lodge.

Both spring salmon and summer salmon packages will be available. In addition to the rivers and lake in the spring package, the summer package will give anglers the opportunity to fish the Moy (Mount Falcon Water and/or Moy Fishery), and the lakes that make up the Burishoole system.

Given the quality of the fishing from July onwards we would advise early booking for the Mount Falcon water.

Offers will be regularly placed on the Mount Falcon website and our Fishery Manager Stuart is available to put together bespoke packages to cover your angling requirements.

In addition to our salmon fishing, we also offer guests the opportunity to fish our private trout lake. We also have a clay

pigeon, archery and a driving range within the grounds of the hotel.

And a pool, spa, woodland trails, bicycle hire, children's playground, proximity to beaches and areas of outstanding natural beauty means that the needs of all the family are met not just the angler.

THE ICING ON THE CAKE

The wind is howling and the rain batters the windows on a late October evening, the sheets of rain can be seen clearly when breaks in the cloud briefly open to reveal a bright full moon. It reminds me of a song which recalls 'the Witch of November come early' in reference to the maritime storms so feared by those most vulnerable out at sea. Back home my thoughts are with the migratory fish that have been forging their way through high water into the river a few miles from my home.

With the Harvest time drawing to an end, this might be a good time to reflect on an unusual year. This year has been a strange one as the trout fishing season in March opened to several feet of snow in some areas and many of us were having difficulty getting to a main road never mind a river! The freezing start delayed insect hatches and some hatches such as the black gnat and hawthorne fly didn't appear at all while the buzzer or duckfly hatches were unpredictable, some not happening whilst other localised areas were having abundant hatches and consequently great fishing. There were olives but queen of the flies, the Mayfly (ephemera danica), was up to three weeks late in some places, but the upside of this was that it lingered for longer than usual, giving sustained sport right into July in some places.

Long Hot Summer

A freezing start was followed by a long hot summer, unusually dry for this part of the world, which stifled the runs of migratory fish but handed the trout anglers great opportunities for sport though as the season wore on conditions deteriorated in some rivers and lakes and the fish 'went down,' not reappearing until rain and cooler conditions returned to make things a bit more comfortable.

From the end of May onwards there were many long, hot summers evenings with memorable fishing to buzzers, spent gnat and later in the season to the sedges and caenis, the 'anglers curse' which may be tiny and difficult to imitate but it certainly puts the trout into feeding mode and can sometimes reveal just how many fish a stretch of water may be holding. Some of our classic Limestone Loughs had great hatches of buzzers, olives, caenis



Another rise to whet the appetite - we got a taste of what the fishing must have been like

and falls of spent gnat and an evening spent during a good rise of trout any of the big lakes such as Corrib, Conn, Carra, Arrow, Mask, Sheelin etc is a truly magical experience as the water reflects the blazing sunset and everything turns various shades of purple, violet and magenta; the peace & calm and sense of isolation of these timeless places is wonderful. The mild weather also stimulated insect hatches during the day and anglers fishing lakes such as Lough Conn had fantastic sport as olives poured off the lough inducing the trout to feed hard on the surface.

Early Morning Sport

The settled weather also added the bonus of early morning fishing to caenis or buzzers; either buzzers being mopped up from the hatch of the previous evening or which were hatching during the early morning such as the little apple green variety, much beloved by trout. The morning fishing seemed particularly challenging as fine tippets, small flies and a stealthy approach were required but the fish seemed more inclined to feed in the margins of the lakes at this time of day and there was also the bonus that at least in the morning it's not a race against time as the light fades which is a frustrating experience in the evening.

Saved the best till last!

The tail end of the summer also held some surprises for me and I was doing a Bat Survey late one evening in August when I noticed a huge hatch of buzzers (chironomids) being blown up the Six Mile Water from Lough Neagh. The warm breeze was carrying clouds of fly upriver and when I got to Clotworthy





A Place To Spawn

Although it's great to see the fish return, we want to optimise the potential for them to spawn successfully so we have just completed a Habitat Enhancement Project which entailed placing around 700 tonnes of rock and gravel into a previously dredged channel of the river to create pools, features and spawning redds. The project brought together different government agencies NIEA, Rivers Agency, DCAL Fisheries but also local

Some of our classic Limestone Loughs had great hatches of buzzers, olives, caenis and falls of spent gnat.

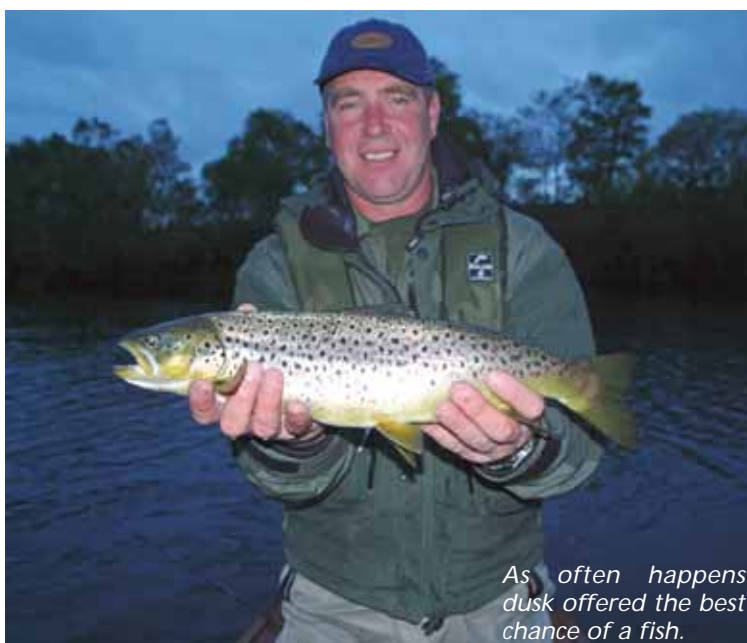
house I leaned over the old stone Deerpark Bridge. To my amazement the pool below me was boiling with fish but not the usual array of little coarse fish and river brownies but everything from a few inches to several pounds. Several huge fish took to the air, slamming down on the still, dark waters causing a huge commotion. This could mean only one thing: the Dollaghan were in!

The Six Mile Water has been hammered by pollution, predation, development, drainage, habitat destruction etc and the Dollaghan plundered by illegal netting until recently but for several years the Antrim Anglers & Six Mile Water Trust have been fighting tooth and nail to have this situation rectified. The issues are being systematically addressed, conservation measures have been put in place and DCAL fisheries were persuaded to start patrols on Lough Neagh. Last year we noticed a large number of fish on the spawning redds but it was a poor year for angling as the water levels were constantly high.

This year has given us a taste of what the fishing must have been like before the monofilament nets, the chemicals, intensive farming, cormorant population explosions, drainage schemes, etc. To see such numbers of fish, to see the wildlife return, the otters, kingfishers, etc., was truly inspiring. The comeback coincided with the fantastic renovation of Clotworthy House and many of the visitors were treated to the sight of large numbers of fish rising in the Castle Grounds pools and the resident otter has become so familiar with people that she takes no notice and goes about her business unperturbed.

business especially Lagan Ferrovial, Constain, (A8 Larne Road scheme) and Henry Boyd Quarries.

We have been fortunate that the work was completed just before the Autumnal storms arrived, in fact, as the last plant equipment was being removed from the site the torrential rain came in so we just made it! Now we have the satisfaction of knowing that those great stocks of Dollaghan will be using those new spawning redds, the next generation of fish will lie safe in the clean gravel over the winter, so as I sit here on a wild October evening and watch the rains beat off the window panes, I know that all the time & effort spent on the river is an investment in the future of our sport and in our angling heritage! Now we can let Nature take its course, any day now those great fish will be pairing up and be busy producing future generations of this fantastic, iconic species. For me that's the Icing on the Cake!



As often happens dusk offered the best chance of a fish.

Blame Europe!

Whenver there is a problem, this is often the cry that goes out. But how informed are we about what goes on in Europe, and how the European Union works? I have been involved in European fisheries management since the Regional advisory Councils were set up on 2005. I had more or less lost connection with Environmental activities since the mid nineties when I was a founder member of both the Irish Whale and Dolphin Group and the Irish Seal Sanctuary. When I was asked to attend the North West Waters Regional Advisory Council (NWWRAC) on behalf of the Irish Seal Sanctuary as a member of the non-catch sector I immediately accepted. I went off to my first meeting in Glasgow armed with a response I had put together to a proposal about discards, even back then, with my colleague, John, an ex-fisherman. I have lived all my life in what used to be a vibrant fishing community, but is now a dormitory town for commuters, and I have seen the harbour covered in dead juvenile fish in the past when catches were often sorted while tied up alongside the harbour. I had been writing for a number of angling publications and had pieces published in some industry publications also. A ban on discards was not even an idea back then, and even suggesting it would have caused derision.

I headed off to this meeting fully expecting the fishing industry to be represented by fishermen interested in their livelihoods. Was I in for a surprise? I found myself addressing a Large table surrounded by 'men in suits,' my first experience of Producer Organisations (POs), some of whom have had some experience as fishermen but most likely as owners. I quickly discovered that it is the owners these people represent, rather than the fishermen on the deck. It soon became apparent that they were very possessive about 'their fish' and that we were not welcome. Many times I have assured them that we are all on the same side, we all want a sustainable future for the marine resources. Our mission statement includes fishermen. Anyway, I had a lot to get used to. Seeing a small, squat Frenchman who looked like he had come straight from the French front row in the seventies, growling at the company, equating this with the polite female voice speaking quietly in my earphones about how his members needed more quota, took a bit of getting used to. I had not experienced instantaneous translation before. Add to this mix the whole European concept which was totally alien to me but I quickly



The Author has been involved in European fisheries management since 2005.

learned about quotas and TACs. But what exactly went on in the Council, Commission and Parliament totally confused me, to say nothing of co-decision and who does what. We struggled on, meeting about four times a year in Madrid Paris, Bilbao, Dublin and occasional other venues. I have to say that many of my friends have said: "It must be great"! But arriving in a city in the dark, leaving the hotel for the meeting in the dark and getting the plane home in the dark quickly becomes hard work. Not to say it's always like that, but it quickly loses its novelty.

We joined a group called Ocean 2012 which was set up in Europe by an American Trust to help lobby for a reform of the Common Fisheries Policy (CFP). They had offices in Brussels and we met a couple of times a year for updates. These guys were the real professional lobbyists for the ordinary folk, with members coming from all sorts of places, from aquariums and island communities to national campaign groups such as the Irish Wildlife Trust. We went along with the requests to email MEPs to try to convince them that it was important to restore fish stocks for everyone's sake, but we suspect we were not hearing the full story all the time, as things happen quickly at times in Brussels. These small stakeholders were the ones who were meant to be at the table with the Producer Organisations at the RACs. But the POs had full time employees and large budgets while the small groups had limited funds and were often attending the meetings as volunteers. We were certainly in this position and struggled each year to find the funds to keep our membership. Once a member though, the RACs are self-funding as expenses are paid by Europe.

Susceptible to overfishing

We certainly considered it important to keep attending and even if only to keep an eye on what the industry were planning and doing was rewarding. We were able to

support calls for the protection of sharks and rays, which had become depleted. I remember catching spurdog on mackerel feathers as a kid. Large areas of sea are devoid of spurdog now as they are very susceptible to overfishing. We heard the industry say that at times the seabed is covered with them. We were able to tell them that these are spawning aggregations, comprised mostly of pregnant females but if they are there, the industry sees a profit and wants them. We were able to work with the European Anglers Alliance and the Shark Trust on this issue. We were members of the Irish Environmental Network and Environmental Pillar so our contacts grew but after an initial surge of membership the other-stakeholder seats in the RACs fell empty as some couldn't afford to join, or became disillusioned and considered the RACs a talking shop. So, despite a percentage reserved for non-catch sector these seats have not been filled. This is all to the advantage of the fishing industry. The Commission and Brussels listen to the advice of the RACs so its important that all interests are represented. Even if the consensus opinion were not what we would like, it is possible to have a minority opinion included in advice. The RACs will continue under the reformed CFP in the shape of Advisory Councils (ACs) the number will increase as new ones such as an aquaculture AC will come into existence. It is important that any interest groups seek to sit on these Advisory Councils. In my opinion angling groups are vastly under-represented; the European Anglers alliance does its best.

The Commission has a press and communication service and this year I was invited to Brussels as part of a group from the Irish Environmental Pillar invited to see how the European Union works. I was happy to accept the invitation. The Irish Environmental Pillar is made up of 27 different environmental groups in Ireland and it was an odd mix of interests who gathered together to see what priorities they had for this visit. The Commission in Dublin would arrange MEPs and others to visit and speak



Unlike discards this rod caught spurdog was about to be returned alive.

to us when in the Parliament building on the second day of our visit. On the first day, we visited the Commission building in Brussels and heard from various representatives of different commissioners and D-Gs from D-G Mare to D-G Environment and the law implementation section. The Commission looked after food during the day and the Pillar fed us at night when we met with a number of Brussels based environmental lobbyists.

The sheer size of the institutions

We had groups interested in forestry and land use to wind farms and aquaculture, nuclear, bees and waste, concerns about all these issues were raised and addressed. Not always to our satisfaction but we were heard. On the afternoon of the second day we visited the head office of the Irish Permanent Representation where we were met by officials and got a nice much-appreciated sandwich. All the officials made it clear that they were there to represent us and would like our input and concerns to be forwarded if we did not get round to them in the short time we had, so cards and e-mail addresses were swapped. The sheer size of the institutions is very impressive. On the day we visited the Parliament building 6,000 visitors were being escorted around the European Parliament building, needless to say security is tight but no more intrusive than your average airport. We met with people with similar concerns and no one got lost. Much to the relief of our guide, Eimear, from the Irish Commission who looked after us like a mother hen. It was a definite eye-opener and we all learned a lot, Long days and hard to keep focused but very rewarding. I learned to my consternation that the Fisheries Committee was voting the following week to only pay expenses to the catch sector to attend the ACs. This would make a farce of stakeholder participation. The day after I got home I sent an e-mail to the Commissioner (Maria Danamaki) expressing my concerns and had an answer back the same day. She was aware of this and was not going to let it happen. Her idea is that everything has to be done on an equal basis for catch and non-catch sectors. So it can bring results to keep on the ball. While I certainly cannot claim to understand all the process of European institutions, I do have a better grasp of what goes on in Brussels.

Anyway, rural interests, angling shooting and hunting interests, if they have not already done so, should in my opinion, ask the European Commission in Dublin or wherever to try to fit them in for a visit. They will learn a lot and don't be timid about this because they have allocated a budget for this and you have paid into this. The week after we were there Eimear had a big group of farmers going. I am glad to have the opportunity to let others know about how rewarding this trip was. If it arises, you can be sure that anti-fieldsports groups will be ready to use lobbyists to fight their corner and it behoves us to be prepared and ready to fight our corner in the corridors where the decisions are made.

Umba and Grand Varzuga 2013



Our 2013 season turned out to be one of the hottest and driest seasons on Kola Peninsula in almost one hundred years! My old embattled but trusty fly reels are screaming out for oil and a service, and my smelly waders need a serious scrub after kilometres of long and sweaty hikes.

Grand Varzuga – A true gem

My Varzuga season started on 20th May when I arrived in Grand Varzuga together with our two Swedish fishing guides. As we flew in by helicopter we could see that the mighty Varzuga River below us was already was about 3-4 feet below its normal seasonal level. Unless something radical happened quickly it would only be a matter of a week or two before much of the river 'disappeared'. Luckily for us the first two weeks at Grand Varzuga turned out really well and we managed to land just under 400 salmon. (How on earth you get that under such difficult conditions, I don't know.) The second two weeks were an even bigger challenge, with a lot of tough hiking to reach the 'hot' pools and fishing spots. As a result of our hard work and persistence we managed to land nine 20lb fish. An exceptional record for Varzuga that proved what we already knew - the biggest Varzuga salmon were heading to our part of the river! All in all we landed 510 fish during our four weeks at Grand Varzuga - a staggering result when you take into account the extreme conditions.

The many faces of the wonderful Umba River

At Umba River we experienced some of the finest spring fishing for many years, achieving high numbers

of twenty pounders every week. In spite of low water on most of the other big salmon rivers on Kola, the Umba was still running perfectly with no sign of what was to come later in the season. One of the many memorable stories from Umba this spring stars David Stocker and Peter Kremsner, who came directly to the Umba from Grand Varzuga. During just five days they manage to land six twenty pounders between them – what a blast! And then there was our Finish friend, Thomas Tallskog, who came to Umba for the first time after 8 years fishing Norway's grand salmon rivers without a single catch. He landed twelve salmon including a big twenty pounder. For more stories from the past Umba spring season please check our Umba reports archive [here](#).

The middle of August saw the start of our autumn season at Umba. With 146 salmon from 8 rods, our first week at Umba turned out to be one of the best in many a fall. But, even then it was already clear that, if we didn't get a dramatic change of weather soon, the river would soon become short of water; a situation we had never seen before at Umba. For five solid weeks the sun shone from dawn to dusk without a single drop of rain. The reservoirs that usually provide a steady source of water started to run dry, and our ever reliable Umba River started to look more like a dried up creek. Many of the large famous pools became so shallow that we couldn't fish them. According to some of the local old-timers, this season was apparently the driest in almost hundred years. But, where there is a will there is a way, and our guests, being hardened well-skilled salmon anglers with determination and hardy spirit, still managed to notch up a fair number of salmon in the logbook over the next seven weeks.

Picking out the best stories from the autumn season is difficult since there were so many, but here are a few of

the 'goodies.' Whilst in Krivets, Heinz Pape managed to land three beautiful salmon with a total weight of 61 pounds, and his 25 lb Umba Whopper was the highlight of the week. And then there were the two Danish brothers, Jesper and Erik Sloth, who landed a series of super chromes of 22lb, 21lb, 17lb, 3 x 15lb and 7 salmon just under 10lb. And, not to be forgotten is the series of huge resident salmon, which must have all been between 32 and 40lb plus. The biggest was a 34lb 'crocodile' of a fish caught by Clive Bruton. Finally I have to give mention to Ken Poincelet's 26lb Super Whopper during October. A better fall run will be difficult to find anywhere else, and it underlines why so many Salmon anglers return to Umba year after year. I could continue the story telling, but these few tales show us once again that Russia still is one of the most reliable salmon destinations in the world, even under difficult, though thankfully occasional, weather conditions.

We at Salmon Junkies also take this opportunity to salute our 49 new Twenty Pounder members for 2013. Wear your Red '20lb' caps with dignity and pride guys!

Aside from the tough fishing conditions on the entire Kola Peninsula, this season will also be remembered as a time of loss. Sadly our community lost two anglers and their Russian fishing guide when flying to Rynda River

with Kharlovka Company. Their helicopter flipped and crashed during take-off. All of us at Salmon Junkies will honour their memory.

During the same weekend we also lost our dear long-term friend and Umba Camp Manager, Nick Podolsky. Even today it's difficult to comprehend that Nick is not here anymore. My memories of Nick are plentiful and rich, and it's difficult to believe that there will be no more adventures together. I will always remember Nick as one of the most extraordinary people in the Salmon fishing community. Our world has lost a great man, a visioned environmentalist and a passionate salmon angler. We miss you dearly and will never forget you Nick!

Before ending, we wish to express a huge thanks to our two Swedish fishing guides, Mark Leander and Mark Nilldorff, who helped us at Grand Varzuga this season. Guys, you really did a great job and made a big difference. We also want to thank our dear friend Orla Bertram Nielsen who has been assisting us at Umba at times. Orla - you are a true Salmon Junkie and an exceptional host. Salmon Junkies also sends its thanks to our Russian partner who has made all this possible, in spite of the many difficulties down the road. And, finally a big thanks to our long-term friend and new Umba





Camp Manager, Igor Kryzhopolskiy, who took over Umba management at very short notice. Well done Igor and keep up your ever present good spirit; we at Salmon Junkies look forward to see your smiling face again next season.

For our upcoming season in Russia we at Salmon Junkies are really looking forward to welcoming all of our many old friends and, of course, hope to continue to introduce new friends and supporters to our matchless rivers. With your support we will make every effort to protect and preserve the future of two of this world's finest salmon rivers – The Umba and Varzuga Rivers.



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GUNDOG GOSSIP

Some years ago, after following up an ad in the Press, I came across a dog food provider called CSJ. At the time, a few friends and I bought a pallet of food from CSJ, and very good and price competitive it was, albeit distribution problems in Ireland prevented any further use at that time. It was obvious that this series of products, developed originally for sheepdogs, had a big future and I had noticed over the intervening years some prominent mentions of CSJ as a sponsor not only of sheepdog events, but increasingly with Gundogs.

On arrival at the CLA in July, it was great to see the Wales and Scotland teams resplendent in their red and blue uniforms, sponsored by CSJ. Alan Rees the Wales Captain introduced me to Ceri Rundle who formed and still runs CSJ, and he expressed his gratitude to a generous sponsor without whom the Gundog Teams for the CLA would be struggling. CSJ products are now available in Ireland from a number of Distributors (see website for details). I myself have used a mixture called Absolute Tripe coming into the shooting season and with excellent results – the dogs love it.

In a conversation with Martin Deeley, who makes the trip from the USA to commentate on the CLA, Ceri Rundle queried why Gundog owners never train their dogs to respond to a sheepdog type whistle. “Do not know,” was Martin’s honest answer, but in further discussion it was pointed out that an Irish handler had used such a whistle many years ago.

That man was John Dick, a farmer from Limerick and a former steeplechase jockey, who owned and trained a brilliant dog called Turramurra Beau. This dog, by FTCh Jasmine Star x FTCh Towerline Swift, only ever ran in a handful of trials in Ireland, but quickly attained Champion status, as well as winning the Irish Championship in 1992. He subsequently ran with great merit in the British Championship at Sandringham, being unlucky to go out near the end. Anyone who has seen the video of the event can clearly hear the sheepdog whistle. Beau was a very fine hunting dog, who unfortunately only mated five bitches before being sold to Japan. I was lucky enough to own a son of Beau, FTCh Ernevale Urn, and can confirm that his hunting prowess was evident in his progeny.

It is with regret that I can inform you that John Dick passed away earlier this year, but his performance with Beau at Sandringham, with his sheepdog whistle, are still talked about to this day.

The breeder of the Turramurra dogs was Jim Curtin from Cork who ran many fine trials and produced some excellent dogs. He also bred Turramurra Teal who won the Irish Championship for Tom Moran in 1995.

The CLA was a great occasion for renewing friendships and seeing some very fine Gundog work. It was also the end of an era in that John Halstead retired as captain of the English team, after many years of devoted and successful service. His successor is Ian Openshaw, who is taking the reins from next year. A formidable competitor, who will probably make up his

century of FTCh’s this year, Ian will bring fresh impetus to the array of talent which exists amongst English Gundog handlers. Other home nations will need to be on the ball in 2014. And as the chill winds of winter approach, I thought we could share a few warm memories of the stunning performance by Ireland at the CLA in the summer past and how better than through the lens of Lorenzo Hynes. The smiling faces say it all really.

In late August, I also ventured down to the Great Game Fairs of Ireland event in Birr. This was a magnificent two day festival of country sports in the heart of rural Ireland, already covered by this magazine in other reports. The Gundog events had splendid ground and were expertly organised. Again, it was a time to renew acquaintances, and a pleasure to see Kieron Murphy, Derek Harford and the team from Broadmeadows Gundog Club who have done so much sterling work over the years. The CLA team had obviously not let up on their training with Sean Moriarty, Mick Walshe, Sean Diamond and Lorenzo Hynes featuring in the top honours. Plenty to enjoy – good people, friendly competition and a great atmosphere.

There have been many changes at The Kennel Club in Clarges Street, W1. The Chairman of the Field Trial Committee is now Wilson Young, and his deputy is Graham Cox. The Field Trial Liaison Committee, on which I sit, also has a new Chairman in Malcolm Taylor, with the deputy being Phillip Highfield. There are also a significant number of changes on the Field Trial Committee. The Kennel Club faces significant change and challenges, and has an onerous task in guiding in a responsible way, the world of dogs. We wish all of the new appointees success.

A question of pattern

One contentious point on which to finish. Will someone in the Spaniel world please produce a definitive statement on the correct pattern and distance for a spaniel when quartering. This issue raised its head at the CLA because, quite rightly, 80 out of 120 marks were allocated to hunting, with scores from two very experienced judges oscillating between 20 and the upper 70s. Surely too great a spread for such a basic issue in such a prestigious event. I, personally, witnessed one ‘boot polisher’ hardly leaving the handler’s feet, and one charging so quickly up the course that the handler was running to keep up. I realise that there is a linear relationship between distance and control – but...?

I can hear the purists already sharpening tongues and knives – it all depends on wind direction, ground cover etc, etc. I agree completely, but further investigation on my part has revealed absolute confusion. Comments like “It is different in Scotland,” or “It should be the most comfortable distance to shoot over,” do not do much for clarification. One A panel judge confessed “When A panel X is in action, I always end up going out early for taking in too much ground.”

For such a basic, all important spaniel function, surely some agreed authoritative opinion is needed to focus minds.

I look forward to some constructive discussion, in the meantime good luck to all Championship participants, and have a very Happy Christmas and a merry and exceedingly sporting New Year !



Retiring England captain John Halstead in contemplative mood.



The scribe in residence surveys the course.



Game Fair veterans - Tim and Hilary Crothers.

TEAM IRELAND CLA 2013

All photos by Lorenzo Hynes



Wales captain Alan Rees does not want to look at the scoreboard.



Just a reminder.



Well Captain - what's this about me running first?



Labrador contingent attack the Pimms.



Spaniels prefer ice cream.



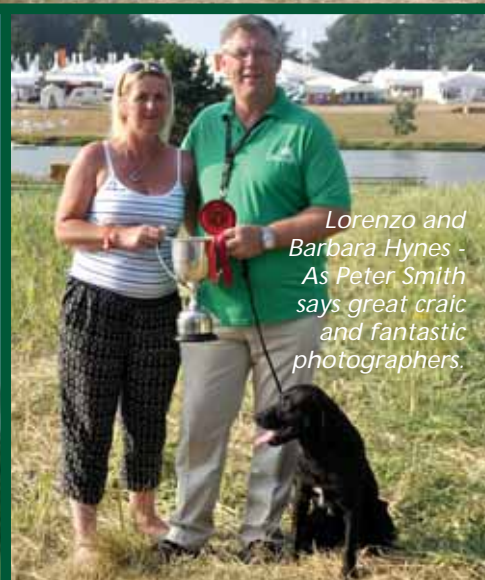
Defeated Welsh decide to go shopping.



Great run - who loves ya baby!



Behind every great team captain is a very supportive woman - Tom and Maeve Hughes.



Lorenzo and Barbara Hynes - As Peter Smith says great craic and fantastic photographers.

One of the Midland's leading hotels, the 3-star Abbeyleix Manor Hotel is one of the best hotels in Laois and offers a restful retreat and an ideal base to explore the hidden beauties of County Laois and central Ireland. So why not...

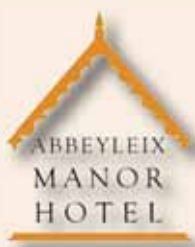


Stay and Dine at Abbeyleix Manor

Situated on the N8 just outside the pretty town of Abbeyleix, the three-star Abbeyleix Manor Hotel is the perfect place to relax and stay for pleasure or for business.

The hotel is within

easy walking distance of Abbeyleix itself, only 8 kilometres from Portlaoise and within easy commuting distance of both Cork and Dublin, making it the natural stopping point in central Ireland. And, once you've stopped there once, you are sure to return, for the welcome is warm, the



stay... explore... relax... dine... escape

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Abbeyleix hotel

food comforting and the bedrooms just made to relax in.

A family owned and run hotel, the Abbeyleix Manor Hotel was built by Bobby and Jenny Kent, who moved from a farming background to slip easily and seamlessly into the hospitality business. Abbeyleix Manor opened its doors in 2000 and, in 2006, was extended to what it is today – a 44 bedroom hotel complete with dining room, bar, meeting rooms and a large function room.

April Kent, Bobby and Jenny's daughter, told ICS&CL: "We used to get a great deal of passing trade, but that slowed markedly with the opening of the Abbeyleix bypass in 2010. Thankfully, we have a loyal and supportive local customer base and we are still a favourite stopping

point for travellers who know where we are and how good the hotel is."

COMFORT AND STYLE

Certainly, the Abbeyleix Manor Hotel offers comfort with buckets of style. Each bedroom is individually decorated and the lobby area with its roaring fire is certain to make visitors feel right at home. The dining room is bright, airy and comfortable and the combination of bedrooms, function room and meeting rooms make this hotel an ideal, central location for club or association meetings and functions.

There is plenty to see and do in the area also, including some very fine angling at the nearby Laois Angling Centre, which, with four spring fed lakes, offers game fishing on the

fly and bait (worm only) and coarse fishing for carp and tench. If golf is your thing, there are no fewer than 5 golf courses in the area, making the Abbeyleix Manor Hotel an ideal base for a golfing society mini-break. Enjoy history and culture at Heritage House in Abbeyleix and shop 'til you drop at Kildare Shopping Village.

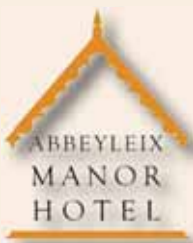
COME IN AND EAT

Of course, every good hotel offers great food and the Abbeyleix Manor Hotel is no different! Breakfast, lunch, dinner to relax over or a la carte to savour, Abbeyleix Manor delivers all with great taste and fine style. Head Chef, Tom Cosgrove, prides himself on offering a mouth-watering array of traditional and contemporary dishes, from

succulent sirloin steak cooked to your individual perfection to homemade pizza and from Thai green vegetable curry to the house speciality, the Manor Mixed Grill, every dish leaving the kitchen is cooked to order and delivers great taste. The daily carvery lunch is extremely popular, with the Manor Bar and Bistro menu coming to the fore in the evenings.

Tom has very kindly shared with us recipes for two of his customers' favourite dishes, beef stroganoff and pan fried chicken in a sweet pepper sauce.

To find out more about staying at Abbeyleix Manor Hotel, call +353 (0)57 873 0111, email info@abbeyleixmanorhotel.com or visit www.abbeyleixmanorhotel.com



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INGREDIENTS

- 4 chicken fillets
- cornflour seasoned with salt and pepper
- 1 of each red, yellow and green pepper, sliced
- 1 onion sliced
- 1 pint of mixture of white wine, chicken stock and fresh cream
- 2 tablespoons of oil
- knob of butter



Pan Fried Chicken Fillet in a Sweet Pepper Sauce

METHOD

1. Preheat the oven to 180C/350F/Gas 4.
2. Coat the chicken fillets in the seasoned cornflour.
3. Pan fry fillets until golden brown on either side and then place in a deep tray
4. Add butter to the pan and sauté the peppers and onions.
5. Add the white wine, chicken stock and fresh cream to the pan and let it reduce at a slow simmer for 20 minutes.
6. Pour the sauce over the chicken fillets in the tray.
7. Cook in the oven for 25 minutes.
8. Serve with freshly boiled rice or mashed potatoes for a warming winter dish with a hint of summer!



Beef Stroganoff

INGREDIENTS

- 600g sirloin steak (original recipes uses fillet tails)
- ½ teaspoon paprika
- 2 tablespoons plain flour
- salt and pepper
- 1 of each red, yellow and green pepper sliced
- 1.5 tablespoons lemon juice
- 1.5 tablespoons vinegar
- 250ml fresh cream
- 225g button mushrooms (whole)
- 2 onions sliced

METHOD

1. Mix the flour, seasoning and paprika together.
2. Thinly slice the beef and roll in the seasoned flour. Pan fry beef for a couple of minutes and then remove from the pan.
3. Add to the pan the peppers, mushrooms and onions and fry/sauté. Put the meat back into the pan with the vegetables.
4. Mix the lemon juice and vinegar and add to the pan bring it to a simmer. Add the fresh cream.
5. Correct the seasoning and simmer for another 5 minutes. It is important not to overcook the meat or it will toughen so keep a close eye on it.
6. Serve with freshly boiled rice and garnish the stroganoff with a few sprigs of coriander or parsley.

A Culinary Christmas

by Emma Cowan

Whether you go for modern turkey, alternative beef or truly traditional goose, make sure your Christmas feast is fantastic with these easy to cook recipes.



Noel McMeel's Roast Turkey with Herb Butter

Serves 14

INGREDIENTS

- 14lb/6.5kg turkey, with neck, heart and gizzard
- 4oz/100g butter at room temperature
- 1.5tbsp fresh thyme, chopped
- 1tbsp fresh rosemary, chopped
- 1 large onion, quartered
- 2pt/900ml low-salt chicken broth/stock
- 2 large fresh rosemary sprigs
- 2 large fresh thyme sprigs
- 1 bay leaf
- 3 tbsp plain flour

METHOD

1. Mix butter and herbs in small bowl. Rinse turkey inside and out; pat dry. Place on rack set in large roasting pan. Sprinkle inside and out with salt and pepper. Starting at neck end, slide hand between skin and breast meat to loosen skin. Spread one quarter to one third of the herb butter over breast meat under skin. Rub the remaining butter over outside of turkey. Place turkey parts and onion quarters in pan around turkey. (Can be prepared 1 day ahead. Cover and chill.)

2. Set rack at lowest position in oven and preheat to 180C/350F/Gas 4. If stuffing turkey, spoon stuffing loosely into main cavity and neck cavity. Tuck wing tips under; tie legs together loosely to hold shape. Roast turkey uncovered 1 hour.

3. Tent turkey breast and tops of drumsticks loosely with foil; roast 1 hour longer. Add 1 cup chicken broth/stock, herb sprigs, and bay leaf to drippings in pan.

4. Continue to roast, basting with more of the chicken stock and pan juices every 30 minutes, for another 2 hours 30 minutes longer for an unstuffed turkey and 3 hours longer for a stuffed turkey.

5. Transfer turkey to platter and let stand 30 minutes before serving.



Mustard and thyme crusted rib-eye of beef

James Richardson, owner and chef at Old Barn Steakhouse Markethill is already garnering something of a reputation for his prowess with beef – his steaks are famous.

INGREDIENTS

- For the beef
- 2.25kg/5lb rib-eye of beef, boned and rolled
- 450ml/¾ pint red wine
- 150ml/¼ pint red wine vinegar
- 1 tbsp sugar
- 1 tsp ground allspice
- 2 bay leaves
- 1 tbsp chopped fresh thyme
- 2 tbsp black peppercorns, crushed
- 2 tbsp English or Dijon mustard

METHOD

1. Place the rib-eye of beef into a large non-metallic dish.

2. In a jug, mix together the red wine, vinegar, sugar, allspice, bay leaf and half of the thyme until well combined.

3. Pour the mixture over the beef, turning to coat the joint evenly in the liquid. Cover the dish loosely with cling film and set aside to marinate in the fridge for at least four hours, turning occasionally. (The beef can be marinated for up to two days.)

4. When the beef is ready to cook, preheat the oven to 190C/375F/Gas 5. Lift the beef from the marinade, allowing any excess liquid to drip off, and place on a plate, loosely covered, until the meat has returned to room temperature.

5. Sprinkle the crushed peppercorns and the remaining thyme onto a plate. Spread the mustard evenly all over the surface of the beef, then roll the beef in the peppercorn and thyme mixture to coat.

6. Place the crusted beef into a roasting tin and roast in the oven for 1 hour 20 minutes (for medium-rare) or 1 hour 50 minutes (for well-done).

7. Meanwhile, for the horseradish cream, mix the crème fraîche, creamed horseradish, mustard and chives together in a bowl until well combined. Season, to taste, with salt and freshly ground black pepper, then spoon into a serving dish and chill until needed.

8. When the beef is cooked to your liking, transfer to a warmed platter and cover with aluminium foil, then set aside to rest in a warm place for 10-15 minutes before serving.

FOR THE HORSERADISH CREAM

- 200ml/7fl oz crème fraîche
- 4 tbsp ready-made creamed horseradish
- 1 tsp English mustard
- 1 tbsp chopped fresh chives
- sea salt and freshly ground black pepper
- roasted root vegetables, to serve



INGREDIENTS

- 10/12Lbs/4.5 – 5.5kg goose
- salt and pepper

POTATO STUFFING

- 3lbs/1.3kg potatoes, peeled, boiled and mashed
- 6oz/175g butter
- 1 medium onion, chopped
- ½ tsp ground sage
- 2 tsp salt
- ½ tsp pepper
- 4oz/125g chopped parsley

APPLE SAUCE

- 2lbs/900g cooking apples
- 8fl oz/225ml water
- 4 oz/125g sugar
- 1 tbsp lemon juice
- 4oz/125g raisins
- nutmeg
- cinnamon

Roast Goose with Potato Stuffing and Apple Sauce

Serves 6 to 8

METHOD

1. Preheat oven to 230C/450F/Gas 8.
2. Clean the goose and remove any large pieces of interior fat. Pierce the goose in several places in the skin with a fork. This will help release the goose fat as it cooks. Rub with salt and pepper.
3. Lightly fill the goose with the potato stuffing (see below). Place on a rack in an uncovered roasting pan. Roast for 15 minutes or until the skin starts to brown.
4. Reduce heat to 160C/325F/Gas 3 and roast 25 minutes per pound. Take off excess fat during the roasting time (a good idea is to use a pipette baster to remove fat and then reserve it in a sealable container for later use). The goose is done when the skin is nicely browned and crisp and the drumstick moves easily.

POTATO STUFFING

5. Pass the potatoes through a ricer or sieve, then place them in a large bowl.
6. Melt the butter in a frying pan and pour over the potatoes (leave a little butter in the pan for the onions). Blend well.
7. With the butter that is left in the frying pan sauté the onions over low heat until they are translucent. When done add the onions to the potato mixture. Add the sage, salt pepper and parsley. Blend well.

APPLE SAUCE

8. Wash, core and peel the apples. Cut into quarters. Put apples in a large saucepan and add the water. Bring to a boil, then immediately turn down to simmer. Simmer until the apples are soft.
9. Add the sugar, lemon juice and raisins. Season with nutmeg and cinnamon to taste. Cook for another 5 minutes, then remove from heat.
10. Let stand 30 minutes.
11. Reheat and serve warm when you are ready to dine.

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Iwalked into the small brick built building. A fresh cedar scent hung in the air, a radio played in the background and a brand new and very fluffy carpet was now under my feet as I entered the small house to the rear. I could have been anywhere, until half a dozen tiny puppies came hurtling round the corner to greet me! Up on my legs they climbed, licking, sniffing and full of excitement as they pulled, chewed and investigated every inch below my knee. "That one is gone, so is that one and that one as well." Left was a handful of puppies that, while they were lovely, lively and everything you would want from such a pup, didn't really catch my eye. "There is another little quiet one in here that sleeps a lot. Do you want to see her because she hasn't been taken yet, everyone thinks she is too small?"

I crouched through a small door and the red glow of a heat bulb was the first thing I felt. In the corner slept a very small, fragile and delicate looking little blue pup. I edged towards her and she stirred a little and, as I reached down to pick her up, she barely moved at all, so deep was she sleeping. I held her delicately in my hands and eventually she squinted in my direction, her blue eyes trying their best to focus. Her paws were so small I covered one between my finger and thumb. "We were going to keep her ourselves, but if you want her then she's yours."

I didn't hesitate for a minute and before I knew it I was driving down the dual carriageway with what would become one of my most reliable rabbiting partners ever, on the passenger seat, in a small plastic box I still have to this day, asleep of course!

Our first few days were easy, not like they should have been. She didn't cry, whine or whimper after her mother. She slept quiet all night and most of the day. If she wasn't sleeping, she was eating and that's the way it continued for a few months, until she began to find her feet. What began then was, without joking, some of the most difficult times I have ever put in with a pup in my life. The little blue runt I named Molly who started life as a sleepy blue eyed angel turned into nothing short of a demon for the best part of 18 months.

It is difficult to describe just how difficult the little bitch became; it went on constantly sometimes. From she was first exercised in the morning until she was closed in at night, Molly made a constant nuisance of herself. If I wasn't running across fields at 7.30 in the morning



Before the trouble began.

trying to catch up with her, I was trying to extract her from my eldest bitch Ruby, who she might be trying to take a bite out of! It's to Ruby's personality that credit is due, because any other dog would have put an end to her antics before they got properly started. She attacked Ruby on several occasions quite severely as a pup. Not only that, but she constantly stole her food, so much so I had to feed them apart. She then began to push old Ruby from her kennel at night, taking her space and refusing to let her back in, biting her if she tried at all. She spent her days digging, chewing, barking and whining.

I increased her exercise to three or four walks a day, spent more time with her and even changed her diet, but nothing I did seemed to settle the young bitch at all. My intentions where to begin her ferreting in a few months time, but I could barely let her near the ferret court, let alone take her out hunting with them. My attempts at breaking her to ferrets were short lived and it seemed the ferrets disliked her as much as she disliked them. She refused to leave them alone and chased them round the garden, lifting and attempting to shake them.

At my wits end

Obedience became a serious problem, nothing worked. Recall, retrieve or even sit didn't work as often as it did. I was at my wits end, even my good wife

became frustrated with the situation. My intentions were to make a rabbiting partner that could accompany me ferreting, work with the nets, mark holes and even do a little lamping, and as much as that sounds a big chore it's something that comes pretty easily to most dogs reared to it. But how could I work on these things when the little bitch didn't even have recall? I began to blame myself, what was I doing wrong?

I pondered over other dogs I had owned. I owned Springers as a child and anyone knows Springers are lively dogs, but they were nothing compared to this. I couldn't stand another day of fighting the other dogs, barking at everything that moved, chewing the ferret court to get at the ferrets, climbing on the kennel roof and trying to get over the wall, no more of any of it. It was time to make a decision.

I spoke to several dog behaviourists thinking there was something not quite right. I changed her diet, tried endless amounts of things but to no avail. Perhaps the time had come when we had to part company? I pondered it and considered it, but couldn't do it. I knew the fire in her could be cooled and there was only one way to do it, Work!

I almost cried the first day we went ferreting; I have never spent a day like it in my life with a dog. I had an 11 month old pup, two rabbits and a ferret wrapped up in a longnet, and that is the absolute truth. I tried to free her from the net and she bit me several times, got free and did a runner across the fields and what made it even worse was it was ground that we had a lot of trouble to get on, and our attitude had to remain professional at all times.

I gave up, I let her go, this time I wasn't going to follow her too closely but kept her in sight. An hour or so later she returned, looking a little lost. I tried to get her in the truck, but as always I had to catch her and load her in because she didn't like it and would run off if I tried to get her to jump in. I drove home that day very annoyed but determined that she would not beat me, no way.

We went lamping for the first time some weeks later, it was equally as exhilarating! I love reading stories of people taking young lurchers out lamping for the first time, and how they catch and retrieve their first rabbit. I would love to tell you the same, but Molly caught hers and took it about two miles in the opposite direction! These antics went on, night after night for a few weeks. There was no retrieve, the only thing I tried to retrieve each night I went lamping was the dog. By this stage I had just about given up, although every now and then she would have a good day, a day when she would settle and when she did she was a pleasure of a little bitch to have around. It seemed sometimes she wanted my entire attention, and focused better when it was just her and I.

Little by little, a corner was turned

I noticed a pattern and the more time we spent alone the more we connected, perhaps it was my imagination but it seemed to work wonders. Little by little, young Molly turned a corner and, as she approached her second birthday, she began to become the dog I had always hoped she would be and, for the first time in a while, we had days and nights when things went as they should.

She began to jump into the truck for a walk, she stopped her anxious behaviour a little more each day and really put herself into her work. It appeared the more work I gave Molly the more settled she was. I got into a habit of walking her alone in the morning without the other dogs, just me and her. It worked very well and little by little she settled down. The ferrets became a friend rather than an enemy, and her constant winter lamping and ferreting regime seemed to keep her mind occupied and tired enough that after a full day or night, or indeed both; she had little interest in anything but resting the next day.

I really didn't realise it myself, but up until this time Molly had been honing her skills as a ferreting and rabbiting dog so much that she became quite handy to have around, in fact I would go as far as to say she overtook my other lurchers in the ferreting capacity and continues to do so to this day.

The summer of 2009 really was a memorable one for me, because it was the first time I stepped into the Game Fair arena, not alone but with young Molly by my side. Albert Titterington, who always encouraged me to do so since I began doing my work with the Great Game Fairs of Ireland said it would really set off the entire thing. Little did Albert know that my reason for avoiding doing so was that I had an irate and unpredictable 19 inch maniac, and not the lovely little whippet everyone thought she was!

The thought of Molly exiting the ring to have it out with someone's dog while several hundred people looked, or in fact just exiting the ring altogether and leaving me in the lurch (no pun intended) and looking like and idiot left me with a shiver down my spine! As my name was announced and I donned my headpiece I remember thinking that day I wished I had forgotten the dog instead of my long net pegs.

How wrong I was, how right was Albert was and how brilliant young Molly was! She loved the ring and the audience loved her. She tore up the arena like a track greyhound, jumping and leaping through the nets, retrieving the dummies and paying absolutely no attention to anyone but me. I was relieved it had gone well, and elated at how she performed. People commented on her performance and how well behaved she was, some even asking how I trained her. But the truth was Molly was never trained for the ring and if it

had of been my decision she never would have been in the ring. What worked inside that large square of barriers was for her no different from what happens for her in the field. The nets go up, the rabbits bolt and she does what she does, I think it makes little difference if their happens to be a few people looking on, she is just driven to catch what moves and that's it, should it be a dummy rabbit or not. Work and experience are the only things that make a dog, and goodness knows Molly has had plenty of that.

At present she is my 'Numero Uno' ferreting partner, and I really cannot be without her when serious rabbiting work is called for. Her patience really is outstanding and this is what really is called for with a genuine ferreting partner. Forget muscle power, speed and all that you may require in another dog, because patience is the key for the rabbitier.

While my other dogs have slunk off down the hedge in search of some action themselves if the rabbits stop bolting or don't at all, Molly will be standing shivering to the bitter end. If she knows a rabbit is at home and the ferrets are down there is nothing that will make her leave. I have witnessed her standing on a rabbit warren in mid February with the hailstones literally bouncing off her while the other dogs took shelter below my truck, refusing to move until the rabbit bolted. If she marks the warren and tells us someone is at home, then wild horses will not move her until that rabbit is shifted!

Through a lot together

It's been six years now since we first met and four since we stepped in the arena together and in that six years I have learned to work with her faults as she has

with mine. We have ironed out most of the problems that we had at the beginning, but Molly can be still quite unpredictable with unfamiliar bitches and I have to be careful on occasion, more for her safety than the other dog. I have always put this down to her being attacked as a puppy by a large Bull Terrier type dog for which she needed veterinary treatment afterwards, but on the flip side I probably should have done more to socialise her afterwards. We have been through a lot together, and I always laugh when the vet pulls out her file when we have a visit. It consists mainly of stitches and believe it or believe it not, she has had a grand total of 75 stitches in her short career, mainly down to chasing pheasants in the summer months and having collisions with wire. There have been a lot of ups and downs with young Molly, a lot of good times and bad but even when we fall out badly, she will sit down in front of me and offer her boney little paw in friendship and I cant but accept it, how couldn't I?

On the roughest and wettest of winter evenings when I am cleaning out the ferrets and the other dogs have scampered off into their warm kennel, she will sit shivering and waiting until I am finished before leaving, almost waiting until I close the back door. She is what one hunting fellow called 'A one man dog,' when he tried to take her to one side of the hedge with the nets and she wrestled him to get away back to me!

And when I go into the arena before bringing her on, only a mountain man can restrain her for wanting to get in to me! As I have said, there was a time when I seriously considered that we should go our separate ways, but I stuck with her and I am glad I did because she paid me back in full.



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Looking Back at our 2013 Dog Shows

As the short days and dark nights creep in upon us and cold winter winds and falling snow flakes whisper in my ear, my love affair with the canine world and all its trapping is over for another year. Yes, the dog show season of 2013 has come to an end. And what a year that was. We could not complain about the weather, with the exception of a few wet show days, overall we had good summer weather.

As the long winter of 2012 faded away, the show and racing season of 2013 at last appeared on the horizon. My phone was red hot, with show and game fair organisers, north and south of the border requesting free dates on my now well established show list. Within weeks all spaces were filled, and the first shows of 2013 had arrived on our door steps. Dessie Mackin's show and race day was the first show of the year North of the border, while Drangan Harrier, Thurles, Co Tipperary kicked off the first show of the year in the South of Ireland. Both top shows and great family days out. The show calendar was soon full, with two shows every weekend right up to end of season in September. These included the NILRC first annual show, at the Field of Dreams Maghera, Mourne show, in the beautiful kingdom of Mourne, Man O' War Keady, Game and Country Fair at Shanes Castle, Matt Slevin's show in Wexford, Birr Castle Game Fair, Birr Co Offaly, Rathnew Show Co Wicklow, and many more too numerous mention.

There was a very high standard of showing and racing dogs at our shows in 2013. Just to mention some of the winners that spring to mind through the year. First on the Lurcher scene, we had James Woods with his winning lurcher Rusty. What a well turned out dog. Paul Reid with his lurcher, a real power house springs to mind as does Fiona Devlin with Maverick who has won everything before him both in showing and racing. Mickey Quinn with Lady, another beautiful young lurcher, and so young to have won many trophies. Dessie Mackin/John Heslip, and Peter Morgan carried home numerous trophies in the terrier ring, while John Shaw, Paul Reynolds, Pearse Reynolds, Tracy Gill, Kirsty Fyffe, and Davy Best picked up top prizes with their beautiful whippets. Tom Barry and his wife Leanne had many proud moments showing too with their winning dogs. There were many more top quality dogs, and best in show winners, whose names appeared in this magazine through this year, but lack of space space dictates that I cannot mention everybody. We had fun too with the digging competitions which were hugely successful at all our shows this year, as were the ladies and gents Tug O' War and the ferret racing.

For me the highlights were Shanes Castle and Birr Castle Game Fairs. At Shanes, Pat McGrath's Joey won Ireland's premium race The Master McGrath, and Rose and Patsy McCoy won three all Ireland Champion races. The Overall All Ireland Show Champion of Champions 2013 went to Dessie Mackin with Soda. What an accolade for Dessie, one man and his winning dog. There was a real flurry of excitement around Birr with the Judging of the Five Nations Terrier and Lurcher Championships. These two Championships went to: Lurchers Fiona Devlin with her winning lurcher Maverick, and Martyn Hulme's terrier Dodge. Shanes Castle and Birr Castle had the largest turnout ever this year, with both events going from strength to strength. I cannot wait to see what surprises are in store for 2014. I am really looking forward to 2014 when we will have for the first time a Five Nations Champion Whippet. It will be so exciting!

However, this year has been tinged with sadness with the death of two great country sportsmen. Republic of Ireland Editor of this magazine Philip Lawton passed away after a short illness to the sadness of his many friends and fellow field sports enthusiasts. Two months later the light of the canine world dimmed when a young Thomas McCormack left this world as a result of a tragic accident. May I offer sincere condolences to both the Lawton and McCormack families on behalf of all the canine community at this sad time in your life.

And finally may I take this opportunity to thank all the show organisers, and Game Fair Director Albert Titterington, his wife Irene and Co Directors for all their hard work in getting all the shows and Game Fairs together for our benefit and enjoyment. 'Bluebell,' thanks for the photographs, lovely happy memories Deirdre. Many worthy charities and special causes have benefited from revenue generated at these Shows and Game Fairs up and down the country and that can only be good for our community.

As you catch up with some of the results below, all that remains for me to do is to wish everybody a very Happy Christmas and a prosperous New Year. I look forward to meeting up with you all again in 2014.

Shannagh Working Terrier, Lurcher and Whippet Show Sunday 4th August

Racing

Whippets: Charlene Rafferty with Lush, Under 23" Jude Lynch with Jill, Over 23" Michael Lynch with Charlie, Under 23" Elite Kirsty Harpur with Tia, Over 23" Michelle Rafferty with Zeus

Bull Cross: Breanden Coleman with Bouncer, Terriers: Geoff Hutchinson with Scruff, Reserve Sharon Reid with Pip

Showing

Childrens Handling Class: Allanah Harpur, Reserve Jack Annett

Overall Show Champion Whippet: Sean Burke, Reserve John McStay with Patch

Overall Show Champion Lurcher: Breanden Coleman, Reserve Sean Higgins

Overall Puppy Show Champion: Sean Higgins, Reserve Melissa Greer

Overall Terrier Champion Terrier: Paul Heslip with Sam, Reserve Paul Heslip with Ranger

Overall Show Champion and Best in Show: Breanden Coleman, Reserve Sean Burke

Tug O' War: The 'Fat and Smellies' Seamus Kearns, Kieran Young, Declan Kearns, Geoff Hutchinson

Digging Competition Team 3 Paddy Gilmore and Shane Larkin were first, but as team 3 had already qualified for Birr, Reserve Team 5 Glen Doherty and Brian Crothers were elected as the qualifiers for Birr.

The Sporting Whippet Club Dog Show Sunday 11th August

There was an exceptionally large turnout and it was nice to see so many new faces at Dunsilly on Sunday, as well as the regular loyal members of the Sporting Whippet Club NI.

Best In Show: Kirsty Fyffe with Ollie, Reserve Roy Hill with Bluebell

Members Class Winner: Michael Quinn with Finn

As usual the showing and racing was star quality. Many thanks to the judge on the day Glen Doherty, and the Chairman of the club Janet Duke and her committee for organising another great family day out.

Tully Castle Festival Dog Show and Race Day Saturday 10th August

The Festival and Show goes began arriving from early in the morning, after travelling many miles, with their little people all dressed up for the occasion. Churchill Silver Band was there to serenade the crowd. It was very refreshing to listen to this beautiful music in such luxurious surroundings.

Champion Whippet: Michael Quinn from Lurgan.

Champion Lurcher: James Woods, from Downpatrick.

Champion Terrier: Gene Gallagher from Sligo.

Overall Show Champion and best in show: James Woods.

Thanks the Judge Kieran Young, Whippets and Lurchers, and the other two judges who judged the Terriers and Mixed Breeds, for a job well done, and carried out efficiently and fair. Barry Holland, and the NILRC monitoring team. The racing went like clock work. Some top class racing dogs there. I must not forget the lady of the day. Yes, Norma Heap and her PA system, a job well done announcing the ring classes, the names and class results - it all went without a hitch. A special word of thanks to Wesley Scott, Scott Fallis and the brilliant band of helpers. I know a lot of hard graft and sleepless nights went into organising this very successful Festival and Dog Show.

Richard Hunter's Show, Saturday 17th August

There was a nice friendly crowd at the show, some old faces and some new. Some great craic and banter, and just an all round lovely relaxing family day out for all the canine men and women who travelled from all parts of the country. The show started at approximately 12.30, with the racing first.

Racing

Whippets: John Shaw with Mango

Under 21 Lurcher: Michael Lynch with Jill, Under 23 Lurcher: Frankie with Serbrus, Over 23 Lurcher: Ian Balfour with

Darkie

Under 23 Elite: Billy Craig with Annie, Over 23 Elite: Michael Quinn with Mochara, Bull Cross: Micky Quinn with Lady

Showing

Children's Handling Class: 1 Alanna Harpur, 2 Jamie Doherty, 3 Jonathan Lindsay

Whippet Pups Overall Champion: Michael Quinn with Finn, Reserve Michael with Charlene

Lurchers Overall Champion Lurcher: James Woods with Rusty, Reserve Ian Greer with Maggie

Terriers Overall Champion Terrier: Peter Morgan with Blade, Reserve Anthony Taggart

Overall Puppy Champion: Leanne Hawthorne with Ace

Overall Show Champion and Best in Show: James Woods with Rusty, Reserve Michael Quinn with Finn



Overall Show Champion and Best in Show went to : James Woods with Rusty Reserve Show Champion went to : Michael Quinn with Finn Runner up : Peter Morgan with Blade.

I would like to thank Alan Hunter and the NILRC members who helped out with organising and monitoring the racing - Nigel Greer, Chris Angus, Arlene Greer, Leanne Hawthorne and all their brilliant band of helpers on the day. The judges were: Lurchers Declan Cairns, Whippets John McStay, Terriers Rodney Gibson Children's Handling Class Margaret Mc Stay. Bluebell, Deidre McCoy was there clicking away with her camera, recording all our moments of glory. Our MC Nigel Greer kept everyone right with his dulcet tones on the PA system all day. And finally, thanks the Hunter family for all their kindness and hospitality shown to all at the show. Especially a word of thanks to Richard Hunter's mum Helen who worked tirelessly, to make sure everybody that came into the field got tea or coffee.

Rathnew Co Wicklow Sunday 25th August

Rathnew, meaning The Ring Fort of Naoi is a village in Co Wicklow, located south of the capital of Dublin, along the M11 between Dublin and Wexford. Famous for its Gaelic Football, the village of Rathnew football team has won the Wicklow Senior Provincial Championship 30 times, the most recent being 2010.

Champion Whippet: Pup Leah Gray with Moley, Champion Whippet: Michael Quinn with Finn

Champion Terrier Pup: Peter Morgan with Blizzard, Champion Terrier: Tom Power with Sky.

Champion Lurcher Pup: Gary Smith, Reserve John Moriarity, Champion Lurcher: Sam Hennessy

Overall and Best in Show: Sam Hennessy, Reserve Tom Power

32 Counties Champion of Champions: Lurchers Mark O'Neill with Sweep, Reserve Fiona Devlin; Terriers: Tom Power with Sky, Ian Heslip with Ranger; Whippets: John Shaw with Mango, Reserve John Shaw with Blue

Overall 32 Counties Winner Tom Power, Reserve Mark O'Neill

Lurchers Overall Champion Lurcher: Graham Brennan with Gypsy, Reserve Gary Mitchell with Sprint

Overall Terrier Champion: Adrian Moore, Reserve Gary Mitchell

Champion Terrier Pup: Peter Morgan with Blizzard, handled by Arlene McClurkan;

Overall Champion Puppy: Kirsty Fyffe with Bella.

Overall Show Champion and Best in Show Adrian Moore from Oldham in Lancashire.

Many thanks the judges, lurchers and whippets Tom Barry, terriers and strong dogs Trevor Coulter for a job well done. If it were not for Dessie Mackin this show would not be possible. Dessie has given all the proceeds of his show (£210) to the parents of the late Thomas McCormack.



Overall 32 Counties Winner : which was held at the Wicklow Show. Overall Champion: Mark O'Neill with Sweep Reserve Champion: Tom Power with Sky.

I would like to thank the judges on behalf of Dave Dickinson , for carrying out your remit so diligently on the day - Lurchers Willie Flynn/Whippets, Catherine Slevin Terriers, Matt Slevin Pets, Ian Whelan 32 Counties Lurchers: John Hendrix Whippets, Simon Murphy and Terriers Brian O'Neill, many thanks for a job well done. Bluebell (Deidre Mc Coy) was there with her camera recording all our moments of glory. Thank most sincerely to Dave Dickinson, his wife and family and band of helpers for a great family day out. I promised Lisa Dickinson I would give her a special mention too. It is also nice to know that Wicklow Cancer Support Group will benefit from the day.

Dessie Mackin's Show Saturday 31st August

We had a very relaxing day at Dessie Mackin's Dog Show at Halls Mills, Gilford on Saturday 31st August. The sun shone most of the time, and the craic and banter was good. As the morning progressed into noon, the cars and trailers began to fill the car park. There were Whippets, Terriers, Lurchers , and Strong dogs on show, and the folk on the end of the leads had only one thing in mind, to qualify for the Five Nations at Birr Castle next day Sunday. The event commenced with the raffle which generated a lot of excitement and laughter and was for a very worthy cause.

Whippets Overall Champion Whippet: Davy Best with Penny, Reserve John McStay with Bella

Field of Dreams Schooling Track Maghera, NILRC Dog Show and Race Day held Sunday the 8th Sept

The Field Of Dreams Schooling Track is an up to date, well designed, and well established family business, run and owned by the Hurley family. Set in the leafy, picturesque Maghera countryside, this Schooling Track has progressed from strength to strength over the past few years. This show was to be a very special day for everyone concerned, as the family of the late Thomas McCormack, a dear departed young, huntsman and show goer, were in attendance.

Racing

NILRC Champion of all Ireland Terrier Liam Toner with Vixen

NILRC Champion of all Ireland Whippet Gavin Wright with Bolt

NILRC Champion of all Ireland Rough Hair Lurcher Paddy McCarthy with Gypsy

NILRC Champion of all Ireland Bull Cross James Wood with Rusty

NILRC Champion of all Ireland Lurcher under 21" Deirdre McCoy with Paris

NILRC Champion of all Ireland Lurcher under 23" Lewis Wilson with Jacky

NILRC Champion of all Ireland Lurcher over 23" Charlene Rafferty with Fizz

NILRC Champion of all Ireland Elite under 23" John Humphries with China

NILRC Champion of all Ireland Elite over 23" Michelle Rafferty with Zeus

Showing

NILRC Champion of all Ireland Ladies Handling class Georgina McCormack with Roman

NILRC Champion of all Ireland Gentlemen's Handling Class Paddy McCarthy with Pip

NILRC Champion of all Ireland Young Handlers class Dean Kearney with Bailey

NILRC Champion of all Ireland Fancy Dress class Gerald Maybins son Joseph with Lucky

Lurchers NILRC Champion of all Ireland Lurcher James Woods with Rusty Reserve Micky Quinn with Lady

Terriers NILRC Champion of all Ireland Terrier Peter Morgan with Chief Reserve Shay McDonald with Spot

Whippets NILRC Champion of all Ireland Whippet Davy Best with Harley

NILRC Champion of all Ireland Pup Kirsty Harpur with Lola

NILRC Champion of all Ireland Pairs Rochelle Duffy with Lily & Tighe

NILRC Champion of all Ireland Veteran Gavin Wright with Rusty

NILRC Show Champion of all Ireland James Woods with Rusty Reserve David Best with Harley, Runner-up Peter Morgan with Chief



197 Overall Show Champion and Best in Show: Jonny Carlin with Nena; Reserve Show Champion : James McKee with Susie; Runner Up Patsy McCoy with Ri.

Sligo Dog Show and Race day.

Located in the scenic area between Ben Bulbin mountain and the Atlantic Ocean, lies the village of Grange Co Sligo. This was the venue for the Lurcher, Terrier, and Whippet Dog Show. The sun was shining for most of the day, backed up with a wealth of craic and banter. There was a large contingent of canine folk with dogs and trailers in tow. It was not long to the field began to fill up with families out to enjoy the fun of the fair for the day. Alongside the Terrier, Lurcher and Whippet show, Sligo Agriculture Show was taking place. As we arrived early, it was nice to go up through the show and soak up that nice carnival atmosphere. Jimmy Buckley was there to entertain

the adults with his songs and music, and all danced away their cares for the day to their hearts content. Congratulations to Jack Stewart, with his beautiful dog Dotty, from Mount Charles, who won the Overall Agriculture Show Champion. Jack was anxious that I would say in my write up, that Lucy normally handled the dog, but he did on the day.

Racing

Over 23" Lurcher

Michael Quinn with Mochara, Under 23" Michael Quinn with Paddy, Terrier Racing Jude Lynch with Randy

Showing

Lurcher Pup Dog or Bitch: Gerald Lynch with Sky, Overall Champion Lurcher: Jonny Carlin Reserve Mickey Quinn

Overall Champion Puppy: Kieran Lynch, Overall Champion Whippet: Patsy McCoy with Rio Reserve John Mc Stay with Patch

Terriers Overall Champion Terrier: James McHugh. Reserve Champion Terrier George Gott

Overall Champion and Best in Show: Jonny Carlin with Nena, Reserve James McKee with Susie.

Many thanks to Gene Gallagher and his band of helpers who made Saturday a special and most enjoyable day for all us Canine folk. We really enjoyed your show and look forward to more of the same next year.



163 NILRC Champion of all Ireland - Racing Liam Toner - Vixen; Lurcher Under 21" : Deirdre McCoy - Paris; Rough Hair Lurcher : Paddy McCarthy - Gypsy, Lurcher Under 23" : Lewis Wilson - Jacky; Elite Over 23" : Michelle Rafferty - Zeus; Lurcher Over 23" : Charlene Rafferty - Fizz, Whippet : Gavin Wright - Bolt, Bull Cross : James Wood - Rusty; Elite under 23" : John Humphries - China.

The NILRC Members Perpetual Cup (Sponsored by Denis Couch) Glen Doherty with Diesel

Thanks to the Judges who carried out their duties to perfection and the hospitality tent on the day was superb. A big thank you to the hosts of the show, the NILRC, Chairman and their brilliant Committee members and band of helpers. You all worked as a team, and every part of the show went like clockwork. It was so lovely to see Tommy and Georgina McCormack and their family there so soon after the death of their dear son Thomas. Albert Titterington asked me to write a short obituary for the Summer magazine in honour of Thomas. By kind permission, and with input from the McCormack family, I did this but I would like to add this short tribute : "Perhaps my time seemed all too brief. Do not lengthen it now with untold grief. Lift up your hearts my Canine friends. God wanted me now, he set me free."

The Sporting Whippet Club and Race Day, Dunsilly Co Antrim Sunday 15th September

This was the last Whippet shows of 2013 for the Sporting Whippet Club of NI and the first two qualifiers for the Five Nations Whippet Championship. I am so proud to say we now as Whippet people can take our rightful place alongside the great and the good at the first ever Five Nations Whippet Championship.

Our first qualifier was the winner of Best in Show Renoir, owned and handled by Tracy Gill, and our second qualifier was The Sporting Whippet Club NI Champions of Champions, Briar owned and handled by Carole Hill. What a great

achievement for these two ladies, and many congratulations to you both. There were two very special presentations on the day. The first, for the most points gained in racing during the year, went to John Shaw. The second presentation was a big surprise, none other than my husband and partner in crime, John McStay. John received this beautiful cup for being the most enthusiastic raffler ticket buyer of the year.

Many thanks to the Judges on Sunday Mrs Jan Irwin and Ryan Hunter, and congratulations to all the worthy winners on the day too. Thanks to our Chairperson Mrs Janet Duke and Vice Chairman Mr Paul Reynolds and our wonderful committee for their time, effort and hard work they have put in to our shows this year. Without all hands on board this could not off happened. And last but not least, the person who allows our shows to take place on his property, Victor McDonald.

Editor's Note: We were delighted to honour Margaret for the hard work she has put in reporting on the shows and the excellent PR she has generated for the Lurcher, Terrier & Whippet world by awarding her one of the magazines's Countrysports Lifetime Commitment Awards.



Sporting Whippet N.I. 'Champion of Champions 2013. Judge - Ryan Hunter (Mossbawnhill Whippets) Carole Hill with Briar, Tracy Gill with Renoir.

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AJ's Angst

Frank opinion on the issues facing the Irish country sports scene

Our Sympathy

As I write this I am just back from the funeral of Colette Gannon, the partner of terrier & lurcher enthusiast and 'digging competition' organiser Kieran Young. It was a very sad occasion for Kieran and his daughters Joanne and Alex, but they must also have been very proud to see the huge turnout at the funeral to pay their respects and the number of messages of condolences posted on Facebook. These demonstrated the high regard in which Colette, Kieran and family are held in the country sports world. We have asked Colette's friends Margaret McStay and Deirdre McCoy to produce a tribute to Colette for the Spring magazine but, in the interim, all of the team at ICS&CL and the Great Game Fairs of Ireland wish to express our sincere condolences and sympathy to our friends Kieran, Joanne and Alex.



NIFCLC and the age reduction for young shooters, that would permit a young person of TEN YEARS or older, to have supervised access to both shotguns and airguns. This petition is supported by the Northern Ireland Firearms Dealer's Association and the Gun Trade Guild NI".

I made it quite clear that while I supported the rest of the petition I certainly wished the age for young shots to be 'older and on that basis I agreed to sign the petition and allow it to be used to gather signatures at the fair. I understand it got 3,000 signatures which I believe to be well in excess of BASCNI's membership!

I would really like to know who of our readers would like to beat, pick up or even shoot in line with two or three 10 year olds at a driven shoot; or make up a woodcock or rough shooting party with two or three 10 year olds and their 'supervisors' or what about ferreting with a 10 year old shot? .

My own sons accompanied me shooting from a young age but the earliest they shot game in a line (in Scotland) was when I felt they could physically and safely handle a gun among other shots and prior to this they had learned proper gun safety and handling through range shooting.

We are all for encouraging young people into our sports but in a fashion that is safe for them and everyone else concerned. That is why our submission also included a range based gun safety certificate of competence where the young person was taught gun safety and handling under range conditions. That is why when we discussed the matter within our organisation, with readers, with friends in the gun trade, PSNI and shooting organizations we decided to put our recommendation for 12 year old in our own submission within the consultation process

The Firearms debate rumbles on – Young Shots

From BASCNI Fastrack comes the news that 'Northern Ireland Justice Minister David Ford is considering lowering the age at which young people can have supervised access to shotguns and airguns to 12 years.'

I have to say we at Irish Countrysports and Country life are delighted that the Minister is considering accepting the submission put forward by Irish Countrysports and Country Life magazine and others for the age reduction for young shots to be TWELVE and not the age of TEN put forward by BASCNI.

In our considered opinion the age of 10 might be appropriate for small bore or air rifle shooting, but much too young for game shooting - especially rough shooting. Many children of 10 would have difficulty mounting or carrying a shotgun never mind shooting it safely! I hope BASCNI will now accept that this is a better idea and lobby for it rather than still hankering after a reduction to 10 years of age. Apparently the argument put forward by BASCNI and the GTGNI for a reduction of the age to 10 was based on the supposition that 'it would be more appropriate as this is the age of criminal responsibility in NI.'

Now I feel that, had BASCNI actually consulted with their members on this submission, I am quite confident that more shooters would have gone with the age of 12 rather than 10. Certainly I would be less concerned about 10 year olds shooting air rifle or small bore, or even clays in a controlled environment of a range, than them wielding shotguns in a game or vermin shooting situation.

I made my position on this quite clear to BASCNI Director Tommy Mayne, when he sought a photo opportunity with me just before the 2012 Game Fair when he asked me to be the first signatory to a petition which he wanted to launch at the fair. The petition said:

"By signing this petition you are voicing your opposition to the proposed increase in firearms licensing fees. You will also be voicing your support for the banded system as proposed by the

Our concern about BASC NI's representation

While we commend BASCNI for the energy of their representation on the Young Shots and other firearms issues, we have to say that we, as members, do object to them seeking to represent our views and the views of NI shooters without seeking to ascertain our views through members' open meetings etc. It simply is not good enough for a relatively inexperienced BASCNI team to decide what they think we want or is best for NI shooters and then in negotiations imply that they are speaking on behalf of the NI shooting community.

This is especially true because we do not know how many members BASC actually have in Northern Ireland, or how many members the 'Chairman of the GTGNI' represents. Both appear closely guarded secrets - could it be they are rather like 'very small tails seeking to wag very large dogs'?

Negotiating tactics – the proposed cost of a FAC

We understand that there was a chance to head off the proposed increase when it was first mooted at the Firearms

Control Liaison Committee. Apparently a cost of £85 was floated without objection.

It would appear that BASCNI and the Gun Trade Guild NI have moved from the position in the petition of total opposition to the proposed increase to what would appear tacit approval to the concept of full cost recovery as their stated objective is NOT that they will oppose full cost recovery and an increase in the cost of the FAC but "We will continue to work with the Justice Committee and partner organisations to ensure firearm certificate holders in Northern Ireland receive an efficient level of service at a fair price." Whereas the Northern Ireland Firearms Dealers Association (which claims to represent the majority of FDs) and we have both objected to any increase.

If, as it would appear, BASCNI and the GTGNI have accepted the concept of full cost recovery and are now simply arguing about how this is to be assessed, they would appear to have put themselves on 'the back foot' in negotiations.

Surely - as I have learned in negotiations - if someone requests something from you ask for a 'quid pro quo'. In our submission we suggested that if there was to be an increase in the FAC it should be accompanied by a relaxation of the shotgun facet to bring us into line with shotgun acquisition in the UK where 'The holder of a shotgun certificate can acquire as many shotguns as he can safely accommodate, without having to prove his reason for needing each individual weapon.' And it costs £50 for five years! One would have thought BASCNI and the GTGNI could and should have asked for parity as part of their negotiations! Just think what a boost this would have given to the gun trade in NI!

Other indications that BASCNI and the GTGNI have perhaps not best represented our interests with skilled negotiations comes from an earlier BASCNI Fastrack "The breakdown of the relationship between organisations such as BASC and the Police Service Northern Ireland's (PSNI) Firearms and Explosives Branch was again highlighted as a major hurdle and the Committee stressed the need for the Department of Justice (DoJ) and PSNI to engage with stakeholders and address their issues of concern." As can be seen from Paul Pringle's editorial, we do not see such 'break downs' in relationships with the PSNI to be helpful in effecting a resolution of the FAC process.

Our own relationship with BASCNI

Just in case readers think we have been unduly critical of BASCNI, readers will have seen that we praised them previously for their initiative in setting up the all party country sports assembly group and elsewhere in this magazine that we have commended their promotion of game evenings and menus in restaurants and hotels.

We have offered them free, and in fact subsidised, space at our fairs and access to the columns of this magazine (the most read hunting, shooting and fishing publication produced in or circulating in Ireland) free of charge to promote their work. The latter appeared to be rejected in an apparent fit of pique because we had the temerity to offer constructive criticism to the BASNI Director. So instead of taking up our generous offer of free publicity throughout Ireland, BASC appears to have chosen to spend members' money advertising in an ROI publication!

What we, as members, object to is that the paid employees of BASCNI appear to do little to ascertain the views of their members - when did they last hold an open members meeting? Therefore their recommendations and submissions are likely to be largely their own views. One must ask why?

We support and want to support the work carried out by all of the country sports organisations on this island but we consider we

owe it to our readers not to simply become cheer leaders for them but rather to offer praise when it is due or constructive criticism when we consider it necessary. We also think that all the organisations should at least have some form of democratic forum, preferably an AGM, but at least open membership meetings where members can express their views openly.

Because of this apparent reluctance by BASCNI to take on board any sort of constructive criticism, their apparent reluctance to actually take steps to ascertain members' views and their very definite reluctance to declare their membership figures in Northern Ireland, it does cause us considerable concern that the views being presented in these negotiations may be the views of a very small number of FAC holders. There are c60,000 FAC holders in NI and from our research it would appear that BASCNI membership is likely to be quite a bit less than 5% of this. If we have got this assessment wrong we would be delighted to offer BASCNI the opportunity to correct our estimate by openly declaring their NI membership. We would also be pleased to hear from the GTGNI what percentage of NI dealers that they represent. We would also be delighted to offer BASCNI and/or the GTGNI space in the next magazine update in January or the full Spring magazine to state what they have actually achieved in the negotiations.

Our own position is quite clear: We would like to see progress on the banded system, the young shots age of 12 implemented (accompanied by a simple range based safety/gun handling test) and NO increase in the cost of the FAC unless something such as the facility to increase shotgun holdings is negotiated in exchange.

According to Paul's response from the PSNI, the PSNI are prepared to negotiate and we hope that BASCNI along with other organisations will go through what appears to be 'an open door' and hold the line that there should be no increase in the cost of the FAC.

St Hubert's Day

Congratulations to the NARGC and the IMFHA for mounting another European Hunters' Day at the Abbeyleix Manor Hotel. We were delighted to attend again this year and it was really great to hear a minister come firmly out in favour of country sports and the role they play in preserving the countryside and the rural way of life. Well done Tom Hayes,TD!

The Demise of the Irish Angler

As we go to press comes the sad news that David Dinsmore has decided to stop publishing the Irish Angler. We have worked for several years in parallel with David and earlier with Mike Shanks and he in the promotion of our fairs and we always admired the standard of production and editorial associated with their work in the magazine.

We live in difficult times for magazine publishing and for the gun and tackle trade but our own resolve and enthusiasm to continue to be the 'Voice of Irish hunting, shooting, fishing and the country lifestyle' remains strong and over the next year you will see great improvements in all aspects of the magazine at the same price. In fact - if you look at our special Christmas subscription offer - we offer unrivalled value for money! And we are currently planning a new event to take place at the end of September next year so hopefully we can help lift the spirits of the Irish country sports fraternity and help create more confidence in the trade.

I wish you all a very happy Christmas and a more prosperous 2014.

Albert J. Titterington

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