

Irish

COUNTRY SPORTS and COUNTRY LIFE

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Main Cover: A stunning matched pair of Boss shotguns (courtesy Donal McCloy Guns Unlimited photograph by Trevor Porter)



Irish Game Angler Cover: Hofsá Beat 1 - The photograph is by kind permission of the North Atlantic Salmon Fund (see FISSTA article inside for more)

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Country Sports and Country Life Role Comment

For lovers of hunting and shooting this is a special time of the year, when the seasons are underway and we are enjoying the pastimes we love so much. Many of us try to participate in a day's hunt or chase at least once a week, sometimes we might even manage two or three days in a week. Every day out hunting is a good day, but from time to time we are treated to really special afternoons when the scent is outstanding, the hounds are performing brilliantly and everyone enjoys some fantastic sport. Hopefully, we will experience a few such top class afternoons during the coming weeks and months.



There is a huge body of literature which captures the sights, sounds and smells of the chase. Some of my favourite books in this genre are the Irish RM series by Somerville and Ross, which are full of great descriptions of foxhunts that will resonate with anyone who has ever chased foxes on horseback.

Edith Somerville and her cousin Violet Florence Martin lived in Castletownshend, County Cork, where they wrote their series of much-loved books including 'Some Experiences of an Irish RM' (1899) and 'In Mr Knox's Country' (1915). The books contain much wit and were very well written. They relate the experiences of Major Sinclair Yeates, an Irish, retired British army officer who is a Resident Magistrate in west Ireland. The books offer an interesting insight into an Irish world long gone, with its foxhunting aristocracy and impoverished peasantry. It's full of insights into people which still run true today, such as this comment on Flurry Knox's character in 'In Mr Knox's Country': 'Flurry was still looking furtively about him, and the thought crossed my mind that in the most hard-headed Irishman there wanders a vein of superstition.'

The foxhunting descriptions are frequently outstanding and they capture the thrill and fun of the chase, such as these couple of sentences from 'In Mr Knox's Country': 'Galloping hoofs on the road behind us clattered a reply, accompanied by what I can only describe as imprecations on the horn, and Flurry hurtled by and swung his horse into the field over a low bank with all the dramatic fury of the hero rushing to the rescue of the leading lady. It recalled the incidents that in the palmy days of the Hippodrome gloriously ended in a plunge into deep water, amid a salvo of firearms.'

There is a slew of great characters in the novels including a man nicknamed 'Walkin' Aisy' who walks slowly and is very laidback: 'And that very afternoon, on our way to Aussolas, we chanced to meet upon the road the local mason himself, William Shanahan, better known to fame as "Walkin' Aisy". He was progressing at a rate of speed that accorded with his sub-title, and, as I approached him, a line of half-forgotten verse came back: "Entreat her not, her eyes are full of dreams." Another passage relates the confusion, excitement and high spirits of a hunt and talks of 'all the fuss, anxiety and uncertainty out of which the joys of hunting are born.

There's also this fine paragraph describing the field in hot pursuit of the fox and the hounds in the hilly country of west Cork: 'They scrambled and struggled up the hill-side, through rocks and furze, the hounds streamed and screamed over the ridge of the hill, the riders shoved their puffing horses after them, topped it, and dropped behind it. The furzy skyline and the pleasant blue and white sky above it remained serene and silent.'

In another chapter, Major Yeates looks forlornly out the window at the appalling weather in the knowledge that the hunt is due to start in an hour's time. It's windy, misty and raining heavily at intervals. 'For my part,' the Major thinks, 'I do not know why people

go out hunting on such days, unless it be for the reason that many people go to church, to set an example to others.' During one hunt, the fun which followers have during the chase is memorably described in this passage: 'Miss McRory was still in the saddle, but minus reins and stirrup; the wind had again removed her hat, which was following her at full stretch of its string, like a kite. Had it not been for her cries I should have said, judging by her face, that she was thoroughly enjoying herself.'

While there is a huge volume of literature related to fox hunting on horseback, sadly far less has been written about beagling or foot harrier hunting. But what does exist is often very good. For example, there's Jeremy Hobson's 1987 book 'Beagling', which is a thorough examination of the subject including what to wear, scenting conditions, how beagling evolved, thinking like a hare, and legend, fiction and mythology associated with the hare. Hobson points out that to anyone who is keen, fit, reasonably energetic and fairly intelligent, there is plenty of fun and exercise to be had from following hounds on foot. He says people follow beagles because they have an interest in houndwork and they want to enjoy a few precious hours in the open countryside when the rest of the week is spent indoors. He adds that beagling has a very strong social side, and the sport is an opportunity to mingle with friends of a like mind on a weekly basis. Conversation may range over international, national or local politics, on people who have passed on to their eternal reward, on the antis, on the sense that hunting means a lot to its practitioners and if it no longer existed it would be a big loss. Most people who go out beagling are ordinary, down to earth people, from all classes. They are no better and no worse than any other group of people.

In his book, 'The House of Sport' (published in 1899), AG Allen Turner penned the following lovely depiction of a day's beagling: 'Tis the middle of November, and a still day, with just that crispness in the air which makes one feel a man, as we draw nine couple of sixteen-inch hounds from the kennels, and start on our seven miles tramp to the meet, which is in the best part of our country, with hares just plentiful enough for sport, and the farmers always glad to see us. Punctually at eleven o'clock, we arrive, and are joined by about a dozen members of the hunt, three or four ladies, and half a dozen farmers. Five minutes chat, and a refresher for some of us, and then we move off down the road, into a meadow.' Turner describes a cracking day's hunting and then concludes: 'We are three miles from where we found. As it will soon be dark, and we have a seven mile tramp back to kennels, we knock off at four thirty. A hard day, for men, and hounds, and after a well earned drink with one of our good friends, the farmers, we light our pipes, and home is the word. We shall be tired when we get there. And after a hot bath and a light dinner (a heavy one is a great mistake after a hard day's beagling), we shall have our smoke and turn in early.'

Cool, cloudless mornings. Attractive countryside. Hard days' hunting. Time spent with friends. Pints of beer coupled with banter and memories. Contented smokes and contented baths after it's all over. These are some of the ingredients which make up a day in the field. These are some of the things which we love about hunting. As Virgil wrote in The Georgics: 'Blessed is he who knows the gods of the countryside, knows Pan and old Silvanus and the sister nymphs.'

**Derek Fanning,
ROI Editor**

An Adjournment Debate in Stormont on 17th November which discussed a fish kill on the Six Mile Water saw 'angling interests' strike a blow for conservation. Ministers were left in no doubt that enough was enough and that action on pollution had to be taken - and taken now. And a packed visitors' gallery of anglers and angling representatives heard important promises made by Environment Minister Mark H. Durkan



It had not been the first incident in the area; there had been several that wiped out fish and invertebrates and this one had taken place at a very important time in the spawning calendar. Lough Neagh has an indigenous species, the dollaghan and they make their way into the river courses. The Sixmilewater is very important but other rivers feed into Lough Neagh...they also make their way into those river courses, but the Sixmilewater is key. 'As a consequence, certain protections have to be put in place,' said Paul Girvan MLA. The debate's 'no-nonsense' tone was set.

Environment Minister Mark H. Durkan was in the chamber, but pointed comment suggested that other Ministers should have also been present, as the matter crossed several Departments. The Northern Ireland Environment Agency (NIEA) was also criticised on how it dealt with the particular issue and the delay. Not mincing words, Mr Girvan said that while the (DOE) Minister was here this evening, 'the Department for Regional Development, which, along with DARD, potentially causes more pollution than any other Department, should also be represented here to answer questions. It is regrettable that responsibility for this matter goes across four Departments: DARD, DRD, DOE and DCAL... I think that it is something that we have to look at in the Assembly, particularly with anything to do with rivers and the wildlife there.'

Government was told that better use should be made of volunteers and people involved on the rivers was crucial: 'We should also ensure that (sampling) is not just government sampling by government sources. We need some form of independent sampling and something that can hold government to account if, indeed, it is the polluter. It needs to be thorough, and it needs to happen extremely quickly.'

'We have extremely good groups working on the river, and some of them are sitting here in the Chamber. We have the Six Mile Water Trust — the anglers. Today, I want to praise not only them but the good work done on many occasions by the A8 team when they were contacted. When things went wrong, they dealt with them. However, things should not have gone wrong.'

Noting that most fines for pollution applied to private businesses, what if it was identified that pollution comes from a government agency, how do we deal with that? 'We pursue the wee man, but, sometimes, it is a government agency.....how do we ensure that such agencies are made answerable so that it does not happen again? We need to find a better way forward so that there is a suitable punishment and suitable compensation is paid. That is key.'

Environment Minister Mark H Durkan then spoke, saying that NIEA staff were immediately tasked with investigating the report: 'During the subsequent NIEA investigation, statutory samples were collected from two different premises.....a number of other potential sources of pollution in the catchment were also visited and investigated by my NIEA staff to rule them out of the inquiry. The Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure is the lead Department for fisheries protection, and its inland fisheries group was also informed of the fish kill by NIEA.

However... investigations are ongoing. We want to be sure that we get these investigations right and that we ensure that not only does the polluter pay but that the polluter prevents any incidents of pollution from happening again.

'NIEA has worked closely with a wide range of stakeholders, such as anglers and a number of other agencies, to protect and improve the Sixmilewater....anglers on and around the Sixmilewater have been particularly enthusiastic participants in the stakeholder groups and that their

practical input has been and is of great value.

Importantly, Mr Durkan added: 'There is indeed some strong evidence that average fines for water pollution offences are higher in, for example, England and Wales than here in the North.....the levels of fine imposed are entirely in the power of the courts and are well beyond the remit of my Department. I can, however, assure you that I and my Department are committed to thoroughly investigating the cause of the latest fish kill and to continuing to work — and improving that work — with other Departments, local anglers and local people to protect the Sixmilewater and other rivers and watercourses.

'I hope very shortly to outline how I intend and am determined to work with other Ministers on this topical and very important subject. Indeed, it is very important that we get this right. I am a firm believer that, in any case, the polluter should pay, and I am keen to work with others to identify how we manage our systems better. If that involves utilising volunteers, which it clearly does, I am happy to do that as well. What I am getting loud and clear here today is that partnership working has to be improved, and while I will work with partners and other Departments, let me assure the House that I will not be complicit in or tolerate any whiff of the cover-up that was implied by some Members.

The Minister also gave an undertaking and commitment to investigate robustly the allegation of only going after the 'wee man' as polluter. 'I will undertake to review how the system works and how my Department works with others, including DCAL, DARD, DRD and, importantly, the Department of Justice. I will be happy to get on to that as soon as possible....I am interested in the proposal of an all-party group. I wonder why that has not got off the ground to date.' And he added that he would also ensure that existing sectoral groups were meeting as it was important to ensure that everything that had previously been put in place and yielded some successful outcomes continues to operate and function.

So good work by the MLAs who brought a vital focus on the problems and particular thanks to the angling interest groups for keeping the pressure on. This magazine has said that penalties for environmental crime are not robust enough to act as a deterrent which would ensure that polluters do not do it again. As it stands, it's sometimes easier to allow the pollution and pay the fine. We need to make sure that this loophole is closed. We are also implacably opposed to Departments allegedly trying to cover up and not engage or feed back information to those who are on the ground. The idea of an all-party group has much merit and I am sure that some of our contributors and representational angling groups would have much to offer such a group by way of advice.

Government has made promises. We'll watch with interest for signs of action.

Paul Pringle
Northern Editor

Barbour Countrywear – Practical, Functional Clothing to Keep You Warm and Dry this Winter

Countrywear, the home of traditional Barbour. Barbour has been producing the highest quality countrywear since the company was founded in 1894, designing clothing to offer the best protection and functionality for people living, working and enjoying the countryside.

Men

Within the collection, alongside the iconic timeless wax jackets such as the Bedale and the Beaufort, are up to the minute jackets designed for today's lifestyle but taking their style and inspiration from the Barbour archives. The new Winter Durham, inspired by the original and very popular Durham jacket first introduced in the late 1960s, takes the shape of the Durham but adds a warm fleece lining to body and hood.

The popular wax cotton Sapper jacket is offered not only in wax cotton but is transformed into both tweed and a plain wool mix. The Gamefair jacket, an old wax favourite, is re-imagined in a waterproof breathable and wool fabric alongside a modern version of the wax classic.

No country wardrobe would be complete without a fleece and the stand out piece of the Autumn Winter 14 collection is the Langdale jacket. A modern and stylish fleece, it comes with a large ring pull zip and bound collar and cuffs. Immensely practical, it can be worn alone or is snug enough to fit under a jacket for extra warmth.

Knitwear provides plenty of choice. All in a 100% soft lambswool, old favourites such as the Tyne Half Zip are rediscovered in a choice of co-ordinating colours. Shirts are classic Tattersalls and more contemporary checks in 100% cotton offering a great selection for customers. To complete the look, moleskins and



Langdale Gilet

cord trousers come in an array of country colours.

Women

For women, style and practicality come in equal measures. The Beagle dog walking jacket, designed by Vice Chairman, Helen Barbour, includes features such as a whistle pocket, large pockets for leads, treats and even a removable pocket lining. D rings enable you to attach a lead and a reflective strip to the belt ensures you will be visible when dog walking on cold, dark mornings.

The Iris quilt and Orchid Fleece are good

looking jackets with plenty of attention to detail. The Iris quilt is trimmed in tweed to the shoulders and pocket flaps and the Orchid Fleece, which also comes as a gilet, has quilted stitching to the shoulders and pockets for a look that adds a special feminine touch.



IrisQuilt

Martin Smith, Barbour's Countrywear Manager said: "This season's Countrywear collection takes the best of Barbour's expertise and knowledge of clothing fit for the countryside and combines this experience into modern classics that effortlessly incorporate functionality with style. These collections are fit for purpose with an attention to detail that is second to none."

For further information, please visit
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Justice Committee seeking submissions on review of firearms licensing – Stanton

Fine Gael TD for Cork East and Chair of the Oireachtas Justice Committee, David Stanton TD has welcomed the extension of the public consultation process for the review of firearms licensing. The Minister for Justice and Equality, Frances Fitzgerald TD has extended the deadline for submissions on firearms licensing following an appeal made by Deputy Stanton.

"Minister Fitzgerald published a review conducted by a working group of An Garda Síochána & the Department of Justice and Equality on firearms licensing on the 13th November. At that time she invited submissions from interested parties on the development of firearms policy and legislation to be made by early December.

"I was concerned that the timeframe for public consultation was too short so as Chair of the Justice Committee, I sought an extension to the deadline from Minister Fitzgerald. I am pleased that she has accepted the need to allow more time and the new deadline is now the 31st January 2015.

"In addition to the extension of the deadline, the Justice Committee is also now seeking written submissions from interested groups and individuals on the report. The Committee will consider these submissions and plans to invite a number of contributors to public hearings. We understand that there are differing perspectives on the holding of firearms and firearm licensing, and it is important that current licence holders, shooting clubs and members of the public are given a forum to articulate their views. We are looking forward to hearing from and engaging with the public on this issue.

"The review includes a number of recommendations such as changes to the list of offences which prohibit convicted persons from obtaining a firearms licence and possible restrictions on the licensing of handguns and semi-automatic shotguns and rifles. No decisions have been taken yet and I am anxious that none be made until a full consultation and discussion about the issues takes place.

"I would ask anyone with an interest in firearms licensing to go to www.justice.ie/en/JELR/2014.WG.Report.pdf/Files/2014.WG.Report.pdf and read the Report on the Review of Firearms Legislation. Written submissions to the Justice Committee should be sent electronically by email before our deadline of 3pm on Friday 9th January 2015 to the following email address only firearmsreview@oireachtas.ie."

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The Jack Murphy ALFRED Fleece Gilet

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The Jack Murphy NEVIN Quilted Gilet

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 RRP £90

The Nevin is a classically styled quilted gilet with oversized collar, which allows it to be worn up or folded down for two distinctive looks. Finishing touches include microfleece lining for extra warmth, cord detail to collar and welt pockets, antique brass zip with branded puller, branded antique brass snaps and branded leather tab to reverse.



The Jack Murphy ROCKALL I Waterproof Jacket

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A smart and practical waterproof, windproof and breathable blouson style jacket, the Rockall I is perfect for protecting against the elements without compromising on style. Finishing touches include contrast coloured fleece lining, taped seams, internal zip to enable embroidery access for personalisation, cosy fleece-lined pockets, contrast coloured branded tab to reverse, branded zip puller and raglan sleeves. €150 or Less



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The Jack Murphy JOSHUA Waterproof Jacket

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The Joshua is a gorgeous utility style jacket, which is also waterproof, windproof and breathable. Finishing touches include Jack Murphy signature Classic Check lining, quilt stitching



detail to shoulders and elbow patches, adjustable waist tabs, oversized bellowed pockets, branded pin badge and branded leather tab to pocket, microsuede detail to collar, antique brass zip with branded puller and branded antique brass snaps.

The Jack Murphy ARTHUR Waxed Jacket

Colourways Available: True Black, Rich Brown, Olive
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The Arthur is a distinctively country waxed jacket style. Finishing touches include antique brass zip with branded puller, branded antique brass snaps, patch pockets with side entry, cord detailing, branded leather tab to pocket and Jack Murphy signature Classic Check lining.



£250 or Less

The Jack Murphy HARRY Tweed Jacket

Colourways Available: Burren Tweed, Glendalough Tweed
 Sizes Available: S - XXXL
 RRP £225

A sophisticated tweed sports jacket style, the Harry will take you from town to country seamlessly. Finishing touches include sumptuous Roasted Aubergine for a dash of colour, branded pin badge to collar, branded faux horn buttons, moleskin binding to pocket and intricate stitching detail to elbow patches and collar.



The Jack Murphy GILBERT Tweed Jacket

Colourways Available: Glendalough Tweed
 Sizes Available: S - XXXL
 RRP £250

A traditionally styled tweed jacket with a twist, the Gilbert features inspired detailing for a truly distinctive look. Finishing touches include quilt stitching detail to back yoke, antique brass zip with branded puller, faux horn buttons, contrast moleskin detail for added interest, branded pin badge to handwarmer pocket and sumptuous Roasted Aubergine lining for a pop of colour.



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DUBLIN 1922

John Butler, Chairman of the NARGC sees challenges and opportunities ahead

Being a member of the National Association of Regional Game Councils for over thirty years now, it was with great pleasure and an honour for me to be elected to the position of National Chairman at this years AGM. It all began when I joined my local club in Carlow in the late seventies and soon after was "encouraged" to take up the role of secretary and delegate to the county body. Shortly after that I became involved at county level and served as county chairman, secretary, delegate and public relations officer over a period of twenty years. For the past two years I have been elected a member of the National Executive, serving as Chairman of the Membership Sub Committee and as a member of our Gameshot Magazine production team. This period along with my previous experience as a county delegate gave me a deep sense of understanding and respect for the workings of our organisation at national level.

The National Association of Regional Game Councils is a professionally run organisation and we are extremely fortunate to have such very dedicated staff in our offices and indeed on the ground. This makes my task all the easier. However, along with the normal duties of the National Chairman I do have a keen interest in the development of two functions of the association one being the development of a Youth Structure within our association and the second being communications. An association that has a membership of 25,000 plus must have a vibrant youth section to ensure that there is new blood coming through at all times. At this years AGM we elected a Youth Development Officer, again for the first time and I have put a Sub Committee in place with him to deliver a comprehensive youth strategy going forward.

It is also essential that our message is reaching our grass root members and that they are kept fully informed no mean task



John Butler, Chairman, NARGC

considering the geographical spread of our 950 plus clubs. For the latter, I have set up for the first time a Communications Sub Committee to develop and expand on all aspects of modern technology to deliver information to our members as quickly as possible.

Hunting and shooting has had its share of pressures exerted on it in the recent past, no more so than with the ongoing loss of habitat for game and wildlife. In many instances this was done in the name of progress or indeed in some cases to qualify for certain payments. This is an area that clubs will have to address and become involved with at local level. In many instances grants can be obtained which are beneficial to the farmer and help him qualify for certain payments to leave that marsh or

scrub there and will provide ideal cover for game and wildlife propagation. I will be asking our various relevant sub committees to look into this problem and deliver information and a package to clubs to liaise with the landowner to try and stem the loss of habitat around the country. We also have a number of Grouse Projects and Grey Partridge Projects in operation in some clubs and counties, again I would like to see significant development and a coordinated approach adopted at National level with these projects to ensure we see best practice implemented and results achieved right across the country.

It would be remiss of me to conclude without a mention of the massive voluntary contribution that our members make right across the twenty-eight R.G.C's, from the officers and committees, to the workers that turn out year in year out to build duck ponds, pheasant pens, vermin control for the farmer, etc. It is not all about what you get that counts, rather what you leave behind that's more important. I would also like to acknowledge the long established bond and co-operation between the gun clubs and the landowners, this is a two way process where by benefits can be had by both sides, long may it last.

My own vision for the NARGC would be to see an association that is membership driven from the ground up and that members can be justifiably proud of our association. I will cooperate and engage with all of the various bodies and intuitions involved in our sport to ensure that the very best possible results are achieved to develop and protect the sport of game hunting and shooting for our members. I will endeavour to make myself available to any club or county that may require my attention whenever possible, as I have already said at the start of this article, it is both an honour and an indeed a pleasure to serve as Chairman and to serve you the members of the NARGC. Have a safe and happy hunting season and Seasons Greetings to all.

SPECIAL EYE TESTING SESSION

THE Ulster Golden Retriever Club has organised an eye testing session by Mr Ian Millar at Redburn Community Centre, Jacksons Road, Holywood, Co. Down, Saturday 7th February 2015 at 2.30 P.M

The cost will be £40 per dog payable to Mr Millar. This is a substantial saving on the surgery price of £52.

Session must be booked in advance by completing a form available from Frank Archibald email: ulstergrc@hotmail.co.uk Telephone 028 27665797

Ulster Golden Retriever Club EYE TESTING SESSION BOOKING FORM

NAME OF OWNER(S):

TELEPHONE NUMBER (incl. code):

ADDRESS:

.....

.....

BREED: (Please state number of each for test)

Breed	Number of Dogs for Test

THIS FORM MUST BE RETURNED BY FRIDAY 30th JANUARY 2015 TO:

Frank Archibald, 3 Loughabin Road, Ballymoney, BT53 8 NP

Telephone 028 27665797

- £40.00 PER DOG
- PLEASE REMEMBER TO BRING YOUR DOG(S) KENNEL CLUB REGISTRATION CERTIFICATE.
- ALL DOGS SUBMITTED FOR TEST MUST BE EITHER MICRO CHIPPED OR TATTOOED.
- PAYMENT TO MR. IAN MILLAR AT THE TIME OF THE EYE TEST.

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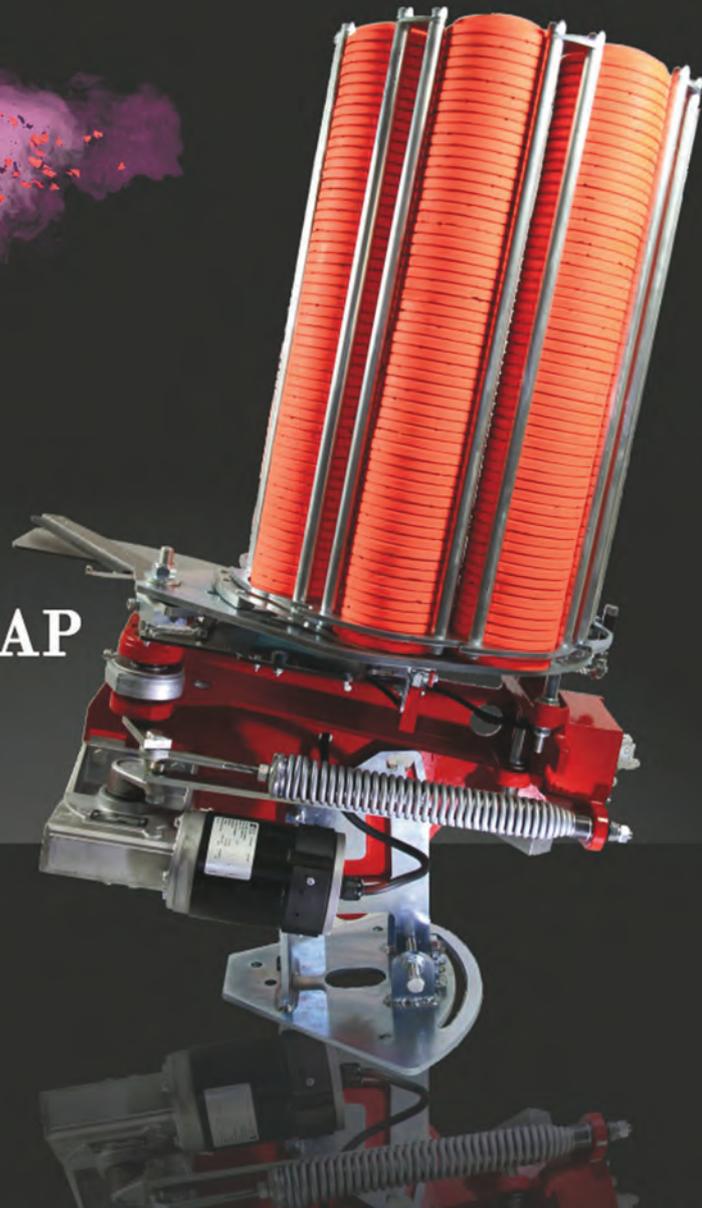


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STR 80 spotting scope with reticle from SWAROVSKI OPTIK

A spotting scope is an absolute must for sports marksmen and long-range hunters to enable them to make out details over long distances reliably and correctly. Thanks to the new STR 80 spotting scope from SWAROVSKI OPTIK, a reticle can be projected directly in the image plane. This enables the reticle to be activated or deactivated as required. The STR 80 also offers an outstanding optical performance package and is perfectly suitable for documentary purposes, for example, when combined with the TLS APO digiscoping adapter. An extensive set of accessories add the finishing touch to this product. The STR 80 spotting scope with reticle is available from December 2014.

Long-range shooting has become a realistic objective mainly for sports marksmen, but also increasingly for hunters too, facilitated by innovations in sport and hunting firearms, as well as in long-range optics. Long-range shooting will always pose a challenge that appeals to marksmen's sense of personal responsibility and their realistic self-assessment. Particular importance is attached to the interaction of observing, measuring, and shooting. For these crucial situations, SWAROVSKI OPTIK will offer the new STR 80 spotting scope with a projected reticle from December 2014.

(MOA or MRAD) has an innovative design. It is projected and can also be activated or deactivated. This means that it can be used across the whole range and in bright conditions (with 10 day and 5 night levels). Its diopter strength can also be adjusted separately. It allows you to switch comfortably between estimating the distance of an object -



The new STR80 © SWAROVSKI OPTIK

with fluoride-containing lenses and 80- mm objective diameter, the STR 80 spotting scope guarantees optimum display quality and impressive detail recognition even over long distances, as well as bright, lifelike images even in poor lighting conditions. The light aluminum housing is rugged, reliable, and its resistance has been tested in every climate zone. The non-reflective, non-slip rubber armoring absorbs any vibration. It goes without saying that the STR spotting scope with reticle is also dirtproof, dustproof, and watertight (up to 4 m) thanks to interior focusing and an inert gas filling.

Versatile and functional: the accessories

Documenting results is an important factor particularly in long-range shooting. The STR 80 is ideally suited to these purposes when combined with digiscoping adapters: the TLS APO (for system and SLR cameras) and the PA-i5 (for the iPhone 5/5S). The STR 80 comes as standard with an objective lens cover, BT tool, and a support for the SSR II spotting scope rail. The integrated sunshade prevents, when required, reflection from any lateral incident light. The MRS mounting rail set and WE winged eyecups are also available.

whether it is of a known size or between two points - and observing the target completely undisturbed. The reticle allows you to see the potential for missing the target in relation to the aiming point. This means that you can make the adjustment you need immediately on the rifle scope.

Proven quality: the optical equipment

Thanks to its powerful, crystal-clear HD optics

New standards: the reticle

The STR 80 spotting scope's integrated reticle

Vintage Year for the Ulster Retriever Club

Three outstanding Trials marked the end of the competition year for the Ulster Retriever Club, who under the guidance and hard work of Secretary Gerard Murdoch provide good sport through superbly organised member events.

A 16 dog All Aged stake was held at Shanes Castle by kind permission of the Lord O'Neill on 25th October 2014 and sponsored by Skinners.

Results:

1. Jim Carnegie lab Rosenallis Enzo
2. Martin Rush lab Eureka Doc
3. David Beattie lab Apollabay Endurance
4. Alan Rountree lab Pitternhill Arthur of Tasco

A 12 dog Novice stake was held at Benvarden Estate by kind permission of Mr Hugh Montgomery

on 1st November 2014 and sponsored by Skinners.

Results:

1. Harry Gillanders lab Ffynongain Razor
- No other awards

A two day Open Stake was held at Glenoo by kind permission of Messrs Tom Woods and Keith Matthews on 12th & 13th November 2014 and sponsored by M1 Petfoods.

Results:

- 1 Jim Carnegie lab Rosenallis Enzo
 - 2 Billy Lundy lab Int FTCh The Newcam Boss
 - 3 Michael Corr lab Astraglen Hardy
 - 4 Damien Newman lab Hatchfield Harrier of Yettolley
- COM Alan Rountree lab Int FTCh Waterford Galahad of Tasco

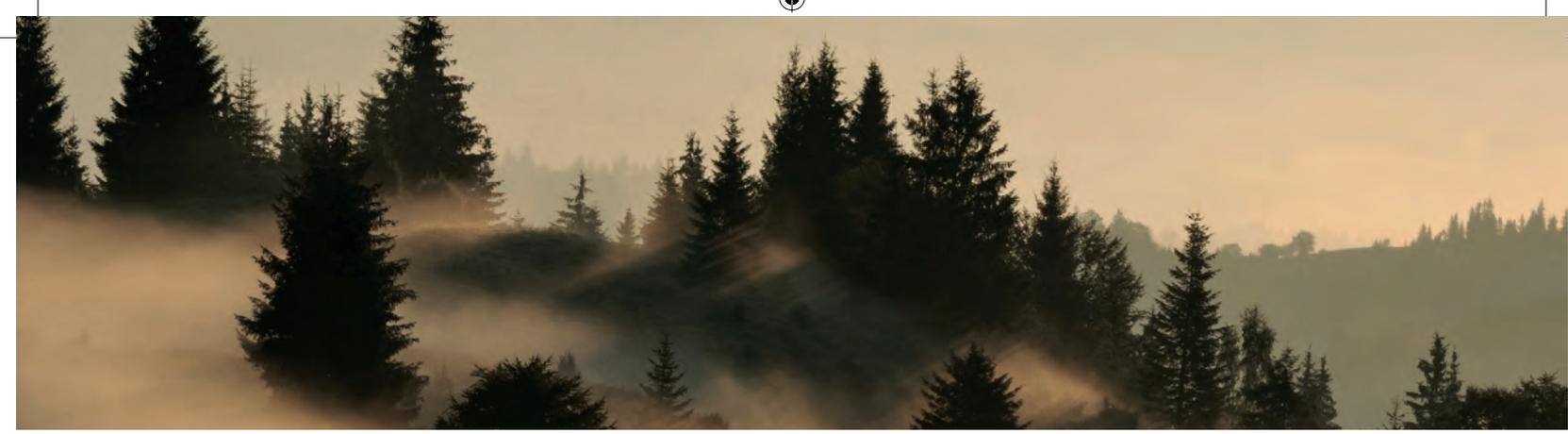
In addition Jim Carnegie picked up a new perpetual award for the top placed dog bred by an own-er/handler - The Sam Jennet Raughlin trophy - which was presented in honour of the great man by his wife, Lillian.



Two Day Stake Winner Jim Carnegie with Lillian Jennet.



Judges and award winners at Glenoo.



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CLA Game Fair 2015

Peter Smith writes: the shooting season is well under way and Trial results are filtering through as I write this. Not long before I pack my bag for the Retriever Championship at Windsor. Neither is there much time to the Spring when Working Tests will provide much needed competition and camaraderie, hopefully in equal measure. The calendar will also be ticking down to the 2015 CLA Game Fair which will be held this year in July at Harewood House near Leeds. The atmosphere at the CLA is electric and the photographs, courtesy of Lorenzo Hynes, give a flavour of this unique event.

If you wish to qualify a dog for the Irish Team, then you should bear the following in mind:

- the dog should preferably have been placed in a Field Trial the previous season;
- top awards in Working Tests will not only get you noticed, but will help prove handler and dog ability in competition;
- any handler selected must be capable of being part of a team, individual brilliance is seldom enough at the CLA.
- experience of handling in a big atmosphere under pressure is a very desirable attribute. Many fail this test, because in a space not much bigger than a soccer pitch, the CLA Judges will set a very severe test of ability. Your efforts will also be watched by a crowded

Grandstand of up to 1-2 thousand knowledgeable spectators, and the hopes and expectations of your home supporters will weigh heavily on your shoulders; and

- handlers must be prepared to attend selection and/or training sessions in the months up to the event.

The team this year will be selected by Ken Lindsay and Tommy Hughes, both men who know exactly what it takes to compete at and win a CLA. Selector's decisions are final, inevitably there are always hard luck stories. Please do not hesitate to get in touch with either of these gentlemen if you wish to be considered to be part of the wonderful experience which is the CLA.



The 2014 Team outside HQ in their sponsored Hanratty fleeces.



CLA trophies on offer.



Welsh captain Alan Rees and Lorenzo Hynes discuss their training regime.



Sean Moriarty, Judge Damien Kelly and Adrian Dorris enjoy the craic.



2014 Team Ireland with lead sponsor Margaret Mellor from Discover Ireland.



Graham Cox – CLA guru, economics philosopher and guardian of Schedule J.



Tommy McMinn and Tommy Hughes "what do you mean – same as last year".

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Damian Newman – Maighmor
(www.maighmorgundogs.com)



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

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Registered Firearms Dealers in Northern Ireland Not Required to Keep Electronic Records

Countryside Alliance Ireland (CAI) welcomes the decision by the Department of Justice for Northern Ireland (DOJNI) that it is not a requirement for Registered Firearms Dealers (RFDs) in Northern Ireland to hold records electronically.

This decision brings Northern Ireland into compliance with the amendments to the European Firearms Directive, which come in to force on 31 December 2014, as part of the UK decentralised electronic record keeping of firearms. Contrary to previous advice from the DOJNI individual dealers can decide to keep their records electronically or in paper form.

Lyall Plant, Chief Executive of Countryside Alliance Ireland said: "We are delighted that the DOJNI has accepted that in order to comply with the EU Firearms Directive RFDs are not required to hold electronic records, and that the Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI) will hold that data centrally as part of the UK's decentralised approach to implementation of the Directive. The previous insistence that compliance required RFDs to move to electronic record keeping was wrong and was yet another example of unnecessary "gold plating" by the authorities. The Government has repeatedly made clear that unnecessary regulations and burdens on business should be removed, including the "gold plating" of EU laws.

Thanks to the persistence of the Gun Trade Guild NI (GTG NI) Chairman, and CAI Board Member, David Robinson, RFDs in NI are now free to keep records in whatever form they choose, in full accordance with the European Directive. CAI and the GTG NI will be seeking an immediate meeting with the DOJNI and the PSNI to discuss the necessary changes that will have to be made in regard to the type and timing of information supplied by dealers to PSNI Firearms and Explosives Branch.

We continue to question whether the Directive does in fact require any RFD in the UK to hold electronic records, as is being imposed elsewhere in the UK.

Firearms Licensing - general

The discussions on the proposed changes to the firearms legislation have progressed with a number of workshops being held to drive things forward. Workshops in respect of Young Shooters and the Banded System have already been held and at the time of writing there is one scheduled in respect of fees for Wednesday 3 December 2014.

Irish Ladies Flyfishing Association Fourth Trial of 2014

The Irish Ladies Flyfishing Association (ILFA) held their 4th and final trial of the 2014 season on the lovely waters of Eskragh Lough, near

Dungannon, Co. Tyrone on the first Sunday in October.

Although autumn had already announced itself during the previous week, the weather held beautifully for the day and fishing was carried out in near perfect conditions with a very mild south-easterly breeze crossing the lake up to lunch time. A stronger wind predicted by the met office kicked in towards the end of the day but did not deter from a very enjoyable outing.

Julie Gerry from Maynooth in Co. Kildare (who was the eventual winner with 9 fish), concentrated her morning efforts at the top of the lake and had most success on an intermediate line and a yellow blob. The afternoon saw Julie move down the lake towards the pier where she continued to catch fish on blobs.

Madeleine Kelly from Hilltown in Co. Down (who was 2nd), had the opposite tactic; choosing to spend the morning at the pier area and the afternoon towards the top of the lake. Madeleine finished with 7 fish and found a Di3 line and a 2-tone blob to be the most successful.

For the rest of the women fishing, intermediate or Di3 lines the blobs were the most successful combination for the day and nearly everyone caught fish including the 3 new members, Orlaith O'Hagan from Dundalk, Deirdre McConnell from Co. Dublin and Liz Dermott from Co. Antrim.

The ILFA would like to thank the members of the Dundalk Angling Club who volunteered their boating services for the day.

The ILFA have now completed the 2014 league and the women that have qualified for

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the 2015 team will be taking part in the International Ladies Flyfishing Championships to be held on the English waters of Grafham Water in June 2015.

Women aged over 18 who would like to try flyfishing are very welcome to attend their training days (tackle and experience are not necessary).

Full ILFA information can be found on Facebook or visit www.irishladiesflyfishing.com

Report by Hazel O'Gorman, PRO, Irish Ladies Flyfishing Association

Be Vigilant This Hunting Season

Hunting is under constant and detailed scrutiny and it has come to our attention that those who oppose our rural way of life will be increasing their presence at meets across Northern Ireland this season.

The anti brigade in Northern Ireland have upped their game and it is our belief that they intend to use private investigators to infiltrate hunt meets in order to source any material at all that they may use in their attempt to thwart our hunting activities and bring this rural activity into disrepute.

Countryside Alliance Ireland, The Northern Ireland Masters of Hounds Association and the Hunting Association of Northern Ireland have joined forces to reinforce to their members



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about the need to be vigilant and to report any suspicious or unlawful activity by antis to the police.

CAI invited Countryside Alliance's Director of Campaigns, Tim Bonner (who has vast experience in this field) to Northern Ireland where he addressed members of these organisations at a meeting in Belfast. Tim informed the meeting of tactics used by some investigators and the lengths that some of them will go to, to discredit individual hunts and their hunting activities and how best to deal with these unwarranted and intrusive actions.

CAI's Chief Executive also reiterated the need for hunts to ensure they do not become complacent about the future of hunting and to conduct their activities to the highest standards and beyond reproach.

Countryside Alliance Ireland – NI Office Relocation

The Northern Ireland office of Countryside Alliance Ireland has moved.

We are now located at 64a Dows Road, Belfast, BT8 8LB. The telephone number remains unchanged – 028 9263 9911.

We would like to take this opportunity to thank our former landlords, the Mackie family and also the estate staff, for their help and support whilst we resided at Larchfield.

Insurance Protection for Countryside Alliance Ireland Members

Whilst almost all Countryside Alliance Ireland members will join the organisation because of a love of the countryside and an appreciation for the work that the CAI does to defend and promote country sports and rural life, some may

also sign up to take advantage of the range of benefits that are offered as part of the membership.

One such benefit is the automatic inclusion to CAI's insurance programme organised by R K Harrison Insurance Services (RKHIS). The package provides Personal Accident cover and Employers', Public and Products Liability cover for eligible members to participate in a wide range of specific country pursuits (otherwise referred to as Recognised Activities) including a variety of riding and shooting events.

A full list of Recognised Activities can be found in the "Frequently Asked Questions" (FAQ's) in the Insurance section of the CAI website and this document will also give you a better understanding of how these pursuits are defined in insurance terms.

RKHIS understands the importance of providing the appropriate cover for CAI members and that is why we continuously review the policies being offered and the insurer partners providing them, to ensure that members can enjoy peace of mind whilst enjoying their chosen country pursuits.

A full review of cover and provider was undertaken in 2013 and we were impressed with the level of understanding insurers had about the needs of CAI members. A decision was made to appoint two new insurer partners, Aviva for Personal Accident and Liberty Mutual for Liabilities. In both cases the breadth of cover has been expanded. For further details of the policies offered please see the summary of cover documents, policy wordings and FAQ's available on the website - www.countrysideallianceireland.org/article/membership-insurance

(Information provided by R K Harrison Insurance Services Ltd)

In addition, a new information sheet has been produced – email info@caireland.org

with the subject heading 'Insurance Protection Factsheet' and we shall email you a copy.

Go Wild For Game This Season!

Eating game is cheap, it's healthy, it benefits the countryside, and it is in season now. What's not to like?

The number one benefit of eating game is its healthiness. Research carried out by Leatherhead Food International shows how game compares very favourably with other red and white meats. Venison is high in protein, low in saturated fatty acids and contains higher levels of iron than any other red meat. Pheasant and partridge also contain a high level of iron, protein, vitamin B(6) and selenium, which helps to protect cells from damage, reducing the chance of cancer.

Countryside Alliance's 'Game-to-Eat' campaign's brand new recipe leaflet featuring newly created recipes from our development chef Lee Maycock is available now. Email info@gametoat.co.uk for your copy today. Recipes can be found at www.gametoat.co.uk

And finally for this year...

I would like to take this opportunity to thank our members and fellow country sports enthusiasts for their continued support throughout 2014. Our members are an integral part of the organisation and each year, as our membership base grows, it is encouraging to receive positive feedback.

It is with eagerness that all of us at CAI look to 2015 and as always we are working for and on behalf of our members and this will remain at the heart of everything we do.

All that is left for me is to say I hope you're having a great season and to have a happy, safe and plentiful Christmas and New Year.

Lyall

IRELAND ANGLING SHOW 2015

The much anticipated Ireland Angling 2015 will be back at the National Show centre in Swords on the 21st & 22nd of February 2015.

Mara Media, event organisers, are delighted to announce that the show will be bigger, better and inclusive of all types of Angling, Game, Coarse and Sea. The addition to the line up of Exhibitors, **Preston Innovation** will be welcomed by the many Coarse anglers that visit the show. Aimed at the serious match angler, Preston Innovations offer a range of products that suit many different styles of fishing. From the casual angler right through to professional match winners.

Pure Fishing return to the show with their team of experts and will showcase their innovative range. Pure Fishing is a global family of quality fishing tackle brands, offering a broad range of products that meet or exceed the needs of today's anglers.

For the Game Anglers we will have the launch of the exclusive **Salmologic** range designed by Henrik Mortensen and available to purchase at the show at the A M Angling Stand.

The Anglers of the future, our kids, will be catered for with a bigger, more interactive **Family Zone**, casting tuition, touch pools, entomology, treasure hunts will be sure to capture their attention and encourage the kids to go fishing.

For the first time at the Ireland Angling Show **THE BATTLE OF THE ANGLERS** - watch as Team Game, Glenda Powell and Stevie Munn, Team Sea, Henry Gilbey and Jim Clohessy and Team Coarse, Jan Porter and Cathal Hughes pitch their casting skills against each other and the clock!!

Come along and cheer your favourite angling personality as they prepare to do Battle in what promises to be an enjoyable and intense competition. The Battle of the Anglers will be compered by world renowned Fly Fisherman Hywel Morgan.

For the third year, the **Irish Speciman Fish Committee** will be hosting the Awards day on Sat 21st at the Bewley's 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 show has an amazing range of products 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," said Grace McDermott, Event Organiser, Mara Media.

And of course **Irish Countrysports and Country Life (including the Irish Game Angler) will be there.**

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- Choose from a variety of lens options for increased performance – standard polarised lenses for excellent glare protection and high definition contrast – or choose our premier Ultra 2000 (Drivewear®) lenses with variable tint technology. These provide perfect, glare-free vision – in both bright sunlight and challenging low light, where other lenses struggle.

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Photo shows GRAMPIAN Game Shooting Coat and Saloppes in minus 30 degree conditions and icy wind Greenland

Merry
Christmas

GRAB CHRISTMAS BY THE BAUBLES

It's that time of year when the adverts get gushy, heartstrings get pulled and all of a sudden hard-nosed execs get misty eyed! Well, there's one company determined to see the lighter side of the festive season by asking its customers to 'Grab Christmas by the baubles' and bag a Christmas travel deal.

Leading ferry operator, Stena Line, wants a ho-ho-ho from its customers this year, so has decided to use humour as a way of telling them that they need to book early in order to secure the lowest fares and preferred sailings on their Irish Sea routes.

The ferry company is also making its low £69* single, for a car and driver fare available during the Christmas season and as there are no excess baggage charges you can really afford to fill the car and bring a pre-sent for everyone.

"At Christmas we want to spend time with our nearest and dearest," said Orla Noonan, Stena Line's Head of Travel, Irish Sea. "Every year, thousands of people cross the Irish Sea to share the festive season with family and friends. Stena Line makes that journey home not only cost effective, stress free and fun but, as we have no baggage charges, you can get a present for all of your loved ones and as pets travel free, no-one gets left behind! Once onboard, passengers will be treated to the best ferry experience on the Irish Sea. And don't worry if you've forgotten that last minute present – you'll find super gift ideas in our onboard store. Plus with up to 50% off high street brands including fragrances, cosmetics, toys and electrical, there's something for the whole family!"

Travelling by ferry this Christmas ticks all the boxes - no long queues at check-in; plenty of places to explore onboard; delicious choice of dining



Model Megan Green, with her festive pooch, Poppy, grabs Christmas by the baubles from Stena.

options including great value meal deals; free festive movies and WiFi; great ranges available for last minute shopping and up to 50% off compared to the high street on selected lines.

To book your very own Stena Line trip to Ireland log onto www.steneline.co.uk * Terms and conditions apply. Subject to availability.

Report of the Joint DOJ/Garda Review of Firearms

The report of the Joint DOJ/Garda review of firearms is now published on the DOJ website on the link at the end of this email. If ever anyone had any doubt as to the enormity of what was being planned, such doubt is now removed entirely. If Fine Gael accept these proposals we must never again allow them to govern. Most of what I had announced early in 2014 being targeted and for which I was criticised by some shooting organisations for giving incorrect information are included. If you allow this to succeed, you will have lost a significant part of your sport and you will lose more later.

As you will be aware from previous briefs, the issue of firearms licensing remains a vexed issue for shooting people. Most, if not all of you will recall that in conjunction with most of the other shooting interests (target, dealers and range operators and our angling friends in FISSTA) we held a day long lobbying/briefing session for TDs and Senators in Buswells Hotel, across the street from Leinster House last May. Following on from that many of those politicians who attended made representations on our behalf resulting in commitments from the Minister in writing to each representation made and to us, and further stated by her on the floor of the Dail, inter alia, that when she received an anticipated report from a review being conducted jointly by the Gardai and her own Department of the firearms licensing system, she would consult with the relevant stakeholders prior to any final decisions being taken.

You will see from the documents linked below

that this promise was nothing more than a sham and another all too familiar broken promise by Fine Gael. The evidence clearly points to an intention to deceive us and treat us unfairly. At this point shooting people have a right to feel very angry that they are being treated with absolute contempt while a discredited Garda force is being rewarded for their unlawful handling of the firearms licensing system. Scandal is not a word which overstates the situation. Make no mistake about it, other hunting firearms are next if we let them away with this.

We need all of you now more than ever to mobilise and call your Government TD's and Senators to account. The political parties are in election mode and the Minister for Justice has been appointed by the Taoiseach to Chair the Fine Gael National Strategy Committee to conduct a Pre-General Election Consultation Process within Fine Gael. I can only suggest, in the circumstances of our experience, that the Fine Gael members should be very wary indeed of any promised consultation process.

We need and urge you to start contacting every TD and Senator in your area and let them know in the strongest possible terms of your displeasure at how shooting people are being treated.

Tell them you expect them to be in Buswells Hotel on the 20th. Every single one of them have received notice of the briefing by email already. Impress upon them that their seats are now very much in danger as sports people, including you, will commence actively campaigning against them if the Minister does not row back from her position. Tell them you are now at the end of your patience with Fine



Gael and Labour and you and your family will never again give them a vote.

Tell them you want feedback very quickly as to what is being done. Make it plain that no one is going to now engage in a fools' sham consultation. Don't contact each politician only once. Follow up to them after a week and tell them you want to know what is happening and do the same a week later and every week until they get the message.

PLEASE ACT NOW!

Links for your attention:

Firearms Notification - November 2014

Letter to Oireachtas Members

Communication to Frances Fitzgerald

<http://www.justice.ie/en/JELR/2014.WG.Report.pdf/Files/2014.WG.Report.pdf>

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— SHOOTING GROUNDS —

To celebrate **25 years in business** Courtlough Shooting Ground are pleased to announce that their Silver Anniversary Draw will take place on St Stephens Night December 26th at 8.30pm.

*No Cash Alternative for Prizes T&C Apply

1st Prize	Beretta SO5 Sporting RRP €26,000
2nd Prize	Beretta 687 EELL 30" Field Gun RRP €8,000
3rd Prize	Beretta 690 Field Gun RRP €3,000
4th Prize	Beretta A300 Semi Automatic RRP €1,400
5th Prize	Tikka T3 Lite .243 RRP €1,200
6th Prize	Le Chameau Arran GTX Boots RRP €350
7th Prize	Le Chameau Vierzonord Wellies RRP €250
8th Prize	Musto Packaway Light Shooting Jacket RRP €250
9th Prize	Hunter Balmoral Neoprene Wellies RRP €250
10th Prize	1,000 Game Cartridges 32gram No. 6's RRP €250



Terms & Conditions for Christmas Draw

- Ownership and transfer of firearms are subject to grant of Firearms License from Garda.
- The Goods will remain the property of Courtlough Shooting Grounds until such a time as Firearms Certificate has been granted.
- Ammunition will be distributed to licensed Firearms holders only.
- Clothing and Footwear is open to variation and can be exchanged for similar goods to the same value.
- No cash alternative for prizes.
- This ticket entitles the holder admission to the Silver Anniversary Celebration on December 26th @ 8.30pm



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Beretta SO5 Sporting RRP €26,000



Beretta 687 EELL 30" Field Gun RRP €8,000



Beretta 690 Field Gun RRP €3,000

4th Prize Beretta A300 Semi Automatic RRP €1,400
5th Prize Tikka T3 Lite .243 RRP €1,200
6th Prize Le Chameau Arran GTX Boots RRP €350
7th Prize Le Chameau Vierzonord Wellies RRP €250

8th Prize Musto Packaway Light Shooting Jacket RRP €250
9th Prize Hunter Balmoral Neoprene Wellies RRP €250
10th Prize 1,000 Game Cartridges 32gram No. 6's RRP €250

To celebrate **25 years in business** Courtlough Shooting Ground are pleased to announce that their Silver Anniversary Draw will take place on St Stephens Night December 26th at 8.30pm.

We wish to invite all those who have supported us on our journey to celebrate this milestone we are delighted to offer someone this amazing opportunity to win a once in a lifetime prize.

On St Stephens Day we will be hosting a Shoot n' Steak day (Including 50 Bird Flush) followed by the draw at 8:30pm in the Trigger & Trout Bar. This promises to be a great night and best of luck to all entrants.

Tickets are available to purchase in the shop at Courtlough Shooting Grounds from 20th October Tickets can also be purchased by contacting us on: 01-841 3096

*No Cash Alternative for Prizes T&C Apply

Prizes in Excess of €40,000 to Celebrate 25 Years!

Cost per Ticket €100 - Limited to 375 Tickets*



Terms & Conditions for Christmas Draw

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New Food Cookery Demonstration Theatre & Roadshow

The Walled City Market, in Derry's City Centre, hosted the formal launch of a new mobile cookery demonstration theatre and roadshow with Irish Food Heritage Chef, Emmet McCourt.

The Cookery Road Show is a new initiative funded by Department of Agriculture and Rural Development NI Regional Food Programme, Derry City Council and facilitated by the Old Library Trust. It introduces a new dimension to Irish Food Heritage Project led by Emmet McCourt and brings together live food demonstrations and local indigenous food suppliers.

Speaking at the launch event Emmett welcomed the opportunity to share his passion and knowledge and explained how this new development advances his ambition to breathe new life into traditional recipes: "It is my ambition to share my passion with as many people as possible through the Cookery Road Show. Through sourcing local artisan produce to make these classical Irish dishes, I also hope to support local business and create a new live cooking experience. I hope it will inspire many to take a new perspective with the many amazing untold stories of local food and its connection to our unique social history."

The road show adds a new dimension to the Irish Food Heritage Project.) The Mobile Cookery Demonstration Theatre & Roadshow is a fully fitted mobile demonstration kitchen that will tour the various markets, fairs and food events throughout Ireland. (Editor: It was a terrific hit with the public at the fantastic Ballynahinch Harvest And Country Living Festival.)

Mayor, Cllr Brenda Stevenson, who attended



The official launch of the Mobile Cookery Demonstration Theatre.

the launch said: "This innovative resource provides an exciting platform for the promotion of local food and food producers. It will support the animation of Ireland's Food Heritage story through interactive demonstrations and provide a new experience for community and heritage audiences. I believe it will energise a new generation of food lovers by bringing together classical menus with the unique taste of their home grown produce".

Louise Millsopp, Head of Supply Chain Development Branch (DARD) also commenting on the initiative said: "This unique project offers

a window into the past to gain a wider understanding of the culinary history of regional Irish food which can provide competitive advantage in the marketplace. I would like to wish the Irish Food Heritage Project every success in their adoption of this new approach to conveying factual information about quality regional food and food heritage through the use of the mobile cookery demonstration theatre".

More details on how to book the Cookery Demonstration Theatre & Road Show is available by visiting www.feastorfamine.ie

DAFM CONFIRMS NO CONNECTION BETWEEN WILD DEER AND BOVINE TB

Ireland's national representative body for deer hunters, the Wild Deer Association of Ireland (WDAI), recently met with senior officials from the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine (DAFM) and the National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) following claims by the Irish Farmers Association (IFA) that a major wild deer cull was urgently needed to combat bovine tuberculosis.

The outcome of the meeting was the welcome confirmation that the DAFM are wholly satisfied there is no connection between the spread of bovine TB and wild deer, and this has now been made known to the IFA.

Data produced by the WDAI matched that of DAFM, with less than 2% of deer carcasses testing positive for bovine TB. This is in line with most other animals. It is understood an isolated area in County Wicklow has shown higher than normal rates of bovine TB amongst livestock, and the IFA are blaming local wild deer.

Those who have visited Killarney National Park will have observed the parks famous deer herd and Kerry cattle grazing side by side whilst there have been instances of Bovine TB amongst the Kerry cattle the disease has never been detected in the deer herd.

To suggest wild deer are the cause is misleading

A spokesperson for the WDAI stated: "Whilst we sympathise with landowners who are affected by bovine TB, to suggest wild deer are the cause is misleading and only serves to unnecessarily vilify our already decimated wild deer herds. WDAI work in a partnership with landowners in every corner of the country by providing an invaluable service of managing wild deer herds, while at the same time preserving Ireland's natural wildlife in an equilibrium ecosystem. It is important that unjust allegations are refuted quickly before more damage to Ireland's wild deer occurs."



Kerry Mountain Red Stag. (photo by Sarah O'Dwyer)

A paper published in a prestigious scientific journal on July 2nd in the UK, highlights groundbreaking new research showing how infected cattle missed by testing are key spreaders of the disease.

Information recently released by NPWS shows a continuous decline in Ireland's national deer cull numbers since 2010. The decrease is despite a significant increase in the number of hunting licenses granted to hunters during the same period. In County Tipperary, deer cull numbers declined by over 20% in 2012 and for the first time, NPWS have begun to refuse deer hunting licenses to hunters due to low deer numbers. In 2012, Minister Jimmy Deenihan removed red deer in County Kerry from the hunting season due to concerns that deer numbers were at dangerously low levels.

It is understood wild deer herds have been decimated in many areas as a result of illegal deer poaching. It is therefore important that unjust allegations are refuted quickly before more damage to Ireland's wild deer occurs.



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Great Game Fairs Artist's 'Siege of Limerick' Sold

Ester Barrett's large painting, 'Siege of Limerick' (above) the last in her Williamite/Jacobite War series has sold at its recent launch at the Thomond Archaeological and Historical Society's 'Practised in the Art of War' conference (Limerick Sieges, 1642 to 1691).

The three-day event was held in Limerick City as part of City of Culture. The painting's buyer wishes to remain anonymous but was very pleased to acquire the painting for her own private collection at a little below the asking price of €15000.

The artist took a year out to study the wars and one of its main 'protagonists', the famous war horse, the Byerley Turk. No stranger to the equine form and the spirit of the horse having exhibited internationally and been the recipient of two awards, Ester was first brought to the attention of Albert Titterington through her participation in his Great Game Fairs of Ireland. It was the beginning of a friendship and working relationship that Ester and her two siblings, Ailbhe and Louise, have been privileged to know. Another painting in the series, 'Battle of Aughrim,' sold earlier in the year to a prominent mid-west businessman.

Ester is currently working towards her first solo exhibition, to be held in Limerick in 2015 when she will be exhibiting a selection of both paintings and bronze sculpture. She is continually in demand as a portraitist and is equally adept at the human figure and animals. Hounds continue to be a favourite subject as shown in her recent piece 'In Focus.'



The Wild Deer Association of Ireland carcass handling seminar

The Wild Deer Association of Ireland will hold a carcass handling seminar on Sunday December 14th at 2pm in the Abbey Theatre, Abbey St, Roscrea, Co Tipperary.

The skill and knowledge of carcass handling is something that we all require new or old to deer stalking and all deer stalkers are asked to support this event.

The seminar is free of charge and open to WDAI members. To gain access to the seminar you will require a current membership card. New members can join on the day or join online at www.wilddeerireland.com

The seminar will include a number of speakers including disease identification and general deer health by a veterinarian, along with carcass preparation and home butchery by a game butcher. There will also be a large display of discounted game butchery equipment for sale with all profits going to the association. A



complementary venison BBQ and hot refreshments will also be served.

Those who have attended previous seminars will know it is a 'must attend' event and a great social occasion to meet like minded deer stalkers.

Irish Fly Fair and International Angling Show

Stevie Munn writes that the recent 5th Irish Fly Fair and International Angling show which was held in the Galway Bay Hotel was a fantastic success and many exhibitors have already booked for next year: "We had record numbers of visitors at the show from all over the world. The feedback from visitors,

exhibitors, fly casters and fly dressers has been exceptionally positive. Business was brisk for the exhibitors, with reports of good spending on the products by the angling public."

Attractions at the show included top fly dressers from all over the world, fly casting

demonstrations by well-known angling celebrities, angling talks by experts in their field and the Youth fly tying competition.

Stevie added: "Plans are already afoot for next year's event and we would like to thank our sponsors Hardy, Partridge, Veniard and also the support from Irish Country Sports and Country Life magazine."

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Art & Antiques

I think the bad days of economic strife are behind us, in so far as auction house activity is concerned.

My enthusiasm for better times is shared by Belfast auctioneer Daniel Clarke, who runs ROSS'S, Northern Ireland's premier sales house: "Yes I think things have bottomed out and the bad days are behind us, but I would be a bit happier if more houses were being emptied, for that would bring more lots to sale," he says. "Silver items are going quite well at the moment; so too are quality pieces of furniture and paintings."

While ROSS'S did not have its usual autumn Irish arts sales event this October, Mr Clarke says that is not to be taken as an indication such sales will not return: "We are running several very successful on-line sales during the year and at the moment all our customers – buyers and sellers – are very happy with this arrangement. That doesn't mean we have dropped the traditional sales. If the demand is there for them then we will hold them. But I have to say that while we are doing well on-line our general house



Samuel Walters (1811-1882) oil on canvas of yachts racing past the Irish Light Vessel sold for €25,500 (Adam's).

sales are quite successful too. Of course many people now feel quite comfortable buying and selling on line and would-be purchasers still like to come in and inspect the items that are coming to sale," he adds.

While in no way trying to diminish online sales, I must admit to being something of a traditionalist in so far as buying and selling goes. To my

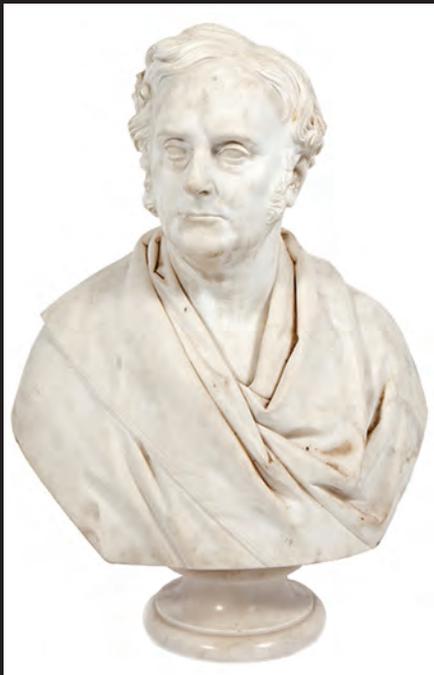
mind there is still nothing to equal the atmosphere of a well-charged auction room with bidders vying with one and other for some high class item, some quirky lot, or some ridiculous piece of crockery.

It is a world of its own, a place where dreams are created and sometimes shattered. Where there is a great sense of equality among all attending, even though the man beside you may be able to out bid you ten times over, but doesn't do so? Yes, there is something romantic too about a sales room, with an experienced auctioneer cajoling, encouraging and always tempting his audience to place, 'just another bid' before his gavel falls to the sound of his voice echoing off the walls, 'going, going, gone.' You don't get any of that when taking part in an online sale, but then again many of those who do participate have never felt the joy of being involved in a bidding battle in an old fashioned sales room.

One of my earliest memories was attending an auction with my mother when I was only about twelve years of age. And I can still remember well that auctioneer, a man called William Thompson who was also a respected



Pair of English 15inch library globes by Newtown & Son, London sold for €25,500 (Adam's).



A carved marble by John Henry Foley of Sir Benjamin Lee Guinness realised €25,000 (Adam's).

butcher and livestock breeder in Downpatrick, Co Down, selling a chamber pot. Today such an item would probably be sold or passed over at a sale in a matter of seconds. But William, being the professional he was, took all of ten minutes to dispose of it. And when he finally dropped his gavel to a successful sale at 2/6d (I can still hear his voice to the purchaser): "It was only used by one careful owner ma'm." You cannot expect an atmosphere like that online!

But the times have changed; I suppose if an item sells and sells well, that is what really matters. So we just have to embrace every device that helps us dispose with satisfaction and purchase with pleasure.

AROUND THE SALES

ADAM'S

Without a doubt Dublin based ADAM'S carried the day for prestigious auctions this autumn, with their 6th annual Country House Collections at Slane Castle in mid October. It was reported that the two-day event in Co Meath saw bidders spend €1.4 m with almost 70 pc of the items on offered being sold.

Over 800 lots representing an eclectic offering and many items with

extremely interesting provenance came under the hammer and the prices attained proved without a shadow of a doubt the interest we still retain for the possessions of the 'old gentry.'

It was lot 649, a Samuel Walters (1811-1882) oil on canvas of yachts racing past the Irish Light Vessel off Dublin Bay, dated 1848 which really shone among prices selling for €25,500.

This was followed by a pair of English 15inch library globes by Newtown & Son, London, dated 1841, which sold for a similar amount and in doing so achieved their high estimate. A carved marble by John Henry Foley, of Sir Benjamin Lee Guinness realised €25,000 while a fine and rare Regency brass mounted wheel barometer by John Russell of Falkirk went at €21,000. It drew much interest achieving a hammer price well in advance of its high estimate. A Thomas Hudson (1701-1779) portrait of a young girl sitting in a made €20,000 while a fine George I inlaid walnut seaweed marquetry long-case clock by Nicholas Lambert of London, circa 1715 went over its high estimate to sell at €18,000. A rare Limerick plain

hemispherical bowl on foot, circa 1749-50, estimated to make €3,000 sold for €17,000.

Among other fine lots were: a magnificent silver model of a stallion by Edwina Emery, €17,000; Marcus Gheeraert portrait of Robert Devereaux, 2nd Earl of Essex, €17,000; Limestone Roman bust of man wearing a toga, €16,000. Lady Ardilaun's Victorian photograph album, which contained an unpublished photograph of Oscar Wilde on the steps of Ashford Castle, sold for €7,000 and a silver casket, which had been presented to Lord Ardilaun in 1914 by the Royal Dublin Society, made €10,000.

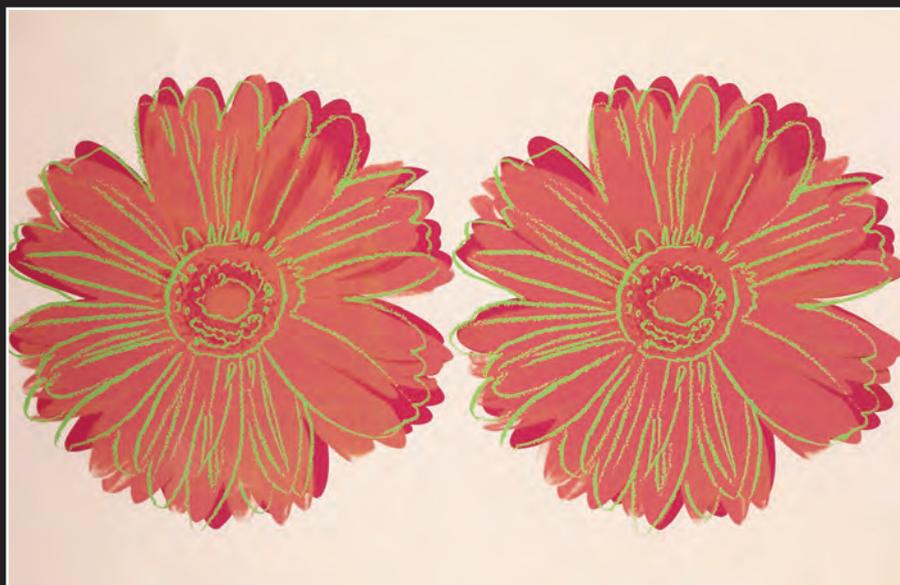
ADAM'S Irish Art sale, in early October, saw a Jack Butler Yeats oil selling for €44,000, followed by a Louis le Brocquy work at €40,000. A Roderic O'Connor oil on canvas commanded a commendable €30,000, while Nathaniel Hone's 'Driving cattle home' made €21,000. Among other lots were: Colin Middleton, "Sleeping Beauty," €20,000; Louis le Brocquy, €17,500; William Conor, €15,000; Norah McGuinness, €14,000; George Campbell, €14,000; and Daniel O'Neill, €13,000.



A Thomas Hudson (1701-1779) portrait of a young girl sitting in a made €20,00 (Adam's)



'Le Courtisan Grotesque (No6)' by Joan Miro sold for €68,000 (Whyte's).



Andy Warhol's 'Double Daisy' exceeded its estimate to sell for €27,000 (Whyte's).

In their Sunday Interiors sale in September, ADAM'S sold a composed 18th/19th century Continental bouffe secretaire for €21,000; a Victorian walnut and ebon side cabinet at €3,400; and a set of ten Regency style mahogany Cork dining chairs at €2,700. A Chinese copper red mallet shaped vase made €2,600 while a fine satinwood, harewood and rosewood cross-banded semi elliptical commode made €2,400.

In the earlier Attic sale, a Leon Zack oil on canvas went at €4,400 while a collection of copper jelly moulds, estimated to make €300 went at 2,600. A French giltwood console table made €1,500 and a large 19th century over mantle mirror realised €1,350.

WHYTES

Both contemporary and traditional works attracted strong prices at WHYTE'S sale of Irish and International art held in late September. The top result achieved was for 'Le Courtisan Grotesque (No6)' by Joan Miro which sold for €68,000 while Sir John Lavery's 'Lady In Green' which attracted a bidding battle before being finally sold for €30,000. Andy Warhol was also in demand by both national and international buyers with 'Double Daisy' exceeding its estimate to sell for €27,000.

The surprise of the sale perhaps was that an oil on canvas, 'In the West of Ireland' by Paul Henry, failed to sell; it carried a high estimate of €55,000.

ONLINE LUCK

It must have been quite a surprise to a private art collector in Co Wexford who sold a Willem de Kooning work for €75,000. The painting which was sold in MORGAN O'DRISCOLL'S online art auction in October, attracted more than 100 bids and carried a pre-sale estimate of €1,500.

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and the only magazine fully representing the interests of Irish hunting, shooting and fishing enthusiasts and the hunting, shooting and fishing trade.

As ICS&CL celebrates 30 years of continuous publication firstly as Irish Hunting, Shooting and Fishing and then ICS&CL we ask enthusiasts, the sporting organisations and the trade to reflect on whether the interests of Irish country sports, both personal and trade can truly be represented by magazines edited and published in GB, or magazines whose editorial staff are primarily office based and rarely attend public events to meet their readers and trade customers?

Throughout 2014 ICS&CL exhibited at the Angling Show in Dublin, The Traction Engine Rally, the Ballymena Agricultural Show, The Irish Game Fair at Shanes Castle, The Irish Game & Country Fair at Birr Castle, the Harvest Festival and Game Fair at Ballynahinch and in the last two weeks Irish Countrysports and Country Life exhibited at the Irish Fly Fair in Galway and then attended the St Hubert's Day celebrations organised by the NARGC and the IMFA in Abbeyleix.

What was very significant was that no other magazine, either GB or Irish based, made the effort to meet existing



Albert & Irene Titterington on the Irish Country Sports and Country Life stand at the Galway Fly Fair.

customers, promote the country sports message and trade advertisers' interest to the public and/or to hear the views of sporting enthusiasts. And of course it's no surprise that ICS&CL is also one of the largest sponsors of country sports in Ireland.

In addition to these public promotions, our staff and contributors are active at shoots, gundog, hunting and fishing events throughout Ireland and the UK throughout the year. That is why

the magazine has a credibility that extends beyond Ireland, increasingly evidenced by the demand for subscriptions and a huge online readership of the FREE to READ online version making the magazine the most read ever Irish based country sports magazine.

With this sort of readership, the magazine obviously offers the trade the most effective advertising medium available in Ireland.



Irene Titterington presents Peter O'Reilly and Paddy Keenan from APGAI Ireland with a cheque for £500 towards their important work at shows throughout the year.



Organisers Stevie and Elaine Munn in the Fly Tying area.



The Team from AM Angling and Loop Tackle.



John Fairgrieve capturing angling memories for ever.



Paddy Keenan from APGAI Ireland with Paul Bourke from Inland Fisheries Ireland.



AM angling have teamed up with Ian Gordon to provide some excellent angling holidays.

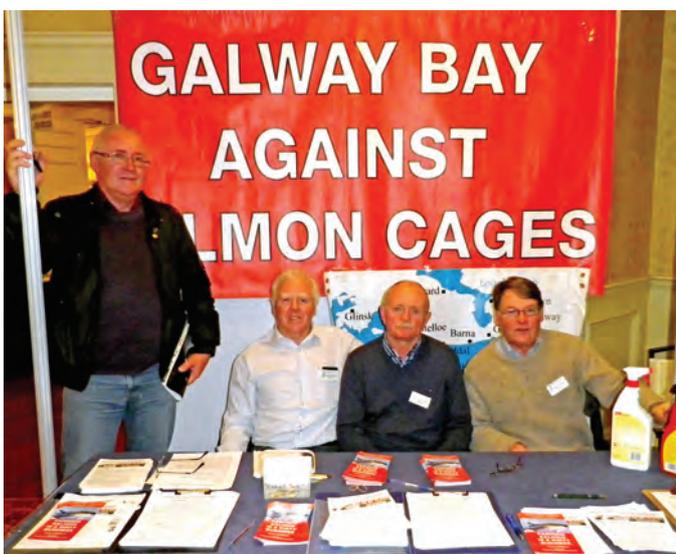
IRISH COUNTRY SPORTS & COUNTRY LIFE at the IRISH FLY FAIR GALWAY

ICS&CL was the only Irish or GB angling publication exhibiting at the Galway Fly Fair, very successfully organised by Stevie Munn and his team of enthusiastic helpers.

IRISH COUNTRY SPORTS & COUNTRY LIFE at the St Hubert's Day Celebrations at Abbeleix

The NARGC and IMFA associations once again hosted St Hubert's Day celebrations at the Abbeyleix Manor Hotel. There was an excellent turnout of trade and organisation stands from fly tyers to taxidermists and of course once again Irish Countrysports and Country Life was the only hunting, shooting or fishing publication to be present at this important annual event.

The assembled crowd of c300 enthusiasts from the hunting, shooting and fishing communities were addressed by NARGC chairman John Butler, David Lalor from the IMFA and Des Crofton. Des stressed the importance of the whole Irish country sports community demonstrating their strength of numbers by signing the Shooting Alliance petition against the proposed firearms changes. The petition is published elsewhere in the magazine so please make the effort to help get the target of 200,000 signatures by canvassing your friends, club members etc.



Determined protest – Galway Bay anglers keep the pressure on against the proposed salmon farms.

IRISH COUNTRYSPOrts & COUNTRY LIFE – THE BEST COUNTRY FISHING enthusiasts and the BEST ADVERTISING MEDIUM for



The NARGC team of Barry Sullivan (Sec), John Butler (Chairman) and Des Crofton (Chief Executive).



David Lalor and John Butler welcomed the crowd and stressed the importance of unity of purpose within the country sports community.



Des with some NARGC stalwarts.



Margaret Neile and helpers with the NARGC Shop.



As usual the very active team from FISSTA were present to demonstrate the support of the fishing community.



Laois Foxhounds added colour to the proceedings.



It was good to see the young involved: Conor Mooney from Offaly and his family are regular attenders while fly tyer Jimmy Tyrrell had some young experts to assist him.



Oliver Russell and some of the representatives from the Ward Union were visitors to the ICS&CL stand.

SPORTS MAGAZINE FOR IRISH HUNTING, SHOOTING and IRISH HUNTING, SHOOTING and FISHING TRADE.

Garnett & Keegan's

Memories of Dublin's famous country sports shop.

Often long-established and characterful shops are held in fond regard by their customers and it's a source of sadness when they can no longer carry on and close their doors for the final time. One such shop was Garnett & Keegan's, a famous hunting and fishing store, which was located on Parliament Street in Central Dublin. With its red and white front, gold colour sign and attractive oak windows, Garnett and Keegan's resembled the gun shops of Victorian London and was in its heyday in the 1950s when it was described as being a 'hive of activity'. The famous wildlife broadcaster Eamon de Buítléar was employed in the shop for a while and he recalled it with fondness, saying that one of the employees was a biologist and an influence on his life.

One of the people running the shop was Tom Smith, who was remembered as being a great character, good company and a decent shot. After the Second World War, Tom was given the post of Director of Keegan's, which was a firearms store positioned beside Dublin Four Courts. The owner was Larry Keegan, an elderly, childless man, when Tom became Director, and shortly after World War 2 Larry sold his business to Paddy Garnett.

Paddy Garnett's family had been running a fishing and shooting shop in the city since the 19th Century. It's not known for certain when the shop was first opened, but some claim it was operating in Bishop Street in 1860, and afterwards moved to Crampton Court (near Dame Street). Larry Keegan opened his shop in the early 1900s at 3 Inns Quay, beside Dublin Four Courts and enjoyed a very good reputation amongst shooting aficionados, and Larry was a member of the esteemed gun makers' association.

The 19th and early 20th centuries are remembered as being good times to be a shooting and fishing enthusiast in Ireland and written accounts talk of large quantities of fish and game being present in the outdoors. The rich and famous from abroad came here in large



Parliament Street in central Dublin, during the 1950s. Garnett & Keegan's was located at number 31 on this street.

numbers to enjoy the sport, including Edward VII. Garnett's was noted for selling fine quality fishing rods including greenhearts from Castleconnell, Limerick and split cane from Haynes, Cork and Hardy Brothers, Alnwick. The shop's flies were also well regarded and Paddy Garnett's mother could often be seen sitting in the shop window tying them. Keegan's was noted for its guns and after the closure of other gun stores (Trulock and Harris, at 13 Parliament Street, and Rigby's on Dame and Suffolk Streets) it became more popular. Keegan's customer record books show that the same families shopped there generation after generation. For example in the 1980s the grandsons of Lords Holmpatrick and

Ardee shopped in the store and their grandfathers had been customers back in the early 1900s.

In 1949 Garnett and Keegan's was bought by John Hanlon, an accountant who was proprietor of an unsuccessful clothes company and married into a wealthy family. Hanlon decided to move the store to 31 Parliament Street in 1951 and under his stewardship the shop swiftly developed a reputation for being an excellent place for anglers and shooters to shop, being billed a 'Mecca for sportsmen from all four corners of Ireland.'

Shooting wisdom

Sporting people remember Garnett and Keegan's in the '50s and '60s as being a magnificent shop where, in the basement, Captain Tom Smith was often engaged in firing guns down a long corridor at a steel plate target, because he was absorbed in the science of firearms (also known as ballistics). In the floor above another notable employee, Dick Harris, would talk at length with customers about angling. Dick retired in 1984 and was the author of 'An Angler's Entomology,' a study of river and lake insects. In the second floor was Dougie Cotter, the chief gunsmith who could often be heard dispensing his shooting wisdom to



Eamon de Buítléar was at Garnett and Keegan's in the 1950s.

enthusiasts, surrounded by the store's guns and shooting goods as well as a stuffed tiger and brown bear. On the third floor ten ladies worked away, tying thousands of flies using exotic feathers from all over the world. Most of these flies were sent to angling shops around the country, and on the fourth floor,

skilled craftsmen were busy repairing customers' guns and rods.

The shop had a more relaxed atmosphere than we are used to today, where enthusiasts would sometimes stay for a couple of hours chatting about their obsessions. Tom Smith was also an unusual salesman. Sometimes, when a

customer asked for a certain gun, Tom would ask, "What do you want that for?" His preferred sales method wasn't the quick purchase, rather he enjoyed a chat with the customer over tea or coffee for an hour, sharing his knowledge, and influencing the customer's choice of purchase in this manner. If he particularly liked a customer then they might go downstairs for some shooting in the basement or else would head out for lunch. A former employee said Tom never held a grudge: "He apologised if he was out of line, typically saying don't mind me. Customers always wanted to talk to him, bringing their gillies and stewards from all over the country to do so. He was not selective who he talked to and was always happy to share his knowledge with those who asked for it."

John Hanlon also had unusual methods. If someone entered the shop whom he did not like the look of, he would give them a shilling and tell them not to come back. On one occasion a customer who had fallen on hard times entered the shop and had an argument with John over credit. The customer exclaimed: "If you're going to treat me like this I'll not come back to the shop," in response to which John put his hand in his pocket, handed him five pounds and asked: "Is that a promise?"

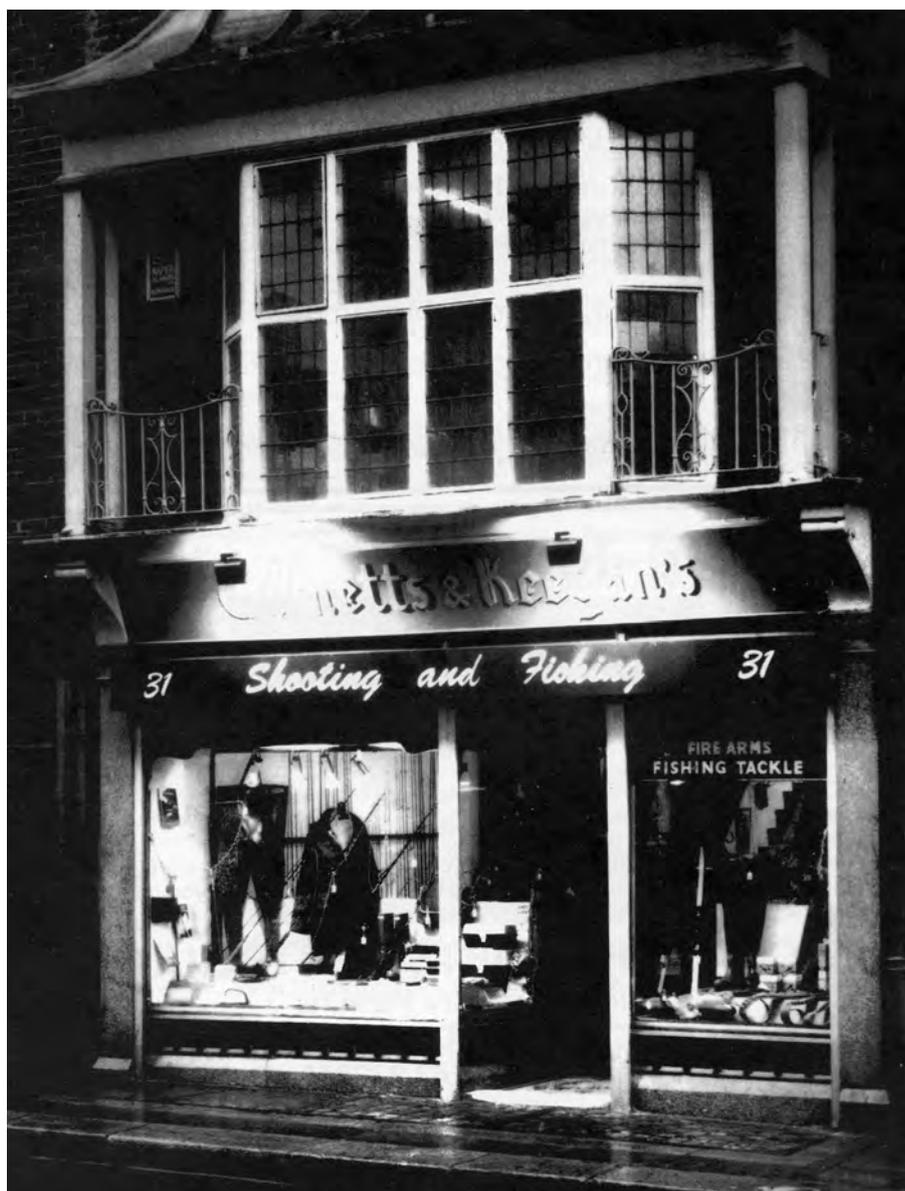
Another interesting person associated with the shop was Eamon McEnery, who was a good friend of Tom Smith's. Every Friday afternoon Eamon and Tom would enjoy a drink and sandwich in the Clarence or Dolphin Hotel and would chat about shooting, politics, religion, life in general, and Tom's experiences as a soldier during World War 2 when based in France, Spain, India, Syria and the Lebanon. Eamon owned land in County Mayo and sometimes the two would go shooting on it, their game being snipe, grouse and woodcock. Eamon remembered Tom as being an excellent shot and was interviewed for an article in 2011 at his estate in Shannon Hill near Portumna, County Galway. Both he and Tom

shared the misfortune of not getting on with their fathers and both men were disinherited.

Eamon de Buitléar began his working life in Garnett and Keegan's in the 1950s and would eventually go on to become a renowned wildlife filmmaker, a Senator and the author of many books. He was significantly influenced by Dick Harris who was the first biologist he came into contact with. He remembered that one day during the '50s a man came into the store looking for a rod because he wanted to retrieve his hat which had been blown onto the Liffey by a strong wind! Eamon said he had never heard of yoghurt until he met Tom Smith who ate it every day and he remembered Tom taking the stairs three at a time when he came in each morning.

In 1963 John F Kennedy's assassination was debated amongst the store's employees who contended that Lee Harvey Oswald could not have killed the President with the rifle used. Eamon McEnery and Tom re-enacted the assassination in their basement, using the same gun that Oswald had been in possession of, a 6.5mm Carcano, an Italian bolt action infantry rifle and customers were invited downstairs to see these re-enactments.

In 1981, John Hanlon died leaving seven daughters. One of his son-in-laws, Barry Mason, took over the firm's management in 1984 but the company was experiencing a difficult time and eventually went into voluntary liquidation in 1989. Many today still recall Garnett and Keegan's with great fondness. Joe Barrett in 'Angling Times' pointed out that the store was associated with a sense of magic. He wrote, 'Still today its name evokes nostalgic memories of golden youth and careless hours spent with rod and gun for generations of sportsmen from all corners of Ireland. The sporting enthusiast would gaze in awe at the wonderland within, the guns and rods all gleaming in lovely old mahogany racks with all sorts of magic to view in the windows.'



Garnetts and Keegan's - a 'Mecca' for countrysports people.



A newspaper advert of the time.

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The Great Game Fairs of Ireland – leading the way in organising Irish country sports and living events



In 2014 the crowds who attended three Great Game Fairs of Ireland were a very eloquent testament to the superb programme of competitions, events, attractions etc at Shanes Castle, Antrim; Birr Castle, Co Offaly and Montalto Estate, Ballynahinch, Co Down. Feedback from the public who attended demonstrated that our events certainly ‘hit the spot’ for real family entertainment.

A typical unsolicited comment on our Facebook page sums up the entertainment value better than we could: “Had a brilliant day at Montalto Estate, Ballynahinch on Saturday, Lovely setting, Some great

demonstrations, sheepdog demonstration was amazing, (even the geese who decided they no longer wanted to take part ... had second thoughts and flew back to give it a second go ...) The highlight for us had to be the Jousting

tournament by Les Amis d’Onno ... horsemanship, stunts, costumes, and all with a great sense of humour and fun ... Absolutely Fantastic.”

And in a post-event phone-in on U105 Frank Mitchell summed up the



(l-r) David Wilson, Estate Manager with Councillor Terry Andrews; Jim Shannon, MP; Councillor Billy Walker, Chairman of Down District Council; Margaret Ritchie, MP; and Fair Directors Albert Titterington and Edwin Dash.



Arena crowds in the paddock during a lull in proceedings.



Crowds in the farmyard.



A professional shell scheme in the barn was packed with quality trade stands.



A perfect backdrop for a re-enactment.



Great gundogs – a very classy photo by Chris Passmore.



A study in concentration: Katy Cropper's sheep dog pushes some recalcitrant geese.

calls by stating that: '99.9% of people attending the Harvest Festival at Montalto' had a similarly great time to that expressed above.

Good weather played its part in all three events, but the whole team must also claim credit for superb and creative organisation; fantastic

competitions with prizes unrivalled in Ireland; the number and quality of the range of exhibitors; and arguably the best main arena programmes to be seen

at an Irish game, country or countryside event.

Shanes and Birr Castle events were traditional game fairs with added appeal, whereas the Harvest and Country Living Festival, staged at the very beautiful Montalto Estate, was something completely different. Firstly, as a 'twin locus' town and country event it was quite a unique concept for Ireland – with a major country fair being staged in the Montalto Estate, while at the same time a major event complete with Battle of Ballynahinch re-enactment was staged in Ballynahinch town. Shop keepers in the town played their part with over three dozen businesses embracing the harvest theme – harvest certainly had come to town! Secondly although all of the elements of the game fair were in place the use of estate buildings and well manicured grounds; a fine food focus from public dining to the fine food festival in the yard; free carousel rides for kids on a huge traditional carousel; a living history encampment; and all sorts of music including pipe, harp, traditional Irish and jazz combined to give more of the atmosphere of a huge country sports and living garden party.

Unfortunately the NITB decision to remove funding from local festivals has meant that we have to consider a re-entrenchment strategy for 2015 and at this stage have committed to running our traditional Irish Game Fair & Fine Food Festival at Shanes Castle on the 27th & 28th June 2015 and our Irish Game & Country Fair and Fine Food Festival at Birr Castle, Co Offaly on the 29th & 30th August 2015.

We are still in discussions with interested parties on what format the Ballynahinch event will take in 2015. This will be announced later and in the interim we publish some of the highlights of the event.

Videos of the event are available to view at : <https://vimeo.com/109834624> and <http://www.irishtv.ie/down-matters-19/>



(Above) Living History and Fine Food were two key components. (Right) Les Amis provided some exciting jousting action.



The RED MILLS Horsedrawn Cavalcade – linked the town and estate.



(Above) Paul Pringle and Councillor Walker presenting the prize for the top harvest window display to Craig Henderson, Optometrist.



Two of the Rebels.



(Right) General Nugent (George Logan) leads the troops back into Montalto after routing the rebels in Ballynahinch.



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The 56th Irish Kennel Club Pointer & Setter Championship

“Winning is not everything but wanting to win is.” Vince Lombardi.

The Irish Championship has become an annual event for me since 1997. That year I competed with two Irish setter dogs Fernglade Ned and Red Monarch. I remember upgrading my clothing from a fleece to a shirt and tie. This, however, confused the dogs who did not recognise me. That stake was bitter sweet as the first day the flying Fernglade Ned smashed his leg on a machine hidden by the heather. Red Monarch however got third place, receiving best Irish setter and best young Irish setter so the family was delighted. At that time, I generally only competed with one dog. As a consequence my handling was deeply conservative and nervous, inhibiting the dog, this interference to keep the dog safe to ensure passage to the next round. Recognising this flaw, I have long since recognised the need for a team of dogs to allow me overcome this.

This year's championship was different as I did not have any expectations. I had been placed multiple times with a number of seconds but you

do feel your opportunity has passed. The Connaught field trial club has its trial the week before the Championship stake and therefore is a good barometer

of the form dogs. Dogs who have won Connaught and went on to win the championship include Aidan Dunne's Irish setter FTCh Jamail Adam, Mick Murphy's pointer dog FTCh Knock Dante and John Geoghegan's English Setter FTCh Lefanta Cindy. If I was hoping for a good dress rehearsal I was to be sorely disappointed as nothing went right in Connaught. That day every dog failed on grouse except one and a calmer view would have suggested that scent was highly unusual for this time of year.

So I took a lot of convincing to attend the 56th Irish Kennel Club Pointer & Setter Championship which this year was back in Dublin for the first time since my first championship in 1997 and I would also be missing my brothers stag party in Galway!

The meet was in the Coach House in Roundwood, a charming pub and restaurant, and, as usual, the Championship Committee did such a professional job. Normally there is a fairly relaxed atmosphere to the draw at a field trial, but there is an almost sanctity and silence as the numbers are



Judges Messrs. Colin Forde, Aidan Dunne and Pat Dooley. (photo M. Waters)

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Competitors for the second day of the Irish Championship (from left) Jim Crotty, Edward Flannelly, George Forbes, Jim Sheridan, Davy O'Neill, James Dalton, Donal O'Leary, Joe O'Sullivan, Joan McGillicuddy, Pat Reape, Carol Calvert, James Coyle, Hugh Brady, Kieran Walsh, Christy Davitt, Ollie Kelly. (photo M. Waters)

revealed in the Championship draw. We had five Irish setters in the draw, namely Int. FTCh Remkilens T-Ebba, Int. FTCh Ballydavid Airforce, Int. FTCh Ballydavid Aodh, Int. FTCh Creg Rena and FTCh Ballydavid Starjet of the Kingdom. I was first brace with Starjet who was bred, trained and owned by Joan McGillicuddy. Starjet is not big and we were faced with extremely high heather with uneven ground underneath at the back of Glenree. Even handling, it was hard to keep your footing and there was a fairly decent incline on the right hand side of the beat. The judges of Aidan Dunne, Colin Forde and Pat Dooley are highly experienced and successful dog men so they adapted coming closer together to make the beat narrower. As a handler you ensure the dog covers the ground at least in front of the judges. I saw the dog indicate on a hare and just ensured she kept her lines straight and off the scent. She attacked the ground bravely and quartered it evenly but it was not the ground you dream of when you come to the rolling hills of Dublin. However the malaise, or more likely the scenting from the previous week in Galway, seemed to prevail again with some proven dogs crashing into grouse as if there were no scent from them. One could argue the scent was poor due to the inclement weather, with consistent rain. No doubt the judges were upset to see some really class acts leave the stage in the first round. I was also last and second last braces with T-Ebba and Rena so after a long day we left Glenree to go home with little excitement.

Next morning it was the opposite in terms of weather. The sky was high and blue with virtually no breeze and the temperature was in the mid 20's. We clipped down to Roundwood again not realising that the list of dogs wanted for the second day was posted the night before in the function room where the annual convivial dinner was held. It

was a pretty exclusive second round with just 20 dogs of the 50 starters surviving.

Of the 20 survivors, 10 were Irish setters, five English setters, two Irish red and white setters, two pointers and one Gordon setter. There was another sizeable gathering who had come to watch the final day of the



Some of the English setter representation in the second round - Kieran Walsh and Christy Davitt. (photo M. Waters)

championship. This time I was second brace with Int. FTCh Creg Rena running against the supreme game finder Int. FTCh Glynlark Apollo who true to form had a find on a snipe. From the first day only Pat Reape's previous championship winner FTCh Lisduvoge Aileen had a find on grouse. Again scent seemed to be terrible as top class dogs missed grouse. I was seventh brace and for the first time ever Starjet was excited. She normally is a very cool customer and good mannered earning her the nickname 'the little lady.' She was several weeks out of heat and physically or psychologically this would be her weakest period as it would be close to her whelping time, if she had been bred. However before I slipped the lead, I was in no doubt that she would perform.

She took off taking long cuts really searching with great intensity and speed — you do go into automatic pilot and probably forget it is the championship stake for those minutes. She is a very natural dog in that she instinctively searches systematically and does not push up the middle from the handler. Her brace-mate came to grief and as the run had ended, I returned back to the

gallery. The defining moment was that one of the judges asked me to run on with another competitor who needed additional time. Starjet touched on something and pushed forward. I tried to interfere with her to bring her right but thankfully she ignored me. She has a good nose but even she had difficulty pinning the bird who lay in the lee of the hill where little air would circulate. She set solidly and I am always confident in her that she will hold her bird no matter what the provocation.

Her brace mate was ahead but she remained motionless as the bird flushed. She was steady to wing and shot and she cleaned her ground efficiently. The next braces of dogs had opportunities on grouse but the same poor scenting abounded. The second round ended and then there was the realisation that God you might have a chance here. Some of the gallery mischievously suggested given the scant scent that there may just be an extension and dogs with finds may not be risked again. I did not think this would happen. This is the Irish Championship stake and dogs should run at least the three rounds. Starjet at this stage was enthused obviously

picking up the tension of the trial and possibly from her agitated handler. I cursed this as normally she is sedate between rounds. At just two years old she still believes the letter of the law. Joan suggested we try to relax her by giving her chocolate but I felt it would be unwise as I expected that it would take a big performance to achieve the ultimate accolade. There was four brace of 8 dogs requested for the third round. I was unsure about watching the other braces run but in the end decided that I needed to see the standard. As it turned out, I was glad I did. The first brace had a really excellent run and one of the dogs had a find from the previous round. The second brace also took in a huge amount of ground, going for broke, and delivered a superb run. So I decided not to whistle and to let her run as wide as she naturally wanted to. Of course this was a risk.

I determined not to interfere and let her succeed or fail on her own

This time I felt different to the previous rounds as I knew what was at stake. I had been in this position before with other dogs and fallen short, so this



Int. FTCh Ballydavid Starjet of the Kingdom.

time I was determined not to interfere and let her succeed or fail on her own. She is naturally flat running which is the type of ground treatment you want for the Championship. So off she went and she got her width in the first cast each side and kept that beat the whole way. She probably was more charged than I'd seen her in that she definitely wanted to take on more ground but was responsive to any instruction she got. I always remember Jamail Adam in the last round of the championship he won and I tried to replicate that flat running, drive and invisible handling. Flat running dogs when game is scarce often won't win as many trials as others but when the pressure is on like in the Championship you are glad of that pattern. Some dogs were included in an extension of the third round such as GB FTCh Koram Kaiser, last year's championship winner, George Forbes' FTCh Ballyellen Moss, Davy O'Neill's Irish setter Shanrycon Andraid and Ollie Kelly's Irish setter Cumber Cindy.

The lunches were had back at the car and there was the inevitable talk of who the next winner would be. There were three Irish setters in the shakeup and two of these had previously won the championship! It was now in the lap of the Gods. We returned to base in the Coach House where the tension was definitely increasing. It really cannot be

repeated enough the effort and professionalism with which this event is organised. From the setting, to the sponsorship, coloured programmes, dinner, presentation, trophy stewards, call up stewards-it really is a production to be very proud of. Chairman Jim Sheridan gave his usual eloquent speech before sponsor Bill Connolly of Red Mills remembered his successful days competing in the championship before finally hard working secretary Edward Flannelly gave the results.

When the result was called out- obviously you have the number in your head and you just think was that my number? When you are second in the championship, which I've been a few times, you listen for that number as well. Even when they call another number you are imagining it's your number. For me, because it was so many years of remembering dogs, some now past and others still here, I became quite melancholic. Of course there is delight, but really you focus on why was this particular dog different. How come she made it where others just fell short and how come you did not see she was different? I had time to reflect as Joan received in total 12 trophies which is quite a testament to what is the most important pointer and setter trial in Ireland before she was whisked off with the dog for photos with the lead sponsor.

What I like about trials is that even in the celebratory drinks afterwards, everyone looks forward to the latest pup in the kennel that have the potential to be the greatest yet. My parents drove up from Galway that night with champagne but, like I imagine All Ireland winning footballers or hurlers in the winners' banquet afterwards, we were totally exhausted. Rather than take the foot off the pedal and celebrate her win in the style that it deserved, we attempted to re-focus straightaway on the next challenge. I believe any trainer just wants to fulfil a dog's potential and I believe with a bitch in particular you are as well to keep going if she is hitting form. We planned to try and make a start towards an international champion title. The Sunday after the championship, Starjet won the Irish Red and White trial and the following Saturday she won the Ulster red setter club trial giving her the first of the two wins needed to be a Great Britain (GB) FTCh. Two weeks after that, she won her second trial under GB rules to claim her International title. It was a Saturday as opposed to the Sunday of the Irish Championship win, so we could afford to celebrate. The weekend after she won the open Irish setter trial in Galway, which is a trial red setter people target. 2014 was a very special year, in that it was finally the delivery after all the accumulated disappointments. It was special to us in that Starjet is the product of dogs we owned and bred having had her grandparents and parents and finally to be recorded on the cherished Championship roll of honour. To echo this sentiment the poet Horace in his Ode written in 23BC said "I will not entirely die! And a large part of me will avoid the grave".

Joan McGillicuddy with her own bred Int. FTCh Ballydavid Starjet of the Kingdom and the Championship trophies and medallion.



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Hard Shooting: Easy Shooting

Some shooting is easier than other shooting, we can probably all agree on that.

Where we might begin to differ is when we try to decide what type of shooting is easy and what is hard. Just for example, which is the more difficult target, a pheasant or a grouse?

Okay: there isn't a simple answer, grouse or pheasant, because it all depends on the way in which the bird is presented. A pheasant lumbering up from the bracken under your feet is not a difficult shot by any definition, but that same pheasant launching itself out of a game crop a couple of hundred feet above you, getting up to full speed and then curling on the wind high above your peg down in the valley will test the best of shots.

Similarly, driven grouse flashing over your butt deep in a moorland gully when you have barely time to register their arrival before they have disappeared again behind you take a bit of shooting, while a grouse that rises in front of a pointer or setter and



Cock pheasant rising from bracken is an easy shot.

takes off low across the heather is about as easy a shot as you are going to get.

Except, if it is such an easy shot, why do I see so many 'easy' grouse missed? I suspect that it is all in the

build up to the shot.

Let's go back to those high pheasants. You've driven up to within a couple of hundred yards of the drive and been directed to your peg by your host. You've taken the gun out of the



Pheasant killed at a springer spaniel trial.



Handler, Gun and pointer working out a point.

slip, made sure there are plenty of cartridges in your pocket and that the cartridge bag is lying open and readily available in case you need more during the drive, checked that the barrels are clear, taken a couple of practice swings, shuffled about until you are happy with your footing, then slipped two cartridges into the chambers and settled down to wait for the first pheasant to sail over your peg. In other words, you've had all the time it takes to get yourself ready.

You can hear the rattle of sticks from the beaters, hear the occasional whistle perhaps, though they are still out of sight apart from a couple of stops on the hill in front of the wood. Then, a clatter of wings, the harsh

'kok kok kok' of a cock pheasant as it gets up into the air and you see the bird, rising up from the trees until it is fifty yards above you, then setting its wings and gliding towards your peg. From now onwards you are on your own. You mount the gun and swing it according to your fashion: sustained lead; swing through from tail to beak; follow the bird with the muzzles then fire as the gun comes into your shoulder; or simply poke and hope as all too many of us do. The pheasant will either fall or it won't and then the next one will come along, and the next: perhaps the next hundred if you are shooting on a big day: and you will load and fire, load and fire until the horn sounds to end the drive. We

will leave it to your imagination as to how many birds you have to retrieve but, as this is purely imaginary, I would suggest that you allow hope to triumph over experience on this occasion.

Now, assuming that, like me, you have been imagining some good, high, curling pheasants pushed along by a December gale you will have been giving yourself some challenging shooting. There can hardly be any comparison between a high pheasant like those and a grouse that gets up twenty yards from your feet and flies away in a straight line ten feet above the heather. I don't think anyone would argue that a grouse like that is the more difficult shot than a high



Two grouse away from the pointer.



Labrador retrieving grouse.

pheasant – provided we are only comparing the two as an exercise in hitting a moving target. Once we take the build up to the shot into account a few small difficulties may begin to emerge.

A stiff climb for half a mile or so before you got to the heather

You've got up early in the morning – very early – and you've driven for several hours just to get to the moor

where you are going to shoot. You've gone from motorway to back roads to moorland tracks and eventually you've bumped your way as far across the hill as your vehicle can manage and from there you've had to walk. You've walked carrying your gun and your cartridges, a game bag containing your lunch, your waterproofs, a camera, a couple of bottles of lemonade, a flask of tea or coffee, some midge repellent,

a jumper in case it gets cool and some sun block in case it gets hot. It was a stiff climb for half a mile or so before you got to the heather, the sweat is stinging your eyes and the game bag is already cutting a groove in your shoulder. But the dog handler has set the first of his team of pointers and setters away across the hill and you are ready to shoot grouse. If indeed there are any grouse to shoot...

You pick our way through the heather, in and out of peat hags, skirting round boggy pools and sometimes hearing your boots crunch across bare rock. The pointer meanwhile is flowing effortlessly across the hill, way out to one side and then back to the other, tail thrashing, ears flying and nose searching for the first faint hint of scent, Then, suddenly, he crashes to a halt, tail extended rigidly behind him, one paw raised and his whole body telling you that there are grouse, right there in front of him, just sitting in the heather and waiting for you to come and shoot them.



Driven grouse over the butts.



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Swinging on to a crossing pheasant.

Except that the dog is actually a couple of hundred yards away and a hundred feet above you: you can't see any grouse because they are clapped down in the heather, but you know they are there and your heart is hammering at about a hundred and twenty beats per minute. And that's before you have climbed those hundred feet to where the dog is standing, stock still on point. You start up the hill with the handler and another Gun, not hurrying because you trust the dog to hold his point, but not hanging about either because the grouse might decide to fly before you get there. As you get closer to the dog you slip two cartridges into the gun and, following the handler's instructions, move slowly into position fifteen yards to one side of the dog. The handler checks that both Guns are ready and clicks the dog in.

He steps forward eagerly at first, then slowing, slowing and dropping his shoulders as he homes in on the still unseen grouse. Another yard, and then another; you move forward with him, half watching the dog and half watching the heather in front of him and trying to keep your balance. One more step and then a whirr of wings and a dark brown bird seems to

explode out of the heather and streak across the moor. You throw the gun into your shoulder and as you do so another whirr distracts you as six or seven more grouse take to the wing. Shoot the first one to rise or switch to one of the others? Your feet are stuck in the long heather and you overbalance slightly as you twist to the left because that first grouse – you are sticking with him for now – dips a wing and swings downhill and across your front. The butt of the gun hits your shoulder, you pull the trigger without conscious thought and the grouse crumples into the heather with just a puff of white feathers left hanging in the air to mark the spot. You hear two shots from the other Gun, swing back round only to see the last of the covey disappearing over the ridge.

The handler reminds you to reload and just as you open the gun two more grouse get up and are gone while you are still fumbling in your pocket for cartridges. Your fellow Gun was also caught with empty chambers so there is just your bird to pick, plus any that he dropped. The handler calls the pointer in to heel and signals for the retriever to come forward and do his stuff.

Thinking back, it really was an easy shot, or it would have been if you hadn't been off balance, tangled in the heather, half blinded by the sweat running into your eyes and if you had known where and when the grouse was going to rise instead of being suddenly confronted with a bird thirty-five yards away and rapidly getting out of range. It would have helped if your heart hadn't been pounding quite so rapidly and if your legs hadn't felt quite so much like lead. You might have been more relaxed if you had known that there would be another grouse along in a moment rather than being terrified of wasting all that hard work the pointer had put in, just so that you could shoot a grouse.

So which is the more difficult – grouse or pheasant? Considered solely as a target I would have to say that a high curling pheasant is as difficult a shot as any in the sporting spectrum. In theory, a grouse rising from the heather in front of a pointer or setter may be easy in comparison, but in practice I have seen an awful lot of 'easy' grouse missed. I've missed quite a few myself and I hope that I will have the chance to miss a few more in the future – and perhaps hit one or two as well.

Hunting Roundup

IMFHA seminar draws a large crowd

IMFHA chairman Rupert Macauley produced a varied range of speakers for a seminar in Co Kildare.

Horsport Ireland chief executive Damian McDonald gave the audience an overview of how HSI sees horses used for hunting being registered as is the case for all other horses used for sporting purposes. He added that more horses are used for hunting than for any other sport.

Hunting and the HSI have a very good relationship and one important development, being overseen by HSI, is the forthcoming publication of a “Horse and safety guide” for road use. This guide will be very important for Hunts and will be recommended for observation by the IMFHA. Damian finished by saying that the registration of hunters would take them out of the human food chain and would assist in the breeding and marketing of such horses as it would be a permanent record as hunters are very much a part of an expanding equestrian tourism industry.

Tim Easby, Director of Hunting in

Great Britain, gave an insightful talk on hunting under a ban and stressed Countryside Alliance’s role in defending our sports. He emphasised how circumspect hunting people should be in talking to anyone they do not know. All in all Tim left everyone feeling grateful that we live on this side of the Irish Sea.

Broadcaster Gavin Duffy then spoke about the importance of relations with the media, political parties and, indeed, the general public. He stressed that each hunt should appoint a capable PRO and that all incidents, however seemingly trivial, should be reported to the PRO, the Countryside Alliance or to the relevant Hunting Association. This was especially the case in this digital age so that any subsequent enquiries could be answered.

This seminar was a worthwhile exercise which was well received by a large audience from both sides of the border.

Anti-hunt protesters invade hunt kennels

Some twenty masked people, claiming to be from “Northern Ireland’s

newly formed Hunt Saboteurs Association”, invaded the kennels yard of the North Down Hunt at Comber. The huntsman, his wife and two little children were there as was his father, who had just arrived and the police were summoned immediately. The police arrived in numbers and very quickly put the intruders out of the premises and on to the road, where they continued to demonstrate before dispersing. A local newspaper subsequently received a telephone call from someone claiming to be from the Hunt Saboteurs Association of Northern Ireland stating that they had prevented the Hunt from staging its opening meet, which was not the case. Hunting people are taking appropriate measures to counteract this sort of criminal behaviour.

Around the meets

North Down Hunt

Barry Jones, newly appointed huntsman of the North Down Hunt, had his first opening meet in quite bright sunshine on an otherwise cool day – which is becoming a normal climatic dichotomy – in Carrowdore.



Some of the North Down Hunt Field at their opening meeting at Carrowdore.



Mark Casserely, Killultagh Old Rock and Chichester Huntsman at their kennel's opening meeting.

Assisted by whippers-in his brother Philip, Charlie McPoland and Stephen Weston he took a 12½ couple mixed pack to the first draw, followed by Lesley Webb MFH and some forty riders. The field included representatives of several other local Hunts with the Co Down, the Iveagh and the East Down Foxhounds being prominent among the visitors with everyone commenting on the numbers of stock out.

The first draw, at the Fisheries, proved blank as did Brown's with a move to Carrowdore Saddlery proving no more fruitful and, as the afternoon went on, hounds continued to work hard with no reward. At Love's farm off Cardy Road, Greyabbey, hounds found and an all too brief burst of music ensued. However this came to nothing, so Barry Jones blew for home on a day when his hounds really earned their keep in such poor scenting conditions.

Barry Jones had only seasoned hounds out today and is already showing sound judgement in his hound management, taking into account the previously mentioned numbers of stock still out.

Killultagh Old Rock and Chichester Hunt

The Killultagh Old Rock and Chichester Hunt opened their season

charge of a small but hardy field on this cool day, when one had to keep moving to keep warm!

The first draw, at Mullholland's behind the old kennels, saw a fox go afoot presaging an all too brief hunt

with hounds in good voice but it came to nothing. Mark Casserely crossed Knockcairn Road but a series of draws at Reid's proved blank. He then drew Sinclair's to put his second fox afoot. Hounds pushed him across McClelland's and alongside the Glenavy River then right around Ignatius Jordan's where he was

accounted for. A further series of draws at McClelland's

with a meet at their Dundrod, Co Antrim, kennels where huntsman Mark Casserely had on a 12½ couple mixed pack and was assisted by his amateur whippers-in Miss Sinead Boyd and Mr Chris Berry. Newly appointed joint master Mr Geoffrey Porter kindly made himself available to drive me while senior master Mrs Frank Boyd had

and right around Tullyrusk Road all proved blank and we had no better luck off Fort Road down as far as Belshaw's. Hounds found Smiley's Firs to be productive at previous meets and today proved to be no exception with Geoffrey Porter being able to holloa a fox away. However, the rain began to fall heavily and light began to fade so the huntsman blew for home to enable everyone to return to the kennels while light lasted.

Mark Casserely is gradually introducing some Old English blood and they are working well with the Modern blood to make a good, workmanlike pack of hounds. This had been a good opener to the season - all we need now is better weather to allow sport to flourish.

Heard it on the grapevine

Crumlin, Co Antrim, farmer Geoffrey Porter has joined Mrs Frank Boyd in the mastership of the Killultagh Old Rock and Chichester Hunt.

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ON THE ROAD AGAIN....

It's November as I write, mid season I suppose, everything is in full swing and, whatever your field sport, you will be enjoying it.

I set off in the hope of a duck on September 1st but had no great success until early October. There were plenty of birds around, but I just couldn't seem to have any success. I can make all the excuses I want but, for a week or more, I really had a jinx on my barrels. I couldn't hit anything: I missed some really easy shots and made some silly mistakes! Luckily it didn't stay like that for too long and I managed to bag a few birds before the evenings closed in. I really only manage duck shooting to any great degree in September and early October, as I have enough daylight after work to walk over a few spots, or get banked in somewhere for an evening flight before it gets too dark. But after that, unless the conditions are right for night time or we go for a shot after the Saturday shoot, then it gets less and less as winter goes on.

This year I have seen and shot a few more species than normal. The usual mallard, teal and widgeon are plentiful, but for the first time we have been

inundated with gadwall and even a few pintail. It's nice to see something different and nicer to bag one or two as well. I managed a brace of gadwall in October, followed by a pintail. However, if I had to choose only one bird I would take a teal closely followed by snipe, both of which in my book are fantastic sporting and eating birds.

I have had one or two very memorable times. A rabbit sitting on a small island at dusk, when I walked up within a few feet of it before we saw each other and after I shot it I wondered just how it got where it did, and why it was there. The island is only metres long, it's in the middle of a deep gully in an estuary and there are no rabbit populations that I know of for at least a couple of miles, a strange one indeed.

Next was something I'd not seen before and I doubt I will see again. Driving towards the beach with the dogs one evening, I noticed a sparrow hawk sitting on a dry stone wall. He

was bobbing up and down slowly and was obviously focused on something nearby. I slowly braked for a closer look when he rose almost vertically and crossed the road. As he did so, a field-full of curlews rose on the far side. The sparrow hawk made a straight line towards the middle of the group, connected with a bird, maybe a blackbird, and pulled it to the ground before adjusting its grip and flying off through a willow plantation to the left. The whole thing was over in seconds and I sat in my car cheering him on, I couldn't help it. The speed, style and execution of the whole thing was phenomenal, I was in awe of the little bird, may he have much more success! Former falconer, Main Arena 'Gamekeeper' and all round gentleman, Edwin Dash explained to me when I told him the story that the bird bobbing up and down was making the most of its split vision, a bit like bifocal glasses, enabling it to focus on long and short range objects. Flying to the middle of

the flock was no mistake either, just instinct. The birds in the middle have less means of escape as they are surrounded by other birds and it takes more time to get away and less time and travelling for the hawk, 'all part of the natural balance.'

Sport-filled days

October wouldn't be complete without our annual jaunt to Birmingham House in Tuam, Co Galway with the Sunnyland Beagles. Our Saturday meet began and ended on a spectacular bog of some 4000 acres. It seemed where ever I looked I could see only heather, heather and more heather! As bleak as this place looked, it turned out to be a wildlife haven, not only alive with hares, but also foxes, grouse, snipe etc as well as Fox Moth caterpillars that seemed to litter the ground as we walked! I enjoyed a sport-filled day following the hounds and we returned to the big house for far too much food and craic, taking some of us into the wee small hours. Next day we arrived at the Doctor's house before lunchtime only to rise a fox from a wood before the hounds even opened up. The sport remained good for the rest of the day, and before I knew it I was making my way home. I couldn't believe it had been a year since we were last there and as always we had a fantastic time in an unspoiled landscape.

Where has the summer gone? It seems only days since a really outstanding event at the fantastic Montalto Estate and weeks since Shanes Castle, a scorching hot weekend that saw thousands of people at one of the most enjoyable Game Fairs for me in a long time. The weekend was a highlight in many aspects, for a change I had a few days off work either side of the event and I got to enjoy both a fantastic press morning. I returned next day for a short interview with Frank



A nice bag - gadwall, mallard and snipe.

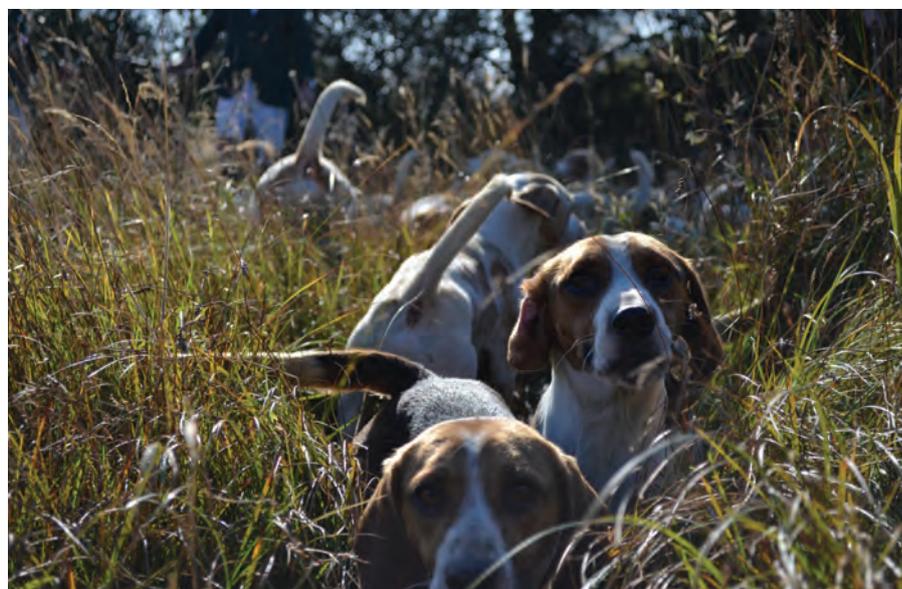
Mitchell, and although Frank got his wires crossed with what the Victorian Poacher does in his act and what he does when he is really catching rabbits, we got on well, oh and I thoroughly enjoyed handcuffing him to the desk as I left! I left the press day at Shanes Castle with mixed emotions. On one hand I was feeling elated that Mr John Shaw Brown, Huntsman and

Joint Master of the Sunnyland Beagles received the Brownlow award posthumously, and immensely proud that I had been chosen to receive an Irish Country Sports and Country Life award, but on the other hand, somewhat awkward that I had accepted it without a word in return! I was so taken by surprise I had sat back down before I realised what had happened.

It has been six years since I first stepped into the Main Arena, donned a head set and gave a rather shaky demonstration on the ways of the longnet. It seems only months ago since I arrived first time at Shanes, almost late, with no idea where to go or who to speak with and ran all the way to the commentary box armed with longnets and pegs and got almost thrown into the ring with a 'mic' and a large bag of nerves! I breathed heavily, stuttered and stammered my way through the next 15 minutes, all the while waiting to be hauled off and sent on my way! My only saving grace was that I was on so early in the morning, the crowds were only starting to come through the gates, what a stroke of luck for everyone!

The Poacher is born

Settling into my act over the next few fairs (they actually asked me back), I acquired a longnetter's jacket and over time with ideas from Albert Titterington, Paul Pringle, Harry Cook,



Sunnyland young entry.

Keith Mathews and various others, added my dogs and a butchers bike. The following year at Ballywalter, Paul Pringle called me a Poacher: "A Victorian Poacher and we might get a policeman to chase you," he said as we walked out of the arena on a bright, warm Sunday afternoon.



Foxmoth caterpillars were everywhere.

The policeman arrived in the form of the late Phillip Lawton. For the next few seasons we had some serious fun and appeared on Dog & Country TV, Field Sports Britain and I even showed up on a UTV advert for the Game Fair! My brother, who knew little of my antics at the time, rang me and asked what I was doing on the TV during Coronation Street sitting on an old bike wearing a flat cap! During this time, my young sidekick 'Fudge' was born, and has literally grown up in the ring with me, doing her first demonstration at a tender 11 months old and she hasn't looked back since. Fudge now gets recognised by children & adults at the Game Fair each year and laps up the attention (and ice

cream) she gets from them.

My whippet lurcher Molly plays a large part in my demonstration and some years back Paul caught a great shot of Molly in the basket of butcher's bike, me with a large salmon and Philip Lawton trying to baton me! The photo became a real classic and made it into

papers across Ireland. I won't ever forget Philip Lawton's voice message on my phone: "McGonigal, McGonigal, we're in the local papers today, just a few small ones, oh and the Irish Times as well!"

The act has developed from a rough longnet demonstration to an educational, entertaining look back at how things used to be and, most recently, we got the audience along with several dozen children really involved, which makes it even more enjoyable. Sadly, Philip Lawton passed away and although I worried initially that a little spark would go out of the act, I needn't have, as Edwin Dash stepped up and took over as the 'gamekeeper.' It's become a little more

difficult for the Poacher as Edwin has a big old baton, can run quite fast and he even had handcuffs at Shanes Castle - but several dozen children managed to knock him down and the Poacher remains on the loose. But who knows, it could be over for the Victorian Poacher yet!

It's a shame that I did not have an award of my own at the press day in return for all who helped the act, because I'm not the Victorian Poacher - they all are. I started off as a longnetter and would have remained so, but with their ideas, help and encouragement they made the act what it is and I thank them sincerely from both of my personas.

On the rabbiting front, I was trying to curb a booming rabbit population on some 3000 acres of private land. The problem was left a little too long, got out of hand and it took quite a while to turn the tables but we got there in the end, accounting for a serious haul of rabbits in a short time, mainly with ferrets, nets and the dogs by day and night. It was a long year but memorable in a very special place and I was truly privileged to get the opportunity. There were some days and nights there which will be forever engrained on my mind and many a night was spent on it with nothing but young Fudge for company. Driving home as the sun rose, the birds broke the silence with the dawn chorus as I unloaded a truck full of rabbits while the lurcher slept at the back door, waiting to get fed; truly magical in every sense of the word.

I have a new location now which is much smaller, with fewer rabbits but very heavy ground, loads of briars and a whole lot more problems. I am not looking forward to the time ahead, I know it is going to be troublesome to say the least, but what can I do, I'm on the road again!



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CLAY PIGEON SHOOTING - WHY NOT HAVE A GO!

Clay pigeon shooting is a very popular sport for everyone involved and you would be surprised how close a shooting ground could be to you.

UCPSA/ICPSA have teams in every discipline and there are clubs in every area that you could join for a very small fee. This would get your shooting a wee bit cheaper than being a non member.

Some of the Northern Ireland and Ireland teams have been to New Zealand this year to represent their countries in the Worlds Down The Line (DTL) championships, great for all team members to shoot against the best of the best. This takes a lot of hard work for all the shooters, but we are lucky to have so many grounds and

clubs to bring people on in the sport.

Aaron Smith has his own layout at his home which he opens up to help anyone with any sort of shooting problem. Aaron is one of many top shooters in Northern Ireland and has shot at a very high level in DTL and is one of many sponsored shooters sponsored by Gamebore Cartridges and a local gondola called Donal McCloy's Guns Unlimited at Toomebridge.

Donal does put a lot back into the sport by sponsoring prizes at the Great Game Fairs of Ireland's north and south, always putting a top prize of a new gun

up for competitors to shoot for, and helps a lot of charity shoots during the year also with great prizes. McCloy's offer a good range of clothing and shooting equipment and a great range of guns for all sports. If you are new to the sport you could pick up a package to get you started for less than £1000 and that will be a new gun and other items.

There are home internationals held every year for all disciplines, held in some lovely places, for example this year's Sporting Home International was held in Scotland, the Skeet Home



Some of the enthusiastic crowd enjoying the clayshooting at Shanes Castle.



Concentration on the target.

International was in Donegal and the DTL was at Bywell Shooting Ground in the north of England, while the ABT was held in Scotland.

Now is a great time of the year for everyone involved in the clay shooting fraternity, when you get to meet new and old friends practising a sport they enjoy so much and there is great camaraderie between shooters which makes for good days out on the layouts. The shooting sports in Northern Ireland /Ireland are great opportunities for everyone to come together and enjoy a sport we love; from the young to the old it does not matter where you are from, or your background, as everyone gets on with the sport regardless, simply as one big family.

We are lucky to be blessed with such lovely countryside and estates to go shooting such as Ballydugan, near Downpatrick, which hold UCPSA shoots every year. Kenny Thomas and his team lay on fantastic targets at these shoots for every level of shooter plus Kenny is always on hand to instruct anyone with certain problem birds on the day or during a private lesson. Kenny runs the shoots for the Great Game Fairs of Ireland in Shanes Castle, bringing a many shooters together to compete for some of the best prizes any shooter could wish to win. Here it's not just a straightforward sporting shoot - there is a two man flush and a pool stand, even something new this year

was a 100 yard teal to be shot with one cartridge in aid of charity, so plenty of prizes for everyone at the game fairs. Over 10 guns have been handed out and other prizes have been won between the three Great Game Fairs of Ireland events this year with huge numbers of people coming to shoot and more and more people getting interested in the sport.

Elsewhere, there is a lot of help for newcomers with have-a-go days at places such as Cairnview Shooting Complex and Courtlough Shooting Grounds, both have qualified instructors to help you get started as well as many facilities.

The Northern Ireland and Ireland teams have been getting fantastic

results all over, even in this year's Olympics we had some of our best people out there shooting, and training has already begun for the next Olympics, with lots of hopefuls trying out for their chance to win a medal for their country. So many clubs shooting every week and everyone is made more than welcome to come along and meet new friends and see if they could maybe have a hidden talent waiting to get out - who knows you could be an Olympic contender in the making! There is always help getting your forms filled out for your first firearm in any of the clubs grounds and many of the gun shops all over the country.

Some shops will let you try before you buy, like Tannyoky Guns and Ammo who have their own shooting practice ranges in every discipline ,plus most shops do deals on cartridges and only sell certain brands so you can get a better deal. You will find shooting certain cartridges could get you better results and shooting certain guns may suit you better than others so it's useful to try a few different guns and ammo before you buy.

Perfect time to smoke some clays

Now is the perfect time to get out and have a blast and smoke some clays with all the teams looking for new, young and old shooters to come on board - with a lot of juniors moving up



There is a range of disciplines to try out.



Smoking clays

to seniors shooting we need young guns and the sport needs a lot more ladies to come and shoot to fill team spots. Much shooting is done under cover so weather seldom halts us during the winter months. As well, many clubs have facilities for people with disabilities such as ramps into clubhouses and level ground so they are wheelchair friendly and everyone at the grounds would be more than happy to lend a hand if needed.

Olympic trap, Automatic Ball Trap and Down The Line can be found under cover and are great for all the family to come along and experience yourself - you don't have much walking and don't need so much gear as a sporting shooter would need to bring, as they are out in all weathers at different stands.

The great thing about the sport is the social end to the sport, with hot food and drinks available at most clubs where you can go enjoy a bit of craic and talk about your day and fix any problems you have had during your

shooting. Through the winter months, a lot of clubs do their yearly charity work bringing in a huge amount of money for local charities, for example Ballyvea Gun Club in the Mourne have a lot of charity shoots and have inter club challenges over Christmas with Rathfriland Claypigeon Club with lot many prizes to be won. It's a busy time over the Christmas period with the flappers and charity shoots, it helps with your practice for the registered shoots in the New Year, where everyone competes for a team place and get the yearly class specification from the UCPSA/ICPSA. The better the shooter, the higher the class, to give everyone the same chance of winning letting you compete with the people in your class all season. You have to complete 3 x 100 bird registered shoots to get your class for the year; there is prize money for every class winner and sometimes you shoot for trophies.

You can get most information from the UCPSA/ICPSA web pages and a

site on Facebook called Claypigeon Shooting Northern Ireland, where they print all the local shoots and results and photographs from all disciplines. On the UCPSA /ICPSA sites you can read up on rules and get any application forms you may need on pdf. For example for joining the association or getting an Irish Licence form to shoot at grounds such as Mill Hill, which hold some of the best sporting shoots over 14 stands on most Sundays. That ground is just a stone's throw from Newry plus Courtlough is just outside Dublin but there are layouts all over the place. So, why not see what's on offer and have a go yourself - then your days could really 'go with a bang!'

(Editors Note: There are many other excellent gun dealers and clay shooting layouts available around the country in addition to the ones mentioned in this article.)

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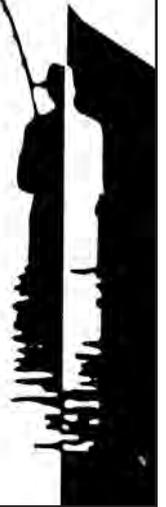
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Perpendicular Partridges At Moyle Shoot

Irish Countrysports and Country Life's editorial team were guests of David Forde



Guns along the slope and pickers up far below.

A fresh, morning, slightly breezy saw a convoy of 4x4s skirt Larne Lough to the 'island' better known as Islandmagee. We were to see how a group of muzzleloaders would fare when up against some excellent partridge drives at the Moyle Shoot which is set amidst some spectacular scenery.

It was not to be a big day, quality rather than quantity, for the Guns who

were part of the Irish Countrysports and Country Life team invited by Shoot Manager David Forde to see how he is developing this shoot. Guns were Bill Parker, Dave McCullough, David Riordan, Richard Edgar, Albert Titterington and Paul Pringle.

We met at a local restaurant to be greeted by David, who made sure we were well prepared for the day ahead with steaming mugs of tea and coffee

along with toast and scones. An excellent way to begin our 'island odyssey.'

Heading for the first drive, the convoy of dogs, beaters and guns arrived at the foot of one of the hillsides which the area is known for. Clumps of gorse, hedges and scattered trees made up the terrain around us, as we set about drawing for pegs before a gentle climb our positions. On this 'Quick Fire' drive, the muzzle loaders were placed slightly forward, with one gun behind and the two others to one side, slightly to the rear, to make up for any delay that the front two had when re-loading their black powder weapons.

Live on the pegs, we were at the foot of a stand of trees reaching skywards on up the slope, excellent terrain, I thought, to present quality birds. And so it was as a rocketing bird came quartering, Dave opened the account for the muzzle loaders. Another fell in short order, then it was Bill's turn to take on a bird whose height was only matched by its speed. A lone pheasant broke right to left as both the black powder



Drawing for pegs - David Forde (left) with the Guns.



no one knew which way to look; left or right, the only way was up. You had to be quick, to have your wits about you and you needed a steady head.

To the rear, in a similar cove some way back, the muzzleloaders had swapped their black powder guns for modern 12 bores - a wise decision indeed as if they had literally 'stuck to their guns' they would have missed a real treat. Sounds of muffled shots made their way over the wind to us at the cliffs in front while to the rear, perched below a beautiful waterfall Dave got into some hot actions as Bill tidied up with some excellent shooting to the rear. None of us were sure how long the drive had lasted, but we agreed that we had enjoyed the wave after wave of really testing opportunities.

The path down to the first cliff drive. men were re-loading only to fall to my own gun. A long, rangy shot had tumbled the bird into gorse at the left hand side of the steep slope. Meanwhile, as Albert concentrated on taking photographs amidst the blackpowder smoke, all of the Guns managed to open their account in style with partridges making very testing shooting - especially on what was the first drive of the day.

was fully occupied. Flights of six or seven, then a fast single, then groups,

Next, we were told by David that we were next to experience one of his showcase drives - Fair's Cliff. Even those who had not shot before at the Moyle had heard about this one, a drive with a pedigree.

Only the brave took their eye off the terrain

A short trek towards the cliff, where we slowly wound our way seawards down the steep path cut into the side, and only the brave who took their eye off the terrain to glance across the breaking seas to Scotland. In single file, we finally managed to make the cove below the overhanging cliffs. One Gun was positioned forward, two behind with 'rear gunner' David Riordan poised to deal with back markers.

Now, if anyone is concerned about being the lowly back Gun - don't worry - from the moment the first birds appeared, screamers above the cliff edge far above, some over, every Gun



Our Editor in action.



Birds breaking over the clifftop high above.

Each Gun had seen excellent sport under the towering cliffs.

But, as they say, what goes up must come down, or in our case the reverse applied. Still exhilarated after the drive, we somehow managed to scramble back to the top, lungs bursting, to meet at the vehicles and find out what was next on the cards.

Bells Port was the reverse of the previous drive and an opportunity to see another part of the glorious cliff and sweep up outliers. A shorter but nonetheless interesting drive, it was an opportunity to watch some of the excellent dog work at close quarters, amazed how the surefooted labradors managed to winkle out birds from the cliff-side scrub.

A scramble later, we were at base camp to be told that lunch was next on the agenda and excellent though it was, soon we were off again for Marion and The Whinns, both drives inland again. The Whinns went in a blur - as did the partridges and next we came to one side of a valley looking towards the brow of sweeping hills where, at the top, the skyline was broken by hedges and trees. This was Marion's and I gazed far below and where the picker ups were on station. The breeze had picked up again, but still no sign of the rain which had been forecast to arrive during the day.

The bird was deftly marked

A covey broke over the hedges at the

top of the hill, so fast that they almost beat Bill to my right but he managed to get off a barrel and claimed the first of the drive. Davy was soon in the action

too, as was Albert and myself as birds appeared on the skyline, caught the breeze and swung at angles over the Guns spread out along the hillside. Another spectacular drive, not only for the quality of the birds, but for the superb scenery across the sea to the mouth of the lough. The tranquility was broken by the shooting, which was fast and furious and well spread out along the line. Finally a sweep by the beaters across the skyline and it was over.

As we slipped our guns and started back we watched some excellent dog work by the pickers up. One retrieve in particular made my day. I had connected early in the drive with a partridge which must have thought 50 yards height would be enough to get



Admiring a very fine partridge.

over unscathed, but made a mistake in his calculations. (It wasn't me but the pickers up who estimated its height) I knew the bird had been hit but strangely it gained height and resumed its flightpath, only to crumple about 300 yards back at the foot of a tree on the opposing slope. Deftly marked by David's father Aubrey, it was picked in short order. Maybe the shot was lucky but the dog work showed real talent to put it in the bag. My 'bath bird' of the day!

The Guns had shot really well at very testing birds, especially the black powder enthusiasts who, along with David Riordan and Richard Edgar, acquitted themselves extremely well. Albert and I had had been in the thick of it too, so it was fair to say that Moyle had provided a fantastic day's shooting for everyone. The birds had been difficult but shootable and nobody had found themselves at a 'bad' peg. What more could you ask for!

We had experienced a very different sort of partridge day, set in the most beautiful scenery, yet within easy reach of Belfast. Every drive produced top quality birds, but the cliff drives had been something really extra special. As one Gun remarked 'perpendicular partridge.' It comes as no surprise that David is seeing increasing numbers of bookings from across the UK who want to experience these sky rocket partridges for themselves.

For more information please visit Moyle Shoot & Game Farm at www.moyleshoot.co.uk

Publishers Note:

Although I found that back to back shooting days are not a terribly good idea when one is recovering from the 'flu, I had heard a lot about the Moyle partridges and was delighted to have the opportunity to see them for myself.

Having run a partridge shoot myself for several years, I was interested to see the shoot in action and hear of David's plans for the future for both shoot and Game Farm and a new idea, training days for gundogs. With a good number of birds released each year, some spectacular scenery and a very pleasant support team we could see the real potential of this operation and we wish this young entrepreneur well in his future plans to develop a top quality shoot – primarily partridge but also duck and pheasant. The birds we saw were in excellent condition and a very good advert for his game farm!



David Riordan waits for the first cliff drive to begin.



Another high bird for Richard while picker up David Armstrong stands by.

The Fascination Of Dog Training

*“When a dog sees a partridge he is naturally inclined to run after it and when he hears a gun fired, the noise naturally inclines him to escape but nevertheless, setting dogs are commonly trained in such a way that the sight of a partridge makes them stop still, and the noise that they hear afterwards, when they are shot over makes them approach... and therein the possibility of changing the movements of the brain and an encouragement for men desirous of gaining an absolute power over all of their passions.” Arkwright, 1906, *The Pointer and His Predecessors*, quote from *Passions de l’Âme* by Descartes (1649)*

The quote perhaps explains men’s fascination with the ancient art of training dogs. My previous article has indicated the important cultural heritage of the Irish setter in Ireland. For a large part of history, the use of the setting or pointing dog has been maintained as a sporting purpose but this was not always so. In earlier times the use of these dogs was more practical. Therefore it is interesting to understand the antiquity of these dogs and thereon the development of the setting breeds. The article will endeavour to identify observations of the time regarding training which I believe are just as accurate and relevant today.

In one of the earliest mentions of hunting the Bible recounts: ‘as when one doth hunt a partridge in the mountains’ (1 Samuel 26:20). However the Bible itself does not refer specifically to a hunting dog. In Egypt there was neither reference in 10th century books of setting dogs with the description of hunting with hawks. Therefore it can be inferred that Europe seems to be the continent where the setting dog originated. From earliest references it could be also derived that the

earliest setting dog was a partridge dog. The first firm evidence of pointing dogs was from Brunetto Latini, teacher of the great philosopher Dante, who between 1260 and 1267 wrote his masterpiece *Li Livres dou Tresor*. In this he writes: ‘others are brachs (or pointers) with falling ears, which know of beasts and birds by the scent, therefore they are useful for sporting.’

The most famous pre-potent sire of all was Ch. Palmerstown who transferred these markings to much of his progeny and this is still referred to as the ‘Palmerstown snipe.’ Int. FTCh Patricia of Killone, a cornerstone of

the Moanruad strain, had white down the back of her neck almost to her shoulder. Working setters today still carry allowable white with white blazes on their head, feet and muzzles.

Arkwright was a legendary pointer promoter and in his masterpiece, “*The Pointer and his Predecessor*”, he records the following passage from the German Bishop of Ratisbon (1193 - 1280) who in his great tome ‘*De Animalibus*’ wrote: “the dogs, however, that are used for birds seem to have these powers more from training than sense of smell, though they derive from both..(sic) and at



Irish Setter’ a painting by FT Daws from Hutchinson’s Dog Encyclopaedia (1934).

lengths learn to go round and round them (birds); but they get to find the partridge by scent, and thus at the beginning they set.”

Arkwright believed that if the smooth-haired dog or pointing brach originated in Italy that the long-haired spaniels or setting dogs originated in Spain. Gaston Phebus, the Conte de Foix who is said to have owned 1500 dogs bought from all countries in Europe records in 1387 their introduction into France. The passage is as follows: “there is a kind of falcon dog or spaniel that comes from Spain. They should not be too hairy and have good qualities in that they are faithful to their masters and follow them anywhere without getting lost. They go also in front of the birds willingly, ranging and making play with their tails and find all the birds. Their proper business is at partridge and quail. They are good for taking partridge and quail with the net.”

Most enthusiasts of the setting breeds would consider that the setting breeds originated from the spaniel and records of paintings over the centuries where the spaniel morphed gradually into a leggier version, as game became scarcer. In Phebus’ account he mentions the word ‘espaingolz’ which is an ancestor of the modern French word ‘épagneul’ and English word spaniel. The first mention of gundogs, obviously after the advent of firearms occurred in 1683, where Sélincont refers to: ‘brachs that stop at scent and hunt with nose held high, with spaniels who are for falcons and hunt with nose low and follow the track.’

The first mention of spaniel in English occurs in the ‘Mayester of the Game,’ by Edmund de Langley, Duke of York (1341 – 1402) where he makes reference to certain dogs called spaniels and Robert Dudley, Duke of Northumberland who in 1504 was said to be the first trainer of these spaniels to set. He said of Dudley ‘he was a compleat gent in all suitable employments... and for being the first of all that taught a dog to sit in order to

catch partridges.’

In the book ‘Of Englische Dogges’ (1576), a section recounts working dogs where there was a new type of dog brought from France that was speckled all over with white and black which mingled colours. Louis XIII is reputed to have sent James I some setting dogs as a present. As per Edmondson and Robertshaw’s 1978 book ‘The Pointer,’ it was deduced that pointers or barques arrived in England from Spain with the return of British soldiers nine years following the Peace of Utrecht in 1713. During the period of the Spanish occupation of the Low Countries, officers most likely took hunting dogs to war for recreation between battles (C. Bede Maxwell, *The Truth about Sporting Dogs*, 1972).

In Spain, Arkwright discovered ‘Dialogues de la Montana,’ transcripts dating from the 16th century outlining the crossbow as the hunting apparatus so partridge had not only to be seen there, but also shot on the ground.

‘Light and sinewy....to feel the heat less and have strong bone to stand the work’

The following observations are as interesting as I believe valid today. The dialogues set out that in open ground the dog should be a circler while in a wood he should be a pointer. The weakness of a circler is that by going round the bird, the dog will be uncertain of the lie of the game. ‘He must likewise carry his head high and freely so that he must be lord of the air and the less the flusher of game.’ The dog should ‘be light and sinewy in order to feel the heat less and have strong bone to stand the work. His feet should be greyhound-like and sinewy so that he will not get footsore....If she be a female the nose will last longer in good order for in littering she be purged of all bad humours... sic the dogs of medium size are preferable as the larger ones are lazy and the small ones are weak.’ Regarding breeding the Dialogues are equally adamant in ‘that you must not put your dog to a bitch of

bad stock nor brother to sister, nor mother to son. Dogs should be reared tractable, domesticated and obedient from pups and the owner must not correct their faults but some other members of the household so they must love and obey him.’ This sentiment was followed by some of the great handlers in field trials in Ireland. It is said Jack Nash, the legendary Irish setter man, often had his dogs’ basic training completed by someone else. ‘Better to rid a fault by correcting thrice than to frighten once,’ quote from *Arte de Ballesteria y Montana* by Alonzode Espinar (1644) on training partridge dogs.

The logic being, that the relationship with the dog would not suffer over basic chiding. However, Nash did complete the training in the bird situation as this was positive reinforcement as setters and pointers adore searching for birds.

John Nash writing in February 1976 in the Yearbook said of George Abbott: ‘having watched and competed against him many times, I think he was the best handler I ever saw anywhere, and that includes the top handlers in Europe and Scandinavia. He seemed to have that rare gift of having absolute 100% control without having taken out any of the dash and drive in his dogs’.... ‘it was an education to see him walk along at a trial with four 55 to 60 pound (24kg to 27kg) dogs who did not pull on the leash’..... ‘It was also a joy to see him keep a dog out of trouble, on a bad scenting day, he could keep even the fastest of dogs on a very lean pattern, across his toes, while the bracemate made all the mistakes early on and at some signal, the dog opened out in the true Abbott pattern with right angled turns, invariably upwind.’ Interestingly Abbott had no say in the breeding of the Sulhamsteads.

English Setters

Regarding teaching the setter to point, the Dialogues records the following passage ‘from the time they are six

months old they are taught to find bread. It is better to be turned out of the house, kept chained up, so that they may be eager to go out; and let them be hungry than the necessity may urge them to find bread. Throw the bread without letting the dog see where, then set him with his nose upwind, talking to him and teaching him to understand stand by: Speak to him as in come here! Try again! Go there! Cast about! The first day let him eat the bread without punishing him, and afterwards repeat to him the aforementioned words, and if he go into the bread let the punishment be very slight, or if it be too severe he will be so frightened that he will never obey afterwards. In this way you can teach him to point, and in accustoming him to that, make him take a circle as he must do later for a partridge, then stop him and snap your fingers, at which sign go and let him take the bread. When the dog is nine months old and upwards, take him to a field of partridges and if he be so unruly in spite of punishment, he flushes without pointing then fasten a long cord round his neck and take him upwind and try him on a tame partridge in a thicket. Let him towards the partridge warning him in the words aforesaid and you have made him point it. The partridge must be set in the dew at night so that the freshness may remove any scent of the sportsman.'

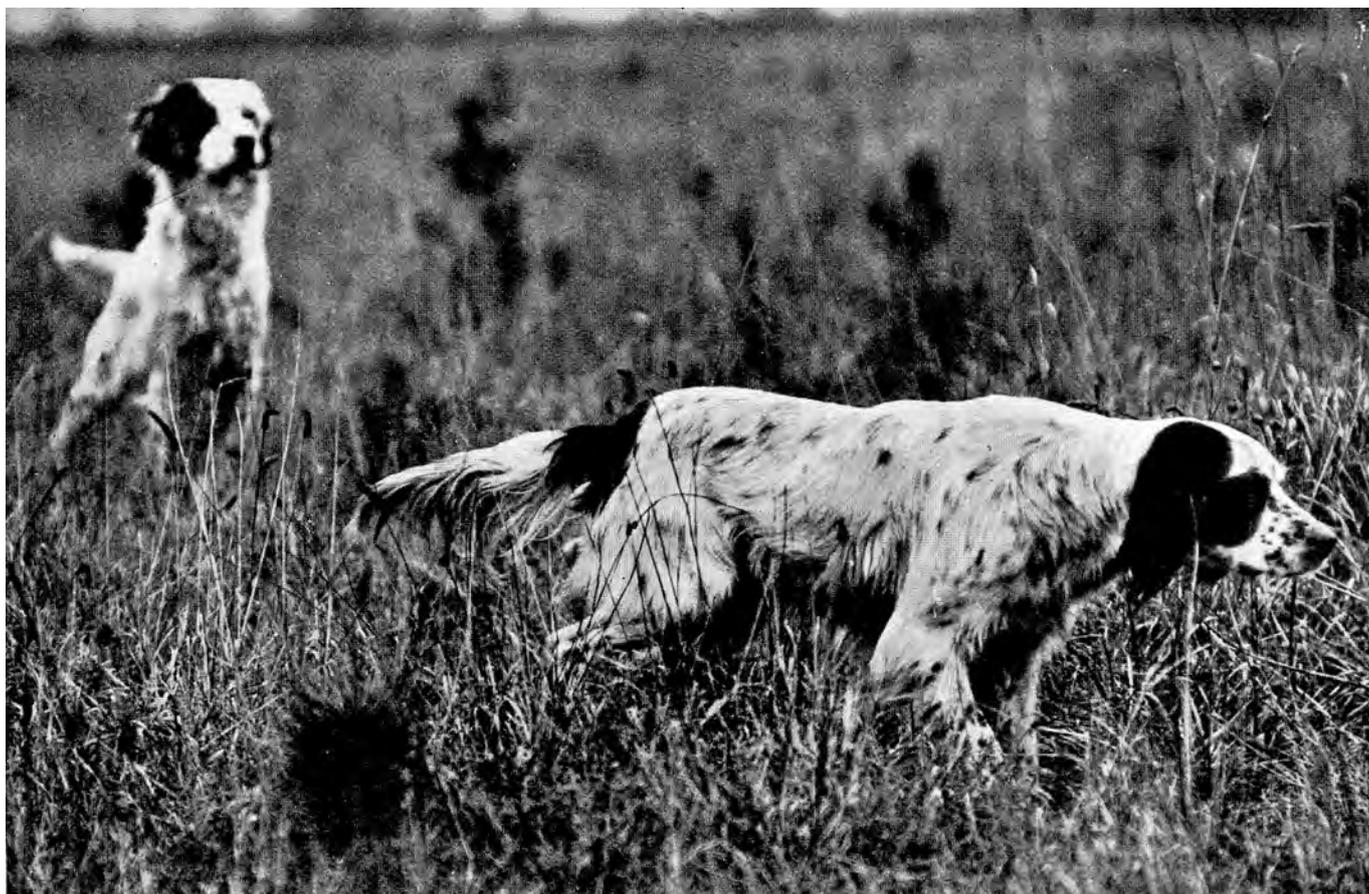
On one of my visits to North Sweden, I became accustomed to this exact method of training. In Sweden, the dogs are taught at an early stage to 'report' when they locate game. Report means the dog points the game often at great distance from the hunter and the dog sometimes circles the bird to ensure it sits. The dog sometimes reverses off the point so as not to disturb the game. The dog returns

to its master indicating that it has found birds. The dog then returns to the birds, this time bringing his master. I have always found it fascinating how so-called non-physical traits can pass from generation to generation. My own dog Remkilens T-Ebba was born in Sweden but trained in Ireland. Often on a day's shooting, she will reverse off point and report to me, without having been trained to do so. While physical attributes such as heart, lungs, legs and conformity have an affiliation with speed, what physical trait could influence this behaviour? But I digress. The Dialogues make specific reference to 'not breaking the dog on quails for that will teach the dog to point very near.' One of my favourite observations, indicating the antiquity of the passage with reference to the origins of the setter from the spaniel 'when the partridge dog is hunting he is won't to keep on wagging his tail with the pleasure and gladness he feels and if he has not a tail he makes the movement with his haunches and thus becomes sooner tired. To avoid this leave the tail long enough not to lack means of showing his content.' This is a rather pertinent observation given the current debate on docking spaniels.

With the invention of firearms from the days of the crossbow, the level of training of gundogs did not need to be as precise. As described earlier, to hunt with the crossbow, the quarry needed to remain still and in open ground this required a dog that could guide the huntsman to within shot by circling the game without disturbing it. Alonzo Martinez in 1644 decried that since partridges were now shot on the wing, they do not exist in numbers as formerly nor are there any pointing dogs to find them and point them with cleverness so great that quantities could be killed with a crossbow. In those days the 'sportsmen were most dexterous now that are such wanting; as the game is killed more easily nobody wishes to take time training dogs as the only use for dogs is to flush game that takes no training'. Martinez recounts that the "first thing that must be taught is to be under such command that they come to their master as readily for punishment as caresses. Once obedient any faults can be corrected but much depends on the dog's disposition. Some will obey with only chiding them while others not even punishment will improve". He laments that trainers should "not punish their dogs for a trifling fault for



A young Jack Nash in the 1950s judging a pointer and setter field trial - he is standing on the left hand side.



Major J D Lloyd's English Setter FT Champion Vineyard of Otham backed by Vision of Otham at the Manor House, Bandon, Norfolk from the 1930s.

fear of cowing the dog in the future. Training of dogs with little pace or nose or those that quest for partridges by foot scent” was not recommended. “However hunting the dogs up wind so they first become body scenters.’

However ‘a slow dog with a bad nose can only hunt by track and when he loses the track he has not nose enough to find the game another way. All young dogs are more inclined for foot rather than body scent and if they were allowed they would follow this inclination.’

I believe these observations regarding training and punishment still remain extremely applicable and honest. ‘A dog may only be punished with knowledge of the mistake. If he flushes a partridge when going up wind because it rises because it will not lie to him-the dog must get the blame for getting too close to it. For this he must be corrected but its enough to pull him by the ears. The author infers that it was the dog’s intention to point the partridge but he went to close and flushed it. However

if the dog going up wind attacks the partridge to rise it he must be severely punished. Some trainers, when the dog is going down wind, without having the benefit of the scent of the partridge suddenly comes across and flushes the bird they will beat the dog almost to death though it was no fault of the dog. Having this injustice done to him and the dog does not know why he will have no future confidence in hunting wither up or down wind and will often run away from his master, being unwilling to range and having arrived at pointing the partridges when he sees shooting approaches he comes to heel for fear, leaving his point as if never been made.’

Trainers of setters and pointers today are just as skilful and knowledgeable in getting the best out of their dogs. Competition has honed these skills, and intuition of their own kennels and bloodlines ensures that flaws can be proactively masked through training and careful management. It is always a recurring

surprise seeing a breeder so successful with his own line of dogs whilst other trainers struggle with the same blood. But that is the attraction, the beauty; the search for the key ingredient to ensure a dog reaches its potential and becomes successful.

Field triallers traditionally are guarded on the finer points of training which is understandable given their competitive streak and protectiveness of their hard-earned knowledge. However, it is this competitiveness and fascination that has driven these men and women throughout the ages to dedicate their lives to persist in the battle upstream for perfection that has evolved and improved the breeds of setters and pointers to ensure their continued relevance today. Glimpses from the archives of history show us that the more things change, the more they stay the same. Despite the passage of centuries and many generations of setters, pointers and their owners, the fundamental selection and training principles remain constant.

Country Chat

Billy goes 'in tent' on grouse counting, surveys the natural world next door and the German Ceara takes life that little bit slower with some rough shooting.

Six days and six nights, sleeping and eating on the hill in the highlands of Scotland, surrounded by breathtaking scenery, thirteen miles away from the nearest town of Fort Augustus may be a pleasure for some, but when you include torrential rain, a heat wave, blankets of midges, sleepless nights on rock hard ground, reveille at 03.45, cold breakfast and tin food daily, slogging over mountains, hills and peat hags, and yes, a distinct lack of the usual amenities, the pleasurable creeps towards the punishable.

Grouse counting with a difference this year; the same two estates as 2013 but fielding with a team of three Germans, the Hungarian Vizsla, and the eight year old English pointer. Grouse numbers on well-kept or managed moors on the mainland have either been stable, or have been rising over the past few years. Certainly I have found on the two estates where I have been counting that the size of the broods has been creeping back into the 9s 10s and 12s. But there are clouds gathering: industrialising the uplands, like the lowlands, for more efficient and productive farming is already upsetting many people who do not like what is taking place.

New roads snaking over the moors are popping up everywhere, and wind farms are a blight on the panoramic landscape. The excavation of peat piles, up to five feet high on some moors and marked with white poles on which to place grit boxes, keeper and shepherd quad treks crisscrossing the moors, the widespread use of medicated grit, large areas of flailing and heather burning, more grouse, more income, more boots on the ground !

When counting, I would scribble in my note book the date, the time started and the beat, any kills and by what; the finds are pencilled in as 2 + 5 - 2 + 10 etc as I move over the moor, relying on the team to quarter and cover the ground in front of me. I quarter with them, ensuring that as much ground as possible is covered, 'slashing' across the moor, so if you think of it as a clock, I would walk from five across or up to eight, from eight up to three and so on. As well as the brood or covey size, I would note the actual stage of the youngsters, (PS) poult size (FG) fully grown or (CS) chick size. Sometimes, unless the cock bird calls out, or the dogs flush him first, it can be rather difficult to distinguish between the sexes, the young grouse already darkened up like their parents.

This year on one such count, the Vizsla was pointing solid on a fox which, in my opinion, before its detection was stalking a hen and seven chicks. The fox took flight up a small ravine which concealed it until it was over the top and out of sight. When I told Raymond the under-keeper about it later, to say he was livid would be an understatement. In fact it's true to say that any evidence of foxes on a well-kept moor would be an embarrassment to any upland keeper. The fox I saw at 11 45am did not live beyond 11 45pm that same day.

Naive to think that ravens don't kill game birds

On the subject of kills on the hill, some are easily identified and by what was responsible, no different in fact to the lowland victims, but never was I prepared for the aftermath of a raven kill. If like me you are naive to believe that ravens don't kill game-birds, then I am sorry to be the one to alter your perspective, they do. To tell you different, would have a certain individual who keeps on a lowland game shoot, not in Scotland, but here at home, reading my words and seeing red. And once seen never forgotten, the remains of the unfortunate victim is unlike anything you have ever seen before. Although I should point out, that no upland keeper that I have spoken to from across the water has ever seen grouse been killed by ravens.

But moving on, what was the tent all about then? After all, were they not designed for the young and the eighteen to thirties club. Or leastways, they should have been and definitely not for an old rooster like myself, who has seen quite a few dawns and dusks in his time. I could rattle on about the outdoor adventure of it all, turning my back on the comforts of life, roughing it in the Highlands of Scotland and experiencing the day-to-day reality of camping without the niceties, but I won't.

A ten day excursion to the Highlands can cost up to £600 and that's only for accommodation. Add another £200 or more for eating out, fuel and ferry on top of that, and you are getting close to the



Billy's 'mobile home' before making camp.

full cost of grouse counting, so now you will see light as to why the tent. Did it save good old fashioned cash? Oh absolutely! Would I ever do it again? Absolutely not!

Grouse counting provides a valuable opportunity to keep the dogs and me fit, which is why I do it of course. When the shooting season ends in January, preparation starts straight away for the March pair counts and, after March, the July covey counts.

I have written many times of my enthusiasm for all breeds of the most common and the most used of the HPRs, and grouse counting allows the pointers to do what they do best. And when it comes to pointers, grouse and open spaces, there is just no comparison, except perhaps, setters, grouse and open spaces. It also allows me to run my pointers on a well-managed grouse moor with (hopefully) a never-ending supply of grouse, and hunting on a private estate with the keeper's blessing. Mix in the ingredients of beauty, isolation and wild places, a holiday in Scotland for me is the perfect busman's holiday.

A blackcock all dressed up for some lekking

A visit to Scotland is never dull, especially if you have an added interest and knowledge of its wildlife which, ironically enough, is obtained through the 'hunter's eyes.' Whilst driving along a narrow country road not a mile or two off the busy A9 and having just passed the Dalwhinnie distillery, I had to slow down to allow for a cock grouse to cross the road. On another occasion on the B862 leading out of Fort Augustus, I passed a blackcock in full plumage, casually strolling along the grass verge, all dressed up for an evening's lekking instead of the usual morning one. Last year driving along the back road from Pitlochry to Kirkmichael and on my way to shoot grouse, ten blackcock flew in unison with my jeep for a good three minutes or so, then as one like fighter jets, dropped their left wing tips and flew across my front. An eagle landed beside me on a rock when I was having my lunch, red deer, wild and free, dined on the hill tops in full view of those who dined in a restaurant. When grouse counting a few years back, I actually tripped over a roe deer fawn, one of two, both twins lying motionless in the heather. Six days and six nights in the Highlands of Scotland may well have all the trappings of a good

book, but for now, I will content myself with just being there.

This was Ceara's last season on the hill; the German short-haired pointer bitch has now been retired from hill work, although she will still be out every now and then on the club ground. Nine-year-old is not beyond the working capabilities of a fit and healthy gundog by any means, but if used for hill work, it is rash, if not cruel in my opinion, to expect them to hunt for hours on end, covering large tracts of moorland, besides, she has already started to show signs of slowing down. She has filled the game bag many times with grouse and pheasant and has had some spectacular finds, many of which has warranted a camera instead of a gun for she is a very 'flashy' bitch on point. I got her at six months old from Tom Mooney of Springbolt kennels and I can honestly say she has never given any bother, both in kennel and in the field.

Unlike the Vizsla, which I have credited with University intelligence, poor Ceara would be along the lines of Secondary education material. Leaving school early to work in the field with little qualifications to her name, she more than made up for it with her endearing character. The 'cratur' found the whole ordeal of directional training and retrieving exercises too tasking for her wee brain and would simply get up and walk off home, like a kid leaving the classroom. But I learnt a very valuable lesson from her, never again would I push blindly along with field work exercises if the pupil didn't have the ability to understand. She made me realise, what should have been blatantly obvious, that some gundogs do have difficulty in understanding what you require from them, and to push on regardless, can only but cause them stress. Ceara may not

have the intellect of Tia the Vizsla but she more than made up for it with her hunting skills and despite very little retrieving exercises, I never lost shot game with her.

This year, after a day's grouse counting, I had to lift her into the jeep and, if jumping out of the jeep, she would do a wee dance with her two front paws in order to pick up the courage to face the drop. Of course from the moment she goes on to the moor she never stops, she hunts and finds at her own pace, something she has always done from an early age. As Heidi and the rest of the team flew over the moor like gazelles, Ceara pottered along. When responding to the whistle, be it a short distance away or a speck on the horizon, she never hurried, stopping every now and then to check something out, whilst myself and the rest of the outfit waited patiently on her and when she did return, she would amble over to me with her wee tail wagging oblivious to all the fuss.

Like Kerry before her (another of Tom's bitches) she was always with me, from grouse counting to grouse shooting, club days to commercial days, always the first choice out of the kennels on every trip. It would be morally wrong to allow her to continue hunting on the punishing terrain of the moors, and nothing short of a disgrace to allow her to end her days outside in a kennel. Walked-up grouse shooting is very much a memorable occasion, but it's a nonstarter without the companionship of my canine friends. Tom has very kindly sent me Ceara's replacement (Sally) and at only thirteen months old, she has already passed her GCSEs, although granted, they have lowered the grade levels!

May I take this opportunity to wish you all an enjoyable season and a good year ahead.



Surrounded by breathtaking scenery, thirteen miles away from the nearest town of Fort Augustus.

The Irish Country Sports & Country Life Team Take On Tall Birds At Dunteige

Just when you think you've seen it all done it all and that you know every shooting venue in the country something brand new comes to your attention - Dunteige Shoot

Another great sign that the country sports world is not only alive and well, but really flourishing was the very welcome news coming in of a shoot in County Antrim that's gaining a very big reputation for presenting challenging duck for discerning Guns. And we are talking REALLY challenging! Yes REALLY REALLY challenging. Please note the emphasis here for as we found out it is totally justified.

Now, here at Irish Country Sports & Country Life Castle we have a very mixed bag of shooters, some good, some even, dare we say it, quite good on their day, but none could really lay claim to being the next George Digweed. Nevertheless, when an invitation arrived to 'come along and see what we could do'....well you've guessed it, we drew breath and agreed to look out our copy of '100 Best Shooting Excuses' just in case.

Dunteige shoot is ideally situated on the outskirts of Glenarm village, the gateway to the famous nine Glens of Antrim and driving through the hills and valleys on route it certainly seemed that it would be well suited to



presenting high birds.

We were welcomed by the Shoot Owner Kevin Cottrell, a young man who lives on the farm on which the shoot was established a short time ago and escorted to the Gun's Room with sweeping views over the wonderful hillside and valleys beyond. In the dining area were given the usual safety talk and told what to expect - three drives, but Guns would move position once during each drive so it was to be more akin to six drives.

Piling into quad vehicles and trailers we moved off to the first drive set on a slope with a river gurgling some way behind us - and here I digress from our normal practice of describing each

drive in detail, rather I'll say what we found to be the case throughout the day.

Informal and relaxed

Dunteige is very much a relaxed informal driven shoot run on the family farm and surrounding farmlands. Its location and the topography of the landscape make it a perfect setting for presenting high fast challenging birds over the waiting Guns. Each of the drives is designed to make the most of the contours of the land and comprises river valleys, open hill ground and woodland drives. It only takes a short walk after each drive and a hop into the vehicle to arrive at a spot nearby which looks and feels like a totally new part of the country. And Guns are invited to enjoy a delicious home cooked meal after the shooting is done, so shoot well or indifferently there is always that to look forward to as a consolation.

But what was the shooting like I hear you ask! In a word - superb! Ducks are flushed from ponds and hillsides over high terrain and standing trees and they come at you from all angles, depending on the wind. Sometimes tail-enders



The birds were very challenging.



Birds high over tall trees.

would pass high overhead only to reappear from behind so it paid to keep an eye out for that to happen. Were the birds high? An unqualified yes to that; and were they fast? Absolutely! What fooled me was that at long range things appear to be going slower when in fact maximum lead was required to have any chance of success. We found that you either hit or missed, there was so little room for error.

Did we shoot well? I'll draw a veil over my own performance as I was using my son's gun and it felt so different to my usual 20 bore (Excuse No 87 as I recall from the aforementioned Book Of Shooting Excuses) but the others certainly enjoyed themselves. In fact I don't think I have ever seen higher birds shot that those by one of our team that day, Thomas Welshman, who is shooting exceptionally well this year.

Most testing birds in the country

If you fancy a day at some of the most testing birds in the country - if not the most testing - why not give it a go. The shoot offers mainly driven duck, mixed days with driven partridge shooting is also available on request if booked in advance. Evening duck flighting is available from mid November to the end of the season for small groups of 2 / 4 Guns.

A typical shoot day will consist of 4 / 8 guns shooting, the bag for each day can be mixed and tailored to meet the requirements and budget of each party, small 50 bird days or larger 250 bird days can be catered for, we also welcome single guns and guns are welcome to work their own dogs for picking up providing they are kept under control.

Guns will be welcomed on arrival and served tea/coffee and homemade scones in the shoot room where they will receive a briefing before heading off to the first drive of the day. Depending on the size of the bag, light refreshments will be served in the field between drives and on completion of the day



The topography was ideal for shooting.



High, wide and handsome was the order of the day at Dunteige.



Shooting in style.



Guns were in the action on every drive.



Our Host Kevin Cottrell (third left) with Guns Thomas Welshman, Neill Alexander, and Paul Pringle. Out of picture is Albert Titterington who also enjoyed the day.

when the bag has been achieved, a warm meal and drinks will be served in the shoot room where the guns can relax and reflect on the days shooting.

The shoot is situated around twenty miles from Belfast International Airport, five miles from Larne Harbour so it's ideal for visitors travelling from overseas. Travelling Guns can either

stay close by as some of the villages in the Glens have good quality hotels, or in main areas such as Belfast.

Will we be back? You bet - we've booked already! And I have ordered more copies of the Book of 100 Best Shooting Excuses, well some of the others might need them next time as well as me.

For more information: Dunteige Shoot, 38 Loughdoo Road, Glenarm, Ballymena, Co Antrim
Phone - Kevin 07919493840
Email: - info@dunteigeshoot.com
Website: - www.dunteigeshoot.com

Keeping Ahead

With a passion for hounds and hunting since boyhood, and a recent appointment as huntsman to one of the Irish midlands' most prestigious packs, Martin Ryan considered himself greatly blessed.

Although only in his early thirties, he had achieved more in his chosen profession than many men twice his age, and yet was still driven by a sense of ambition, and a desire to put his own stamp on his new pack. As well as getting to know by name each hound residing in the hunt kennels, Martin made it his business to visit and speak with local farmers, and to explore the hunt's seemingly endless country.

Whilst settling in to the genteelly dilapidated Georgian house, which accompanied his new position, the young man had discovered box upon box of dust laden ledgers, recording every day's hunting enjoyed by the pack, almost from its inception.

The village being some miles distant, Martin had only his own company in the evenings, for most of

the kennel staff had headed home by 6 p.m. Lacking both television and radio, the old house offered little by way of entertainment. Perhaps unsurprising then, that when the working day was done, the huntsman's attention turned to the boxes of aged and yellowing ledgers.

Spreading the dusty tomes upon the kitchen table, Martin carefully thumbed his way through the heavily foxed pages, and marvelled at how meticulously the records had been kept. As he worked his way back through the decades, he noted with interest the changing style of handwriting, as each of his sporting predecessors came and went. Mention was made of hounds and horses long gone, their virtues extolled, and 'Red Letter Days' and legendary runs noted. Ballpoint gave way to fountain

pen, which in turn acquiesced to brass nib and ink pot. Many parts of Martin's new hunt country were mentioned, with likely fox holding ground soon becoming apparent, by the obvious success enjoyed there. More puzzling however, was the repeated practice of calling hounds off a hunted fox, whenever it approached a place named Kilconnell Hill, or, in the older ledgers, Kilconnell Fort. Bizarrely, from what Martin could glean, this strange custom seemed to have been prevalent immemorial.

A search through the peeling bookshelves in the study soon provided the young man with a map of the area, and within minutes Martin had located Kilconnell Hill. 'The huntsman noted with interest the words *'Faerie Fort,'* located in brackets below this archaeological feature, but still couldn't understand the hunt's practice of avoiding the place. With curiosity aroused, the young huntsman determined to explore this neglected country in the off season, as soon as weather and kennel responsibilities allowed.

It was some weeks before such an opportunity presented itself, but on a clear June morning Martin led his ten year old Irish Draught, Macroom, from the stables, and set out to investigate Kilconnell Fort. Placing a foot in the stirrup, the huntsman bounced up into the saddle, and pausing, habitually tightened the straps on his girth. Standing 16-2 hh and quite in his prime, Macroom possessed that rare combination of great stamina and uncanny sagacity. These characteristics had bourn Martin across some of Ireland's toughest country over the past three seasons, and often the young man had joked – somewhat prophetically - that



No country dweller dared cut down the Sceach or Faerie Thorn.

he would trust 'Mac' with his very life.

With a pale dawn easing itself over the eastern horizon, Martin headed out of the stable yard, and guided the grey gelding along a narrow lane bounded by gorse topped banks. According to the map, Kilconnell Fort was no more than half an hour's ride from the yard, and on such a fine day as this, it was good to be out exploring new country. As Martin and his mount left the shelter of the lane and headed out across open pasture, the landscape flooded with the full light of a summer morning, and the dawn chorus rose to accompany Macroom's steadily drumming hooves.

Skirting a large bog the young huntsman urged his mount on to higher, drier ground, and soon entered the dark confines of a mature spruce plantation. Only with some difficulty did Martin navigated the maze of conifer shrouded rides, eventually exiting the resin scented gloom by way of a little used farm track. Once more in daylight the huntsman referred to his map; quickly realising that Kilconnell Fort stood silhouetted against the ridge, but a short distance ahead.

The ancient whitethorn snapped in two

Responding to words of encouragement, 'Mac' cantered easily over the last few hundred yards of rising ground, bringing both himself

and his master to the remains of the Neolithic hill fort. Encircled by an unbroken ring of gnarled whitethorn bushes, and resting on top of the highest hill for miles around, the ancient fort had formed a local landmark for thousands of years. Still baffled as to why past huntsmen had chosen to avoid such a foxy looking place, Martin circled the mound in hope of finding a gap in the screen of protecting whitethorn. Having circled the fort in vain, the young man dismounted, and placing the horse's reins over its neck, began to tear at a wizened and brittle looking thorn which grew before him. With surprisingly ease the main trunk of the ancient whitethorn snapped in two; the desiccated shrub clearly having reached the end of its natural tenure.

Martin knew that his actions would have been considered unthinkable by generations of farmers and country folk before him, for no country dweller would ever have *dared* cut down or damage the Sceach or Faerie Thorn. To have destroyed something believed sacred to the Sio'ga, or Little People, would have been to incur the wrath of creatures far removed from those portrayed in Victorian story books. Vengeful in the extreme, the Celtic faerie was no delicate winged fancy, but a terrifying entity whose spite knew no bounds.

He was, however, a man of the 21st century, and cared not a jot for the beliefs and superstitions of past

generations. His job was to hunt the fox to the best of his ability, and that was what he intended to do.

Having torn a gap in the whitethorn screen, Martin led Macroom over the fort's surrounding ditch and onto the ancient ramparts. Wandering about the Neolithic site, the huntsman quickly noticed the mouth of a well used den standing dark against the turf embankment. As he did so, the usually calm Macroom came to a sudden halt, snorting nervously through flared nostrils. Martin felt a shiver travel down the gelding's side, but thought this nothing more than a bite from a troublesome horse fly.

Leaving his unsettled mount to stand, the huntsman approached the den, and kneeling, noted that its entrance was littered with fox tracks. Lying flat on his stomach Martin placed his head inside the opening, and immediately caught the whiff of Reynard's musky odour. Newcomer to the area or not, Martin had been right, for it was obvious that this den was well established, and had probably been in use for generations. Why had his predecessors been so reluctant to hunt hounds here? He simply couldn't understand.

Martin's eyes quickly became accustomed to the den's gloom, and it was then that he noticed something white and half buried, lying a few feet inside the entrance. Remarkably, of all things..... it was a *football!* Martin was astonished! How on earth could such an object find its way into a fox's den, in this a high and lonely place? Reynard momentarily forgotten, Martin crawled a little further into the entrance of the tunnel, and stretched out an arm to recover the ball. It was then that he made a most chilling discovery. The white sphere which he had foolishly thought to be a child's plaything, was in fact a human skull! Drawing the earth stained object into the daylight, he turned it over in his hands with a mixture of shock and wonderment. What was the explanation for it being



A single fox made its escape earlier.



Stretched out and galloping as never before.

here? Had foxes simply unearthed an archaeological artefact by their digging, or was this part of a victim of some heinous crime? Martin certainly couldn't say. It seemed probable that the skull was old; but how old? A few stained teeth remained in place, but as the young man stared into the dark and sunken eye sockets, he couldn't

tell whether the skull had lain in the earth for thirty years, or three thousand.

Returning to where Macroom paced uneasily, Martin was sure of his course of action. He must return to the hunt kennels with the skull, and contact the relevant authorities. If his find were indeed ancient, it would be

welcomed by the local museum. If more recent, it would be of interest to the forensics department of the county constabulary. Placing the skull within his capacious saddle bag, Martin took Macroom by the reins, and mounting, rode out through the gap in the encircling whitethorn. Heading downhill and away from the fort, the

young huntsman found great difficulty in holding back the normally steady and well behaved Macroom, as the animal plunged wildly and heaved at the bit. Greatly surprised by Mac's behaviour, Martin growled at his prancing mount as they slipped and slithered down the hillside. Here, only with considerable effort, did he manage to bring his unruly horse to a halt. With eyes wide the lathered gelding turned to face the faerie hill, and it was then that Martin noticed the riders.

A flicker of movement on the edge of the whitethorn ring first caught the young man's eye, as three horsemen emerged from the hill fort, following the line of his departure at great speed. Martin thought it strange that on such open ground, he hadn't noticed other riders approaching. Stranger still that the men, (for he thought they were men) hadn't made themselves known earlier, as he descended the hill. Quivering now from nose to tail, Macroom continued to plunge against the bit whilst emitting a hysterical whinnying. *What was wrong with this horse today?* As the huntsman stared at the rapidly approaching riders, he was shocked to see just how thin their mounts were; merely skin and bones in fact! How could anyone of conscience keep animals in such an awful condition?

Unearthly shrieks

It was then that his eyes fell upon the riders, and the hairs on the back of his neck began to bristle. The three creatures - for that is the only way they could be described - were as gaunt as their horses; tattered grey shrouds covering their skeletal frames. Staring wide eyed in terror and disbelief, Martin saw that each pursuing ghoulish creature carried a long spear gripped in its bony claw; the bronze tip of each weapon glinting wickedly in the morning sun. Perhaps most shocking of all however, was the realisation that the hindmost of these devilish pursuers, was headless!

Stupefied almost out of his wits, the young huntsman at last gave Macroom his head; the terrified horse needing no encouragement to flee, as it wheeled around and set off toward home at the gallop. Unearthly shrieks emitted by the demonic riders now reached Martin's ears, as grabbing a handful of Mac's mane he hung on, entrusting his very life to the grey gelding's speed and sure-footedness. Requiring neither whip nor spur, Macroom stretched out and galloped as he had never galloped before. With ears flat against his head and mane flying, he cleared the open hill with unimaginable speed, entering the gloom of the forest ride without once checking his pace. Mud splattered and branch lashed Martin clung on, knowing that his horse was the only thing between himself and the horror which pursued him. With flying hooves the great Irish Draught sent stones scattering across the forest track, as the jabbering ghouls urged their unearthly mounts ever nearer Macroom and his terrified master.

Nearly six feet tall and built of broad larch boards, the wire topped forestry gate now stood barring the terrified huntsman's way. As Martin fixed his eyes upon this seemingly insurmountable barrier, a bronze tipped spear skimmed his right shoulder and embedded itself in a trackside conifer. Sensing that their quarry was now trapped and victory close at hand, the undead cried out and rent the air with hideous shrieks.

In utter desperation Martin gave Macroom his head, and approaching the gate at speed, dug his heels into the grey's lathered flanks. Blowing hard now and adjusting his stride, Macroom strained his every sinew as he cleared the forestry gate like a stag. Martin heard the top rail rattle, but cared not as horse and rider burst out of dark woodland and into sunlit meadows.

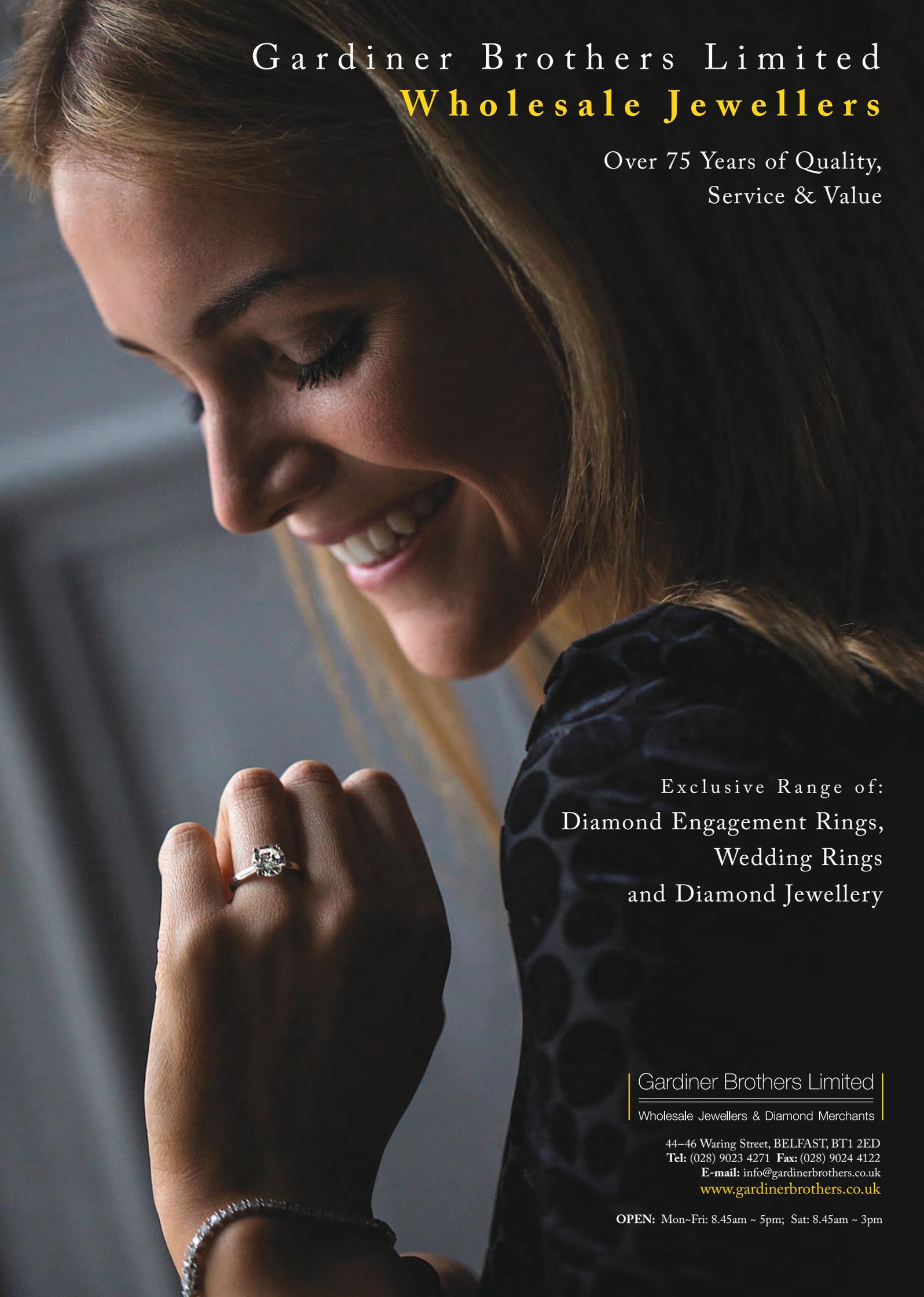
The joy he felt at still being alive was short lived however, for blood chilling screams told that his

supernatural pursuers were closing in to exact a deadly vengeance. Able now to maintain little more than a steady canter, Macroom had given the run of his life, but as the great horse began to slow, it was clear to Martin that his companion's strength was all but spent.

As a foul stench of rot and decay filled his nostrils, the huntsman glanced over his shoulder to see that his grinning pursuers were no more than an arm's length away. At that moment the nearest ghoulish creature raised its spear, and made ready to plunge the weapon deep into its human quarry. In desperation Martin unbuckled the strap of his leather saddle bag, and taking the earth stained skull in hand, launched the hideous object directly at his murderous assailant.

When the agony of the expected spear thrust failed to come, Martin again glanced over his shoulder, only to find himself and his exhausted mount in an empty meadow, on a summer morning. Pulling his stumbling horse to a halt, he looked around as a man delivered from a terrible nightmare. They were quite alone. Macroom's sides heaved as he gasped for air, and as Martin slumped across the neck of his steaming horse, he understood clearly the message the old hunting ledgers had attempted to convey.

Arriving at the kennels the following morning, the hunt staff were dismayed to find that their newly appointed huntsman had left, without even a letter of explanation. The stable, where his 16-2 Irish Draught had been quartered, was also empty. A drained water bucket in the middle of the floor, the only sign of recent occupation. Curiously, on investigating the adjoining Georgian farmhouse, a large journal was found open upon the kitchen table. The date selected was that of the day before, and scrawled across the page in an unsteady hand, the warning: *"If you value your soul and your sanity, stay away from Kilconnell Fort."*



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Long Range Shooting Seminar in Germany

Last September, a group of hunters converged on the German town of Wetzlar, roughly one hour's drive from Frankfurt. Drawn from eight European countries, we were invited in our capacity as Yeswehunt Club members to a special long range shooting seminar by the Carl Zeiss Sports Optics Company. This seminar was an ideal opportunity for hunters/shooters from many nations and backgrounds to meet and share knowledge and experiences. The Irish guests included woodcock authority Larry Taaffe, deer stalker Stephen Dunn and me. It was quite an interesting gathering because while most knew each other by name, they had never met.

Maruan Al-Hammoud, Head of the Zeiss Training Academy briefed us that evening on the following day's activities, which would include assembling at the impressive Zeiss building in Wetzlar, a talk on Zeiss optics, related shooting topics, and a guided tour of the factory. Lunch would be served at a nearby Zeiss-sponsored shooting range, followed by shooting exercises at distances out to 300 metres.

Next day, the Zeiss conference-room was reserved for our group representing Belgium, France, Ireland, Netherlands, Romania, Germany, Finland and Luxembourg. Maruan opened the seminar and spoke in depth about shooting related Zeiss products which were on display for everyone to

examine. These comprised a selection of telescopic sights and binoculars. He stressed that all products were totally hand-assembled; Zeiss does not use assembly-line production methods. We received an in-depth insight into the manufacturing, assembly and testing process of every Zeiss optical product. Despite each individual YWH member present having long years of experience in hunting and hunting-related equipment, we quickly realised that we were being provided with a fresh outlook and in some instances previously unknown aspects in the use of our existing equipment. Examples include setting/focussing the reticle on a 'scope, and the superior reliability of rail mounts over 'scope rings.

Maruan also emphasised the

importance of using a smaller red dot as opposed to a larger one which, at long distance could possibly cover too large an area of the target. Zeiss Victory and Conquest 'scopes are designed and constructed to provide maximum light transmission at all times and come into their own in poor light conditions or at twilight – also the built-in illuminated red dot is renowned as the world's best.

The extensive range of Zeiss 'scopes (too numerous to mention here) contains a host of features and technology, including superb lenses ground from glass supplied by Schott, a Zeiss subsidiary company. Another important point made was the fact that a shooting range is used for testing 'scope performance - no testing is carried out on live animals.



European Hunters who attended the Zeiss seminar.



Checking out 'scopes and binoculars.

Light transmission ability is the highest on the market

Moving on to their range of binoculars, Maruan explained that the highest standards attainable are used in the manufacture and assembly of all models. Entry models come with 93% light transmission ability, while more expensive models such as the 8 x 54 permit 95% light transmission. This performance can be tested by machine or in the field from a high seat, starting with low light conditions and progressing towards dusk where the superiority is evident. Top quality binoculars should produce a 'field sharp' picture - tests against other brands show a lesser ability than that of Zeiss products. The significance of exit pupil size was also explained in depth and we were shown examples of the varying sizes, coupled with the magnification factor. Maruan stated that Zeiss binoculars' 95% light transmission ability is the highest on the market. We had the opportunity of testing both binoculars and 'scopes by viewing various aspects of Wetzlar town from the conference-room window, following which we set out on our tour of the premises.

Having been on more factory tours than I care to remember during my working days, I didn't particularly relish the prospects of yet another one.



Stephen Dunn with the monitor facing away.

However, this was the one that proved to be the exception. Maruan advised us in advance that we would probably notice the older age profile of many of the Zeiss staff – it takes years of training to arrive at the level of competence and efficiency required to hand-assemble these precision products. He also mentioned that photography was not permitted for the obvious commercial reasons. During the tour we were permitted to handle 'scope tubes in their raw state – all are made from a single piece of metal. We saw

the machining and lens grinding processes and much more intricate work by hand. At one point a lady operative demonstrated how she "stuck" 3 glass products together. This becomes the one-piece light transmission system used in binoculars. Briefly, two small angled pieces of glass had to be attached to a larger rectangular block. The use of adhesive material is not an option and the necessary binding is created by vacuum. She placed a small cloth on the main block, pressed the angled



Arnout Vandevyvere (Belgium) 'cooling' Heiko Schwartz's (Germany) rifle.



Larry Taaffe test firing.

piece into place on top of the cloth and gently slipped the cloth out from in between. Result? A perfect vacuum binding! Maruan mentioned that an employment contract waited on his desk for anyone who could do the same. Three YesWeHunters volunteered and two succeeded. Whether they actually want the jobs or not has yet to be established!

On leaving the Zeiss premises we drove to the local shooting range where lunch was served followed by a pre-shooting talk. Maruan dealt with the usual safety precautions and went on to advise that the object of the day was a grouping exercise. Where shots actually struck the target scoring rings was not the issue, we were to fire for groups – the tighter the better. Blaser rifles in .308 calibre with either traditional timber or synthetic stocks were available for the test and all were fitted with various models of the latest Zeiss ‘scopes’. The course of fire was over 100 and 300 metres with the objective of understanding rifle and bullet performance at these distances. Each individual received personal

attention and Mauran was on hand to answer any questions that arose. In fact, we marvelled at his patience and the calm manner in which he handled the day.

Heat haze rising from the barrels

Each firing bay was equipped with an electronic screen displaying a diagram of the target and indicated the point of impact of each shot. A printer then produced a copy for the shooter. As the afternoon wore on the rifles heated up and frequently the sight picture was distorted by heat haze rising from the barrels. We used a novel system for cooling them by having another shooter close by fanning the rifle with a piece of styrene. An interesting point emerged as Maruan mentioned that



Mauran Al-Hammoud - head of the Zeiss Training Academy.

he seldom cleans rifle barrels. Some of the rifles we were using had fired up to 3000 rounds without cleaning and groups were still excellent. An occasional pull-through with a bore-snake is all the cleaning necessary; he said, provided that the same soft-point hunting ammunition was in use. Other

ammunition types such as moly-coated or FMJ would necessitate cleaning after use as they did indeed foul the barrel. My rifles have always been treated/cleaned in this fashion and it has drawn a fair share of criticism from the ‘gun bore shine’ brigade. It was quite a treat to have such expert opinion confirm what I had learned 50 years ago.

All too soon we ran out of time – everyone had fired at both distances and each YesWeHunt shooter was well up to the task. Some groups were tighter than others, but all were well above the boundaries necessary for ethical hunting. It would be impossible to single out any specific highlight of the day – every aspect was fascinating and so professionally presented – our host Maruan was in a class well above anything we had expected and we noted that he was the youngest man present. We can but sincerely thank the Zeiss Academy and Mauran for a most informative, fascinating and thoroughly enjoyable experience. When we returned from the range, those YesWeHunters who had driven to Wetzlar headed back to their home countries. The remainder spent a further night in the hotel before setting out for Frankfurt airport and homeward-bound flights the following day. Larry, Stephen and I travelled together and were able to fit in a visit to a large Frankonia outlet as well as the Natural Wildlife Museum in Frankfurt on our way back.

To conclude, at one point in the conference room that first morning, Maruan claimed that Zeiss products were the best that money can buy. It would be difficult to disagree!

Editor’s Note: *Yeswehunt is an independent multilingual portal providing a discussion and contact platform for several million hunters worldwide. It is committed to promote ethical, sustainable hunting and foster international hunters’ solidarity. Details: www.yeswehunt.com*



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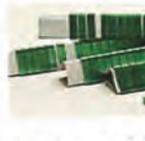
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Around the Terrier, Whippet & Lurcher Shows with Margaret Mc Stay

Man O' War Show 6th July

Sunday morning came bright and early, with the jingling of the alarm clock, and the dog chorus howling from the dog pens. This was a reminder to our household that the day had arrived for the Man O' War Dog Show and Race day, at Castleblaney Road, Keady.

It was nice to see so many children in the children's handling class. As I have said before, these young people are our show organisers of tomorrow, so it is heart warming to see them starting early in country sports, and following in our footsteps. Some tired little people on Sunday night.

The racing and showing commenced at approximately 1.00 pm.

And do you know I felt a sense of pride for these two young women Charlene and Michelle together with their brilliant band of helpers,

You produced a very enjoyable show and race day to be proud of. Many



Montalto Overall Champion and Best in Show - Dessie Mackins Soda, Handled by Breandan Coleman Reserve Champion Nicky Robinson with Roxy along with Judges Sam Mc Connell, Tom Barry and Rose McCoy.

thanks for a really enjoyable day out, amongst all our lovely canine friends. I look forward to more of the same next year.

Tullylish Working Terrier Club Saturday 2nd August

The townland near the River Bann, contains the villages of Gilford, Laurencetown, and Blearly. Deep in the heart of this beautiful countryside, with its magnificent scenery, was the venue for the Tullylish Dog Show and Race day. Although it rained heavy and continuously all day, it did not take away from the quality, and organisation that went in to making this show so successful. As the old saying is "The show must go on" and John Barry and the Tullylish Working Terrier Club did just that.

As the rain continued to pour down, James Woods hunkered in under our umbrella. Well, the craic and the slugging started. When Big John and James got in under that umbrella there was room for nobody else. Sean Burke joined in as well and the craic was



The North West Terrier, Lurcher and Whippet Club - Rose McCoy U21" Zola & U23" Diego.



The Sporting Whippet of NI Overall Champion of Champions and Best in Show went to Rea Wilson with Odis.

ninety. It was all singing in the rain under that umbrella. Thank you and the Tullylish Working Terrier Club for another top class show this year, and hopefully we can enjoy more of the same again in 2015.

Tully Castle, Enniskillen Dog Show Saturday 9th August

Tully Castle stands at the top of a south-facing slope on Tully Point on the west shore of Lower Lough Erne. What a legacy and legend is the remains of this old ruined Castle, with its historic gardens and scenic views, and steeped in history from many centuries back. These beautiful surroundings were the back drop for Tully Castle Festival and dog show on Saturday 9th August 14.

As the morning clouds broke into sunshine, car loads of families from the local community, canine folk and their prized canine friends, and people from further afield, began to fill the car park very quickly. Soon the sound of barking dogs and playing children rang out over

the beautiful valleys of the Fermanagh country side The sun shone for most of the day, with the exception of a few light showers in the evening. Amid all the festivities, the Dog Show began at 2pm sharp. Some top quality dogs in the Whippet/Lurcher/Terriers and mixed breeds ring.

Children's Handling Class was won by Harry Fallis with his lovely dog Daisy. Well done Harry, we are all very proud of you, Also congratulations to all the rest of the children who took part in the show ring. You are all winners in my eyes, and made your parents very proud of you.

Michael Quinn won Best in Show with his top class Lurcher Mo Charra, and Reserve Best in Show Champion Declan Lynch from Ballyhaise, Co Cavan with his winning Terrier Taz. A big congratulations to both men and well done.

And finally, a very special word of thanks to Scott Fallis, and Wesley Scott , and their brilliant band of helpers for a



Overall 5 Nations Champion Lurcher Jed Donagh with Flick and Reserve Mark O Neill.

very enjoyable Festival and Dog Show, and many thanks again for the memories. You are a real gentleman, and we are already looking forward to next years Festival.

Birr Castle Game Fair Saturday 23rd August, and Sunday 24th August

In the Heart of Ireland, amidst a green jewel of world renown, lies the unique and simply gorgeous Birr Castle, Birr Co Offaly, with its beautiful gardens, rivers and ponds, a perfect venue and a magical backdrop for Birr Castle Game Fair.

Results

Master McGrath Qualifier Over 23 Gary Smith with Bond

Master McGrath Qualifier Under 23 Rose McCoy with Diego
Master McGrath Qualifier Under 21 Nigel Greer with Kildrum

1 Rough Coated John Shaw with Boris

2 Bull Cross/Terrier Dillion O'Shea with Chance

3 Long Dog Chontelle McMeekin with Flash

Overall Champion from 1/2/3 Chontelle McMeekin with Flash

Lurcher Race Jed Donagh with Flick

Whippets Ryan Wright with Bolt
Terriers Brian Crothers with Molly

Results

Lurchers Overall Champion Lurcher Adam Curran with Taugh

Whippets Overall Champion Whippet Steve Herridge with Stan

Terriers Overall Champion Terrier Damien Kelly with Borris

Overall Show Champion and Best In Show Damien Kelly with Borris

Overall Puppy Champion and Best in Show Janet Duke with Oscar

5 Nations Champion Lurcher Jed Donagh with Flick

5 Nations Champion Terrier John Hendricks with Rocky

Birr Castle Game Fair was full of fun and enjoyment, but in the midst of all of this, memories from Shows gone

came back with the glowing tribute from Kieran Young and the Memorial Cup presented year in memory of his partner of many years, Colette Gannon. This will be for Sports Persons / Personality of the Year, awarded annually at Birr Castle Game Fair. This inaugural award went jointly to Mickey Quinn and Michael, from Lurgan Co Armagh. Mickey and Michael, father and son, are two of the nicest, genuine countrysports people around. The Colette Gannon Memorial Cup was presented by Colette's daughter Joanne and I can honestly say there was not a dry eye around the ring.

On behalf of the Game Fair Digging Competition organiser and director Kieran Young, I would like to thank the following Sponsors: Irish Country Sports and Country Life Magazine / Bulldog Tools/ Belman & Flint/ Marwalsh/ Wilderbeast. Yana Scupakova and Bluebell were there with their cameras, recording our every moment of glory.

I must not forget our excellent judges on the day - Terriers: Paddy Curtayne Lurchers: Breandan Coleman/ Whippets: Tom Barry Five Nations: Terriers : Robert Black/Tom Barry/ Breandan Coleman Lurchers: Shane Lee/Patsy McCoy/ Gary Smith. Judging is not an easy job at any time, but you all carried out your remits with dignity and integrity. A job well done by all.

Steven McGonigal gave an excellent commentary during the 5 Nations Championships and other events in the Game Fair. The Roscrea team certainly have the knack of making things run smoothly and efficiently. And the huge success of Birr Castle Game Fair was plain to see with a very large crowd in attendance.

The NILRC Champion Of Champions Annual Dog Show And Race Day, held at The Field Of Dreams Schooling Track Gulladuff, Maghera, Sunday 31st August



Overall 5 Nations Champion Lurcher Jed Donagh with Flick and friends.

The venue was the Field of Dreams schooling track, Guladuff, an family run business owned by the Hurley family. The Race Track is top class, and has progressed from strength to strength over the past few years. This was the setting for the NILRC Dog Show and Raceday, a brilliant venue and a top class race track.

As the racing started, the cheering began, and with it came the excitement, and this did not stop to the last race romped home. What a race track, pure gold. All dogs finished safely. A Big Congratulations and well done to all the worthy winners, and many thanks to the NILRC for a brilliant show.

The North West Terrier, Lurcher and Whippet Club (Barry Hollands Show) Sunday 7th September

A brisk autumn wind blew softly through the trees, sending waves of leaves floating over our dog pens on Sunday morning. This was nature's way of telling our Canine friends, the end of

the showing season was approaching fast, and their weekly trots around the show ring for this year was coming to an end. With this in mind, it was time to leave Portadown for the day, and head to Strabane and the NWLTC Dog show and race day.

Results

Overall Champion Pup John Lynch

Overall Champion and Best in Show John Heslip with Molly Reserve Glen Doherty with Diesel

32 Counties Lurcher Champion Mickey Quinn with Lady Reserve Fiona Devlin with Diva

32 Counties Terrier Champion Ian Heslip with Molly Reserve John Heslip with Sam

32 Counties Champion Whippet Davy Best with Harley Reserve Jason Dunwoody with Maggie

Dog of the Year: Mickey Quinn with Lady, and a well deserved winner.

Many thanks Barry and Joe for a great dog show today.



Winners of the Digging Finals Competition at Birr - Shane Gilmartin and Keith Breen.

The Sporting Whippet Club of NI Dog Show/Race Day and Barbecue, Sunday 14th September at Dunsilly Kennels, Co Antrim

With the September dew still on the grass, trailer and dogs in tow, we set off for the County Antrim Countryside and the townland of Dunsilly. With its beautiful schooling track and easy accessibility to the motorway, Dunsilly Kennels was the perfect venue for the last Sporting Whippet Club NI Dog show, Race day and barbecue of the year. There was a larger crowd than expected and very soon the field filled up quickly, with canine folk.

Results

Overall Best in Show Davy Best with Harley Reserve Best in Show Davy Best with Penny

Winner of Show Champion of Champions Davy Best with Penny Reserve Rea Wilson with Odis

Congratulations to all the winners and the best of luck to Davy Best and his winning Whippets Penny and Harley, who are now both qualified for the 5 Nations Whippet Championship at Shanes Castle 2015. Our Chairman Paul Reynolds made a presentation of £300 to the charity Chest Heart and Stroke Foundation on behalf of the Sporting Whippet Club NI.

Many thanks to all concerned - Paul Reynolds, Racing Managers Patsy McCoy/Mickey Quinn/Brian Crothers and Carole Hill and all the hard working committee of the Sporting Whippet Club NI, for a great day and for all their hard work behind the scenes during the year 2014. I would

also like to thank all the good men and women who have supported the Club throughout the year.

The Ballynahinch Harvest & Country living Festival and Feedwell/Irish Country Sports & Country Life magazine All Ireland Champion of Champions Terrier, Lurcher, and Whippet Challenges 27/28 September

Montalto is a privately owned estate nestling in the picturesque surroundings of the Co. Down countryside. The Estate is situated on the outskirts of Ballynahinch, and has been a family home for centuries and offers 400 acres of privately owned Irish rural landscape and so much more. Convenient to Ireland's airports and famous golf courses, this special hideaway is one of Ireland's best kept secrets.

The highlight of the day for me was the Feedwell/Irish Country Sports & Country Life magazine All Ireland Champion of Champions Terrier, Lurcher, and Whippet Challenge. This is where my heart lies, and had been looking forward for this day to arrive.

Results

Champion Terrier Pup Dessie Mackin's Mack, handled by Breandan Coleman.

Champion Terrier Dessie Mackins Soda handled by Breandan Coleman Reserve Champion Terrier John Heslip with Molly.

Champion Lurcher Pup Davy Best with Daisy

Champion Lurcher Mickey Quinn with Lady Reserve Champion Lurcher Glen Doherty with Diesel

Champion Whippet Pup Nicky Robinson with Roxy

Champion Whippet Tracy Gill with Ash Reserve Champion Whippet Graham Fyffe with Bolt

Overall Champion Pup Nicky Robinson Roxy

Overall Champion and Best in Show Dessie Mackin's Soda, Handled by Breandan Coleman Reserve Champion Nicky Robinson with Roxy.

Ferret Showing Champion Chontelle McMeekin With Jill

Ferrett Racing Champion Rose Mc Coy With Conker Reserve Racing Champions Michael Quinn with Angela.

Glen Doherty sponsored two lovely ferret boxes for the show winners and racing and many thanks to Glen for that. Many thanks to the judges of the Champion dog show. Terriers - Sam McConnell/ Lurchers - Tom Barry/ Whippets - Rose Mc Coy and the Ferrett judge/ Andy Gibson. Your judging was firm and fair, and a job well done. Bluebell (Deirdre McCoy) was there with her camera, while Harry Cook was there filming all our moments of glory. Can't wait to see the photographs and video. And last but not least, three guys who worked tirelessly on both days: Stephen McGonigal on commentary and Darren Moore and Graham Fyffe on Ferrett Racing and Showing - very professionally carried out indeed. A special word of thanks to Kieran Young Director for Terrier/Lurcher/ and Whippets, for all your hard work this year. It was much appreciated Kieran.

See you all in 2015!



Tullylish Overall Show Champion M. McCartan with Turbo and Reserve Patsy McCoy with Rio.



Ferret Showing Champion Chontelle McMeekin and 'Jill' alongside Ferrett Judge Andy Gibson.

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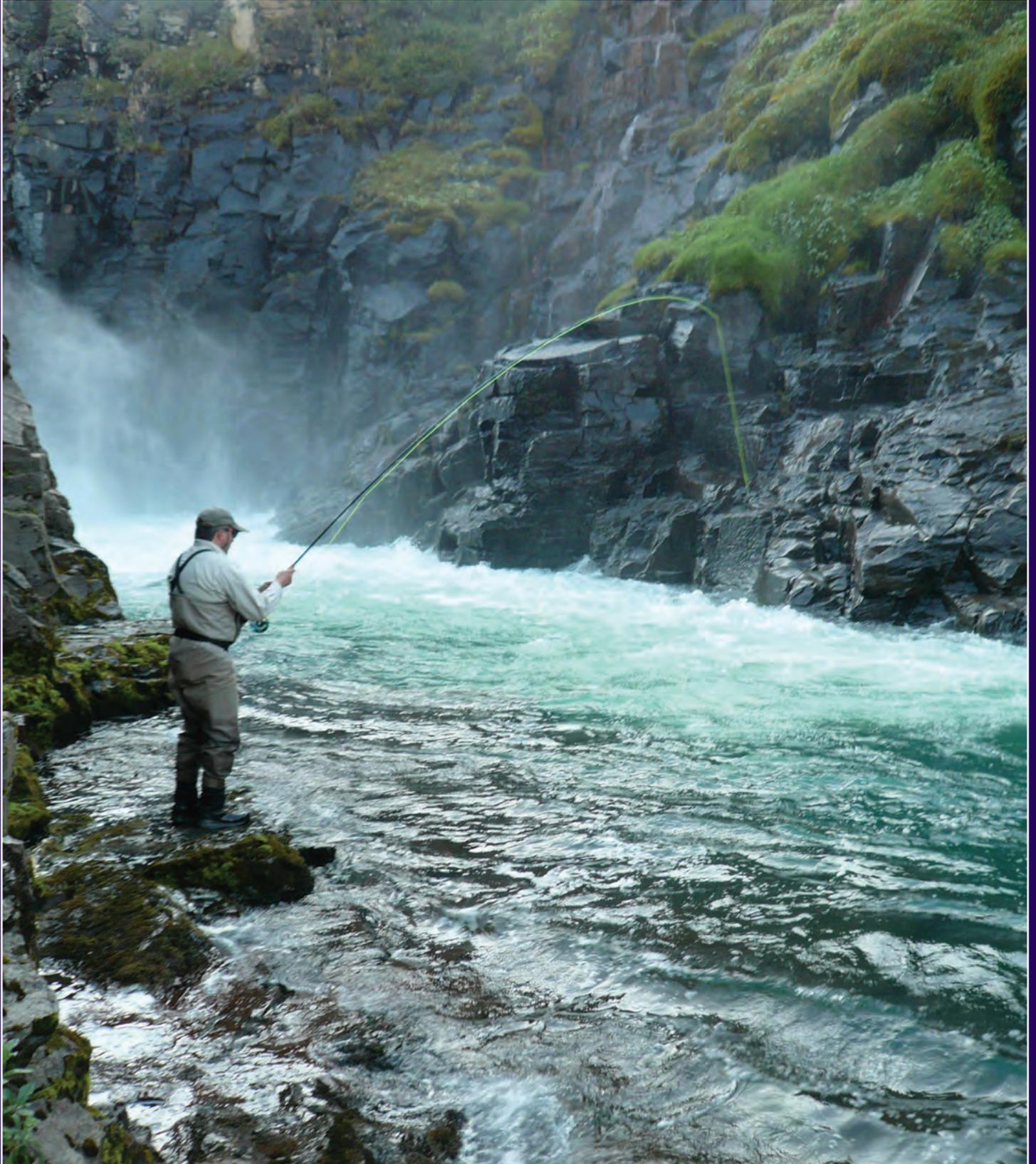
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THE IRISH
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From Michael Martin, Six Mile Water Trust

A GOLDEN OPPORTUNITY

Many anglers of my generation will have despaired at the condition of the rivers and lakes in Northern Ireland and, when I listen to the old boys recounting the great fishing days of the past with tremendous fly hatches and abundant trout, I often wonder how things ever got so bad for our fish and wildlife.

Now that I'm involved in the local River Trust, the story unfolds as we learn how Rivers Agency drainage plans tore the heart out of beautiful streams; how new intensive farming methods dumped slurry, herbicides and insecticides on the land which are washed into the river; and of how NIEA failed to prosecute the

businesses which were expanding everywhere and N I Water were building CSOs which discharged raw sewage with storm water on every flood; all the while Planning Service was granting permission to build on flood plains to unfortunate residents who can't understand why their properties are flooded.

Revolution

For many years now angling has been in stagnation simply because many lakes and rivers weren't worth the effort. Recently things have begun to change. Anglers are discovering the benefits of river enhancement, pollution control and conservation.

People such as Alan Morrow from Ballinderry River Trust, Richard Kennedy from AFBI, John Kane from DCAL Fisheries have inspired a revolution. Some rivers are starting to return to a natural condition despite the best efforts of River Agency to canalise every piece of stream in the country. The natural river morphology provides the conditions necessary for abundant plant and aquatic invertebrates which support the bird and fish populations and now we are seeing a return of kingfishers, dippers, otters, trout etc.

Several River Trusts have emerged to complement the work of angling clubs and now we are starting to get

to grips with pollution issues, mostly agricultural, commercial premises and N I Water facilities; no longer can the polluter go unchallenged, the problem must be addressed! Other schemes are underway at this very moment: enhancement programmes to provide habitat for spawning fish, aquatic invertebrates and wildlife; invasive species mapping and eradication programmes; conservation measures; aquatic invertebrate monitoring, education programmes etc.

Trusts are more effective than angling clubs alone, because a varied membership of bird groups, conservation groups, leisure groups, landowners, councillors and MLA's provides the basis for more holistic approach to the management of the river which can benefit the catchment as a whole and makes it easier to draw funding and publicity plus gives more clout when lobbying.

DCAL steps up to the plate

Recently a Strategic Review of Angling in Northern Ireland has revealed a huge potential for recreation and tourism, a love for the natural environment and a desire to improve our special countryside and wildlife habitat: these things are a part of the fabric and culture of life in Northern Ireland. Importantly for anglers DCAL are supporting angling, through funding initiatives, through education programmes and through habitat enhancement in various catchments. Sport N I is also following this lead and has recognised angling so they also are initiating training programmes which will help develop angling for the future.

Lough Neagh

A Lough Neagh Development Plan is being drawn up at present, there are numerous stakeholders and many scientific studies have been completed including some excellent studies on the fish stocks which have revealed a

huge potential as a fishery. It has been ascertained that the Lough has the potential accommodate a thriving commercial fishery and a great recreational fishery. The thinking is that if DCAL and the Lough Neagh Fishermen's Co Operative who run the eel fishery at Toome can work together then as the eel fishery declines then the scale fishery can be managed to help support the commercial interests. If the number of commercial fishing licences was restricted to those families who traditionally fished the Lough then the Co Operative could control the catch and the government could market this to get the best possible price. DCAL Scientists could calculate the sustainable harvest for the commercial take to provide for expansion of the stock and for recreational fishing in the rivers and Lough.

DCAL patrols have removed thousands of metres of netting from Lough Neagh which was destroying the licensed netsmens livelihoods who had sent a petition to the Minister to curb the illegal fishing. DCAL will also be helping the angling clubs in the system to enhance the habitat so we improve recruitment into the Lough and NIEA have produced Local Area Management Plans to reduce pollution which will improve water quality. DARD and N I Water are working to improve water quality and the Water Framework Directive initiatives are starting to show results.

Take the Six Mile Water for example: for several years the Antrim Angling Association had been fighting to improve the river under the expert eye of the late Alan Kirkpatrick. Fish passes were installed, poaching was brought under control and he started the fight to control pollution. Unfortunately Alan passed away prematurely but his legacy lives on as those who knew him have carried on his work to improve the condition of the river so now we have excellent

juvenile recruitment from the river into Lough Neagh. Couple this with the return of DCAL's fisheries patrols to prevent illegal netting on the Lough and the result was a huge run of Dollaghan into the river with a declared catch of over 2,500 Dollaghan! This is a staggering number for such a small stream and if you consider the other, larger rivers draining into Lough Neagh such as the Maine, Blackwater, Bann, Ballinderry etc. then the potential for recruitment into Lough Neagh is enormous and the best thing is that the vast Lough has ample food to provide for such a huge population of fish. Already studies have shown that there are as many trout in Lough Neagh as there are in iconic angling lakes such as Lough Corrib! If this is a taste of what Dr Aidan Cassidy, Seamus Connor and the DCAL staff can provide then I will certainly back them in this brave and groundbreaking strategy to enhance fisheries in N. Ireland.

Everyone's a winner

If all of the Government Agencies, the Lough Neagh Fisherman's Co Operative, angling clubs, environmental groups, RSPB, boat clubs, councils etc can all work together then we can have a great leisure and tourism facility, a commercial facility for fishing and a super Dollaghan fishery for Northern Ireland anglers. If we can regulate and market the commercial catch, manage the fisheries sustainably, improve the rivers for maximum recruitment and angling facilities, provide the habitat for wildlife and fish, improve tourist and leisure facilities then this will provide employment, investment and a better standard of life for the communities in towns & villages surrounding Lough Neagh; this DCAL initiative is starting to sound exciting, everyone would benefit and I think the people of Northern Ireland deserve it!

Federation of Irish Salmon & Sea Trout Anglers

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

RIVER CLOSURE

As we await to hear the news on how many rivers will be open and closed this coming season, we are hopeful to see some serious improvements on 2014 disappointing lack of progress. Last year, the Independent Standing Scientific Committee for Salmon (SSCE) assessed 143 of the IFI rivers and advised that for this 2014 season:-

- 57 rivers were to open,
- 30 rivers have been classified as open for angling on a catch and release basis only; and
- 56 rivers are closed, as they have no surplus of fish available for harvest in them.

The conservation system in operation has caused great controversy, as the closures impact greatly on local economies and many fear for the wild salmon habitat if the Government's ten fish farm plan is approved by Minister Coveney, the first of which will be decided on shortly for the Aran Islands in the iconic Galway Bay

While the season started off reasonably well the angling declined with the dry weather and ended with a very disappointing conclusion as the rain stayed away for almost the final six weeks.

FISSTA JOIN WITH ORRI VIGFUSSON TO CELEBRATE THE WORLD'S MOST VALUABLE FISH

Now that the season is coming to a close many fishers can share happy memories of catching huge salmon this summer. Yet the absence of smaller fish in many rivers raises important questions about the problems facing wild salmon and what measures could be made to save them. The North Atlantic Salmon Fund (NASF) is the world's leading salmon conservation organisation which begins celebrating its 25th anniversary by promoting its vital work at seasonal events all around the North-Atlantic. Forums on fish farming, promoted by NASF, will be held this coming winter in cooperation with the Sæmundur the Wise Institute of the University of Iceland and the Biological Society of Iceland. Lectures will be given by independent specialists with a wide experience of the effects of net pen fish farming on adjoining ecosystems. The fight for the wild salmon in the North Atlantic is far from over. The stocks are subject to natural dangers, which we have little control on, but the actions of man are no less a threat and it is possible to intervene

in many ways to save the this valuable species. Healthy, wild salmon are one of the best quality assessments of the environment available and are a sign of clean, unpolluted nature. This has now become one of the most coveted and valuable resources on Earth.

To discover more about the work of the NASF please contact Orri Vigfússon by email nasf@vortex.is or visit the website www.nasfworldwide.com

BRIEFING

Red Bay Public Meetings: The debate on salmon farms continues in most coastal communities as more and more applications are lodged to increase the number of cages in almost every bay. One of the more established salmon farms in Glenarm, County Antrim has met with serious community opposition, in which a new application in Red Bay is being considered. As in most areas, opinion has divided the community in which both sides sharpen their scripts on the jobs versus pollution debate. The recently well attended meeting in Cushendall, convened by Oliver McMullan MLA, heard concerns expressed by angling and political representatives for their survival of the fish stocks on the Glenariffe and Dawe rivers. FISSTA congratulate and support all MLAs at Stormont who are monitoring the serious threats in cooperation with the angling interests around the north Antrim coast. We in FISSTA have raised our objections to this new application and other related plans through the North South Joint Ministerial Council at their next meeting, as this has implications for the Donegal wild salmon runs as well. The basis of our objections are that the open net cages as proposed are based on old outdated technology that is unsustainable and destined to damage the very same scenic beauty and clean bathing water attractions which have made the Glens of Antrim famous as a tourist destination. FISSTA proposes as an alternative, the very same new technology of closed contained salmon farmed tanks on land that will ensure all disposals of waste



Fljótaá (photo courtesy of NASF)

effluent will be managed compared to the offshore dumping that takes place at present. It is time for the farmed salmon producers of Ireland to confront the unsustainable practice that is open net cage technology. In this regard FISSTA gave a presentation to the Galway Fly Fair in November in the Galway Bay Hotel.

New Minister: Minister Joe McHugh TD replaced Fergus O'Dowd TD who we failed to make progress with in his term at the helm. FISSTA presented our case to him in September with our shopping list of needs and he has yet to respond.

Salmon farming: As we still await the decision of Minister Coveney to grant or not grant the Galway Bay salmon farm licence. In the meantime BIM have announced another smaller fish farm for between Inisturk and Inishboffin but this time they are getting consultants to tender for the drawing up of the EIS. This is happened as the CEO of BIM left for greener pastures in Killybegs. The pressure is on Marine Harvest as they try to beg, borrow and steal fresh water supplies from Donegal, Mayo and Galway county councils treated supplies as an emergency to keep farmed salmon alive in cages that are contaminated with the AGD – Amoebic Gill Disease. We have evidence of lakes being drained by pipes and diggers to feed the hunger for water to treat the fish eg Kilkieran pipe.

NASCO update: The IFI faced the scrutiny of FISSTA at the last international salmon conference of NASCO meeting, but we got inadequate answers to our questions at this forum due to opposition from certain NGOs who had nothing but support for the IFI management of our fisheries.

Review of legislation meetings report: A series of meetings between the Angling Federations with even a FISSTA /TAFI having to stage a walkout to express support for anglers on the Gweebarra River who were confronted by the IFI staff. While we continue to work on an agreed draft certain other items will be added for consideration by FISSTA National Executive Council agreement.

Post election campaign: Following our founding of the Irish Sports Coalition which was set up to coordinate the campaign with the NARGC and others we managed to get a good few politicians to sit up and heed our pleas on fish farming and salmon management during the June elections. I have been contacted by Fine Gael after their parliamentary party meeting set up angling and hunting committees to examine our case as referenced in our literature. The Fine Gael Angling committee are considering our submission and Chairperson Michelle Mulherin TD who has been a good supporter down the year's but knows we are depending on her help more than ever at this time.



Hofsá Beat 1 (photo courtesy of NASF)

Donegal/Gweebarra: The usual seasonal strife on the river continued this year as IFI staff were accused of heavy handed tactics which garnered them very negative publicity against our anglers while the state actions are being exposed. Good results are hoped for when the case goes back into the Supreme court appeal and the defendants are to be commended for their tenacity in the face of legal challenges to them since 2006.

Feale update: FISSTA asked Minister Deenihan to end netting on the Cashen to allow recovery under a SI which Minister O'Dowd could introduce, but our request went unheeded much to our disgust when the nets opened on June 1st. New fight with new Ministers to start all briefing and lobbying again.

Meeting IFI: FISSTA met with Board Sub Committee and very little progress was made which proves once again that we have serious problems with IFI in charge of our future.

Buncrana Hydro Project: Despite planning approval for the project FISSTA and the Mill River Anglers continue to fight this very damaging project.

Lough Erne Fisheries Plan: FISSTA to attend the consultations to suggest a salmon and seatrout restoration plan as well as coarse.

National Inland Fisheries Forum: This NIFF model is to conclude by November and an alternative is to be put in place.

Scottish Thin Report: The release of the recent Thin Report allows us to evaluate and propose new era for Irish Anglers.

Great Game Fairs of Ireland: FISSTA feels very fortunate to have obtained great benefit from the professional staging of three events under the Great Game Fairs of Ireland management. These very well attended events were a tremendous success this past summer which gave us the opportunity to meet and greet many of our

angling clubs and members and to discuss the various concerns raised at such a crucial time.

Lobbying: is a very important part of what we do to influence government to conserve our wild salmon and seatrout. Occasionally we get listened to, but sadly and all too frequently, it seems big business wins out over the greater good. But it is imperative that we never give up and on that score we now have to start all over again after spending three years briefing and making representations to Minister Pat Rabbitte and his junior colleague Fergus O'Dowd TD for Louth. We had expected that Minister of State O'Dowd was up for promotion, but instead was dropped suddenly for a Cavan Monaghan Fine Gael TD who anglers knew very little about. The newly appointed Minister of State for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources or Joe Mc Hugh TD now serves with the senior line Minister Heather Humphries TD and Minister Alex White TD who will be controlling the Natural Resources or wild salmon part of the department with specific tasks and responsibilities allocated to Minister of State Joe Mc Hugh TD which FISSTA will report later in the column as we have met a number of times since his appointment.

Restrictions: To date, the lifting of restrictions on commercial draft net fishing into August proves we are still not managing this valuable salmon resource properly. There are many examples how the conservation system needs to be improved on rivers that have dwindling numbers such as the Donegal Eany where a once fine river of over a thousand salmon surplus has now collapsed to 200 with ten draftnet licenses being licensed to carve up an allocation of a dozen salmon each while most local and visitor rod licensed anglers are denied their right to take even one fish for the pot. Sadly, the migrating smolts into

Inver Bay from this river have to run the sealice infested gauntlet of a myriad of salmon farm cages where IFI calculate that a massive 39% will never return. The conservation system in operation has caused great controversy as the closures impact greatly on local economies. Many fear for the wild salmon habitat if the Coveney ten fish farm plan gets approval, the first of which will be decided on shortly for the Aran islands in the iconic Galway Bay.

The Time of Season: Late autumn is the time of year we all in angling do the groundwork to ensure the returning salmon, after feeding in the North Atlantic to arrive home to their spawning beds in the rivers from where they originated. Andrew angler, Andrew McGall gives us a taste of what we anglers observe on our rivers at the moment. Log on to this video from Andrew.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mnzHjkm1Fxc&list=UUH0D8qaIabN8rm54ELcZLyg>

MORE TO BE DONE ON RIVERBANKS TO ENHANCE BIODIVERSITY

With many angling clubs completing new salmonid habitat enhancement works on their rivers, there are new plans to further improve the lot of the farmer and the angler in operation since before the summer. A new woodland native replanting scheme will hopefully take off as reported in the press recently. A report outlines how to take advantage of a good opportunity and stated that Ireland's rivers are the blood vessels and the arteries of the natural world we live in and along with it hosting our salmon and sea trout habitat, our rivers have served many other wildlife species for centuries. Woodlands have always been at the heart of our Irish ecosystem, nurturing biodiversity and wildlife. But by 1900 only 1% of our original natural forest remained. The loss of so much forest was devastating causing many species to become extinct. Today, many more species hang on the precipice. Since the 1950s we have been planting non-natives such as conifers that were used as a timber source rather than serving a wildlife habitat. Such choices have put us in danger of undermining nature's primary functions and environmentally threatening our own future. If we do not find a radical way to expand woodlands now the natural balance of Ireland's ecosystem is in great danger. Hopefully, by promoting this scheme to farmers, we in FISSTA can help transform the wild salmon habitat into a more productive ecosystem for the benefit of all.

THE ORGANIC DEBATE – OPEN NET FISH FARMING CAN NEVER BE ORGANIC, CLAIMS REPORT

FISSTA welcomes a report from the US-based Center for Food Safety (CFS)

claiming that ocean-based fish farming can never be certified as organic. Read or download it online by clicking http://www.centerforfoodsafety.org/files/like-water-and-oil-aquaculture_54029.pdf It is reported in E-news Forest Park, the scientific report: Like Water and Oil: Ocean-Based Fish Farming and Organic Don't Mix, has been released prior to the USDA regulations governing aquaculture. The CFS warns that if 'organic' aquaculture was permitted in the sea, the integrity of the whole US organic industry would be severely undermined. The findings of the comprehensive report were endorsed by 53 organic farmers, fishers, organic consumers, animal welfare and environmental advocacy organisations. Dr Lisa J Bunn, Organic Policy Director of CFS and the co-author of the report, said: 'It's mind-boggling to think that USDA would seriously consider allowing fish farms at sea to be organic. It's absolutely impossible to control or monitor the wide range of substances, including toxic pollutants, that flow into and out of sea-based farms.'

The CFS also highlighted the number of fish escapes over the last 20 years, which amounts to around 24 million globally, stressing that escaped fish can carry pathogens and diseases, restructure food webs and could lead to the extinction of wild fish in certain species in particular areas. As one of the fundamental principles of the organic movement is to promote stable, balanced ecosystems, ocean-based fish farming cannot be labelled organic, states the report. This disruption of marine ecosystems violates one of the basic tenets of organic, which is to promote ecological balance and conserve biodiversity. Responding to the report's findings, the CFS argues that: Open-ocean fish farms can never be organic: Inputs and outputs to the system cannot be monitored or controlled and neither can a farmed fish's exposure to toxic synthetic chemicals, which are prohibited under Organic Foods Production Act (OFPA) and present in the marine environment. Farming migratory fish can never be organic: This statement holds true regardless of the type of system in which they are reared. That is because their confinement in fish farms would curtail their biological need to swim far distances, creating undue stress. Some migratory species are also anadromous, such as salmon, migrating between freshwater and the ocean during various life stages, a behaviour not possible while in containment. The organic standards dictate that organic production systems must not the natural behaviours of farmed animals. Farmed fish fed wild fish, meal or oil can never be organic: That is because OFPA requires that all certified organic species are fed an organic diet. Feeding farmed fish wild-caught fish and related by-products—



*Salmon at Fljótaá
(photo courtesy of NASF)*

fish meal and fish oil—would increase pressure on already over-exploited and recovering fisheries that form the basis of the marine food web. It would also decrease the food supply of a wide range of native, aquatic species, including seabirds and sea mammals, contravening the USDA organic biological diversity conservation requirements. Dr Bunin added that 'We believe that the strong findings contained in this Report warrant USDA's withdrawal of plans to allow organic ocean-based fish farming...to do less would be irresponsible organic policy-making, and it would do a disservice to the entire organic industry.'

DAN JOY RIP 24TH SEPTEMBER 2014

The sad passing of former FISSTA Chairman, Dan Joy from Killoccrim and Finuge Co Kerry has shocked everyone that knew him.

Dan was a leading light that helped guide FISSTA through many difficult years before illness took him from us. His leadership as FISSTA Chairman and as an angling officer was legendary and his massive contribution to the wild Atlantic salmon sets the example for us all to follow. Dan was Secretary of the Killoccrim Finuge Salmon Anglers and joined the National Executive Council of FISSTA in 1989 to represent his beloved Feale at national level. Outside of family life, Dan was mainly known to the people of North Kerry as a very well respected school teacher. Dan was a talented professional whose death will be felt most by members of the Kerry angling community and in particular for his representations and authority on his beloved River Feale. He represented our federation and his country at international salmon events and gave of his time most generously when he was called on to do so down the years. In recent times Dan fought a strong battle with illness, which he bravely faced with his loving family and close friends and neighbours in Killoccrim.

To Marie and his family we extend our sincere sympathies on your tragic loss.



WHERE THERE'S MORE TO COUNTRY SPORT THAN SPORT.

You can take the majesty and beauty of the Cork Blackwater for granted. You can take the numbers of glistening salmon as read. You can take the 16 private beats of the Blackwater Lodge as some of the best on the river. But on top of all that there's the comfort of the Blackwater Lodge itself. Now concentrating on the prime months, we're open for residential (Guesthouse B&B) bookings from July 16th, but our self-catering accommodation and waters are open all season. Flick through your 2015 diary and mark a few days on the Cork Blackwater. Contact Ian Powell for info and bookings. Where in the evenings you can put the 'port' back into 'sport'.



Upper Ballyduff, Co. Waterford, Ireland. Tel: 058 60235

email: info@ireland-salmon-fishing.net Web: ireland-salmon-fishing.net

THE IVANHOE HOTEL • CARRYDUFF

A fresh new look for a family-friendly and long established business in the Carryduff area. The Ivanhoe Hotel, owned by the Maguire family has been a familiar landmark on the Saintfield Road for a long time. However, in January of this year, a major £1 million

refurbishment was started to transform the appearance of the ground floor. The Reception area was first to be tackled and has been completely refurbished with pastel colours and a natural wood floor. To add to the

ambience, a welcoming fire has been installed.

Next on the agenda was the Bistro. This popular 70-seater restaurant has undergone a complete transformation with a colour-scheme to complement that of Reception. The whole impression is one of clean lines and soothing colours



with much use made of natural brickwork and flooring. At present, extensive exterior landscaping work is underway to provide a canopied heated patio, gardens and bespoke fire features with plenty of outdoor sitting areas.

At this time of year, as thoughts turn to Christmas presents, why not purchase Ivanhoe Gift Vouchers? These can be used for accommodation, meals or Afternoon Tea. Contact the hotel on 028 90812 240 for further details.



Indian Summer

***B**etween the 'jigs and the reels,' I managed one or two magical sea fishing trips this past summer.*

The fishing was good, except for mackerel, which were very scarce throughout the summer in inshore waters. Certainly it was August before they showed up in the middle of the Irish Sea. I heard all sorts of explanations for this. Maybe it was just too warm for them to move inshore because I heard of good catches offshore and in deeper waters around the Southwest. But in my lifetime I have never seen them as scarce in my own area.

Speaking to fishery scientists, I was told that most of the stock migrate down

the west of Ireland, but some go through the Irish Sea each year. Damian, who owns the boat I usually fish from, did manage a few in August and September, but these were quick sessions and only provided enough to be bait for the rest of the day.

However, with the warm calm weather extending into October this year, we planned one last trip out. The boat had been on its mooring for most of the summer, so by now had a good growth of barnacles and other marine life firmly attached to its underside, despite a good coat of anti-foul. This

adds considerably to drag and slowed us right down so, because of this, we decided to forgo a trip out to where we had a chance of a few codling and would try to stock up our bait fridges with mackerel for the winter. Hopefully the Mackerel would oblige.

Straight back down again and this time a better pull

Anthony was with us and had some rag-worms with him so we would not be stuck for bait for the day. At our usual spot to pick up a few mackerel we started jiggging feathers. It was not long before I felt the bang of my first mackerel of the year; a single fish, which was very small. Usually this size would go back but we needed fish so I kept it. Straight back down again and this time a better pull and a full string of five small mackerel came into the boat. Anthony and Damian caught a few but this was not a case of fishing until we had enough; we had to work to catch a few. We were trying to catch enough to provide a day's bait for the gurnard which Anthony had a mark for.

After a while, we shifted to a nearby mark where another two mackerel and a small pollack went into the bucket. A couple of small whiting were added to the tally and these also went into the bait bucket on Anthony's advise that huss will take them, for usually they go straight back.

We headed for a mark which had produced ray and dogfish for us in the past. On our way, we passed Lambay Island and I asked Damian to keep close, so I could see if there were seals with pups around. There were a few on a small secluded beach and I wanted to get a bit closer. We did not go close enough to disturb them, but I could see that there were plenty of young seals and a few adults on the beach - but no white coat pups. They were having a



Anthony's huss.



Safely released.

good time with some playing in the sea, rolling on their sides and splashing water with their flippers. The sound was amazing and you can easily understand how, in days gone by, these creatures had many myths and legends told about them. Moaning like babies and replying when I moaned at them, it was a great experience.

As we headed further offshore I spotted a gull feeding on something dark in the water and passing close I could see what it was. As we approached the gull flew off a short distance and I could see that it had been feeding on a dead shearwater. I had heard of people seeing gulls killing



A small thornback ray gave a good account of itself before being returned.



Up close and personal with a ray's eye.

razorbills and guillemots to eat, but this was the first shearwater I had heard of being predated by a gull. It looked fresh, as the body was not waterlogged.

The day was glorious with not a cloud in the sky and the sea was calm, not dead calm but just enough chop on it to prevent glare. Blue skies like this are to be taken advantage of in October, so we reached our mark and the anchor went down. I decided to try a three-hook paternoster rig for gurnard, with pollack on one hook, a small piece of mackerel on another and a mix of pollack and rag-worm on the bottom hook. The weight had barely touched the bottom when I felt a bite; I waited a bit and when I felt the pull I lifted into what felt like a decent fish, which fought well on the way up. This is what sea fishing is about: you know you have something decent and can only make an educated guess as to what it is until you actually see it. Eventually a decent huss, or greater spotted dogfish, came into sight. Anthony tried to lift it in to the boat using the trace and the line broke just short of the hook. Off it swam. We resolved to use the net after this, which we now made sure was to hand.

The rod tip bent over and I pulled into a fish

Within minutes Anthony himself was 'in.' Another fine huss broke the surface and I netted it. A couple of quick photos and she was safely returned. I changed rig to a two-hook rig with beads, which someone had given me earlier in the summer. This time I baited with a cutlet of small mackerel on both hooks. After a short time the rod tip bent over and I pulled into a fish. This did not feel like a huss, so I could only wait to see what came up - a nice small thornback ray! I did not want to eat it and, as it was female, back she went.



A young seal nursing as we passed by.

Damian was fishing away all this time and only getting an occasional doggie or small whiting on his line. Next I had another small ray. Anthony got another nice huss and a doggie as well. We were catching fish and the sun was shining, what more could you want? Well, a cup of tea went down a treat. We tried all our baits and could not get a gurnard and, as we were limited by the tide to get back to the mooring, our time was limited. I tried putting a small dead whiting on each of my hooks, not a recognised bait but until you try it you never know. A while later my rod tip pulled over and I lifted into a serious weight and some great guessing went on as my rod doubled over under the strain. Eventually two decent huss appeared under the water. I resolved to go back to my usual single hook rig for further trips as one good sized huss gives a good fight, but interestingly, both had taken the whole whiting bait.

As we came back, I had grabbed a few small mackerel from the bucket to bring home as bait for future use. Unfortunately all those friends who I can usually give a few fresh mackerel to missed out this year, but hopefully next year will be better. It had been a great day out with huss, doggies, mackerel, pollack whiting and ray caught, and I even managed to freeze some of the unused bait for future beach trips or possibly a pike trip. If that outing lives up to form it will be memorable too and maybe there'll be a story in it for next time.



Loch Valtos

Busy, Busy And It's Not Over Yet!

I always enjoy travelling, exploring new locations and reacquainting myself with places I have not visited in a while. This year was no exception.

Trout and Salmon magazine asked me to go to the Isle of Lewis in the Outer Hebrides to photograph salmon fishing on the Soval Estate, south of Stornoway. This was my first trip to Lewis and I was accompanying writer Stan Headley in his quest to catch the elusive salmon in Loch Valtos.

The Island's wild and ancient landscape instantly captivates you with its undulating horizon of hills and a multitude of lochs; it looks like a haven for the angler and sporting man and woman.

Richard and Marie Kershaw own Soval and offer fishing, shooting and red deer stalking. Accommodation is the modern and very comfortable lodge on their secluded farmland overlooking

Loch Erisort. The couple, their family and friends often spend their leisure time on Soval. Richard is very passionate about his country sports and is very active with rod, rifle and shotgun.

On the first morning, we headed to the fishing hut, the group split up, fishing from the two boats and on the banks surrounding the Loch. I joined Stan in one of the boats. He caught and released a few trout but had no joy with the salmon, however, our host, Richard, caught two salmon in 'The Cast' pool close to the fishing hut before lunch. Our evenings were spent in the lodge around the dinner table eating delicious local food and drinking wine with huge servings of animated, humorous chat

covering the vast topic of fishing. Aside from the fishing chat, I thoroughly enjoyed hearing about Richard's stalking on the island, how they would stalk in by boat, climb high up in the hills, take a beast, head back down and finish the stalk off with a swim in the loch.

A few more days were spent fishing on the loch, but the wild salmon played hard to get although I did catch my very first trout thanks to the help and casting advice from gillie Tim Armstrong.

I was back in Fife and packing my bags once again. This time I was heading south just over the border for a trip into Cumbria early on in the pheasant season to a driven shoot on the Greystoke Castle Estate a few miles



A fine Valtos trout.



The fishing group on Lewis.



The Greystoke team.

northwest of Penrith. It was great being back in Cumbria again, I lived there for a number of years and only a few miles from Greystoke. I visited my old neighbour, retired gamekeeper, George Butterworth for a catch up over a cup of tea. In-keeping with a tradition I have kept going over the years, I took George a proper, authentic (there are lots of fake ones) Scottish Haggis, one of his favourites.

34" long barrels — really!

The shoot day started at The Boot & Shoe Inn in Greystoke village over breakfast with the Guns. After a short drive to the estate, we met Gamekeeper Chris Herthington who welcomed everyone and then conducted his safety briefing. Peg numbers were drawn and we all headed out to the first drive called 'Cuthbert's.' The birds flew high, the gun to my left Allan 'Devon' Cavendish took his time selecting the highest sporting birds, shooting them expertly with his 34" (yes, really!) 12 bore Caesar Guerini shotgun. I have never seen a gun with this length of barrel before; I have a 32" Beretta trap gun but the two additional inches makes the gun look exceptionally long. I guess it looks all the longer if you are vertically challenged.

We moved onto the unusually named 'Sheep Hospital' drive, where Chris and his team of beaters flushed out the game crop and sent a steady flow of high flying pheasant and partridge over the Guns' heads. The estate is full of mature parkland with a wide variety of trees and has excellent vehicle access to each drive; it made getting about very easy.

During the 'Nab North' drive before lunch we had a sudden, torrential downpour, I spent most of it sheltering under a tree. The view was great; the roof top of the castle on my left and Penrith in the distance, the Guns in the centre and the fells of the Lake District on my right. The rain pushed off as we headed to the home farm bothy for a hot lunch. The weather was determined to get us that day, on the 'Hollybank

Bottom' drive immediately after lunch the torrential rain started and didn't stop. I felt sorry for the Guns on the pegs in the field, with no coats, or cover. The heavy rain slowed everything down, but not a large dog fox that bolted out in front of two guns. Chris the keeper had said absolutely no ground game during his safety briefing, so the fox carried on its way.

Fast, furious and challenging

The rain hammered down so hard the drive was understandably challenged and just as we headed back to the cars the rained eased off. Although it was still raining on the final drive, we saw glimpses of sunshine and a rainbow. One final push from the beaters sent the birds rocketing high over the guns. It was a fast, furious and thrilling end to the day. Despite being a little damp around the edges, everyone was in high spirits as they posed for a group photograph. The bag was met and, after a quick change of coats and footwear, we were back in the Boot and Shoe for a post-shoot drink.

The weather has been a much talked about subject during the salmon fishing season, which has been rather challenging due to the water levels being so low. I had a thoroughly enjoyable day with Tony Spacey, from the Game Angling Consultancy, on the Tweed at Ladykirk with ghillie David Fleetwood. The fish were very active and Tony had not been in the water and casting for very long when he landed a Salmon. So, in true Tony style he opened a bottle of champagne to celebrate — cheers!

I finished the fishing season close to home on the Tay at Meikleour. I had a very enjoyable day with Claire Mercer Nairne and her friends fishing the beat. I took along my friend and casting instructor Tom Brown (from Spey online) so he could impart his casting wisdom amongst the girls.

The Meikleour Estate looks especially beautiful at this time of year; the colours of the trees along the river



Judith Dewhurst's handsome fox red Lab Harvey.



Allan Cavendish wielding his 34 inch shotgun.



A faint rainbow on the last drive.

bank are truly a feast for your eyes. The house commands an impressive view of the beat. You can rent the east wing of the house, which is steeped in history and has always been home to passionate anglers over many centuries.

I spent a few hours in the boat with head ghillie Calum McRoberts, and asked him about the season: "Meikleour fishing had a good season, considering

how dry the summer was," he said. We finished the season slightly down on our five year average with 180 fish compared to 205. October was a bumper month, with many fresh and sea-liced fish up to 24lbs. We're already excited about the 2015 season."

As always, it has been a very interesting year and it is not over yet. I look forward to getting out on more

shoot days and hoping the weather is kind to us all. Happy, safe shooting to you all!

For more information please visit:

www.sovalestate.co.uk

www.meikleourhouse.co.uk

www.islamouth.co.uk

www.speyonline.com

www.gameanglingconsultancy.com



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Casting instructor Tom Brown with Claire Mercer Nairne.

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The author with a large 8lb dollaghan trout

Three Flies For Migratory Lough Neagh Trout, Seatrout and Salmon

At the time of writing (late October) I am fishing mainly for local salmon and, almost even more importantly for me, Lough Neagh brown trout, or as they are known in my part of the world 'dollaghan' which is old Irish for 'run of fish.'

These fantastic native trout migrate from Lough Neagh into its rivers to spawn and can grow into massive trout. The largest I know of was taken on a fly, a colossal 20lb fish, and this mighty trout was landed by my good friend Bobby Bryans on our local river, the Six Mile Water in Co.

Antrim .

I love these wild trout as I grew up fishing for these fine fish and over the years have caught thousands of them. I still get out to fish for them and get quite a few, though I must now say our rivers do not get the runs that they used to. I found some old records

while researching dollaghan which showed runs of fish in the 1940s and 50s where immense.

On one evening in the late summer of 1951, a local angler took 87lb of dollaghan on the Ballinderry River, which runs between two counties, before retiring bored as it was just too



easy. It was around this time that the outlines of the huge trout were etched into the stone on Cough Bridge which spans that river.

I also fished this river a lot as a young boy with my late father, and I remember having fantastic sport and landing many large trout. There are a few factors that have been slowly making our fishing not what it was in those bygone days, pollution from bad practices in farming, industry and housing, loss and damage of habitat on the rivers and the huge lough, this seems to have started in the 1980s and also I am sad to say illegal netting on Lough Neagh has taken their toll and some of these things seem to be have been slowly increasing. That said the dollaghan at the moment still survive and are still incredibly good, though I must state that I feel the powers are clamping down on these problems as surely they must in these more enlightened times of conservation. If we look after this fantastic wild trout and its habitat the benefits would be substantial. I know as I guide and fish, not only at home but all over the world, when I tell foreign anglers what we have on our doorstep they all say the same thing, that it could be one of the greatest wild brown trout fisheries in the world, which if looked after it would bring millions of pounds into

the local economy and many tourist anglers who think nothing of travelling to South America or New Zealand for trophy brown trout. Some of those anglers have already appeared as at the time of writing I just had two Dutch anglers fishing with me, one of whom hooked and lost a nice fish of around 4lb - and they will be back!

Incidentally I hope there are some politicians reading this (Editor: There are indeed Stevie) as we need to start treasuring these wonderful fish, their rivers and their Lough. It's really a blessing what we have, but sometimes it may be hard just to realise what

sheer quality and beauty we have at home. Ok I will now jump off my soap box but make no apology for this rant, as it's all true in my opinion.

Now then, the three flies I list below are all great for dollaghan and salmon patterns and I hope they work for you. They are local flies with local names.

The Fox Fly (R. Bryans)

Hook. I have used the new Partridge Patriot Salmon double 8 – 12

Body Silver or pearl flat tinsel

Rib Silver wire

Hackle Guinea Fowl

Wing Golden Pheasant red breast feather, black squirrel, Temple dog or buck tail, golden pheasant topping and a couple of strands of pearl twinkle (optional)

This Bobby Bryans pattern has been taking both Dollaghan and salmon on the Lough Neagh system for years. A great pattern that I must state is one of my all time favourites, normally I fish this pattern on the dropper though Bobby I know likes it as a point fly that said I have seen him do well on just a cast of fox flies. This is a fly if I have it in my box it goes on my cast first while looking for Dollaghan. A fantastic fly.

The New Black & Blue Jam (S. Munn)

Hook I have used the new



Partridge Patriot Salmon double 8 – 12
 Thread. Red
 Body Blue holographic tinsel
 (Original was silver, pearl or gold.)
 Rib Silver wire
 Hackle Orange cock
 Wing Blue Arctic fox with black squirrel or bucktail with a couple of strands of pearl twinkle.

This was my best Dollaghan fly over the last few years and is very good on the point as a night fly .I have given a few of these to some of my friends that fish in Wales for Seatrout and they tell me that the Black & Blue Jam has worked well on their rivers also, taking many big fish. I have great faith in this little hair wing, it has work well on many occasions and has taken its fair share of Salmon working very well for me on the river Bush a few years ago; it's a very good all-rounder and if I'm after Salmon or Dollaghan in low water.

Wee Davy (D.Telford)

Hook I have used the new Partridge Patriot Salmon double 8 – 12
 Thread. Red
 Body Gold or Silver holographic tinsel

Rib Silver or gold wire
 Hackle Orange cock or Kingfisher Blue cock hackle dressed long.

Wing Black Arctic fox or black squirrel or bucktail with a couple of strands of twinkle.

This easy to dress fly is everything I like about a Dollaghan fly, which should be quick and not hard or expensive to make, as you will lose quite a few flies as a lot of the time we fish deep in places with underwater snags and rocks. (Which are great places for Dollaghan) This pattern was dressed and is used a lot by local angler and a great friend mine, Mr Davy Telford.

There are six main inflowing rivers to Lough Neagh which, going anti-clockwise from the northern most river, are: the river Maine and tributaries , Moyola, Ballinderry, Blackwater, Upper Bann and my local Six-Mile-Water. The right time can be



Wee davy

from July, after a spate, through to the end of the season on the 31st of October. Largest fish are normally caught in the rivers on the fly from the first summer floods to October but normally only when fishing conditions are right. So why not treat yourself next year by trying your skills on one of them

guides. He runs teaching lessons in fly fishing and hosts groups fishing in Canada, Iceland, Argentina, Ireland, and other parts of the world. You can contact him via email anglingclassics@aol.com or get more info at www.Irishflyfair.com

The author:

Stevie works full time in the angling sector as a guide, writer and qualified game angling instructor; he has appeared in many angling books, DVDs and angling shows all over the world. He has also fished many places in the world and grew up fishing on rivers and loughs of Ireland where he often

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RE0151	11
RE0152	12

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HARDY SINTRIX JET FLY RODS

After the success of the Zenith and Proaxis rod ranges, Hardy have now released the Jet, which delivers all the powers and advantages of the SINTRIX 330™ material, at a price point more affordable for the everyday angler.

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Code	Length	AFTM	Handle	Pcs	Price
HR1699	7ft	#5	RHW	4	£349.00
HR1700	7ft 6	#3	RHW	4	£349.00
HR1701	8ft	#4	RHW	4	£349.00
HR1702	8ft	#6	RHW	4	£349.00
HR1703	8ft 6	#4	RHW	4	£349.00
HR1704	8ft 6	#5	RHW	4	£349.00
HR1705	9ft	#4	RHW	4	£379.00
HR1706	9ft	#5	RHW	4	£379.00
HR1707	9ft	#6	RHW	4	£379.00
HR1708	9ft 6	#6	FW+EH	4	£379.00
HR1709	9ft 6	#7	FW+EH	4	£379.00
HR1710	10ft	#3	RHW	4	£399.00
HR1711	10ft	#4	RHW	4	£399.00
HR1712	10ft	#5	RHW	4	£399.00
HR1713	10ft	#6	FW+EH	4	£399.00
HR1714	10ft	#7	FW+EH	4	£399.00
HR1715	10ft	#8	FW+EH	4	£399.00



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SKR Reels

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Spools

Code	Model	RRP	Price
RE0315	#2/4	£34.99	£25.99
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HALF PRICE



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GC1588	11ft	#7	4	£249.99	£125.00
GC1589	11ft	#8	4	£249.99	£125.00

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HR1117	WF9

55ft head	65ft head	AFTM
HR1124	WF8	HR1112
HR1125	WF9	HR1113
HR1126	WF9	HR1114
HR1103	HR1127	WF11

55ft head	65ft head	AFTM
HR1104	HR1128	WF8
HR1105	HR1129	WF9
HR1130	WF10	HR1131
HR1115	HR1139	WF11

65ft Line
RRP: £79.99
£30.00

55ft head	65ft head	AFTM
HR1120	WF8	HR1121
HR1121	WF9	HR1122
HR1099	HR1123	WF11

55ft head	65ft head	AFTM
HR1132	WF8	HR1133
HR1133	WF9	HR1134
HR1134	WF10	HR1111
HR1111	WF11	HR1112

55ft head	65ft head	AFTM
HR1112	HR1136	WF8
HR1113	HR1137	WF9
HR1114	HR1138	WF10
HR1115	HR1139	WF11

HARDY MARKSMAN 2 SALMON RODS

Marksmen 2 "T" Double Handed Salmon Rod

For those who like casting, or fishing rivers which traditionally use, or favour a full line, these rods fit the criteria perfectly.

Marksmen 2 "S" Double Handed Salmon Rod

The S-Series are more suited to short Spey and shooting head lines using the underhand or Scandinavian style of cast.

Code	Model	AFTM	Pcs	RRP	Now
HR1497	15ft 8"	#11	4	£639	£447

Code	Model	AFTM	Pcs	RRP	Now
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Code	Size	RRP
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HALF PRICE

LEOP ADVENTURE 15FT #10 SALMON ROD

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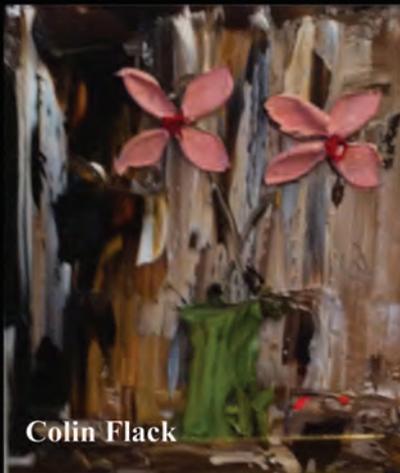


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HARVEST BOUNTY

What a way to finish the ebbing season than battling a salmon in these surroundings!

Suddenly the summer seems to be behind us, the fields are bare stubble, the nights are closing in and the mornings are a little fresher. The hedgerows are heavy with autumn fruit, the haws and rowan berries glowing bright red, shining ripe blackberries and the bloom is on the purple sloes. Our autumn migrants are gathering in flocks, growing more restless with each passing day and soon we will be hearing the calls of the geese and the migrating whooper swans; evocative sounds that remind me of the far north from whence they have travelled.

Pheasants and wildfowl which have appeared bedraggled and scruffy all summer suddenly transform into the pristine article showing gleaming iridescent greens, pure white collars and rich chestnut shades. The lethargy of the hot summer's day has gone, now

there is an urgency to stock up for the lean months ahead and nature has provided a bounty for just this purpose. The country landscape transforms as weeds die back and the trees take the hues of orange, copper and gold; there is no more beautiful time of year to be roving the Irish countryside in search of sport.

From the trout fishing perspective this past season has presented problems and opportunities in equal measure: a hot dry summer didn't bode well for some fisheries, deoxygenating the water and causing algae blooms and weed growth. For the fisheries less affected by these problems there was an upside. Whilst we normally have a late hatch of olives in the autumn and some sedges are still present, this year the warm weather provided a fantastic fall of black gnats which the trout were not

slow to take advantage of. The black gnat (*Bibio Johannis*) provides fantastic dry fly sport and trout will station themselves under the trees in anticipation of a gust of wind which litters the surface with the unfortunate flies. The usual rise form is a quite little dimple which in no way betrays the size of the fish and when trout get keyed into the black gnat large specimens will appear to take advantage of the bounty.

This year the fall of flies was so heavy that we had to use flies with little wing posts to distinguish them from the real flies but I found the trout were rejecting the flies with a stiff polypropylene post too quickly to make an effective strike. This problem was solved by using CDC plumes which collapse when eaten by the fish, giving just an extra few moments to effect the



Derek Bell with a lovely dollaghan.

strike. Not only did the black gnat provide great challenging dry fly fishing but the many thousands of flies should help provide fat reserves to sustain the trout through the rigours of spawning and surviving the winter.

As the autumn solstice arrives, the salmon begin to stir from their torpor in the deep pools and become more aggressive and the late running fish flood in from the tide to occupy the lower pools. The spring and summer

salmon have begun to colour up in anticipation of spawning, the hen fish take on a pink tinge initially but the big cock salmon will eventually be sporting a magnificent tartan regalia with a large kype and pronounced teeth. When hooked these fish are generally very aggressive and will test tackle severely so strong line and carefully tied knots are the order of the day at this time of year. Coloured and gravid fish should be played hard and released quickly and

barbless hooks make this a simple task. It may seem unfair to be fishing over these fish but at this time of year there will be few pools without their residents and often fresh autumn running salmon will lie alongside these residents and usually it is the fresh fish which will take the fly or lure rather than the coloured specimens. At this time of year a salmon will often have a second go at a fly or prawn if not hooked on the first cast which is a stark contrast to the behaviour during warm summer days when they appear totally disinterested in any bait or lure. It's truly a pleasure to spend a mild autumn day by the river, especially if it's bordered by woodland with the golds and reds of the leaves reflected in the dark pools; what a way to finish the ebbing season than battling a salmon in these surroundings!

This season provided a huge run of dollaghan on my local river, the Six Mile Water, which provided a great deal of sport on this little stream from July onwards. Anglers have been catching them on dry flies, wet flies, nymphs and on salmon flies at night. Bead head nymphs have proven very effective during the day and it is great fun catching these unique fish on light tackle.

A gentle twitch on the line signalled a take

I had been fishing with nymphs one beautiful summer's evening and decided to stay on into the dark. As I sat chatting to the other anglers we noticed a good rise beginning in the gathering gloom. The little trout were splashing about but it wasn't long before their larger cousins joined in and soon I was threading my way upstream between the tree lined banks very carefully in the pitch dark. A warm downstream breeze was blowing little sedges and olive spinners down the river and the trout and dollaghan were up on the fin. My little 5 weight Sage delivered the tiny nymphs perfectly to a gap under the hanging branches and I retrieved just fast enough to keep in



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The number of rods per beat is strictly limited and advance booking is recommended. Rates are very competitive and discounts are available. The Fishery operates a Membership Club with very attractive terms and conditions.

For more information please contact either Len or Liz Tomlinson on 058 60897 or Lentomlinson@me.com or Connie Corcoran on 058 60146 or 087 6918230.

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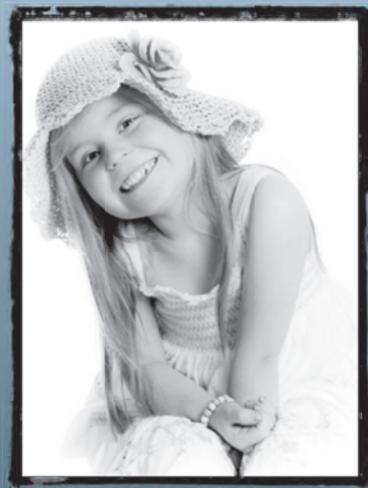
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touch with the flies. A gentle twitch on the line signalled a take and as I delivered a firm strike everything went taut and suddenly a 5 pound dollaghan erupted from the inky depths and crashed back into the water with a huge splash. I piled on the side strain as the fish tried to bore under the tangle of branches and roots and, after an exciting ten minutes, I was able to slip the landing net under him for a quick photograph, before letting him slide back into the depths. Once I realised the dollaghan would take the little flies in the dark and I could catch them on light tackle, there followed several nocturnal forays to the river and I enjoyed some tremendous sport from dusk onwards during the last few months of the season, as did many visitors and regulars who managed to get to the river.

For all this sport I think we have to give credit to the DCAL staff who risk life and limb to scan Lough Neagh for illegal nets and to John Kane, Richard Kennedy and their staff who have helped in surveys and habitat enhancements and helped dramatically improve recruitment of young dollaghan back to the Lough. I know other rivers such as the Maine have also had huge runs of fish, with a dollaghan over 10lbs landed before May was out and catches of over 25 dollaghan to a single rod during the day, a common occurrence for several weeks on the bottom beats of this river. The potential for dollaghan fishing is huge and if DCAL can continue to manage and protect stocks in the Lough, anglers continue to practice largely catch and release and clubs continue to improve habitats and control pollution then there will be a great opportunity for sustainable angling tourism, a great local sporting amenity and a sustainable commercial fishery as the eel stocks decline; if Lough Neagh is managed sensibly and only a harvestable surplus taken then we shall have a fishery to be proud of that will provide employment and sport for generations to come, what a thought!

In the meantime the autumnal storms have been lashing the country and heavy floods are scouring the river beds, cleaning and loosening the gravel – perfect spawning habitat for our salmonids who will be quick to take their position on their spawning redds. Let's hope they have a successful spawning season, ensuring sport for the coming years. All we can do now is toast the passing of another game angling season and look forward to the next one, Cheers!



Autumn salmon on the Moy.



Careful now!



Trout love the black gnat.

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Ireland 2015 Angling



Jan Porter



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Casting for more than fun

Trevor Greene from First Cast NI tells about the work of this exiting new community angling organisation.

Everyone who fishes or enjoys other country pursuits will recognise the sense of calm which comes from a day spent in the countryside. For me, days in the countryside are spent fishing. I remember once being asked what I think about when I spend a day alone fishing. Simple answer – I think about fishing. Over the years, many difficult times, whether in work or in my personal life, were put into their proper focus by taking a day, or even a few hours away from the immediate problem and immersing myself in fishing. Happily, none of my problems were so great as to cause deep despair or a personal crisis.

However, many people in our society do find themselves in places where they feel closed in by their problems. It is a sad fact of life that many of our fellow citizens have to face issues such as unemployment, family breakdown, mental ill-health, debt, and homelessness. And that is not an exhaustive list. Many voluntary and community organisations now exist and provide excellent and expert services to people who find themselves in a ‘dark place.’ These groups along with government and professional organisations recognise the beneficial effects of angling.



Arthur Greenwood (left) and Trevor Green (right) show how easy it can be to tie flies.

Indeed the recent report by Sports NI (A Strategic Review of Angling in

Northern Ireland) sets out the benefits of angling for individuals and



A very successful visit to Monanagher Fish Farm.

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Around 50 people are pictured at the Emotional Health at Straid Fishery.

communities. These include gains in physical and mental health, opportunities for victims, disabled people, homeless people and people at risk of suicide. Evidence referred to in the report suggests that angling can be used as tool to reduce crime and people at risk of offending through broader social interaction among a range of ages and social classes. It is suggested that angling can contribute towards helping to divert young people away from anti-social behaviour.

First Cast NI was founded by a small group of anglers who had links with voluntary groups helping people in crisis. Ian Rowan, Chair of First Cast NI says: “We set about arranging a day where a small number of people came along to have a taster session at fly fishing. It was a taster for them and for us,” and after the first session, Ian and his colleagues reviewed and developed some refinements to the programme. Funding became available from North Antrim Community Network to run a fuller programme in the autumn and winter of 2013. It consisted of a full day split between, learning to cast a fly, learning to tie a fly, a study of trout and their feeding habits and a session trying to catch a fish. Another event included coarse fishing. Feedback from our partner community/voluntary groups has been extremely positive. Almost all participants found the sessions fun and the vast majority would want to continue fishing as an

outlet and an enhancement to their quality of life.

These events have been generously hosted by Derek and Ray of Straid Fishery and we have very much welcomed a developing partnership with the Fisheries Division of DCAL. Tuition has been in the hands of professional instructors from APGAI including Joe Stitt, Ray McKeeman, Gary Bell, Lawrence Finney and Arthur Greenwood along with assistance from a number of highly experienced anglers and fly-tyers including member of the Irish Ladies Fly Fishing Team.

It is generally accepted that outdoors activities have health benefits for participants. Local fishing club, Willowbreeze Fly Fishing Club, put this into practise on Saturday 16th November by organising an Emotional Wellbeing Day at Straid Fishery, Co Antim. In collaboration with First Cast NI they aimed to introduce adults and children to fly fishing for the first time.

The committee of First Cast NI aims to extend and expand the work done so far. Initially they will carry on with the programme based at Straid Fishery over the summer of 2014 and the programme starts with an open day on the 5th May Bank Holiday along with a fund-raising competition for experienced folk. First Cast NI will work with young people in particular, as well as families and others, who have experienced degrees of vulnerability or social exclusion,

with a view to building healthy and lasting friendships, self-reliance and self-confidence through the medium of fishing. Beyond that, the Committee will be working to grow as a membership organisation and to form partnerships with angling clubs who would be happy to work within the First Cast NI framework. It feels that it can only reach a limited number of the vast number of people for whom angling could offer a relief from their problems. First Cast is also trying to identify support groups which feel that its work could help people they serve to have a better life. It will also seek to develop links with other groups with similar aims and possibly develop joint activities. We will be getting in touch directly with clubs to discuss collaboration and asking individuals to become members of the group to help in our work

Ian Rowan summed it up by saying that the First Cast NI project has the potential to help many people through their current difficulties and beyond, giving an opportunity for angling to be a release from the pressures of their daily life. The work will also help to grow the pool of anglers for the future of our sport.

First Cast NI would like to hear from either individual anglers or angling clubs who want to take this work forward. You can get in touch either through the First Cast page on Facebook or by e-mailing us on Firstcastni@outlook.com

AJ's Angst

Frank opinion on the issues facing the Irish country sports scene

Thirty Years of publishing and going stronger than ever

We go into 2015 celebrating thirty years of the continuous publication of Ireland's leading hunting, shooting and fishing magazine – initially under the title Irish Hunting, Shooting and Fishing and latterly the Irish Countrysports and Country Life magazine. There have been many changes along the way including the decision to take the magazine and news and views on Irish country sports and country life to the widest possible audience by publishing a FREE to READ online version. This plus increasingly combining the efforts of the cream of Irish country sports writers with expert writers from all over the world means that the magazine can speak with the authority of a publication produced by expert country sports people.

Not only can we claim that we are the best quality and most read ever Irish country sports magazine but we also are a true campaigning magazine and one that has ploughed more money back into sponsorship of country sports than any other magazine published or circulating in Ireland. Though our Irish Countrysports and Country Life Lifetime Commitment Awards, we have also recognised the previously unheralded work of a huge number of country sports men and women and the contribution they have made to the promotion and defence of country sports and the rural way of life in Ireland.

In 2015 we will have many special features and attractions and are very willing to hear from readers how they think we can best celebrate this milestone in Irish publishing and in country sports history.

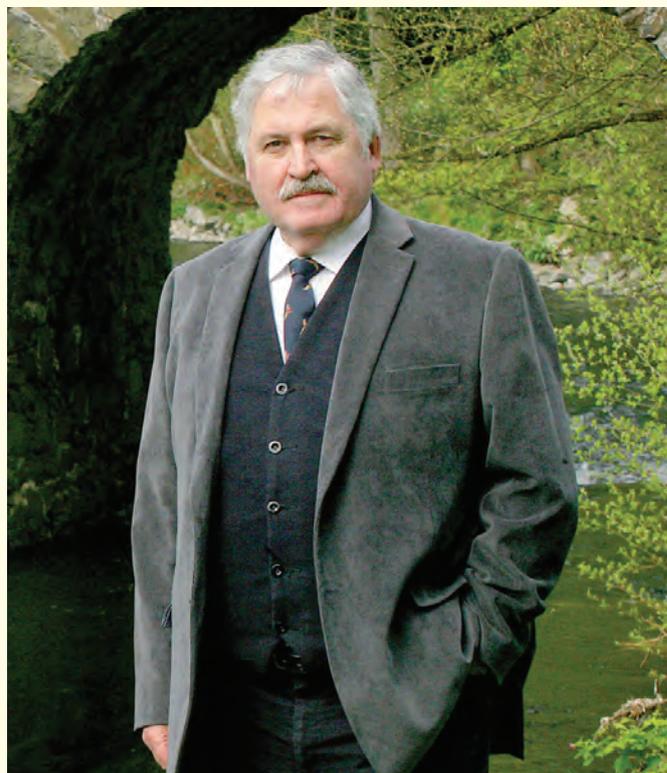
The Weather

2014 has demonstrated some quite different weather patterns and I hear today that a year which has been characterised by remarkably mild weather might finish with a white Christmas.

It was certainly the warmest September I can remember since 1966 and the met office statistics indicate that my memory hadn't failed me. In 1966 I spent the month of September at the Outward Bound School in Aberdovey, where a large part of the time involved quite horrendous physical activities, including a seven day expedition with a 40 lb pack (including tent, sleeping bag, stoves, food etc). This year my September was spent planning and executing the Harvest Festival at Montalto Estate, Ballynahinch at the latter end of the month which really could have been described as an 'Indian Summer'.

Conversely, October was one of the wettest on record, but I am delighted to say that so far we have missed the worst of it when shooting and in fact most of our shooting so far has been in shirt sleeves!

	Mean Temperature	Monthly Highest	Monthly Lowest	Total Rain	Total Sun
1966	15.3°C	22.4°C	6.4°C	23 mm	160 hrs
2014	13.0°C	21.5°C	8.0°C	19.4 mm	116.8 hrs



In spite of the lack of really cold weather it would appear that the woodcock are following the calendar rather than 'Jack Frost' and I shot my first of the season on the last Saturday in November at a shoot in Co Down.

Firearms

The Firearms debate in NI rumbles on while, in the ROI, prompt action by the Sports Coalition appears to have delayed - but not completely headed off - potential draconian controls over some types of firearms. The Sports Coalition has decided that if the proposed changes are to be total rescinded that the country sports and shooting communities must demonstrate they are a force to be reckoned with in the 2015 elections, and have launched a petition, details of which are included below and accessed online at www.sportscoalition.org. This is an opportunity for all country sports people in Ireland to demonstrate that we have great strength in numbers so please do sign it and get your friends to sign too.

While on the subject of firearms licensing, I was just completing the rather onerous paper exercise of filling in my application for the renewal of my FAC and thinking this would be much easier, quicker and less expensive all round if it was able to be done online, when I saw from a CAI members release that: "Thanks to the persistence of The Gun Trade Guild NI (GTG NI) Chairman, and CAI Board Member, David Robinson, RFDs in NI are now free to keep records in whatever form....."

I had to re-read the release again as I thought I had misunderstood the implications of it i.e. firearms dealers do not have to keep records in an electronic format but to quote

the release: "individual dealers can decide to keep their records electronically or in paper form."

Now I assume that the GTGNI had surveyed the whole trade in NI to canvass their views on the pros and cons of keeping paper or electronic records. Personally I would have thought that dealers keeping electronic records could cut the cost and lead to greater efficiencies in PSNI firearms administration. On an individual basis I would also have thought that once a standardised system had been set up it could actually be labour saving for the dealer.

It would be interesting to know what sort of a majority of the trade expressed a desire to continue to keep paper records and why. Obviously this 'victory' for paper records against electronic administration will inevitably impact on my own desire to be able to renew my FAC electronically. We would welcome readers views on this.

Back to the weather facilitating three great events

As well as fantastic weather for our new event at Montalto

Estate, we were fortunate that our other two events at Shanes Castle, Antrim in June and Birr Castle, in Co Offaly also attracted good weather and due to this, plus the best content seen at any Irish game or country fairs ever, supported by truly creative marketing and promotion campaigns, we delivered the two best Irish game or country fairs ever. In spite of the rather misleading claims published by other event organisers, there is no doubt which are the leading country sports and countryside events in Ireland. We suggest that the following videos should be informative viewing for anyone who was misled into thinking differently. Videos of the 2014 fairs are available at: Shanes Castle:

<http://www.irishtv.ie/antrim-matters-11> and www.vimeo.com/101162040 and Birr Castle <https://vimeo.com/106036699> and Montalto: <https://vimeo.com/109834624> and <http://www.irishtv.ie/down-matters-19/>

We thank trade and public for their support in 2014 and look forward to once again in 2015 delivering the leading countryside and country sports events in Ireland.

The Sports Alliance Web Site and Petition see www.sportscoalition.org



This website was established to disseminate information to the members of the constituent associations concerning the latest proposals of the Gardai and the Department of Justice and Equality to further restrict possession of firearms for sporting purposes without justification. A large campaign has been launched to fight these very unjust proposals and the website will be the focal point for all our supporters.

It is a "one-stop-shop" for information, updates, commentary and direction to member associations, clubs, individuals, supporters and politicians and will assist everyone in helping to oppose these most unreasonable proposals. The site will be updated regularly and I will post the latest information as it arises.

Please use the website as a tool to assist you in briefing and lobbying your constituency politicians and other public representatives. The proposals in the joint Garda/Department of Justice & Equality

report are biased, self-serving, inaccurate and vindictive. They are justified by arguments which have no basis in fact and are supported with statistics which are purposely manipulated to present a picture which is false. We hope with your help, to educate those who will eventually be called upon to make the final decisions. Please follow the news and get as many people as possible to sign the petition. Add your comments on the site.

We can and will demonstrate to the political establishment that we are unbeatable together and that unless this issue is finally resolved satisfactorily, there will be electoral consequences for the Government parties.

Des Crofton

National Director, NARGC &
Spokesperson for the Sports Coalition



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