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### COUNTRY SPORTS COUNTRY LIFE COUNTRY LIFE



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Irish Game Angler cover: 'Coming Home' - photograph by Chris Sharp

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Just One of Stevie Munn's Angling

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Country Chat - with Billy Lewis

North - by Derek Fanning

Adventure & Hunting In The Frozen

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#### Country Sports and Country Life Northern Comment

I was a member of a fishing club for many years, taking my turn at night in the group which accompanied the bailiff to check for sightings of poachers. When a wrongdoer was apprehended, police were called to prevent an affray and the details of what had taken place noted. Rods, etc were impounded by the bailiff as is normal in such matters.

Months later, I might - or not if the case dhadnt made it court - read a report in the local paper, of the court proceedings. Absolute

discharges or nominal slaps on wrists seemed to be the outstanding features of most of the cases I seem to recall. Despite the evidence, it often appeared to me that the judiciary cared little about trout theft, or the destruction of property that sometimes went with it. The wasted work carried out by the club which did not even seem worthy of consideration. All this despite the poachers being caught 'bang to rights.'

I remember a club member muttering once that if we should try to paint double yellow lines on the bank or catch them in the act while using their mobile phones. Maybe then we could have expected a better result. I got his point.

I know that anti poacher work takes place regularly on club waters and rivers and, despite being vital, is often a fruitless task.

But there are sometimes glimmers of light which help to keep us going too and I was reminded of this when I read recently of a case concerning some men who had been prosecuted for assaulting and obstructing a Fishery Officer on the River Aherlow.

At a sitting of Fermoy District Court on 16th October 2015, Judge Brian Sheridan prosecuted the men who had pleaded guilty to a number of offences, following an incident that occurred on the upper River Aherlow near Anglesborough, Co. Limerick on the 20th November 2014.

The case was that on that date, Fishery Officers from Inland Fisheries Ireland (IFI) were undertaking a night time patrol of the river Aherlow during the salmon spawning season. During the investigation, an incident developed which resulted in one Fishery Officer being assaulted and struck with a handle of a shovel. Other Fishery Officers were subjected to threats of violence and abusive language.

The details of the men concerned were reported, naming Mr \_\_\_\_\_, Co. Limerick who was prosecuted for assaulting, obstructing and refusing to give his name to Fishery Officers. Mr \_\_\_\_\_, Co. Limerick was prosecuted for possession of a lamp on a spawning stream, obstructing and refusing to give his name to Fishery Officers and Mr \_\_\_\_\_, Co. Limerick was prosecuted for obstructing Fishery Officers.

Judge Brian Sheridan imposed the following penalties: Mr\_\_\_\_ was sentenced to six months imprisonment, suspended for two years on the defendant signing a bond to keep the peace and be of good behaviour for the said period of two years. He was also fined €500 in addition to legal costs of €630. Mr\_\_\_\_ was fined €250 in addition to legal costs of €630. Mr. \_\_\_\_ was fined €250 in addition to legal costs of €630.

"This is not just about the fish," stated IFI CEO Dr Ciaran Byrne, "it is about protecting over 3000 Irish jobs that rely on our endangered salmon stocks and also ensuring the safety of IFI staff who work to protect and conserve this valuable natural resource for the benefit of rural communities throughout Ireland, including the Aherlow River."

In another unrelated case, an excavator operator was convicted for removal of riverbed material. At a sitting of Fermoy



District Court on 25th September 2015, Judge Brian Sheridan convicted excavator operator, Mr \_\_\_\_\_, Kilbehenny, Co. Limerick, under Section 173 (1)(c) & 173 (1)(d) of the Fisheries (Consolidation) Act 1959, relating to the removal of riverbed material from the River Funshion on the Cork / Limerick border. Judge Sheridan imposed a threemonth custodial sentence, suspended for two years with a bond of €500 paid by the defendant, additionally imposing a €100 fine and awarding Inland Fisheries Ireland (IFI) €2,000 towards its costs in the case.

The case related to works carried out during September 2014 which entailed the removal of riverbed material along a continuous excavation of 200 metres of river channel. The case was initially heard at a previous court sitting on 26th June at which the defendant entered a guilty plea on two charges.

IFI gave evidence of its observations of damage to the fisheries resource backed by photographic records of the site which depicted large stockpiles of river gravel in a continuous narrow ledge or shelf adjacent to the affected river. IFI also noted in its evidence, the defendant's readiness to co-operate in the planning of remedial works. The defendant then signed a written undertaking to the court that remedial works would be carried out to the satisfaction of IFI, with the case then adjourned to allow for the works to be completed.

At the hearing on 25th September, IFI confirmed that the remedial works had been completed to its satisfaction, with full co-operation from the defendant, and also acknowledged the assertion made by the defence that the remedial works had been a substantial undertaking, stated as costing upwards of  $\in\!3,000$ . Judge Sheridan remarked that the initial damaging works would also have been expensive and that he wished to send a message regarding such activity before imposing sentence.

Inland Fisheries Ireland, commented: "The serious destruction of fisheries habitat which took place is an environmental crime. Such practices impact stocks of fish and, ultimately, the potential of our wonderful natural resource to contribute environmentally, economically and socially to this particular rural area and the wider Blackwater catchment downstream."

Recent estimates of the economic contribution in the Republic of Ireland of brown trout angling, and salmon and sea trout angling to Ireland's economy are €148 million and €210 million respectively, supporting 5,088 jobs primarily in rural and peripheral locations. I don't have the corresponding figures for Northern Ireland but would assume they are broadly pro rata.

In my opinion the action by the courts in both cases was something to gladden an angler's heart. I my view the cases were treated in accordance with what they had done. Crimes were crimes and those concerned, in my opinion, paid appropriate penalties.

There is little doubt that in such cases, the law is clearly seen to be a deterrent to poaching. Maybe other courts should take note and act accordingly!

Maybe I have simply missed reports of similar results brought about by the courts in Northern Ireland - I hope that is the case. Nevertheless, I do feel that Northern Ireland legal eagles should cast their eyes at what is happening in other jurisdictions, and make sure that poaching feels the full force of whatever the law can impose whenever it's appropriate to do so.

Paul Pringle, Northern Editor

#### Country Sports and Country Life Rol Comment

Surfing the net recently I came across the website www.gametoeat.co.uk and looked at a wide range of recipes on the site. I've often returned home with a brace of rabbits after a day's hunting with Harris hawks, so I was very interested in the site's suggestion for rabbit. I was not disappointed. I tried the Wild Rabbit Ragu with Penne and found it pleasant and piquant. There were a few of my favourite ingredients in it including chilli, nutmeg, cinnamon and pancetta. There's something very enjoyable about hunting your own game and cooking it afterwards. I've had a few disappointments when cooking game when using recipes that weren't terribly interesting, but after a good deal of experimenting I've accrued several, very tasty recipes. Celebrity chef Nigel Slater in his most recent book 'Eat' has a couple of excellent suggestions for cooking rabbit.

The gametoeat website also has a number of really good suggestions for cooking pheasant including the delicious Pheasant Breast Braised in Cider which features rashers, shallots, and crème fraiche. Cider is a marvellous accompaniment to pheasant.

One of the things which I think we are lacking in Ireland is a selection of game in our supermarkets and butchers. Our beautiful landscape is home to a variety of game and it has always struck me as being mysterious that we haven't embraced this food source with greater enthusiasm. It would be lovely to see this situation change. There is nothing more cheering than dishes such as roast pheasant during the winter months.

The same website informed me that the 6th World Pheasant Plucking Championship will take place in St Helen's Lanchashire on Saturday 21st November, with pheasants being plucked in the traditional way, by hands only. The Championship is sponsored by the World Pheasant Association, and there are prizes albeit of a modest variety. I don't know of any similar event in Ireland. Perhaps an idea for someone reading this?

By the way, the World Pheasant Association (WPA) was founded in 1975 by a group of aviculturists and sporting enthusiasts who wanted to do more for the birds than just keep them. The WPA works around the world to conserve and protect Galliformes and their habitats. Galliformes are heavy-bodied ground-feeding birds which include turkey, grouse, chicken, ptarmigan,



partridge and pheasant. Much of the WPA's work involves studying populations of species and their environments, and has resulted in the establishment of protected areas and national parks. The WPA also educates and raises awareness in local communities about the importance of bird species and their habitats. In September 2014 the WPA held a very successful Convention in Kilkenny and Meath during which they heard about the reintroduction of the Golden Eagle to Ireland and visited Donal Campion's home in Kilkenny. Donal has an impressive selection of waterfowl, pheasants and cranes at Wallslough Game and Waterfowl Farm and he sometimes supplies cock pheasants to shooters for breeding purposes.

The end of October beginning of November is always a happy time for hunting and shooting lovers with the commencement of the hound and shooting seasons. For the first day of the hound season I planned to venture out with the Balgarrett Foot Beagles in Westmeath. When I rang them to ask where the meet was, they said it was cancelled due to Kennel Cough afflicting some of the dogs. Kennel Cough is an upper respiratory infection which can spread rapidly among dogs living in close quarters. Symptoms include a retching cough and vomiting. Dogs usually recover from Kennel Cough after a few weeks.

I was very keen to get out, so I rang around a few beagle packs. After getting no answers from four packs I managed to get through to the Ballydine Beagles. Or rather, someone who was formerly connected with the Ballydines and who gave me the mobile number of the current huntsman. Starting about 20 years ago I went out many times with the Ballydine Beagles over a number of years. We had some fantastic days out. Their country is in Tipperary and for many years the Huntsman was Matt Wade who kept 13 and a half couple of trencher-fed bitches with his brother John. The country used to be good, flat country with some

forest and bog, but I'm not sure what it is now. It certainly wasn't flat when I went out with them a couple of weeks ago! John Wade and myself had a long chat on the phone reminiscing about some of the great days we enjoyed together years ago and about some of the followers. Matt and John were excellent at their jobs and the Ballydines were a fine pack under their stewardship.

The weather was windy and wet for my first day out and I met the Ballydine Huntsman and his whipper-in beside an old graveyard in the village of Ballinure between Thurles and Cashel. The drive there had been an interesting one. I passed an uninhabited Norman Keep called Grallagh Castle which was unusual because it still possessed some of its original details. Many of the Norman Keeps in Ireland are sadly decaying, and many of them are stark edifices. This one, however, was less stark and had a number of attractive features. It's a four storey tower which was constructed in the 16th Century when the lands of Grallagh were passed to Edmond Butler and subsequently to James Butler the son of Lord Dunboyne. It's under the care of the OPW and is located just a couple of miles south of the Horse & Jockey.

Ballinure itself is just a crossroads with a few houses but the houses are attractive and it's a pleasant place. There's a lovely thatch. The old graveyard with its ancient church is worth a look as well. There are 193 memorials in the graveyard and a prayer at the

entranceway in Irish which translates as 'I salute you the just ones of Christ, who are here awaiting the glorious Resurrection. May He who suffered the passion for you give you everlasting peace. Amen.'

There's a famous song about this region called 'The Hills of Killenaule' and the third verse begins, 'On Ballynonty's slopes, I heard the pheasant call, In Lanespark, the hare bounds best of all, And through Cooldine's lowly gorse, Ran the foxhound and the horse, It's so lovely round the Hills of Killenaule.' As I tramped those hills with the Ballydine Beagles a couple of weeks ago I could see that it is indeed lovely in that region, and the hare was abundant in the plantations. The huntsman told me that unfortunately an overhunting of hares in this part of Tipperary, and further afield, is taking place which means there are precious little hares left in some places for foot packs. He told me the plantations are where one is most likely to find hares. Overhunting is a problem which is as ancient as the hills and apart from the sadness of the thing, it leads to the one outcome which no fieldsport lover wants — no game and no sport.

Despite windy weather the scent was good and the Ballydine's ten couple found five hares in a large plantation and split into three. As we followed there was quite a lot of jogging up slopes. Good exercise and a good day out.

Derek Fanning ROI Editor

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## Keeping Warm This Winter with Barbour

This season, Barbour is offering a brand new range of countrywear, including functional jackets, woolly jumpers, stylish shirts and accessories for men and women that are both practical and fashionable - perfect for those who love life outdoors.

The new Barbour Country Collection provides a selection of relaxed country attire in neutral and autumnal hues. Offering a full wardrobe of country essentials including wax, waterproof, quilted and wool jackets together with smart knitwear and traditionally tailored shirts, the new country collection is made for outdoor life.

For men, the new Gamefair Waterproof Jacket, a fully waterproof version of Barbour's popular Gamefair wax jacket, is a superb choice for those who are active outdoors. The piece is made with a hi-tech outer fabric that repels rain and provides protection from harsh winter winds.

For ladies, the Tors Wax Jacket adds extra winter credentials to Barbour's iconic Beadnell wax jacket including a warm quilted body, promising reliable protection from the elements. The jacket is complete with a charming vintage bird print lining, adding a quirky edge to a country classic.

Designed with the active country sportsman in mind, the Ayton Half Zip in Barbour's Sporting collection is another winter essential - a rugged men's sweater with a full waterproof lining. This chunky knit is crafted in 100% lambswool for natural warmth and softness without being overly bulky when layered underneath a jacket.

For women, the new Arctic Expedition collection is a more colourful option for winter walks. The Bartlett Knit, an oversized jumper crafted with a warm, chunky construction, is light enough to layer over a long sleeved tee or under one of the collection's cosy waterproofs such as the Kirkby Coat

To complement your winter warmers, there are some great accessories in the lifestyle and country collections at Barbour including an array of cosy hats, scarves and gloves.

The new Autumn Winter 15 Countrywear and Lifestyle Collections from Barbour are available now online at www.barbour.com or from selected stockists - perfect for those who live, work or play in the countryside, whatever the weather!



The Gamefair Waterproof Jacket - £229



Tors Wax - £229.00



Ayton half zip - £159



Bartlett Knit - £99.95



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## Anglers will soon be able to provide proof of the one that got away

REVOLUTIONARY new underwater gadget, which can stream live footage onto a smartphone as you fish, is set to be catch of the day. For the first time ever, anglers will be able to stream live footage straight to their mobile device as they fish via an underwater camera cleverly hidden in a marker float, thanks to the new Fish-Spy.

Fish-Spy's streaming technology gives anglers the opportunity to quickly identify whether they are fishing in the wrong place or if bait is incorrectly presented. It also captures and records underwater footage, providing up to seven hours of recording time. The game-changing device was designed by expert anglers at Total Fishing Gear and took three years of development.

Streamed to your device via an inbuilt private Wi-Fi transmitter, crystal clear video allows users to see exactly what is happening under water. It is easy to use and requires no networked phone signal or internet connection.

The camera gives a 'bait-eye' view under the water, helping to show how fish approach and feed on bait. Fish-Spy say their device could help even seasoned fishermen improve their skills at hooking a fish. Because the camera is incorporated into a marker float, it can be recovered even if a fishing line breaks.

Priced £249.95, Fish-Spy can be purchased from www.fishspy.com and Total Fish Gear stockists.



The revolutionary FishSpy

#### Key features:

- Stream live underwater footage to your wifi enabled phone or tablet
- No more guessing find the perfect fishing features, check your bait is presented perfectly
- Watch live as fish interact with your bait
- Record up to seven hours of footage onto built in SD card
- Over three hours battery life and ip to 100 metres range
- Perfect for carp fishing

#### The Essential Shooting Show

The 2016 British Shooting Show will open its doors at the Stoneleigh Park Exhibition Centre, Warwickshire CV8 2LG. The annual three day event, now in its eighth year will run from the 12th – 14th February.

The British Shooting Show is the UK's premier shooting specific show and is held within 5 fully carpeted and heated halls, giving an exhibition area of over 450,000 sq. Ft. Visitors will be presented with thousands of products, covering all shooting disciplines including shotguns, rifles, airguns, pistols, optics, knives, vehicles, specialist clothing and a vast array

of shooting accessories. The show's warm and friendly atmosphere has made it the most popular event for shooters to meet up and find out all the latest news and information.

The show is proud to host the UK's largest public gathering of manufacturers, distributors, retailers and associations and gives visitors a fantastic opportunity to meet with the industry's professionals and get all the latest product news and advice.

There is plenty for visitors to see and do at the show including a massive airgun range with 40 lanes including the new 'night vision' lanes, the gamekeeping hall, gundog zone, activity and interactive zones, arena displays, specialist and historic collections, archery

lanes, a WW2 Spitfire and many 'show only' offers and free to enter competitions with fantastic prizes. The 2016 British Shooting Show is the ultimate public shooting event providing shooters of all disciplines with the very best the industry has to offer.

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#### Cork School Named National 'Something Fishy' Competition Winners 2015

t Mary's Senior School, Dunmanway, Co Cork, awarded top prize for 'The Wonderful Water Kids Show

Fifth and sixth class students from St Mary's Senior School, Dunmanway, Co. Cork, were named National Winners of Inland Fisheries Ireland's 'Something Fishy' competition award at a prize giving ceremony held in the West Cork Education

The students received the award and a €700 prize for their class project 'The Wonderful Water Kids Show'. Project entries in this year's competition addressed the themes 'Water: A Precious Commodity' and 'Water Quality and the Environment'. Their innovative entry comprised a digital and artistic interpretation of the theme, presented through a video format.

Jim Daly TD and Noel Harrington TD, congratulated the students while presenting the perpetual 'Something Fishy' award to the students on behalf of Joe McHugh, Minister for Natural Resources, who was unable to attend the event.

Ms Mairead Twohig, Principal, St Mary's

Senior School, was presented with the school prize by Michael McCarthy TD, at the ceremony. Commenting today, Ms Twohig said: "I am delighted to accept this award on behalf of the students of St Mary's Senior School, who have demonstrated their excellent understanding of water and its huge importance in the world in their 'Wonderful Water' project".

Ciaran Byrne, CEO of Inland Fisheries Ireland (IFI), commented: "I would like to thank the participant schools and the staff of Inland Fisheries Ireland, who bring to life the 'Something Fishy' educational programme, not only at St Mary's but at many other schools around Ireland. IFI is committed to this programme which I hope ignites an interest in all things fish, fishing and fish habitat."

Speaking at the event, Suzanne Campion, of IFI, said: "'Something Fishy' is an educational resource designed and promoted by IFI in conjunction with the Blackrock Educational Centre. It ensures that children do not become an 'endangered species' on the banks of rivers, lakes and our coast. In a typical year, we bring the programme to around 100 schools across the country. Every year, IFI staff aim to make the



St Mary's Senior School, Dunmanway, Co. Cork were National Winners of Inland Fisheries Ireland's 'Something Fishy' competition.

programme exciting and interesting for children so that learning is easy and fun."

#### 'Something Fishy' 2015/16 programme

Aimed at fifth and sixth class students at primary level, the programme is based on the life cycle of salmon and gets students to explore, water, fish, fish stocks, angling, conservation of rivers and lakes and fish as part of the food chain. As well as class based work Inland Fisheries Ireland fishery officers take students into the 'field' to get hands on experience of their work. A comprehensive set of resources for teachers and children is available on www.somethingfishy.ie Schools interested in participating in the 2015/16 programme should contact their local Education Centre

This year's winning entry 'The Wonderful Water Kids Show' can be viewed online at: www.somethingfishy.ie/blog.html.



Women's Sidney Plaid Boot SRP: £80; Visit: www.bogsfootwear.co.uk

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CO<sub>2</sub> data is preliminary. Please contact your dealer for latest information. P11D value for BIK purposes is the retail price plus delivery charge. BIK % shown for the 2015/16 tax year.

#### Derreen Stream Enhancement Project

istory was made recently, when all six Angling Clubs on the Clare River system combined forces in the interests of a major stream enhancement project. Over one kilometer of stream enhancement work has successfully been completed on the Derreen Stream, Abbeyknockmoy, Co. Galway.

The project was coordinated by a newly formed Clare River Angling organisation call "Cairde na Chláir "(Friends of the Clare), a voluntary organisation, which is supported by all Clare River Angling Clubs, namely Turloughmore Anglers, Corofin Anglers, Milltown Anglers, Tuam Anglers, Cregmore/Athenry Anglers & St. Colman's Angling Club.

The project was completed by the Office of Public Works (OPW) in consultation with Inland Fisheries Ireland (IFI).

The instream enhancement works were constructed along with programmed routine channel maintenance on, an OPW scheduled arterial drainage channel, namely the Derreen stream, which forms part of the Corrib/Clare catchment drainage scheme.

The project was funded & supported by all Clare River Angling Clubs through "Cairde na Chláir", Lough Corrib Angling Clubs though "Cairde Loch Coiribe" (Friends of the Corrib), The Clydagh Foundation & an extremely generous anonymous donor. This project is one of thirty two potential enhancement projects, which have been identified by the IFI on the Clare River system.

The projects are designed with the aim of enhancing the natural habitat of a specifically selected stream, into an area where trout and salmon can successfully spawn. Great care was taken during the construction of the project, to insure that the overall Biodiversity of the stream was greatly enhanced.

According to the current chairman of Cairde na Chláir, Damien Mc Grath: "This project is a template for future stream enhancement projects. As an Angling group "Cairde na Chláir" are very thankful to the various Angling elements, who have assisted greatly in bringing this project to a successful conclusion, we are very grateful to the Local Landowners who assisted greatly

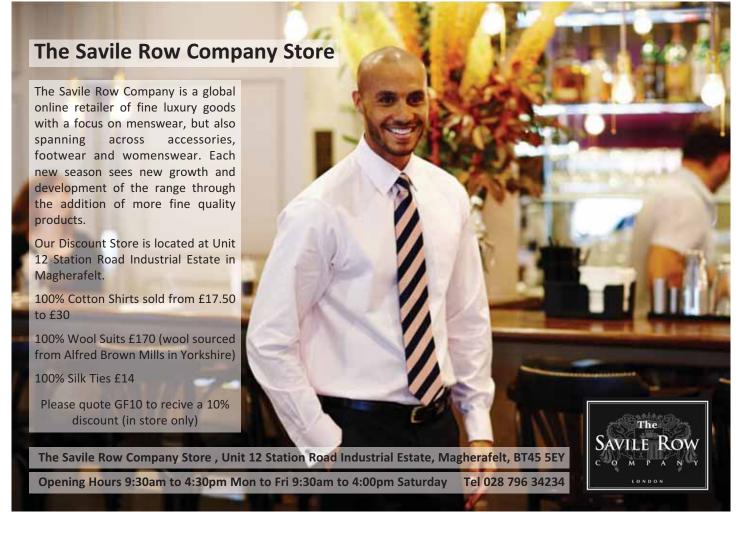
in the accommodation of the works. As a group we were particular impressed with the commitment, diligence and leadership, which was shown to us by Inspector Pat Gorman & Fishery Officer Conor Dennedy IFI both of whom are a great credit to their organisation".

"Cairde na Chláir" intends to proceed with other enhancement projects over the next five years, on a planned and coordinated basis, in conjunction with the IFI, OPW, "Cairde Loch Coiribe", The Clydagh Foundation and others. If all thirty two stream enhancement projects were completed the Clare River and Greater Corrib System would become the most prolific Angling destination in Western Europe. The projects which have been identified have the potential, to greatly increase the current fish stocks within the entire Corrib System and help to secure the many jobs which are dependent on angling activity, throughout the greater Galway & Mayo region.



(left to right) Enda Holian (OPW), Michael Shally (OPW), Thomas Cheevers (President - Cregmore / Athenry), Pat Collins (OPW), Larry McCarrty (Clydagh Foundation, Richard Jordan (Tuam), Phil Donaghue (Cregmore / Athenry), James Langan (St. Colman's), Martin Hynes (Turloughmore), George Frazer (Turloughmore), Michael Bradly (Treasurer - Cairde na Chláir), Jarlath Farragher (Milltown), Frances Kelly (Tuam), Damien McGrath (Chairman - Cairde na Chláir), Conor Dennedy (Fishery Officer - IFI), Inspector Patrick Gorman (IFI), Kevin Mitchell (St. Colman's), Michael Harte (Milltown) and Sean Nestor (Secretary) - Cairde na Chlái





#### NARGC ELECTS NEW CHAIRMAN

The National Association of Regional Game Councils has elected Wicklow RGC delegate, Michael Fenlon, as its new Chairman at the Association's AGM in Kilkenny.



Michael Fenlon, Chairman NARGC

Born and reared in Dublin, Michael's interest in hunting and shooting developed at an early age. This was despite the fact that there was no discernible hunting tradition in the family. By the time he had reached the ripe old age of 10, he was already an old hand with dogs, ferrets and snares and the fishing rod was always near at hand. His first gun was an air rifle which he acquired at the age of 14. His interest in the outdoors continued throughout his teens and inevitably he graduated to hunting game birds and deer stalking.

In his early days of hunting, he started by rearing pheasants and ducks under bantam hens and he continues to do so to the present day. In Ireland, he has hunted with great respect and enjoyment all the Irish game species from Grouse to our native Red Deer. He has also hunted many species in several other countries

He has been a member of NARGC, as he says: "For more years than I care to remember" — a very long time indeed. He was a founder member of Eagle Shooting Rifle & Pistol Club, and served as a Committee Member of the National Rifle & Pistol Association of Ireland (NRPAI), and held various positions in that organisation including Club Secretary and Club Chairman. With Wicklow RGC he held the positions of County Chairman and Regional Delegate to NARGC.

Michael has a wide

experience business in such diverse

enterprises as having worked in the motor trade for most of his life, owning his own business



in Motor Sales and Repairs. He also ventured into the licensed pub trade for a number of years before becoming a Registered Firearms Dealer. He now runs a very busy hunting and shooting on-line website and a retail outlet in Co Wexford.

He is married to Trish and they have two children, Rebecca and Mike. Mike is following in Dad's footsteps since he was 4 years old, when he started pestering to be taken along when Michael went hunting.

He says that his ambition during his Chairmanship is to make the Association stronger and better with increased membership and to make it more cost effective. He will do this by listening first hand to the grass root members. He says: "I have no doubt that we will go from strength to strength, and I look forward to the challenges this might

#### SOCIAL MEDIA AND FIREARMS LICENSING etc

ohn Wray, Shooting NI, asked Firearms Licensing for their thoughts on posting to all types social media. His Email and the reply are copied below for information of readers:

#### From: John Wray

05 October 2015

To: Firearms Licensing

Subject: Laws and Guidelines Regarding Posting on Facebook and Licence Expiry Date Query

I'm checking the current rules and regulations regarding the posting of material on social media like Twitter, Facebook or internet forums as I have read that it's a breach of my firearms permit and home security to post pictures of firearms on social media groups or forums. Can you please clear this up for me as I was unaware of this until now.

Also if a firearms permit is due for renewal and someone doesn't submit their application six weeks prior to the expiry date will their firearms have to be surrendered to either a RFD or the PSNI as this is also been said to me.

Thanks John Wrav

#### From Firearms Licensing:

Thank you for the Email - the security requirements for storing your firearms are published in a document called Guidance on Northern Ireland Firearms Controls, which is available online.

Appendix 10, 44 (a) of this document states: 44 Security Conditions

(a) A firearm certificate is conditioned to require that "'irearms to which a certificate relates must be stored securely at all times so as to prevent, so far as is reasonably practicable, access to them by unauthorised persons."'And as long as the application of received at FEB before expiry and we have issued a receipt letter then the firearms won't be seized or need to be lodged with a dealer.

le, the FAC holder is required to take reasonable steps to prevent unauthorised access. For example, in the event of a burglary at the FAC holder's home if it can be found that he or she contributed to the theft by - say - leaving the cabinet keys where they can be found, then this could lead to

The same also – whether or not a burglary takes place - applies to instances where, for example, someone has posted a photo of their FAC showing the home address online as this could contribute to a burglary.

Beyond this, every instance is different but if you post pictures of yourself with your firearms on social media and someone can then search to work out your location then this is obviously unwise at best. Depending on the individual situation, carelessness on social media could lead to revocation as a breach of the conditions of your FAC as above.



#### In terms of a certificate due for further grant:

It is illegal to be in possession of firearms without a valid and current certificate. Letters are being sent to holders advising them before their certificate expires, however if it the responsibility of the holder to ensure that they are in legal possession. In the event of a certificate being allowed to expire, police will make contact to arrange for the firearms to be taken into safekeeping until a new certificate is issued and as long as the application of received at FEB before expiry and we have issued a receipt letter then the firearms won't be seized or need to be lodged with a dealer.

I hope this is of help. Your local Firearms Enquiries Officer is always happy to advise and can be contacted by calling 101 or through your local station.

Thanks and regards Senior FEB Manager





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Mon-Fri 8:30am - 5:30pm Sat 9am - 12:30pm Closed Sunday



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#### This Hunting Season

Once again the anti brigade has come to the fore and they have recently declared their intention on social media to mount a more vigorous campaign against hunting this coming season.

Countryside Alliance Ireland (CAI) Chief Executive, Lyall Plant, met with the PSNI's Superintendent in charge of wildlife crime and rural matters to discuss the potential threats from antis. The PSNI now have key hunt details (hunt contact personnel, dates of meets and locations) which will be circulated internally to ensure the PSNI officers are aware of the meets taking place.

CAI, The Northern Ireland Masters of Hounds Association and the Hunting Association of Northern Ireland have joined forces to reinforce to their members about the need to be vigilant and to report any suspicious or unlawful activity by antis to the police. 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.

Many of the hunts have codes of practice in place and this is particularly important to ensure that the members are aware of what is expected of them. Much of this is common sense and includes the need for members to be courteous and considerate, not only to fellow huntsmen and women but to the public in general.

Lyall Plant commented: "It is vital, especially in these testing times when the antis are increasingly trying to thwart legitimate hunting activities, that the support of the public is not diminished by any act of mindlessness, such as blocking traffic or causing obstruction. This applies not only to the hunt themselves but also their car followers. A little bit of consideration goes a long way and we all have our part to play."

#### 'Watch out for Wildlife Crime'

Many of Northern Ireland's native species are under threat of wildlife crime, according to a new campaign launched by the Partnership for Action Against Wildlife Crime in Northern Ireland (PAW NI).

PAW NI of which Countryside Alliance Ireland is an active member, is a partnership comprising representatives of organisations (statutory and non-government) involved in protecting against wildlife crime.

The 'Watch out for Wildlife Crime' campaign, is encouraging everyone to get serious about all forms of wildlife crime and help to prevent it. It aims to raise public awareness of what a wildlife crime is, why it's important, things to be avoided and how to report anything suspicious.

A wildlife crime involves any action against any protected wild animal or plant which contravenes current wildlife, environmental, game or animal welfare legislation protecting Northern Ireland's wild animals and plants.

Wildlife crime covers a broad spectrum and can include everything from salmon and deer poaching, disturbing and killing of badgers, killing

# TRINE TO THE TOP TO TH

Emma Meredith PSNI Wildlife Liaison Officer, Supt. Brian Kee, Service Lead for Rural and Wildlife Crime and Lyall Plant, CAI Chief Executive.

## COUNTRYSIDE ALLIANCE IRELAND

#### Love the countryside

of birds of prey, disturbance of nesting birds and the uprooting of wildflowers.

Speaking at the launch of the 'Watch out for Wildlife Crime' campaign, Environment Minister Mark H. Durkan said: "We have launched this campaign to highlight to the people of Northern Ireland activities which are potentially harmful to so many of our native wild species.

"We aim to educate people that sometimes their actions inadvertently cause significant harm to wildlife. Of course there are also other elements which involve much more extreme forms of criminality; those who target wildlife inflicting great cruelty for their personal pleasure or those who illegally exploit or target our wildlife for financial gain.

"Our starting point is to drive increased awareness of what wildlife crime is and why and encouraging them to report it or seek advice, so that we keep this as a priority and work towards dramatically reducing all forms of wildlife crime."

The Police Service of Northern Ireland lead for Rural and Wildlife Crime Superintendent Brian Kee and member of PAW NI said: "The Police Service of Northern Ireland today, along with partners in the Partnership for Action Against Wildlife Crime, call upon the public to 'Watch out for Wildlife Crime'. This campaign seeks to prevent wildlife crime from occurring by raising awareness and encouraging people to report a wildlife crime."

"But let's be very clear - those who intentionally or recklessly kill, injure or disturb protected wild animals or wild flowers are criminals and deserve to be brought to justice. So anyone who witnesses suspicious behaviour or suspects a wildlife crime is taking place or has occurred contact the Police Service on 101, or in an emergency ring 999. The report will be fully investigated and where evidence of a criminal offence is found the

offender will be reported to the Public Prosecution Service with a view to a prosecution. Anyone who wishes to report information anonymously can ring the independent charity Crimestoppers on 0800 555 111.

CAI's Lyall Plant, said: "Countryside Alliance Ireland is pleased to help promote the message that wildlife crime will not be tolerated in Northern Ireland. We must all play our part to raise awareness and help combat wildlife crime once and for all."

For more information visit the Watch out for Wildlife Crime webpage on: www.wildlifecrimeni.org

#### The late Tom Brown

It is with great sadness that we write of the recent passing of Tom Brown.

Tom, a keen supporter of Countryside Alliance Ireland, was a continuous presence in our marquees every summer, entertaining us with his great repartee. A former President of the British Deer Society in Northern Ireland, his knowledge and

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experience within the deer stalking circles was second to none. Tom will be sadly missed; not only by the country sports community but by all who knew him.

Our thoughts are with his family and friends at this time.

#### Sale of Woodcock Prohibited in Republic of Ireland

The European Communities (Wildbirds) (Woodcock) Regulations 2015 refers. The Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht has made the European Communities (Wildbirds) (Woodcock) Regulations 2015 in exercise of the powers conferred on her by section 3 of the European Communities Act 1972. Regulations add the Woodcock to the list of species of wild birds of which the sale, transport for sale, keeping for sale and offering for sale is prohibited, in the interest of conservation



Following the Minister for Justice and Equality's announcement in relation to changes to firearms licensing, Countryside Alliance Ireland was asked to attend the first meeting of the Firearms Consultative Panel on Wednesday 29 October 2015 in Dublin.

CAI is one of a number of representative organisations on the panel that was present at the meeting to discuss a number of items including the terms of reference, proposed as follows:

- To examine the feasibility of the establishment of a ballistic record of handguns.
- 2. To examine the introduction of the reloading of ammunition.
- To consider updated storage conditions for firearms and improvements to legislation governing safety and security of firearms.
- 4. To examine the introduction of security standards for the safe custody of firearms within registered firearms dealers' premises.
- To provide a forum for discussion of difficulties and relevant developments in the firearms licensing system.
- 6. To make observations on the amendment of the Garda Commissioner's Guidelines as to the Practical Application and



Greg Kane, Chairman BDS NI, the late Tom Brown & Lyall Plant

- Operation of the Firearms Acts 1925-2009.
- 7. To report to the Minister as required on firearms licensing.
- CAI was an active member of the previous FCP and we will continue to ensure the interests of our members are best represented. We shall keep you updated on further developments.

#### Firearms News – Northern Ireland

Firearms Engagement - At the time of going to press, Countryside Alliance Ireland has been invited to an introductory meeting with PSNI FEB to meet recently appointed senior management including the Temporary Head of Firearms and Explosives Branch and the new Chief Superintendent for Service Improvement Department.

#### **Justice No.2 Bill**

In addition, we have been called to give oral evidence to the Committee for Justice on the Justice No.2 Bill at Stormont on Tuesday 17 November 2015. Along with the Gun Trade Guild (NI) and BASC (NI) we will reiterate our views to the Committee in respect of firearms licensing fees, the banded system and young shots.

#### Minister Humphreys Announces Ban On Sale Of Woodcock

The Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht, Heather Humphreys TD, has announced a ban on the sale of woodcock, effective from 1st November 2015. The move is aimed at addressing the falling number of the bird species here.

There is a large winter influx of woodcock to Ireland. The Minister has decided to introduce the ban, following consultation with relevant stakeholders, in order to reduce shooting pressure on the species. The ban is effective from November 1st, which is the start date for the hunting season for woodcock which extends until 31st January 2016.

Minister Humphreys said: "Concerns have been expressed by both hunting groups and conservation bodies that the extent of shooting is threatening the woodcock population. It is thought the increase in the shooting of woodcock may be due to the overseas market for the species.

"My Department will monitor the impact of the ban during the hunting season and I will consider additional protection measures, if required. Any further changes will only be implemented in consultation with the relevant hunting and conservation organisations.

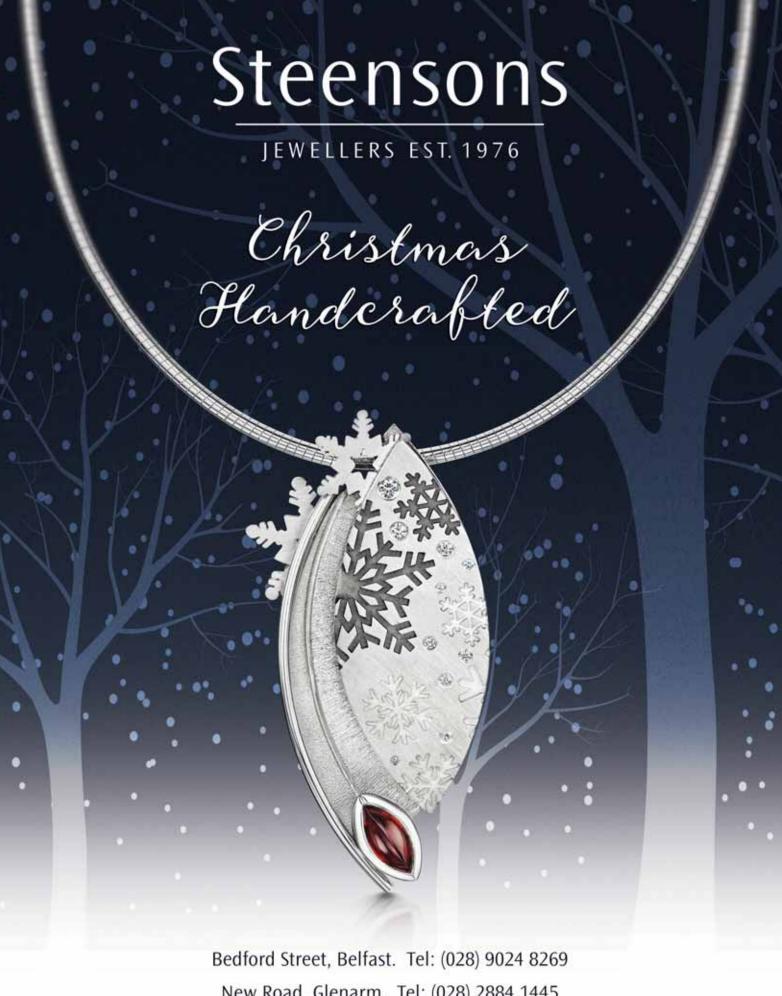
"A number of hunting and conservation groups are supportive of the ban, including the National Woodcock Association of Ireland, the Association of Game Shot Operators, the National Association of Regional Game Councils and BirdWatch Ireland."

The European Communities (Wildbirds) (Woodcock) Regulations 2015 prohibit the sale, transport, keeping and offering for sale of woodcock and are available on the website of the National Parks and Wildlife Service of the Department at www.npws.ie.

Ireland's report in 2014 to the European Commission on the status of bird species in Ireland noted a long-term 68% reduction in the breeding range of woodcock. It is also considered to have unfavourable status across Europe. These findings are reflected in the inclusion of woodcock in the revision of the list of Birds of Conservation Concern in Ireland.

Commenting, Larry Taaffe, Secretary of the National Woodcock Association of Ireland, said: "The ban has come after long discussion with the NPWS and they should be congratulated for their pro-active involvement and in particular Mr Gerry Leckey.

"The NARGC headed by Mr Des Crofton lead the communications with the department and Birdwatch Ireland, The Association of Game Shoot Operators and the National Woodcock Association of Ireland were the groups highlighting the overshooting of woodcock by unregistered, unregulated tour shoot operators and "ordinary hunters" who are plundering the woodcock population for monetary gain."



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## SUPERB 300-YEAR-OLD GUN COLLECTION FROM HOOTON PAGNELL HALL IN YORKSHIRE FOR SALE AT BONHAMS

#### AMILY'S ARMOURY INCLUDE DUELLING PISTOLS, BLUNDERBUSSES, SILVER MOUNTED FLINTLOCK PISTOLS, SWORDS, HELMETS AND A MAN TRAP

When Mark Warde-Norbury inherited Hooton Pagnell Hall eight years ago he decided he needed more space and so Bonhams are holding a house sale of a selection of the contents in Knightsbridge, London.

Of all the objects in the house some of the most interesting come from this fascinating weapons collection, many of them owned by family members across three centuries dating from 1668. Sited south of Leeds the spectacular house dates back to the 13th century stands in extensive aardens.

David Williams, Head of Antique Arms and Armour at Bonhams says: "The fact that some of these weapons have been out of circulation for 300 years and come fresh to the market adds greatly to their interest."

Mark Warde-Norbury comments: "It was an eye-opening experiencing going carefully through the house and finding things that I did not know existed. We found weapons in drawers and cupboards and behind furniture, stashed away as though for an attack that never came." The reason for that may be in part the fact that it was known that the house contained mantraps.



19th century iron mantrap.

The sale features a 19th century iron mantrap with eighteen-inch jaws

## LANDOWNERS WELCOME NEW WILD SALMON PROPOSALS

Scottish Land & Estates has welcomed the Scottish Government's revisions to its proposals to license the killing of wild salmon.

Environment Minister, Aileen Macleod, has announced a more targeted approach which will see fishery districts categorised according to their salmon's conservation status and a charging scheme will no longer be pursued. The killing of salmon will be allowed where salmon are in good conservation status, restricted in areas of moderate conservation status and salmon fishing will be restricted to purely catch and release where the conservation status is poor. In addition, conservation plans will be required in areas where salmon fail to meet good conservation status. Fishing for salmon outwith estuary limits will remain prohibited as previously proposed

Katy Dickson, policy officer at Scottish Land & Estates, said: "We support the Scottish Government in revising the proposals and are delighted that stakeholders have been listened to. The measures appear to be more targeted and there is an appreciation that one size does not fit all when it comes to wild fisheries policy. We look forward to seeing full details later in the week but these proposals appear to be practical and reasonable."

and a tilting footplate, (65 1/2in wide x 16 1/2in deep x 10in high). This fearsome object is estimated to sell for £400 – 600. Estates used mantraps to deter and catch poachers in the 18th and 19th centuries. They became illegal in 1826 although a law was passed in 1830 allowing for them to be used by licence before finally banned for good in 1861.



A fine cased pair 22-bore flintlock duelling pistols.

The most valuable item amongst the weapons in the sale at an estimate of £6,000 to £8,000, is a cased pair of 22-bore flintlock duelling pistols by H.W. Mortimer & Co of London, gun makers to his Majesty, circa 1800. Harvey Walklate Mortimer was apprenticed to his father in 1791.



A pair of 18-bore silver-mounted flintlock holster pistols.

A pair of 18-bore silver-mounted flintlock holster pistols by John Harman of London circa 1730, is estimated at £2,000 - 3,000. John Harman was apprenticed to Henry Anthonison, and turned over to John Shaw in 1707. He was free of the London Gunmakers' Company in 1714, and appointed Gunmaker to Frederick, Prince of Wales in 1729. The last reference to him is in 1760.

Bonhams Director of House Sales, Harvey Cammell, says: "Hooton Pagnell Hall is the quintessential English country house and this sale of selected contents will have huge appeal to collectors both in this country and internationally."





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#### International Sea Trout Symposium focuses on species' management and conservation

nland Fisheries Ireland (IFI) and Northern Ireland's Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure (DCAL) have welcomed delegates to the second International Sea Trout Symposium, which took place from at the end of October in Dundalk.

The Symposium's key objective was to promote the wider application of an evidence-based approach to the future management and regulation of the sea trout. It also considered developments since the last symposium, held in 2004, and highlighted priorities for future investigation.

International scientists, managers and policy makers interested in the conservation and protection of the sea trout attended the conference. Sea trout is a valuable natural resource in Ireland, offering an exceptional angling experience to both tourists and locals. Irish fisheries managers are therefore very focused on the sustainable management, and, where required, the restoration of these valuable stocks. Outputs of the symposium will be used to develop national sea trout policies.

Northern Ireland's Minister for Culture, Arts and Leisure Carál Ní Chuilín, said: "Last year I brought in new legislation to protect both salmon and sea trout in our native rivers. All salmon and sea trout caught must be released back into the water, unless those rivers are meeting their management targets. We are delighted to be working with Inland Fisheries Ireland in advancing our knowledge of this species so that we all can enhance our understanding of their complex life history and ensure that we are taking all the necessary steps not only to conserve them but also to enhance stocks in our rivers."

Joe McHugh TD, Minister of State at the



Pictured at the second International Sea Trout Symposium in Dundalk were (L-R): Denis Maher, Department of Communications Energy and Natural Resources; Dr Ciaran Byrne, CEO, Inland Fisheries Ireland; Cynthia Smith, Deputy Secretary, Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure, Northern Ireland; and Dr Cathal Gallagher, Inland Fisheries Ireland

Department of Communications, Energy and Natural Resources, commented: "I would like to compliment all the scientists, managers and fisheries stakeholders on their passion and enthusiasm in extending their knowledge and understanding of sea trout management and conservation. The presence of this iconic migrant, which leaves freshwater and wanders our coastal waters to feed heavily before returning to its natal streams to spawn, is

considered by many as a very positive environmental indicator. I look to Inland Fisheries Ireland to ensure that sustainable management of sea trout is prioritised, and that the loss of sea trout populations, which has occurred in some areas, is halted. I also applaud the north-south approach being taken in supporting science and management issues – this is required to ensure the future effective management of sea trout stocks."

#### THE IRELAND ANGLING SHOW 2016

The biggest and busiest fishing show in Ireland, The Ireland Angling Show, will be back in action at the National Show Centre in Swords on 20 & 21 of February 2016.

Once again the show is shaping up to be an amazing gathering of Angling experts with over 100 exhibitors including retailers, boat builders and fishing holiday providers.

Mara Media extend a warm welcome to our friends at Scuola Italiana Di Pesca A Mosca – SIM, the Italian Fly Fishing school, who will be travelling to Dublin to participate at the show with Italian style casting demonstration and a variety of talks on Fishing in Italy. The Italian team will also be promoting the wonderful Fly festival in the historic town of Castel Di Sangro at the 15th century Maddalena Convent.

The international flavour of the show continues with the introduction of the sleek and sophisticated Marcraft fishing boats, hand crafted in the Netherlands www.marcraftvisboten.nl Four boats will be on display at the show perfect for lake fishing pike and trout etc. We welcome back the TFL Poland crew, with their amazing range of specialist lures. Fishing in Norway, Iceland, Italy and other exotic locations around the globe will be represented, and our own charter skippers from all around the Irish coastline and not forgetting our beautiful inland rivers and lakes.

Our most important visitors to the show as always are the kids, the future anglers and passing on the knowledge and love for fishing is all important. The Family Zone will be sponsored by Inland Fisheries Ireland and promises to be fun and interactive with workshops, entomology, tuition, and a host of attractions that will encourage them to pick up a rod and go fishing.

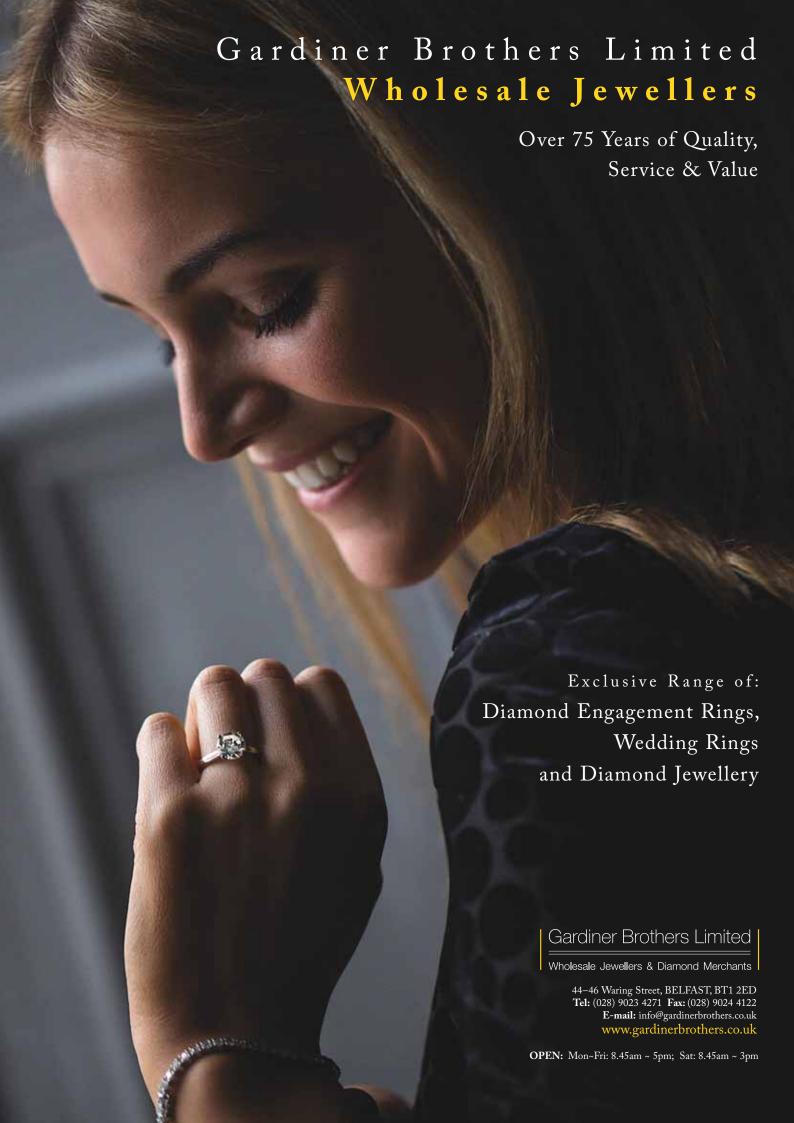
After the hilarious antics of the teams at Battle of The Anglers at the last



show, we are planning a repeat competition with new teams in 2016. Angling legend Charles Jardine will team up with Scott Mackenzie for Team Game, Jim Clohessey and Luke Aston will partner for Team Sea and champion Coarse fishers Cathal Hughes will partner Mark Pollard for Team Coarse. Come a long and cheer your team as the competition heats up. Compered by Hywel Morgan we can promise a lively competition.

The Irish specimen fish committee will host the Awards Day at the Clayton Hotel (formerly Bewleys Airport Hotel) on Sat 20th at 2:30 pm. Buses will run to and from the show for those of you who wish to attend both events.

The show is offering a one-stop-shop of all things Angling Related, be it shopping for tackle, a fishing holiday, a boat or to meet up and get advice from your favourite fishing expert. The Ireland Angling Show has it all follow us on Facebook, Twitter and website for updates.



#### The Second Northern Ireland Angling Conference 14th November 2015



Delegates at the Angling Conference organised by the NI National Angling Forum

Gary Lavery, Angling Active Clubs Co-ordinator writes that the Second Northern Ireland Angling Conference was organised by the NI National Angling Forum, made up of representatives from Sport NI (SNI), Loughs Agency (LA) the Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure (DCAL), Tourism NI, Waterways Ireland as well as the Ulster Angling Federation and the National Coarse Fishing Federation of Ireland. The conference was focused on club development in NI. Gary Lavery as the Active Clubs Development Officer was instrumental in pulling together the programme for the conference.

#### Strategic Review of Angling in Northern Ireland

The strategic Review of Angling in Northern Ireland had been prepared by external contractors through an intensive consultation process to help inform the development of an angling strategy for the north of Ireland. The review was commissioned by Sport NI in partnerships with LA, DCAL and Tourism Northern Ireland and advised by a steering group involving the recognised governing bodies for the sport. The Review was published in February 2014 and highlighted thirty three recommendations that could help to progress the development of angling, through the provision of better governance, improved facilities and increased awareness and participation. One of these was to hold an annual angling conference.

#### The Conference and Programme

The conference was held at the Craigavon Civic Centre and over 75 delegates from 21 different clubs including 2 newly formed clubs were involved in the event. The conference was opened by Seamus Connor from DCAL Inland Fisheries group and was facilitated by Gary Lavery.

The Programme was split into two sections: the morning consisted of four speakers and the afternoon consisted of three optional workshop sessions.

#### Morning session speakers

Odhran Doherty, Disability Sport NI.

Odhran is one of the DSNI Active Clubs Development Officers and provided very valuable and useful information to the angling clubs present on innovative thinking that may help to encourage greater participation in the sport and also to encourage a greater take up in membership to the clubs. The greatest value of this session was the connections that Odhran could bring between disabled groups and organisations and the

	Conference Programme
9.00am – 9.45am	Registration Tea/Coffee
10.00am	Welcome, introduction and opening remarks – DCAL
10.15 - 10.45am	Keynote speaker 1
	Odhrain Doherty, Disability Sport NI
10.45 - 11.15am	Keynote speaker 2 Mike Duddy, Salford Friendly
	Anglers Association
11.15 – 11.30am	Tea/Coffee
11.30 - 12.00pm	Speaker 3 Denise Hayward, Director, Volunteer Now
12.00 – 12.30pm	Speaker 4 Mark Tierney – Lough Macrory and Murrins
	District Angling Association.
12.30 – 1.15pm	LUNCH
1.15 - 2.00pm	Optional workshops series 1
	a. Club Mark and Club Leaders – Alan Curran
	b. Accessing Funding for Your Club – Mike McClure
	c. Safeguarding and Your Club Members –
	Paul Stephenson
2.00 – 2.45pm	Optional workshops series 2
	a. Club Mark and Club Leaders – Alan Curran
	b. Accessing Funding for Your Club – Mike McClure
	c. Safeguarding and Your Club Members –
	Paul Stephenson
3.00pm	Final plenary – Loughs Agency
3.30pm	Conference close
11.30 - 12.00pm 12.00 - 12.30pm 12.30 - 1.15pm 1.15 - 2.00pm 2.00 - 2.45pm	Speaker 3 Denise Hayward, Director, Volunteer N Speaker 4 Mark Tierney – Lough Macrory and Mur District Angling Association.  LUNCH Optional workshops series 1 a. Club Mark and Club Leaders – Alan Curran b. Accessing Funding for Your Club – Mike McCl c. Safeguarding and Your Club Members – Paul Stephenson Optional workshops series 2 a. Club Mark and Club Leaders – Alan Curran b. Accessing Funding for Your Club – Mike McCl c. Safeguarding and Your Club – Mike McCl c. Safeguarding and Your Club Members – Paul Stephenson  Final plenary – Loughs Agency

fishing clubs. There was a high level of enthusiasm among the clubs represented to work more with people with disabilities – and this represents a good opportunity for development for both DSNI and the Angling NI officers.

There was a call for further more distinct training especially for coaches in dealing with the disabilities. The paddle-ability and climb-ability courses that have been previously developed could be re-jigged to create a "Fishability" course.



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#### Mike Duddy, Salford Friendly Anglers Association

Mike Duddy is the Chairman of the Salford Friendly Anglers Association. This is the oldest fishing club in the world and in 2010 was about to close with only 6 members. Mike came on board and through some very socially orientated and innovative approaches there are now over 2000 members in the club. They agreed at the outset in 2010 to keep the membership free and any money required would be captured through fundraising, grants or giving. They deliberately keep their costs really low – mainly insurance and have negotiated all of their fishing rights for £1 per annum (if requested). They are focused on environmental improvement so that fishing will improve in inner city Manchester and as they work in some of the most deprived sections of the community there – they have been good at availing of grants.

They have very short and clear aims.

- To raise the profile, and public awareness of the River Irwell as a leisure facility.
- 2. To ensure that our local authorities, United Utilities and the Environment Agency continue to divert resources towards the continuing environmental revival of the River Irwell and its tributaries as fisheries
- To ensure that as much of the river as possible remains free access to fishermen and other water users
- 4. To encourage people to go fishing!

They hold their meetings in the pub and not much happens without cups of tea or a pint!!

This was a very inspirational story and again highlighted the value in informal approaches to club development.

#### Denise Hayward, Director, Volunteer Now

Denis provided a very useful and interactive presentation on developing and valuing volunteers. She got delegates to think a bit more strategically

about volunteer development and could be a useful speaker for other Active Clubs seminars and workshops. She is keen to continue to build bridges with the sport sector as they recognise that sport and the environment are 2 of the main ways that people volunteer in NI.

#### Mark Tierney – Lough Macrory and Murrins District Angling Association.

Mark highlighted that the 2014 Angling Conference was the inspiration for their club to further develop their programmes and membership. He also flagged up how he utilised the information in the Strategic Review of Angling to access funding and further opportunities. Having a good site in a rural setting was their starting point - but building connections with other sporting facilities and opportunities around them has proved important with a walking trial, triathlon group, GAA club and gym. This has helped people to see the lake and surrounds as a key hub for recreation. Furthermore building a community focus and engaging with local groups such as the Camphill community and Men's Sheds groups has been essential

Mark highlighted that they have a really strong committee of very enthusiastic, forward thinking people with a positive can do approach and this has been instrumental in developing the club. Also working closely with funding bodies (SNI and LA) has been essential to help understand their priorities and to make sure that the club delivers on these.

Again this case study highlighted the importance of driven individuals and building community engagement through their sporting activities.

#### Afternoon Workshops:

In the afternoon 3 club development workshops were held for the attendees by Mike McLure Sport NI on Funding Programmes, Alan Curran Sport Ni on Club Mark and Club Leaders and Paul Stephenson NSPCC, on Safeguarding and Access NI.

The conference was closed by Kevin Wilson Loughs Agency.

#### 6th Annual Galway Fly Fair

The Great Game Fairs of Ireland had two stands at the fair (one for the fair and one for the magazine) and in terms of promoting an Irish Angling publication and game and country events had the field to themselves. Could this engagement with customers and potential customers be the reason why the Fairs are the most popular events and the magazine the most read Irish hunting, shooting and fishing magazine?

The fly fair ably organised by Stevie and Elaine Munn and team - even 89yo Munn mum was heavily involved - was a good success and we at ICS&CL gave away

almost 1,000 copies of the magazine – something we do at a number of events - could this be why our advertisers get the best returns?

Stevie reports: "We had record numbers of visitors come to the show over the two days 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 over 60 top fly dressers from all over the world travelling to Ireland, fly casting

demonstrations by well-known angling celebrities and world champions, angling talks by experts in their field and the youth fly tying competition. We would like to thank our sponsors. Partridge, Veniard, Semperfli and acknowledge the support from Irish Country Sports and Country Life magazine and the companies that gave to the prize draw. Hardy, Greys, Costa, Partridge, Veniard and Semperfli.

For more information on the show please email Anglingclassics@aol.com or visit www.irishflyfair.com or go to the Irish Fly Fair Facebook page.

## Salmon farms can have a significant impact on wild salmon and sea trout stocks

Adefinitive scientific paper, reviewing over 300 scientific publications, has just been published in the prestigious journal Aquaculture Environment Interactions on the effects of sea lice on sea trout stocks. A team of top international scientists from Norway, Scotland and Ireland reviewed all available published studies on the effects of sea lice and have concluded that sea lice have negatively impacted wild sea trout stocks in salmon farming areas in Ireland, Scotland and Norway.

The paper entitled "Effects of salmon lice Lepeophtheirus salmonis on wild sea trout Salmo trutta — a literature review" (https://research-repository.st-andrews.ac.uk/handle/10023/7295) reached its conclusions based on comprehensive studies of the effects of salmon lice from over 300 scientific publications.

The study also examined the potential effect of sea lice on salmon

and concluded that sea lice have a potential significant and detrimental effect on marine survival of Atlantic salmon with potentially 12-29% fewer salmon spawning in salmon farming areas. These conclusions concur with previously published Inland Fisheries Ireland (IFI) research on the potential impact of sea lice from marine salmon farms on salmon survival.

The studies reviewed indicate that salmon farming increases the abundance of lice in marine habitats and that sea lice in intensively farmed areas have negatively impacted wild sea trout populations. The effects of sea lice on sea trout are increased marine mortality and reduced marine growth. This new study confirms the evidence collected since the early 1990s in Ireland regarding the impact of sea lice on wild sea trout stocks, particularly in relation to the collapse of Connemara's sea trout stocks.





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#### New Director of Development

#### and Country Sports For Great Game Fairs of Ireland

The Great Game Fairs of Ireland team is widely regarded as a 'dream team' in terms of experience and expertise in delivering world class country sports events.

Continuous development is just one key element of The Great Game Fairs of Ireland's success story spanning a record of nearly 60 Game and Country Fairs since 1979 - with plenty more to come.

Joining the team in 2016 as its new *Director of Development and Country Sports* is author, journalist and country sports enthusiast Steven McGonigal.

Having worked with the Great Fairs of Ireland in the Main Arena since 2008 as the notorious 'Victorian Poacher' and as Country Sports Arena Director, Steven is very enthusiastic about his new role in 2016.

Steven said: "The Great Game
Fairs of Ireland consistently provide
top class events and have played an
important part in promoting and
defending country sports and the
country way of life particularly in
Ireland but increasingly to a more
international audience through
international championships at the
fairs and through the international
reach of the online version of the Irish
Countrysports and Country Life
magazine.

"I very much look forward to bolstering this hugely successful team, and helping taking the fairs forward to the next level by delivering bigger, better and even more successful events for the public to enjoy and further increasing the readership and status of the Irish Countrysports and Country Life magazine.

"I will be launching a series of new initiatives in 2016 and can announce that the first will be aimed directly at lurcher enthusiasts – full details shortly.

"I have other exciting developments planned, including new sponsors for the Great Game Fairs of Ireland's International Competitions, and an exciting new enhanced Prize Structure. I also have some very innovative new ideas for Main Arena entertainment. It really is the dawn of a new era for us - in fact an exciting time for everyone - particularly the many thousands who flock to our events each year."

From Donegal and brought up 'in the thick' of country sports since he was a child, Steven lives and breathes the traditional ways of county life. Steven writes for several publications including Irish Country Sports and Country Life Magazine, and is the Irish correspondent for the Countrymans Weekly. He is also author of 'The Seasons End' and has contributed to various working dog publications.

He grew up accustomed to working Springer Spaniels, he found his true passion with running dogs at an early age and currently has two Lurchers, 'Fudge' and 'Molly' and a young Teckel called 'Archie.'

A man of many passions, Steven enjoys a variety of country sports, but counts ferreting, lurchers, shooting, beagling, fishing and reading country sports books among his favourite pastimes.

Welcoming Steven to the team, Game Fair Director Albert Titterington, who brought the concept of a sustainable Irish Game Fair to Ireland in 1979, said: "2015 was the most successful year ever for the Great Game Fairs of Ireland, with the Irish Game Fair at Shanes Castle setting a new standard for any Irish game, country or countrysports fair - with a new international focus, a record attendance and record numbers of quality traders. As well, the Irish Game & Country Fair at Birr Castle posted a record attendance on Sunday, and the Irish Countrysports and Country Life magazine is clearly the most read ever Irish Hunting, shooting and fishing magazine.

"However instead of 'resting on our laurels,' we recognised that this gave us the ideal platform to take our events and magazine to levels unseen in Ireland before in 2016 and beyond and felt that one of the best ways of driving our planned initiatives forward was to appoint a Director of Development .

"We were fortunate that we had the ideal candidate for the position as Steven McGonigal already contributes to the fair in a number of ways, including deputising for me in many facets of the fair. We are also fortunate that while Steven brings additional youth, drive and enthusiasm to the team, he spans most of the sports, is competent in marketing and finance, and is extremely popular with the existing Fair directors. As such he will fit seamlessly into the organisation structure.

"Importantly, Steven subscribes wholeheartedly to the ethos and aspirations of the Great Game Fairs of Ireland and I speak for the whole team when I say we look forward to working with him to drive the Great Game Fairs of Ireland brand to new international levels."



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#### **Obituary**

#### DOUGLAS BUTLER An appreciation

He shall not hear the Bittern cry In the wild sky, where he is lain, Nor voices of the sweeter birds Above the wailing of the rain.

Perhaps the words of Francis
Ledwidge the young poet who lost his
life at Passchendaele best encapsulate
the sad news of the passing of Douglas
Butler on September 25th last. The
death of one of the country's foremost
biologists and game shooters was
greeted with shock throughout the
entire field sports community in Ireland
and indeed further afield.

Cambridge educated, he never once lost sight of his roots which were deeply embedded in those wild places of his beloved South Tipperary. During his formative years following graduation he spent a short stint in England where, as well as teaching, he indulged his other passion playing rugby with Blackheath in London. But the call of home soon beckoned and before long, he moved back to Ireland and began his teaching career at the famous Glenstal Abbey in Murroe Co. Limerick.

A couple of years later he accepted a teaching post as Professor of Biology at



Burning heather for habitat improvement.

Rockwell College near Cashel where he eventually settled down and, which by sheer coincidence, also happened to boast a thriving rugby academy. An active and passionate shooting man his entire life, Douglas managed to ably combine those rare attributes of being an academic and conservationist who understood only too well that the delicate balance of nature, so susceptible to man's

influence today, could so easily be tilted to the detriment of many species without necessary intervention in the form of predator control. Indeed, many a time I heard him astutely argue his case on this very topic as only he could and, such was his prowess that when he spoke people listened.

As a case in point, a mere five years ago, he bravely took on 'the establishment' on the issue of grouse stocks in Ireland by ably demonstrating through scientific know-how that birds were far more widely distributed throughout the country than figures quoted by officialdom. In fact, one of his oft quoted lines was that 'in fifty years of grouse shooting in Ireland, I have never once encountered anyone counting Grouse.' It also a solid testament to the man that he was instrumental with others in setting up The Irish Red Grouse Association which has also gone from strength to strength in the short few years since its inception. He was also a founder member of the NARGC Game Hunting



The late Douglas Butler is pictured on the left.

Compensation Fund and served as Chairman on a number of occasions.

One of the ventures closest to his heart though was leading his local Club in a grouse restoration project on the Knockmeal Down Mountains which, through his efforts, doubled numbers in a short few years. Even right up until his untimely death, he was preparing a project study on woodcock that would determine the numbers of native birds versus winter migrants as a means of establishing the general health of the population.

An accomplished author of several titles and scientific papers as well as numerous magazine articles, Douglas Butler will long be remembered for his unstinting work in the defence of the traditional rural Irish pursuits and he is a man whom it has been my privilege to have known.

To his wife Margaret, sons Owen, Rupert and Paul and his beloved daughter Susan, sincerest sympathies are extended.

John Burke

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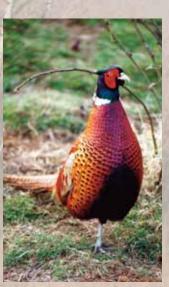
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### **Connemara Shooting** School At **Ballynahinch Castle**

'I wanted to teach people a sport that I had found wonderfully logical to learn.'

Back in the late seventies, a few of my friends wanted to win a national competition and were seeking assistance. They knew I had undergone many months of training in a famous shooting school in the UK I wanted to help them and also establish my credentials as an instructor, so I watched

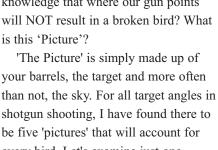
them one by one, shooting at a simple target in order to see their individual skills with their shotguns. Just a simple bird discloses so many of those skills, or lack of them. Having watched them all and offered advice to those who needed it, I went with them to the next round of their sport. On this occasion it was their

yearly final and I was thrilled to see both teams shoot really well.

I had told them two inescapable truths: the first is undeniably logical, where your gun is pointing in relation to your target, at the moment you decide to pull the trigger, will result in you either hitting or missing your target. A hit bird has the correct 'picture'. The second is equally pertinent, it takes time for the shot to travel the length of your barrels and exit the muzzle. During that time the barrels must remain moving. If the shot is still inside the barrel and your barrel stops moving, has your bird suddenly stopped flying?

Many times, I said those words to an aspiring shooter, whether a complete novice or someone trying to reach the lofty heights of Olympic success. For you to know that you will break the target, 'the picture' must be seen to be correct before you pull that trigger. So why is it that we still find ourselves sometimes shooting with the clear knowledge that where our gun points will NOT result in a broken bird? What

be five 'pictures' that will account for every bird. Let's examine just one.



#### The incoming or driven bird

Seeing an incoming clay pigeon, we raise the gun, while pointing the whole gun at the target. With hand eye coordination, the stock reaches our cheek and we should now be viewing the



Connemara Shooting School's Shane Bisgood in his 'school uniform'.



The group trying a 60 bird flush.

target just at the end of our barrel. We need to catch up with the target and cover it completely. So for you to know it is the right moment to pull the trigger, the correct 'picture' for an incoming target is made up of sky, barrels and no bird. It is at this exact moment that we pull the trigger.

#### The pitfalls

These can be summed up as follows: so keen to see a bird break one fails to cover the bird entirely before you pull the trigger; so keen to see a bird break you lift your head at the moment of shooting which results in there being no follow through due to the barrels stopping dead; trying to complete your swing on the bird using your hands and arms, resulting in unintentional lateral movement on a vertical target or possibly pulling the gun too far in front of the target; poor gun mount with the bead uncentered, results in a shot to left or right of the target; not mounting the gun to the 'dominant or master eye', resulting in the gun being badly misaligned with the target, and closing both eyes or blinking at the moment of

shooting results in the shooter puling the trigger with both hands and arms and therefor jerking the gun away from the target.

Why we pull that trigger when the Picture is incorrect

The moment that you find yourself thinking that all is well with the world, I'm hitting my targets, everything's looking good, Beware! It took me many years to realise why I sometimes found myself pulling the trigger of my own



Shane offers some practical advice.



Ballynahinch Castle, the location of the Connemara Shooting School.

gun, actually knowing that the Picture wasn't quite right. It takes strength of mind to constantly examine what we are doing and criticise that which we are sure we do well.

The more birds we hit, the more inclined our minds are to relax. "You know how to do this, it's no problem". I've actually heard those words flit across my mind while in the act of swinging my gun on a target. At that moment we have transited from being the 'dictator to what must happen' and become the 'spectator to what is happening'. The result will inevitably be a missed bird.

#### The cure

Understand this one fact, if you wish to hit the target, the picture has to be seen to be correct before you pull your trigger. Every time! There is no possibility of automation on this one element of shooting. All other elements such as balance, correct gun mount to the cheek and shoulder, correct movement of your body, correct pressures used on cheek and shoulder, they can all be automated but the 'picture' must always be seen to be correct before you pull that trigger.

#### The speed of gun movement

The faster you move your gun, the more difficult it is to be certain the

Picture is correct or the timing of the shot. Pick a small narrow target that is absolutely stationary, maybe the size of a clay pigeon. Point your front hand's index finger at a point to the left or right of the target, around 12 inches away will do. Now move your finger across your target at a medium speed and say 'Now' when you think you're pointing exactly at the target. Are you sure you are not slightly to the left or right of it? Now move your finger in a similar fashion but at quarter the original speed. I suspect you will rapidly realise that the slower you move that finger, the more certain you will be that you are correct when calling the shot.

The same applies to a shotgun, the slower you move that shotgun, the easier it is to be certain that you are pulling the trigger at the right moment. Needless to say if you move the gun too slowly you will never catch up with the bird but correct gun mount, combined with good weight distribution and balance, will ensure you of more time to move that gun slowly, enabling you to be sure the 'Picture' is correct. There are two overarching questions as to whether I pull the trigger of my gun: is it safe to shoot and is the picture correct?

#### The shooting school

My own shooting school is now in

Connemara, where I've set up my operation at the spectacular Ballynahinch Castle and I confess to having one of Ireland's most picturesque 'offices.' I teach both hotel guests and people from across Ireland and further afield. We entertain groups of families, friends and businesses. I'm teaching both ladies and gentlemen, including those who have never shot before or are improving their skills as well as entertaining those who are well versed in this art.

One favourite element of the shooting ground is our simulated driven bird shoot. Three guns shooting simultaneously, load and fire at multiple targets over a period of a few minutes, achieving a score which can be contested, or improved upon. These targets come from a high tower with multiple traps on it and from a mixture of lower traps showing a wonderful array of incoming and crossing birds up to 125 feet above you. This gives a selection of easy and challenging targets, a superb way to entertain others or to group build with your colleagues.

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## The start of a Dynasty

There have been many very interesting terrier and lurcher stories about the development of terrier 'breeds' and lurcher lines, including those by D. Brian Plummer and Colonel David Hancock. Hancock wrote on The Plummer Terrier, the Lucas Terrier and, most relevantly to this story, he illustrated the 1982 book by Plummer, entitled 'Merle: the start of a dynasty' about the development of a 'dynasty' of lurchers.



We are indebted to local enthusiast, Billy Craig, for reminding us about another dynasty of lurchers, whose development took place here in Northern Ireland.

#### The story begins

For as long as we have been running the All Ireland terrier & Lurcher Championships at Shanes Castle, now coming into their 29th year, much of the racing has been dominated by a particular dog, Miss Ellie, and her descendants.

Billy acquired Miss Ellie, a little fawn bitch, in 1998 at two years old from his good friend Gary Farmer from Hastings, East Sussex. Gary did — and still does — have an excellent reputation for keeping some of the best



Miss Ellie

'non peds' in that area. And, when Billy got Miss Ellie, she was as 'fit as a fiddle 'and a credit to her previous owner.

Miss Ellie was 22 ½ "to the shoulder and in the opinion of many was the start of a racing breed lurcher dynasty in the last decade, as many of the winning dogs at game fairs and shows owe their ancestry to her. Her sire 'Stag Night', a 'non ped' was a racing legend all over England, and her dam was a greyhound called Tyrone Sue.

Billy said that during the couple of seasons he had her, Miss Ellie won numerous races. "But after racing her a second season, I decided to go into greyhound racing, so I sold her to Frankie McKeown from Belfast."

Before selling her, he had taken her to John O'Connor in County Waterford, a well respected greyhound man, who had one of the top stud dogs called Come on Ranger. Miss Ellie was left with John and the bitch was artificially inseminated by a dog called Come on Chief, and the service fee agreed was a bitch pup.

Miss Ellie had six pups all fawns like herself and a little fawn bitch went to John. Joe McKinley the greyhound transporter, took the rest of the litter over to Gary Farmer in England. The two pups Gary kept for himself made a big impression in the non pedigree whippet racing in England. Gary called one of the dogs Come on Ernie, and a bitch was named Come on Sue. All the English racers should remember them well.

Frankie mated Miss Ellie to a greyhound called Marty's Star and out of this litter he sold a bitch pup which was destined to make a big impression. That pup went to Rose McCoy who named her Miss Tori and she in turn had great success, both in Ireland and the UK.

#### A remarkable racing dynasty

Rose takes up the story: "I took Miss Tori to Geoff Fletcher in Chesterfield and mated her to his racing champion Sugar Daddy. In many people's opinion the pups from this litter were virtually unbeatable. I kept two back for myself, a dog called Diego and a bitch called Zola. Another pup from this litter was sent to a lady in England and went on to win many races including the prestigious 'Thousand Guineas' Race.

"Miss Tori had broken her leg at 3 1/2 months old and had to get a pin fitted. She wasn't allowed off the lead till she was 10 moths old and, within a month of having gallops, she went on to win the first of her All Ireland titles at only11 months old."

#### Notable successes

Miss Tori was four times All Ireland U23" Racing Champion and was crowned Ireland's fastest Lurcher in 2007. She was U23" racing champion at Birr, Lurcherworld Apache Cup U23" Champion of Champions in 2006. At the Midland Game Fair she won the U23" Open Racing Winner 2005, Midland Game Fair U23" Racing Champion of Champions 2006. And of course she twice was crowned Six



Miss Tori surrounded by her winnings.

Nations Racing Champion and also became the BWRA Bonanza Overall Lurcher Racing Champion.

Rose said that she thought carefully about her breeding programme: "Miss Tori was Miss Ellie x Marty's Star, and I decided to breed her to a top dog, NSCH Sugar Daddy, a whippet x greyhound dog from Yorkshire owned by Geoff Fletcher and the mating resulted in Diego and Zola. We also had purchased a non ped whippet from Kenny Maddison, Co. Durham, called Paris who was RCH Wor John x The Fly One. Around the same time, Later, we mated her with Diego, which

produced two of our current young racing dogs, Kyro and Taylor, who are at the start of their racing careers. We have plans to breed Zola and another off our racing dogs, Luna, in 2016.

Diego has been Reserve in the Master McGrath and All Ireland U23" Racing Champion and has twice become Irish National U23" Racing Champion, four times NCF Overall Racing Champion; twice 32 Counties Champion of Champions and at Birr became the U23" Racing Champion, as well as Pride of the Peaks U23" Racing Champion.

Zola twice became the All Ireland U23" and U21" racing champion, and

on two occasions was Irish National U23" Racing Champion; 32 counties U21" Racing Champion of Champions, as well as Ballinlough NCF Overall Racing Champion and the Midland Game Fair U21" Lou Fowler Memorial Cup Champion.

When we asked about nutrition for her dogs, Rose confirmed: "We feed our dogs on Red Mills Tracker and Red Mills cereal, along with mixtures of beef and fish."

Miss Ellie was indeed the start of a racing dynasty in Ireland and we think it's fair to say that the story still has a long way to run.



Miss Tori with her 4 x U23" All Ireland Racing Champion trophies. Each event was won at Shanes Castle.



Diego after one of his Irish Nationals wins.



Diego in England wins Pride of the Peaks U23" Racing Champion, with his litter sister Leah in reserve.



Zola after winning the Midland Gamefair U21" Lou Fowler memorial Cup. Rose is pictured with Geoff Fletcher the owner & breeder of her sire Sugar Daddy.



One of the occasions when Miss Tori won the U23" All Ireland Racing Champion titles. It also shows her litter sister Ellie May, who won the O23" All Ireland Racing title with Frankie McKeown.



Diego & Zola after Diego had won the U23" 32 Counties Champion of Champions title & Zola had won the U21" 32 Counties Champion of Champions on the same day last year.



Kyro & Taylor two of the McCoy's current young racing dogs by Diego x Paris.. Both have been winning a few races each so far but still early days.



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## Terrier, Lurcher & Whippet Show Roundup

The Sporting Whippet Club of NI Dog Show and Race Day, 19th July, Dunsilly Kennells, Antrim.

Another great day and a big crowd at the Sporting Whippet Club NI Dog Show. Forty-one whippets were shown in the ring and the same in the racing.

#### **Showing Results**

Children's Handling Class: 1st Pearse Reynolds with Enzo, 2nd Lily Reynolds with Slaney, 3rd Abbey Fyffe with Boss

Best In Show Rea Wilson with Odis Reserve Best In Show Paul Reynolds with Slaney

Members Class Winner: Leeroy McCullough with Tizer

#### **Racing Results**

Grade A 1st Susan Mc Cann with Bella, 2nd Graham Fyffe with Bolt Grade B 1st Gladys Savage with Billy Bob, 2nd Barry Chambers with Ruby Grade C 1st Mark Eppleston with Bessie, 2nd Graham Fyffe with Roxy Puppy Racing 1st Rachel Kane with Duchess, 2nd Seamus Hart with Emily

Many thanks to our chairman Paul Reynolds and his committee for another great days showing and racing at Dunsilly. The Sporting Whippet Club NI, at the end of every season make a donation to a chosen Charity by Mr Victor McDonald, owner of Dunsilly Kennells. Last year's charity was The Chest, Heart and Stroke Foundation.

#### The Combined Clubs of Ireland Charity Dog Show/Race Day/Raffle /Auction, 26th July, Seaforde.

There were Whippets, Terriers, Lurchers, and family pets on show, and the folk on the end of the leads had only one thing in mind, to qualify for the Five Nations at Birr Castle, as well as contributing to funds for Ronan Elliott who suffers from Cerebral Palsy.

#### **Showing Results**

Overall Champion Puppy Chontelle McMeekin with Blue

Overall Champion Whippet Lisa Dumigan with Frankie

Overall Champion Lurcher Declan Lavery with Rolex

Overall Champion Terrier Breandan Coleman with Cindy.

Overall Champion and Best in Show Declan Lavery with Rolex

#### **Racing Results**

Fastest Lurcher Karen Cummins with Harry

Elite lurcher Nicky Smith with Prince Under 23 Peter Cummins with Angel

The raffle and auction was one of the highlights of the day. Dessie Mackin was auctioneer and what a brilliant job he carried out. Little Ronan Elliott attended with his Mum and Dad to say thank you to everyone for their efforts to help him lead a more normal life - what a brave little boy and I think everyone present 'dug that little bit deeper' into their pockets for such a worthy cause. £800 was handed over to Maurice McDowell to help Team Ronan on its way to its projected £2000.

What a surprise for John and myself, when we were presented with a beautiful engraved plaque by Irene Titterington on behalf of the Combined Clubs of Ireland, for all our support and hard work behind the scenes for the clubs over the year. It was so much appreciated by both of us.

#### Sligo Agriculture Show Dog Show & Race Day, 1st August.

Located in the scenic valley between Ben Bulben mountain and the Atlantic Ocean, lies the village of Grange, Co Sligo. Famous for its beautiful coastline, this was the magnificent venue for Sligo Agriculture Show, and the Lurcher, Terrier, and Whippet Dog Show & Race day Saturday. As we arrived early, it gave us time to go up through the show and soak up the carnival atmosphere.

#### **Racing Results**

Over 23 Lurcher 1st David Nolan with Bandit, 2nd Kirsty Harpur with Regal, 3rd Kirsty Harpur with Skyler

Under 23 1st David Nolan with Julie, 2nd Rose Mc Coy with Luna

Under 21 1st Rose Mc Coy with Kyro, 2nd Deirdre Mc Coy with Taylor

Whippet Final 1st Ryan Wright with Bolt, 2nd John Mc Stay with Riley

Terrier Racing 1st Jed Donagh with Bow, 2nd Niall O Cloghan with Silver, 3rd Ryan Wright with Oscar

#### **Showing Results**

Overall Champion Terrier Charlene Heslip with Molly

Reserve Champion Terence McLoughlin with Mac

Overall Champion Lurcher Kirsty Harpur with Skyle

Reserve Champion Lurcher Shane Ennis with Blue

Whippets Overall Whippet Champion John McStay with Riley

Overall Champion and Best in Show Charlene and Ian Heslip with their beautiful Terrier Molly.

It was a very poignant moment, when a member of the McGowan family stepped forward to present the PJ McGowan memorial Perpetual Cup to Charlene and Ian Heslip, Best in Show winners. The cup was donated by the McGowan family in memory of their late father, a top terrier man who kept terriers all his life.

#### Tullylish Working Terrier Club Dog Show And Race Day, 8th August.

Our summer dog shows have become canine excursions from all parts of the country and Tullylish was no exception as there was a big turnout of terriers, lurchers and strong dogs, but a small turnout of whippets. The reason for the small turnout of whippets was because there were only two classes on the board for Whippets. I am told this will be rectified again in 2016 with a ring for whippets only.

#### **Showing Results**

Puppies Overall Show Puppy Champion Chontelle McMeekin with Blue

Whippet Bitch Colin Tucker with Tia Whippet Dog Leeroy McCullagh with Tizer

Overall Champion Lurcher Sean Burke with Jack

Reserve Michael Quinn with Mo Charra

Overall Champion Terrier Peter Morgan with Mick

Reserve Peter Morgan with Chip Overall Strong Dog Champion Stuarty Moore

Overall Show Champion and Best in Show Peter Morgan with Fire Reserve Sean Burke with Jack. Northern Ireland Champion of Champions Lurcher Sean Burke with Jack Reserve Champion of Champions Eamon McCann with Thunder

Northern Ireland Champion of Champions Terrier John Heslip with Bruce

Reserve Northern Ireland Champion of Champions Charlene Heslip with Molly

#### **Racing Results**

Under 23 Joe Leonard Under 21 Joe Leonard with Jazz Over 23 Michael Quinn with M0 Charra

Bull Cross Champion Adam Puppy Race winner Kirsty Harpur with Pippa

Simulated Coursing Steven Dumigan

with Dash

John, thank you and the Tullylish Working Terrier Club for yet another top class show.

#### Birr Castle Game Fair 29th and 30th August.

Birr Castle Demense is a very impressive 1200 acre walled estate in the Magical Midlands of Ireland. The castle is the family home of Lord & Lady Rosse and has been in the family since 1620.

We arrived in the estate at 9.30am, and at that time we were just lucky to get a parking place at the ringside. By 11am, the field was completely overflowing with cars, trailers and families, and the atmosphere was electric and the weather was fantastic.

#### **Racing Results**

Master McGrath
Qualifier Over 23 (2016)
James Kelly with Shogun
Master Mc Grath
Qualifier Under 23 (2016)
Billy Craig with Cuckoo
Under 21 Billy Craig
with OO7

Non Elite Dion Carney with Oscars Girl

## Birr Showing Winners



Overall Champion Whippet Michael Quinn with Finn.



Overall Champion Whippet Micky Quinn with Finn.



Best In Show Kirsty Harpur with Skyler; Reserve Dessie Mackin with Mac; 3rd Michael Quinn with Finn; Judges Lurchers Patsy McCoy; Terriers Tom Barry; Whippets John McStay.



Sporting Whippet Club Best in Show



Sporting Whippet Club Racing Winners

Under 23 Non Elite Charlene Rafferty with Jip

Directors' Challenge Long Dog David Cain with Bursty

Bull Cross Raz Cain with Tyson Hairy Dog Rossa McDaid with Trigger Overall Champion of the 3 categories David Cain with Bursty Whippets Ryan Wright with Bolt Terriers Willie O Meara with Peanut.

#### **Showing Results**

Overall Champion Lurcher Kirsty Harpur with Skyler, Reserve Champion Lurcher Glen Doherty with Diesel

Champion Lurcher Pup Mickey Quinn with Hoss

Overall Champion Terrier Dessie Mackin with Mac, Reserve Champion Terrier Shane Gilmartin with Twister

Champion Terrier Pup Dessie Mackin with Haig

Overall Champion Whippet Michael Quinn with Finn, Reserve Champion Whippet Janet Duke with Ash

Overall Champion Whippet Pup Janet Duke with Benson, Reserve Champion Pup Tracy Gill with Ebony

Overall Show Champion and Best In Show Kirsty Harpur with Skyler, Reserve Show Champion Dessie Mackin with Mac

Overall Puppy Champion and Best in Show Mickey Quinn with Hoss, Reserve Puppy Champion Dessie Mackin with Haig

Overall 5 Nations Joint 1st Champion Lurcher Stuart Reid with Damo, Kirsty Harpur with Skyler, Reserve 5 Nations Champion Lurcher Peter Cummins with Harry

Overall 5 Nations Champion Terrier Ray Lawson with Toffy

Reserve Overall 5 Nations Champion Terrier John Hendricks with Young Sid

There was a huge surprise for John and I when Kieran Young presented us with the Colette Gannon perpetual Cup for Country Sport Persons of the Year 2015. A lovely tribute to the memory of Collette, I can assure you it will take pride of place on the mantelpiece in our home.

The Roscrea team certainly have the knack of making things run smooth and efficiently. A big thank you to Shane Lee, the man at the helm and to your team, for another great weekend of sportsmanship, enjoyment, and results.

#### The Sporting Whippet Club of NI Dog Show/Race Day and Barbecue, 13th September, Dunsilly Kennels, Co Antrim.

As we arrived at our destination with dogs in tow, the tents were already set up and ready to go for another great end of year show and barbecue and the field filled up quickly.

#### **Racing Results**

Grade A 1st Susan Mc Cann with Bella, 2nd Janet Duke with Oscar

Grade B 1st John Shaw with Mango, 2nd Graham Fyffe with Roxy

Grade C 1st Mark Eppleston with Bessie, 2nd Gareth Young with Duchess

Pups 1st Barry Chambers with Joey, 2nd Susan McCann with Seabass

Sporting Whippet Club NI Racing Champion 2015 Susan Mc Cann with Bella

Sporting Whippet Club NI Puppy

Racing Champion 2015 Leeroy McCullough with Tizer

#### **Showing Results**

Children's Handling 1st Pearse Reynolds with Elsa, 2nd Erin with Christoff

Overall Best in Show and 5 Nations Whippet Championship Qualifer for Shanes Castle 2016 Sarah Thompson with Bella

Reserve Best in Show Lucinda Thompson with Luna

Winner of the Sporting Whippet Club NI Show Champion of Champions 2015 Tracy Gill with Lola

Reserve Sporting Whippet Club NI Show Champion of Champions 2015 Rea Wilson with Odis

Thanks our Chairman, Paul Reynolds and his hard working committee for all their team work and dedication behind the scenes in 2015.

#### The Sporting Whippet Club of NI Charity Dog Show and Race Day, Richardson's Estate, Moyallen, Portadown, 20th September

The weather was good for the first half of the show, but later in the afternoon there was prolonged downpours, but this did not dampen the spirits of our avid show supporters.

#### **Showing Results**

Children's Handling Class Jamie Dumigan with Diesel

Overall Champion Terrier T Caravelle with Ned

Reserve Champion E Norman with Harley

Overall Champion Strong Dog S

Greenly with Rosie

Reserve Champion D Scullion with Sid Overall Champion Whippet Michael Quinn with Finn

Reserve Champion Ray Wilson with Otis

Overall Champion Lurcher Kirsty Harper with Skylar

Reserve Champion Sean Burke with Kash

Overall Champion and Best in Show went to Kirsty Harpur with Skylar

Reserve Champion Samantha Green with Rosie

Overall Champion Pup and Best in Show Mal McFall with Jock

Reserve Champion Pup Dessie Macken with Haig

#### **Racing Results**

Terriers 1st Brian Crothers with Maeve

Whippet Pup 1st Susan McCann with Seabass, 2nd John Shaw with Ghost Whippets 1st Susan McCann with Bella, 2nd Roy Hill with Briar

Lurcher Pup 1st Billy Craig with Scooby, 2nd Billy Craig/Seven Up

Lurcher Under 21 1st Joe Leonard with Not Scared, 2nd Rose McCoy with Taylor

Lurcher Under 23 1st Finbar Leonard with Never Scared, 2nd Finbar Leonard with Tracy, 3rd Rose McCoy/Luna

Lurcher Over 23 1st Michael Quinn with Mochara, 2nd Mal McFall/Fergie

Bull Cross 1st Kirsty Harper with Skylar, 2nd Kirsty Harper/Regan 3rd Adam Hughes with Nelly

Terrier Cross 1st Neil Pinkerton with Dipper, 2nd Mal McMurray with Smokey, 3rd Glen Doherty with Diesel

£250 was donated to the Chest, Heart and Stroke Association, chosen by Victor McDonald, Dunsilly Kennells, Antrim, and a Cancer Charity chosen by Johnny Richardson of Moyallen Estate, also £250.

#### The North West Working and Gun Dog Fair, Temple House Demense, Sligo, 27th September.

There were some beautiful Wolfhounds, Lurchers,

Whippets, Terriers, Irish Terriers and Plummer Terriers in the racing and show rings, and a big turnout also in the family pet ring. There were many outstanding moments at this Fair, but the highlight of the day for me was the Terrier Maze, hilarious and full of excitement.

#### **Showing Results**

Overall Champion Whippet Janet Duke with Ash

Reserve Overall Champion Whippet Charlene Rafferty with Timber

Overall Champion Terrier Terence Mc Laughlin with Rusty

Reserve Overall Champion Terrier Sam White with Merlin

Overall Champion Lurcher Peter Cummins with Harry

Reserve Overall Champion Lurcher Glen Doherty with Diesel

Overall Champion Puppy Chontelle McMeekin with Blue

Reserve Overall Champion Puppy Adam Cummins with Ben

Overall Champion and Best in Show Terence Mc Laughlin with Rusty

Overall Reserve Champion and Best in Show Janet Duke with Ash

Overall Champion in Family Pet Show Shannon Kelly with Guinness Overall Reserve Family Pet

Champion Frank Garbey with Fraiser

#### **Racing Results**

Under 21 Deirdre Mc Coy with Taylor

Under 23 Peter Cummins with Angel Over 23 Ned Kane with Coco Hairy Dog Ray Kane with Rose Bull Cross Kirsty Harpur with Regal Whippet Race Charlene Rafferty with Solo

Terrier Race Willie O Meara with Chieftain

And finally, none of this would be possible without the hard work and dedication behind the scenes of a lovely couple Patricia and Ritchie Verden and the committee and helpers.

Editors Note: We are indebted to Margaret for her reports and to Deirdre Mc Coy and Billy Harper and others for submitting photographs from Whippet, Terrier & Lurcher shows and from the Game Fairs. Without these people it would be impossible to give the working dog fraternity the coverage we do in Ireland's most read hunting, shooting and fishing magazine.

We realise the prestige associated with winning events at the Great Game Fairs of Ireland and especially the All Ireland Championships at Shanes Castle however, as an increasingly international event with a wide range of competitions, it is simply impossible for us to publish photographs of all shooting, fishing, gundog, and dog show winners from the terrier & lurcher show, pedigree dog show, dog agility show, carriage driving etc. We can therefore only publish a flavour of the fair through a selection of photographs.

Due to pressure of space we did not include the following results in the last edition:

#### THE 29th FEEDWELL All Ireland Terrier & Lurcher Racing Championships

Lurcher Pups Billy Craig with Beauty Under 21 Elite Billy Craig with 007 Under 23 Elite Finnbar Leonard with Tracy

Over 23 Elite James Kelly with Shogun

Under 23 Lurcher Charlene Rafferty with Gip

Over 23 Lurcher David Nolan with Missie

Traditional Lurcher Karen and Peter Cummins with Harry

Bull bred Lurcher Mickey Quinn with Lady

Greyhound Race Terrier Race Jenny O'Meara with Peanut

All Ireland Puppy Racing Champion Gareth Young with Duchess

All Ireland Whippet Racing Champion Susan and Ernie McCann with Bella.

And we are indebted to Billy Harper for supplying us with some photographs from Shanes Castle and Birr Castle of Billy Craig's very successful kennel of dogs.



Billy Craig's All Ireland Under 21 Elite Racing Champion, Shanes Castle 2015.



All Ireland Champion Racing Puppy, Shanes Castle 2015.

Billy won the Puppy Racing and Under 21" racing at Shanes Castle, repeated his under 21" success at Birr and also won the under 23" racing at Birr.

His photograph illustrating how 007 got its name has

His photograph illustrating how 007 got its name has stimulated an idea for a 'Dog Owners' page, where owners of successful dogs be it terriers, whippets, lurchers, or spaniels, retrievers, setters, pointers and HPRs, can submit a photograph of their dog letting the world (or at least the regular 80,000 readers per issue of this magazine) of the success of their dogs be it in winning prizes in competition or simply helping give a good day's sport. Please email these photographs to irishgamefair@btinternet.com



007

## More Exciting Terrier & Lurcher Events for 2016

Our new Director of Development will be launching some new terrier & lurcher initiatives in February to add to the following high profile events:

The RED MILLS Master McGrath Challenge at the Irish Game Fair at Shanes Castle Saturday 25th June: Applications for qualifiers now being taken.

The RED MILLS Five Nations Terrier, Whippet and Lurcher Championships : Applications for qualifiers now being taken.

The 29th Annual All Ireland Terrier & Lurcher Championships — Ireland's most prestigious championships OPEN to ALLCOMERS. Racing 25th June and Show 26th June at Shanes Castle, Antrim.

Exciting New Show & Racing events at the Ballynahinch Game & Harvest Festival Saturday 24th September.

To apply for qualifiers email Albert Titterington at irishgamefair@btinternet.com

# Harewood House CLA Game Fair 2015

This year the CLA was held at the beginning of August at Harewood House Estate near Leeds. The Home International Team Competition was on Saturday 1st and Sunday 2nd August. The Irish Team was selected and schooled by Captain Ken Lindsay and Vice-Captain Tommy Hughes and was as follows:

#### Spaniels

Willie McGaughin with Buccleuch Infinity of Mountdavys

Jamie Cahill with FTCh Clodahill Nell

Mick Walsh with Int FTCh Hollydrive Kurt

Ian Blair with Clodahill Nofler of Carnteel

Sean Moriarty with FTCh Tearsol Flash

#### Retrievers

Lorenzo Hynes with FTCh Trumpetaker Ash

Declan McCoy with Loughbeg Lady Roy Rankin with Brian Fig John Barr Jnr with Willowmount Regal Rose

Sean Diamond with Doohooma Lad The Spaniel Judges were Jon Bailey, Andrew Cunningham, Willie Edgar, and Victor McDevitt and the Course was set by Mark Whitehouse. The Retriever Judges were Peter Bates, Jamie Bettinson, Graham Cox, and Jim Dykes and the Course was set by Graham Jones.

The ground itself was some 150 metres long flanked by woodland on the right hand side. The cover was mainly game crop and white grass intersected by three fences. There was a water "splash" at the far end of the Course and the left was flanked by the spectator Grandstand.

The Spaniel Test was fairly straightforward with four retrieves of fifteen points each and sixty points for hunting. The Retriever Test by comparison was complicated, as it was run as a walk-up trial, with each team occupying a different position in line for each round. This meant that a comparison of each dog's work was impossible as only rounds one and five were identical. Confusing it sounds and was, as co-ordination between dummy throwers and guns became disjointed in early rounds, and nobody seemed to know who was going where.

After two days of often sodden competition the team placings were as follows:

1st England with 1001 points 2nd Ireland with 928 points 3rd Wales with 924 points 4th Scotland with 797 points

#### A remarkable result for the Irish Team

This was a remarkable result for the Irish Team, after some tiresome travelling, and dysfunctional organisational problems with accommodation, none of which were the fault of the Team management.

More exceptional, therefore, were the performances of Sean Moriarty with FTCh Tearsol Flash, who came out top spaniel for the third successive year, something never before accomplished. John Barr Jnr and Willowmount Regal Rose was top Irish Retriever and the redoubtable Sean Diamond put in a solid performance for the third year in a row to earn top Marking retriever. John Halsted with The Duchess of Devonshire's dog Brocklebank Navigator of Chatsworth was top retriever after dropping just thirteen points.

This was a trip not without massive problems, particularly with transport and accommodation, and the Team is to be congratulated on its' fortitude under less than ideal conditions. The Team sponsors Discover Ireland, Nutts Dogfood and Quest were amply rewarded by a Team who did their absolute best and represented Ireland exceptionally well.

#### Farewell to the CLA

This is the last CLA in its present format as it has been announced that due to falling revenues, there will be no more CLA Fairs under the current format. Anyone attending the Fair over the last few years, will have realised that despite the enormity of the event, attendance was falling, and eventually economic realities would hit hard. Perhaps with some restructuring, or mergers with other events, the Fair may emerge in another guise.

This is sad, as over many years since the early 1960s the CLA has produced some great National Gundog Teams, and some notable characters have shown their mettle in the green jersey.

One man who made an enormous contribution over many years was Tom Creamer, who was able to secure good sponsorship and, in conjunction with Irish Kennel Club Treasurer Victor Corbally, organised memorable trips to many UK CLA Game Fair venues. Our thanks go to Tom and the many others who in more straightened economic times always ensured that somehow Ireland had a Team at this prestigious event.



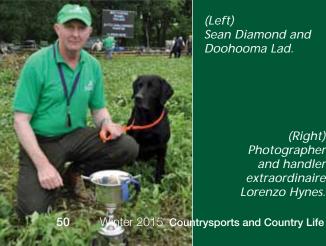
The Irish Team, CLA 2015.



The Team with sponsors Quest.



The Team with sponsors Nutts.



(Left) Sean Diamond and Doohooma Lad.





Sean Moriarty - Three in a row. (Below) Top Irish Retriever John Barr with Lord Harewood.





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An Impala ram culled by the Author.

#### The early sun was hovering low on the horizon that morning as we moved cautiously through the African bush.

Prior to setting out from camp the overnight frost was scraped from the bakkie's (jeep) exposed seats, so walking was a welcome relief for cold, stiff legs. Having scouted the area the previous evening we were aware that a decent herd of Impala was in the district. Locating their tracks was a priority while taking care not to accidentally stumble across them and spook the animals. With a Tracker out in front we scanned the terrain in an effort to isolate impala hoof-prints from the myriad left by other species that inhabited the area.

The Impala is native to the southern half of the African continent and inhabits woodland, scrub and bush veldt, always within reach of water. They could be viewed in many ways as the sika deer of Africa due of their rapid breeding and similarities including horned males and smaller females. Impala are jumpers, a three metre-high fence is not an obstacle and their leaps and bounds when running is referred to as 'pronking.' In other respects they behave more or less like most African antelope species, the herd always led by an older female with the canny male bringing up the rear. Lion, leopard plus other predatory species view impala as a tasty dinner and Homo sapiens falls into this category too. On the particular day in question, back in pre-digital camera days of the 1990s, we were camped a few miles from Thabazimbi in South Africa's Limpopo province in an area that had an abundance of impala. The Guide's wife had left us in no doubt that if we wanted to eat that night, we had better bring back some

meat.

The tracker led us further and further into the bush as he tried to find some useful signs. By 8am we had peeled off our jackets or fleeces, hanging them on nearby branches for collection later. The sun was beginning to do its work and flimsy shirts with short sleeves began to take on the aura of a winter overcoat. As is the custom in Africa we marked this area by stringing short lengths of loo roll from bushes in the vicinity of the jackets in order to identify the spot on the return trek.

#### Fresh impala tracks

Shortly afterwards we almost bumped into a group of rhino – luckily the Tracker spotted them before they spotted us. It was a gathering of nursing mothers with calves at heel and it



Early morning reflections.

wouldn't do to upset them. Rhino can make an awful mess of a mere human if they take the notion. Our Guide Mike suggested that we reverse slowly out of sight - and luck was on our side as the rhino didn't wind us. This change in direction led us to pick up fresh impala tracks, the first good signs we had seen.

At that point we split up. Mike and the other hunter, Anthony, went in one direction, the Tracker Thomas and I headed off at an angle to the others. Small two-way radios provided the necessary communication. Not long afterwards we heard a rifle report which indicated that the lads probably had some luck. They informed us over the radio that they had shot a female

Impala and were returning to the bakkie with it. The heat dictated a return to camp as soon as possible to butcher the meat and get it into the cold room. That shot spooked the herd, sending them in our direction, so we took up a position on higher ground which gave us a decent overview of the area. The Ram was bringing up the rear and as luck would have it, he stopped and turned in our direction to face the sun. Moving to a good shooting position involved crawling through the scrub for about 100 yards, often under bushes and sometimes through them, with the unpleasant possibility of coming face to face with a mamba or other unfriendly reptile.

Finally we came to a gap in the undergrowth and there he was straight in front about 150 yards away. Facing directly into sunlight the Ram couldn't see us, giving me ample time to settle down before taking the shot. When the bakkie returned we collected our discarded jackets and having loaded the impala onto the back of the vehicle, headed off for the cold room and then breakfast. Mike's wife told us that we would be having impala steaks for dinner that night which prompted the question if the meat was not too fresh. The response was interesting – she planned to soak the steaks all day in a marinade of coca-cola and cream. They were delicious!

Generally females are shot for herd management purposes, although I was on an Impala cull hunt in the Eastern Cape some years ago where we concentrated on males. The sole criterion was malformed horns. The ranch owner wanted to prevent these males mating with females and perpetuating the strain, so rams with bad heads were taken out. Obviously they didn't exactly stand around waiting to be culled. It involved a lot of hunting on foot in hilly terrain often looking down from a height on the Fish River.

#### I replaced it in the magazine with a fresh round

In a separate hunt close to the Botswana border I came across a slightly different problem. The plan was to cull six females, so a tracker and I set out to do just that. While we managed to get quite close to a milling herd of Impala it was plain that they would run in all directions after the first shot. The day was dragging on and losing the light was going to add to the problem. My .270 Mauser has a magazine capacity of four rounds, so I chambered one and then replaced it in the magazine with a fresh round making a total of five. Clasping a sixth round between my fingers I ran full tilt at the herd getting off the five rounds and bringing down five females. The last round manually loaded brought

down number six as they scattered. In hindsight I wouldn't recommend anyone to try that – and if I knew then what I know now, I wouldn't have done it either. But, heck, it was exciting at the time.

One of the more interesting characters that I met while hunting in the area is a gentleman with the very Afrikaans' name of Fanie Kruger. Fanie (pronounced Fawnie) has a sophisticated workshop set-up in his home outside Pretoria where he builds the occasional custom rifle. He also has a penchant for strange cars or jeeps and had just completed restoring an old Willys Jeep which sported oversized tyres and was fitted with a new 3-litre petrol engine. Naturally we had to try both out.

The rifle, a .30–06 was test-fired on the camp range and grouped adequately for hunting purposes. It was topped with an inexpensive scope and may have performed better had it been fitted with a more sophisticated sight.

Mounting a cheap scope on a rifle that someday might mean the difference between life and death for the hunter always provides a major topic of conversation for European hunters.

This practice, widespread throughout Africa, is alien to our way of thinking. Anyway, Fanie and I went impala hunting in his Willys Jeep. Someone told him that they had spotted a Schwartz Rooibuck in the district and we set out to find it. Schwartz Rooibuck (black-faced red buck) is native of Namibia and seldom seen in this area. No luck that day - we didn't come across any although we shot an Impala and Warthog for rations, eventually deciding to call a halt. The jeep performed well, riding high on the outsized tyres - with just one problem. It was considerably higher off the ground than the designers had intended and climbing back in was a bit of a problem.

Impala hunting is indeed challenging and will remain a staple of African safaris. Poachers too are fond of Impala – but that's another story.



A typical termite mound.



A stray Chameleon found in camp.



The Willys jeep performed well, riding high on the outsized tyres.

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One year on from my first visit to Lord Masham's Swinton Estate for the HPR Championship and I am back with a sense of déjà vu. Last year the first day of the trial was notable for almost continuous rain: this year we have not only rain but strong winds and showers of stinging hail to contend with as well. Fortunately, sponsors Skinners are again on hand to dispense hot drinks and a modicum of shelter for those who can squeeze into their tent until Chief Steward Nigel Dear calls us into the marquee for welcome speeches and introductions.

Our Judges for the 2015 Championship are Sheila Kuban and Phil Pearson. Phil was one of the Guns at last year's stake and ran in the very first HPR Championship at Lord Joicey's Ford and Etal Estate back in 1986 when I was also there, snapping away in black and white for a sporting magazine. Today my photography is all digital and colour but a wet day presents just the same problems as back then - fogged up lenses and waterlogged shutters just for a start. Our Guns for the stake are Paul Nixon, Stephen Robson, Costas Wilkinson and Karl Field and Head Grouse Keeper Gary Taylor is on hand to ensure that we make the best of the ground available for the trial.

The Allotments is a wide expanse of moorland with mainly heather in the

centre, bracken banks, white grass and rushes around the edges with woods and fields on all sides. On a dry day there would be a good head of pheasants, particularly around the margins of the moor, but the driving rain and hail have kept most of them in the shelter of the woods today and, as the trial gets under way, it soon becomes clear that the dogs are going to have to work hard to find game.

There are twenty-two runners made up of nine German Shorthaired pointers (GSP), five German Wirehaired Pointers (GWP), three Hungarian Vizslas (HV), two Hungarian Wirehaired Vizslas (HWV), two German Longhaired Pointers (GLP) and one Weimaraner (W).

We start off with the dogs hunting a cheek wind through bracken and white

grass and, for the first five runners, there is no game to point, though they still can impress the Judges with their hunting pattern in this difficult breeze. A lone woodcock flushes wild as the sixth dog is hunting but is missed as it flickers off into the shelter of the woods. At this point we turn directly into the wind and climb up through a thick bracken bank onto the heathery part of the moor and the action begins to perk up.

#### A woodcock jumps well in front of the dog

The rain eases off and for a while a watery sun breaks through. Lucy Hustler is running her GSP FTCh Aytee Isadora and the dog has a good steady point in the lee of a stone dyke. Guns in position, Lucy clicks her in and three

grouse rise and swing across the wind. Gun Costas Wilkinson is in pole position and drops two of them with a single shot, giving Isadora the chance to impress further with two good clean retrieves. Next down is Adrian Blackledge with his HWV Kerride Henry and after some good quartering Henry comes onto point out on the right flank. As the Guns are getting into position a woodcock jumps well in front of the dog and is dropped into the heather. The Judges have a brief debate as to whether this was the bird that Henry was pointing, then ask him to make the retrieve anyway which he does with no problems. Run on, he is soon on point again in the bracken and lifts a hen pheasant that is duly shot and retrieved. Though it is impossible to be certain, I suspect that this bird was the subject of the original point rather than the woodcock and had run off into the bracken as the Guns were coming in from the flanks.

A grouse dropped over the dyke into thick bracken is too much for the next two runners and, fortunately, not found by the Judges either. Scent seems a little stronger briefly: possibly because the birds are fluffing up their feathers as the sun breaks through but soon the rain starts again and the later runners struggle with several birds either bumped or missed. With the last first round runner Jayne Herbert's GSP Peersofdale's Highlander completing a retrieve on a grouse the Judges decide to blow for home to general satisfaction, most of us feeling that we have got wet enough for one day.

Saturday brings a much better morning: still with a good breeze but with the rain holding off until most of the ten dogs brought back into the second round have had their run. The quality of work is much more impressive too with grouse sitting quite tightly even though the heather is quite short on this part of the beat and allowing the dogs to impress the gallery with some good quartering and steady pointing. The Guns are on form as well, dropping grouse and the

occasional pheasant as we work our way across the moor.

By the time we are halfway through the card, we have dropped down a little into longer heather and, while the grouse are still sitting tightly the later dogs sometimes struggle to find them and the last few runners are eliminated when grouse are either flushed or missed. Lucy Hustler and FTCh Aytee Isadora are brought back for a retrieve on a grouse that jumped wild and was shot at very close range and there is some doubt about damage to the bird is it caused by the shot or the dog? The Judges run her on until a second grouse is killed at a more reasonable distance and this time the bird comes to hand with no suggestion of damage and

## A grouse finally does rise from behind the dog

Isadora is rightly reprieved.

The last runner is Adrian Blackledge's HWV Kerride Henry, who has so far not had a point or retrieve on grouse though he has done well on pheasant and woodcock. His run starts in some really deep heather which hampers the Judges as well as the dog, so we move uphill onto some better ground where the chance of a decent find on grouse seems more likely. Sadly, despite a good steady run and some systematic quartering, when a grouse finally does rise it is from behind the dog and though he gets his retrieve, for him the trial is over.

The water test follows with just four dogs left in contention and they all make the trip across the river for a blind retrieve on pheasant with no problems. Then it is back to the meet: a very welcome cup of soup supplied by Skinners and a short wait for the results.

It is no surprise when Lucy Hustler and her GSP bitch FTCh Aytee Isadora are given the top honours after some excellent work on both days. Jackie Hay's German Wirehaired Pointer bitch, Monkey Business at Moorrunner is placed in the runners-up spot and the other two dogs to reach the final stages get Diplomas of Merit: Jean Robertson's Hungarian Vizsla bitch, Greenwire Lenci and Adrian Blackledge's Hungarian Wirehaired Vizsla bitch, Ribble Amber. Finally Darryl Elliot's German Shorthaired Pointer bitch Jhebron's Crachin is named Gun's Choice and the trial is



The winners: Lucy Hustler and FTCh Aytee Isadora.



Adrian Blackledge casting off his HWV Kerride Henry.



The Guns were Paul Nixon, Stephen Robson, Karl Field and Costas Wilkinson.



GSP FTCh Aytee Isadora retrieving a grouse.



Adrian Blackledge's HWV Ribble Amber retrieving a grouse.



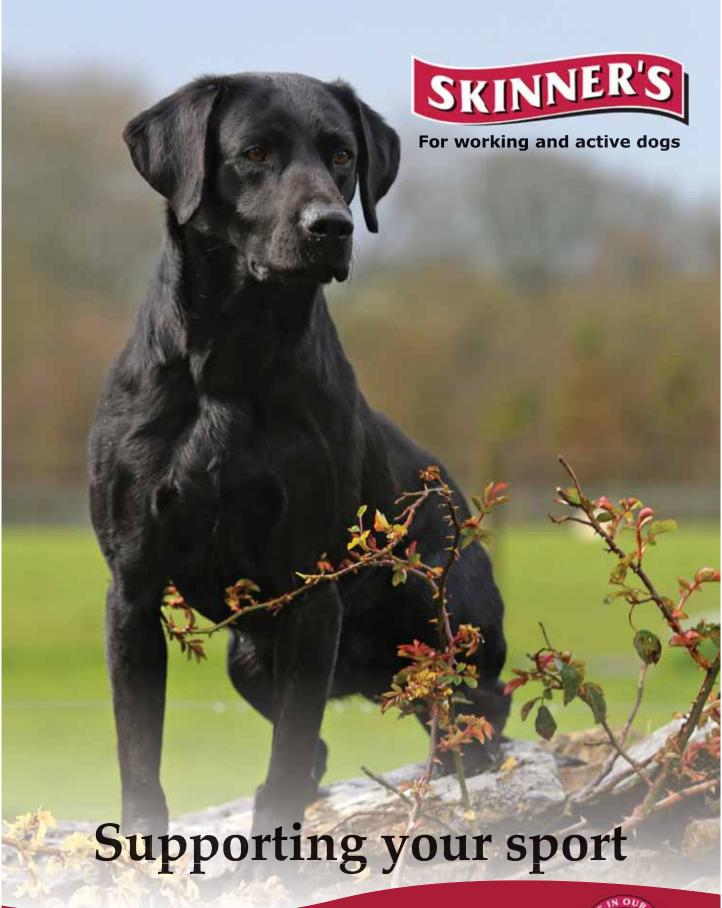
The Judges were Phil Pearson and Sheila Kuban.



Judges Phil Pearson and Sheila Kuban watch as Anne Johnson works her GWP FTCh Trudvang Gefjon through wet bracken.

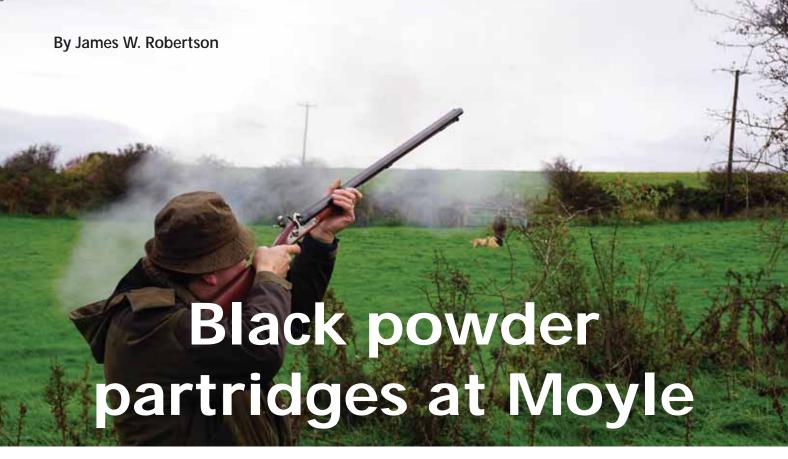


Maureen Nixon takes a cock pheasant from GSP Quintana Magic Time.



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The Moyle shoot on Islandmagee is carving out a reputation for some very testing partridges, suitable for even the most discerning of Shots. High hills and high cover matched with cliff top drives ensure that no Gun can go away wanting more. Imagine our expectation as Ian Bill, Davy, Dave, Richard, his son James and myself paid a return visit to Moyle just one season after our first trip to that very unique part of the world.

We assembled at a local cafe to be met by David Ford who runs the Moyle Shoot & Game Farm which was established around ten years ago by David himself. From a very modest start of 200 pheasant chicks it has grown from strength to strength producing high quality eggs, chicks and poults year on year and of course some very testing and unique shooting. David had worked part time on a local estate were he gained a great deal of experience before leaving and starting on his own.

Beaters and pickers up arrived as we enjoyed our tea and toast and soon were off in convoy to the first drive. The Guns were placed in two main areas of grassland with the sea almost a stone's throw to our back, with Larne Harbour busy with commercial boats beyond in the distance. Amongst the pickers up I recognised a Spaniel trainer of huge standing having won the Spaniel Championship and many other events in the past. Springer spaniel royalty indeed!

I was towards the centre of the field on the right with James out on my right flank while in from two of the black powder Dave and Bill made ready. To my left, Ian was busily preparing his hammer gun while to his right Richard watched and waited as did David who shared position at the rear.

A cry of bird over but despite our anticipation Guns were well, and truly beaten. Another couple sped downwind, sliding on the breeze. One crumpled to Dave's smoking gun. One down to the black powder boys. Then it was Bill's turn as a partridge almost unseen through the black powder smoke was spotted tumbling to the ground. As if by prearrangement it was the turn of Ian as I witnessed him pull off an incredible high shot, cleanly dispatching another partridge in overhead style. The, as if by magic shots were taken up and down the line of Guns. Davy had a double, there a single then another double showing his as much a fine shot with partridge as he is with wildfowl.

As for me, well here's what

happened. First shot resulted in a centre of the pattern kill. Then a delightful left and right were picked by two of the springers. And then the wheels came off the wagon. Now I have to say that I usually perform badly if I start off by missing birds which I would normally consider 'in the bag,' but I can't remember the last time I started off well and then deteriorated. The confidence of the three early kills evaporated and I struggled to hit another partridge all through the drive. I had plenty off chances, more than I can really recall , but boy was I waggonless!

Not so for the others, who were only to keen to relive the high birds out in front, the slipping, sliding birds almost out of a mortal's range..... I heard it all and managed to smile and pay just the right number of compliments. Well, I couldn't argue could I, as I had just had ringside opportunity to watch my friends take on some of the best partridges we had ever seen — and win!

Back in the vehicles and it was only



Bill, Dave and Ian equipped with black powder shotguns.

a short drive to the next location, where an area of woodland and whine were to be driven across and down a hilly area. Davy and I were placed one beyond the other up the slope along a small rid where we could hear the beaters' flags crack every so often to 'guide' the birds in the right direction. We could see a couple of the other Guns on our right, far below where we stood waiting.

#### In action almost non stop

First a single, then a covert then more singles then groups swung at Davy and I at roughly 45 degrees from the left. Davy connected first then lo and behold my form returned and I nailed a super bird, then another. Then I missed one over my head but connected with a screamer for the side. Davy was in action almost non stop, as shots rang

out from the team below us. Birds feel from the sky, I clouldn't see who was claiming what but the birds were certainly high and fast for everyone, even for the Guns whose peg number had ensured their position at each side.

Springers and labs were busy picking up as the drive came to a close and we drew breath. How had they done? The smiles said it all and I could see that for



As one Gun fired the other re-loaded quickly.



Now that's what I call taking on a high bird!



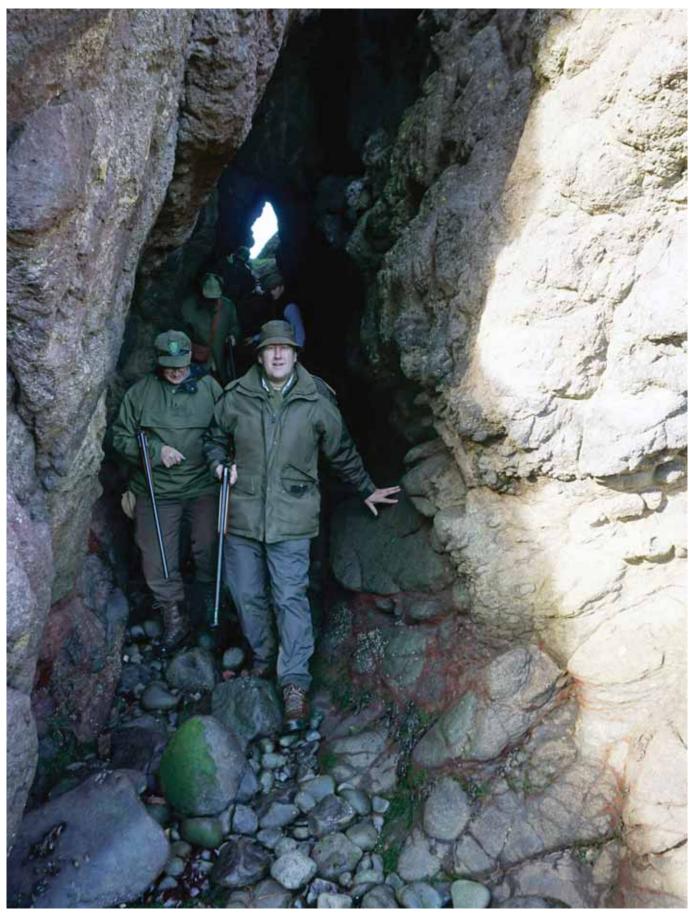
Bill rams home the charge.

this drive more 'normal' weapons had been selected in preference to black powder guns. It had been the correct choice, given that sheer speed and weight of numbers would had made it impossible to do the drive justice with slower re-loading.

About face and over a little style and we had a steep climb up a sloping pasture where I could spot some low sheep wire surrounding some test boring which had been carried out for research purposes. We caused halfway up, lining out facing the hedges at the top of the hill. Live on the peg again I had a quick kill and spotted Bill on my left getting quickly into action as well. Shots to my right meant that Davy and Dave were also enjoying some excellent sport. The birds showed in numbers, cresting the hedges above the line and speeding over the line of Guns. Everyone had hot barrels, and the smile said it all as the drive ended and we watched the Pickers Up in action far below where the bulk of the birds and fallen.

Lunchtime came and we swapped stories of derring do, of birds hit and missed and we agreed that the morning;'s sport had been tremendous. But it was the next drive which was to really catch our imagination. The Cliff Drive is exactly as it says on the tin — very high and very fast birds at clifftop height over Guns positioned on the shore below.

We scrambled down the cliffside, stopping every so often to admire the view. Now, you wouldn't expect me to admit being so unfit that I need to stop on the way down as well as the way up would you? Anyway the trek was well worth it and what an experience. At seal level, we proceeded to two different march areas surrounded by the towering cliff face. We even had to walk through a cave to get to the first area where Davy waited at the rear, me next, James to my right and a good way up the rising ground. Davy was in front, while Ian, Bill and Richard disappeared round the cliff side to take up position in the next bay.



Emerging to take up position for the Cliff Drive.

#### Re-loading was done on automatic pilot

Then it began: bird after bird shot over the cliffs above us, some in

front some slightly to our right, then some from around the cliff in front swinging in from the sea. Amazing! Muffled bangs from those out of our sight said that they were into battle as well. This was definitely not an occasion for a muzzle loading gun I can assure you. You daren't take

your eyes of the clifftop and skies above for fear of missing a chance. Even reloading was done on automatic pilot as you reached for partridges and fed them into the chambers by instinct.

It is seldom that I could claim to have hot barrels but at Moyle's Cliff Drive they were certainly just that. It was sheer magic. It was shooting that could not I imagined be replicated in any other location, it was, well, words fail me.

All to soon it was over and we made our way - slowly - back up the cliff path to the cars just as shower, the only one of the day, began and ended quickly There was no chance of it dampening our spirits however after a day of partridge shooting second to none. David had told me that he was developing another life based drive which would only be accessible by boat. And this one would have REALLY high bird he said. Well, if that's the case I'm going to ask the firearms people if it would be all right to apply for an anti aircraft gun as either that or me winning the Olympic shooting would equip me for the challenge. Somehow, I think that both of those ideas are unlikely to happen. Anyway, try the Moyle Shoot for some very different sport - I know a bunch of guys who did and are already booked for next year — with or without a cannon!

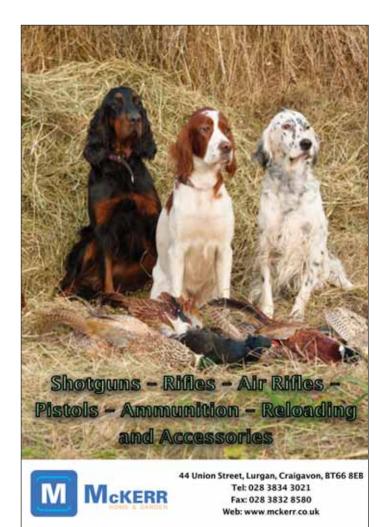
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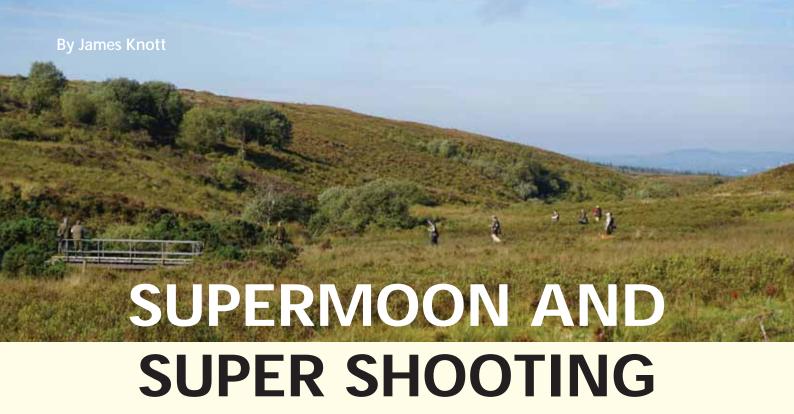
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It was Monday the 28th of September, just hours after the 'supermoon' passed through earth's shadow and I was off to Glennoo for partridge!

AT GLENNOO

Those who had eschewed the comfort of bed, had been treated to a dazzling total lunar eclipse that the media told us was better known as a supermoon, or supermoon blood moon. A supermoon occurs when the moon reaches its full phase at or near the closest approach to Earth, and appears abnormally large and bright as a result. The Sept. 27 event was quite special as the last supermoon eclipse occurred in 1982 and the next won't take place until 2033.

And while I must confess to missing the event 'live', I could see quite clearly a distinctly different moon in my rear view mirror, as I began the journey to the Valley Hotel. The hotel was our meeting point for my own 'phenomenonal' event - the chance to experience what everyone had been talking about - the Glennoo Shoot.

I had been asked to shoot there on the second day (Monday) of a two day Open Stake run by the Ulster Golden Retriever Club the first 'day' being held on the Saturday at Drumbanagher and I was looking forward to seeing the dogs compete and learning why Glennoo was spoken of so highly by shooting friends who had sampled the shooting there.

My introduction to the other Guns was enjoyed over an admirable Full Ulster Fry and copious slices of toast washed down by much-needed cups of coffee in the Valley Hotel, Fivemiletown and Shoot Manager Keith Mathews briefed us on the day ahead and the safety rules, followed by the draw for pegs. Judges were also there for breakfast and it was interesting to be able to put names to faces that I had only read in shooting magazines, and good way of getting people together before the competition began.

We decamped via the shoot transport over a short journey through delightful countryside to our rendezvous with Head Keeper Tom Woods and the beating team. Competitors were assembled as we walked over moorland surrounded by hillsides and mixed timber to our pegs. Actually, it would be more appropriate to say that we walked to our butts as the partridge were to be presented in the manner of driven grouse.

David was to be placed as back Gun

and he had the distinct pleasure of seeing how folk unused to driven grouse - in this case partridge - could miss in style, while taking on some tremendous birds himself. "David" I told him afterwards, "you had so much more time than us, and the sun was in our eyes and ....and..." Here, I ran out of excuses.

I was in the centre of the line, normally the peg which I would sell my soul for, but with the lovely partridge driven like grouse, well this time I was a little wary. The horn sounded and we were off.

Not long to wait and the first covey screamed down the valley facing us, only to drop into cover. Trying to gauge their speed was difficult and I tried to work things out another covey of five birds whose over ....two places to my left. Two shots and no birds. They were certainly fast.

Then it really started in earnest as parties of birds and some singles flew straight at us only to veer or jink, or curve above us. By the time I had the gun up and on a bird it was past. Then I recalled what I had heard about driven

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grouse shooting: shoot away out in front and you will have change of negating the speed of the bird downwind.

And believe it or not that is exactly what happened, much to my relief. I began to connect with birds and getting into some sort of rhythm, my nerves disappeared enough to allow a right and left. Yes really, a magical right and left that was totally unwitnessed by all of my fellow Guns - or so they said!

Off to my right, Thomas on the wing had some lovely testing shots while Albert, bothered by injury to his ankle dealt with birds to his left,

choosing to leave any to his right to his neighbouring Gun to avoid any more leg damage.

Neil and Ken took some very fast birds which for some reason were seen to flare left and right while also shooting upwards at speed. Testing shooting to say the least. Richard too was shooting consistently and it was good to see that everyone had their fair share of chances.

Then the dogs were tested with long retrieves from the line of competitors which had been waiting patiently some considerable distance behind the Guns. It was difficult enough with little scent and both dogs and handlers were fully tested in the conditions. A bright sun almost facing added to the handling task and I imagine could have contributed to any difficulty marking a bird.

Dog work and handling were to a non-trialler such as myself of a very high standard and I thought that the Judges would have a difficult task indeed. Guns had remained at their butt and it was a unique experience to be able to see the dogs cast in our direction, then out beyond to make their retrieves. Up close and personal it added much to the fun of the day.

A brief stop for some most welcome refreshments served 'on site'





Judges and competitors watch closely (courtesy of Field Sports Photography)



'Get out!' (courtesy of Field Sports Photography)



competitors made it on foot. This time it felt more familiar with Guns pegged out on a rising hill. David and I were at the foot of the hill and in most shooting situations we would have been back Guns aiming to sweep up whatever had avoided the Guns in front. Not so in this case, as it became delightfully obvious as the drive went on that testing birds would be presented to all of the Guns. Up the one, down the line, at the rear of the line it made no difference as each had scarcely time to reload before the next bird appeared. 'High, wide and fast or high wide and very, very fast' was how one of the Guns summed it up and everyone agreed.

by Keith and we were off to the next drive in the shoot bus, while the hardy

The speed of the birds made for some long falls away from Guns, some that were hit even managing to plummet into trees behind. I wondered how the competitors could mark so many different falls, but as the trial continued after the drive I need not have worried. Birds were collected with precision and as soon as the final dog had been tested the Judges made up their books.

Competitors and Judges Messrs



Awaiting directions (courtesy of Field Sports Photography)

Nigel Carville, Michael Fleville, Michael McKee and Gary Mc Cutcheon. assembled and the results were announced by FT Sec Geoff Peoples who also thanked our hosts, the guns, judges, stewards and beaters. Judging by the happy faces a good trial had been enjoyed by all, not least the winner Declan Boyle with FTCH Miller Mcduff.

Meanwhile, fallen birds which remained on the ground were 'hoovered' up by the team of Glennoo pickers up. Indeed I have never seen such precision by any Shoot dog team and ground was searched intently as were the woodlands surrounding until Keith was satisfied that absolutely nothing had been missed. This attention to detail, indeed all of the Shoot's organisation is quite remarkable.

Guns then were driven to a refurbished stone cottage on the shoot to be treated to home cooked stew and freshly made desserts along with 'something for the inner man' of they wished. What a way to end a perfect shooting day! Back at the Valley Hotel, Keith proudly showed up the purposebuilt kennel block which had been specially installed for visiting Guns' dogs. When you consider the extremely special hotel rates arranged for visitors to Glennoo that's another great reason to enjoy everything on offer.

It had indeed been a 'super shoot' after the super moon and Glennoo Shoot had been completely 'out of this world.' Their website refers to Glennoo as 'Irelands Premier Shooting Destination.' and I for one would not argue with that.

Glennoo Game Sports is a commercial driven shoot and offers mixed bag driven days on partridge, duck and pheasant. For further information or to make a booking please contact Keith Mathews, The Shoot Manager, on 0773 928 2066 or visit www.glennoo.com

Photos indicated are courtesy of Field Sports Photography - see the Field Sports Photography Facebook page for more information.



Next to go receives instructions for the Judge.



The Guns were (I/r) Ken Perrott, Richard Edgar, Thomas Welshman, Neil Alexander David Campbell, Albert Titterington and (taking the photo) James Knott.



Winners and Judges at Glennoo (courtesy of Field Sports Photography)

# Mouflon Hunt in the Czech Republic

Like many hunters, there are certain species that I would like to hunt and Mouflon was one of them!

Some time ago, I had made contact with a Czech hunter as we had a mutual interest in training hunting dogs. So after lots of discussion, my hunting friend František (Frank) offered me the opportunity to hunt for a mouflon ram in the Czech Republic and I accepted the invitation immediately.

I arrived at Prague airport to be greeted by Frank, as he would be known at his request; he was making life as easy as possible for me on my hunting trip so calling him Frank, was a good start. We drove one hour and half to the hunting areas and there met a local hunter who would also be my guide for the duration of the hunting trip, his name was also Frank.

He immediately suggested that we should come and see some mouflon which were sitting in the middle of a very large field of an oil seed rape crop. We then went to see a group of mouflon in a very big field, probably 200 acres plus. In that group there were only ewes and lambs with some immature rams.

We drove to the house where we would be staying for the duration of the hunting trip, had a coffee and a bite to eat and got dressed to go hunting that evening. We made our way to a high seat with the 'new' Frank as my guide. On the way we spotted a group of mouflon rams and in that group there was one very big ram. When we took our position in the high seat, we had mouflon ewes and lambs and many roe deer surrounding us in the course of the evening, but not until the last light did we see a ram and what a ram he was old and clever. He skirted the high seat for many minutes and even though the wind was in our favour, he eventually left us. We could only imagine how



We move off to begin our day time hunting.

good he was, as he never came close enough to allow a clear view of his horns. Would we ever see him again?

We had no chance of a shot that evening so we eventually went back then to our house where Frank's wife had prepared a hot dinner for us on our return. We also had beer and a local drink which was so easy to drink but so strong. Then bed time and my alarm was set for 4.15 am.

At the appointed hour, Frank my guide arrived and we went to a high seat at a maize field, which had been harvested so there was plenty of corn on the ground. Close to dawn, two mouflon rams appeared but both were young. Coming to within 35 meters of the high seat and we got a really good look at them and they were too young to be taken as they were only about three years old and would have to be at least 7 years old to be considered as trophy animals.

Later in the day, we went stalking for mouflon lying up in the forests but again no luck. This stalk took three hours in the very hot part of the day and I was glad to get back and have a reviving shower and a rest for my weary legs. It was not level ground stalking but climbing up 60 degree slopes and then down again looking in the sandstone rocks for sleeping sheep, but no luck.

We went to the high seat at the maize another day and, just before light, a mature mouflon appeared, but unfortunately he moved away from us and did not present a shoot. He came to within 250 meters, which was too far in poor light. Later that day, we had an excited call from Frank my guide - mouflon had been seen out in a large field and he suggested we should try and stalk them. When we went to see them there were mostly ewes and lambs and there was also a ram, but on closer



A young mouflon ram and ewes

inspection he was a young one, about four years old. Although a fine trophy for any hunter, my guide insisted I wait for a mature ram. So back for a shower and clean up to await the evening hunting. No luck again that evening as we only saw roe deer.

Next morning, again up at 4.30 am and off to the high seat at the maize field, where we waited there for three hours but nothing came. We then drove to different vantage points to look for mouflon and eventually found a group of 42 ewes and lambs and young males but nothing but nothing of the calibre we were looking for so back then for breakfast and a sleep for a few hours.

#### At the very far end of the field - Mouflon!

That evening, Frank arrived to collect me at five o clock and we went to a different location close to the maize field area. This high seat overlooked a large field recently drilled with corn. The field was full with roe deer, as many of the fields in this area are as the population of roe deer in this are is very high. Frank noticed some different shapes at the very far end of the field. Mouflon! And there is a suitable ram with them, so now some action.

Immediately we went to the car to try and get in front of the mouflon before they got to the maize field.

Success. Closer inspection of the ram showed he was a good trophy. I would try to take him!

We stood on a track lined with apple trees, no shooting sticks or bipod on the rifle which I am used to using at home when I stalk, so I had to use Frank as a rest, leaning against one of the apple trees for support. Not the best position to take the shot of a lifetime, but I have

been in awkward spots before.

The rifle was a CZ in 30.06, a really nice rifle and very comfortable, the scope a 6x42 fixed with graduated reticule. The centre crosshairs are zeroed for 100meters, the next for 150meters and the next for 200meters and on to 400, and my mouflon is 220meters away.

As I tried to become comfortable in my shooting position, I found it hard to focus clearly and after a few attempts all was ok and the mouflon had turned broadside, offering a shot. At this point my heart and head begin to separate. My heart was pumping at an alarming rate and my brain going into default mode reverted to my normal riflescope reticle. My hunting scope has a single crosshair zeroed for 200 yards. My brain therefore automatically used the centre crosshair on the riflescope I was using. I took the shot and there was no sound of a hit, the ram ran forward and stopped and looked startled, he looked around and tried to understand what happened and then he was gone. Yes, yes, yes I missed, cleanly thank God, low in front. At this point you feel like...well you can guess. I have not felt this stupid since I was a child as the realisation of what just happened dawned on me.

We walked forward to confirm my worst thoughts and on very close



Genuine Czech hunters, Frank, Robert and the second Frank.



First light and my very last chance for a successful shot.

inspection we found the bullet strike and confirmed no hit on the mouflon. Of course I was happy that it was a complete miss and a very heavy weight off my mind as the bullet may have creased the brisket. So yes we confirmed it: I did miss low. I was so annoyed with my stupidity but happy that I had not wounded the mouflon, the bullet was placed correctly and would have been a clear heart and lung shot, if..if..if I had kept my concentration and not be become excited. Buck fever I think its called.

The time passed with us trying but failing to get a shot and my last night in a high seat arrived, trying for the elusive mouflon ram. As the light began to fade and the roe deer left the field, we were about to decide to leave when I spotted in the distance some large body shapes, either boars or mouflon. They were mouflon and they were heading our way. Five hundred meters

away, then 150 meters and then they stopped to eat and relax. They began to move away to our right into the forest, becoming just shadows and then disappearing from view. Our hearts sank, foiled again we thought.

Then suddenly they appeared again walking in single file towards our position. In the small group there were two rams, one looked possible to take but the light was poor and identification was unclear, they would have to be very close to make a positive decision. They were now just less than 100 meters away when the ewe who was leading the group decided to change direction and move diagonally away from us. I could see her clearly with my Swarovski binos as she crested the horizon. At the same time as I tried to get the largest ram into my riflescope, she appeared to wind us and moved rapidly back in the same direction she had come from and, of course, all the

other animals followed her. They went to 150 meters and relaxed, when suddenly another mouflon appeared at this spot where they had stopped. We wondered had she winded us or did she go back to investigate the new arrival another mouflon ram?

Robert was to be my new guide for the following day - my last before returning home - and Frank advised him where we should go to try once again and for the last time for a good mouflon ram.

The alarm woke me at 04.30hrs and we discussed the possibility of me going home with no mouflon, but that is wild hunting, there are no guarantees. If I failed to take a mouflon on this trip I had been very kindly invited to come back and try again next year, an invitation I gladly accepted. Robert arrived and away we went, a short drive and a walk of ten minutes.

Within minutes two rams appeared



Frank signals a change in our direction.

on the horizon. Pushing and shoving each other, head butting and running about but in complete silhouette, I ranged them at just over 100 meters. Was this to be my lucky day? They moved ever so slowly to the left on the horizon, still in silhouette. It was only 5.30 am the wind was coming from behind us and possibly reaching them. We watched and watched and watched and I prayed for them to come closer but no, they disappeared into the darkness to our left. I began to accept the fact that there was no mouflon ram with my name on him.

## A dark shape emerged from the forest

Around 45 minutes later, I noticed to my left a dark shape emerging from the forest, it was alone so it could have been a large boar but no it was a mouflon, a mouflon ram, alone. Its body was heavy but his trophy was not clear to be seen because of the poor light at this time. He moved with a

slow, deliberate, suspicious movement, indicating a mature animal. The ram was walking parallel to the high seat but to our left and away from us.

I indicated to Robert to have a look at him as a possible shootable ram, but he could not see him clearly as the morning light was only beginning to show. And then Diana smiled, the ram turned and walk towards us. Slowly and deliberately he came, stopping occasionally treating every waft of wind with suspicion. I could feel the tension rising, was this my ram, I looked at Robert, Robert nodded, he did not speak, but his body language suggested a shootable ram, a good one, a very good one.

I had the CZ at my shoulder. The crosshairs are so delicate on this scope and it is not designed for low light shooting but I found the ram's shoulder and, at 80 meters as he was slightly quartering towards me, I squeezed the trigger. It appeared to take forever to connect and when it did I only heard

the bullet connect with my ram, I never heard the sound of the shot. I watched the ram take the shock of the hit, he spun around and took his last rush to the forest. He died on the field less than 30 meters from the position of the strike. I had taken a mature mouflon ram. Robert confirmed what I already knew, the ram was down and lifeless. A very quick and excited congratulation to each other and our attention was on the ram. We waited some minutes before descending to have a closer inspection of the fallen king of the forest. Robert stood back and allowed me to approach the ram alone and I knew when I saw him in the first light of the new day that he was special.

Robert is a man who has seen many fallen mouflon before, and he silently confirmed my suspicion, but we did not dare say what we were thinking, instead we spoke about the morning and the events leading up to the mouflon coming to our high seat. Robert gave the ram his last bite for his eternal journey and presented me with a green branch from the forest and congratulated me on my success.

Phone calls were made, many congratulations were given. There was great excitement as this was the largest ram taken in this area in a number of years. The ram was taken away to be examined by the local hunting club officials and was measured against CIC criteria for the possibility of a medal, either bronze, silver or gold. The number of CIC points for a gold medal for a Mouflon is 205 and my ram scored 216.5 CIC. When Robert and I had first seen the ram, we had the same thoughts, it was an exceptional example of a mature Mouflon Ram.

I must offer my warmest thank to all the people from the local hunting club who came to congratulate me on my success, but especially to Frank, Robert and Frank and www.exchangehunt.com for a wonderful time in the Czech Republic and for allowing me to become part of their love and knowledge of their countryside and their wild animals.

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# **Country Chat**

Escaping fish, an entente cordiale and a minefield of game, but nowadays Billy's happy 'in neutral.'

I have never been a great follower of bed and breakfast 'stop overs.' It always felt like I was staying with 'Auntie Mabel/Uncle John,' sort of thing.

During the early days of grouse counting I stayed in an old converted school house in the Lanarkshire area of Scotland. The landlady was forever knocking on my bedroom door with, 'a wee mug of tea and home-baked scones,' for me.

In the mornings I shared the breakfast table with her five kids and on one morning in particular, kiddie number four was screaming the place down, for it was his first day ever to go to school. As the landlady was making up lunches, mine as well as theirs, I was left trying to comfort the little lad. "School isn't so bad son, you will have lots of new friends to play with." The youngster went quiet at my consoling words and stared at me and then went back to playing with his German toy soldiers. "You are really so good with children Billy," says Mrs L. Not realising that it was my accent that had quietened him and not my words I reached over the table for more toast whereby the little monster rammed a Panzer tank into the back of my hand.

Delivering a spaniel I bred myself along with a kennel up to a lady who runs a B&B in Portrush. I thought it would be a sound idea if I stayed there



Only 12 weeks old yet English Pointers Tess & Finn getting ready for the years ahead.

for the night, rather than turning straight around and driving the long journey back home. The good lady had her walls covered with religious pictures and biblical phrases, some of which were embroidered by friends and loved ones. Sitting and talking over a cup of tea I rather naively told her I had a very religious upbringing, but neglected to say that I feel more comfortable these days getting about in neutral.

#### A most unusual explanation

Which reminds me of the time when the kids were young and still at school, the missus found occasion to take them and stay over at their grandparents. With lunches and evening meals labelled as such and left in the fridge, they left Dad to hold the fort. At some time during their absence, four young people representing Jehovah's Witness called at the door. Now then, whether they were sent directly to me to test their convictions or simply as a challenge, I have no idea, but a minor party ensued, with all four of them partial to the music of Rod Stewart. Tea and soft drinks flowed throughout the evening and we had great craic. The following day, the wife and kids arrived home, only to find two well-dressed young ladies standing on the doorstep, one of which had left her bible behind, from the night before! A most unusual explanation ensued.

Anyway, back to the B&B at Portrush, the landlady asked me to go with her to a 'fellowship meeting.' She would be absolutely thrilled if I accompanied her and met her friends. Working on the theory that they can't all look like kind little grannies, I volunteered and went along with her. We arrived back to the B&B shortly

before midnight, only to discover that the spaniel I had delivered had done a runner. It was nigh on three in the morning when I found him down at the beach paddling about the water like an innocent child. An hour or so later, I got to bed and an hour or so after that I was woken up by workmen in the street below my window, and when I got home later that morning I was shattered.

At a B&B in Pitlochry, Scotland, I shared a breakfast table with a couple who had obviously fallen out with each other. I tried to strike up a conversation, if only to be friendly and get through my breakfast without any embarrassing incidents. But as they were French and couldn't or wouldn't speak a word of English and I wouldn't, because I couldn't, speak a word of French, it was the quietest breakfast I have ever shared in the presence of others. It was only after I tried to get the young waiter who was German to understand that I did not want my tomatoes cremated, but to leave them just as they were, that they started laughing and when my fry turned up with two whole tomatoes, complete with vines, the pair of them became uncontrollable. Obviously my culinary tomato disaster had shifted the gloom. When I saw them later, they were kissing and hugging and we now had



Eight years old Tia teaching 8 month old Ellie while Ellie's proud Mum looks on.

an entente cordiale in place!

When son Alan wasn't too old, the Lewis family were enjoying a holiday in a lovely B&B somewhere in a beautiful setting in Scotland. As Mum and Dad were drinking their coffee and chatting with others, Alan sat on the grass outside looking into a small garden pond which contained goldfish. No more than ten minutes later the youngster came running into the dining room and whispered in his mother's ear. "You did what?" said his mother. We followed him out to the garden only to discover that he had removed a large flat stone that was strategically placed to contain both the water and the goldfish. The three fish that remained were now thrashing about on a sandy, gravelly bottom which use to be covered with a few feet of water.

At the time the landlady was very understanding, but when we were leaving, the landlady was setting up a hose to re-fill the little pond, whilst her husband was down on his hunkers at a much larger pond down the hill, trying to catch escapees with a child's fishing net. I gave them a friendly toot and a wave as we were going down the driveway, but they must have been very busy, for they 'didnae wave back.' Or something!

#### Plenty of grouse to be found

This has been a very eventful year for me and the team. Back in March, I took all the pointers to Scotland for the grouse pair counts. Sadly, snow on the uplands not only hampered play, but it was bordering on downright dangerous as well. Tramping over ground covered in several feet of snow, which at the best of times weather-wise, is littered with deep holes and crevices, is without doubt a recipe for disaster. So counting aside, I ran Heidi and Sally on the low ground, one walking to heel the other quartering, finding, pointing, flushing on command and finally, 'hupping' to flush. Then I repeated the exercise with the other German pointer several times, allowing them to hunt on after a find to avoid any sort of pattern developing. I

reckon each of them must have had a find on a pair of grouse every five minutes or so, but then again, that's Scotland for you.

Kieran Fox and I went back to Scotland in April to run the dogs in a Grouse pointing test, which was organised by a Scottish branch for HPRs. Young Sally, at just under two, ran really well in the junior class and had copybook finds and flushes, until that is, a hare got up just under her snout. The little rascal took off after it, giving tongue to boot.

At the inquest later, I told all those gathered around me, that at least she returned to the whistle. "No Billy, the fence stopped her from going any further," remarked one of them. Of course, in reality, chasing is a minor detail and thankfully becomes history in but a very short time and, believe it or not, you do not need to go out looking for hares.

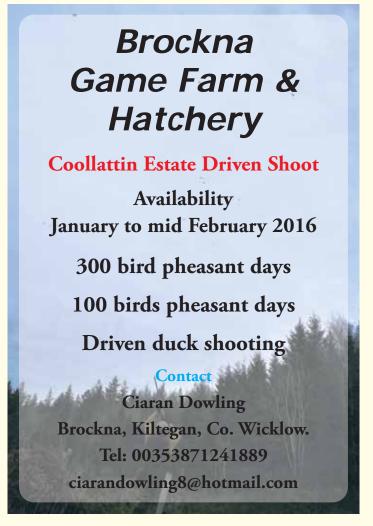
Heidi on the other hand, at four-yearold, was entered in the senior class and

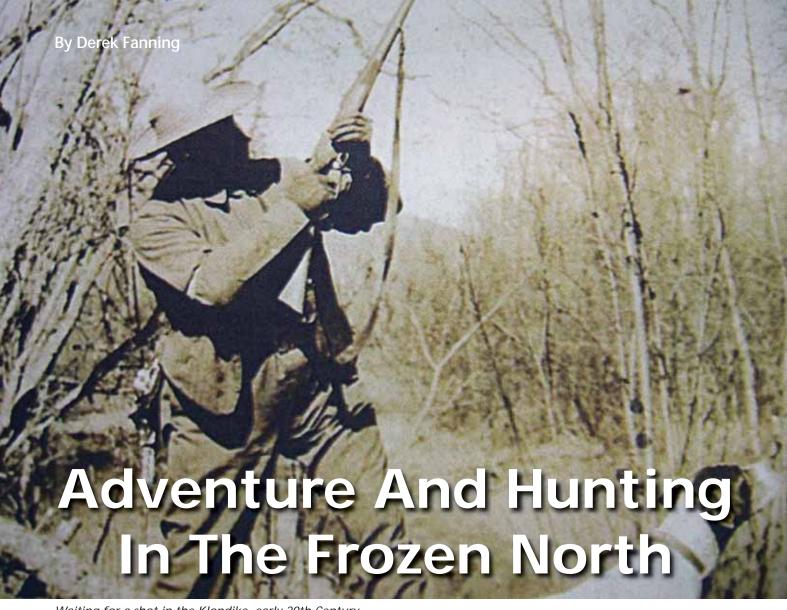
has nothing new to learn, or so I thought! Unfortunately she ran into a minefield of game; yes she quartered, she found, she held point, flushed on command and 'hupped,' but she did so on her terms. Handler. judges, stewards, keepers, competitors and onlookers were running flat out to keep up with

July was without doubt the best holiday/dog work/grouse count in Scotland that I can remember for many a year and the keeper was very pleased with the coveys found. At the end of September, LB and I went back to the same Estate to shoot walked-up grouse, not over the pointers I hasten to add, but over the little cockers. I purposely left the pointers at home to make it more of a challenge. We finished up with four and a half brace, all three cockers running out of fuel around two each day.

The keeper was adamant that no blackcock were to be shot as he is very pleased with the blackcock that are on the estate. As LB would be hard-pressed to tell the difference between grouse and blackcock even close-up, let alone flushing ahead of him and, with as many blackcock as grouse on the patch that we were hunting, I had to watch LB as if my life depended upon it!

May I take this opportunity to wish you all good sport and a good year ahead.





Waiting for a shot in the Klondike, early 20th Century.

Towards the end of the 19th Century gold was discovered in the Klondike region of Canada, which brought in its wake a gold rush, an influx of adventurers and dreamers, of decent men and people of not so decent motives. Some of them were Irish and while a relatively small number did make a fortune there were countless others who were disappointed in their aspiration. Many had to work hard in difficult conditions to survive and some went without food for days. In his film 'Gold Rush', Charlie Chaplin detailed the excitement and the disappointment of those heady days. There's a famous incident in the film where Chaplin's tramp is compelled to eat his own leather boots because he has no food, something which apparently did happen to the original gold-seekers.

The Klondike is a region in the federal territory of the Yukon in northwestern Canada. It is a very beautiful region which is sparsely populated and is subjected to brutal, long winters where temperatures can reach minus 50 degrees celsius, and it would be unwise to venture outside. It is also a land which teems with game, which is well-populated with duck, with caribou, bear and salmon. For the outdoor enthusiast and for the hunter it is paradise and many people travel there every year for the excellent

fishing and shooting. Hunting tourism is a significant part of the Yukon economy and a surf on the internet reveals that there are a large number of hunting outfitters in the region. Big game hunters from around the world travel there. Among the many species which people hunt is the moose, mountain goat, stone sheep, dall sheep, fannin sheep, barren ground caribou, and mountain caribou. Some clients ride horseback into the wilderness on these expeditions.

In the late 19th Century it was the

pursuit of this game, big and small, which provided a living for many goldrushers who hadn't found their pot of gold yet. One of these hunters / goldseekers was John Lee from Monasterevin, County Kildare.

Few people know the story of John, or Jack, Lee but it is a tale worth the telling for he led an adventurous and fascinating life in the frozen wastes of North America for many years. While John forged a living in the Klondike by shooting game for the locals he was hoping that his gold-claims would



John Lee from Monasterevin, Co Kildare as a young man.

strike lucky. We know a lot about his exploits because he was an excellent letter writer, regularly writing long letters to his relatives in Ireland. We still possess many of these letters and they represent an invaluable collection, an intriguing record of a period and place. For hunting enthusiasts the letters are compelling because large tracts of them are taken up with the descriptions of game and the hunting of game.

I first came across the name John Lee and his story during a visit to the Irish Fly Fishing and Shooting Museum near Durrow, County Laois a couple of years ago. The curator of the museum, Walter Phelan, published a book containing John's letters in 2012 with the assistance of local government funding.

Walter first came across the letters in 2010 when he was working in Paddy Mooney's pub in Abbeyleix. During a tea break the publican told him that his wife is an antique dealer and some years previously at an auction house in Dublin she bought a number of items connected with the Klondike, including John Lee's letters. Paddy showed Walter the letters and Walter loved them so much that he decided to publish them in a book.

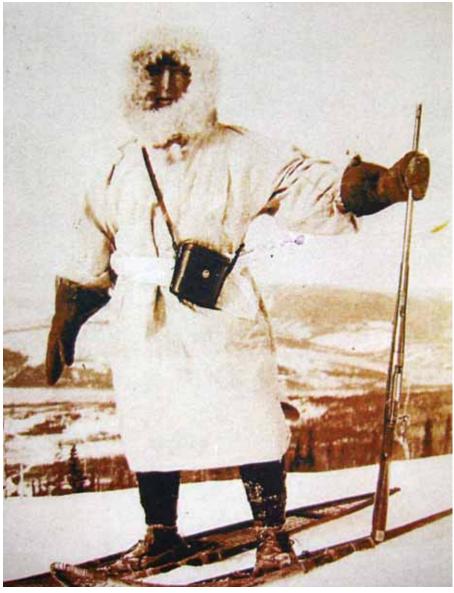
Gold was discovered in large quantities in the Yukon in 1896 and this led to the start of the famous gold rush the following year, when more than 30,000 men and a handful of women arrived in Dawson City. Unfortunately most of the claim stakes were gone when the majority arrived so they ended up working for the claim owners. Many of the prospectors were ill equipped to survive the harsh conditions and many perished.

John Lee arrived in Dawson City in September 1898 at the age of 33 or 34, staked a couple of gold-claims and embarked on long hunting expeditions in the beautiful, pristine wilderness surrounding Dawson.

The first letter in the book of his letters is dated 12th July 1899 and is addressed to his mother. 'How are all of you?' it begins, 'I suppose by this time you imagine I am frozen to death or have joined the great majority by some

other horrible means. Well, I have not, nor do I intend to for a long time yet. I never felt better or happier in my life.' He writes that he endured a tough, long trek in freezing conditions. 'This country is alright,' he writes, 'and anyone who stays with it is bound to come out with some money. I haven't made my pile yet but I don't despair.' He says a man can live on five dollars a day and he has shot game several times for a number of prospecting trips. 'I could have been working steady all the time if I wished.'

John relates that when he is out with the prospecting trips and shooting game for the prospectors he could be gone for two months, trekking for a distance of a hundred to a hundred and fifty miles into the mountains surrounding Dawson, 'with the thermometer from



In his hunting outfit.

forty to fifty degrees below zero, and

only a tent to live in, and a small sheet iron stove to cook and warm the tent in winter. The days get very short, six hours daylight being the shortest, but in summer it is all one long day. It has been broad daylight now for the last two months, and it will be another month before it will commence to get a little dark at midnight.'

He tells his mother that he is writing the letter at a camp thirty miles up the Klondike River from Dawson. 'One of the boys is going in and will post it.' He describes the teeming wildlife in the Klondike. He says there are vast numbers of salmon and trout in the Klondike River so much so that the salmon have 'hardly room to swim they are so thick. When we want one, one of us just takes an axe, walks into the water, hits a big fellow on the head and takes him out. The trout we catch with flies. I can catch a hundred of them any time I go out.'

He points out that the Klondike River is very swift and is three or four times wider than the River Barrow in Ireland. 'There is not a weed in it, as it runs through a valley of coarse gravel. The salmon have not been long up. You see they come from the sea, and have to wait till the ice goes out of the Yukon before they start. It is two thousand miles here from the sea, and the beggars are up here in about three weeks after the ice goes out of the mouth of the river. That is, they come up the two thousand miles against an extraordinary strong current and very swift in three weeks.

'The game we have here in winter is bear, wolf, caribou and moose — the last two names are excellent eating. The caribou weighs about three or four Cwt.' Cwt stands for Centum Weight or Hundred Weight, and one cwt is equivalent to about 50 kilos. Therefore, John is saying that a caribou weighs about 150 to 200 kgs. 'The moose is an extraordinary traveller,' he continues, 'he can gallop up the side of a mountain for two or three miles without a stop, and people say that when he is frightened he will go a hundred miles

during the night.
The other night a big bear took forty seven trout we had in a sack in the river.
They are very fond of fish

'The cold here in winter is fearful. The ice on the river freezes eight or nine feet thick. The Yukon is a very great river. It is nearly a mile wide here. Klondike enters it at Dawson and is very deep and swift. It is completely frozen over for seven or eight months in the year. I can't begin to explain how cold it gets. Everything in the cabin is frozen

solid. We had to saw with a saw instead of cut with a knife everything that was left over from one meal to another. I have often risen in the morning and before I could get the fire started in the stove, which would only take a couple of minutes, my hands have very nearly become badly frozen, because it is twenty or twenty five degrees below zero inside the cabin. Of course when the fire gets started and the cabin becomes warm, everything is alright and as comfortable as any parlour. The cabins are generally small, twelve feet long by ten feet wide is about the average size. They are built of logs, laid on top on one another and locked into one another. The corners between the logs are stuffed with moss. Nothing could be warmer or better for keeping out the cold.

'When outdoors in cold weather, a person has to be warmly clad, but not very heavily clothed. Your feet, hands and face are the most liable to get frozen. The clothing most generally worn when travelling or working is a fur cap with flaps that tie under the



Klondike Bull Caribou killed by John. This mounted head was sent to Ireland.

chin. When the rig is on there is only a space left to see and breathe. A person is not long out on a cold day until there's a complete coating of frost and ice over face, breast and shoulders. A person cannot smoke outdoors. The pipe gets frozen.'

#### No roads, just trails all over the country, over mountains, up streams, through woods

'The trails are well beaten pathways to all places where any work is going on. There are no roads, just trails all over the country, over mountains, up streams, through woods.' He says these trails run from Dawson for a hundred or more miles in every direction and see plenty of use with travellers, workers, dogs and sleds. Ten dogs are able to pull nearly a ton. He asks his mother for news about his brother Johnson in Ireland, who is also very fond of hunting. 'Has Johnson shot or fished much since? If he was here he would have a high time of it.' He is very keen to hear news from home and asks his mother to tell his relatives and friends to write more often and convey more

Dawson Vovember 9th 00 My Dear Little rephen Georgie I received your note, and wa lad to hear from you, I am sending you This mail a pair of Indian made buches the samo & much the beads as is mostly worn here im cold weather, it necessary in extreme cold snaps to wear en extra kair of heavy woollen mittens in lined leuckblins, so you can in mague how cold it gets out here, purgled me to know what you that would be an novely over there will like them, I should have acknowledged four note when writing to your and Matic about a week de that when I was to the post office registering the packet with lockets to er, I found that the mail would start within a few mientes aus time to pencil a shor

A page from one of his letters home. news.

In a letter to his mother dated 13th September 1901, he relates that the Klondike River is full of salmon at the moment. 'One old water spaniel dog, that we had along, caught and dragged out on the bank of a small shallow creek that runs into the Klondike eighteen big salmon while we were cooking and eating our dinner one day. If we hadn't stopped him he would be dragging them out yet. We split them up and hung them out to dry and will get them when we go back. Dry salmon make good dog-feed. We are sick of eating them. This time of year the bears live on them and they have the muddy places all tracked up with their big paws.'

In a letter dated 17th September 1902, he tells a relation that in August

and September there are berries growing everywhere in the region and that one could live on them. They include red and blackcurrants, raspberries, blueberries, cranberries, and lots of other kinds. 'When travelling we stew them and have fresh jam all the time.'

His letters occasionally mention his gold-claims but he never strikes lucky. On his hunting and food transporting trips he uses dogs and sleds. Sometimes he is with companions. Sometimes he is alone for weeks on end. The wildlife is of course potentially hostile but it is very rare for wolves or bears to attack humans. Most of the time the animals do their best to avoid people.

In one letter he relates that he has bought a very special shotgun and shipped it back to Ireland. He uses a winchester pump action shotgun with five shots for shooting duck and geese, and a .22 rifle for caribou (which would not be considered an ethical rifle for caribou today, but was fairly commonly used in John's time). Over a period of four mornings he shot 380 ducks.

# Six dogs eat on average fifteen hares per day

'There are only a couple of weeks in the Spring and Fall of the year,' he writes, 'when the ducks, snipe etc are coming and going out of this country that shooting of that kind can be had. I killed 198 ducks of all kinds in one week this Spring. I was camped on the Klondike about fifty miles from Dawson, waiting for the ice to go out, so I could float down to Dawson in my canoe. Quite close to my camp was a small lake completely thawed out about two hundreds yards long by a gunshot across. Around the pond I had put some blinds. The days were getting long, there being only a couple of hours of darkness. When the ducks commenced coming I would take my place in one of these blinds about 1 o'clock in the morning a little before day. I would only stay a couple of hours or so, the flight being over by three o'clock. One morning I killed fifty-two, another morning thirty-four. I got one hundred and ninety-eight in a week. I also caught one hundred pounds of trout. I took the lot to Dawson in my canoe, and got seventy-five cents each for the ducks and thirty-five cents per pound for the trout.....' 'You talk about hares,' he writes to Johnson, 'They are more plentiful here than ever the rabbits were in Moore Abbey. Our six dogs eat on average fifteen hares per day.'

He tells Johnson about the following caribou hunt: 'At daylight (7am) I again took the caribou track and followed it up hill and down dale until about 2pm when on topping a high spur I sighted them five in number, near the top of the mountain on the opposite side of the gulch. They were feeding, that is pawing the snow away and eating the moss. Caribou live on moss. They were about three quarters of a mile away and



Shooting over decoy ducks, the Klondike region.

every one of them bigger than jackasses. The wind being from me towards them I was afraid they would scent me, so I made a detour to the right of them, crossed the valley and climbed up a draw half a mile. This kind of travelling is pretty tough. The draw being too steep to climb on snowshoes, I had to take them off and wallow my way up through a foot and a half of drifted snow.'

Eventually he gets to within decent shooting distance. 'Coming to the top there they were right under me and not over a hundred yards away (it had taken me two hours to make the detour). Taking off my right fur mitten, and putting on a thin woollen glove (it was thirty-five degrees below zero and my fingers would have frozen if left exposed, the cold gun helping to freeze them more quickly) I shot one of them lying down and they were on their feet at the crack of the rifle.' He shoots dead five caribou, and skins and guts them on the spot. 'By the time I had all five gutted and laid out straight on their backs, so they could be loaded decently on the sleds, it was getting dark. It took me a couple of hours to get home.'

#### The local press reported

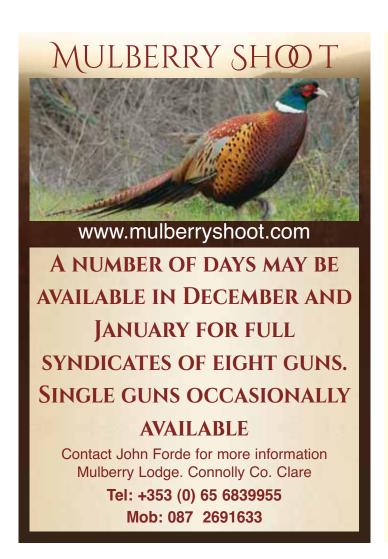
## John's dramatic encounter with a bear

'Lee,' the Dawson Daily News reported, 'was trudging through the logs and through the bushes on his way back from a water staking trip on the Klondike, when he heard a crashing in front of him, and was surprised to see an ugly she bear making toward him. Lee is an old-time hunter, and knew well the peril that he was in and what was the best course to pursue under the stress.' He scampered up a nearby spruce tree and the bear stood at the bottom of the tree. The bear, at 500 or 600 pounds, was enormous. 'The old bear gave the tree a terrific shake from the bottom,' John told the newspaper. 'Then she looked savagely up at me, and growled and shook again. Then the old girl gazed up again, this time into something new. She was looking into that trusty little .22....I was not more than eight feet from her, and was shooting straight down. Thank my lucky stars, the bullet hit the bear's eye....with a mighty groan, she reeled over and stretched out.'

Apart from his letters we don't know much about John. His father was Johnson Frederick Lee and was a

farmer and breeder of race horses and greyhounds. His mother was Susan Shelton Harrison. His Dad died in 1889 and his Mum passed away in 1941. John had two brothers and one sister. His religion was Church of Ireland. He grew up in an attractive house which still exists. In 1898 john was present in Monasterevin for an address and presentation during which he said he hoped to return home in three years. He lived in the Yukon for many years until he suffered a stroke in 1914 and he returned to Ireland in 1918 or 1919. Because of the stroke one side of his body was partly paralysed which meant he walked with a limp and had slurred speech. In his letters there is no mention of a sweetheart and as far as we know he never married.

John Lee was a hunting man and a lover of the outdoors before he emigrated to North America, and his job in the Klondike of hunting game was a job which he loved. It was tough, of course, but he was very happy to be working in a beautiful, pristine wilderness. He died in December 1926 in Athy, aged 61.





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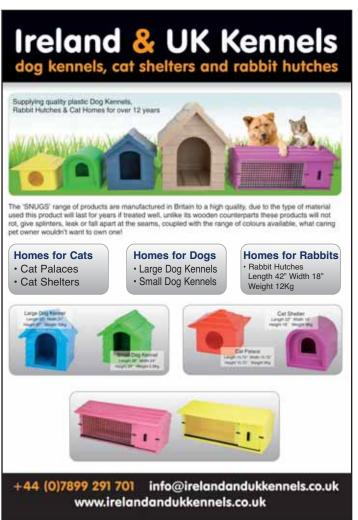
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# All the Better to See You With

The Iceni had raised this spirit and the Iceni were welcome to keep it!

On reflection, there were few things that Peter enjoyed more, than sitting in a pigeon hide on an early autumn day, as a steady stream of unwary birds dropped into his well set pattern of decoys. This particular October afternoon had been noteworthy, for not only was he directly on the pigeons' flight line and weather conditions perfect, but Peter's shooting had also proved to be pleasingly consistent. An evening phone call from a farmer friend, had informed Peter that the 'Grey Hordes' were attending a field of storm flattened barley, and with a little prior reconnaissance, great sport might be had

His friend had not been wrong, for as Peter gazed out over the flat East Anglian landscape, he noticed yet more wood pigeons approaching over a neighbouring field. Keeping low behind the concealing screen of camouflaged netting, the shooter waited until his quarry were directly over the decoys, before standing, picking out two descending birds, and making a neat right and left.

Flaring away on clattering wings, the rest of the flock sought shelter in a distant pine wood, whilst with a gesture of the hand, Peter sent out his springer, Jack, to make the retrieves. Bounding out of the hide and over the uneven rows of wasted crop, the black and white spaniel found the birds lying belly up amongst the ranks of plastic decoys. Jack was an old hand at this kind of work, for having a master with a love of pigeon shooting, he had spent much of his life picking these grey birds from Norfolk's rich arable land. Having retrieved both birds to hand, Jack once more took up his place on the floor of the hide; his master bending to remove the dry, grey and white feathers, which stuck to the dog's nose and mouth.

A quick calculation revealed that man and dog had accounted for 68 wood pigeons, and with the flight now thinning, Peter decided to call it a day, gather up the decoys, and head for home. As much as he loved pigeon shooting, Peter lamented the fact that so much equipment had to be lugged across farmland, between the position of his hide, and the spot where he had left his Land Rover, parked on the farm track. His burden today included gun, net hide and poles, cartridges, 50 shell decoys and on the homeward leg, 68 cooling wood pigeons. A shortcut would have to be found!

Assessing the situation, Peter decided that if he cut across the head of the freshly ploughed, adjoining field, and then along the hedgerow to the farm track, he could save himself considerable time and effort. Shouldering two cartridge bags, his gun, and the sack

containing the decoys, Peter called Jack to heel, and set off on his newly procured route. The whole operation would take two trips, but with luck, shouldn't take longer than 20 minutes. With head down, and labouring under his burden, Peter walked through the open gateway from the barley field, and along the edge of the plough. Impressed by their uniform straightness, he noted how the bottom of each furrow still retained its knife sharp 'V', and how the freshly turned earth had yet to lose its rich odour.

As is common for this part of East Anglia, the well drained soil was littered with myriad broken flints of uneven shape and size, but as he trudged along the weed strewn headland, Peter's eye fell upon an unnaturally shaped stone lying two furrows out. Curiosity aroused, the weary shooter unburdened himself and strode out onto the crumbling



Wood pigeons over a neighbouring field.

plough, where kneeling, he picked up the stone, and turned it over in his hand. Carefully weighing its heft, Peter realised instantly that the cold, smooth object, was no chipped Norfolk flint, but a much softer stone, and one foreign to the east of England. This was for its own sake remarkable, but as he brushed the drying soil from its surface, he was astonished to discover, that the fist size object was, in fact, finely carved.

Taking a large handkerchief from his trouser pocket, Peter wiped the stone clean and for the first time saw the object's lupine features. Lupine, for there was no doubt that what Peter held in his hand, was a carved stone wolf's head.

# Its eyes seemed unusually large, glaring almost

Jack the spaniel wandered onto the plough, more interested in the scent of moles than any archaeological discovery. Peter though was wrapped and carefully ran his thumbnail along the head's carved grooves, cleaning them of the soil that lodged there. Ancient though the object must be, its features remained clear and distinct, with pointed ears unbroken, and sharp wolf snout displaying bared canine teeth. Its most unusual feature however were its eyes, for even to one unfamiliar with wolves, they seemed unusually large, glaring almost.

Placing the carved head in his jacket pocket, Peter continued transporting his decoying equipment to the Land Rover, whilst mulling over his best course of action. He could, drive straight down to the farm and hand the object over, but doubted the farmer would take the time and trouble to investigate the head's age and origin. Would the farmer even be interested anyway? Probably not. No, he would keep the head for now, and present it to the landowner only after the object had been properly researched by a local museum. Feeling pangs of guilt over his planned temporary deception, he told himself that his action would enrich the archaeological knowledge of the area and benefit those studying the history of East Anglia. Laudable surely?

Arriving home, Peter fed Jack, hung the pigeons in the larder, and cleaned his gun; only then turning his attention to the stone head, which remained in the pocket of his jacket, hanging by the front door. Taking the carving into the kitchen, he placed it in the sink, and with hot water and a scrubbing brush removed from it any remaining earth. Holding the still wet object up to the light, he marvelled at its detail, and the level of craftsmanship necessary to create it. Undoubtedly of great age, it showed a degree of technical ability unsurpassed even in the modern age. What Peter

found most remarkable however, was the way in which its maker seemed to have imbued it with a sense of life, an animation almost.

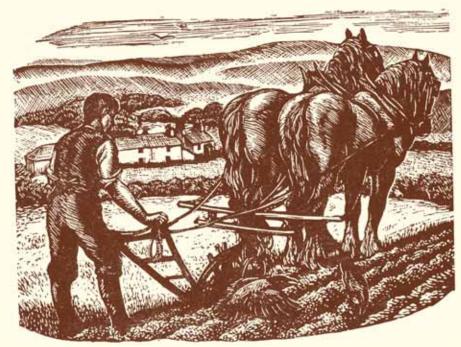
After drying the carving, he carried the artefact upstairs and placed it at the centre of his bedroom dressing table. His wife, who was away visiting her sister in London, would never have allowed the object to be so placed, but long before she returned, the head would, he hoped, be in the care of Norwich Museum.

In a place somewhere between sleeping and waking, Peter became aware of a dog barking furiously. Glancing at the clock on the sitting room wall, he discovered two things; that it was 1.05 a.m., and that he had fallen asleep in the armchair. The barking, and furious it proved to be, was coming from upstairs, where Jack seemed to be in some kind of frenzy. Peter shouted up to him to be quiet, and that all was well, but when the barking continued unabated, he hauled himself out of the chair, and climbed the stairs to investigate.

Turning from the broad Edwardian staircase onto the landing, he found Jack standing with hackles raised, directly outside the bedroom door. What remained of the dog's docked tail was tucked firmly between his legs, whilst his eyes stared unblinking at something on the other side of the panelled, mahogany door. Peter had seen Jack bark when excited, and even in mild aggression when the postman arrived. This however was different. This was genuine fear.

Had a burglar perhaps entered the house through an upper window, while Peter had slept downstairs? It certainly seemed a possibility, and one which must be investigated.

Taking an antique, Zulu knobkerrie, from its place of display upon the first floor wall, Peter gripped the brass bedroom doorknob, and turning it quickly, thrust open the door and turned on the light. The bedroom was still, and silent, and empty. In fact the only sound that Peter could hear was his own heart beating hard within his chest. Even Jack had ceased to bark, and stood with



Peter crossed the head of a freshly ploughed field.

hackles raised, showing no desire to enter the room.

## His sleep that night could best be described as fitful

Peter gently reprimanded the dog, and audibly questioned the animal's sanity. As he walked around the bedroom he saw that all was as it should be; all that is, apart from the carved wolf's head, which he had placed at the centre of his dressing table, and was now lying on the carpeted floor. He picked up the smooth, carved object, placed it back on the table, and remembering the lateness of the hour, made ready for bed. His sleep that night could best be described as fitful, for several times Peter woke feeling cold, and no matter how he adjusted the setting on the radiator, oddly, the bedroom retained an unnatural chill.

Unfortunately, this situation repeated itself the following night, and Peter's growing fatigue, wasn't helped by Jack repeatedly barking outside the door of the apparently empty bedroom. Peter could make no sense of this behaviour, as his spaniel was usually the quietest of dogs. Jack's change of mood however,

wasn't the only recent development that troubled Peter.

Norwich Castle Museum was both impressive and imposing, and as Peter waited at its well appointed reception desk, he studied the various local articles on display. Ancient and agricultural, it was all there, from single furrow ploughs made by Ransomes of Ipswich, through to crest bearing Roman helmets. Returning to the desk, the museum receptionist informed Peter that for his 2 p.m. appointment, he should go to the Local Finds Department, second door on the left, where Professor Robert Hedges would be glad to talk to him.

A leading local archaeologist, Robert Hedges looked every inch the antiquarian. Tall, lean, and slightly stooped, he wore a shapeless tweed jacket complete with leather elbow patches. A pair of gold wire rimmed spectacles balanced on the very end of his chiselled nose, whilst from his breast pocket projected the tarred bowl of a Dublin briar pipe. His physical stature, married to an almost perpetual squint, created the impression of an alert, if slightly myopic heron.

Professor Robert Hedges looked every inch the antiquarian.

Introductions over, Peter removed the carved stone wolf's head from his coat pocket, and after unwinding its protective layer of bubble wrap, handed it to Professor Hedges. Visibly impressed, the archaeologist held the object beneath a bright angle poise lamp, and with the aid of a large magnifying glass, studied it in great detail. Without once taking his eyes off the carved stone, Hedges asked Peter where he had found the artefact, and under what circumstances. Having heard a detailed explanation of its discovery, the professor laid the stone upon his desk, and placing his hands into his trouser pockets, met his visitor's expectant gaze.

The carving was without any doubt ancient, but just how old, it was hard to say. Hedges again picked up the carved head, and holding it to the light, proffered that it was Welsh blue stone, belonged to the Iron Age, or possibly even the late Neolithic period. When asked if he could be more precise, the professor said that he believed it to be the carved head of a wolf deity, probably sacred to the Iceni tribes, and certainly made before Boudicca's uprising of AD 61.

At this point, Peter drew attention to the carving's huge eyes, and grinning with tobacco stained teeth, the professor countered with: "Ah yes. All the better to see you with," he laughed.

Forcing a smile, but shuffling uncomfortably, Peter cleared his throat, and with some embarrassment, asked the Professor if he believed in the supernatural. Hedges looked at him with a start, and said: "Interesting question. Why do you ask?" Aware that he was going out on a limb, the young man explained that since finding the carved head, a series of increasingly strange events had taken place. He told of how every evening, the usually peaceful Jack had barked furiously outside the door of his empty bedroom; the same room that remained inexplicably frigid, even after the heating had been turned full on.

With a consoling air, Professor Hedges smiled, and offered that perhaps Jack had scented mice in the bedroom, as rodents were not uncommon in older houses such as Peter's. Similarly, in a house built at around the turn of the last century, there were bound to be problems with the heating, air-locked radiators, that kind of thing. Raising his eyes slowly from the surface of the desk, Peter fixed the archaeologist with an unblinking stare, and said: "And then.... there are the scratches." "Scratches?" questioned Professor Hedges. "Yes.... scratches, on the back of the bedroom door," reiterated Peter.

Grinning, and putting his hand on the young man's arm as reassurance, the elderly professor ventured: "But surely, in a house with a dog, scratches on doors are common place, and hardly connected with the supernatural?" Peter, with a slightly faltering note to his voice, said: "Yes, indeed, in most cases, what you say is absolutely true. But professor, the scratches on my bedroom door are on the inside, and scored deeply in the upper panels. Five feet from the floor! What kind of dog could do that?"

#### In a voice, little more than a whisper, he said get rid of it.....quickly

His smile transformed into an expression of unmistakable concern, Robert Hedges looked down at the carved wolf's head on the desk before him, and in a lowered voice, asked, "Do these, occurrences, take place only when the carving is in your bedroom?" Upon Peter's admission that they did, he found himself shaken by the old man's response. Far from scoffing and pouring cold water on Peter's claims, as many in his position might have done, the elderly academic lent forward, and in a voice little more than a whisper, said: "Then get rid of it. And quickly."

Stunned at having had his revelations taken seriously, the young man found himself momentarily lost for words, and as he stood with mouth agape, Hedges repeated with renewed emphasis: "Quickly!" In lowered tones he continued: "I have heard accounts like yours before, all concerning carved Celtic deities, and none of them ended



well. Get rid of it, and fast."

Taking the wolf's head from the desk top, Peter thrust it into his pocket unwrapped, and striding out through the open door, offered a hurried thanks over his shoulder as he went. His course of action was clear.

Arriving home in a spray of gravel, Peter left the car with the engine running outside the secluded Edwardian Villa. As he sprinted across the lawn to where a spade hung by its nail in the potting shed, the sound of Jack frantically barking inside the house could clearly be heard. Grabbing the spade, Peter ran toward the front door, and throwing it wide open, found Jack with hackles raised, and in a state of some distress, at the foot of the wide mahogany staircase. Peter's attempts to calm the dog achieved nothing, for the frantic spaniel continued to bark unabated; his eyes fixed upon the heads of the stairs.

With spade still in hand, Peter placed a foot on the bottommost tread, but was frozen in mid stride by what he saw moving on the upper landing. There, defying all science and logic, and with glaring eyes the colour of obsidian, stood a beast half wolf half man. Jack's barking had now progressed to canine hysteria, as the terrifying lycanthrope commenced to bound down the staircase three steps at a time, toward Peter and the ground floor.

Holding the spade horizontal, Peter

thrust its blade out before him as a soldier with bayonet fixed. He had experienced fear before, but until this moment elemental terror had been unknown to him. Now seemingly paralysed, he could only grip the edged garden tool, as an entity older than all mankind sprang past him with a snarl, and out through the open front door. Jack, his nerve finally broken, had fled to a dark corner somewhere in the house, and Peter, trembling entirely, could happily have followed him. Instead, he stumbled out through the front door on unsteady legs, the spade still held out as protection against what might await him.

Of the creature however there was no sign, and the trembling householder had no inclination for pursuit. Instead, he hurled the spade into the back of car, and without a sideward glance roared off towards a certain ploughed field. Pigeons were still dropping in to the acres of storm flattened barley, as Peter abandoned his car on the rutted farm track, almost exactly where he had parked his Land Rover a few days before. Pigeons however, were now far from his mind, as jumping the fence, he half strode, half ran, out towards the freshly ploughed field of well drained flinty soil.

Loping over the plough, his well polished shoes quickly filled with soil, but he cared not. Standing in the centre of the uniform furrows, he thrust his hand into his coat pocket, and took out the now familiar form of the stone wolf's head. With plans of hole digging abandoned, Peter simply lent back, and with a mighty effort, hurled the ancient object as high and as far as he was physically able.

Somewhere out on the plough he heard the thud of its impact, there to lie until covered over by agricultural machinery. This elemental force once worshipped and revered by our ancient Celtic ancestors, had returned to the earth from which it was conjured. The Iceni had raised this spirit, and the Iceni were welcome to keep it. Boudicca could take her wolf back.

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# There's more to the 'game' than pheasants

I know that many enthusiasts really look forward to the pheasant season opening every year, but in my book there's much more to the 'game' than pheasants!

This event is the highlight of the year for many shooters, especially the members of game associations who have worked all year raising poults and protecting them from vermin, to ensure a good supply of birds for the members' season. Some such as deerstalkers have the advantage in that the stag season opens in September. For myself, it's time to clean the boat rods and gear and store it all away in good condition for the winter, then get the pike and bass rods out and make sure that they are up to scratch. But I digress, this is not about angling.

I have been a member of my local game association in the past and served my time feeding poults and enjoyed the rewards during the season. Then kids and suchlike came along, and I withdrew from active shooting sports. Now however I have returned with a fresh eye and wonder why pheasant seem to be the quarry that most consider the only one that matters?

Some game associations concentrate their efforts on ducks or woodcock. I, however, have explored a bit further and abandoned the shotgun in favour of a high powered air rifle. In honesty if I had a decent dog I think I would have returned to rough-shooting. But I have a soft spot for foxes so would not shoot one. I consider that they eat more rats and mice than we give them credit for, and they also clean up the countryside. Those who use an air rifle appreciate the challenge of a rifle. Have one shot

and you find that being accurate is indeed a challenge. I'm not saying you don't need to be accurate with a shotgun, but a single bullet or pellet needs to hit the right spot to do the job.

I have written in the past about controlling squirrels in a local golf club, and I also shoot pigeons coming in to roost with an air rifle and I have always stated that shot placement is crucial for kill. Once while shooting pigeons in a field at the request of a farmer, I was approached and told that it was illegal in Ireland to shoot any bird with any rifle but I have had some great evenings shooting feral pigeons in a farmer's grain shed at his request. He would not have been quite so happy if I had left his shed full of holes! No one in their right mind would fire any rimfire or centre-fire rifle anywhere without a proper backstop because the bullet can travel a long way. However with a shotgun or an air rifle you know roughly where the pellets will land as the range is limited. I believe pest controllers can use air rifles to control pests such as feral pigeons, but despite a number of previous articles on this topic I have received no complaints.



Another to keep in check - the rat.

#### Tough targets

Both wood-pigeon and squirrels are tough targets and it is easy to hit one but have it run or fly away. Nobody wants to injure any animal, so I always try to respect the animal and dispatch it cleanly. In saying that, I have found shotgun pellets in the breastbone of



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pigeons when preparing them for the table. Being responsible sometimes means that you miss the shot, but so be it. Deerstalkers know well the frustration of finally seeing the quarry, but having to forego the shot because there was a chance of injuring the animal or else no safe backstop. I am of course referring to the majority of deerstalkers who would not dream of wounding an animal in the hope of a follow-up shot.

Anyway deer and pheasant aside there is great sport to be had controlling pest species such as rabbits, rats, feral pigeons, wood-pigeons and squirrels. Squirrels, pigeons and of course rabbits are very tasty and a welcome addition to the kitchen.

Knowing the local farmers can mean a phone call at any time with a request to do away with crop-robbing pests and we always try to oblige. One memorable evening we visited a grain shed to find that feral pigeons had turned it into a roost and feeding spot at once. We arrived after dark and knocked off about twenty. The farmer was very grateful, as the droppings were also causing problems. As a bonus we realised that there were loads of mice living in the grain store and these were very tough shots, but we managed a dozen or so.

In our efforts to be responsible my shooting companion and I both use rangefinders to determine pellet drop over distance. But being sure of a one shot kill is the priority. We would often discuss exactly where the best placement is to kill a pigeon or squirrel depending on the angle you can see the quarry. A pigeons head is a very small target.

I believe that far too many sportsmen limit themselves to 'traditional' game or quarry species, when there is great sport to be had helping out local farmers control pests along with invasive species such as grey squirrels.

(Right)

Just out of focus another invader.



A headshot despite being a small target.



A clean kill is what you're after.



# **Hunting Roundup**

#### The Fermanagh Harriers

If anyone ever needed reminding that the Fermanagh Harriers are a family pack they only had to be at their opening meet, the venue being the kennels, Scarva House near Clones, the home of the Vance family.

Senior joint master Billy Vance (in office since 1963) celebrated his eighty-fourth birthday during the preceding week but was still leading from the front on his twenty-three year old grey mare, Sonnet. Three of his children were also "on parade".

His son, Johnny Vance MH, was hunting hounds which were being turned to him by his two sisters, Susan and Clare and by Ellen Coyle, making her debut in the role of appointed whipper-in having acted there in a casual capacity in the past. Surely this is a unique situation of three lady whippers-in? To complete the 'generation game' Johnny's three children Daniel (12), Arabella (9) and Chloe (8) were all out on good ponies.

Some forty riders, including the three other joint masters, Patrick Murphy, Richard Trimble and Michael Bevan, were under field master Edward Perrse.

Johnny Vance put his 101/2 couple mixed pack, including 4 couple of new entry, into Scarva bog and drew on across the estate and into Noel McFarland's before crossing back into the estate, all without success. He had no better success at Golanduff, so he then drew across Ian Keating's at the Blind Lake, moving on to Hugo Maguire's.

At Lisamuck Lake, on Gerry Fitzpatrick's land, hounds put one customer afoot presaging a short hunt before our pilot was lost in poor scenting conditions. At Eugene Clerkson's bog and on to Eddie Owens's at the Ring Fort hounds continued to draw blanks. Moving across Brian Maguire's and Alice Courtney's a hare went afoot and took hounds back into Brian Maguire's and Alice Courtney's before going into Scarva Estate and being lost. Hounds then drew Michelle Maguire's and David Keating's with a continuing lack of success in these poor scenting conditions so Johnny Vance blew for

home. A day which had started with some bright sunshine, while still cool and had experienced a short heavy shower now ended in some sunshine.

My lasting memories of the day centred on the eighty-four year old Billy Vance giving several others a lead over some stout fences to confirm his continuing great influence on this Hunt and the people in it.

#### The North Down Foxhounds

The North Down Foxhounds' opening meet outside Carrowdore enjoyed a mild, bright day with poor to, at best, patchy scenting conditions.

Huntsman Barry Jones had on a 12½ couple dog-hound pack and was assisted by his brother Philip and by Charlie McPoland while Lesley Webb MFH had charge of a twenty-five strong mounted field.

The first draw, at Ballyboley Dexters, proved blank as did The Fisheries. My driver Barney Jones, the huntsman's father, remarked that this part of Co Down must have had more rain than the rest so soft was the going. The huntsman drew on as far as



Paul and Christine Probit with the Galway Blazers at Craughwell.



Oliver Little, MFH, leads the Dungannon Foxhounds away from the first meet after a short break for refreshments at Ardboe, Co Tyrone.

Carrowdore Saddlery without success, with his hounds working very hard for him on this unfavourable day.

At Cranston's a fox went afoot, risen and pushed hard by Hoarder 12, to give a short hunt from Mountstewart Road into Brown's, past Peninsula Riding School to finish at Margaret Love's, whose late husband Professor Gary Love had so enjoyed riding to these hounds.

Hoarder 12 had pushed this fox hard throughout this hunt but even he could not hold the scent so, at this point, Barry Jones blew for home. The bright weather persisted until 4.30pm enabling everyone to get home in daylight.

#### The Iveagh Foxhounds

The Iveagh Foxhounds' opening meet, at their newly refurbished kennels, saw the introduction of new joint master Alexander Mills and new huntsman Mark Casserly. The refurbishment, under Chairman and former joint master Clifford Lilburn, has certainly improved the Hunt's accommodation and is a massive statement of confidence in the future.

On the last day of October we had a warm day with some sunshine which the huntsman and his 14 ½ couple mixed pack did everything to belie. A forty strong mounted field, under joint masters Bob Wilson and Alexander Mills, included a number of North Down Foxhounds members, with whom this was a joint meet, among whom Lesley Webb MFH and huntsman Barry Jones were prominent all day.

Mark Casserly, with Patrick Grinter

whipping-in, drew George Nesbitt's as far down as the old railway line, then the Kennels Bog and on through McDermott's, Wallace's and Waugh's without success. Hunting was now being done in warm and bright sunshine.

He continued all around Jameson's on a day which had become almost too warm for hounds, before moving to Sands's at Ballycross without success despite Stephen Sands being in the mounted field and therefore being able to tell the huntsman of any likely spots!

At Stanley Dougan's hounds drew a field of maize where we car followers could see the maize moving increasingly strongly. Suddenly, a fox broke covert and a particularly distinctive sandy coloured fox with a white front it proved to be. Our pilot made off from the maize field and crossed two fields towards Steen's Hill, halloaed away by ex Killultagh huntsman Noel Fitzpatrick. We watched as hounds pushed him hard and in good voice back to Steen's Hill and eventually into Drew Jameson's off, Seapatrick Road, where he was lost in fading scenting conditions. Mark Casserly then blew for home and everyone returned to the nearby kennels in excellent light.

#### The Louth Foxhounds

The weather was even milder for the Louth Foxhounds' meet at Monasterboice where huntsman Alan Reilly had on a 17½ couple mixed pack, including 5 couple of new entry, with Ian Donohue and Oisin Duffy

whipping-in to him.

A twenty strong mounted field, under joint masters Gerry Boylan and Joe Callan, followed the huntsman to the first draw behind Donegan's. Here, hounds quickly put a brace afoot but could make nothing of either of them as both foxes went to ground after short hunts.

Hounds drew back to Briscoe's with what car follower Hugh McKeever, brother of former huntsman Michael, aptly described as 'bits and pieces hunting.' Alan Reilly stopped them at Briscoe's, being unable to go on to Tullyesker due to cattle. Last season saw cattle still out in December across various Hunt countries and this season is looking like presenting the same problem.

The huntsman lifted hounds and drew Fieldstown, again quickly putting one afoot which ran as far as McGinn's at Brownstown where he, too, went to ground and was given best after some desultory hunting in probably the worst scenting conditions for some time. Alan Reilly deserves great credit, as do his hounds, for their determination to show sport in such unfavourable conditions.

## The Killultagh Old Rock and Chichester

The Killultagh Old Rock and Chichester meet at Ballyvannon House, outside Crumlin Co Antrim, hosted by Dan and Grace Glendinning, started out in persistent rain which quickly cleared and finished with some sunshine in still mild conditions. The various weather conditions brought no improvement in



Donna Quail and her daughter Tory with the East Down Foxhounds at Listooder Nr Saintfield.

scent which remained, at best, very patchy all day.

Huntsman Patrick Headdon had on a 13½ couple mixed pack and was assisted by Chris Berry and Robbie Gault, while field master Philip Swann had charge of a hardy field of some dozen riders with Geoffrey Porter MFH overseeing everything.

Hounds put a fox afoot at Brankin's Shore but he went to ground in some very heavy brambles near Sandy Bay, which were so thick that even the huntsman couldn't get into them!

A series of draws around Wilson's came to nothing as was the case at John Farr's so the huntsman moved to Feumore where he drew more land belonging to the Brankins. Having drawn several coverts blank hounds put a second fox afoot at Feumore to enjoy a short hunt, again with hounds in good voice. This circular hunt went as far as Toryart and ended with our pilot going to ground near Portman Lake. After a further series of draws Patrick Headdon

blew for home, at Darachean, while there was still some daylight to return to the meet.

#### The Westmeath Foxhounds

The initially showery, then mild, bright weather which greeted the Westmeath Foxhounds at Delvin confirmed the changeable nature and patchy scenting conditions of this early season hunting.

Huntsman Niall Mahon had on a 17½ couple mixed pack and had Adam Bouabbse whipping-in to him, while field master Ann Moorehead had a dozen riders, including joint masters Dr David Mortell and Ann Derwin, under her charge.

I was being driven by David Geoghegan, who had no fewer than forty electric fences to neutralise, twenty personally and twenty by telephoning land owners. Also in our vehicle was Mona Ferentschik who was about to return to her native Germany having done an excellent job with the Hunt horses.

Niall Mahon drew the grounds of the old St Mary's hospital but they were blank as was Revington's. Hounds found in Alan Smith's, whose late father Stanley who died recently was such a staunch supporter of the Hunt. This fox ran left handed towards the N52 then circled left handed, to run through Tom Cox's then left handed again into Anderson's covert. After some sharp hunting here he was marked to ground under a big beech tree.

Anderson's covert yielded our second fox which ran straight towards Delvin but hounds were lifted, after a short hunt, due to the numbers of stock out and because of a family bereavement to Niall Mahon with the death of his aunt earlier that morning. This had been an 11am meet and the day now ended in mid afternoon

Hounds worked hard throughout and Niall Mahon, now in his second season, has settled in well.

#### The Newry Harriers

The mild weather could not last, so I was not surprised that the Newry Harriers' meet at Ewart's Cross, outside Bessbrook, Co Armagh, took place in persistent rain with mist eventually closing in right across the area.

Sole master, Mrs J E Close, was there to see a hardy field of some twelve riders off. Huntsman Mark McIlroy, assisted by his son Matthew and his friends Conall McGrath and Alex Hammond, took a 20 couple mixed pack to the first draw at Derrywilligan. He drew the entire townland without success as the mist started to come down.

A move to Eshwary proved no more successful despite drawing every possible covert so Mark McIlroy moved to Duvernagh and drew as far as Kingsmill Road. Here, hounds put a fox afoot from a bog to presage a short hunt in worsening weather and scenting conditions before he went to ground back in Duvernagh where Mark McIlroy blew for home which, for him, was now very close.



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First grouse for Debbie in the Perthshire hills.

It was at the beginning of June that I stood at the window of my office, looking out at the gale and the teeming rain that was sweeping across Scotland and northern England and wondering how many of the grouse chicks that were about hatch would survive the awful weather.

Cold wet weather at hatching time deals a double whammy to young grouse: some will die from the cold and wet directly while others will starve because the insects that they eat during their first couple of weeks are simply not available. When it was time to start brood counts in mid-July we were all very nervous about what we would find. Would there be any young birds at all?

It soon became clear, from our own counts with the pointers and setters and from what others were finding around the moors, that 2015 was going to be a very mixed bag for grouse shooting. The counts on the estate where we started were at least equal to and in some cases better than those in 2014. When I contacted the next estate where we were due to count the Keeper told me that their numbers were so poor that they had cancelled all shooting and were not going to count at all in order

to minimise disturbance of what birds remained. We already had several days shooting over the pointers pencilled in for August and September and it was an anxious time waiting to hear whether we could go ahead or if the shoots would be cancelled. As it happened we were lucky and all our days went ahead and provided an interesting insight into different levels of grouse moor management.

I began the season on the Twelfth, waving a flag as a flanker on a driven day on the moor where we started our summer counts. It was warm and still and the general feeling was that the grouse would be sitting tightly and would be difficult to get over the butts. As is so often the case, all the pre-shoot worries disappeared as soon as the first drive got under way and shots started ringing across the moor. The beaters swept through, flags waving: the horn sounded for 'no more shooting

forward', the last grouse were shot – or missed – behind and the drive was over. I rolled up my flag and was delighted when the head keeper came over, grinning from ear to ear and said: "Well: it looks as though your counts were right."

The first moor where we shot over the pointers is in the north Yorkshire and is a grouse moor pure and simple. The keepers spend all their time managing the ground for grouse: controlling predators, burning heather, putting out medicated grit and maintaining the roads, butts and lunch huts. The grouse is king on these moors and the hard work of his subjects shows up clearly in the numbers of birds we saw on the two days we shot there.

## Some hard chances were taken, others missed

Our bag limit was ten brace and there was never any doubt that we

would get our twenty birds - provided the pointers did their job, the grouse were not too wild and the Guns shot reasonably well. I am happy to report that all three criteria were met and we enjoyed two great days shooting. The beat had already been driven earlier in the season so the coveys were split up to some extent and the birds were a little wary but if anything this made the days more interesting. Grouse that run, twisting and turning through the heather, can test the dogs and the Guns alike, and an old cock getting up thirtyfive yards off to the side is not the simple shot that is presented when a covey jumps five yards in front of the pointer's nose. Some hard chances were taken and one or two 'easy' chances were missed, but we ended both days in good time with our ten brace safely secured.

Then we had another day at the top end of the Pennine on a moor where the keepers are responsible for a commercial pheasant and partridge shoot as well as a few thousand acres of moor. Grouse here are an important part of the estate sport, but only a part and obviously less time is dedicated to their welfare than on a moor where grouse are the only consideration. Again we were looking for ten brace but this time it was more of a hope than a foregone conclusion.

There is some good heather on this moor but also a lot of more marginal ground where the heather shades off into rough grazing. A storm the night before the shoot had scattered the coveys and left them somewhat wild and we had to work really hard for every bird in the bag. The dogs covered miles of ground as did the Guns and the dog handlers and at the finish of a very long day on the hill we had seven and a half brace of grouse, aching legs, tired dogs and the satisfaction of knowing that every one of those fifteen grouse had been thoroughly earned by dogs and Guns alike.

Then we spent several days up in Perthshire on a hill that is primarily stalking ground and where, apart from a



Ronnie with a Yorkshire grouse in hand



Pointer Bruno working on grouse in Yorkshire.



A covey away high up on the Pennine.



Dan on point on a rocky outcrop.



lain ready for action with Bruno and Ellie.

bit of fox control, the ground is pretty much left to look after itself. There seems to be a concerted effort at the moment by antis and to some extent by so-called environmental 'experts' who should know better, to attack grouse shooting and grouse moor management, particularly the practice of heather burning which we are told pollutes water courses, destroys the underlying peat and generally despoils the unique upland habitat. Well, this moor represents what you get if you stop managing the land and leave things to nature.

We started working the dogs here about twenty years ago when the tenancy changed hands. Prior to that the ground had been keepered and regular heather burning had been the norm. Back then we were shooting an average of around ten brace a day with our best day being twenty-two brace. The numbers have steadily declined until, over the last couple of years, two or three brace has been as good as it gets and as the heather has got longer and ranker just getting across the hill has become harder and harder for dogs and humans alike. We used to see mountain hares all across the moor but this year I didn't see a single one, nor much in the way of larks, pipits and other small ground-nesting birds.

We still love going and working our pointers on the few birds that remain and, if the Guns worked hard for their birds on that day on the Pennine, they have to work doubly hard here for a much smaller bag. This is grouse shooting over pointers on the very raw edge and if you want to shoot a grouse you have to be prepared for some serious yomping and still be on target when a rare opportunity presents itself. There are very few second chances here.

The highlight of the season for me was seeing a young lady called Debbie shoot her first ever grouse with her first shot after Bruno the Pointer had found, pointed, and then hunted out an old cock that was doing its very best to escape by creeping off through the

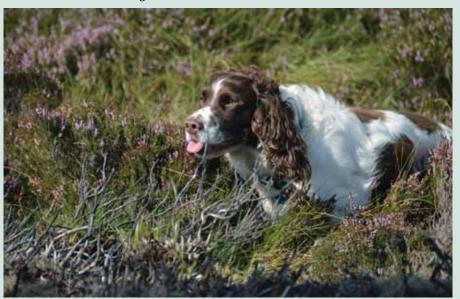




Acres of well-managed heather as the Guns wait for grouse to rise

Merlin delivers a grouse to Rowlie. heather. Bruno re-cast and re-found him three or four times, then tracked him down and pushed him up for Debbie to drop him cleanly onto the heather. It was smart work by the pointer and the Gun alike and, as it turned out, the only shot she was to get that day so she can truthfully say she has never missed a grouse. Hopefully we will put that right next August.

Our grouse shooting is over now, even though the season still has a couple of months to run and we are getting down to the bread and butter work of pheasants and partridges with the spaniels instead of the pointers. We were lucky in that we were able to shoot at all, with many moors cancelling once the extent of the damage done by the wind and rain in



Charlie the springer hunts for a shot bird.

June became clear. The pointers are resting up now until the spring counts start in March when hopefully there

will be a decent stock left for breeding and some better weather around hatching time.



The shooting party well pleased with a grand ten brace day over the pointers.

# Art & Antiques

Reflecting on the sales season that was summer, one cannot help but observe there was a bit of a lift in the atmosphere throughout the auction rooms.

But, whether it will continue or not is anyone's guess for economically we are living in a very fickle world and while one minute we may be riding the crest of a wave, it takes little to topple one into the depths of a depression. Anyway, there were highlights right across the season and no doubt they brought much pleasure not only to sellers but also to the purchasers of such goods.

One lot in particular which attracted much pre-sale attention and an equally attractive price during the auction was a clock which turned up in County Kildare. Known as The Francis Johnston Speaker Clock it had, until fairly recently, stood in the Irish Parliament and it had a unique attribute in that it played God Save the Queen on the quarter hour.

The 220 year old timepiece had previously belonged to Patrick Guinness, who was a direct descendant of the brewery founder Sir Arthur Guinness. It was sent to sale together with many other heirlooms from the Furness House estate of the Guinness family. And when the hammer came down on it at auctioneer George Fonsie Mealy's sale it made €115,000 or around £84,000.

Describing it as: 'A highly important mahogany long-case clock,' Mr Mealy added, "there was huge interest in the piece given the wealth of history it represented. We expect it will go on public display eventually."

#### What a clock, what a story

The clock is crested with a scallop shell, flanked with a hound and cherub and inscribed with the Johnston motto 'Nunquam Non Paratus' meaning 'never unprepared'. And while it has been a resident of the Irish Republic for so long it has a strong Northern Ireland connection having been built by Armagh man James

Waugh, who was a member of a well known clock-making family. Mr Waugh worked in Armagh from 1785 producing an astronomical clock for use in Armagh Observatory in 1793, before moving to Dublin in 1805.

This fine grandfather clock took its name from its one-time owner Francis Johnston, who was the architect of Dublin's General Post Office and the Armagh Conservatory. It had been loaned to the Irish Parliament before being damaged in recent times by the heating system in Leinster House where the Oireachtas sits. What a clock, what a story!

On a more bizarre note, try beating an item which came up for sale at The On the Square Emporium at Albert Sq, Belfast , just a short distance from the city's Cathedral quarter. A box of bones, complete with a skull was on offer for £750. They used to belong to a doctor from the days when medical students were permitted to take home the remains of the cadaver they had dissected for their degree work. A spokesman at the Emporium said: "We have sold the skeleton for £750, but still have the skull."

Then there was the hoard of smuggled gold, said to be worth more than half a million pounds which was sold by Wilsons Auctions, Mallusk, Co Antrim. The precious metal brought illegally into Britain was seized by HM Revenue and Customs as part of a £9m smuggling plot which saw a gang's leader jailed for nine years. Almost 150 kilos of gold, worth more than £2.5 had been brought in by the gang. Mainly gold bars were sold during an online auction netting £522,000. A total of £700,000 had already been realised earlier.

And of course we cannot forget the Battle of the Boyne musket which sold earlier in the summer for £20,000 and was purchased by the Orange Order. What about



An Irish George II giltwood pier mirror, sold for €60,000 (Adams)

the pair of large Chinese 'Quing period' powder blue vases estimated at 40,000 euros which came up at SHEPPARD'S two day auction of the contents of Capard House, County Laois at the end of the summer. They went beyond all expectations to a couple who had travelled from Beijing especially for the sale and they paid 560,000 euros for the 2.5ft high masterpieces.

Overall around 82pc of the 1,160 lots were sold at the sale which attracted 3,000 to the viewing.

Yes, you never know what turns up at a sale. That's what makes them interesting and exciting.

#### AROUND THE SALES

Dublin-based ADAMS Slane sale was as usual a crowd puller and in keeping with the occasion attracted many fine prices for many fine lots.

An Irish George II giltwood pier mirror, sold for €60,000 which was above its high estimate while a fine Irish Regency three pillar dining table went at €38,000. An Irish William IV breakfront bookcase sold for €33,000 followed by a Martin Cregan portrait of Arthur Guinness II at 32,000 euros and a George II breakfront bookcase at €30,000. A George II mahogany triple



Fine Irish Regency three pillar dining table went at €38,000 (Adams)



Irish William IV breakfront bookcase sold for €33,000 (Adams)

folding top games table realised €20,000; a Jacob Roos painting €18,000 and a terrestrial globe a similar amount.

ADAMS Irish art sale in September saw a Jack Butler Yeats oil, 'The Old landing place' selling for €28,000 followed by a Dan O'Neill, 'Barmaid' oil for €23,500 and a Gerard Dillon, 'Resting tinkers' at €18,000. A William John Leech oil went at €15,500 followed by a William Conor wax crayon 'The apple seller' at €15,000. Among other leading prices were: Lilian Lucy Davidson, 13,000 euros; Colin Middleton, €12,000; Sean Keating, €11,000; Frank McKelvey €10,000; Colin Middleton, €10,000.

In their Vintage & Modern Jewellery sale ADAMS sold a pair of diamond ear-studs for  $\epsilon$ 7,000; a diamond three stone ring at  $\epsilon$ 4,800 and a 19th century diamond crescent brooch at  $\epsilon$ 4,000. Among other lots were: Art Deco diamond ring,  $\epsilon$ 4,000; diamond necklace,  $\epsilon$ 3,600; three stone diamond ring,  $\epsilon$ 2,500; Lady's Omega Constellation watch,  $\epsilon$ 2,000.

The Fine Period Interiors sale held by ADAMS saw an Edwin Hayes oil going for  $\&math{\in}8,200$  while a large 19th century extending table with thumb moulded rim made  $\&math{\in}7,700$ . A serpentine side table realised  $\&math{\in}6,800$  while a set of twelve upholstered panel back dining chairs, in Georgian taste sold for  $\&math{\in}6,000$ . A fine Louis style walnut and marquetry credenza hit a hammer price of  $\&math{\in}5,000$  while a Hugh Douglas Hamilton portrait of Mary Preston made  $\&math{\in}4,800$ . Other lots included: early 19th century longcase clock,  $\&math{\in}3,700$ ; 19th century over-mantle mirror,  $\&math{\in}3,200$ ; cloisonné and brass cased mantle clock of architectural form  $\&math{\in}2,800$ .

#### One of Ireland's rarest coins

WHYTE'S History auction in Dublin is always sure to bring something interesting to the fore.

So when a rare 1985 Irish 20p coin came under the hammer it was exciting, to say, the least to see it sell for €7,200. Considered



Dan O'Neill's 'Barmaid' oil made €23,500 (Adams)

one of Ireland's rarest coins it was described as a 'trial piece' for a new coin, scheduled to be minted the following year in 1986.

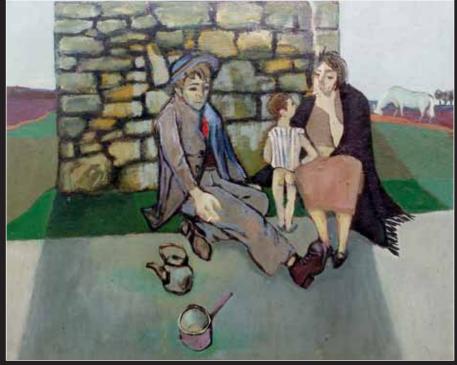
It appears the Central Bank produced around 500 coins and issued them to various organisations to help them calibrate vending machines and public telephones. The coins were supposed to be returned to the bank

to be melted down but about 50 never made it and 10 are recorded in private ownership. So there are some more out there. But



A rare 1985 Irish 20p coin came under the hammer for  $\in$  7,200 (Whyte's)

beware forgeries and as the coin was never circulated it is unlikely to be found in old collections of pre-Euro change.



Gerard Dillon, 'Resting tinkers' sold at €18,000 (Adams)

# Sporting Lives Now .... and Then

#### NOW...Irishman Hunting With Hounds In Scenic, Friendly Derbyshire

Since he was a wee lad Kevin
Murray has loved horses and this love
has guided him into a career of
working for foxhound packs in
England, something which is
challenging but very satisfying. For
several months now he has been
working full time for a prestigious hunt
club in central England, in the

beautiful Peak District region.

Kevin is 22 years of age and he grew up in Birr, County Offaly. At the age of seven he began regularly riding horses with the local Equestrian Centre and eventually entered the fox hunting world, going out with the local pack, the Ormond Foxhounds.

The love of horses and hunting persisted through his childhood and teenage years, and eventually he began learning a bit of the trade under the tutelage of Richard Markham, who was huntsman of the Ormonds at the time. 'I would regularly help Richard in the kennels,' recalled Kevin, 'or act as a whipper-in during hunts. Richard was very helpful and taught me a huge amount. I had been contemplating becoming a secondary school teacher but I decided I would like to try a career in fox hunting. Therefore I asked Richard for assistance. He showed me where to



Kevin Murray and the hounds

look and I saw that a couple of jobs were on offer, one of which was for the position of whipper-in with the Dulverton West foxhounds in Devon. I applied for this job in 2010 and got the post. The job wasn't especially well remunerated compared to other occupations, but I was in the outdoors and riding horses.' Dulverton West is located in North Devon and West Somerset and Kevin worked as a whip three days a week.

After two and a half seasons in the West Country, Kevin became aware that the job of huntsman was available in north-east Derbyshire with the Barlow foxhounds. He applied, and to his delight was given the post, beginning the job at the start of the 2014 / 2015 season.

## Obstacles such as dry stone walls

The Barlow country lies mainly in north-east Derbyshire but includes small portions of Nottinghamshire and South Yorkshire, and is comprised of small mixed and dairy farms. There are a variety of natural obstacles including dry stone walls (which is the most common form of obstacle). The Barlow could date back to the end of the 1600s when a pack was formed to chase the fox and hare, which was done until 1907 when it switched to fox alone. Barlow was managed and hunted by yeoman farmers until 1851.

'There is a lot of dairy grassland,' said Kevin, 'which is ideal for our purposes, and there is an area of land near the Kennels called the Valley which is the most popular meet with subscribers because a large number of hunt-jumps have been constructed. We go out two days a week, on Tuesdays and Fridays, and I'm assisted by two whips.' His accommodation is beside the kennels in a rural part of beautiful Derbyshire, near the village of Holmesfield halfway between Chesterfield and Sheffield. Life as a huntsman is very satisfying, explained Kevin, and he has found the Derbyshire people very welcoming.

#### THEN...Respected Gunsmith Recalls Working In Ireland's Last Gunmaking Factory

When trawling recently through the many newspaper and magazine articles about the Fenian Gun Factory in Birr I came across a fascinating article in The Sunday Independent which was published on July 16th 1972.

The article was called 'The Gunsmith Of Ballinderry Hates Snakes' and was written by Des Moore. The piece was an interview with a much-respected gunsmith living in the village of Ballinderry, North Tipperary called Michael Mullally, who recalled working in the last gunmaking factory in Ireland.

Des Moore began his article memorably with a lovely description of the attractive landscape of North Tipperary which is a mixture of pastureland, vistas of Lough Derg, rivers and hills. "Some of the quietest and loveliest roads in the country," he wrote, "run along the eastern shore of Lough Derg to serve peaceful beauty spots such as Portroe, Dromineer, Puckane, Coolbawn and Ballinderry. It is the last place in the world one would expect to find a gunsmith. And a gunsmith there is."

Mr Moore said Michael Mullally was a very competent craftsman who in an out of the way locality was kept totally busy repairing restoring and refurbishing an immense variety of firearms. Michael and his wife were living in a thatched house a few minutes from Ballinderry. They had ten dogs and travelled by pony and trap. "To all intents and appearances," said the journalist, "they are among the most happy and contented of couples in the entire Irish countryside."

## All the guns were open books to Michael

Michael said he was born in Stradbally County Laois and had been handling guns of one kind or another since he was a child. "The first one shared with my brother was a tightly bound bamboo cane which we fired with a black powder." Many guns lined the walls of his workshop including flintlocks, shotguns, blunderbusses and duelling pistols. Some of these guns were antiques which he was restoring, others were rifles and shotguns belonging to local farmers. Some of the shotguns which Michael was repairing for local farmers had been in service for generations.

For a number of years Michael worked in gunsmith houses in Britain and as an additional activity made miniature cannon. Relics of previous wars such as those to be found in the Tower of London served as his models and he worked from sketches made on the spot.

"Some of the guns brought in to me here are of beautiful workmanship," remarked Michael. "Here's a fowling piece made by Pattison of Dublin - handmade, muzzleloading flintlock and featured in it is the broad rib so much talked about and admired in our present day guns." He said that neglect was the principal cause of gun trouble. He spoke of dangerous repairs carried out by careless owners. Commonest of these was the welding of breaks and holes in barrels any of which could explode in the user's hands.

Michael chatted briefly about his time working as a gunsmith in Fenian Gun Limited which operated for a couple of years in Birr in the late 1960s, when was one of between 60 and 90 employees in the factory and he was positive about his experience there and about the under over shotgun called the Fenian. The Fenian was the last firearm to be made in Ireland, north or south.

"One suspects," concluded the article, "from the manner in which Michael admits to being a reasonably good shot that he is in reality a deadly marksman. Although he goes out shooting he confesses to getting his pleasure from the use of the gun rather than from the killing of things. Sole exception to this rule is snakes. He finds snakes so repellant that their destruction actually gives him satisfaction."







# What's stopping you?

T: 0300 200 7860 | www.nidirect.gov.uk/angling

Department of Culture,
Arts & Leisure Inland Fisheries Group

Causeway Exchange 1-7 Bedford Street Belfast BT2 7EG

# Marine Sportfish Tagging Programme

So, as the leaves begin to turn and the days shorten, another season of Inland Fisheries Ireland's Marine Sportfish Tagging Programme draws to a close.

Around the country a couple of hundred anglers and charter skippers will be writing up their logbooks and oiling up their (hopefully) much used tagging applicators for storage over the winter months. The word on the street is that 2015 has been a fantastic year for Blue Shark with great catches reported from Donegal down to Cork. I won't know the full picture until I

round up the data and begin to process it in early 2016 but the early signs are encouraging.

The Marine Sportfish Tagging Programme (MSTP) began way back in 1970, as both anglers and fisheries staff began to realise that catches of some of our primary sea angling species were beginning to decline and nobody really knew why. In particular, species such as



Blue Shark and Monkfish were showing a marked fall off in numbers and as we didn't fully understand the movements of these fish in Irish waters we couldn't draw any concrete conclusions as to why catches were dwindling.

So the programme began with the aim of collecting data from various fish species resident in, or visiting, Irish waters in order to build up a better picture of fish stocks and movements around our coast and beyond. It has now been running for over 40 years and is the second longest running programme of its kind worldwide. Over those years it has built up an invaluable dataset on some of our primary angling species and it has some interesting and often worrying stories to tell.

While the data collected by the programme is hugely valuable, one of the more encouraging stories that can be seen through the programme is not specifically related to the data but to the change in attitude of anglers to their sport. It was a different age back pre 1970 and unfortunately it was not unusual to see piles of dead shark laid out on a pier after a days fishing just for the sake of taking a photograph or a measure of weight.

## Buying into catch and release

As these fish had no real food value they were often discarded over the edge of the pier at the end of the day. To a modern Irish angler, it would be



A Common Skate tagged by well known angler Terry Jackson.

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A tagged Porbeagle Shark © www.rosguill.com

obvious that such indiscriminate killing of large numbers of shark would eventually contribute to a decline in catches but back then anglers were not so well educated as to the consequences of their actions.

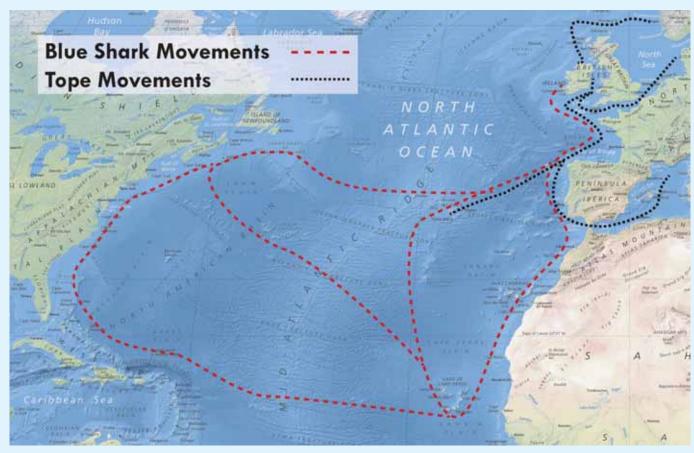
So when the MSTP began in 1970 it heralded a sea change in how anglers viewed their own commitment to the long-term conservation of their sport. In buying into the MSTP, skippers and anglers were also buying into a 'Catch and Release' ethos, as once tagged the fish were released to be caught again another day. Nowadays it is almost unheard of for anglers to kill a shark for any reason and so they are playing their part in the battle to protect our marine resources.

The programme is also interesting in

that it is wholly reliant on the commitment of charter skippers and anglers who take the time to tag and record their catches on a yearly basis. IFI's input is to organise equipment and to manage the data but anglers and skippers around the country do the bulk of the work. It's not always easy to take the time needed to tag a fish, particularly when the fishing is good and they are coming thick and fast, so it's great to have a network of dedicated participants

who take such an interest in their sport.

So what can we learn from the data we have collected? Well firstly that different species have vastly differing habits in terms of their movements around our coast and the wider oceans. Species such as the various Rays and Monkfish tend to be relatively static and usually don't move too far outside our coastal waters. Oftentimes they can



Paths followed by Tope and Blue Shark visiting Irish coastal waters.



Inland Fisheries Ireland (IFI) has consulted previously on the preparation of a National Angling Development Plan. Following this consultation and research undertaken by IFI. IFI has prepared the National Strategy for Angling Development (NSAD). The NSAD is the first comprehensive national framework for the development of our angling resource.

All the relevant documents pertaining to the National Strategy for Angling Development may be viewed or downloaded from www.fisheriesireland.ie/NSAD

There will now be a further round of public consultation commencing on November 30th. Written submissions or observations should be sent to: NSAD.consultation@fisheriesireland.ie or NSAD Consultation, 3044 Lake Drive, Citywest Business Campus, D24 Y265.

All submissions must be received no later than January 4th, 2016.



# Federation of Irish Salmon & Sea Trout Anglers

Conaidhm na Slat Iascairí Bradáin agus Breac Geal

VISIT US AT www.fissta.com



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

# **NEW SALMON FISHERY DRAFT REGULATIONS - ANGLERS TO PAY FOR** THE SINS OF STATE MISMANAGEMENT?

Thanks to the many anglers and clubs who contacted our National Executive Members or who communicated directly with the FISSTA office in response to our last comments regarding the future role of Inland Fisheries Ireland and the management of wild salmon and seatrout in particular.

Thanks to the many anglers and clubs who contacted our National Executive Members or who communicated directly with the FISSTA office in response to our last comments regarding the future role of Inland Fisheries Ireland and the management of wild salmon and seatrout in particular.

Some felt that we were overly critical on the regime, while most felt we did not criticise them enough as example after example in their locality was cited. Maybe, we got it about right and maybe we need to do more to make sure we have a strong, vibrant and proud IFI that will be judged on

State mismanagement can also refer to the granting of licences for salmon farm, hydro, forestry, wind turbines, foreshore developments, effluent discharges, where the impact on our salmon results in closed rivers. The measuring stick for this record at present is the list of rivers open and closed and sadly we are losing our battle to protect the very natal habitat that gives us the fish to survive. See the new draft list for 2016 and give us your feedback on your river now so that we can include it in our observations before the 7th December 2015.

The Minister of State Joe Mc Hugh TD has put this list out to public consultation and all appeals and observations can be made within 30 days from the 11th November

The number after the river name is the proposed maximum number of tags that may be issued in respect of taking wild salmon or sea trout from river. C&R means the river is

closed to taking a fish and no blue tags will be issued, but anglers can fish it under catch and release rules as laid down in the leaflet that accompanies the rod licence you

**Dublin Fishery District** - Dargle 0 fish Closed, Upper Liffey 0 Closed, Lower Liffey (down from Leixlip Dam) 0 C&R, Vartry 0

Wexford Fishery District - Slaney 0 C&R, Avoca 0 Closed, Owenavorragh 0 Closed

Waterford Fishery District - Barrow and Pollmounty 0 C&R, Nore 0 C&R, Suir including Clodiagh, Lingaun, and Waterford Blackwater 0 C&R, Colligan 0 C&R, Corock R 0 C&R, Owenduff 0 Closed., Mahon 0 Closed, Tay 0 Closed.

Lismore Fishery District - Blackwater (Munster) including Glenshelane and Finisk 3,714 Open, Bride 0 C&R, Lickey 0 Closed, Tourig 0 Closed, Womanagh 0 Closed.

Cork Fishery District - Owenacurra 8 Open, Lower Lee 1,612 Open, Bandon 584 Open, Ilen 657 Open, Mealagh 191 Open, Coomhola 24 Open, Upper Lee 0 Closed, Glengarriff 332 Open, Argideen 92 Open, Owvane 530 Open, Adrigole 0 C&R

Kerry Fishery District - Roughty 209 Open, Blackwater (Kerry) 0 C&R, Sneem 695 Open, Waterville 329 Open, Caragh} 1,327 Open, Laune including Cottoners} 4,537 Open, Maine 924 Open Castlemaine Harbour - 763 Open In the event that draft net fishing takes place in the common estuary, the combined total allowable catch of the rivers Caragh, Laune and Maine

contributing to the fishery is reduced to reflect the higher risk associated with meeting the individual river conservation limits simultaneously. Behy 0 Closed, Emlagh 0 Closed, Owenmore 211 Open, Croanshagh 0 C&R, Sheen 300 Open, Inny 289 Open, Kealincha 0 Closed, Lough Fada 0 Closed, Owenshagh 0 Closed, Cloonee 0 C&R, Finnihy 0 Closed, Owenreagh 0 Closed, Emlaghmore 0 Closed, Carhan 0 Closed, Ferta 117 Open, Owenascaul 0 C&R, Milltown 0 Closed, Feohanagh 0 Closed, Lee

Limerick Fishery District - Feale including Galey and Brick 1,452 Open, Mulkear 0 C&R, Maigue 0 Closed, Shannon River 0 Closed, Fergus 0 Closed, Deel 0 Closed, Owenagarney 0 Closed, Doonbeg 0 Closed, Skivaleen 0 Closed, Annageeragh 0 Closed, Inagh 0 Closed, Aughyvackeen 0

Galway Fishery District - Corrib 5,227 Open, Aille (Galway) 0 Closed, Kilcolgan 0 Closed, Clarinbridge 0 Closed, Knock 0 Closed Owenboliska (Spiddal) 0 Closed.

Connemara Fishery District - Cashla 375 Open, Screebe 26 Open, Ballynahinch 1,321 Open, Lough Na Furnace 0 Closed, Ballinakill Erriff 574 Open, Bundorragha 324 Open, Common estuary 2 726 Open, Owenglin (Clifden) 402 Open, Dawros 580 Open, Culfin 271 Open, Carrownisky 0 C&R, Bunowen 447 Open, Owenwee (Belclare) 33 Open.

Bangor Fishery District - Srahmore (Burrishoole) 0 C&R, Carrowmore Lake 707 Open, Owenduff (Glenamong) 1,268 Open,

Owenmore 0 C&R, Common estuary 0 Closed, Newport (including Lough Beltra) 467 Open, Glenamoy 86 Open, Muingnabo 0 Closed, Owengarve River 0 Closed (In the event that draft net fishing takes place in the common estuary, the combined total allowable catch of the rivers Erriff and Bundorragha contributing to the fishery is reduced to reflect the higher risk associated with meeting the individual river conservation limits simultaneously)

**Ballina Fishery District** - Moy 19,012 Open, Easkey 344 Open, Cloonaghmore (Palmerstown) 0 C&R, Ballinglen 0 Closed, Brusna 0 Closed, Leaffony 0 Closed.

Sligo Fishery District - Ballysadare 2,616 Open, Drumcliff 126 Open, Garvogue (River Bonet and Lough Gill) 658 Open, Grange 0 Closed.

Ballyshannon Fishery District - Duff 0 C&R, Drowes 2,707 Open, Eany 0 C&R, Glen 116 Open, Owenwee (Yellow River) 0 C&R Erne 0 Closed, Eske 0 C&R, Abbey 0 Closed, Ballintra (Murvagh R) 0 Closed, Laghy 0 Closed, Oily 0 C&R, Bungosteen 0 C&R.

Letterkenny Fishery District - Owenea/ Owentocker 558 Open, Gweebarra 310 Open, Clady 219 Open, Tullaghobegly 0 C&R, Crana 0 C&R, Gweedore (Crolly River) 121 Open, Ray 0 Closed, Lackagh 0 C&R, Leannan 0 C&R, Bracky 0 Closed, Owenamarve 0 Closed, Glenna 0 Closed, Swilly 0 Closed, Isle (Burn) 0 Closed, Mill 0 Closed Clonmany 0 Closed, Straid 0 Closed, Donagh 0 Closed, Glenagannon 0 Closed, Culoort 0 Closed Drogheda Boyne 0 C&R.

**Dundalk Fishery District** -Castletown 0 C&R, Fane 0 C&R, Glyde 81 Open, Dee 0 C&R, Flurry 0 Closed.

#### **END FISH FARM CAMPAIGN**

FISSTA has led the campaign to end the Government's ten mega fish farm plan that will place 700 cages in bays that will decimate our wild salmon and seatrout. They are leading members of the 200,000 strong Irish Sports Coalition who lobby on behalf of most nature sports especially shooting and fishing.

#### ELECTION MODE - THE WILD SALMON ANGLING VOTE GETS ORGANISED

The salmon angling season ended in September with little signs of any recovery in the declining salmon stocks graph that we have become so used to over the years.

There is a clear resignation from our Governments, both north and south of the border, that reflects that of both permanent Government policy to do nothing seems to be the common option as any brave attempts to do otherwise would be deemed futile for any budding civil servant that has the ambition for higher office. They are conditioned to avoid any thinking outside the boxed system of curtailments and to avoid more work in

constructing new frameworks that would foster our goodwill and opinion.

So with dwindling wild salmon and seat trout stocks, the outlook is bleak for both local and visiting anglers who want to put a positive slant on their fishing waters to entice more to fish and deliver quality sustainable tourism into the future. The new list of closed rivers will be published for 30 day public consultation in the third week of November when we will then know how many new rivers are added to list of 90 last year. The Minister for State for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources Joe Mc Hugh TD will once again act like a belated Halloween Banshee to announce the closed rivers and effectively closed communities that will have to face next season without an income from angling or salmon. Some may never open again as the odds are stacked against them.

Sadly, the Scots have no good news with their rivers divided up into three categories similar to our own except the list for closed rivers are nearly all in the West where the salmon farms and sealice have been allowed to damage the cycle. Yet, the problems of wild salmon are relatively easy to resolve if a new minister would care enough to roll up their sleeves and halt the habitat degradation caused by sealice from salmon farms and commercial netting of valuable stocks.

Earlier in the summer, Minister Coveney, produced his vision for the future of salmon farming in the National Strategy Plan for Sustainable Aquaculture which stated that open net cage salmon farming seemed to his only option to grow the production of farmed salmon from 8,000 tons presently to over 45,000 tons by 2023 for export markets. He seems to have disregarded his civil servants advice to embrace and develop new RAS technologies that will deliver that same tonnage by 2018. This new opportunity is lost to Ireland while only Norwegian interests benefit from our grants.

His assertion that the production of organic salmon in Ireland ties in effectively with an image of Irish aquaculture that is 'as green as the island' and also fits in well with Ireland's new food marketing drive 'Origin Green.' How can he say this when he has a desk full of scientific reports that warn him to change policy or the wild fish resource will get wiped out.

Yet, in a month when a new Scottish report confirmed that sea lice was the culprit once again, he responds by granting a new salmon farm license to Marine Harvest in Bantry Bay which we in FISSTA have appealed to the ALAB – Aquaculture Licenses Appeals Board. We have objected to many of the fin fish licenses granted since the early nineties and always the scientific advice of the Marine Institute is cited as the reason and defence in supporting the Ministerial approval. Never or rarely has the other state scientific advice from the CFB or now the IFI

or Inland Fisheries Ireland or international authorities been accepted despite many the submissions from us and others drawing your attention to them. The important issue is that every party gets a fair hearing and that justice must be seen to be done by arriving at decisions that are evidence based. But such scientific advice from the Marine Institute is not independent as they are not a free agent without a vested interest in the decision and the general public does not view their advice as such.

The Minister still allows operations of the Marine Institute to be put under the direct control of the Fisheries Division which allows the fishery industry to have a direct input and undue influence in the evidence put forward and the ALAB are not without their own industry influentials. They are occasionally appointed above our wild salmon members by the Minister to the ALAB to the delight of the Irish Farmers Association who constantly deliver for IFA Aquaculture. How else can they continue to punch so far above their weight? How can a few companies, (mostly foreign with abysmal track records abroad) with 80 full time and 40 part time jobs in their industry (source: NSPSAC page 38 Appendix 5) hold an angling tourism industry of 12,000 jobs and €800m to ransom to the delight of the Oslo stock exchange?

We have failed to get a high powered salmon summit type of meeting with An Taoiseach Enda Kenny TD because he has higher priorities in running the country. Yet, if that is the case, why did he take almost a full day in time out to meet Norwegian citizens to develop a plan for the fish farming sector. Our response will not be a new letter to his office but rather a concerted campaign to convince his voters in places such as the Moy Valley that new ideas from a new Government are needed if their massive angling tourism income is to be retained and protected.

#### PRE ELECTION OPEN LETTER TO TAOISEACH KENNY – FIX OUR RIVERS

We seek your help urgently in resolving a serious Irish problem regarding the plight of our wild Atlantic salmon.

Our angling tourism value has been revalued and the Tourism Development Ireland study has confirmed that the new value to our economy has increased in 2013 from  $\[mathebox{\ensuremath{\varepsilon}}\]$ 200m to  $\[mathebox{\ensuremath{\varepsilon}}\]$ 750m supporting over 10,000 rural jobs since the last estimate was conducted. This figure has now increased to  $\[mathebox{\ensuremath{\varepsilon}}\]$ 836m and 12,000 jobs in 2014. The plan is to consolidate and develop what is a dwindling resource at present.

Our National Executive Council is certain that these income figures and 12,000 jobs can be doubled by 2018 if a number of measures were undertaken that will assist also our 18 other salmon countries many who are

neighbours and EU colleagues whose salmon also feed in the same north Atlantic feeding grounds. We also await the decision of Minister Coveney TD to grant or not grant the first of ten mega salmon farm licenses that will most definitively wipe out our angling and stocks forever.

We believe the new National Seafood Strategy launched last June now opens up the debate in finding a better way for Ireland to embrace the goals published in this document. The target of 42,000 tons by 2023 from the present 8,000 tons may seem ambitious, but we believe this figure can be achieved by 2018-19 if a new closed contained on land method of RAS was adopted by the Minister. Rather than repeating our opposition to open sea net cages (as they infest our wild migrating salmon smolts) we have researched and discovered an amicable solution that will keep angling tourism thriving in the traditional market regions such as the Moy Valley for future generations. We now have persuaded one such German producer to set up a pilot unit employing 120 people should the Minister respond to their formal proposal sent directly to him last August.

We have met you informally several times at public events such as the forthright discussion we had at the 'Harnessing our Ocean Wealth' conference when you remained convinced that 500 jobs would be created if the Inis Oirr salmon farm was granted a licence. We have engaged many new innovative ways in our campaign that has included marches, international lobbying at many salmon conferences such as the international 19 salmon country NASCO conference against these cages and to date we can say that every day there is no decision is a victory for our rivers and salmon stocks. Since our campaign started in June 2011, we have convinced many to campaign with us or individually to oppose the ten mega farm plan. We have found new examples of production units using highly sophisticated technology which we must embrace. Instead of using our time for further campaigning, we prefer to present this very good news solution to you in a formal meeting and we will fly in some international experts who will demonstrate in a short few minutes how both jobs and product tonnage can be increased without inflicting disease and toxic impact on our precious wild salmon and marine environment.

We have also campaigned to promote angling tourism through our own Wild Atlantic Salmon Way where visitors can view river wildlife settings and the wild salmon clearing falls as they return to their precise birth location upriver to spawn. We believe this new initiative can be encompassed into a far more ambitious project than what has been proposed in the past. We believe that our salmon resource can deliver a better spread of the prosperity around our island coastline.

#### GALWAY FLY FAIR - A RESOUNDING SUCCESS

FISSTA thanks all friends and supporters for visiting our stand at the Galway Fly Fair in the Galway Bay Hotel Salthill. The Saturday of the fair was by far the best foot fall day and the atmosphere was great to be in the midst of all our old friends of like mind who value and support our cause.

List of winners of our draw and their prize:

Two Days Fishing For 2 Rods On The Blackwater River And One Night B&b At The Blackwater Lodge Kindly Donated By Glenda Powell Won By: Noel Cashman, Fair Hill, Cork;

Two Days (fly Only) Fishing For 2 Rods At Careysville Fishery Kindly Donated By Owners Lord And Lady Burlington Won By: Dave Golden, Douglas, Cork;

Two Days Fishing And 2 Nights B&B In The Waterviille Upper Lakes – Donated By Waterville Trust Won By: Monica Brennan, Galway;

Two Days Fishing For 2 Rods And 2 Nights B & B On The Moy River Kindly Donated By Ballina Salmon Anglers Won By: Andrew Thornton, Togher Cork;

Two Days Boat Fishing On A Conamara Lake Kindly Donated By Ireland West Anglng.ie And Midweek Overnight B&b In The Salthill Hotel Won By: Paul Creedon, Glasheen Cork;

Two Days Boat Fishing On Lough Corrib Kindly Donated By Basil Shields Angling Guide And Instructor Oughterard Won By: Susan Browne, Lisburn, Co Antrim;

Two Days Boat Fishing On Lough Corrib Kindly Donated By Frank Costello Ashford Bay Boa Hire Won By: Coleman O' Shaughnessy, Loughrea

Clonanav Fly Fishing Hardy's Flyline Won By: Eamon Ross Longford

Many thanks to all the ticket buyers and sponsors who gave so generously

#### NASF ENCOURAGED BY POSITIVE ACTION PROPOSED IN SCOTLAND

The Scottish Government's earlier announcement that it is to ban the coastal nets that catch wild Atlantic salmon has been welcomed by North Atlantic Salmon Fund (NASF) despite fears that this is a case of too little too late. But the reclassification in accordance with the NASCO guidelines seem to be a good start despite the very system that is supposed to save salmon and angling will now divide anglers even more as the damage is measured.

Such action should have been taken 20 years ago. In June 1994 the member nations of the North Atlantic Salmon Conservation Organisation (NASCO) – of which Scotland is a member – agreed to ban commercial fishing for mixed stocks of Atlantic salmon at their meeting in Oslo.

The aim was to overcome the dangers which arise from the fact that salmon

originating from different rivers intermix in coastal waters as they return to their home rivers to spawn. This means that commercial fishermen have no way of telling whether they are killing salmon from rivers that can afford to lose some of their fish or wrecking all hopes of recovery in rivers that have already lost most of their stocks.

"Despite the agreement," said Orri Vigfússon, chairman of NASF, "Scotland and Norway just turned a blind eye to the requirement to stop coastal salmon fishing. They are the only two parties of the NASCO treaty that allowed mixed stock fishing to continue and still permit it to take place today. The results have been disastrous for most of the salmon rivers in both countries."

NASCO's scientific advisers, the International Council for the Exploration of the Sea, which first identified the dangers of mixed stock salmon fishing and called for the ban, says there has been a 92-96% decline in salmon catches in Scotland in recent decades.

"After all these years of mismanagement any improvement is welcome," Mr Vigfússon added, "but, given the huge decline in numbers, doing nothing more than banning salmon netting in coastal waters is unlikely to result in safeguarding future stocks. What is needed is an effective all-round strategy that addresses all the problems faced by this unique and very valuable species. This time Scotland must get it right and there should be no ifs or buts. There should be no repetition of the hesitations and half measures that have dominated Scottish salmon management for so long."

Dr Aileen McLeod MSP, Minister for Environment, recently invited Mr Vigfússon and several Faroese longline delegates to a meeting in the Scottish Parliament. They key topic for discussion was the current plight of wild salmon and the strategies needed to help restore depleted stocks. The delegates considered the necessity to manage migratory species throughout their entire life cycle – be it in rivers, costal waters or in the high seas – and the various issues affecting their survival. In order to demonstrate positive change the NASF has invited Dr McLeod to Iceland to review the country's fishery management strategies and to Denmark to observe alternative land-based fish farming methods

Upon his return to Reyjkavík, Mr Vigfússon stated that Dr McLeod and her new advisors had been a 'breath of fresh air'. He noted that they are dedicated to doing whatever is necessary to bring Scottish Atlantic salmon back from the brink and he looks forward to helping the Scottish Government realise this intent.

The Scottish Government's new legislation also signals the introduction of a licensing scheme for the killing of wild salmon caught in rivers using any method of fishing and the freeing up of access to game fishing that is currently either private or let on a tenancy basis. NASF believes that the severity of the existing situation could be worsened by the government's apparent attempt to bring about a semi-nationalisation of Scotland's game fisheries. It advises that what is really needed are measures that would protect access to game fishing and encourage owners to continue to improve fisheries in favour of salmon. As such this international conservation organisation has also called for an emergency ban on killing any wild salmon for the next three years stressing that all rod-caught salmon should be released.

Mr Vigfússon said: "We need to stimulate academic input, rekindle interest, encourage changes in attitude and introduce smarter ways to achieve success. That means that we must extend our present capabilities, expertise and resources. We shall continue to campaign for the revision of existing policies and the adoption of radical new strategies." For 26 years NASF has been protecting and restoring wild salmon numbers in Scotland and elsewhere on both sides of the North Atlantic. Its work has been frustrated by the intransigence of Scotland and Norway. Agreements with commercial fishermen in the Faroe Islands and Greenland have meant that large numbers of Scottish salmon have been spared from commercial fishing on the high seas. "It has been heart breaking to see the many thousands of salmon we have protected then being killed by coastal nets in Scotland and Norway before they can spawn and help bring salmon numbers back to their former abundance," added Mr Vigfússon.

#### THE GREENLAND BUYOUT DEAL STALLS ONCE AGAIN

There are 6 main reasons why Ireland is included in this problem group and why Greenland refused to sign up to their usual contract of restraint with Atlantic Salmon Federation and North Atlantic Salmon Fund last season:

- The 2010 licensing of commercial netting in the Castlemaine fishery was clearly a decision to test our reaction for a return to mixed stock fishing. The success of our campaign against Castlemaine to date, with the help of NASF and our international colleagues, is the main reason why our government has refrained from opening any further bays and returning to those dark days when our salmon were on the brink of extinction.
- While many embrace the single stock river management system as the way forward, the sad lesson from Ireland is that it has failed to deliver increased stocks after almost two life cycles of the salmon having elapsed. The latest state fishery regulations for 2014 confirm that of our 150 designated wild salmon rivers, 86 are still below conservation levels and without surplus. This means they are closed down yet again for the taking of any fish in 2014. This management policy is a very slippery slope that was politically motivated will never result in recovery of our fisheries as long as the scientific advice continues to regard commercial netting equivalent to angling exploitation, because netted fish can never be released. This flaw in the single stock management system will impede any escapement until all commercial draft netting on rivers are closed down.
- In June 2011 at the NASCO conference held in Greenland, the Greenlander fishermen staged a protest outside our conference hotel against the NASCO failure to meet them half way by protecting the resource and ending mixed stock netting forever. At that meeting they were fully aware of our Irish mismanagement as they quoted the sad recent history of the River Feale. This case study represents one of worst examples where many of the 50

- estuarial draft licenses were bought out in 2007 for an estimated €2,8m. only to be replaced with 47 new licensees in May 2008 which made a mockery of our conservation efforts at that time. The Feale counter figures in 2007 recorded 14,301 salmon returning to spawn, while the 2013 figures record only 5,540. Such blatant mismanagement of our resource throughout Ireland explains why we hold out little hope of our salmon recovering any time soon.
- In November 2012 our Irish government announced their intention to locate ten mega salmon farms off the west Irish coast, starting with the iconic Galway Bay. The media reported that it would increase national production from our present 10,000 tons to a possible 300,000 tons but failed to state that the plan will pollute the habitat and eliminate any hope of our smolts surviving their migration through the sealiced gauntlet of cages to their feeding grounds in the far North Atlantic.
- Irish anglers are paying a double rod license fees since 2007 to finance a protection policy that simply does not work. These fish are invaluable, yet nothing is being done to develop those 86 underperforming rivers despite a recent independent socio economic study estimating the angling industry at over €750m per annum to our economy. The Greenlanders know this and wonder what point is there in protecting a resource for it to be wiped out on the other side of the Atlantic anyway.

So, while we wish NASF and ASF well in their efforts to salvage our few remaining fish in their ongoing Greenland negotiations, it is indeed a struggle 'to live for to fight another day' in what is a mad gamble by those responsible for our natal rivers. It is fair and just for us and our international colleagues to campaign against any state body that fails to



Seamus Carr and fund raisers presenting a cheque to Dr Sharon Mc Kenna from the Cork Cancer Research Centre at UCC

recognise and protect our hard won wild Atlantic salmon asset from extinction.

FISSTA has been making strong campaigning representations to Norway over many years in cooperation with our NASCO NGO colleagues and below is an extract from the NASCO Special Sessions debate in Canada last June 2015: FISSTA referred to coastal netting of wild salmon in Norway

and the findings of the recent research programme, Kolarctic Salmon. It is clear from this research that multiple stocks, including salmon from Russia, are exploited in the coastal fishery in Finnmark, and FISSTA asked the Russian delegation to comment on the management measures in place in Norway; and if it was possible that sea lice from Norwegian salmon farms were damaging salmon smolts migrating from Russian rivers. With regard to aquaculture in Ireland, FISSTA noted that there is denial and confusion in relation to salmon farming and the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine needs to be challenged as to why Ireland's marine environment is being put at risk.

So FISSTA has appealed to the President of NASCO, to use his strong influence and become a game changer by advising your Norwegian government to finally lead by example. This has been missing for many years but now we are hopeful that Norway can reform their policies for the good of the wild Atlantic salmon.

#### FISSTA JOIN ROSSES ANGLERS IN JUBILEE CELEBRATION

The Rosses Anglers Association are one of the most progressive clubs in Ireland having within their riches a salmon, seatrout and wild brown trout waters that any club would be proud. Since their founding in 1965 they have worked hard to keep the club promoted and ensure that visiting anglers keep returning to the Rosses Lakes to enjoy the peace and tranquillity of this angling oasis. Their golden jubilee was marked with a gala dinner and several old and new friends and former officers joined to celebrate what was a truly fine occasion.

#### FISSTA SUPPORT HELPS RAISE MOVER €57,000 TO BEAT OVARIAN CANCER

The first anniversary of Brid Carr's death was marked with the handing over of cheques



totalling a magnificent €57,000 raised from a number of fundraising events held in her memory.

The handing over ceremony was held at Harvey Point Hotel Donegal recently attended by the many family and friends who supported the fundraising events held earlier in the year. As such a significant amount was raised by all concerned, another charity called Breakthrough Cancer Research (www.breakthroughcancerreserach.ie) has agreed to match funds for this specific

ovarian cancer research project. This was fantastic news, as it doubled the amount raised by all so that the Cork Cancer Research Centre at University College Cork can now embark on badly needed new research project on ovarian cancer. The fight against cancer continues and remember the BEAT message that Brid Carr RIP asked us to keep raising awareness of at every opportunity.

#### FISHING DIARY PUBLISHED

Catch records make fascinating reading and will help the younger generations learn what a fishing trip entailed during the fifties and sixties onwards.

Professor

Professor Ronan Gormley from UCD has wide experience of angling all over Ireland and since his child-hood has kept a personal diary of the many species of fish he caught.

Gormley has written and published his angling diary in an E-booklet format which is now on line and available gratis at the following link ucd.ie/t4cms/anglingdiary.pdf

#### **John Fairgrieve**

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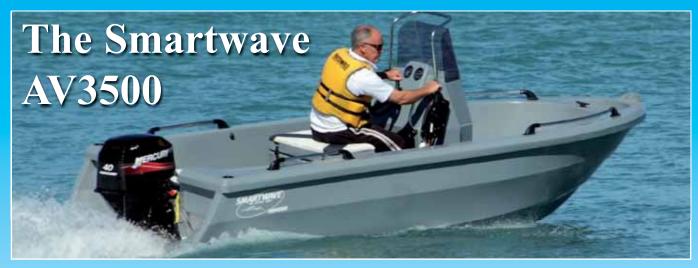






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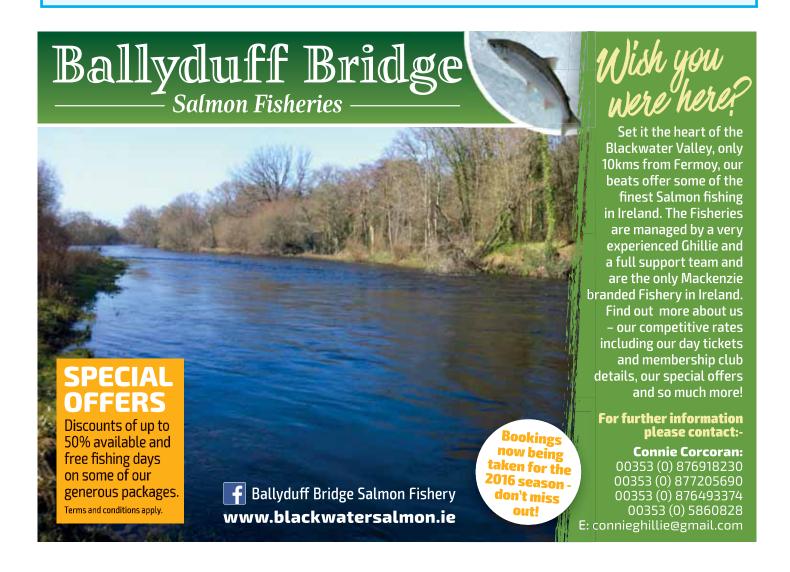
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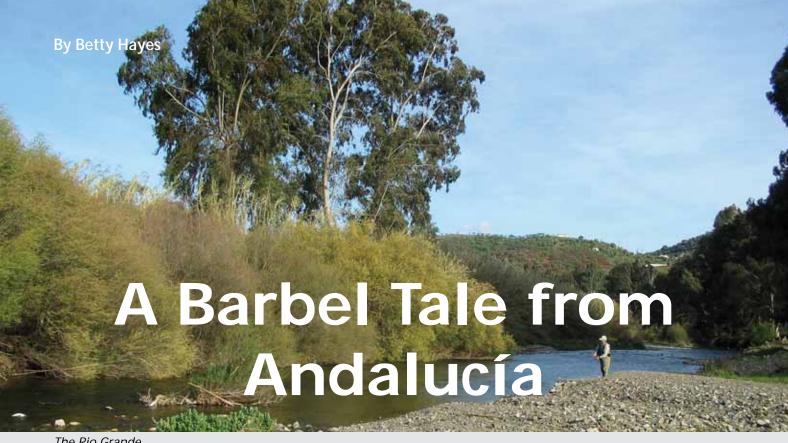
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The Rio Grande

To put my story in context I will describe the conditions I am most likely to encounter when I go down to the banks of the River Liffey at Barrettstown, County Kildare in the springtime to fish for wild brown trout.

The season gets under there on March 17th, St. Patricks Day and traditionally it either freezes, snows, blows a gale or the rain comes down in torrents on that day. Patrick was a Welshman so be thankful over there, he brought all your bad weather with him when he came to Ireland to Christianise us in the year 432.

Fast forward to my alternative home, Andalucia in southern Spain where the sun shines brightly for most of the year and the rainy season is more or less predictable and gets on with it... most of the time!

Now to inject a little background and to illustrate the variety of angling opportunities there are here, apart from the beach casters who never seem to go home! For the most part these dedicated fishermen patiently endure a never ending stream of questions and advice, as practically every beach user stops to look, or chat. They all seem to catch their supper, well most of the time. But this story is about fresh water fishing (pesca en agua dulce).

Michael and I have made many angling friends here over the years. Juan del Carmen, an excellent fly fisher, introduced us to fishing for black bass on the Embalsa de la Conception (reservoir) near Istan. While it's called 'fly fishing' and while I did enjoy seeing my first largemouth bass shake its head furiously as it leaped several feet into the air on the end of my line, 'popping' mice, or frog imitations, would not be top of the list of my favourite pastimes.

We are members of La Asociacion para la Conservacion Pisciola y de los Ecosistemas Acuaticos de Sur (ACPES). Some time ago, we travelled to an AGM in the small hamlet (pueblo) called Rio Frio, which takes its name from the river which runs right through the middle of the little village. Fishing here is recorded right back to the sixteenth century.

At one end of the village is a rainbow trout farm and nursery, while about five hundred metres away, at the other end of town, is a sturgeon-rearing station where harvesting of the sturgeon eggs takes place. I believe there are approximately eleven restaurants and Tapas bars in the area, all specialising

in rainbow trout dishes. After lunch, everybody went fishing on the river which in places is about two meters wide.

With nymphs, or small lures, cast upstream and tumbled down over the pebbles, it looked like these rainbows were easy prey, but few were landed. The fish are very healthy, one of the reasons has to be the extremely cold spring water, which gushes out of the 1,670 metre high Sierra Gorda one kilometre upstream and remains at the same temperature all year round.

#### The fish is known colloquially as barbo gitano, or gipsy barbel

But the real focus of my story has to be about the tale of the barbel. Allegedly the rivers here are domicile to at least eight species. The one which we fish for in Andalucía is barbus sclattari, known colloquially as barbo gitano (gipsy barbel) and typically weighs around two to four pounds, considerably smaller than the barbus barbus familiar to English anglers. But fished on a 4/5 weight river fly outfit



The wonderfully named Barbo Gitano. with small nymphs or dries, this is an outstanding game fish — how inappropriate the term 'coarse' for such a splendid creature.

One of our favourite rivers is the Rio Grande in the area of Cartama, near where it joins the Guadalhorce. The river is wide and somewhat featureless, with practically no shelter from the hot Spanish sun. The water clarity makes the term gin clear an understatement and the barbel are wary beyond belief. This is true sight fishing and, more often than not, the 'sight' is the V-wake of the rapidly disappearing fish. Stalking, sometimes down on one's knees for the final approach and accurate casting is the order of the day.

On one of my first attempts I was with Michael and Alfonso Izco, a young Spanish lawyer friend, who has lately become Father Alfonso. I was short on stealth and spooked most of my prey I managed to hook one fish but lost him. Alfonso said: "You hold 'hem too tight". I can confirm that Spanish men belong to that universal brotherhood when it comes to telling women in waders how it's done!

Another favourite stretch of the Rio Grande is what we call Tramo Dos in the foothills of the Sierra de las Nieves. This venue is about a fifty minute drive from our house through the Sierras on a fine, well maintained but seriously winding highway. The scenery is spectacular. Citrus orchards and olive groves, their trees in precisely measured

rows on the south-facing slope of almost every mountain, and in Spring the almond trees are switching on their pale profusion of blossoms and wonderful fragrance. The villages we pass look like they are painted onto the hillsides, compact, without sprawl and every house whitewashed.

The road takes us past Monda, with its formidable looking Castle perched on a steep hill, overlooking the town. Past Guaro on the way to Tolox the river comes close to the road and is very accessible, although a four wheel drive vehicle is necessary in unfamiliar territory. The pit-stop at the roadside Venta is part of our Spanish fishing routine. Two cafe con leche, freshly made bread served with a clove of garlic, salt and olive oil, ham Iberico and an unmeasured glass of brandy constitutes the local elevenses and costs

about five Euro....for two people!

One of my most memorable days was on Tramo Dos. Breezy with a nice ripple on the surface of the water, we could see the fish and get a bit closer to the bank. I fished over barbel for about two hours trying small dries as well as nymph and emerger patterns, but no luck. Meanwhile Michael had caught a lovely fish of about two and a half pounds on his own tying of a bead headed GRHE.

The wind was gusting which made delicate presentation difficult in the quiet pools, so I went upstream where the water was very shallow but fast-running. The fish were moving around in the shadows of overhanging trees. Michael had given me one of his 'deadly' size fourteen secret weapons, a Pheasant Tail Nymph with dark red wire body. Keeping my shadow off the water, I used a side cast to get under the branches and kept the fly moving as the current took it over the noses of several feeding fish. No interest.

On the dark side of a sandbank, like a miniature drop-off, in about twenty-four inches of water, I watched three barbel swim up in my direction. As I eased the nymph across their path the two smaller fish spooked, but the big fellow kept moving up. I very carefully put my line back on the water and maneuvered the fly downstream, giving it the slightest of lifelike twitches as it came within the fish's line of vision.



A well bent rod takes the strain.

### He made two more runs taking line, making the reel

The take was more like a big yawn. I lifted the tip of the rod, trying not to notice the increase in my heartbeat, and then all hell broke loose. He charged upstream in the shallow water like a torpedo, then back downstream making for the deeper water under the trees. He made two more runs taking line and making the reel hum before he was ready to be safely taken in. I held the beautiful specimen on its back inducing a trancelike state, admired, then turned him over just long enough for a photograph.

The barbless hook was easily removed and, as I turned him on his belly and slipped him into the water, his golden underside and fins glowed in the afternoon Spanish sun. He splashed his displeasure at the indignity of being captured before becoming turbo powered again and vanishing. The stretch of river should be undisturbed for a while to allow the fish to glide back about their business, time for me to sit quietly while kingfishers, like turquoise crystal in the bright sun, dip and reappear with small fish fry for their family.

Another favourite river is the Rio Campanillas, which flows through the Embalsa de Casasola. Unlike the Rio Grande which continues to flow even in drought conditions, the Embalsa (reservoir) is part of the public water supply so long stretches of this river



Orange groves were all around me. can disappear in the summer.

Amazingly the barbell survive by finding the charcos, or deep pools, which always hold some water, and lie there until rain brings flooding once more.

On one occasion the riverbed was very low for several miles and we were convinced that all the fish had died until we came to a concrete dam. There was four foot high wall across the river with a cascade of water tumbling over into a pool a few feet deep below. This is a monitoring station for flood warnings and an indication when reservoir levels become dangerously low.

There were probably several hundred barbel attempting to scale the dam wall but as the pool was only a couple of feet long they could not get a 'good run at it,' so to speak. However, as we watched and waited, many fish made the fresh water above. It was like watching a miniature Ashley Falls or Galway Weir when the salmon run is at

its best. Somehow we knew that they would all get up when darkness fell and they did, it was an emotional experience for us. Meanwhile our friends have since introduced some sort of stone ledges to give the fish a helping shove.

In Ireland, I am most fortunate to be able to fish the great rivers, even if I must dress in thermal fleece and a wooly hat because wild river trout, spotty and golden, are the most beautiful. They are less frustrating and more predictable than barbel. However, on the Liffey I can't watch small turtles swim by, their heads above water like miniature submarines, look up at the circling Ospreys, have an orange tree snag my back cast or hear the music of tinkling bells as the shepherd guides his couple of hundred goats down to water, all in the warmth of the sun.

(Bottom Left) The Author with a fine fish

(Below) The Rio Campanillas is a beautiful place to fish.





### Freland 2016 Angling









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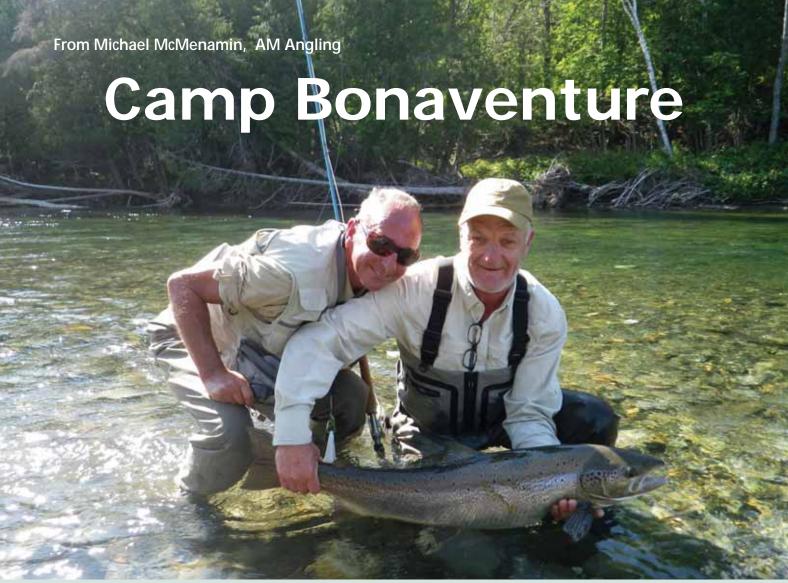
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Brian with the fish of a lifetime, 22lbs of Atlantic salmon.

#### This year we took the opportunity of a lifetime to go dry fly fishing for big salmon at Camp Bonaventure in Canada.

We had set our sights on the Gaspe Peninsula, Quebec, Canada and fortunately, working in the fishing business and being a partner with Salmologic, Henrik Mortensen offered us a week at Camp Bonaventure. This camp has access to three of the most prestigious rivers in North America: the Grand Cascapedia, the Petit Cascapedia and the gin-clear Bonaventure River.

Henrik had previously made DVDs about fishing in this part of the world and every time we watched the films it seemed like heaven. After many conversations about the fishing and the camps Henrik assured us that this was it, the ultimate fishing package!

We flew out of Dublin Airport early one morning in late August to Heathrow airport and then onwards to Halifax, Nova Scotia. Halifax was a seven hour drive from the town of Bonaventure so we decided to split the journey up into two legs, stopping off for the night on the way north. Next day, after a bit of retail therapy in one of the shopping malls, we continued the journey.

The road north was along smooth highways lined by trees as far as the eye could see and intermittently broken up by a river flowing into the atlantic. I have to say it wasn't the most exciting car journey but once we hit the Gaspe Peninsula the entire topography of the land changed, steep mountains, wind swept pines, picturesque views over the bay as the road winded along the cliff tops. Finally, at the town of Bonaventure we headed for the camp.

We were greeted by Glenn LeGrand the owner and after a quick tour around the camp we set up our fishing tackle in the rod room, checked were we would be fishing the next day and then headed over to the Lodge were we would be staying. Once we had settled in and unpacked our bags we were served up some cool refreshments, appetisers and then out to the veranda to relax. It wasn't long before we all sat down at the dining table with the other camp guests to a meal that could only be described as out of this world: good food, good company and plenty of talk about fishing, after all that's what we were here to do!

Next morning everyone was up bright and early and full of anticipation of the day ahead, after a hearty breakfast we headed to the rod room to meet our guides for the day. My first guide of the week was Mario Poirier, a local legend amongst the salmon fishermen of Quebec. Off we set with the rods, waders, lunch and a strange box of flies loaded into Mario's truck. A short drive through the forest trails and we caught our first glimpse of the

Bonaventure. It was like nothing I had ever seen before, one of the clearest rivers in the world with visibility exceeding 200 Ft. Even whilst getting our waders on we could see salmon holding their positions in the pools.

Mario then opened up our fly boxes and put on a fly that these North American rivers are famous for, the 'bomber,' a huge dry fly for Atlantic salmon. This was to be my first experience dry fly fishing for salmon, and what an experience!

#### Into the canoes and upstream

Mario could spot fish at distance, so we stopped on the way upstream to cover pods of fish but they didn't seem to be to interested as the morning was still cold. Further on, we went to a pool called Double Camp, nicknamed 'the aquarium' for the amount of fish it held. We began to get to work, Mario holding one of us in position in the canoe covering fish, while the other would wade, searching the rest of the pool.

Dry fly fishing for salmon was unlike anything I had ever done before, really hard work and I don't think I have ever made so many casts in one day, as we cast the Bombers upstream, dead drifting over the fish before picking up and casting again. One thing Henrik had told me throughout the year



The Bomber ready to entice a salmon to the surface - various colours and sizes were used throughout the week.



Another face with a smile - Paul with his personal best, another big fish on the Bomber.

in the buildup to our trip was that if the fish showed any interest at all in the fly it would eventually take it; it could be two casts later or two thousand casts later.

Positioned at the front of the canoe Mario slowly worked me up the pool over a few fish. The water was so clear it only looked about four feet deep, but my guide assured me it was closer to fifteen, we could see the fish lying on the bottom. I cast the dry fly about two feet upstream and in line with the fish, it was amazing just how accurate you had to be when suddenly one of the fish moved up off the bottom a few feet. Mario told me to give it a bit of time to settle back down before I tried it again, so with another cast landed in the same place the fish stayed stuck to the bottom. With that I was ordered to swing the rod tip rod to the back of the boat for Mario to change the fly. Out of the deepest corner of his fly box he produced a huge brown bomber and called 'the paintbrush ' and that's just what it looked like, with tufts of deer hair sticking out off the hook.

The next cast landed in the sweet spot, the fly drifted back towards the fish and off the bottom of the river bed. We watched as this fish which I assumed was about 10 lbs got bigger and bigger as it neared the surface, as it

drifted back in the current, following the fly. Its pectoral fins splayed out, looking more like a shark that a salmon pursuing its next meal. After what seemed like an age the head broke the surface and rolled over the fly — the perfect head and tail rise. I was so mesmerised by the sight I did nothing and watched it roll back down. I hadn't struck in time and just blew my chance at what the guide said was a 25 pounder. So feeling a bit sorry for myself and having to listen to the heckling from Mario and my fishing partner Paul for the next 45 minutes I assured myself it wouldn't happen again, but that image of the fish rolling over the fly just played back over and over again in my head.

#### Up it came out of the depths

After all the excitement, we moved a little downstream and found another group of fish. Paul was having his leader adjusted by Mario when I began working the big paintbrush bomber over a group of five fish, holding just beside a big boulder. One of the fish began rising up towards the fly. It didn't look that big in the clear water, maybe only about 6 lbs. Up it came out of the depths and with just its nose breaking the surface, the fly was taken under the water. I struck straight away



The Author in action - big fish, clear water and fantastic surroundings, what more could one want?

and was into the fish; the previous hour of jokes from my two companions faded away. As Mario manoeuvred the canoe into the shallows, I set the drag a bit higher for what was no 6 lb grilse.

As we brought the fish closer, Mario readied the big net and in one quick swoop the fish was ours. Unhooking the fish in the water, I lifted it out of the net, a big fish, certainly my biggest to date. After a few quick photos and a few measurements taken by Mario, the fish slid away in the water, back to where it had been lying. It was such a joy to watch how they behave in such clear water and I sat down at the side of the river, the happiest man in the world. With the surroundings of the area and the sound of the river, the fishing was just a bonus — just being in that spectacular place was worth the trip alone.

Lunchtime, out came the cool box and stove and within minutes Mario had a hot stew for us, and a selection of other treats that you wouldn't think of having for your lunch when fishing at home — spoilt again. The remainder of the day was just as exciting with fish reacting to the flies in all different ways.

Eventually, the fishing ended, and arriving back at the camp our guides hung up our rods and waders for us and showed us were we would be fishing the next day and who with. We were then greeted by the camp manager Jonny with cool beers own ice, what better way to round off the day!

After a shower, we relaxed on the veranda, swapping experiences. The guides had taken photos throughout the day and at night they were all put together and played on the big screen for everyone to see, a nice touch. After a few drinks and appetisers, the staff called us into the dining room for the evening meal. The food all week was superb, but the evening meals were out of this world: steak, salmon, halibut and even whole lobsters, fine food and fine wine all washed down with tales of the days fishing. Simply superb!

As the week continued, the camp felt more like home with each day. The staff and the guides looked afternoon every need, going out of their way to ensure we were comfortable and enjoying ourselves. As for the fishing, it got even better and better as the week went on, with us adapting to spot the fish more easily, and getting the fly to appear properly in front of the fish was no longer problem.

On one occasion during the week the salmon entered a 'funny half hour,' when almost every cast produced a reaction from the fish, and they would come up metres off the bottom to attack the fly. There was the time I covered a fish over the 20b mark and as it was rising up to intercept the dry fly a small grilse of about 5 lb came from nowhere like an Exocet missile and grabbed hold

of the fly before the bigger fish could get to it.

All too soon the seven days of fishing were over, and again on the way home we split our journey in two and did a bit of sightseeing along the way exploring some of the fishing towns and enjoying the last of the holiday. Suddenly it seemed we were back home and back to porridge. There hasn't been one day since then that I haven't thought about being on the Gaspe Peninsula and being beside the rivers. I had often thought that foreign fishing expeditions were simply all about the 'grass being greener on the other side,' as we still have such good fishing in Ireland. But after my experience I am now truly hooked. The entire experience, the anticipation with over a year's preparation, the hospitality, the friendships made, the fishing the surroundings were just as Henrik had explained it to me almost two years ago: "It's the whole package!"

For more information about this and other trips please contact Michael McMenamin on 07544308098, email: salarsupplies@gmail.com and for all your tackle needs for such a trip www.amangling.com

(Below) Camp Bonaventure, where dreams become reality.



# From Meredith Sister to Shakespeare Sister

Many times during my career I have reflected back at my childhood, and how odd we must have looked during the 80s. We were four sisters, carrying fishing rods, through the streets of Comber in Co Down, heading for the Inler River.



We were trying to fool a trout into taking one of our artificial flies that we had tied, and we realised very quickly that trout were much more intelligent than us. If it wasn't a fishing rod we were carrying then it was probably a ferret or two - sisters on a mission to net a few rabbits along the old disused railway embankment from Comber to Dundonald. There would always be at least one faithful hound in tow. How fortunate were we, that we grew up with a father who loved country sports, grew up during a time when 'free range' parenting was the norm, and how fortunate was I to have been left some fishing rods after my Uncle Michael passed away. I don't know how, but he knew when I was nine years old that I would be a fisherwoman.

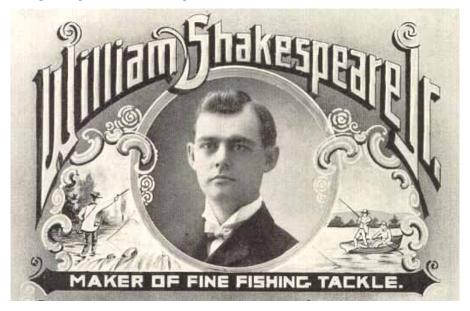
My passion has taken me to fish in stunning places around the world. I have been blessed to have won a world championship in distance casting, been



Quality time on the riverbank.
honoured to have been given the role of
Chairperson of APGAI Ireland for the
past three years, demonstrated and
coached at the Great Game Fairs of
Ireland at Shanes Castle and Birr Castle

and many other angling events, and I have gained a wealth of experience working with Blackwater Lodge and Salmon Fishery in county Waterford for almost 20 years. I have had the opportunity to catch 20lb seatrout in Argentina, fish with some of the best and most expensive equipment, fish on some of the most sought after waters around the world, yet I have never forgotten those early days on the River Inler.

My uncle Michael had left me split cane rods. These rods were very heavy for a nine year old girl and I very quickly developed blisters on my hands trying to use them which would bleed and eventually turn into calluses. On my eleventh birthday my father took me 'up the street' to see Trevor West from Country Sports in Comber and





Just another day in the office for Glenda.

this is when I was bought my first carbon fibre rod. What a difference this made to me, my casting improved immensely and I even started to catch a few trout.

I am a teacher now and have been for twenty-two years. I have dabbled with many other areas in the fishing field during this time — such as competing — but I have realised that my passion is for teaching fishing, and fishing of course.

Over the years I have learned that one of the first requirements in teaching someone how to fly cast is to make sure that the person has balanced equipment. The equipment also needs to be light enough for the person who is going to be using it, and it needs to be affordable.

During the boom years the cost of fly fishing rods exploded, and a lot of us bought them. The running joke was, 'if I die then please don't let the wife sell my rods for the price I told her that I bought them for!' We soon believed that if the rod didn't cost at least €500 then it probably wasn't worth having, and this soon led to rod snobbery.

#### The Oracle salmon rod was 'Best in Test'

In recent years the rod company

Shakespeare kept cropping up in conversation, and probably like many of you reading this I didn't give it much thought. To me Shakespeare fishing equipment was around when I was a child. My impression was that this equipment was suitable for beginners. I also didn't think of them specialising in fly fishing equipment. I can remember being surprised to find that their Oracle Salmon Rod had won 'best in test' in an issue of the Trout and Salmon magazine.

#### I could not believe the quality

I started to research Shakespeare with renewed interest and was amazed at what I discovered. Yes, to my surprise, their Oracle salmon rods really did work very well, as did each one of their single handed rods that I tried. I tried the pike rod next, and then came the Oracle Switch Rod, matched with reel and line. I simply could not believe the quality of the equipment that I was using, how easy it was to cast, and what value for money it was selling at. It was time for me to think again.

I found myself reading that this company has been around since 1897 as the leader in quality, affordable fishing tackle. Shakespeare has something to offer for the whole family at all levels of experience. Their objective is to make fishing simple and enjoyable.

This is what I have been trying to do for over twenty-two years. I became 'a Shakespeare Sister' in September as one of their Game Angling Consultants and during the 2016 season I plan to travel around the North and South working with tackle shops and rivers in all areas to promote angling and giving people the opportunity to try this equipment.

#### A challenge

I challenge you to try one of the Shakespeare rods this coming season, and if you would like to see me in your area, on your water, please contact me and I will endeavour to arrange this. I will be starting with an open day on Saturday 6th February on the Cork Blackwater at Blackwater Lodge and Salmon Fishery. We will be offering free fishing, free tuition, and an opportunity to try out some of these rods.

To book a place on this day, please contact me. glenda@ireland-salmon-fishing.net Tel 00353 (0) 872351260

## The NI Angling Show at the Irish Game Fair

#### Shanes Castle, Antrim 25th & 26th June

OFFERS ANGLERS a 'Put and Take Fishery' for children; an increased range of quality tackle stands; casting demonstrations & tuition by Charles Jardine and the team from APGAI Ireland including Glenda Powell and Stevie Munn; fly tying instruction; taxidermy & sporting art; game & fish cookery demos; information stands from the main organisations and fisheries; all the fun and attractions of the game fair and with special vouchers the best value angling show in Ireland.

FOR RETAILERS: It offers access to the largest number of anglers at any show in Ireland including serious anglers plus a huge number of processional anglers who do not attend specialist angling shows.

See: www.irishgamefair.com

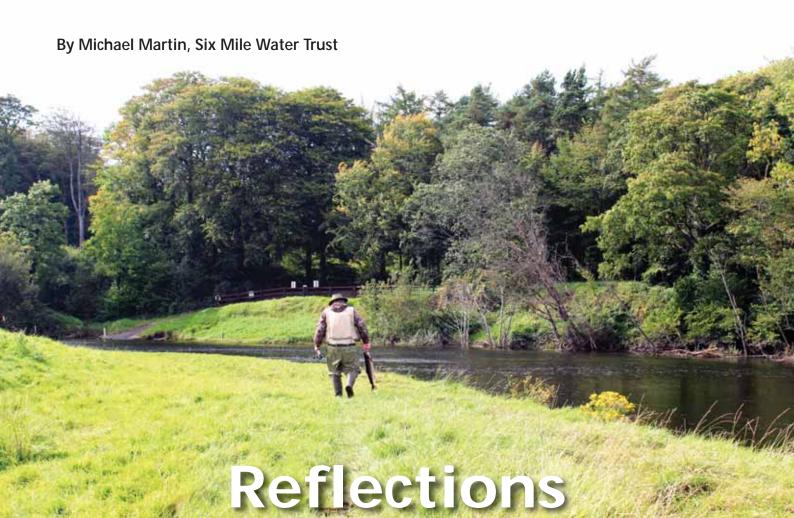


### WHERE THERE'S MORE TO COUNTRY SPORT THAN SPORT.

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 2016 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'.





A beautiful end to the Season

By the time you are reading this, the last days of the angling season will have passed, the autumnal rains will have washed the spawning gravels clean, refreshing the water with oxygen and the fish will be assembling on the redds, prior to laying down the next generations of trout and salmon.

Just a few weeks ago, while wading up the river in search of a dollaghan under the light of the full Harvest Moon, the first skeins of geese came flighting overhead to roost at Castle Upton. The wild music echoing across the valley reminded me that another season had all but passed.

This September the Harvest Moon, (closest to the Autumnal equinox) was spectacularly large and bright and in fact it was the closest super-moon of the year, the time when the moon was nearest to the earth. For those roaming the countryside there were some spectacular nights when the big orange moon illuminated the whole landscape. Another name for the Harvest moon is the Full Corn Moon, and one can imagine the farmer bringing in the last of the harvest under its pale light in the days before tractor lights and modern machinery.

The long nights and short winter days are closing in and as we dust off the gun, pull out the beating stick or get back to the fly tying vice, we can take the time to reflect on the season just passed. Try not to get too depressed about the long hours spent in work, remember the high points and decide how to plan for next year. Certainly there will be experiences worth repeating, some better forgotten, but all the time we should try to learn. I often go away with preconceived ideas about what I should expect, rather than getting to the destination, assessing the conditions and working from there.

Last July, we drove down to Lough Arrow all set for some Green Peter action as a colleague had mentioned he'd seen the sedges a few nights previously. By the time we'd finished work, loaded the car and made our way through the winding roads of Leitrim, Sligo and then up to the Lough, the sun was starting to slide from the horizon. The little Evinrude engine quickly pushed us across the bay and soon we were throwing our Green Peters, Murroughs and Elk Hair Sedges out the front of the boat and scanning the water ahead for any rising trout.

There was only the odd fish moving, but as the big moon rose we were able to cover a few rising trout, which studiously ignored every imitation we threw at them. We had wasted an hour at this when Dad said he was going back to his trusty old dry Buzzer patterns and then the penny dropped: there had been no sign of any sedge activity and the rise forms were all wrong. They weren't wild slashing rises, but quiet sipping rise forms, more indicative of trout taking Chironomids from the surface film, just on the point of hatching. Sure enough when I flicked



A Six Mile Water Dollaghan comes to hand.

the torch on the white top of the old engine cover it revealed various buzzers and few sedge, so we quickly changed to buzzer emergers.

Dad quickly covered a fish rising, which sipped in his buzzer in a leisurely manner before a firm strike. Its silver flank flashed in the moonlight as it took to the air then bolted for the inky depths. We landed another two including a lovely leopard spotted fish of around three pounds before the gloom finally closed in. It was too dark to see the rises and we decided to make for the shore but I felt we'd wasted too much time with sedges before realising what we were doing wrong.

We had a similar experience at the end of the season on the River Moy, except this time it was us who rang the changes and were rewarded for changing tactics. The rain had eventually arrived and the river had been high for some time. As our weekend at Mount Falcon drew closer, the reports indicated that great early success with the worm was beginning to slow, even though the river was still high and in good order.

It was indeed still high and we were advised that worming was the best option, advice that didn't please me as it was September and we don't like to use this at this time of year, because salmon tend to swallow the worms, are deep hooked so can't be released.

### Soon the big worm float was replaced by the little red prawn float

Arriving at the allocated beat we fished for a few hours but as the sun



Fresh Autumn grilse were a feature of the River Moy this year.

rose higher it became clear to me that although the river was a couple of feet higher than summer level. Clarity wasn't too bad, after all the Moy is the colour of strong tea at the best of times. Soon the big worm float had been replaced by the little red prawn float and I was fine tuning the depth before mounting the little purple boy and sending him down the pool. When the others saw the wee float there was a bit of leg pulling about wasting time fishing big water with such a bait, but after about three casts that little float jagged downwards a couple of times, then slid away. I responded with a solid strike and a lovely fresh fish crashed across the pool in a wild jump. Several minutes later I netted the fish before carefully slipping him back to the river.

Never before has a team of anglers switched tactics so quickly as my colleagues pulled off their worming floats and set up prawn gear.

Meanwhile, I missed another take and I could see hands fumbling as knots were quickly tied and float stops threaded on as everyone rushed to get started.

The Moy is a great river, but there was not much fly water and most of the fish seemed to be holding about the ten feet mark which would be pretty inaccessible to methods other than the prawn. Dad even took a fish in the lovely Boat Pool, tight under the trees on the far side at a depth of fifteen feet. In fact the seventy-three year old gent ended with a hat trick of fish, a great way to round off a season! We finished with a fair tally of fish in the books, while many anglers struggled in the conditions as they thought the high water would preclude the use of prawns and shrimps. But, as we found out, the key was water clarity rather than height.

This year the Moy had a genuine run of fresh Autumn fish and we caught several nice silver grilse, even though we only fished a couple of days. It's definitely a beautiful river for this type of angling and the colours of the trees in their autumnal colours and the classic Mount Falcon Hotel made this a great way to round off the season.



Sheelin Bounty: a carpet of Mayfly stretched from Rusheen to Church Island.

One of the most frustrating aspects this year was the Mayfly fishing. Our clubs' annual pilgrimage to Lough Sheelin at the end of May was a mixed bag, with very little Spent Gnat and Buzzer fishing in the blustery evenings and terrible frustration during the day when the trout simply ignored the emerging Mayflies, known locally as the 'Greenfly,' despite great hatches.

During the past few years the Greenfly has produced good daytime sport during and there's no doubt about the stock of trout in Sheelin - but they just would not come to the surface to feed There's no shortage of speculation as to why: from too much food below the surface, weather conditions or to just far too many boats and anglers chasing the trout; it would take a better mind than mine to give an answer. I did see a good rise of trout was the last day of my trip during a massive Mayfly hatch when the fly carpeted the water surface from Rusheen to Church Island. There was a fair blow, which pushed me along Derrysheridan shore and I noticed the huge hatch of Mayfly and immediately spotted fish rolling in the waves.

### I never saw the fish and the rough conditions made it difficult to keep control

I managed to drop the flies immediately in front of a rising trout and luckily he took my Grey Wulff pattern from among dozens of naturals and as I struck he bolted out of the shallows into the deep water. I was alone in the boat and managed to pull out into the lake with one hand to follow him into the deeper water where I played him for a while. I never saw the fish and the rough conditions made it difficult to keep control and after almost ten minutes I was thinking I might have a chance of landing him.

One of the other boats saw my predicament and motored up to offer assistance by helping to net it. After a few more minutes the fish decided to move upwind, but I couldn't follow with one hand on the oar amid big waves. I stood up and put more pressure on him but he just cruised away as my backing slowly peeled off the reel.

Eventually with only a dozen turns of backing left, I turned the rod sideways to try to turn the fish, but the side strain didn't move him and the line came back with the hook pulled straight. I would love to have seen the trout just to see what size he might have been. But that's Sheelin, there's always a possibility of a really large fish.

Distraught, I pulled around the corner to the shelter of Rusheen and lit the Kelly Kettle for a cuppa and had a crack at the hip flask. As I sat looking out to Church Island, the wind dropped and patches of calm water appeared. In the calm patches the hatching Mayfly gathered, the trout appeared and mopped each fly up before moving on to another calm area.

I changed the fly and pushed out again, but I noticed that already the breeze had swung around and I covered a couple of fish without any luck (I think there were just too many naturals on the water) before long the wind forced me back onto the shelter of the Rusheen shore. In the strengthening wind all the other boats disappeared, but I couldn't make my way back up to Finea in the worsening conditions, so had to sit it out for a few hours until



Lough Arrow Leopard Spotted Trout.



Fish on!

there was a short lull. Even with the front of the boat weighed down with boulders, the crossing was still hairy enough and the eighteen foot boat was being tossed about like a cork. Never mind the fishing, I was just felt lucky to get back across the Lough to shelter and the relief put the disappointing angling into perspective. I was just glad to be safe!

On the positive side, I hear that Lough Mask fished consistently well through the season and the mighty Corrib had a reasonably good season too. Maybe if I had a little more time next year it would be great to revisit these superb Loughs.

#### Planning for the future

This is the time of year to have a think about what can be done to improve your home waters, think of some goals, form a strategy, whether some habitat enhancement is required, fences and stiles mended or more spawning gravel added. The Wild Trout Trust produces a book called the Wild Trout Survival Guide, every trout angler should have one: even a quick glance will show how to improve a fishery, the requirements of a good fishery and how to optimise resources,

it's the best tenner any club member could spend, it's available on the internet and there are other publications and DVDs available on specific habitats such rain fed rivers or chalk streams. I guarantee anyone who buys this book won't be able to put it down, it's so interesting and educational, it will inspire you to start projects on your home waters and don't forget that in Northern Ireland we have a first class team of advisors in DCAL and AFBI and in the Republic there is the Inland Fisheries Ireland. If you want to have a good fishery then you've got to make the effort yourselves and now is the time to start planning what needs to be done.

Other things we can do to support angling is to respond to consultations such as the NIEA Catchment
Management Plans and Lough Erne,
Neagh Management Plans, this way we can influence the future of our fisheries and support environmental policies.
Another important forum is the Catchment Stakeholder Meetings which provides opportunities to liaise with government agencies to find solutions to problems in your catchment. The Ulster Angling
Federation and Sport N. I. are funding

coaching courses to help educate future instructors to bring youngsters and beginners into the sport.

We also have the spectacular Game and Country Fairs at Shanes Castle and Birr and the Fly Fair at Salthill, Galway, fantastic venues and shows which showcase the great angling potential of our country, all these initiatives should be supported at club level for the future of angling in Ireland.

Meantime, I hope you don't get too badly afflicted with the recently diagnosed winter condition known as FAD (Fishing Affective Disorder) which causes grumpiness, irritability, general lethargy etc. My wife was the first to isolate the condition (never a good sign) but some remedies are available to make life more bearable. These include good fishing books, bouts of fly tying, stockie bashing in the local Rainbow trout ponds, but the best solution is the group therapy option, namely a session in the pub with your fishing buddies talking about what you're getting up to next season! Oh, I forgot to mention that visit to local angling shop helps too for some retail therapy. You might even pick up a Christmas present for yourself!

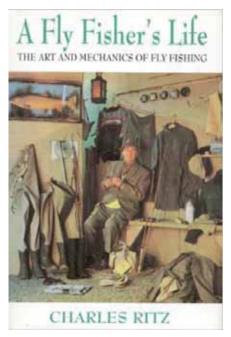
# A few of my favourite fly fishing books

With Christmas coming, why not stock up on some ideal fireside reading.

Fly fishing, like most country pursuits, is about so much more than just doing it. Fishing addicts like us imply live and breathe our sport and for me fly fishing is a lot more than simply getting out and casting a line on a shining river or majestic lough, though that is one of the most pleasurable things in life.

So this issue I have decided to give you a list of some of my favourite fly fishing books, that will give you something to enjoy if the river is in flood or the wind is too strong for the lough, something which has happened a lot at the time of writing.

I know there are countless books that have been written on angling and many are truly excellent. I could list perhaps 50 books that I love or that I have bought, but I am going to tell you about just five that I could not do without. These are books that I have read and reread and I think are simply works of genius - my 'Famous Five.'

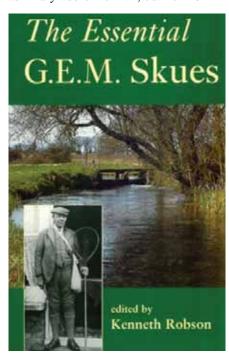


A fly Fishers life
The first book I would buy if I

wanted to start a fly fishing library would be A Fly Fishers Life by Charles Ritz. This masterpiece was bought for me one Christmas by my lovely wife Jeanette and I have to say I am not even sure how many times I have read it. The subtitle is The Art and Mechanics of Fly Fishing and there is quite a lot about fly casting of which Ritz was a master, but for me the best thing are the stories in the book where Ritz recalls some of his fishing experiences. Monsieur Charles Ritz comes from the famous hotelier dynasty, he was Swiss, although he also carried dual US nationality for a while, having served in the American army during WW1. The book is a fantastic read from a bygone age with photos of giant Swedish River Em sea trout, Norwegian Alta salmon (49 lb.), and many others of historic interest. There are some useful 'how to do it' parts as well. I found his P.P.P. leader tapers very useful, they work just as well today. There are several editions of the book, as more chapters were added over the years. I have the final 1972 version (reprinted 1977 & 1996)

The Actor Bernard Venables once said: "Once in a while, in a very long while indeed, it becomes the duty of the reviewer of angling books to recognise the coming of a truly outstanding book on angling, to do so with the certain feeling that here is a book that takes its place among the few outstanding books of all time. Such a book is A Fly Fisher's Life by Charles Ritz. This outstanding book is filled with splendid stuff. A great book by a great angler.' So that's my first choice, a 'must' for any angling library as it's simply exceptional.

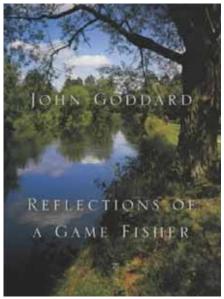
I should now perhaps say these books don't come in any pecking order as I truly adore them all, but next is



The Essential GEM Skues
The Essential G.E.M Skues, edited by
Kennetth Robson. This book is a
compilation of some of the great man's
work. My father George always talked
about Skues when I was a child fly
fishing in the 1970s and 80s and I think
he liked that he was a nonconformist so
I have always had a fondness for him.

George Edward Mackenzie Skues was born 13th August 1858 and died 9th August 1949 and around 100 years ago Skues was nymph fishing for brown trout on the chalk streams of England. Skues without any doubt, one of the greatest trout fly fishermen of all time and has many angling books to his credit, but in 1910 he started some controversy with his book entitled Minor Tactics. The book's title seems almost apologetic and the book is dedicated to 'my friend the dry-fly purist, and to my enemies, if I have any' and this was most likely directed at the great dry fly man of the time and

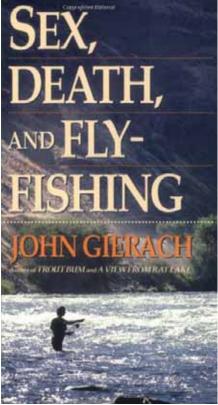
another hero of mine, Halford. The reason I have included this book is because someone who is not a student of Skues can get to know his writings quickly. Kennetth Robson refers to him as the 'Father of the Nymph' but reminds us that 'he was an expert in every aspect of fly fishing including entomology, fly dressing and fly patterns, fly fishing techniques, methods and tactics.' A must-have book to enable you to get to know Skues.



Reflections of a Game Fisher

Next is a book by John Goddard called Reflections of A Game Fisher. One of the reasons I have listed a Goddard book is that he had a massive influence on me while I was growing up after I watched a programme called the Educated Trout and also looking at his book many times on which he collaborated with his friend Brian Clarke, called Trout Fly Recognition. I had the pleasure of meeting John a few times before he sadly past away in 2012. The first time I met him was while I was giving demonstrations at the British Fly Fair and found him to be a true gentleman and this book is an interesting read.

And now Sex, Death, and Fly-Fishing by American writer John Gierach. I was first introduced the this man's words by an old friend of mine called Dave Heavers, who owns the English company Tackle Bargains. We used to work together, travelling from country show to country show, selling



Sex, Death, and Fly-Fishing tackle many years ago, and fishing inbetween for a number of years all over England, Scotland and Wales. It was during this time Dave gave me my first Gierach book Trout Bum, I think Dave was trying to tell me something! Anyway, all Gierach books are great though Sex, Death, and Fly-Fishing is my favourite, humorous, often profound. We're introduced to a lively group of fishing friends, some local 'experts' using the term very loosely and even an ex-girlfriend, along the way. Thoughtful, evocative, and ironic, he shares insights on mayflies and men, fishing and sport, life and love, and the meaning, or meaninglessness, of it all all great stuff. I find his writing irresistible.

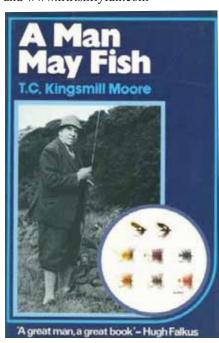
And finally, it has to be a book by an Irish fishing legend TC Kingsmill Moore and of course it's the classic angling book A Man May Fish. This is a book which I consider all fly anglers should read, and which was described by another fly fishing legend, the late Hugh Falkus, as the greatest book on sea trout fishing and one of his top 20 angling books. High praise indeed.

TC Kingsmill Moore was a distinguished judge of the Irish High

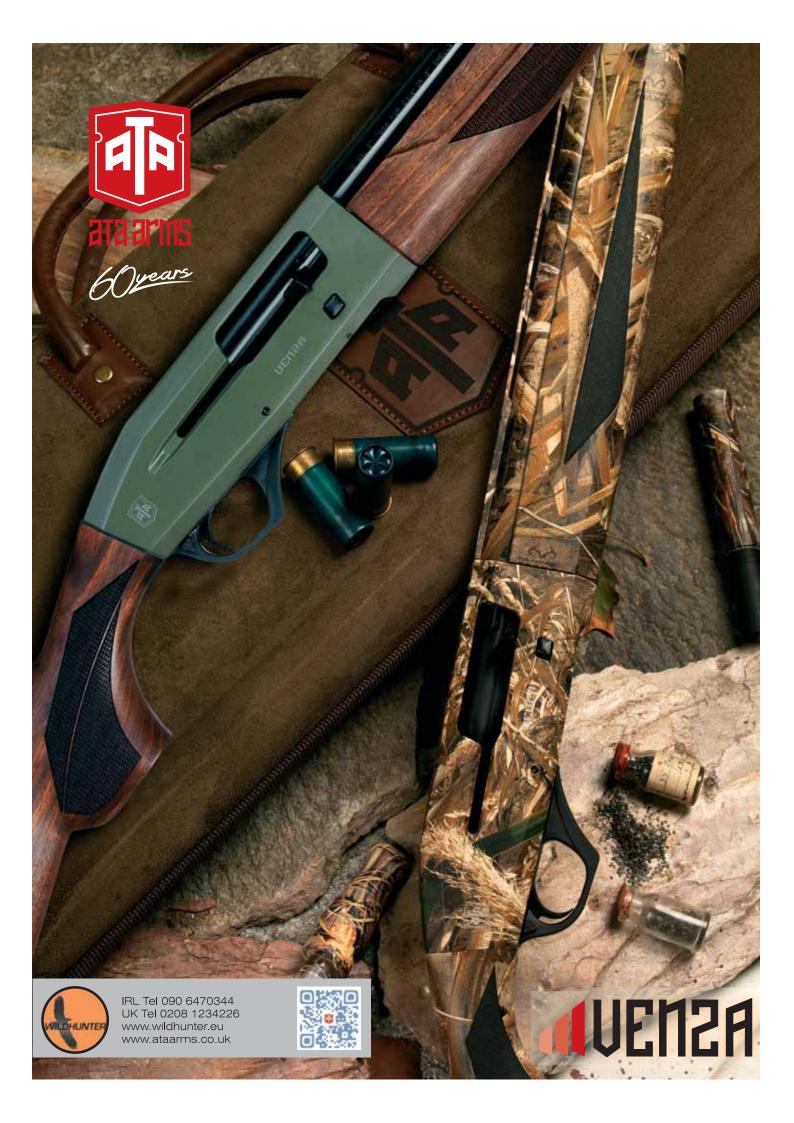
Court and Supreme Court and fished the Irish rivers and loughs for over 50 years. Born in Dublin in 1893 he died there in 1979 aged 85, he lives on not only in the words of this book, but in his great fly patterns which have helped shape Irish lough flies. His blends and shades of colours in the hackles and furs gave his flies translucency, which is perhaps the quintessential essence of the Irish lough style fly patterns. Kingsmill Moore's 'Bumbles' and their variants still ride the waves. This book is simply a must read for the Irish game angler.

So that's my personal top five reads, though I must state again that it was quite hard to leave out some great titles. So why not check them out if you haven't yet done so - for me there's nothing better than to 'go off fishing' with some of the best angling writers of our time

Stevie works full time in the angling sector as a guide, writer and qualified game angling fly casting instructor and has appeared in many angling books, DVDs and at angling shows. He runs teaching lessons in fly fishing and host groups fishing in Canada, Norway, Argentina, Ireland, and other parts of the world. You can contact him via email anglingclassics@aol.com or get more info at www.anglingclassics.co.uk and www.iririshflyfair.com



A Man May Fish



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

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

# Fairs On Tree Prints on The Prints of the Pr

#### In 2015:

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

- TOURISM SOARS The Birr Castle Game Fair & Fine Food
   Festival also posted a great attendance and a large number of
   quality trade stands and probably the largest influx of visitors
   to the Mid Ireland region ever.
- DIVERSITY & EXPANSION Both fairs further extended the range and variety of their Fine Food Festivals.
- MARKETING & PR DIVIDENDS Both fairs received the greatest amount of PR coverage ever within a hugely successful multi media campaign including the use of radio, TV, general consumer printed media and online features. As such they once again stressed the fact that, with this magazine, they form the greatest vehicles for the promotion and defence of our country sports in Ireland. Vendors and advertisers reap the benefits as well.

#### Our plans for 2016 include:

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

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

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



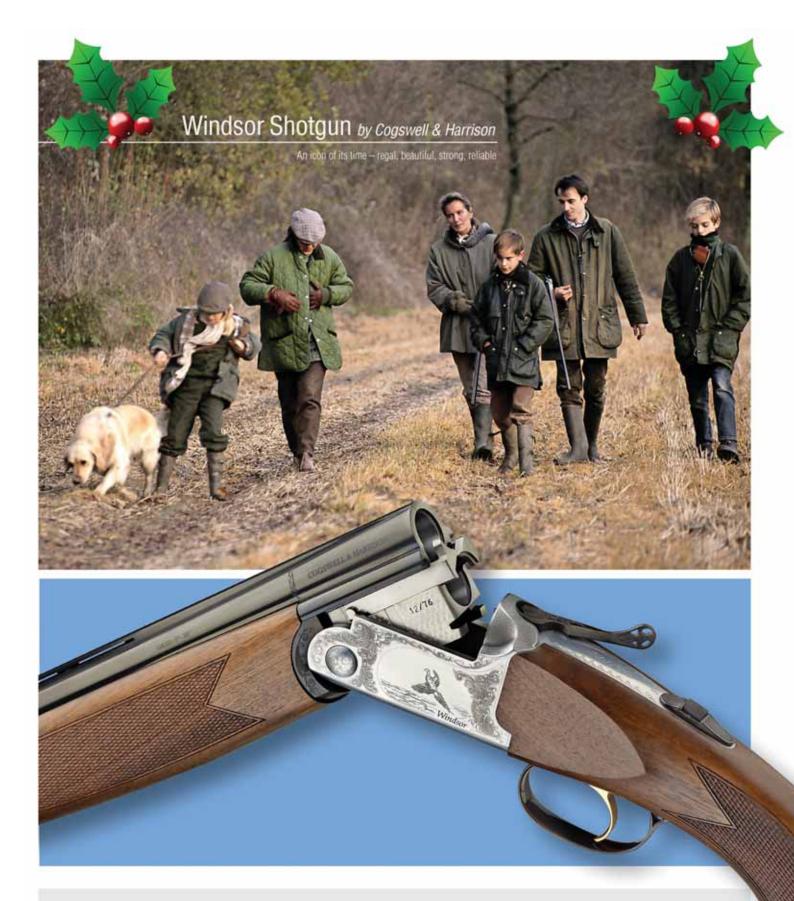
**Paul Pringle** 

For details on advance booking for stands at the Game Fairs or advertising in the magazine or a big value promotional package for both.

Email: irishgamefair@btinternet.com
Tel. 028 (from ROI 048) 44839167 / 44615416



**Albert Titterington** 



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