

The Great Game Fairs of Ireland 2019

Having delivered the largest ever ALL IRELAND 40th Anniversary Irish Game Fair in 2018 the Great Game Fairs of Ireland team intend to build on the huge publicity generated for Irish country sports and the rural way of life by organising two superb country sports and lifestyle events in 2019.

The Irish Game Fair & Fine Food Festival



Shanes Castle, Antrim, 29th & 30th June 2019 The Irish Game & Country Fair



Galway Racecourse, Ballybrit, 15th & 16th June 2019

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to deliver a potentially huge IRISH COUNTRY LIFESTYLE FESTIVAL

at the superb new venue of the world famous Galway Racecourse. For further details of these exciting events see our web sites coming soon: www.lrishgamefair.com www.irishcountrylifestylefestival.com www.countrysportsandcountrylife.com Tel: 028 (from ROI 048) 44839167/44615416 E: irishgamefair@btinternet.com

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Irish and COUNTRY LIFE



Front Cover: 'Grouse taking a break on the 1st November' by Stephen McHugh

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Managing Editor: Albert Titterington, ROI Editor: Derek Fanning, NI Editor: Paul Pringle, Associate Editor: Irene Titterington

Publishers: (Editorial & Advertising) Country Lifestyle Exhibitions Ltd. Cranley Hill, 5b Woodgrange Road, Hollymount, Downpatrick BT30 8JE Tel: (028) (from ROI 048) 44839167 Email: Email: irishgamefair@btinternet.com Web: www.countrysportsandcountrylife.com

ROI Office: ROI Office: Derek Fanning, E: derekfanning 123@gmail.com Tel: 05791 20003

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Country Sports and Country Life Rol Comment

I love the winter season in Ireland, for many reasons. One of these reasons is the return of the hunting season. So far this winter I have been out foot-hunting twice a week every weekend and have enjoyed some fantastic sport, as well as plenty of exercise and good company.

Many packs around the country returned to action during the October bank holiday weekend, and I returned to action with them, driving down to the parish of Ballyfoyle, which is north of Kilkenny city, to meet up



with the Rockview Foot Harriers where our task for the day was the pursuit of the fox. Winter had arrived with a vengeance that weekend and the temperatures had plummeted below zero degrees, making it hard to struggle out of bed at 6 in the morning. Shivering, I put on my hunting stock and pin and the rest of my hunting apparel.

I met the Rockview at half-eight beside an old-style farmhouse beside an impressive keep. This squat edifice was probably Norman and like the many other examples of Norman castles scattered throughout our countryside its story is unknown. Often when I look at old ruins like this I wonder what their stories are, and who were the people that lived in them. The large grey stones of the keeps remain mute, their secrets forever locked away.

This part of north Kilkenny is lovely country to hunt. It consists of small hills and wooded vales and is attractive to look at. All those steep slopes also make for testing exercise and soon one's lactic acid is protesting in your calves!

We found immediately and pursued a fox down a lengthy wooded valley whose broadleaf trees looked beautiful in their autumnal raiment bathed in the light of the early morning sun. More often than not the fox will make good its escape when pursued by hounds. On this occasion it didn't and the hounds caught up with it after just a few minutes.

We walked over a hill and down into a valley where we drew another covert. The hounds began speaking again but soon lost the scent. And that was the story for the next five hours of the hunt – frustratingly patchy. Not to mind. It was great being out with likeminded people, enjoying good exercise, pleasant scenery and appreciating the enthusiasm and energy of the hounds.

In the second valley the terrain was challenging underfoot, with briars constantly trying to trip you up and mud up to one's knees. There was also the challenge of crossing felled trees. When these are covered with undergrowth it's easy to lose one's footing and topple over, making traversing this type of terrain a slow and tiring process. After the hunt we assembled at our cars where we drank tea and ate sandwiches and chatted amiably.

The following day was another blue-skied, cold day. I met up with Richard Bonham and his new pack the Lakeland Beagles. Richard combines a friendly disposition with plenty of energy and enthusiasm. It's great to see a beagle pack operating once again in the midlands following the demise of the Balgarretts a couple of years ago. Richard lives just outside Castlepollard in Westmeath and he showed me his kennels which he only finished building a couple of months ago. The kennels are placed at a judicious distance from his house so the sometimes raucous noise of the pack doesn't intrude. Richard said a number of other beagle packs from Ireland and England were very friendly and helpful to him when he was seeking to build up a new pack, giving him hounds from their own packs.

For my first day out with the Lakelands we went to Coole Bog, a vast tract of land not far from Tullynally Castle and Castlepollard. We spent the day traversing this bog or entering its adjacent woodland. A hare was found here but again the scent was patchy and the pack lost the trail after a short while. It was good to be out with the Lakelands. Despite the decline in beagling's popularity in Ireland over recent years, there is still a considerable appetite for a pack in the midlands. Westmeath used to have two beagling packs. A couple of years ago the last one, the Balgarretts, disbanded. This left a gaping hole in the midlands for the many beagling lovers who live in the region. Thankfully the Bonham family from Castlepollard stepped into the breach. The Lakelands began hunting regularly in mid October and there was a big turnout of followers at the first meet.

My second day with the Rock View Harriers was very different in terms of the weather than the first. It was several degrees warmer and exceptionally windy and wet. We were hunting a great bit of country near the village of Ballyhale in South Kilkenny which always yields lots of foxes and plenty of sport. This day was no exception. We hunted two foxes for several hours, two fine-looking, healthy-looking creatures. Despite the strong wind the scent was pretty good and the pack managed to hold the line most of the time. Whenever they lost it, the huntsman assisted, encouraging them to cast around until they found again. The terrain was sometimes soft, sometimes hilly, and entailed scaling slippy walls. The briars as always did their best to trip you as you jogged or walked along. After a couple of hours we caught the first fox, who was visibly tiring, in the middle of a field. The hounds got their just reward for a good chase.

After the hunt we were invited into the nearby house of one of the hunt followers, whose daughters provided us with soup, sandwiches and sausages. The hospitality and generosity, as so often in hunting circles, was second to none.

Driving home I briefly stopped off to look at a Ogham Stone, which was only a kilometre from where we had been hunting. As I stood looking at this fascinating, weathered pillar of stone, I wondered about the people who erected it and about the prehistoric farming community who would have lived in this attractive, undulating, part of Kilkenny. No doubt some of them hunted foxes as well, a creature which has long been a threat to farmers' poultry and has long been treated as a pest.

Country Sports and Country Life Northern Comment

e are now deep into the pheasant shooting season and it seems to be going very well. That is, it's going very well for some folk. For me, well not entirely, now that I have made a discovery, but I'll come to that shortly.

The birds have fared well, are strong flyers generally, providing excellent sport, whether they are walked up rough shooting or driven birds. As a gun and as a picker up, I've enjoyed watching some really excellent birds.

'Did you see that tremendous bird I shot - I'm sure he's down way behind that far wood'! How often has that remark been made. Yes, we saw it, but it was missed by a country mile, gliding down to run into that wood...not behind it. But of such are 'bath time' birds made, to be enjoyed in the slightly skewed mists of time. They improve with age, near misses become dead shots, 35 yards become 45, 55.....when distance really does lend enchantment.

In my opinion, all high birds are not necessarily difficult by default. If a Gun has got used to shooting with that high bird sight picture firmly in his mind through continuous practice, then they often just pull the trigger in the way that us mere mortals shoot at lesser birds, which present us with our more usual sight picture.

There are many difficult shots though: a woodcock flushed just as you are doing all you can to keep upright, tramping over a quaking bog. A teal which drops into the pond from behind and overhead on the cusp of darkness, that gives less than a split second to see what's happening, gun up and fire. As for the -'Never seen one that height before'! - well maybe we all should have gone to the high tower more often in the months before the season started, but that of course is another story.

And slowly, I'm getting to the point of this train of thought, which carries on in some ways from my autumn editorial, of the stages we shooters go through, from getting a shot, to getting lots of shots, the size of the bag, how difficult the shooting is and so on.

I was browsing Field and Stream's web page (https:// www.fieldandstream.com) when I noticed an article by Phil Bourjally, entitled The Five Stages of Hunting. And that's when I found that at least one other person had been considering how we shooters adapt as we go down the shooting trail. Unashamedly I'll re-print his fine words to help underpin what I have been driving at.

Phil Bourjally writes: 'Last Sunday, I was lucky enough to shoot this black duck-mallard hybrid along with a handsome greenhead on the river bottom near my home. We hardly see black ducks here, and I've never shot one, so a hybrid is a rare bird for us. I am thrilled. It's a genuine trophy duck, and it came in to the decoys perfectly on a clear day when I had the sun at my back to light it up, which made shooting it all the better. The experience prompted me to think about the "Stages of Hunting."

"The Stages of Hunting form part of every huntered curriculum I've ever seen. Hunters are said to progress through the Shooting Stage, the Limit Stage, the Trophy Stage, the Method Stage, and the Sportsman Stage, according to this theory, which was formulated in the 1970s by a pair of University of Wisconsin-Lacrosse professors who interviewed more than 1,000 hunters."

"In the Shooting Stage, you just want to shoot things. In the Limit Stage, numbers matter.



He then went on to say: "The Stages of Hunting make the most sense, though, if you allow that it's possible to be in more than one stage at once. Or, if you think of them more as parts of a continuum rather than as steps in a

progression. For instance, I'm putting myself in the Trophy-Method-Sportsman stage. I realise that's more than half the stages, but there you have it. (Actually, I believe anyone who enjoys hunting belongs in the Sportsman Stage, because we wouldn't be outdoors if we didn't appreciate it.) Also, I don't mind shooting a limit every once in a while and telling people about it, so that puts me in four stages at once.

"But I also used to care more about limits than I do now, so I know I've moved along the scale.

This hybrid duck notwithstanding, I always thought meat was the real trophy in hunting. Now, with just two of us at home to eat what I shoot, I'm selective. The game I shoot has to taste good. If that makes me a trophy hunter because I don't shoot shovelers (except for the ones I mistake for teal first thing in the morning) and have been giving the million or so ring-necks at my duck place a free pass lately, then I'm in the Trophy Stage.

"Method matters a lot. So do aesthetics. I'd rather shoot a duck late in the morning with the sun on it than before sunrise when it's a dark blob. I prefer my doves and waterfowl decoying, and my upland birds pointed, although I'll shoot anything the dog puts up in range. On the other hand, while I like calling turkeys, I would belly crawl one in a minute if the situation arose. You can be at different points along the continuum with different game," he concluded.

Well, that made me think. More than one stage at one time? I think he is exactly right. And so I'll ask exactly the same question as he finished with too: How many stages are you in? Me? I'm still trying to do something about the fact that my 'normal' shooting eyesight has changed dramatically - as I discovered when I had the pleasure of shooting with a leading gunsmith earlier this season, Mark Crudgington of George Gibbs, Gunmakers. He watched me shooting and noticed that I seemed to have difficulty with certain shots. A quick series of tests at the end of the day indicated central vision. Mounting the gun normally, my nose was looking down the rib, not my eye. Since then, I've been to see Mark while on other business and had a full gunfitting session, finishing with test shooting a 'bendy' gun at different types of clays. So, not yet quite ready to take up bowls, or something, I am looking out for something that fits my central vision requirements.

Perhaps there should have been another stage in the process, giving yourself the best possible chance to hit something by making sure that your gun fits. And that's reason enough to visit the experts, not least the ones that do such excellent work for the shooting fraternity at Shanes Castle. I just wish I'd known sooner about my own change in eyesight, but better late than never.

I hope that Guns everywhere enjoy the rest of the season.



An Irish Country Sports and Country Life Christmas & New Year

May we wish all of our readers and advertisers a very merry Christmas and a happy, healthy and prosperous new year. Throughout the magazine there are very many excellent gift ideas for you and your 'nearest and dearest' but we highlight below some products that we have purchased as gifts and a couple of very SPECIAL offers for readers of Irish Country Sports and Country Life.

Fill Your Stockings This Christmas with Snugpak Essentials

Snugpak, the UK's leading sleeping bag and insulated clothing manufacturer, has a wide range of accessories which will make great stocking fillers for any traveller or outdoor enthusiast this Christmas!

Snugpak's Merino Technical sock (RRP £12.95) provides a relaxed comfortable fit, thanks to the in-turned welt and extra padded sole. The gentle grip sections support the feet and make sure the socks stay in place, whilst the fine seams reduce the risk of blisters.

Merino Wool is a warm fibre which can retain heat in colder climates whilst allowing heat and moisture to escape thanks to the sock's ventilation channels - the Merino

Wool naturally absorbs moisture to keep your feet dry; allowing the waterproof membrane on your footwear to breathe.

Also, with Merino Wool being a Natural Fibre, Snugpak'sMerino Technical sock is the ideal choice for areas with sensitive skin. Soft, warm, comfortable and durable, these socks are available in three colours and are ideal for outdoor activities and everyday use.

No traveller can be without a wash bag and with the Essential and Luxury Wash Bags, Snugpak has you covered! Both wash bags are made out of heavy duty 600D polyester, so they can take whatever the adventure throws at them. The Essential Wash Bag (SRP ± 10.95) has been designed to organise all of your everyday toiletries compactly with a detachable mirror and useful hanging hook to store it up out of the way.

The Luxury Wash Bag (SRP £11.95) has all of the same features as the essential while benefiting from larger compartments and a very handy

wet storage

compartment.

Dry bags are a must for any traveller or adventurer, whether just out for the day or for longer extended trips and holidays. With Snugpak's Dri-Sak's

 $(SRP \pm 10.95 (S) - \pm 19.95 (XXL) you can$ rest assured that all your kit will staydry whatever the weather! Availablein 3 colours and 5 sizes from 4 to 35litres.



Finding it tough to squeeze the air out of your dry bag? Snugpak has this covered with the 40 litre Air Valve Dri-Sak (SRP 19.95). This innovative dry bag allows you to push out any excess air enabling you to really get down that pack size and make the most of your bag space.

For further information or to buy online via one of Snugpak's preferred stockists, please visit snugpak.com or call 01535 654479.

Haglöfs Skuta Mid Proof™ Eco -Stay Dry And Comfortable In Challenging Conditions

The Haglöfs Skuta Mid PROOF™ Eco (SRF £120) is a supportive and tough trekking mid-boot with a wide forefoot for extra comfort, developed in association with ASICS.

It provides the wearer with a perfect grip on treacherous,

slippery trails, and it's made with our

sustainable waterproof membrane, PROOFTM, which is a fluorocarbon-free material and a recycled lining. With this boot, Haglöfs is helping to usher in a new era of sustainable modern hiking.

A full product test in this very smart and comfortable boot will appear in the spring issue but full for full details of the Haglofs' range see https://www.haglofs.com/gb/en-gb/

A Special 10% off READERS Clothing Offer from our Friends at Edinburgh Clothing

There are very many special offers on the Edinburgh Clothing site for clothing for the whole family including the stylish verv Percussion Range but for Christmas The Family Fielding have offered ICS&CL and Great Game Fairs of Ireland a 10% special reduction across their online store. Simply go to their advertisement in this edition see what you want and go to their website at



https://www.edinburghoutdoorwear.com and put in the special Code IGF2018 to get your 10% Discount.

From Glasgow Angling Centre – not only a FREE bumper 268 page catalogue which they claim has 'virtually everything to cover your hunting, shooting and fishing needs' but FREE delivery to NI & ROI on orders over £150.

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Official fuel consumption for the Volvo XC60 D4 R-Design (manual) in MPG (I/100km): Urban 44.8 (6.3), Extra Urban 58.9 (4.8), Combined 52.3 (5.4). CO2 emissions 142g/km. MPG figures are obtained from laboratory testing intended for comparisons between vehicles and may not reflect real driving results.

New Irish Game & Country Fair theme mirrored by major UK Fair's new attraction

n our last edition, we announced that our ROI Game Fair previously staged at Birr Castle - is joining up with the Galway Home and Garden Festival at Galway Racecourse, Ballybrit on the 15th & 16th June 2019 to form the Irish Country Lifestyle Festival. This has the potential, not only create a real 'Festival of the Irish

Countryside,' but bring together two very experienced organising teams – the Great Game Fairs of Ireland team with over 40 years experience of organising game and country fairs, and the team from Southern Promotions Ltd, organisers of the very successful Mallow and Galway Home & Garden Festivals.



The UK Game Fair 2019 - billed as the 'Festival of the British Countryside' - has adopted a similar theme of 'Game Fair Gardens'

From their press release we find that, as one of their new attractions, the organisers are introducing a gardening theme this year:

"The organisers are getting ready to take the event to the next level. Lord and Lady Salisbury's estate at Hatfield House will host the event again and an ambitious plan of new attractions will delight the crowds.

"Game Fair Gardens designed by RHS Gold Medalists from Capel Manor College, will tell the story of the countryside, estates, country gardens, traditional practices and innovations. Visitors will experience an immersive journey through themed gardens reflecting the interests and passions of The Game Fair's audience. Expect kitchen gardens, traditional crafts, art & sculpture, animals and superb design in the setting of Hatfield House which already has an international reputation among garden enthusiasts."

Game Fair 2019, the Festival of the British Countryside, takes place at Hatfield House, Hertfordshire on the 26-28 July 2019.

Other supporting events from the Irish Country Lifestyle Festival Team

The Southern Promotions team will once again organise their highly successful Mallow Home & Garden Festival on the 24-26th May 2019 www.exhibitionsireland.ie

And the Great Game Fairs of Ireland team will organise the Irish Game Fair & Fine Food Festival at Shanes Castle, Antrim on the 29th & 30th June, 2019 www.irishgamefair.com

British Shooting Show 2019 - Spectacular Return To NEC, Birmingham

The British Shooting Show 2019 is set for a spectacular return when it opens at the NEC Birmingham in February (15th-17th). Following on from the hugely successful 2018 show, exhibitors have been quick to book and confirm their attendance for 2019 and with even more first time exhibitors confirmed there will be even more for visitors to see and do.

The central location of the venue makes traveling to and from the show much easier with many traveling direct to the NEC by train many more arriving by car and taking advantage of the free parking and shuttle bus service. The rail link, with a journey time of 90 seconds from

Birmingham airport to the NEC, has also made the journey easier for visitors arriving by air.

The British Shooting Show is Europe's largest trade and retail shooting show with the biggest gathering of manufacturers, distributors and retailers ever seen. The show is packed with guns, rifles, air rifles, optics, knives, shooting accessories and specialist clothing, in fact everything a shooter could possibly need, want or dream of!

The air rifle ranges give plenty of shooting practice for expert



shooters and first time shooters alike. Younger visitors, under the supervision of qualified range officers can have their first introduction to target sports. The manufacturer lanes give an ideal opportunity for those looking for a new air rifle the chance to try them out before making a purchase and with the 'night vision' ranges visitors can check out the latest night sights and scopes.

The British Shooting Show is an experience that balances the very best of shooting retail with stunning attractions and displays that include private rifle and pistol collections, arms heritage displays, demonstrations of gun engraving, stock

making and gun-fitting. Visit the show and see everything the shooting industry has to offer in the warm and dry surroundings of the NEC.

Come and join us for three full days of shooting indulgence at the NEC, 15th – 17th February 2019 where you can enjoy a warm welcome, a friendly atmosphere and the best the shooting industry has to offer.

Tickets are available now by visiting the British Shooting Show website www.shootingshow.co.uk (accompanied visitors aged 15 and under go free)



THE UK & EUROPE'S LARGEST TRADE AND RETAIL SHOOTING SHOW

15^{тн} - 17^{тн} FEB 2019 AT THE NEC B I R M I N G H A M



What is the British Shooting Show all about?

For three days in february the world's shooting industry gather at the NEC, Birmingham for a festival of everything that is shooting. You will see the largest gathering of exhibiting manufacturers, distributors and retailers to date.

The premier event on the global shooting calendar.

The British Shooting Show is the UK & Europe's largest trade and retail shooting show, held at the NEC, Birmingham - the UK's best connected venue. Get to the British Shooting Show via plane, train, coach and by car quickly and easily.



New levels of one-to-one interaction with brands.

Visitors are presented with a unique opportunity to speak directly to manufacturers about new and existing products as well as news about product research and development. No other event offers this level of one-to-one interaction.

A global stage for product launches.

Over the past few years, the shooting industry has chosen the British Shooting Show as the stage on which to unveil new products to the visiting public, trade and press. Last year the show hosted over 120 product launches across the full spectrum of the shooting industry.

WWW.**shootingshow**.co.uk Email: info@shootingshow.co.uk Call: +44 (0) 1258 857700

Learn more about the British Shooting Show and buy your tickets

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Buy your tickets online in advance to enjoy **discounted ticket rates.**

Save the dates.

15th, 16th & 17th February 2019

Venue.

The National Exhibition Centre (NEC) Birmingham, UK

Learn more.

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Schöffel Country unveils its updated Ptarmigan Extreme II shooting coat

With a new contemporary sport cut, Schöffel Country's bestselling Ptarmigan Extreme shooting coat has been updated for AW 18.

Originally launched in 2015, the dark olive coat set the benchmark in shooting coat technology, leaving the discerning game shot wanting for nothing. And from this year, whilst still offering the wearer complete freedom of movement, it boasts an improved, more stylish fit.

Fully waterproof and windproof, whilst still being breathable, the coat is crafted using Gore-Tex two-layer laminate fabric. The membrane is bonded to the outer fabric, making the outer layer waterproof and hardwearing, whilst the inner fabric layer improves comfort and versatility. Combined, these layers offer superb protection from even the most extreme of weather.

Extra features include reinforced bellow cartridge pockets with retainer straps and drainage holes, fleece-lined hand-warming pockets as well as two further zipped internal pockets, perfect for keeping valuables secure. A detachable hood and storm cuffs keep the cold chills and water out. Finished with the Schöffel logo subtly embroidered, the coat lives up to all expectations and is built to last for years to come.

Sizes: 36" to 54" chest SRP: £449.95

To find out more about Schöffel Country, visit www.schoffelcountry.com



Schöffel's updated Ptarmigan Extreme II shooting coat.

Rigby knife at the cutting edge

London gunmaker John Rigby & Co. has proved it is not just adept at producing guns, adding the new Rigby Caprivi knife to their stylish line of hunting knives.

The Caprivi knife, which shares its name with the 280 mile-long, wildlife and mineral rich narrow stretch of land in Namibia, famous for its abundant game, features an ebony wood handle while the blade itself has been expertly crafted from Damascus steel.

Further complementing its fine lines and stylish look, it has been engraved with Rigby's famous 'double R' logo.

This iconic logo has also been embossed on the accompanying handmade leather sheath, which ships with every Caprivi knife. RRP £199, plus P&P.



RRP £199, plus P&P. Available exclusively from www.johnrigbyandco.com.

Moor burning on upland peat bogs -GWCT responds to RSPB position

The RSPB press office appear to have forgotten that 75% of the world's heather moorland is found in the UK because grouse moor managers have been fighting to save it - since before the RSPB existed. In 1880 the first moor owner took a city corporation to court for draining peatland to provide drinking water. In this century moor owners have refused



subsidy, or tax incentives, from successive governments, which encouraged them to drain their peatlands and carpet them in trees or sheep.

GWCT research showed that between the 1940s and 1980s grouse shooting was the main reason we kept our open moorland. There is also a wider, shared social responsibility that rarely gets aired: pollution from urban areas has significantly damaged the growth of the rare plants protecting the surface of our peatlands for over 100 years.

The main body of people that began large scale efforts to combat this degradation were moor owners. It is bizarre that the RSPB now seek to criticise them through the highly selective use of both science and history. Conservationists are still learning how complex these peatland systems are and moor owners are helping evolve best practice.

Saturday 10am-5pm Sunday 10am-5pm



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Countryside Alliance Ireland meet with PSNI **Firearms** Chief

Countryside Alliance Ireland's Chief Executive, Lyall Plant, met with Nichola Murphy, Head of PSNI Firearms and Explosives Branch to discuss a number of topics and to address members' concerns. These included the Auditor's Report, general licence issues and the performance of the on line system.



Nichola Murphy Head of Firearms Licensing in discussion with CAI's Lyall Plant

The on line application system has for the vast majority proved to be an excellent service with a quick turnaround. However, Lyall did address the backlog affecting a number of applicants. Ms Murphy advised that every effort is being made to address the back log of cases that are being addressed by Senior

Licensing Managers, in that cases are being classified as more complex or require a Senior Managers decision.

Countryside Alliance Ireland will continue to fully engage with PSNI FEB and we shall keep you updated.

Rural groups unite to challenge shooting ban in Wales

Three of the UK's leading rural organisations are challenging the Natural Resources Wales (NRW) ban on pheasant shooting on public land.

The Countryside Alliance (CA), The British Association for Shooting and Conservation (BASC) and the National Gamekeepers' Organisation (NGO) sought legal advice when NRW's board voted not to allow shooting after receiving a letter from Welsh environment minister Hannah Blythyn. Lawyers acting on behalf of BASC, CA PAW NI - Poaching Sub Group.

and NGO have now issued a letter before action to NRW and may seek a Judicial Review, which they will jointly fund.

Tim Bonner, the CA's chief executive said: "It is important that policy is evidence based. There is no evidence which justifies the decision to end pheasant shooting on NRW land, as NRW itself recognises. Indeed the evidence points clearly to the benefits of shooting to Welsh communities, the rural economy and in meeting NRW's statutory obligations. The decision by NRW appears perverse and damaging, and this situation cannot be allowed to go unchallenged.'

executive director of Christopher Graffius, BASC's communications and public affairs, said: "An evidencegathering review and consultation process came out in favour of shooting, yet NRW appeared to change its position after later interjection by the minister. It is a sign of the strength of feeling in this issue that the three rural organisations have united in their commitment to holding NRW and Hannah Blythyn to account on behalf of shooting and on behalf of those who are rightly appalled that a public body can apparently ignore sound evidence in such a manner."

Liam Bell, chairman of the NGO, said: "The NGO felt it essential to challenge the decision of NRW, not just in behalf of our members in Wales but also because of the serious precedent that it could be set for other decision-making by the authorities."

Northern Ireland Future Agricultural Policy Framework

Countryside Alliance Ireland together with the Ulster Angling Federation welcomed the opportunity to submit our comments in respect of the Northern Ireland Future Agricultural Policy Framework.

The food and farming industry is nationally important, generating over £108 billion a year for the UK economy and underpinning our food security. It is particularly important for our most rural areas where farming is often central to the







The Smartwave AV3500 has impressive deck space lending it to many applications. This craft is well suited as a tender, fishing or duck shooting platform, for rescue work or as a tough

Specifications Length External beam Hull Weight

Horsepower Deadrise Hull thickness Warranty Max No People Max Payload

3.5m (11.5ft) 1.7m (5.6ft) 100kg (220lbs)

25Hp

8mm

4

13deg

5 years

340 Kg

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commercial boat. In short the AV3500 will excel in every application. The AV3500 is designed for maximum space, stability and low planning speed.



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economic and social life of the community as well as playing a vital role in conservation. The establishment of the first UK agricultural policy in over 40 years is therefore hugely important, not just to farmers but to the future of the countryside and the nation as a whole.

Leaving the European Union (EU) provides the opportunities to create an agricultural policy that is better suited to the regions and nations of the UK than the EU's Common Agricultural Policy (CAP), and to simplify the current system of support payments and grants. However, this process will involve significant change as the Government has confirmed that it will move away from direct income support in favour of payments for certain types of public goods outlined in the Government's "Health and Harmony" consultation on the future of food, farming and the environment.

PAW NI Fin Poaching Sub Group meet at the Loughs Agency

A meeting of the PAW NI Fin Poaching Sub Group was held recently in the Loughs Agency Headquarters in Prehen. A number of items were discussed including 'Terms of Reference' for the group and the production of a statistical survey to enable the group to focus on specific areas of concern. The meeting was kindly hosted by John McCartney, Director of Conservation and Protection at Loughs Agency, who recently took over as Chair of the Fin Sub Group.

The Fin Sub Group comprises of members from the PAW NI (The Partnership for Action against Wildlife Crime in Northern Ireland) steering group; which brings together statutory agencies, non-statutory agencies and interested parties with the common goal of combating wildlife crime through publicity education and campaigning. PAW NI partners include key government departments, PSNI and other enforcement agencies, environmental organisations, animal welfare groups and country sports associations.

Stolen gundogs – what to do?

Dog theft, especially of working dogs, continues to be a huge problem in rural areas. With the increase in popularity of field sports comes the increase in demand for trained dogs and thieves see valuable gun dogs as a saleable commodity. DogLost has stated that almost 50% of its missing dog reports actually relate to working dogs. The most commonly stolen gundogs are cocker and springer spaniels and labradors.

When you are out and about

- Never leave your dog unattended.
- If you are in a public area don't boast about your dog, you never know who is listening.
- If you have to keep your dog in the car for any period of time, ensure the car is locked. Consider the use of tinted windows or secured dog transit crates that can be locked.

Review your security at home

- If your dog lives indoors, take the usual principles to ensure safety.
- If kennelled then install a secure lock and alarm system.
- Install remote access CCTV, which allows you to regularly check on your dogs from your mobile phone and security lighting on all outbuildings and kennels.
- Never leave ladders or tools around that can be used by thieves to gain entry.
- Sign up to local and regional neighbourhood watch programmes so you are aware of other local thefts in the area. Note down the registration numbers of any suspicious looking vehicles.

Are you having a litter of puppies?

• Be extra vigilant.

- Don't put signs by the roadside to indicate you have puppies for sale.
- If potential buyers come to see your puppies make sure you have someone with you and show them the puppies one by one.



Springers and cockers are the most commonly stolen gundogs.

If your dog is stolen

- Swift action is a necessity contact the Police and get a crime reference number. Also contact your local council, dog warden and RSPCA to alert them should the dog be handed in.
- Talk to neighbours and check with your local community postal workers, milk men, shop keepers etc.
- All dogs must now, by law, be microchipped, so ensure your details are up to date and report it to Petlog.
- Take photos of your dogs from several angles and keep them with your dogs' documents. These can then be circulated quickly in the event of theft and passed to the police
- The use of social media is great to spread the word if your dog is stolen. Forums and facebook groups are good places to post messages, but be aware of hoaxers claiming to know where your dog is if you provide money. Keep the police up to date and always allow them to follow up any potential leads.

Remain vigilant and report any suspicious activity either via 101 or 999 in an emergency.

FACE is the Voice of #EUROPEANHUNTERS

It is important to continue to be a member of Countryside Alliance Ireland as we are a full paying member of FACE Ireland and therefore your voice and concerns are directly communicated through our representative John Flannery, to the heart of Europe. Our northern members are represented by The Countryside Alliance in London through FACE UK.

Many regulations which affect us come from Brussels and impact the daily lives of millions of citizens! Since 1977, FACE has represented hunters in Europe, building a bridge between them and the European institutions.





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Coming Soon another **Great Game Fairs** of Ireland movie by Harry Cook

n 2018 in the midst of half a dozen television programmes made about the Shanes Castle Game Fair by local and national TV companies, our readers enjoyed a film 'Forty Years of Irish Game Fairs,' produced by the inimitable Harry Cook https://player.vimeo.com/video/258116515



And coming soon on our websites www.irishaamefair.com & www.irishcountrylifestylefestival.com will be the new Game Fair movie looking back on the success of 2018 and looking forward to our two events in 2019 - The new Irish Country Lifestyle Festival at Galway Racecourse, Ballybrit 15/16 June (to replace our event at Birr) and the Shanes Castle Fair, Antrim 29/30 June

The trade and public reaction to both events has been excellent, with visitors to our stand at the Galway Angling Fair

extolling the benefits of our new event site and our special discounted ticket offers. These offers mean that visitors to Galway can get discounted admission and ALL Galway visitors can avail of half price admission to Shanes Castle. Trade interest too has been keen and we are now fully open to take bookings for both events.

We also took advantage of our 'test marketing' trip to the well attended Fly Fair in Galway to speak with members of the gun trade, as well as having several site planning meetings with our new partners/ franchise holders for the Galway event. We also found time to enjoy the many attractions that visitors to the fair can enjoy in Galway and we can commend them to fair visitors

The Great Game Fairs of Ireland team are really excited at the idea of working with Alan Collins, our new partner for the ROI Fair, to deliver a real 'Festival of the Irish Countryside' - one which really enhances the Game Fair message and concept.

The exhibition and infrastructure at the race course is perfect for such an event and, together with the large green space inside the track, provides a much larger area to grow the Fair than we had at Birr.

Overall there are good facilities for trade exhibitions, arena programmes and all of the country sports competitions, including gundogs, terriers & lurchers, and clay shooting. Trade stand bookings are now open for both fairs : Call 028 (from ROI 048) 44839167/44615416 Email: irishgamefair@btinternet.com

Barbour Autumn / Winter Countrywear

ince 1894, countrywear has been at the heart of the Barbour Sbrand. This Autumn / Winter, the collection maintains its attention to practicality and performance, offering a stylish selection of functional outerwear for men and women with layered clothing expertly suited for outdoor activities.

Dominating this year's colour trend is a mixture of olive and navy. The collection features an assortment of lightweight bridle quilted and waterproof jackets, combined with a choice of chunky knitwear and country checked shirts in rustic and neutral themes. It's sure to suit those who embrace the country lifestyle - guaranteeing functionality and performance throughout.

Our products are available to buy from www.barbour.com and the following retailers:

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VPA – the variable phone adapter from SWAROVSKI OPTIK



SWAROVSKI OPTIK's VPA phone adapter conveniently captures detailed close-ups.

For iOS or Android: with the VPA, its variable phone adapter, SWAROVSKI OPTIK is launching a flexible all-rounder that is compatible with most smartphones on the market. The adapter quickly and easily connects SWAROVSKI OPTIK spotting scopes or binoculars with your phone to create a super telephoto lens, allowing you to dive into the amazing world of digiscoping. The convenient way to capture unique observations and detailed close-ups. The SWAROVSKI OPTIK adapter is available from authorised specialist retailers and at WWW.SWAROVSKIOPTIK.COM.

Attaching the VPA is incredibly easy. Use the clamps to adjust the width and height of the adapter to the size of your smartphone and the position of the camera. Three different adapter rings are available for connecting to your SWAROVSKI OPTIK binoculars and spotting scopes. This is done by attaching the correct ring to the corresponding eyepiece cup in the screwed-in position. No special tools are needed. The anthracitecoloured adapter is light yet rugged thanks to the use of fibreglass-reinforced plastic.

Swazi beats the elements with its new Micro Shirt base layer

New Zealand-based outdoor clothing brand Swazi Apparel has launched its Micro Shirt, a reengineered base layer designed to protect against harsh winter conditions.

Thoughtfully designed to provide comfort in cooler climates, the Micro Shirt is made from high quality,

Nicro Shiff is made from high quality 140gsm microfleece and features an extra-long tail to prevent a chill. A convenient zip on the high neck makes it easy to warm up or cool down as the seasons change. Thumb loops on the sleeves also provide that extra barrier, preventing cold hands where gloves end and sleeves begin.

Davey Hughes, founder and creative director at Swazi Apparel, commented: "The Micro Shirt is an essential addition to every outdoorsman's wardrobe. We wanted to



The Swazi Micro Shirt base layer.

create a base layer which could resolve

the issues of other brands, ensuring that every inch of skin could be covered whilst also being able to control your own body temperature. This is a superbly designed top and is ideal for winter weather and cooler climates."

RRP: £69.95 Sizes: XS-XXXL Colours: Tussock, Black or Olive For more information, visit www.swazi.co.nz.

Warm welcome from Anglers for Bruton move to protect wild brown trout in western lakes

The Connacht Angling Council has expressed its delight that Minister Richard Bruton has afforded special protection to wild brown trout in the great western lakes.

The Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment has signed a new bye-law ensuring the great western limestone Loughs of Carra, Conn, Cullin and Mask (Mayo), Corrib (Galway), Arrow (Sligo/Roscommon) and Sheelin (Westmeath, Meath, Cavan and Longford), will now be managed exclusively for the benefit of wild brown trout.

This follows an 18 month-long Connacht Angling Council campaign to ensure the protection of wild brown trout in the lakes and a halt to the proliferation of predator pike, which each eat up to 20kgs of wild brown trout in western fisheries per-year.

A bye-law in relation to the protection of pike in these waters will now no longer apply.

The new bye-law was drafted by former Minister of State with responsibility for Inland Fisheries, Seán Kyne, before his promotion to Government Chief Whip and Minister of State for the Gaeltacht.

"We are delighted Minister Kyne took on board our grave concerns regarding the future of wild brown trout stocks in western lakes," said Martin Kinneavy, Connacht Angling Council Chairperson.

"There is now a sincere and genuine commitment to develop wild brown trout stocks in western lakes and a copperfastened strategy to deal with the threat of predator pike.

"Our world famous Irish wild brown trout fisheries are now protected by law from pike and can reach their full trout angling potential.

"Pike are far more prolific breeders than trout and a pike will eat as much as 20kgs of wild brown trout in western fisheries peryear.

"West of Ireland wild brown trout waters are internationally recognised as the best in the world and wild brown trout angling is worth \in 148m per-year to the Irish economy.

"The bulk of that money is spent in the west, where it is badly needed.

"Minister Kyne recognised that west of Ireland wild brown trout fisheries are unique eco-systems and need to be protected as such by law.

"We are grateful he has done so, otherwise, we would be staring at further severe damage to wild brown trout stocks in the region."



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EDINBURGH OUTDOORWEAR



Percussion Ladies Normandie Jacket Marron £100.00

Percussions Normandie jacket comes completely waterproof and breathable, designed for any type of weather! Available in a 3 part set that matches up with the Normandie vest and trousers.

Sizes: Small, Medium, Large, XL & XXL

Percussion Ladies Normandie Trousers Marron £45.00

Percussions Normandie trousers comes fully waterproof and breathable, its lightweight and durable material makes it great for all types of activities whatever the weather!

Sizes: Waist 28 - 38

Percussion Rambouillet Zipped Wellington Brown £89.00

Percussions neoprene wellington designed for all weathers – wet or cold! its 4mm neoprene lining gives increased comfort and extra warmth.

Colour: Brown Sizes: 39 - 47

Percussion Tradition Warm Trouser Brown Khaki £38.00

Percussion's newest Tradition trouser comes in a 2-tone brown rather than previous years Green. Designed for colder weather these DWR treated trousers to give protection against light showers and will keep you warm on colder days due to its microfleece lining. Leg Length: 31" Sizes Waist 30 – 44

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Percussion Grand-Nord Jacket Dark Khaki £130.00

Percussions Grand-Nord jacket is arguably their best winter coat! it comes completely waterproof and breathable. has a micro fleece lining and extra layer of padding to help battle the cold, an absolute must for winter shooters! Colour: Dark Khaki Size: Medium

Percussion Marly Jacket Khaki £90.00

Percussions Marly jacket comes fully waterproof and breathable, lightweight – perfect for this summers shooting season.

Colour: Khaki Sizes: Small to XXXL

Percussion Savane Trousers Khaki £30.00

Percussions Savane trousers come lightweight and offer effective moisture transfer so particularly good on warm and dry days, its elasticated waistband ensures a very comfortable fit.

Leg Length: 32" Colour: Khaki Waist Sizes 30 - 47

Verney-Carron Perdrix Jacket Khaki Was £110 NOW £99.00

Verney-Carrons Perdrix jacket comes lightweight and flexible, its fully waterproof and breathable membrane makes it great for warm and cold days whatever the weather!

Colour: Khaki Sizes: Small - 4XL

Verney-Carron Ladies Perdrix Jacket Khaki Was £110 NOW £99.00

Verney-Carrons Perdrix jacket comes lightweight and flexible, its fully waterproof and breathable membrane makes it great for warm and cold days whatever the weather!

Colour: Khaki Sizes : XS - XXL

Trouser Dark Khaki £80.00 Percussions Grand-Norde trouser is arguably their best winter trouser! it comes completely waterproof and breathable. has a micro fleece lining and extra layer of padding to help battle the cold, an absolute must for winter shooters!

Leg Length: 31" Colour: DarkKhaki Waist Sizes 30 - 44

Percussion Grand-Nord

Percussion Marly Trouser Dark Khaki £45.00

Percussions Marly trouser comes fully waterproof and breathable. Features 6 pockets and 1 knife pocket. Leg Length: 31" Colour: DarkKhaki Waist Sizes 30 – 44

Verney-Carron Rapace Trouser Khaki Noir £60.00

Verney-Carron Rapace trousers come ultra-resistant for all types of shooting/hunting. Fully waterproof and breathable, great for all types of "rough" activities.

Colour: Khaki Noir Waist Sizes 30 - 44

Verney-Carron Perdrix Trousers Khaki £60.00

Verney-Carrons Perdrix trouser comes lightweight and flexible, its membrane is also waterproof and breathable.

Leg Length: 32" Colour: Khaki Waist Size : 30 - 46

Verney-Carron Ladies Perdrix Trousers Khaki £60.00

Verney-Carrons erdrix trouser comes lightweight and flexible, its membrane is also waterproof and breathable.

Colour: Khaki Sizes 28 -38

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Anglers reminded to maintain vigilance against crayfish plague

New legislation introduced will strengthen existing measures to protect the native white-clawed crayfish. The regulations will provide authorities in Ireland with the powers to prevent the arrival and spread of the five non-native species of crayfish included on the EU list of invasive alien species of Union concern.

The White-clawed Crayfish is considered a globally threatened species and Ireland holds one of the largest surviving populations. The freshwater species is found in many rivers and lakes in Ireland and is protected under both Irish law and the EU Habitats Directive. Throughout Europe, the species has been decimated by the impact of a disease called Crayfish Plague.

Many North American crayfish species are resistant to Crayfish Plague and can act as carriers of the disease which is rapidly fatal when passed to the White-clawed Crayfish. While there is no evidence that North American or other non-native crayfish have been introduced to Ireland, the crayfish plague has now reached five rivers



White clawed crayfish

(photo D. Gerke)

in Ireland possibly by spores carried on fishing equipment.

The prospect of the disease being controlled depends on the absence of non-native crayfish. The European Union (Invasive Alien Species) (Freshwater Crayfish) Regulations 2018 targets the introduction of several species of non-native crayfish which have been included on the EU list of invasive alien species of Union concern ('the Union list').

Inland Fisheries Ireland have welcomed the new legislation to

alien crayfish were to be introduced in Ireland, this could have a devastating effect on the ecology of many of the lakes and rivers. The public is also asked to alert the authorities of any mass mortalities of crayfish or sightings of unusual crayfish (e.g. red claws, large size) by contacting the National Parks and Wildlife Service (www.npws.ie), the National Biodiversity Data Centre (www.biodiversityireland.ie) or Inland Fisheries Ireland (www.fisheriesireland.ie).

help resist the threat from introduced crayfish. They say if invasive

Do you have what it takes to become an Accredited Game Shot?

Schooling enthusiasts can put their knowledge to the ultimate test and become an Accredited Game Shot by partaking in a test launched this week by the Game & Wildlife Conservation Trust (GWCT).

A team of experts at the Trust have written a series of game management questions, which are based on the new publication, The Knowledge: Every Gun's Guide to Conservation, to test the readers.

There are 25 multiple-choice questions which ask Guns about their shoots, the

ways in which a gamekeeper is a working conservationist, raises controversial issues affecting shooting and explains the way legislation and regulation covers shoot management.

GWCT's director of communications Andrew Gilruth said: "Game management is so much more than rearing pheasants and organising shoot days. When done well, it can have a hugely beneficial impact on the countryside. It is in the interests of those who go shooting to help prevent poor performers overshadowing the great conservation work done by others. Equally, if a shoot is already a five-star operation, it should get the recognition it deserves.

"It is vital that a balanced case is made for gamebird management. Some notable, high profile opinions published recently have lacked this balance. As an evidence-based research organisation the GWCT would seek to put that right. With the correct knowledge, individual Guns can also help make than happen."

As well as the book, all the information you need to help earn accreditation is on our new website -

www.gwctknowledge.com.

Angling for bass has less impact on stocks than previously assumed

Following revised advice from the International Council for the Exploration of the Sea (ICES) from 1 October to 31 December 2018 anglers fishing in Ireland have been allowed to keep one bass a day.

ICES submitted revised advice for bass in the ICES divisions covering the central and southern North Sea, Irish Sea, English Channel, Bristol Channel, and Celtic Sea for 2018. This includes all Irish coasts including those parts of Donegal omitted from the previous regulation.

According to the advice recreational angling does not impact on bass stocks to the degree previously assumed. In addition, ICES estimated a higher survival rate from catch-and-release (a 95 % survival rate compared to the previously estimated 85 %). In their view it is appropriate that one fish per fisherman per day may be retained in recreational fisheries that take place in October – December 2018. A minimum size limit of 42cm applies.



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Letterkenny Educate Together National School Wins National Education Programme 'Something Fishy.'

The students from fifth class were presented with the 'Something Fishy' perpetual trophy and a monetary prize by Joe McHugh TD, Minister for Education and Skills, at the school today. During the 2017-2018 academic year, 99 national schools and 10 education centres took part in the programme, reaching approximately 3,000 students.

'Something The Fishy' education programme is an initiative of Inland Fisheries Ireland, in partnership with Blackrock Education Centre, which allows students to learn about fish and the environment in a local context. Students enjoy classroom based activities as well as practical fieldtrips with Fisheries Officers as part of the programme, which is promoted and delivered by education centres nationwide. In addition, students compile and submit projects on their learning for assessment by an independent judging panel.

Letterkenny Educate Together School received the national accolade after being commended for their project called 'Save Our Schools (SOS)'. The project saw the class build a website aimed at engaging other children and young people to learn about fish and the importance of protecting the fisheries resource. The webpage included digital games and video content, all devised and produced by the children themselves.

Teachers and students participating in the 'Something Fishy' programme explore eight different lessons on the fisheries resource, after which they receive a visit from Inland Fisheries Officers who introduce them to their local river and the fish and invertebrates who live within in. Since its inception in 2005, over 50,000 students have participated in the programme.

Minister McHugh said: "I want to congratulate the students and teachers of Educate Together National School in Letterkenny on becoming 'Something Fishy' National Champions for 2018. This year's award is particularly special as we embark, in conjunction with countries all over the world, on the International Year of the Salmon to celebrate the shared cultural and mythological place of salmon in societies around the globe.

Our international scientists and fishery managers will seek to "educate together" and to investigate new and innovative conservation initiatives. I am particularly proud that Donegal, and especially the Letterkenny area, has built up an excellent pedigree in this competition with this year's Champions following in the footsteps of Gartan NS who won the title last year," he added.

Dr Ciaran Byrne, CEO of Inland Fisheries "Letterkenny Educate Ireland said: Together really impressed the judging panel with their use of digital communications to highlight significant conservation messages for their peers. I would like to congratulate the children and their teachers, Nakita Burke and Cliona Marley, for showcasing important learnings about the local fisheries environment in such an effective manner. We are delighted that the programme has been so well received here in Donegal and we would like to acknowledge the efforts of our colleagues in Donegal Education Centre and Blackrock Education Centre in that regard.

Inland Fisheries Ireland is committed to educating and engaging the next generation around our natural fisheries resource. The 'Something Fishy' programme brings the mysterious world of the aquatic environment to life in classrooms across the country and highlights the importance of conservation and protection of fish and their habitat."

Jacqui Dillon, Director of Donegal Education Centre said: "Donegal Education Centre works closely with the local Fisheries Officers in raising awareness and developing skills at primary level through the 'Something Fishy' Programme. This is the second year in a row that a Donegal school has won the national award. This is reflective of the commitment of the teachers involved and the keen interest they have engendered in their pupils.

This year has seen the project go to yet another level with a STEM base project - an online learning platform which the pupils have created that is accessible to all. The 'Something Fishy' project gives schools an opportunity to raise awareness about their local rivers and lakes and the life cycle of the salmon. The project is cross curricular and draws together geography, science and ICT as well as making the learning fun for all involved with the interactive online 'Something Fishy' resources. The Centre is delighted that Nakita and her pupils are ensuring that the national award stays in Donegal - for another year at least!

For more information about Something Fishy visit www.somethingfishy.ie



Joe McHugh TD, Minister for Education and Skills, is pictured (standing fourth from right) with the winning pupils of Letterkenny Educate Together National School

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Tree of the Year winner revealed



A monster of a giant redwood in Castlewellan, County Down, has been crowned Northern Ireland's Tree of the Year in a search for the nation's bestloved tree.

Organised by the Woodland Trust, the competition was open to any living tree in the UK – with Northern Ireland, England, Scotland and Wales each having its own contest.

The giant redwood – or multi-stemmed giant sequoia - stands within the walled garden at Castlewellan Forest Park. This much-loved veteran, now over 160 years old, was planted as a sapling by the Annesley family, the former owners of the Castlewellan demesne.

With an awe-inspiring 19 trunks, it's a

firm favourite with young climbers, who are suitably amazed when parents point out that the multiple trunks are in fact one incredible tree.

This tree was grown from one of the original seeds first brought back to England, from California, in 1853 by the renowned collector William Lobb, working for Veitch Nurseries. He dashed to the Sierra Nevada in 1852 when he first heard of these monster

High level of rubbish in Ireland's waterways threaten to angling tourism

The latest report from Irish Business Against Litter highlights the threat which exists to angling tourism if the issue of litter is not addressed. The report found that only 8 per cent of Irish beaches, harbours and rivers were found to be 'clean' in an evaluation of the levels of rubbish in coastal areas and waterways throughout Ireland.

Ireland has a unique status as an angling destination, attracting 446,000 domestic and overseas anglers to fish here. The fisheries resource contributes €836 million to the Irish economy annually and supports over 11,000 jobs, often in rural and peripheral communities.

Inland Fisheries Ireland said that our waterways and the fish which they sustain are one of our great natural assets. Ireland has a reputation as an outstanding angling destination however this is reliant on our 'green' image. IFI are disappointed to learn that angling destinations such as the Boyne, Shannon, Suir and Tolka feature on the 'heavily littered' list.

Inland Fisheries Ireland promotes a 'leave no trace' ethos with anglers and all water users and are calling all water users to address this issue with immediate effect and appeal to the public to refrain from littering in or around our waterways. Any incidences should be reported to the appropriate Local Authority. It is crucial that we clean up our act as soon as possible if we are to realise the enormous economic and recreational benefits which can accrue from the resource. If we are to ensure the sustainability of the resource in the long term and to safeguard Ireland's enduring appeal within the world of angling then we each need to quickly remedy this litter issue."



trees, anticipating correctly that the species, renowned for being the world's largest tree, would be hugely popular among Victorian collectors."

The Woodland Trust's Tree of the Year competition aims to highlight and celebrate our country's remarkable trees, and to ultimately ensure they are given the recognition and protection they deserve.



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The NARGC Celebrates its 50th Golden Anniversary - the 2018 AGM Report from the PRO's Desk

hen Albert Titterington, a special guest at the celebration of our 50th AGM Gala Banquet, suggested that I contribute an article celebrating our anniversary, I thought, easy peasy, just throw in a potted history of the NARGC, a brief report on proceedings at our conference and a few photos of the night's celebrations and the job's a good one.

Then I began to research our history and found that there was a goldmine of archive material and that more talented writers than I had, at various stages, done a much better job of presenting our story.

So, I thank and acknowledge the work of those stalwarts, including Martin McCarthy, Jim Fitzharris, Des Crofton, Chris Gavican, Douglas Butler, Tim O'Connell and many more, too numerous to mention, as the sources on which I base this reflection on our organisation.

It all started for us in 1968 but that's not all the story because our roots go much further back than then.

In the post WW2 years, Ireland was a very different place when compared with today, with a vastly different landscape, different farming practices, a more rurally distributed population and very different sporting and shooting opportunities. Land use was changing and the breakup of the old estates under the land commission saw a decline in the national game stocks.

Leisure holidays and tourist fishing and shooting were perceived by some in Government as a means of attracting wealthy visitors to the country. This, at a time of little indigenous manufacturing industry and when added value agricultural processing was in its infancy. Beef left the country on the



John Toal (National PRO NARGC) with Tricia Fenlon and Irene Titterington at the NARGC Banquet.

hoof. Hard foreign currency was what was needed, so said the then experts.

Those days were known as the hungry fifties (the decade of my birth) and it was then that the Saint Hubert Club of Ireland was established, in 1954, by a group of sportsmen who intended to affiliate to the Saint Hubert Association in Europe. The membership was drawn from a wide-ranging background comprising cultural, agricultural and professional fields. It is understood that the core interest of this grouping was in the ethics relating to hunting, shooting and fishing without any vested interest whatsoever in any sport, business or occupation.

Others held the view that Saint Hubert's Club of Ireland had as its main interest in the stimulation of public opinion to the value of the sporting resources of this country. Subsequent Government policy seemed to support the latter view.

The club was instrumental in 1956 of

convening a meeting of the national rural bodies of that time, i.e. the National Farmers' Association, Muintir na Tire, Macra na Feirme and the Irish Countrywomen's Association to implement a national policy for the propagation and conservation of game. This, at the time when the Second Programme of Economic Expansion was in the offing. This programme envisaged annual income of over 1 million pounds from visiting sportsmen from abroad.

The pre-existing Irish Game Protection Association (founded in the late nineteenth century) was not included despite that organisation's considerable expertise in game management.

The goals as stated of the Saint Hubert's Club were to:

(a) Establish Regional Game Councils in each county which would be constituted by accredited representatives from county executives of each of the rural organisations.

(b) Establish a national Game Council with the specific function of corelating, determining and implementing a unified policy on game development.

(c) Establish a constitution for each RGC, subject to ratification by the National Game Council.

(d) Request the Government to establish a Statutory Body to give effect to these proposals.

As might be imagined, ten years passed in argument and debate, primarily because the local sportsmen did not support the plans and farmers soon realised that game was a moving crop that could not be controlled and that there was no guaranteed return on money invested in the way of selling shooting days to wealthy tourists.

All the time local gun clubs and game protection associations, were developing and preserving ground and were recognised under the then 1930 Game Preservation Act (subsequently replaced by the still-in-force, 1976 Wildlife Act and it's 2000 update). As a foot note, my home club Dundalk and District GPA was founded in 1949. I joined in 1978 and so celebrate 40 years continuous membership in one of Ireland's oldest Clubs.

County Federations were born and the National Sporting Association comprising these federations was established. Over time, these gun clubs infiltrated and eventually assimilated the Regional Game Councils. The Rural bodies reverted to their core pursuits, happy to let the Gun Clubs take over the business of game stock management.

Landmarks and milestones on the way to our formation

1960. National Game Council [Chairman; Mr. P. J. Frayne, Kildare. Vice Chair. Mr. A. Morris, South Tipp.; Mr. P. Coyle, Monaghan; Mr. D. Daly, North Leitrim; Hon. Secretary, Mr. T. Makiterian and Hon. Treasurer, Mr. M. Regan, Meath]

1968. April 20th in Athlone saw the birth of the National Association of Regional Game Councils.

[First officers were: Chairman, Dr. R. Clarke, Donegal; Hon. Secretary, Mr. B. Flahive, Cork; and Hon. Treasurer, Mr. M. Downes, Dublin and Recording Secretary, Mr. J. Cummins, Cork.]

The work of building and developing the services to sporting members of the National Association got underway in a national and co-ordinated manner.

1971. The Department of lands appointed Mr. A. W. Duggan, Assistant Secretary in charge of Forestry and Wildlife. December of that year saw a seminar arranged in Longford town at which the Department launched the (famous) "Blue Paper" that standardised game development grants throughout the State. The then Minister for Lands, Mr. Sean Flanagan, T.D. was guest of honour at this seminar. This marked the first jointly organised engagement with the Department and the NARGC.

The NARGC becomes established as the main voice of Irish Shooters

1975. Mr. T Fitzpatrick introduced the Wildlife Bill soon to become the Wildlife Act (1976) and later that year, Mr. Ray McSharry, T.D., deputising for then Minister for Fisheries and Forestry, Mr. B. Lenihan T.D., attended another seminar.

These demonstrated the growing acceptance by Government of the NARGC's role in representing shooters in matters concerning game development and shooting in this country. 1975 also saw the Association first move to access insurance cover for our members. The level of cover obtained, demonstrated to the farming community, State Agencies and the public generally, the seriousness of the NARGC in meeting the needs of its members and in adopting a responsible role in hunting practices in Ireland.

1977. saw the ratification of a new constitution with all 28 regions represented. A side note here brings me back to my copy of the original Constitution. I will quote briefly from that document: Aims and objectives: (a) To promote co-operation between Regional Game Councils and all appropriate interests, Sporting, Wildlife, Conservation, Agriculture, and Rural for the proper development of our Game resources and the Conservation of Wildlife and to represent these interests at national level.

(b) To co-ordinate the efforts of Regional Game Councils and other interested organisations in the development of Game Stocks, Control of Predators and the Conservation of Wildlife.

(c) To promote generally the interest in Game, Wildlife and Field Sports

(d) To advise and assist the relevant Government Departments in all matters concerning Game propagation, Game Laws, Wildlife conservation and other like matters.

(e) To promote a better knowledge and understanding of Game and Wildlife through Press, Radio, Television and all other media.

(f) To establish a Nature Conservancy.

The above were noble aims and to a great extent have been achieved but, as always, there is still much more road to travel.

1985. This year brought about the birth of our Compensation Fund. Commercial insurance had become prohibitively expensive, so the Association's solution was to set up "a Fund" to which every club member, without exception, would join and carry a share of the Fund's liabilities. The fact is that the Fund, then comprising some 20,000 members, from 875 clubs (and membership has continued to over 24,000 members today and over 950 clubs nationally) had the bonus effect of binding our national membership to a common identity helping to develop cohesion nationally that is unsurpassed in any other organisations.

The Fund, under Administrator Chris Gavican, has successfully dealt with all matters of liability since its inception.

The organisation also became a provider of education and training during these years but more of that anon as I deal with recent developments later in this article.

1989. Rathescar

This was a new foray for the NARGC in that we purchased some 48 acres, part of the old Henry Estate near Dunleer, Co. Louth. This was the last remaining part of an old arboretum and hunting preserve established some 250 years ago, the rest having been clearfelled to open the land up for agriculture.

With a man-made lake and ancient forest, this has been kept as a wildlife reserve and is the centre for a number of conservation and biodiversity projects.

Louth RGC leased this Reserve from the National Association in the late 1990's. The main mover in this undertaking was and is my old friend Dr. Eugene

McEnteggart. The kindness and support of the Chairmanship holders, Douglas Butler and Eddie Kelly, during lease negotiations, is fondly remembered by the Louth team, me included.

Project Manager, Dr. Eugene McEnteggart has been a key figure in Louth RGC since the very beginning, along with Mr. Peter Callaghan, Caretaker and Manager of Rathescar Reserve.

Over the years, lakeside and forest walks have been developed and the Reserve opened to the public in 2000. This project allows schools and community groups along with families to experience diverse natural habitat. As Rathescar hits its 250th birthday, there will hopefully be a later and fuller article on this project.



Dr. Eugene McEnteggart and Peter Callaghan



Rathescar Lake

Structures

As inferenced, the NARGC is a democratic organisation with a cohort of gun clubs electing a Regional Game Council (RGC) in each county. Each RGC sends two delegates to the National Association and that body forms the Electoral College, the Governing Body (GB). The GB elects annually the Chair and Executive to manage its affairs between Quarterly Meetings of the Association. This is the supreme authority of the Association. Various sub-committees focus on different projects and areas of interest to the Association. Always to the fore is Research, Game Management, Safety, Education, Youth Development, Communications and in recent years, Target and Clay shooting.

I could write a volume on each of these areas but in the interest of brevity, I will opt to revisit these in future articles and now simply look at current lead shot research and Youth Development.

Way back in 1988, the Research Sub-Committee, under the chairmanship of the late Dr. Douglas Butler and including Mr. Simon Devereux, Mr. Turlough Coffey, Mr. Seamus Price and Mr. William O'Regan, conducted tests





Two photographs from our Transition Year Courses

on duck gizzards nationwide and concluded that 2.52% of the birds tested contained lead pellets.

What then with the ECHA (European Chemicals Agency) advising the European Commission that upwards of 1 million water birds die annually from lead ingestion? No credible counts have been proffered but rather, small data sets have been extrapolated and American research of many years back has been relied upon. Nonetheless, the ECHA has advised the European Commission that lead shot should be banned on all wetlands (as per the RAMSAR definition) and that lead generally should be banned for all hunting.

The NARGC has now launched a survey, similar to that of 1988. All RGC's and their Clubs will participate. We will then have solid Irish evidence with a 30-year comparison to boot.

New initiatives aimed at Youth Development saw the introduction of the NARGC Proficiency Course for Transition Year students. Two were held and they were enormously well received with a roll out planned for the coming year.

With our AGM just now passed, it is a good time to reflect on the event and to give a brief resume of the activities of the weekend. This was a special AGM being our 50th anniversary.

We were delighted to welcome past Chairmen and long-time supporters to share in our celebrations. The event took place in Clayton Whites Hotel, Wexford hosted by Wexford Regional Game Council. The Guest Speaker opening the AGM was the Mayor of Wexford.

The outgoing Chairman, Mr. Michael Fenlon, opened the meeting and as this AGM concluded his three consecutive year term, he reflected on developments during term of office. Tumultuous years some might say but he leaves the Chair with the organisation in a stronger state than he found it and with progress being achieved over many fronts. It is fair comment to say that the strong leadership provided by Michael, sustained us all in difficult times and that the team building done, gave us a united and focused Executive capable of meeting all and any challenges.



Outgoing Chairman, Michael Fenlon.

Officer's reports were taken as read.

The Financial Report (confidential to the membership) was given by the Hon. Treasurer Mr. Paul Doran. Suffice it to say that all is in order and that the NARGC is well placed to continue its affairs into the future.



Hon Treasurer, Paul Doran

The Compensation Fund Administrator's report was delivered by the National Administrator, Mr. Chris Gavican. Again, the Fund is performing to all possible expectations with everything being handled in a competent and timely manner. As ever, the Fund protects landowners and farmers who generously allow our members and clubs to hunt over their lands.

I must mention again the extension of Fund cover that was agreed by the Governing Body to protect Officers of the Association all the way down to club



Compensation Fund National Administrator, Chris Gavin.

level. The Governing Body further approved a grant of up to €750.00 for members of two years standing or more, where they find themselves in a District Court, contesting a decision by a Garda Superintendent on a licence renewal matter. These moves just go to show the ever improving and unique offer to the NARGC's membership.

Saturday saw the election of the incoming executive for 2018/19.

Mr. Dan Curley (Monaghan) was elected National Chairman. Mr. Michael Fenlon (Wicklow) was elected to Vice Chairman. Mr. Seamus O'Brien (Tipp. North) is again Hon. Secretary and Mr. Paul Doran (Wexford) takes up the reins again as Hon. Treasurer. Mr. Ray Devine (Mayo) was elected Deputy Fund Administrator while Mr. John Toal (Louth) is retained in the role of Public Relations Officer. Mr. John Flannery (Tipp. North) was returned as National Safety Officer and Mr. Ger. Burns (Waterford) again slots in to his familiar role as Game Development Officer. Mr. Seamus Heraty (Donegal) again is National Predator Control Officer and Mr. John Butler (Carlow) was re-elected to the role of Youth Development Officer. Executive officers elected were Messrs Paddy Flynn (Mayo), Jim Brennan (Meath), Shane O'Connor (Wexford), Tom O'Shea (Wicklow) and Raymond McCarthy (Cork)

Trustees elected were: Messrs Joe O'Loughlin (Clare), Des Furlong (Wexford) and Tomas Óg Ó'Curraoin (Waterford)



The NARGC Team: Back row (left to right) John Toal (PRO), Seamus Heraty (Predator Control Officer), Paddy Flynn, John Flannery (National Safety Officer), Seamus O'Brien (Hon. Secretary), Jim Brennan, Raymond McCarthy, Tom O'Shea. Front row Ger Burns (Game Development Officer), Paul Doran (Hon. Treasurer), Michael Fenlon (Vice-Chairman), Dan Curley, (Chairman), Chris Gavican, (National Fund Administrator), Shane O'Connor, Raymond Devine (Deputy Fund Administrator) and John Butler, (Youth Development Officer).

There was strong competition for seats on the Executive with a number of candidates narrowly missing out. This augurs well for the future as new blood is key to the vitality of any organisation. After the elections concluded we took a breather for tea and coffee before getting stuck into the resolutions.



Dan Curley, National Chairman.

The new Chairman received a warm welcome from the delegates.

There was a heavy agenda here and I don't propose to list all of them but will mention a couple of the highlights:

Game crop subsidy funding is increased from ϵ 16,000.00 to ϵ 25,000.00. The NARGC will lobby Government to activate the legislation on tourist shooting of migratory game birds. The alarming increase in the Buzzard population and in the Pine Marten (although some say that we now have the invasive Stone Marten here also), was debated. The affect that these have on smaller raptors, small fauna such as rabbits and shrews, along with game and threatened ground nesting birds such as the curlew, needs to be assessed and quantified. Should we be controlling their numbers now before the damage is irreversible? It was also agreed that all NARGC courses will be updated and improved in the coming year as will the Club of the Year Competition also be revised. There were a number of items discussed under any other business and as usual, some robust debate ensued. Healthy debate at conference saw a heavy workload set for the new **Executive.**

Milestones reached in 2018

Most notable was the achievement of becoming a LANTRA Member and Approved Provider of training courses. As a customised provision provider LANTRA will work with the NARGC to deliver and accredit our courses. LANTRA will provide certificates which will also include our logo.

FACE Europe

Great news this year when Ireland's FACE Representative, Mr. John Flannery, was elected Vice-President for the Atlantic Region. John now sits on the board of FACE giving us an even stronger voice in Europe.



Ireland's FACE Representative, John Flannery.

Gala Night

Saturday night brought with it our celebration of our golden anniversary. This event included a fine gala dinner. Guests included many of our former Chairmen and long-time supporters. Special guests included Mr. Albert and Irene Titterington, Mr. Tom and Vera Kirwan, Mr. Damian and Siobhan McDonald, IFA and representatives of a local charity – Friends of Wexford General Hospital - chosen by Wexford RGC. Many Gun Club members also attended, each representing our competition winners during the year.

I will close at that for now and I hope this is informative and gives you a flavour of events.



Members' Compensation Fund for Hunters, Clay Shooters, Target Shooters and others who are Members of our affiliated Clubs.

The National Association of Regional Game Councils encourages game shooters and clayItarget shooters to support the Shooting Lobby by joining a GunlGame Club, Clay Pigeon Club or Target Sports Club affiliated to the NARGC. With 24,000 Members, you will be joining the most authoritative voice for the sport of shooting in Treland. You will also enjoy the benefits of your Compensation Jund, which pools the cash contributions of its members. Only Jund Members can benefit from the Compensation Jund. Protection is available for Jund Members up to a ceiling of € 10m per incident. The Jund is administered by the Association in the best interests of the Association and its Associate Members. The Association welcomes the affiliation of new Clubs through its RGC structure.



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- Mallard/Pheasant Release subsidies for Clubs and RGC's currently €4.37 per bird
- Research into Game and other species
- Club of the Year Award
- Game Meat Handling Courses
- Representation otherwise at EU level
- A good working relationship with Farmers
- An Association Shop books, badges, stickers, ties etc
- Monitoring and input into the drafting of legislation affecting shooting sports
- Inter-Club & Inter-County Annual Clay Shoots biggest Clay Shoot in Ireland
- Members' access to information/advise on all issues every day
- Proficiency Courses and Safety Seminars for Associate Members
- Constant Government lobbying in Ireland and at EU level

For information on the Compensation Fund, call our Fund Office on FREEFONE: 1800 222 444 or telephone our full-time National Fund Administrator on 086 788 8411 (office hours only please) We now offer Fund Membership to Club Members who are under 14 for just €10



Photographed at the NARGC 50th Anniversary Banquet Photographs by Michael Fenlon Jnr


















Photographed at the NARGC 50th Anniversary Banquet Photographs by Michael Fenlon Jnr



















Dan Curley – the new NARGC National Chairman

he National Association of Regional Game Councils (NARGC) held its AGM on the 6th of October, and the annual elections were to the forefront of the business of the AGM. Ten (10) Officer positions and five (5) further Executive Committee positions are up for election annually, to form the fifteen (15) person National Executive Committee. The Chairman's position on the National Executive is the key pivotal role, as not only does the Chairman chair the Executive meetings, the Chairman is also in charge of the day to day running of the NARGC. With 960 Clubs and 24,000 Associate Members currently in the NARGC, this task is onerous as the Chairman and indeed all the Executive positions, are voluntary. The Chairman and the Executive rely on the employees Chris Gavican and Margaret Cox and all the volunteers in the county bodies, to get the work of the Association done and to keep the organisation running smoothly. The outgoing Chairman, Michael Fenlon from Co. Wicklow, had completed his full term of three (3) years as Chairman.

Dan Curley from Co Monaghan was elected as the new Chairman. Dan is 58 years old and is a native of South Roscommon. While he cannot exactly remember when he became involved in Gun Clubs and hunting, he thinks at about 12 he started hunting with the local Gun Club on Fox drives, acting as a beater with the dogs, to drive the foxes from the cover. Born into a rural farming background, the control of foxes was crucial and the local Gun Club organised fox hunts every Sunday and most of the local teenagers helped as beaters.

Dan's sixteenth birthday was eagerly awaited, as that was and indeed still is the minimum age at which you can own and license a shotgun. A new Baikal single-barrel shotgun



Incoming National Chairman Dan Curley, Compensation Fund National Administrator Chris Gavican and Larry Mitchell (Chairman 1981 -83)

was his first gun, costing £60. While this seems a very basic kit by modern standards, in 1976 money was scarce, and this was a common path into shooting by most persons at that time. After a bit of trial and error, the single barrel proved quite effective. It does really teach the shooter the best principles of shooting, because there is no worse feeling than seeing a bird flying off unscathed after a snap shot from a single barrel. After a few such feelings, the shooting routine becomes more deliberate with no place for snap shots. After two years with the Baikal, and a bit more money acquired from summer jobs, the Baikal was traded in for a Browning semi-auto. The shooting initially deteriorated, because the three-shot upgrade brought back complacency and the quick snap shots, but after a while a better degree of competency returned.

The dog situation was equally an evolutionary process, starting off with a converted sheep dog, who did the job with no real indication he was on birds. The next dog was a very head-strong, fast pointer who was determined to actually catch the bird and only pointed if he thought it would improve his chance of catching the bird. He left nothing behind him, but a sprint was often required to be within shot distance of a rising bird. He was nine years old when acquired, so that dog was not going to mend his ways.

In 1980, work dictated that Dan move to Monaghan and before long he was involved in Gun Clubs there. While very different terrain from Roscommon, the Club members had very similar expectations from their club and their sport. In 1989 he got involved in the administration end of Clubs by becoming Secretary of Annaghmakerrig Gun Club. In 1997 he became Secretary of Co. Monaghan Regional Game Council, one of the 28 RGC's that make up the NARGC. While much of his time is taken up with administration nowadays, it is still very special to get out into the country particularly on the 1st September and the 1st November.

Speaking after his election, he said the Club structure which is a prerequisite for joining the NARGC, is very special in that it seamlessly crosses all divides, social, economic, religious, and indeed any other strata you can think off. The gun club is one of many clubs in the parish or area, and it is simply a collection of like-minded persons, working for a common goal. It is very special that people value, use and seek to improve their own area, no running to faraway hills, but instead, look after their own hills.

He said of course the challenges are many and huge, but if we all work together at Club, county, and national level, we can continue to enhance the rich tradition that has been entrusted to us.

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Winter Woodcock and the Working Spaniel

Hard won woodcock on a Winter's day.

truly wild and very elusive game bird the magical woodcock is a beautiful intelligent bird we are blessed to receive around the counties of Ireland every winter, as the visiting migrants from Scandinavia and Russia swell the numbers of our own smaller population of resident birds, as the Christmas holidays approach. This is usually the time when the heaviest concentration of birds arrive to visit the western side of the country feeding at night on the soft pasture land and during the day taking cover in the plentiful scrubby forestry sides and the myriad of blackthorn dykes that surround the small rushy fields, our temperate damp climate over the winter months suits their feeding habits perfectly.

Shooting walked up woodcock and searching for this stunning little bird is for me and many others, the ultimate of sport during the shooting season and to understand why, well I think you have to experience it first hand before you can even begin to describe the excitement and completeness of it. For me it's the combination and partnership between gun and dog ,stunning scenery and the most instinctive form of game bird shooting available, the perfect woodcock dog has to be the English springer or cocker spaniel, but not just any Spaniel will do as they have to be tough , intelligent and ooze natural ability along with physical and mental stamina.

In my book, a great hunting spaniel owns the two types of stamina in abundance, firstly physical that gives it that drive and endurance allowing it to hunt the hardest of cover and terrain for hours on end usually on back to back days and in all weathers and this coupled secondly but just as important their mental stamina that keeps them hunting for scent and not just on it, as all good woodcock hunters will tell you sometimes the dogs have to hunt for hours on end between flushes so a dog that loses interest without scent isn't of any use for woodcock.

Finding a great dog for woodcock shooting isn't just as easy these days as it used to be, as not all spaniels today are up to the arduous task of long days and consistent cover and, as with most things in life, it's horses for courses and the more powerful, stockier, muscular spaniel seems to fit the bill perfectly. However, getting that combination of intelligence, natural ability and stamina is for me of paramount importance, because the key words for rough shooting and especially woodcock are control and obedience, hunting well within shot. And during the time in which the dog is alone in cover, using its intelligence and natural abilities to find and hopefully try and flush the bird towards the gun.

You may say that's a lot to ask of a dog but, believe me, a great woodcock dog that hunts for you and not itself, works out with experience that it gets no retrieve and no praise by hunting for itself! I have tested this with my own spaniels whilst hunting alone along the blackthorn dykes and its too much of a coincidence that a dog with experience is flushing 70% of woodcock out of my side of the dyke. I also want a dog that enters the cover on scent and when asked to do so by me, and hunts the cover for short periods and distances, always coming out to see where I am and where it is in relation to me. Woodcock are extremely hard to hit when flushed at close range and you don't want to anyway, while dogs flushing woodcock at extreme distances by hunting for themselves are as good as no dog at all.

There seems to be very little enthusiasm for cockers around me in Ireland for rough shooting and woodcock, which I often think is such a shame as they are truly a spectacular fun energetic gun dog. I run a pair of chocolate cockers myself which are just perfect for the task. I have yet to be able to tire them out, even though they seem in their absolute enthusiasm to cover twice as much ground as the springers, but I have to say if you get the right breeding they are just pure class for woodcock shooting, obviously requiring the same abilities and training as that of the springers.

As for woodcock shooting, it's instinctive, fast, exciting and



A quick breather then it's off again to hit the cover. exhilarating, a combination of all our couple senses are needed to give us a that little line bet

couple of seconds of advantage, a fine line between a great shot and that all too



A great woodcock dog hunts for you and not itself.



With 5 or 6 in the bag, let the remainder fly on.

familiar exclamation of how did I miss that? The telltale clatter of hurried wings negotiating the branches and twigs of the thick cover alert your senses to their imminent exit and once they break free the 'ghost of the woods' definitely has the advantage. Flushed out of the dykes they fly low, usually avoiding the skyline, blending in with the dark background, jinking, twisting and turning using every natural obstacle on their escape route to shelter them from the following shotgun pellets. And within hardly the blink of an eye, they are up and over the far hedge and gone. As for the forestry sides, either exiting low out of the scrub, or vertically straight up through the scrub trees visible for a few seconds as they climb the forestry wall until they reach the canopy, hit the breeze and again they're gone. I have actually known people who really struggle to shoot walked up woodcock as they just simply cannot

pull the trigger — always waiting for the perfect shot and amount of time to execute it which unfortunately and fabulously very rarely comes with woodcock. It can be severely frustrating for someone so desperate to enjoy this incredible experience.

It is definitely a case on most opportunities, of a shot of simply point and pull, a totally instinctive action and, over time and with experience, you begin to ignore such obstacles as tree branches and it's amazing how many times I have bagged birds shooting through the thickest of cover and been amazed that the bird fell dead in the air. Of course when shooting with a friend or even alone you always have to be aware of safety first, never take shots unless you know with complete certainty no one apart from the woodcock is in the firing line.

I use a couple of quite light Spanish side by sides which mount to the

shoulder quickly and fit me exactly, so as to line up the barrels when snapped up without me having to adjust the gun once it's mounted to the shoulder. But on very numerous occasions, even this seamless action isn't quick enough to be the downfall of the wily woodcock.

Because the woodcock is a truly wild game bird, I think we should all be mindful of the fact that there are no gamekeepers around breeding lots of them to release, so sensible shooting should always be practised. Always know the time to say enough is enough. There are days when we have purple patches, flushing high numbers of birds sometimes 30 to 40 plus in a day, but with 5 or 6 in the bag let the remainder fly on. I often find these days that the camera can be a really satisfactory replacement for the gun, because an equal thrill to shooting a woodcock can be enjoying and videoing a great spaniel hunting for them.

By Michael Martin, Six Mile Water Trust

DOLLAGHAN ADDICTION

As Derek says 'there are monsters here'.

he liquid moonlight's reflection waxes and wanes in the inky black waters' reflection. The undulating waves are caused by the splash of a mighty dollaghan, which has moved once again under the overhanging branches of an ancient beech tree on the far side of the river. The pulse quickens and all the senses are focused on the dark surface of the river. Having just arrived, I take a seat on the bench to absorb the mood of the evening and chew the cud with Jim Gregg, fellow piscatorian and a hunter of specimens. I light a cigar, relax and, as we chat, I can put the thirteen hour hospital shift behind me and suddenly we are caught in the moment; the old church bell in Antrim town chimes eleven o'clock, the full moon climbs above the mediaeval tower illuminating the Castle Grounds and suddenly we are bathed in the blue moonlight.

The scene is somehow familiar but

it's not the sight that the tourists or day trippers see. The ancient Deerpark Bridge and the grounds are given a blue grey veneer, each detail can be seen but in monochrome; the quiet waters are still black as pitch, save for the dimples of roach, perch and small trout and the occasional crash of the migratory dollaghan trout which send ripples far down the pool. A heron flies up the stream at head height almost crashing into Jim, it screeches obscenities as it swerves to avoid him, looking more like a prehistoric pterodactyl as it navigates the river in the gloom. That signals the end of his fishing for the night, the moon is high and he's had enough, sure it's a waste of time anyway!

I rest the pool for while, surveying the scene and thinking tactics. While most who fish here employ large flies and strong tackle for the big specimens, I'm happy enough to fish smaller flies and take smaller, but more, fish. After all I'm fishing a four weight rod, so even a one pound fish can put up a fight, it's all a matter of scale. I thread up the rod with a five weight line for better feel and loading with short casts, tie on a fluorocarbon tippet and a couple of gold head nymphs, black and hares ear, size twelve and fourteen. I notice more activity in the pool, the fish are starting to move.

I can slip out the hook and admire the spotted flanks and perfect fin

First cast and I love the delicacy of the set up, I can feel the nymphs touch bottom occasionally, brushing stones and leaves then a sharp knock. I tighten and up comes a little half pound brown trout. The de-barbed hook slides out easily and soon he's gliding back through the water. A nice roach follows and it is returned gently to the stream. A longer cast takes the flies under the



Dollaghan put on over two pounds each year in Lough Neagh so it makes sense to return them.

overhanging branches on the opposite side and experience tells me the flies are in the right place even before a solid thump initiates a sharp strip strike, and the water explodes as a three pound dollaghan takes the air and tries to shake the hook free. The little rod bucks and strains, but after the initial acrobatics I can walk the fish up the bank away from my fishing spot and to somewhere I can land it with the least fuss and disturbance. After several runs and some head shaking and thrashing, I bully him in and slide the net under him. Resting in the nets meshes in the shallows I can slip out the hook and



I glanced up as the moon appeared between the branches.

admire the spotted flanks and perfect fins, a quick photo and his lithe symmetry is sliding through the clear water.

Having disturbed the tail of the pool, I decide to make my way upstream between the tree lined banks to the 'wade'. This isn't easy to access, the water can be waist deep and there are sunken branches on the boulder-strewn river bed, but it's a great place to catch dollaghan as they favour the cover of the overhanging branches and lie in tight packed shoals under the shadows. An angler has to be prepared to lose flies here, especially when fishing in the darkness and a lapse of concentration can cost dearly but it's worth the risk. As I manoeuvre into position, a moorhen shuffles and clucks its disdain from a branch behind me and a grey squirrel rummages about in the tall trees above, dropping leaves and beech nuts on to the river around me. In the gloom, as our visual senses decline, the touch,



Every now and again a stunning brown trout comes your way while searching for dollaghan.

smell and especially hearing senses become more acute and we soon become aware that we are not alone in the darkness. Upstream a vee appears as a rat crosses the river. I strip line from the reel and the loud ratchet lets him know that I'm not a branch, because several times I've had them swim over to try to climb up me while standing static in the water. Once while wading beside a steep bank in the dark, an otter killed a rat just above my head and the screams made me almost jump out of my wader; night fishing is not for the faint hearted!

Now in position, I start halfway up the wade and begin by roll casting across the stream covering the water close by and gradually working more line until the little nymphs pitch into the water under the branches. I can feel every little bump and touch. I know the draw of a roach, the thud of little perch and the jag of small trout and I don't react. Third cast into the shadows and, after travelling a couple of feet, a different type of take, a gentle but solid thump. Reflex takes over as I strip the line tight to the fish, a rod strike would send the flies into the trees behind if I miss, but this time all goes solid and a

good dollaghan thrashes on the surface, the moonlight catching the ripples as they roll across the river. I hold hard with side strain to keep him out of the tree roots and the rod tip thumps down as he lashes about deep under the surface. The strain pays off and he runs upstream, jumping at the end of the run, but before long I can lead him into the shallows. I need my head torch to get the net under him and his sides glow silver, a similar sized fish to the first, but very different markings; the silvery fish seem to fight harder and jump more. Out comes the hook and I just lower the net allowing him to swim into the current.

Somewhere, out in the darkness, a big fish is trying to shake the hook

Next I have to wade a little upstream. I start in the middle of the wade because, if I land a fish, the commotion tends to disturb the water downstream, but this way I can still fish up into undisturbed water and there is a great lie beside some wooden pilings just upstream on the far side. I wade until the water gets too deep to go any further and as I pull out line from the reel a large swirl betrays a sizeable fish in that very spot. My heart beats harder as I cast across my right shoulder to avoid the branches, the flies drop upstream of the lie to allow them to sink before crossing the nose of the fish. It's more difficult to keep in touch with the flies when casting upstream, the retrieve must be faster but without pulling the flies unnaturally. Third or fourth cast and everything locks up. For a moment I think I've snagged the bottom, then a trembling comes down the line and I know something big has taken hold.

Suddenly the fly line is snatched from my hand and the little Orvis reel's ratchet sounds. Somewhere out in the darkness a big fish is trying to shake the hook before turning and bolting downstream past me and into the deeper water. With heart pounding I follow him downstream stumbling over underwater stones and branches, doing my best to stay in contact. He's dropped into the pool below and I'm relieved to be out from the tunnel of trees and into the open. I can feel the mighty head thrashing and occasionally a huge tail slaps the surface as I pile on as much pressure as possible with the wee rod. I work him over to the centre of the river

several times, but he just cruises back under the shadows. By now my legs are trembling and as he sulks I unsling the net and turn the head torch on. Applying as much side strain as I dare, I eventually haul him over to my side of the river and reach for the net. I can see the whole length of his wide body as he rolls over, then the golden sides and big black spots on his flanks; he must be almost double figures, the net may not be big enough. Suddenly he bolts upstream but I can't follow him. The line peels off the reel once again but this time I can't keep up and, as I apply pressure to slow him, he gives a savage head shake and straightens the hook leaving me shaken and with a mix of emotions coursing through my head. All I wanted was a photo I tell myself, but it's not to be. In my mind I can hear Jim and Derek saying don't use lighter tackle, 'there be monsters here,' but each to his own and I'd rather have quantity than quality if fishing time is limited, I'd just have to take my loss on the chin.

I reel in the slack line and lifting the net I climb up on to the bank, set down the rod on the bench and smoke the rest of my cigar. The bell of the Antrim church chimes two AM as I reflect on the nights sport. The disappointment of losing the big fish soon passes; it's good enough to know they're there and come November they'll be on the redds, two thousand ova per pound of trout so it goes to show how valuable the big hen fish are to the system. The Castle Grounds and Deerpark bridge are beautiful bathed in the light of the full

moon. While the rest of the world sleeps I have this place to myself and I am enjoying it, the stresses and strains of modern life, the hustle and bustle seem a long way from here at this moment. Overhead a skein of migrating geese honk in the starlit sky, a sure sign that winter is coming and with that I get back to the river. By the time the old church bell rings out three chimes I have three more lovely dollaghan, keeping a small one for the table. It's time to go and as I crunch up over the old Deerpark Bridge a familiar sound comes from under the arches, as a couple of otters whistle and gambol on the grassy bank that I'd just left. It's not hard to imagine why this form of angling is so addictive, there's so much more to fishing than just catching fish, especially on a beautiful river lit by an autumnal full moon.

FOOTNOTE:

It's hard to imagine that in 2008 the Six Mile Water was almost destroyed by a huge pollution incident, ten years later it's got an abundance of wildlife, the Antrim & District, Ballynure angling clubs and Six Mile Water Trust have worked tirelessly to reduce pollution and predation, improve habitats, conserve the spawning stock and work with government organisations such as NIEA, Rivers Agency, Dept of Agriculture, N I Water and of course AFBI and DCAL Fisheries. We owe a great deal to Richard Kennedy and John Kane who have given much of their own time to



help and advise on habitat improvement and carried out numerous surveys. We aim to provide abundant recruitment of dollaghan to Lough Neagh to provide a stable commercial fishery (with the decline of eels) and a constantly improving rod fishery. This season we have installed transmitters into numerous large dollaghan which will be logged by receiving devices along the length of the river and in Lough Neagh itself, this fascinating project will give information as to migration and feeding patterns of the iconic species. The improvement of the Six Mile Water is not restricted to dollaghan of course; otters, kingfishers, herons, wagtails, mallards, dippers etc. are now all common along it's banks and are seen as environmental indicators of improving water quality.

When we see the great abundance of dollaghan on the Six Mile Water which historically was never a great river for the species it makes one wonder what could be achieved with those rivers which were traditionally the great dollaghan rivers, the Moyola, Ballinderry, Maine, Blackwater. If a small stream like the Six Mile can attract these numbers of dollaghan, then the potential for these larger rivers must be huge, so could our fisheries authorities, Rivers Agency, NIEA and angling interests put together a management plan to improve these catchments, especially as the targets of the Water Framework Directive appear to have failed so spectacularly. Would it not be better to have a combined action plan so everyone is communicating and supporting each other? I know that's not how things work in Northern Ireland but maybe it's time for a change, it's an investment in our environmental heritage, it's what should be happening, the angling potential for these larger rivers could be spectacular!

> I eased out the goldhead and slipped the fish back.

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Winter trout fishing

Punching a line out across the wind.

The traditional trout season ends during September, depending on the region there are slight differences but between the 16th in the south and the 30th further north. The close season was set to preserve the spawning period and to give the trout a chance to regain their strength again before fishing resumed in the spring during March.

With the advent of sterilised, triploid trout that cannot spawn if they wanted to being stocked the traditional close season has less importance on stocked stillwaters. Many fly fishing clubs have trout waters which are open throughout the winter, with a catch and release policy for brown trout to protect any wild fish that might be caught inadvertently. This is the policy my own club work to, with some waters better suited to winter fishing kept open.

Fly fishing in the winter can be a test of endurance, as much as fishing skill. With a biting north easterly blowing creating a wind chill well below that of the water temperature, there are times when ice forms in the rings and the line becomes as stiff as wire. The trout will be snug though, sitting at a depth where the water is a comfortable temperature. Nature is a wonderful thing and water has special properties to enable it to defy physics. You see water density is greatest at 4 degrees C, that is why ice floats. The warmer water, being denser, sinks creating a warm layer of water away from the effects of the wind chill on the surface. This is the depth at which the trout will be found.

A fully finned, beautifully conditioned trout makes those blanks worthwhile

On a glorious winter's day, with a clear blue sky and bright, albeit low, sunshine it is wonderful to be able to take advantage of these waters. It provides a fishing opportunity when the rivers are unfishable for the grayling in some waters and keep the trout angler fishing. It isn't easy though and requires a dedication that many 'bag' anglers are lacking, because you may go four or five days without so much as a touch. But when you do finally get a fully finned, beautifully conditioned trout it makes those blanks worthwhile. This fishing isn't about quantity, it is about quality and savouring those moments when perseverance pays off.

With the fish down in the water. I chose to use my saltwater rod, an 8weight, with the Cortland Ghost Tip line, which is a floating line that has 15 feet of clear intermediate sink tip. It is an awesome line that has stood the test of time, it must at least 10 years old if not 12 and been used extensively. In the still water it gets down to about 10 feet with a weighted fly, so is ideal for exploring the top layers. I added a 12 foot leader ending in 6lb tippet for both the point and dropper flies. Normally I would use a 6-weight for trout, but it pays not to go under gunned at this time of year because casting in a stiff breeze is much easier with the heavier outfit.

I had met my fishing friend, Jim, at the lake side and we set off around the bank to fish the deeper side. The wind was blowing hard down the lake from left to right, so that helped. My fly choices were a slightly weighted small damsel on the dropper and a red beaded Diawl bach on the point, both on size 12 hooks. Jim was putting his faith in black buzzer patterns that work at this water. We lined up about 30 yards apart and started to cover the water systematically, starting fairly close in.

An old sage once told me, never neglect

the near water and I have used this advice ever since, carefully casting close and gradually extending my range.

Jim was working the edge of the drop off and allowing his flies to swing round in the breeze, so they were being presented naturally by the wind and just inching them back very slowly. Damsels



My brown trout as it approached the net.



Safely in! What a great fish in lovely winter condition.

are fairly strong swimmers, so I could afford a slightly faster, twitchy retrieve. As my line was crossing the edge of the drop off I felt a slight tap on the end. A trout had shown interest but not taken the fly, perhaps just bumped it with its nose, or even swum over the line. I hesitated to let the flies fall naturally and the line pulled taught immediately. I held the line with my left hand to set the hook against the weight of the fish, you don't need to strike when fly fishing, just hold tight, the hook only needs about 1 mm to find a good hold.

Through the glare on the water were the unmistakable markings of a lovely brown trout

Straight away I could tell this was a good fish, the line was whipped out through the rings until I was playing the fish off the reel. Being a saltwater outfit, the drag on my reel is as smooth as silk and it purred as this fish shot out into deeper water, taking off at least 10 yards in one strong run. I put some pressure on and kept the rod well bent to maintain a taught line. After two or three more strong surges the fish came into view. Through my polarised lenses I could see through the glare on the water, and the unmistakable markings of a lovely brown trout showed through the clear water. Jim netted it for me and I got him to hold the magnificent fish for me, as working my camera takes a bit of getting used to and I wanted a good picture of this fish. It was just over 4 lbs.

With the landing of that fish we gained extra confidence and all thoughts of cold hands were gone. It is amazing how catching a fish can warm you up! We carried on with renewed effort and went on to catch a couple of rainbows each to the same damsel method. The buzzers weren't doing it. All too soon the sun sinks at this time of year though and as soon as the temperature starts to drop the fish turn off. The best hours are from lunchtime to about 15.00, at which time we packed away, happy with a fabulous afternoon catching just a brace of fish each. Roll on Spring!

The Dramatic Pursuit of the Sun-fish in Irish Waters

This lithograph is reproduced from the following-out frontispiece to Wallop Brabazon's 'The Deep Sea & Coast Fisheries of Ireland,' published in 1848.

he basking shark is the secondlargest living shark in the world, a magnificent creature whose dorsal fin and considerable size initially seems to herald danger and death but in fact it's a placid fish uninterested in using its enormous mouth and highly developed gill rakers and is found in all average basking shark reaches lengths of between 20 to 25 feet and can weigh five to seven tonnes. It has been hunted for centuries throughout the world because it's a source of food, liver oil, animal feed and shark fin. Sadly, it has been overexploited in parts of the world and has either disappeared or has had to be protected. It gets its name because of its habit of feeding at the surface, appearing to be basking in the warmer water there. In Ireland, it was also known as the Sun-fish because the sighting of the fish was associated with bright calm weather when they surfaced, sometimes in large shoals, with the characteristic dorsal and notched tail fins showing dramatically above the water.

There are about 40,000 basking sharks in the world population and significant numbers can be seen along the Atlantic coast of Ireland, from April to August every year. During this time, the Irish coast is one of the best places in Europe to see one of the world's largest sharks. They can be seen from Mizen Head in the south to Malin Head in the north, sometimes just metres from the shore. People who run boat tours often take their boats where the sharks are likely to be and they are big hits with the tourists, especially the children. Basking sharks were almost hunted to extinction for the oil in their liver (which constitutes about 25 per cent of their body size).

Thankfully there's an EU wide ban on hunting them. They are still hunted

by the Japanese and Koreans. Some European countries still also hunt them, illegally. Their dorsal fin is used to make shark fin soup. The current situation in Ireland is far from satisfactory. The Irish Wildlife Trust pointed out a few months ago that the basking shark is not legally protected in Ireland. In fact, at the beginning of 2017, it was announced that the basking shark had been put on a new list of fish at risk of extinction in Irish waters. It was pointed out that while the basking shark isn't fished for commercially in Irish waters, some are still taken as bycatch in fisheries.

The Irish word for basking shark is



Setting off.



A dramatic moment during the hunt. Ainmhí Sheoil (the beast with the sail). There's a place on the south side of the Great Blasket Island in Kerry where shoals congregate called Gleann na bPéist (Valley or Glen of the Sea Serpent). This alludes to the fact that when you see the dorsal and tail fins of a group of basking sharks they are not dissimilar to a long, twisting sea serpent.

The basking shark was hunted in Ireland for at least two centuries. The golden-brown oil extracted from its liver was much in demand and commanded a high price. The oil was exported to London in the 1800s where it was used in the lamps. In 1750, Charles Smith wrote about the practice of hunting basking sharks in Ireland, "The liver affords from twenty to one hundred gallons of oil. They are struck with harpoons and are well worth looking after. Local communities along the west coast not only used the oil for their lamps, they also used the oil to dress wool and preserve timber; and they used it as a soothing balm for skin burns and bruises and an embrocation for the relief of muscular pain. Industrially, the oil was also used for the hardening of cast steel."

Sun-fish oil might also have been used in lighthouse lanterns

As early as 1740, and possibly much before, sun-fish oil was supplied to contractors responsible for maintaining lanterns in the streets of Dublin. Other towns likewise employed sun-fish oil for lighting purposes as shown in the statutes relating to public lighting in Galway and Waterford in 1742. Sun-fish oil might also have been used in lighthouse lanterns, although there is no traceable record of this.

In his excellent 1976 book, "The that the hunting of the basking shark was for a long time "a traditional and Ireland, from Donegal in the north to Cork in the south." The combined hunting of basking sharks and whales about 1760 by Andrew and Thomas Nesbit and there is some indication that this was a moderately successful venture didn't capture very many whales and it seems that the capture of basking sharks provided the economic background that enabled the enterprise to function. However, commercial the exception and it was mostly the farmer-fishermen of the mainland coasts and islands (notably the Claddagh and outlying islands such as the Arans, Inishbofin and Inishark) who accounted for a high percentage of the basking

At the close of the 1700s, Galway had between forty and fifty boats engaged in this activity, though this number was to decline considerably in the following decades. Many of these vessels were open hookers, carvel-built sail-boats ranging in size from six to thirteen tons and carrying a crew of six or eight men. "Large numbers of basking sharks," writes McNally, "were captured by the most haphazard methods from hookers and even small row-boats and curraghs, often at risk to life and limb during long and spectacular struggles far from land. "For many country people the extra income derived from the sale of a basking shark liver could mean the difference between a tolerable existence and near starvation. For the people of the west Connacht seaboard this fishery was so profitable that, as one inspector wrote in the early 1800s, "the poor fellows will risk even their lives to secure one of these fish."

The season for hunting basking shark occurred in April and May because the fish are usually in greatest evidence on the west coast during these months. There could be stark differences between the numbers of sharks visiting the coast from one year to another. Some seasons only a handful of sharks were spotted; other seasons as many as a thousand were seen. The sharks were sometimes seen in shallow inshore waters of the west coast and sometimes in secluded bays, but the majority of them congregated in great shoals a considerable distance from land.

The 'sun-fish bank' was six or seven leagues westward of Inisbofin

An observer in 1821 wrote that the Aran boatmen "go great distances in the Atlantic in pursuit of the basking shark, called sun-fish." These fishermen, along with fishermen from other districts, often ventured out to what was called the sun-fish bank, the location of which was indicated on a number of nineteenth century sea charts. This bank was described as being "six or seven leagues



A basking shark hunt near the Aran Islands during the 1930s. These men are hunting the basking shark in the traditional way using a harpoon and line.

westward of Inisbofin, extending from near Slyne Head (County Galway) to the westward of Achill Head, in thirty to four fathoms of water."

Another 19th century writer said the sun-fish bank "is remarkable for the break of the tide on it, with ebb and flood, and is supposed to be a ridge of land extending from the Blaskets to Erris Head in about seventy fathoms." Fishermen said it was about a day's sail from the coast. "But even this distance," writes McNally, "had little dampening effect on the optimism and boldness of crews who, more often than not, illequipped and with only instinct to guide them, undertook the long journey to the bank and the arduous return home after



Notice the angle of the boat in this photograph.

securing the liver of a sun-fish.

In favourable conditions the scene in the vicinity of the bank must have been one of remarkable energy and spectacle. Dutton, for example, recounts that the Galway and Connemara boats killed between one hundred and two hundred sun-fish there on 4 and 5 May, 1815. Thomas F Brady underlined the rigours of this occupation and gave instances of fishermen going without food for twenty-four hours at a stretch....it was in a sense a test of manhood; as a folk tale from County Galway states, 'a boatman was little esteemed long ago until he had spent a season or two at the Sunfish Bank'." During the second half of the 19th century crews stopped going out to the bank, preferring to wait instead until the sharks were observed near the coast.

If the shark dived it could easily pull a medium-sized boat under

The essential equipment for the fishermen included harpoon and line. Harpoons consisted of an iron rod of half an inch diameter, four and a half feet long, bearing a pivoting blade-cumbarb which opened out at right angles to the shank when it pierced the fish. The rod and blade-cum-barb were attached to a wooden handle six feet long. The wooden handle had two fixed loops through which the line ran freely after the harpoon had been thrown or thrust. Harpooners sometimes threw their preferred method was to get up beside the fish and thrust in the harpoon. Most harpooners avoided piercing the shoulder area of the fish but aimed lower down, near the dorsal fin. After being struck the fish could carry out up struggle could last for ten hours or more before finally the shark would allow itself to be drawn to the surface and lanced. During the struggle it was coiled in the bows of the boat. When the shark dived it could easily pull a reason a crewman stood ready to cut the line with a hatchet in the event of a mishap. "Notwithstanding these known fishermen went after sun-fish in the most negligent manner and paid little heed to even basic maintenance of their gear." Immediately following a kill, the carcase of the shark was turned belly grapples and lashed fore-and-aft alongside the boat.

The sun-fish oil industry was in decline by the 1830s and the number of sun-fish hunts greatly declined over the subsequent decades. A report on the state of the Irish sea coast fisheries in 1872 revealed that "the fine first-class hookers that followed the capture of the sun-fish, or basking shark, in the months of April and May, are now nowhere seen." Despite this, some sunfish hunting was still going on. One of these hunts, on May 25, 1873 resulted in a tragedy, when five men from Inishark were drowned when their boat capsized.

In the 1930s the American film maker Robert J Flaherty vividly recreated the drama of the traditional sun-fish hunt in his evocative film "Man of Aran", which accurately reflected a past way of life. Also during the 1930s basking sharks became much more numerous in British and Irish waters. This result in a sun-fish industry being established in the Firth of Clyde in Scotland which developed into a productive local industry in the post war years. Gavin Maxwell, the famous author of "Harpoon at a venture" and "Ring of bright water," became involved with the sun-fish industry in the years after the war. However, for various reasons none of these ventures lasted more than a few years.

In 1947 a couple of men, WJ Sweeney and Charles Osborne, set up a base on Achill Island for hunting the basking shark. Their method of capture adopted at the outset was basically the same as that employed by Gavin Maxwell in Scotland, namely, a heavy steel harpoon and line fired from a whaling gun mounted in the bow of a



The Shark has been netted and one of the men is about to harpoon it.

fishing boat. Sometimes the harpoon head was modified to carry an explosive charge intended to kill or stun the shark on impact. They also killed the sharks by wrapping nets around the gill-slits, thus suffocating the fish. The Achill Island fishermen would kill the netted fish with a lance in order to keep the damage to the net to as low a level as possible. This Achill Island fishery was at its height during the 1950s. It filled a gap because it coincided with an acute shortage of industrial oil after the war.

Estimates put the likely total of sharks taken at several thousand annually

McNally tells us that the Achill Island fishery was still going in the mid 1970s and had been joined by a fishery in Dunmore East, County Waterford. However the industry was experiencing the problem of much reduced catches. Some people were blaming Norwegian shark hunters for this. "Norwegian shark hunters," wrote McNally in 1976, "have been active in and around Irish territorial waters for a number of years, tracking the shoals over a wide area and barrelling the livers at sea. No accurate returns of catches are available for comparison, but estimates put the likely total of sharks taken at several thousand annually. This scale of hunting must therefore have a detrimental, possibly irrevocable, effect on local stocks of fish."

It's been estimated that, at its peak, the Achill Island fishery was the world's largest basking shark fishery and caught a total of 9,000 individuals between 1950 and 1964. The last records of target fishing of basking sharks in Irish and EU waters occurred in 2006 and were undertaken by ships from the Norwegian whaling fleet.

Countryside Act Basking sharks are protected from capture and disturbance and the least the government could do would be to introduce measures which would reduce the chances of the fish being taken as a by-catch. Whilst the picturesque and dramatic and the men practical reason for pursuing these magnificent creatures has long since conscientious governments to introduce appropriate legislation to reflect this by-catch include modifying fishing gear or changing where, when and how people fish. Government agencies responsible for fisheries and the marine environment can provide incentives and resources to undertake research and various trials to reduce and prevent by-

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This year Irish Country Sports and Country Life Magazine was invited to accompany the group on the trip to Swarovski's HQ in Absam, near Innsbruck in the Austrian Alps. The event was a perfectly balanced mixture of training, learning about the ethos and values of the company and gaining an insight into the manufacture of their products. Dealer networking, sightseeing and generous entertainment completed the experience.

The diverse group of dealers included, Sporting Firearms and Fishing outlets such as York Guns, Ian Hodge Shooting and Field Sports, the Glasgow Angling Centre, Optical Department Managers from Harrods and Selfridges, Bird Watching Tour operators, Ecological Estate Managers, the BASC training officer and Camera Stores. The group was welcomed in Heathrow airport by Peter Antoniou, Swarovski's UK Country Manager and his personal assistant Christine Percy, before travelling to Munich and then on to the spectacularly charming Hotel Speckbacher in Gnadelwald.

Swarovski's head of training, Daniel Muehlmann, welcomed everybody to the factory and presented a very busy day one itinerary, including a review of Swarovski Products, followed by presentations on Binoculars and Rifle scopes for the field sports outlets, while the Birders and Ecologists concentrated on the extensive range of telescopes, tripods and digi-scoping equipment. I had the unique opportunity to try out a Swarovski Rifle scope and binoculars in the field having been invited to hunt Chamois in the mountains above Gadenwald. More about that later.

Pursuit of excellence is key

The afternoon session commenced with a technical training module delivered by Daniel Muelhmann, covering lens design, lens coatings, light transmission versus contrast and colour fidelity and the need for absolute precision in the production process. This led the group on to a tour of the factory which started with a look into the Swarovski apprentice training school and workshops. Here we discovered that the pursuit of excellence is the key aim of the company and that the trainees must achieve the highest standards in quality and precision to graduate from the school in their chosen area of either optics or mechanics. We

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Trying out the Swarovski range of telescopes.

were shown examples of their test pieces which included fully working and very ornate clocks manufactured from raw materials and beautiful decorative glass sculptures constructed from precision hand ground and polished components.

Some of the lens production tolerances were mind blowing, 1/1000th of a millimetre, being the most impressive. We were shown some of the manufacturing and testing processes that ensure that all optical instruments meet the robustness standards that Swarovski is so well known for.

I was not surprised by this as I witnessed a fellow stalker drive off recently having left his Swarovski binoculars on the roof of his open back 4 X 4. He heard the binos hit the floor behind the cab and then saw them bounce out onto the road in his mirror and cartwheel several times down the road. He thought that was the end of his uninsured £2000 investment. On picking them up he found only a small dent in the plastic casing around one of the front lenses but no breakage of lenses or mechanics and in perfect working order.

The tour ended with a visit to their reclamation plant where they recover as much material from the manufacturing process for recycling. The final factorybased event for the day was a visit to the factory's high tech, underground firing range for a chance to use a Swarovski rifle scope under live firing conditions. We were each allowed 3 shots at a Chamois target at 100 metres. The clarity and crispness of the image when viewed through the scope was immediately apparent. I had the same reaction when I viewed a real Chamois through a Swarovski scope next morning.

The Excitement of the Hunt

The Chamois is described as a goat

antelope, males can weigh in at up to 50 kg and females up to 42KG. Both sexes have straight horns with a pronounced curl to the rear at the top. They are native to the Alps and spend a lot of their time foraging on the upper stony screes where they scrape for small grasses amongst the stones.

The hunt commenced before sunrise, when I was picked up by Swarovski's professional hunter Albert Unterberger and his dog Ciara in his small 4X4. Our route to the hunting grounds began with a long and at times hair raising climb using a very narrow road which originally served salt mines.

As we climbed ever higher the road rapidly deteriorated to a rocky boulderstrewn track, skilfully navigated by Albert bringing us to a halt in daylight above the tree line at about 1500 m. The highest summit in the area is Mount Hunskoph at 2243 m. The views were spectacular, and it was a challenge to take in just how vast this alpine mountain range is.

Before we started our trek upwards Albert familiarised me with his rifle, an Austrian made TITAN .270 by Robler which is equipped with a set trigger which needed to be pushed forward before firing. As soon as I was happy with the operation of the safety catch we were off in full stalking mode, Integral magazine loaded with cartridges and



Our base was the Hotel Specbacher.



Absolute precision in the production process.

bolt closed on an empty chamber. We regularly stopped as we continued to ascend the mountain to glass the apparently barren grey screes and rocks. Albert soon spotted some Chamois close by which he was not inclined to stalk. It was good to take a little time to study our quarry animals which I had only seen in books before. One was perched high on some rocks surveying the landscape and oblivious to us and the potential danger we posed to him. As soon as we moved off he was away in the blink of an eye.

Swarovski EL binoculars first, then a high-powered Swarovski Spotting scope

Having spotted Chamois, stealth and movement becomes very deliberate as we picked our way silently over the rocky surface, making great use of the available cover of low shrubs scattered amongst the rocks. I follow Albert's lead, only setting the steel tipped stick he had given me down on any convenient patch of vegetation to avoid rattling the stones. We climb higher with every step, often observing more Chamois on distant slopes. Albert with Ciara by his side, glassing first with his Swarovski EL binoculars and then taking a closer look using his highpowered Swarovski Spotting scope. Once again, nothing suitable is spotted and we move on, but contouring this time, picking our way through some more low scrub. Albert pauses, and things seem different this time; he slowly drops to one knee and motions Ciara to his side. He looks back towards me and seeing me already crouched in cover nods his approval. His body language is clear, as he carefully glasses a small group of Chamois feeding on a steep slope ahead, slightly above us: we have a suitable beast!

Albert deftly adjusts some rocks to make a rest for the rifle and I see him draw the bolt back and loading a round into the breech. Before setting up the rifle he motions me to crawl to him. Albert comes close to my ear to whisper his instructions – three chamois, two together and one slightly up hill from them. I must take the one in the middle.

Taking hold of the rifle I feel the excitement rise within me as I slowly move the rifle up and get my first look through the rifle scope at the three animals. Range I estimate at 100 m (actually 127.5 m according to Albert's range finder binoculars) All three are nibbling and moving as they look for their next bite, but I fix on the selected beast and line her up in the cross hairs.

I suddenly remember 'set trigger!' Thumb behind trigger and push forward, but my target has moved and presents a quartering shot. I must wait and control my breathing, finger poised, away from the hair trigger, I do not want to fire unintentionally. The chamois is clear in the scope and I can see her blink as she chews her last bite. With one step she is perfectly broad side. Now is the time. I close my finger to the trigger and instantly feel the



Chamois mother and calf far below.



My professional guide surveys the Alpine slopes for Chamois.

recoil and was totally unaware of my finger making contact with the trigger. Through the scope I see the chamois react to the strike and take two faltering steps before collapsing into a slow roll downhill, before coming to rest on the scree. I feel the instant relief of knowing that the shot was good and the despatch of the chamois was swift and painless.

I receive Albert's congratulatory pat on the back and handshake with humility, recognising that it was his skill and effort that had made the shot possible and I was glad not to have let him down. This was later followed by a surprise phone call from Carina Schiesel, CEO Swarovski to congratulate myself and Albert on a successful hunt.

Cloud below us as we descend

As hunting experiences go, this has to rate highly as one of my most enjoyable, it was most definitely my highest altitude hunt to date and it was a privilege to have the opportunity to hunt in the Alps. The Chamois was quickly gralloched and loaded into the Austrian version of a roe sack which Albert slung onto his back leaving me to carry the rifle. We retraced our steps back down to the mountain to the $4 \ge 4$ giving me time to appreciate the grandeur of the mountains to marvel at the clouds below us as we descended. I was dropped off at the factory to join up again with the group just in time for the factory tour and the shooting competition, which by

the way was won by Mr Girish Surlekar, Senior Sales Consultant at Harrods Photographic, demonstrating that he is as good with a rifle as he is shooting with his cameras.

The 2018 Swarovski Dealer event was warmly rounded off with an evening of traditional Austrian food, folk dancing which involved music, axes, hammers, fireworks, lederhosen, lots of thigh slapping and endless laughter. The grand finale to the event was a visit to the ancient city of Innsbruck next day and a funicular railway and cable car ride to the top of Hafelekar Mountain.

This was a great assignment and I am most grateful to have been given the opportunity by Swarovski to join particularly this dealers group who made me feel most welcome through out the event. I think I can speak on behalf of the whole group in thanking Peter and Christine for a wonderful experience and a great programme brilliantly managed.

Kit Box

Rifle - TITAN .270 by Robler Binoculars – Swarovski EL Range 8 x 42 Spotting Scope – Swarovski CTC 30 x 75



The Author with his Chamois - the tradition of putting a piece of spruce bough into the hunter's hatband identifies the hunter that made the kill. Similarly, a handful of grass in its mouth symbolises its last meal and shows respect for the animal.



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Ulster Golden Retriever Club

1968 – 2018 celebrating the 50th anniversary of the club and the 150th anniversary of the breed.

s the inaugural meeting of the Ulster Golden Retriever Club was held in June 1968 we were pleased to recognise the 50th Anniversary at the Championship Show held on Friday, 28th September 2018 and at two other events - a two day AV Retriever Trial and our Open Show .. The show was held at The Sixmile Leisure Centre, Ballyclare. An excellent entry awaited the Judge Mrs Margaret Henderson (Westervane) who had not only drawn entries from local enthusiasts in Ireland (North and South) but also from England, Scotland, Wales and Spain!

We remember those who founded the club and, on the day, Mr. Everett Massey (Seamourne) one of those founder members was present and we were delighted that he 'cut' the celebration cake prior to sharing with all who attended.

Results from the 50th Anniversary Championship Show:

Best in Show: Ramirez NED CH MAYBE FOREVER THE ONE AND



Three of the founder members at an earlier anniversary: Everett Massey with the late Eva Harkness (Mandingo) and late Lucy Ross (Buidhe). Lucy Ross was the owner of the legendary Int Dual Ch David of Westley.



Judges & Prizewinners Championship Show

(photo: Gail Greig)





Judges & Prizewinners

ONLY MultiJCH - Spain Reserve Best in Show: Wild's SH CH FENWOOD ELL MASTERPIECE AT BLUEWATERS JW

Best Opposite Sex: Bolano's CH GREY GOOSE SEDA Y HIERRO -Spain

Res Bitch CC: Maddison JAYMARDLEY HIDDEN SECRET Best Puppy in Show: Neil & Rose MOLOKO EEZEE TIGER

Best Veteran in Show: Bolano's MULTI CH TOSCANA MOON DE RIA VELA - Spain

Results from the 24 dog stake Glenoo/Drumbanagher, 28th/29th September 2018

Judges G Wilson, G McCutcheon, D Boyle and J Williamson

1st Tony Rodgers: HIGHWALK GALWAY

2nd Michael Corr : DRUMGOOSE ALONSO 3rd Tadhg Kelly: FTCH CARRICKVIEW HOLLY 4th John Bar: FTCH DERRYAD MOSS

COM: Billy Lundy: INT FTCH DRUMGOOSE WARLORD; Davy Beattie: APOLLOBAY ENDURANCE; Jim Carnegie: ROSENALLIS ENZO Results from the UGRC Open Show 8 September 2018 Newtownards

Judge Albert Titterington (Ruadth) It was a pleasure to act as a replacement judge for Glynis Massey at the club show held in association with the Bangor Championship Show in a super venue at Ards Airfield.

Veteran D or B: 1.Byers IR SH CH HAVERGROVE INTO THE FLAMES AT BALIBEAU.

Puppy Dog or B:1st Murray'sRATHCLOON SHOP TIL U DROP

Novice D or B: 1s ARCHIBALDS ABINVALE MIS DIOR

Open D: 1st Dynes IR SH CH SANDSEERS MAKING WAVES FOR

COM Awards.

CEDARDYNE Limit Bitch: 1st. Murray's SOFT SOUL GIFT FOR RATHCLOON.

Open Bitch: 1.Byers IR SH CH BALIBEAU JACQUITO

Best of Breed: IR SH CH BALIBEAU JACQUITO Best OS: IR SH CH SANDSEERS

MAKING WAVES FOR CEDARDYNE

Contributions were made to this feature by Alexa Brown (Chair); Geoff Peoples (FT Sec) and Albert Titterington (President)

Publishers note: It is with deep regret the club records the death of our esteemed Vice Chairman Eugene McGregor. He will be sadly missed by the club and indeed by the whole gundog fraternity. Our condolences go to his wife and family. A full obituary will be published in the next edition of the magazine



Federation of Irish Salmon පි Sea Trout Anglers

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FISSTA CLUBS TO ENDORSE SALMON PROGRESS AT AGM IN ATHLONE

Following a very mixed season on most rivers, many of our salmon and sea trout fisheries remain closed or in danger of closure, despite our hopes for improvement. Rivers like the great majestic Feale are consigned to catch and release status while the graph for closed rivers plummets year by year with no plans or actions from IFI to fix the faults.

Thankfully, our appeals to oppose the granting of new fish farm licenses in Bantry Bay have been delayed even further, to the middle of 2019 while the new technological ways of closed contained RAS systems are gathering momentum worldwide. The international pressure on the Norwegian salmon farming industry to eradicate 'open netcage' practices that breed sealice are mounting but more needs to be done.

This year we have met frequently with the members of Government, and Minister Sean Kyne TD in particular, to attempt to get change in the various issues such as opening more rivers, the better distribution of our angling development funding, and in conjunction with TAFI, NARA



Noel Carr, FISSTA's Secretary / PRO

and other like - minded bodies have succeeded in introducing new pike control measures to conserve our wild salmonid habitat.

We represent you, the Irish anglers, your sport and our fish, both at home and on the international stage such as NASCO (in USA last June) where our government claims to be to the forefront in salmon management and where we tell them publicly the exact areas where there is need to do more. Basically, we have won the arguments on scientific, business, jobs and sustainability, but there is no serious plan to conserve and develop our sport - and that is the key theme of our AGM on 25th of November in Athlone.

Along with these major issues, the protection of our stocks have taken a huge hit in their migration out of our lice infested bays, in the feeding grounds and on their return to our natal rivers. On all three areas of the habitat there has been only hand wringing by the state claiming these are climatic problems and outside our territorial limits to take any action as if there was a solution being proposed. You may remember, the passing of Orri Vigfusson in July 2017 left our Federation and colleagues in NASF in a very uncertain position for our salmon. There was much speculation on whether the Faroes agreement that protect our Irish salmon in their feeding grounds could be renewed. We needed urgent cash for this cause, but our Minister Kyne TD refused our urgent request.

But thankfully, and despite our failure to secure an urgent statutory donation to NASF, the negotiations resumed and progressed and a good contract was agreed on our behalf by ASF and NASF on May 20th last. We are indebted and acknowledge their generosity of 'ponying up' the cash in the meantime, as we are long established colleagues and fellow NGOs at NASCO since 1991.

We have raised serious angling issues with IFI, in

particular the taking of our Gweebarra waters which is the matter of a court case which we hope will conclude soon, (now in in the twelfth year). However, we are very concerned with what we consider to be the unfair way our funding process is being awarded and administered under the NSAD -National Strategy for Angling Development and the Conservation Stamp Fund. Despite such issues being aired privately and publicly with the IFI executive we are making very little progress, but we will persist until these issues are resolved.

There is much to discuss with particular focus on our campaign to convince a stronger IFI to up their game and fight harder for our fish by getting more rivers opened instead of closing pattern that continues each season.

Angling clubs have spoken for the need for us all to stand up and fight for our stocks and the FISSTA AGM is where the pilgrimage starts every year. We will have a full report of our tactical plans and other debates in the next issue.

NSAD FUNDING FOR HABITAT SCHEMES HAS GONE BELLY UP

We and the anglers of Ireland are indebted to this magazine for carrying our critique of the Inland Fisheries Ireland management of their affairs, and in particular their funding of our habitat enhancement programmes which many rivers and clubs have given up on, and, as has been said by some, it appears to be a bureaucratic mess and a waste of voluntary time.

Frustration spilled over at the

recent Galway Fly Fair, where many angry anglers were handing out leaflets to one and all, frustrated at what is happening to our fishing. Their leaflet was signed by the Boyne Anglers Association who were measured in their criticism of IFI spending €245,000 on six animators to assess grant funding instead of releasing it into the river works nationwide. Out of kindness, perhaps, they probably did not embarrass them any further, or otherwise they could have mentioned that it appears IFI had agreed to pay a whopping €300,000 out of our various funds so that another economic survey could tell them what FISSTA and the anglers of Ireland know too well from the TDI report in 2013.

Over the Christmas period of 2015 FISSTA had to submit their views in response to a public consultation for the then new National Salmon Angling Development (NSAD) in which we noted our note our comment on the four IFI goals as follows:

Goal 1: "To improve the protection and conservation of the resource"

FAILED – FISSTA claim that the failure to make a case for more funding based on the new €750m angling value, compared to the IFI valuation of €150m approximately explains why our protection and conservation of the resource has not improved but diminished greatly. The expertise is within the Department to analyse this professionally.

Goal 2: "To develop and improve wild fish populations"

FAILED – FISSTA claim that the failure to protect our wild migrating smolts from sea liced salmon farmed cages in our estuaries explains why our wild salmon and sea trout populations have continued to decline.

Goal 3: "To have more anglers"

FAILED – FISSTA claim that the policy to reject partnership and to prosecute local anglers in the Gweebarra case has alienated clubs and prevented them from supporting the IFI staff and many as a result have given up angling in disgust as recorded in the decline in salmon licenses over the years.

Goal 4: "To generate a better return for Ireland from the resource"

FAILED – FISSTA claim that the failure to increase the national income from angling has cost the state billions of euro in lost revenue from overseas anglers. Again, the failure of IFI to engage with anglers and especially FISSTA means that the lessons are ignored and the loss to the state continues.

We note that as usual this and other submissions received will not be responded to on an individual basis with the now familiar proviso that 'they will be taken into consideration by IFI in its final report.' This very rarely happens as anglers, the main stakeholders who contribute more voluntary time and funds to IFI fisheries, are quite simply ignored.

DONEGAL ANGLERS PROTESTED AT THE LAUNCH OF MINISTER JOE MCHUGH CATCHMENT MANAGEMENT PLAN IN CLOGHANEELY

FISSTA DONEGAL HAVE CRITICISED THE PLAN. THEY FEEL IT MUST

ACKNOWLEDGE THE 'DESTRUCTION BEYOND REPAIR' OF THE WILD SALMON HABITAT ON THE TULLAGHBEGLEY RIVER AND PARTICULARLY LOCH ALTAN.

The County Donegal Branch of Federation of Irish Salmon and Seatrout Anglers (FISSTA) have protested to Minister Joe Mc Hugh and Minister Sean Kyne TD regarding the announcement by Cloughaneely Angling Association (CAA) to publish a Catchment Management Plan 'to try and invigorate the local economy in a sustainable and environmentally friendly manner.'

FISSTA, who have the support of almost all the Donegal angling clubs under the Donegal Game Anglers Federation (DGAF), have seen this launch as a new found concern by the local Angling Association who they claim have presided over the destruction of that fishery comprising of the rivers Ray and Tullaghobegley. For many years past, the DGAF and FISSTA have highlighted the destruction of the river and lakes due to industrial smolt farming with extractions of fresh water from Loch Altan appearing to leave the habitat damaged and possibly beyond repair.

The DGAF have been locked in legal battles with Inland Fisheries Ireland (formerly Northern Regional Fisheries Board since 2010) over the attempted takeover of the Gweebarra River since 2006 and the conclusion of this case is imminent in the courts. In 2009, Cloghaneely Angling Association entered into a formal agreement with the Northern Regional Fisheries Board, which appeared to deflect attention from the DGAF fight for their angling rights on the many rivers that were marked for takeover under their blue book plan.

'We have protested to Donegal Minister Joe McHugh who formally was to launch the plan last month with Marine Harvest and other state bodies in supportive attendance which include Inland Fisheries Ireland, the Rivers Trust, Údarás na Gaeltachta, Donegal County Council, Irish Water, LAWCO, National Parks and Wildlife Service, BirdWatch Ireland, Irish Natura and Hill Farmers Association, the local Tourist and Traders Association and local landowners - many of whom have no knowledge of the history of this dispute and who do not wish to become embroiled in it.'

GOVERNMENT LACKS NEW INITIATIVES FOR WILD ATLANTIC SALMON AT SEA

Every spring, the Irish Government lodges a Progress Report on Actions taken under their wild salmon Implementation Plan for it to be scrutinised at the international NASCO meeting, which FISSTA attends as an accredited NGO since its formation thirty years ago. The week long meeting last June was held in Maine, USA and, while the agenda was by far the most important one to date, our Federation were the only Irish representatives that were present to hold our government to account on the various issues

raised in their Annual Progress Report (APR) under a series of questions standardised for every country to answer. Question 1.2 on page 1 asked them to "describe any major new initiatives or achievements for salmon conservation and management that you wish to highlight." The Irish Government's answer has been the same for years and once again the reply is "No new initiatives."

Therein lies our problems and you can read Report CNL(18)31 on pdf at:

http://www.nasco.int/pdf/201 8%20papers/APRs/CNL_18_31 APR %20EU Ireland.pdf

Our Federation appreciates the very positive messages and feedback from all Inshore Ireland readers to this column in the last edition, that reported the deal that was secured by our wild salmon NGOs in the North Atlantic to protect our wild salmon in their feeding grounds, thus increasing returning stock for spawning in our natal rivers.

Well, thankfully, the new version of NASF (post Orri) achieved this great success in such a short period of months and thankfully did not have wait for Irish (both north and south) Ministers' funds to do a deal that secures the future of our wild salmon for two generations, or twelve years in the Greenland case. But the buyout money for future years must be found soon, as Ireland must acknowledge our responsibility in what is the best deal for Irish salmon for years. FISSTA will, as founding members of NASF in 1991, as always, continue to raise their contribution to the present funding drive to meet the deal commitments.

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Contacts:

Marcus O'Halloran M: 087 167 0830

> Barbara Killeen T: 1890 924 982

Deer Stalking - An Unforgettable Experience

nowing my love for all things field sports and wanting to expand my understanding of conservation, for my 30th birthday this year my husband booked me in for a deer stalking experience in Scotland.

Travelling from home (Northern Ireland), my husband Barry and I set off on the boat from Larne to Cairnryan in the early hours of Friday morning. Staying with our good friends Davy and Annette in Dunragit, we arrived mid morning.

I met my guide, Aaron McGregor, that afternoon for target practice. Aaron lives in Cairnryan, in one of the houses on Cairnryan Estate. He took me to some rough ground, where my friend Davy had the shooting rights. As I was using Aaron's .243, it was important for me to get to grips with his rifle before we went out stalking. Although predominantly a shotgun girl, I have had experiences in Australia hunting Kangaroo, with the saying in Oz 'one shot, one kill,' I knew I would need similar skills for this experience.

Aaron had set up a target just over 100 yards away. He hoped that we would be within this range for a shot



This was my first experience of this hunting tradition.

when we went out. Lying on the ground, trying to control my breathing, I 'squeezed' the trigger – my first tip that Barry my husband had given me, to squeeze rather than pull the trigger to stop any unnecessary movement of the rifle. The shot went off and, making sure the gun was safe, I jumped up to look through the binoculars. To my dismay there was no trace of the bullet. I walked over to the wooden board where the target was pinned to get a closer look and, there it was, to the very right hand side of the board, a mark in the wood where the bullet went in.

My second task from Aaron was to try and get three bullets within a 4-inch circle. I failed quite miserably with my first attempt. I tried again and managed to get the three shots in the 4-inch circle. Aaron had told me that we would be using shooting sticks, so I tried again, this time using the sticks and it seemed that I had finally got my eye in.

Confident with the rifle, that evening Aaron took me to a close-by farm for my first stalking experience. As an experienced stalker I followed his lead, walking across the fields and hills. It was a very calm evening, no rain or wind and the sun had been shining all day. The ground, although hard, was very hilly, with many fences to get over and dikes to cross.

He only shoots what is of benefit to the herd and countryside.

I was busy talking to Aaron, asking him all of the questions I had wanted to find out. How often did he go out stalking? Why he was so passionate about stalking? Had he taken out many ladies before? What he did he do with most of the meat, etc?. Busy finding out everything I wanted to know, it was to my surprise that we shortly spotted Roe



Aaron had set up a target just over 100 yards away.

deer - my belly filled with excitement and nerves. With Aaron's excellent vigilance he was able to spot the deer from about 500 yards away by eye! During the whole experience I was completely mesmerised by Aaron's level of knowledge and sheer skill. After checking with the binoculars, it became apparent that there was a good cull buck in amongst them. Aaron had taught me about the importance of a selective cull - he only shoots what is of benefit to the herd and countryside. As deer have no natural predators, he explained the necessity of selective culling to ensure the overall health of the deer stock - he only shoots what is of benefit to the herd and the natural balance of the countryside.

Identified as an old buck, Aaron had given the go ahead to try and get closer. This was my first sense of the skill of this hunting tradition. We had to keep well out of sight and try to approach the deer within a range I was comfortable to shoot at. Being quiet wouldn't exactly be in my nature, so that was a challenge in itself. As we got closer, we had to be particularly discreet with every breath and footstep. My heart was racing as my body filled with excitement. I began to feel nervous, my time was close, and

this was my opportunity. When we were almost in range, a few does were startled and ran off. We both stopped dead in our tracks and ducked down hiding in the long grass; after waiting a few moments we got back up and the buck remained.

A few steps closer, Aaron had the hunting sticks up, the rifle ready and signalled to me that this was the time. I knew I only had one shot and if I missed by the smallest margin I would have lost out on my chance. Excitement, nerves and pressure all fluttered together in my stomach. Then the doubts started - was I going to make this shot? What if this was my only shot? Everything else around me was a blur. It was the buck and me, and that was it. As I was almost holding my breath on the approach, along with the adrenaline, excitement and anticipation, I tried to control my breathing. Aaron had told me before to take three good breaths in and out, and just after the third to hold and fire. I squeezed the trigger and the buck went straight down.

At first I didn't believe it, I looked at Aaron and he was still. 'He's down, he's down Amanda - great shot,' he called. I didn't believe him and had to see the body before I would be satisfied. He

We stopped dead in our tracks. had fallen on the other side of a dike. Aaron carried the buck over. Without sounding harsh, my first emotion was pride. I'm not a natural rifle shot and to hit a target about the size of my fist, over 100 yards away, with a gun I wasn't used to, I couldn't help but be delighted. Aaron actually laughed at the pure joy on my face.

> Now for the hard part: Aaron got his knife and showed me how to bleed and gralloch the deer, sticking to all the

meat would make to the hunter's family or tribe. The primal part of me wanted the full, true experience and I couldn't resist the temptation to be initiated by this ancient ritual. Aaron wiped two fingers across my cheeks and forehead, smearing the still warm blood across my face, a rite of passage into the hunter's world. That particular deer was going to





Almost certain that a stag was close by. be butchered for the farmer as a thank you for letting us stalk his ground. That evening, I relived the entire experience to Barry and Davy. With adrenaline still pumping through my body, I was like a child on Christmas morning; I wanted to relive every second of it again.

The trek was much tougher this time around

Next morning we had an early morning start at 6am. This time we were on the stunning Cairnryan Estate set in 2000 acres of glens, forest and moorlands. With the stalking rights to this estate, today we were on the hunt for a red stag. We followed tracks across the breath-taking Scottish countryside, which was out of this world. High up on the hills, we were surrounded by views of Loch Ryan on one side and a mixture of forestry and moors on the other. The views overlooking Loch Ryan were simply stunning, as it was such a clear day we could see the Isle of Man and Northern Ireland. The trek was much tougher this time around, passing through thick cover, at times on our stomachs crawling under briers, whilst always looking out for signs that deer were close by. This was a true stalking experience, everything was studied and nothing was missed: wind direction, deer tracks, bark stripping, territory

markings, deer droppings and pathways.

With any obvious fresh signs present, we were extra quiet, crouching through the trees and briers. We spotted fresh wallowing marks and knew that there were stags close by. Aaron explained that wallowing was quite a common occurrence during the rut. The stags rolled in the mud, which was often urinated in, to give them a distinct aroma for the hinds.

With a short break for lunch, we went back out in the evening, stalking for a few more hours with no signs of deer. As it was just becoming dark, we crawled along the moors, losing hope for the evening, when just then some hinds came into sight. The adrenaline pumped through my body. We crept closer and were within 100 yards of four hinds that had just come out of the forest. We were certain a stag was close by. Just like that, a young stag bolted out of the forest towards the hinds, then startled, the deer ran off. It was now dark; the day was over.

Unfortunately I didn't get my red stag, but what an experience. I came home with a beautiful buck's head, boiled and bleached, ready for mounting. I learned and experienced so much of this important tradition. Plus, I managed to come away with a 100% kill rate.

The skill involved, benefits of selective culling and the level of control required

There was something very humbling about the whole experience. I always had a doubt in my mind before going, that, when I had the deer in sight and I was ready to take my shot, I might feel guilty and wouldn't be able to pull the trigger. However, I didn't feel any guilt, not because for lack of respect for the animal – as they truly are beautiful, noble and my goodness, they are intelligent. After spending so much time with Aaron the estate stalker, I learnt so much about the importance of his job, the skill involved, the many benefits of selective cull and the huge level of control needed. Aaron educated me on why he does what he does and why he is employed to do it. From controlling the ever-expanding population of deer and protecting our woodlands, to what it brings to the local economy and not to mention that none of the meat is wasted, it all goes to local families or the local game dealer. It is a pity that we hear so many people becoming so pass-remarkable about this historic and skilful tradition. Aaron and every other stalker have a tough job on their hands and one that must be done so that we can continue to enjoy and beautiful wildlife and countryside.

From my personal experience, I couldn't have wished for anything more. The conservation I learned was more than I could have ever read in a book, that feeling of that fresh, fresh air on my face first thing in the morning, plus experiencing the purest views, walks and smells of the loch, hills and forests surrounding me, and making a shot I never thought I would, it all was a truly unforgettable experience and one that I will cherish forever.



The 'smearing' was a traditional rite of passage into the hunter's world.

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A fine show of high pheasants and partridges at the Crookbridge drive.

o what would you rather do: walk or drive? I'm not talking transport here: I'm talking shooting. Would you rather spend the day tramping the woods, fields and moors for a walked-up mixed bag or would you prefer to stand on a peg and have your birds driven over you?

If you are anything like me you will find that a difficult question to answer because both forms of shooting have plenty to commend them. Walking up will give you a bit of exercise, a chance to work your dog, a mixture of different shots and, hopefully, a nice variety in the game bag at the end of the day. On the other hand, the driven day should test you with some difficult, high birds and probably give you a lot more actual shooting. At the beginning of October I was lucky enough to be invited to the Whitfield Estate in Northumberland to join in both a walked-up and a driven day. And as I was using a camera, not a gun, I could be completely objective about the relative merits of each and not worry about my usual appalling kills to cartridge ratio.

Whitfield covers around 16,500 acres of grouse moor, woodland, rough pasture and farmland and is justly famous for showing the highest of high birds for those Guns who can connect with them. This day was organised by Head Keeper Stuart Maughan in conjunction with film-maker and expert shot David Carrie and vintage gun buff and TV pundit Diggory Hadoke. The aim was to highlight the benefits to the countryside that accrue from a well-run shooting estate and to showcase the best of game on a plate. To organise the second objective, chef Tony Binks was preparing a barbecue for when the shooting was over. So: a morning walking-up, and afternoon of driven pheasant and partridge and then a gourmet meal to follow. What's not to like?

I spent the morning with the four Guns who were walking up, Andy Harvey, Nathan Hawkins, Alex Wordsworth and Jordan Gatt. Keepers Roy MacNeil and Neil Jewitt were there to keep everyone right, along with a small team of dogs to get the game flying or running as required. The morning was to be spent hunting through rushy fields and bracken and gorse-filled gullies with pheasant, partridge and rabbit the most likely quarry, then, after lunch the walking Guns would move onto the edge of the moor for a crack at a grouse or two. Add in the chance of ducks from the ponds that are dotted about plus the possibility of snipe, hare and pigeon and you have everything you need for a cracking day's rough shooting.

They sent a nice flush of partridge and pheasant to test the Guns

This early in the season with four months shooting to come there was plenty of game, but although it was only 1st October all the pheasants we saw were well grown with full tails and no intention of hanging around. With the line well spread out across the fields the shooting was very sporting, especially when partridges came swinging back across the wind high above the Guns. The Keepers organised a mini-drive just


Walking up means exercise, a chance to work your dog, different shots and variety in the game bag.

before we paused for lunch, beating through a little game crop alongside a wood and sending a nice flush of partridge and pheasant to test the Guns.

We went back to the meeting point — the Elk's Head in Whitfield – for lunch, then I joined the other Guns for the afternoon's shooting on the Crookbridge drive. We drove along a farm track and then dropped down a steep little brae and parked up on a grassy strip. There were trees still in leaf as a backdrop and a little burn bubbling over the rocks along the valley bottom. Behind the Guns was a steep hill and in front a bracken-covered slope leading up to a fir wood. As the Guns lined out, some very serious looking



Springer Clay brings a hen pheasant to hand.

pickers-up were taking up their positions and four or five stops with flags were climbing the slope in front of us. There was not long to wait before the first couple of partridges came sailing over: high, fast and curling on the breeze. I found a comfortable spot leaning against a dry-stone dyke and thought that if they all fly as well as that, this is going to be a spectacular drive.

In short, they did, and it was. There is an art to showing high birds with ideally a good, steady stream of pheasants and partridges, spread all along the line, with no big flushes and no long pauses between shots. When it works well it is great to watch and even better if you are fortunate enough to be one of the Guns. The drive started steadily and then got properly into its stride with a mixture of partridges and pheasants getting up from the hillside behind the fir plantation and setting their wings for the top of the brae behind the line of Guns, which meant their natural flight-line put them forty or fifty yards above the line. They were challenging to say the least and from what I saw the Guns were well up to the challenge.

It was good to see an old side-by-side in action

As seems to be the norm today, most of the Guns were shooting over-andunder weapons with the exception of



Pickers-up were taking up their positions.

Diggory Hadoke, who was using a sideby-side hammer gun and, I might add, using it to very good effect. Not that many years ago anything other than a side-by-side was frowned upon at many formal shoots, but now the over-andunder is not only accepted, it is pretty much the configuration of choice. Good to see an old side-by-side in action though and I don't suppose the pheasant or partridge in the pattern will have much of an opinion either way.

The horn sounded the end of the drive and the pickers-up did their work while the Guns posed for a team photo,



A mixture of partridges and pheasants came off the hillside.

then it was back to the Elk for that barbecue: and what a barbecue it was. Chef Tony Binks set the tone as I watched him seasoning a dozen or more thick chunks of venison fillet and setting them to sizzle on the grill. The whole meal was based around game from the estate, some simply prepared and cooked, some processed into sausages and burgers, and all of it delicious. Stuart told me that the estate sends most of its game to a local processor who plucks and dresses it so that Guns have the choice of game either oven-ready, or in the feather.

The walking-up Guns arrived back with mallard, teal, grouse, pheasant, partridge, rabbits and a pigeon to hang along the railings: a great mixed bag that was only a hare and a snipe or two short of a full house. They looked more than satisfied with their day's shooting, but then there were no long faces among the driven Guns either.

So, to get back to my original question: to drive or to walk? Having watched both at first hand on a gorgeous autumn day I would say it is an almost impossible choice. Of course, in part the decision will hinge on the depth of your pockets with walked-up shooting costing roughly half as much per bird as a formal driven day. The important thing is surely that we make certain the public understands the part that all field sports play in preserving and enhancing the countryside, in providing healthy, natural meat and keeping up our long-standing right to shoot, to fish and to hunt.



Great to watch and even better if you are one of the Guns.



Gun in action at Crookbridge.



Chef Tony Binks sizzling venison fillets on the barbecue.



F3

Mythical Adventures



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Photography Credit: Tweed Media

Hunting in Russia

wo years ago, Steve Hornady and I booked to hunt mid Caucasian tur in Russia. It had long been an ambition to hunt with Steve. I've known him for some eight years and he has inspired many of my high-altitude adventures to date. This would be my first trip with him. We postponed. As Steve blithely put it: "I bought a new hip and had my orthopaedist fit it for me." So, now with a new hip, Steve was keen to give his new hip a mountain work out – remarkable given he would be turning 69 in a few short weeks.

We were eager to get going once we arrived to Mineralnye Vody, just north of Georgia. No fewer than six checks had been performed on my rifle from home to my destination, with endless scrutiny and stamping of documents. Hoping to get some rest before what was sure to be a tough journey to camp, it was a relief to hear that we'd be spending a night in the town. We breathed a sigh of relief, and waited to be shown to our beds, only for a sudden change in plans to shatter our hopes. Herded into a vehicle, it wasn't entirely clear what was going on. We trundled away through the dark streets of the town, stopping once in a back alley to hand over our passports to a figure shrouded in darkness. It didn't fill us with confidence, but Steve reassured me this was completely normal having hunted in Russia many times before. What choice did I have?

Through the night and the darkness, we drove south towards the Caucasus, finally stopping at five am. The light was just beginning to show us what we'd be up against, and it looked promising. Verdant hills surrounded us, with distant, more interesting peaks glimpsing through the early morning cloud. Finally, we were granted a few short hours of sleep, before zeroing rifles, sorting gear, and stripping our luggage to the minimum for the steep climb ahead. Next, we sat with the guides, pouring over maps of the region, looking at promising areas and deciding where we'd set camp for the week, Steve and I agreeing to hunt together despite being told we would have more chance if we split. An experience shared is an experience doubled and all that.

The only respite from the hard saddle came at points too steep for the horses

Under cover of darkness the following morning, we hoisted

ourselves on to horses and headed out. The soft curves of the hills that had seemed benevolent the previous day that covered the saddle soon failed to cover the hard iron framework. As we made our way through the green grew ever more scarce and it wasn't long before we were above the treeline, the misty morning thankfully hiding covering some 9 miles and gaining from the hard saddle came at points too steep for the horses, when we'd get off and lead them. Finally, towards the end of the afternoon, we stopped, pitched out tents among the clouds at 9,500 feet and collapsed. It was becoming clear that our guides weren't the sympathetic type – tough and inscrutable, the most common phrase we heard was "come, come, come!". I was in my sleeping bag by 5pm, exhausted – and besides, sitting at the camp fire wasn't an option with the blisters brought on by those saddles, I could only lie or stand.

After a restless night under canvas, sleeping on rocks for both Steve and me, the views of the mountains were refreshing, and the chill in the air better



These were the rocks we were to sleep on.



Our guides weren't the sympathetic type - tough and inscrutable.



Summits where eagles soar.

hang about, Omar and Sasha determined to find us animals as the weather was climbed, I realised I wasn't prepared for this – either physically or mentally. My relatively recent trip to Nepal as much as I normally would before a focus on the task at hand. As anyone sliding beneath us. While I was developed near crippling leg cramp, the determination and persistence was Spartan – and he soldiered on through it. By lunch time, we had gained another 1,500 feet. We stopped briefly and the guides had a master plan of nimbly walking around the other side of the mountain to see if they could push some overlooking on our side. This never works I thought.

We were soon in position and set up, finding a good rest for the rifle and scouting the bowl. If this plan miraculously worked, it would be ideal – the farthest point was 220 yards. We waited and watched, until finally a female tur and one of this year's youngsters ambled into sight followed shortly after by a guides who reappeared over the edge of the bowl. There'd be no easy hunt today. A little disheartened, we headed back down the mountain, desperate to make camp before darkness, for with the sliding scree and steep terrain, you wouldn't want to be walking in the dark.

Steve's cramp returned in the night. He decided to take a day's rest in camp the next day leaving me to head out. The guides showed me little mercy, never stopping for a breather, and one, rather punishing, hour after leaving camp we'd climbed 1,000 foot above camp. It was here that we spotted our



first group, but the scout had seen a more promising prospect in another group, so we decided to try to catch up to them. The mountains loomed above us, their silence only broken by occasional bird's song and my lungs panting on the thin air to keep up. Cliffs and boulders scattered the area, but underfoot we were still struggling with small, loose sharp stones and shale,

which required every ounce of concentration I had.

It wasn't long before the scout confirmed what we had feared – the group had starburst, and we were heading towards nothing. It was back to the first group then, which we hoped would still be in the area. Keeping up with the guides had been hard going uphill, but it was terrifying going down,



The tur's meat would not be wasted.

every step a danger, sending rocks skipping down to the cliffs below. We'd have to drop another 1,000 feet to get into position, the guides said as we took a short breather. Just as we were starting up again, a group of around 17 tur appeared not 80 metres away. They'd been in dead ground and we'd startled them. Chaos ensued: they were all young... no, a mature male had been spotted at the back of the group, I should try for a shot, I shouldn't, it might be our best chance, they were moving. Amidst the gesticulating and rushed words of the guides, I frantically scanned the hard-flat rocky ground for a good rest, but we had just hit a slope with not a single feature other than shale, and there was nothing. The tur was moving and fast, and we needed to decide before they disappeared over the ridge.

We hunters are constantly faced with decisions: whether to take a safe shot or wait, whether it is the right age, the right animal, or whether to wait for a better prospect. It's extraordinary what the brain can process in a matter of



It's clear that for those lucky enough to have hunted in the mountains, passion eclipses sense.

milliseconds, our instinct doing much of the work for us. And, for those hunters who travel for trips, the pressure is immense. It may be the only chance you get, and almost invariably, the guide will be urging you on, and pushing for the pull of a trigger. I had trained and imagined a steady 600 metre shot with a dead-rest and time to consider my bullet path. Instead I had a furore of conflicting thoughts and decisions.

'It's good, it's good, shoot, shoot'!

I saw the male, a large, mature animal, running on a line slightly higher than the rest of the group. "It's good, it's good, shoot, shoot!" the guide was saying as I took my rifle off my shoulder. "Shoot, shoot!" he urged again. I had no time to range the shot myself so called for a range. I knew that by now these animals were a good deal further away than 80m, and I'd need to adjust my shot. Not only that, but even as I lowered myself, I could feel the ground under me shift and my body sliding about on the scree. "Quick, backpack!" I pleaded with the guide. Precious seconds were lost, the guide too keen for me to take the shot to understand what I needed at first. I grabbed the pack, slid myself down, and found the animal in the scope. "Range, range!" I said, trying to keep my breathing calm.

The answer wasn't forthcoming. "How far?!" I asked again. The guides discussed in Russian, while I tracked the animal in my scope, using all my muscles to stop myself sliding down the slope. Finally they answered: 240, no, 260m. I adjusted my aim to compensate for the distance, breathed... and fired. Stones exploded above the moving animal, and it continued in its path, speeding up having been showered with supersonic rocks fragments from my shot. Text book mountain shooting error. I overcompensated for distance, particularly with such an acute angle. I was zeroed dead on at 100m. But the angle and thus the horizontal travel of the bullet meant I needed little or no hold over even with a 200gr projectile. Using the integrated ballistic calculator of the Leica Geovid binos would have told me this, but time had not been on my side to dial or even range the target myself.

I kept tracking the now twice as fast tur, hoping he might stop, while the guide gave ranges. Changing rapidly: 270, 280, 290m. The animal slowed to tackle the ridge to leave our sight. Now or never. It paused for a split second, giving me the chance I needed. At 300m, I had no time to think, only to act, as he was moving again. I now knew I aimed high at 260m, so taking this into account I squeezed the trigger. The rifle and muzzle break boomed. The animal disappeared over the ridge and out of our sight. Had I or hadn't I?

Straightening his arm in the air, he gave a signal - found!

I was sure I'd hit it but after the first missed shot and with no visual confirmation from the guide, I started to worry. The terrain where the tur had been was unbelievably steep, and too dangerous for all but the most experienced scout to get to. We had an agonising wait, watching the scout clamber his way to the cliff top to see if there was any sign and we hoped retrieve a dead animal. As he got to the point at which the tur had been standing, I drew my breath. We could see him peering down over the rocks, straining this way and that. Finally, straightening his arm in the air, he gave a signal. Found.

Where the tur died was too precarious for us to get to. The guide caped off the 100kg animal and had to simply too dangerous to bring it back to wasted. This range was a strong hold for the threatened Eastern Imperial Eagle. We had seen several circling the would make good feeding for many eagles in the area for days to come. An hour later, the guide returned with the unusual looking horns and cape on his back. This looked like it was from spent the day recovering and making camp somewhat more cheerful, with stone seats around the fire. I could and we spent the evening in a jollier frame of mind, spurred on by success. sleep came more easily that night.

The next day dawned and we headed out early, Steve ready for his hunt. It wasn't that the terrain was easier, nor that we were suddenly fitter, but optimism goes a long way to helping when you must climb. There was no reappearance of the cramps for Steve and, after a long day's walking, in the late afternoon, we found a group by the tree line that included a mature male. This time there was breathing space, and a better rest, and Steve took his shot. Unseen, however, was the steep cliff below a ridge, and the animal tumbled down, out of view. By this time, the light was starting to fade and, knowing we had a long descent, there was no option. The guides would have to return for Steve's tur as it was too dangerous to attempt that day.

Steve's tur was found, and we were back among the comforts of home and I was relieved to hear Steve would have a permanent reminder of our hunting is an inspiration for what I hope to achieve. With some 40 mountain hunts under his belt. Steve has hunted no fewer than 20 goats and 26 sheep, most of which different species. As he told me when he shared the news that his tur was recovered, he'd found our Russian trip hard. "I'd say this was the most challenging I've been on – my lungs were okay, but the treacherous terrain was tough. And going downhill that we both had underestimated just what a challenge this would be. We reminisced a little about our hunt, and I asked Steve what had been the best trip he'd ever done. There was no hesitation. "For sure it was a desert expensive. I got drawn there, any mountain hunting that trip started that has cost me a lot!" Steve admits that I'd like to do. I really want to go to Alaska for a huge dahl sheep next." It's have hunted in the mountains, passion as our Russian one... We start our

Mid-Caucasian tur

Found east of Mount El'brus and west of North Osetiya, the mid-Caucasian tur is only found in a small area of Russia. Capra caucasica caucasica stands slightly taller than the true west Cacuasian tur, at 38 to 43in at the shoulder. The black horns are smoother than those of its western cousin, with smaller cross ridges and the tips closer together. The beard is shorter, and the Mid-Caucasian tur has a darker forehead and chest, with a reddish-gray colour to its summer coat. It's similarities are unsurprising – it is thought to be a true naturally occurring cross between the Eastern and Western tur, showing horn characteristics of both. There is a strict licensing system for the tur species in Russia, with 100 licences issued every year, and Profihunt, the company that the hunt was organised through, taking 20 of those. All the licences are for mature males, and with 10 of the licences going to other outfitters, the remainder are used by local hunters. The aim of the licensing is to prevent poaching, which, along with overgrazing of the lower pastures is the biggest threat to these species.

How do you go:

For more information about hunting Mid-Caucasian tur, visit: www.profihunt.com.

Kit Box

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The Tree of Idleness

he Tree of Idleness grows in Bellapais, a little sea-view village perched in the hills behind Turkish North Cyprus' capital city, Kyrenia. This large tree, situated on a street corner is an inclusive feature of a restaurant bearing the same name. In bygone years the area's sole tourist attraction was Bellapais Abbey (or Monastery) built in the 13th century by French monks who were withdrawing from Jerusalem. Originally named Abbaye de la Paix - Abbey of Peace, later Venetian influence quickly shortened it to De la Pais which finally evolved into Bellapais. While always an area of interest for tourist writers Bellapais achieved world-wide attention in 1957 with the publication of Lawrence Durrell's superb book "Bitter Lemons". Many readers will be familiar with "The Durrells", a TV series depicting widowed Mrs. Durrell and family comprising three sons and a daughter who permanently departed Britain for Corfu in the 1930's. Same family!

Lawrence Durrell moved to Cyprus in 1951 planning to find a quiet area where he could write. Within a short period he bought a house in Bellapais. Apart from having animals and grain stored there, it was in good condition and had an unhindered view of Bellapais Abbey from the roof-top patio. One slight drawback was – and is - the extremely steep hill and narrow streets leading to the house.

Back then the road was a dirt track which became a gushing muddy stream during the rainy season. In Bitter Lemons Durrell describes the Cypriot Turkish and Greek locals, their coy attitude towards a stranger in their midst, the daily goings-on in the local bar aptly named the Tree of Idleness. He made many friends sitting around that tree where Turkish coffee, brandy sours and gossip were an integral part of the Bellapais daily routine. A part-time post teaching English in a Kyrenia school helped to supplement his income. Unfortunately armed rebellion during which he was appointed Press Advisor to the Government interrupted Durrell's idyllic life-style. It curtailed his social life in Bellapais as both Greek and Turkish Cypriots were wary of being seen speaking to him - and also shortened his stay there.

Durrell wrote a series of novels based on his civil service experiences during WW2 in Egypt. Other works included further novels, plays and travel articles. After departing Cyprus he published, Bitter Lemons (which won the Duff



Kyrenia Harbour seen from the Castle.



The Tree of Idleness. Cooper Memorial Prize in 1957) describing his experiences - to this day it is widely regarded as a masterpiece. The descriptions of his time in Cyprus from 1951 to 1953 with house buying, wheeling and dealing, locals of all persuasions, scenic locations and restaurants, are superb. In 1962 he was shortlisted for a Nobel Prize in Literature.

The main attraction was always Bellapais

1974 saw the Turkish invasion that divided the island creating a no-go area which was strictly enforced for many years to come. Today Bellapais is mainly populated by Turkish Cypriots, with the Abbey, shops and restaurants open for business. Overall North Cyprus has become quite a tourist attraction. Having read Bitter Lemons twice and been to the South several times, I decided in September that the time had come to go north. So we did, basing ourselves in a comfortable hotel 20 minutes' walk from Kyrenia town centre. During the time there we visited all the main historic areas - Famagusta, Salamis' Roman city, Nicosia, Kyrenia Castle etc – but the main attraction was always Bellapais.





The Turkish Cypriot gentleman and daughter who invited us into their home.

Lawrence Durrell's house in Bellapais.

Just arriving there by taxi was an experience in itself. Negotiating narrow streets, the driver was obliged to stop and engage in verbal contretemps with a gentleman sitting on a chair, blocking the road. Apparently he sits in the sun every day and is constantly unhappy at having to move to the narrow footpath. Classic Durrell material! Everything in Bellapais appears unchanged from the book's descriptions aside from concrete roads and electricity. The Abbey, Tree of Idleness with its restaurant attached, the grocer's around the corner plus a handful of souvenir shops were all there. It was almost mandatory to sit under the Tree of Idleness with tiny cups of Turkish coffee taking in the surroundings, watching the world stroll by. Mention of Durrell's name brought little reaction mainly because most locals today are either of Turkish descent or Turkish immigrants to the

island.

However all were familiar with 'bitter lemons,' immediately pointing to an extremely narrow road nearby. The decision was taken to walk up the hill – climb might be a better description. The further we ascended the steeper it became. Eventually we spotted an elderly gentleman sitting in his front yard and asked if we were near Durrell's house yet. 20 metres more we were assured – and there it was, freshly painted, with a circular plaque over the door stating that Lawrence Durrell lived there from 1951 to 1953. The Abbey and sea views were spectacular.

He had indeed known the author

Beginning the descent, the gentleman asked where we were from, inviting us into the yard to sit for a while, which we gratefully accepted. His wife and



Bellapais Abbey

daughter joined us, followed shortly by a granddaughter who had been shopping in the village. The inevitable offer of Turkish coffee followed and I took the opportunity to ask if he had known Lawrence Durrell. Conversation was difficult due to language problems but we did ascertain that as a child he indeed knew the writer. Later we met a British couple who had a holiday home even higher again. A member of their family had also known Durrell. All was literally downhill after that, mission more or less accomplished.

During our stay in North Cyprus my wife and I spent some time in the historic walled city of Famagusta. A new city has literally sprung up around the old and is open for business, while buildings holed and pockmarked from artillery shelling in 1974 remain fenced off but visible. In Nicosia we walked the Green Line with its barbed wire dividing north from south - again wardamaged buildings are still standing. United Nations, Greek and Turkish military presence is there, discreet and unseen. In 1992 our attempt to cross from Greek Nicosia to the Turkish section failed - 26 years later it was interesting to find that crossing back and forth was a minor formality.

North Cyprus is currently underdeveloped although construction works are becoming a common feature. It's historic, scenic, relaxed and inexpensive with good restaurants and friendly people – well worth seeing. Reading Bitter Lemons in advance might be a good idea. It's an even more interesting read after having been there!

Irish Hunt, Point, Retrieve Results from Robert Doran

RETRIEVING TEST HOPES POINT, MULLINGAR 15/07/18. JUDGES: MR R Doran MR P McAuley



Competitors in the GSP Pointing Test.

Puppy: 1st GWPB Little Meg Mr J Halley / Miss C Phergus 2nd GWPB Sole Survivor Of Slane Mr D Mitchell 3rd GWPB The Park Nuisance Mr G Hurley 4th GSPD Blackstone Boy Mr J Finlass

Novice: 1st GWPB Sole Survivor Of Slane Mr D Mitchell 2nd GSPD Blackstone Bond Mr M Johnson 3rd GSPD Blackstone Boy Mr J Finlass 4th GWPB Little Meg Mr J Halley/Miss C Phergus

Open: 1st GSPD Look At Me Mr P Begley 2nd GWPD Todlachie Black Tarquin Mr R Roberts 3rd GSPD Blackstone Bond Mr M Johnson **DOG SHOW**

Puppy Class: 1stGWPBLittleMeg Miss C Phergus / Mr J Halley2nd GWPBSole Survivor Of

Slane Mr D Mitchell 3rd PP Fab Point Joaninha Voa Voa At Paddockpoint Miss S Moffatt

Best Bitch Class: 1st Brittney Spaniel Patouche Morgana Mr D Gunning 2nd Italian Spinone Ir.Ch Inishstorm Vittoria Miss D Graham

Best Dog Class: 1st GWPD Todlachie Black Tarquin Mr R Roberts



JGSP Pointing Test Judges and Award Winners.

OPEN TRIAL, GLENNOO SPORTS IRELAND 17/09/18 KINDLY SPONSORED BY FEEDWELL DOG FOODS

Judges: Mr R Doran (A), Mr S O Carolan (B)

1st Graded Excellent GWPD Squire Astor Handled By Mr S McManus 2nd Graded V.Good GSPB Aytee Isadora Handled By Mrs L Hustler 3rd Graded V.Good GSPB Aytee Juniper Handled By Mrs L Hustler

OPEN TRIAL, CORRAD SHOT, LISNASKEA 20/10/18 KINDLY SPONSORED BY FEEDWELL DOG FOODS

Judges: Mr J Mc Connell (A), Mr R Behan (B) Mr D Gunning (C) 1st Place Graded Good GWPD Squire Astor H/O Mr Stephen McManus



1st S.McManus and 2nd Mrs L Hustler at Glennoo Open trial.



The Group is pictured at Corrad Shot, Lisnaskea.

Congratulations to Stephen McManus on making his GWP an IR FT Champion

Stephen made Squire Astor an Irish FT Champion with the following awards:

4 Open Stake Firsts including at Glennoo & Corrard ; 4 Seconds, and 1 Third and his show grading Reserve Green Star Dog.



Stephen McManus with IR FT Champion Squire Astor and some of his many awards.



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

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Terrier, Lurcher & Whippet Show Roundup

Man O' War Dog Show and Race Day, 21st July

As usual the whole show from start to finish was run with impeccable organisation. The gods of sun shone all day, with not a hint of rain in sight. The craic was good with plenty of banter and friendship.

Racing Results:

Whippets Gladys and Alex Savage with Murphy

Under 21" Joe Leonard with Rosin Under 23" Lurcher Neil Pinkerton with Dipper

Over 23" Lurcher Lee brooks with Bobby

Under 23" Elite Joe Leonard with Not Scared

Over 23" Elite Michelle Rafferty with Sally/Joe Leonard Blue (Joint 1st)

Bull Cross Mickey Quinn with Haus

Rough Coated Neil Pinkerton with Gunner

Pups Alison Gamble with Ziro

Greyhounds Michelle Rafferty with Sky

Showing Results:

Champion Whippet Mairead Fearon with Jill; Reserve Champion John McStay with Jack

Champion Lurcher Maurice McDowell with Poacher; Reserve Champion Maurice Mc Dowell with Blue (Handled by Neil Pinkerton)

Champion Terrier Conor Quinn with BOB; Reserve Champion Declan Owens with Mink

Champion Strong Dog Tom Barry with Shamgar; Reserve Champion Ethan Barry with Nancy

Champion Bull Cross Neil Pinkerton with Ben; Reserve Champion Cathal Farrell with Turbo

Champion Pup Conor Quinn with Midge; Reserve Champion Michael

Quinn with Elvis

Overall Show Champion and Best in Show Mairead Fearon with Jill Reserve ChampionTom Barry with Shamgar

Congratulations to Mairead and Tom and above winners. This show was run for the Charity 'Cash for Kids,' a charity very close to all our hearts.

Wicklow Terrier, Lurcher and Whippet Club Dog Show and Race Day, Rathnew (David Dickenson's Show, 22nd July Racing results:

Under 23" Joe Leonard's dog Bandit; Joe Leonard's dog Pepsi

Whippet Racing Barry Chambers with Alfie

Mick The Millar Jed Donagh with Lily; Jed Donagh with Beauty

Master Mc Grath

Over 23" Elite David Nolan with Missy

Under 23" Elite Joe Leonard's Bandit

Showing Results:

Champion Whippet Pup Jade Dunphy with Whizz: Jed Donagh with Maisie

Champion Whippet Barry Chambers with Alfie; Mairead Fearon with Jill

Champion Terrier Reece Dunn with Misty; Noel Roche with Scooby

Champion Lurcher Frank Kenny with PJ; David Nolan with Rocky

Champion Pet Nicky Smith with

Judy; Brooke Burn with Jack

Overall Champion and Best in Show Reece Dunn with Misty; Frank Kenny with PJ

All Champion and Reserve Champions in Whippet, Lurcher and Terrier showing at this show, qualify for 5 Nations Champion of Champions at Shanes Castle 2019.

Proceeds form this Charity Dog Show went to Pieta House, who have helped 30,000 people in suicidal distress or engaging in self harm.

Tullylish Working Terrier Club Dog Show and Race Day, 29th July

Simulated Coursing Ian Balfour with Jack; Sean Burke with Milo

Straight Racing Results

Whippets Alec Savage with Murphy; Barry Chambers with Alfie Under 21" Deirdre Mc Coy with

Taylor; Joe Leonard with Scarred Under 23" Joe Leonard with Not

Scarred; Fiona Devlin with Dory

Bull Cross Charlene Rafferty with Red; Lisa Beggs with Cirez; Jamie Lee Mc Kinistry with Socks

Over 23" Lee Brooks with Bobby; Charlene Rafferty with Jet

Overall Final and Master Mc Grath Qualifier Michelle Rafferty with Sally; Charlene Rafferty with Ned; Kirsty Harper with Joker

Showing

Overall Champion Puppy Sean Burke with Fox; Janet Duke with Honey; Charlene Rafferty with Bjorg

Overall Champion Whippet Michael Quinn with Finn; Mairead Fearon with Jill

Overall Champion Lurcher Fiona Devlin with Musty; Maurice Mc Dowell with Poacher

Overall Champion Terrier Martin Mc Donald with Toker; Conor Quinn with BOB

Champion Bull Cross Dwyer Laverty

Champion Strong Dog Tom Barry with Sully

Overall Show Champion and Best in Show Martin McDonald with Toker; Tom Barry with Sully

Northern Ireland Champion of Champions Lurcher Maurice Mc Dowell with Blue; Charlene Rafferty with Red.

Northern Ireland Champion of Champions Terrier Martin Mc Donald with Toker

Gene Gallagher's Dog Show and Race Day Sligo Agricultural Show, Grange, Co Sligo, 4th August

Racing Results:

Whippets John Mc Stay with PIP; Colin Maguire with Sally

Over 23" Billy and Kirsty Harpur with Joker and also winner of the Master Mc Grath

Mick The Miller Barry Holland with Bell; Barry Holland with Snowy

Showing Results:

Champion Pup George Gott with Elvis

Overall Champion Whippet Colin Maguire with Sally; Margaret Mc Stay with PIP

Overall Champion Lurcher Kirsty Harpur with Regal; Niall O Cloghan with Sally

Overall Champion Terrier Terence Mc Laughlin with Woody; Billy Craig with Hanratty

Overall Champion and Best in Show Terence McLaughlin with Woody

Sporting Whippet Club NI Dog Show and Race Day, 5th August

Showing Results

Children's Handling Class Cormac Mc Killion with Diff; Abbie Fyffe with Bindy; Conghal Burke with Lilly

Baby Puppy Nicky Fyffe with Bindy; Janet Duke with Elliot; Colin Tucker with Cooper

Whippet Dog Janet Duke with Oscar; John Mc Stay with Jack; Dean Spence with Rinty

Whippet Bitch Davy Fyffe with Roxie; Tracy Gill with Scarlet; Margaret Mc Stay with PIP

Racing Whippet Janet Duke with Oscar

Veteran Whippet Tracy Gill with Finlay

Whippet Pairs John Mc Stay with Jack and Jill; Megan Tucker with Cooper and Bindy; Tracy Gill with Scarlet and Finlay

Best in Show went to Davy Fyffe with Roxie; Janet Duke an Oscar

Racing Results

KC Race Grade C Dean Spence with Rinty

KC Grade B John Mc Stay with PIP; Lisa Dumigan with Frankie KC Grade A Janet Duke with Oscar; Gabriel Frank with Dash; Dean Spence with Posey KC Veteran Race Tracy Gill with Finlay; Paul Morrison with Sonny Non KC Race Granny Fyffe with Roxie; Sean Burke with Lilly

Children's Slip

Joint First Abbie Fyffe and Conghal Burke

Tully Castle Dog Show, 11th August

Showing Results: Overall Champion Terrier Paul Elliott with Susie

Overall Champion Lurcher Maurice Mc Dowell with Poacher;

Chontelle Mc Meekan with Grey.

Overall Champion Whippet Fiona Devlin with Mick

Overall Champion Gun Dog Niall O Cloghan with Grouse

Best Local Dog Paul Elliott with Susie

Overall Supreme Champion and Best in Show Maurice Mc Dowell with Poacher; Fiona Devlin with Mick

Armagh Sporting Dog Supreme Bends Racing Championships and Showing, 4th November Northern Ireland Supreme

Bends Championships 2018 Pedigree Whippet Bitch Suzanne Addis with Poppy Pedigree Whippet Dog Barry Chambers with Alfie Under 25lb Champion Claire Smith /Darren Smith with That's Andy

Under 35lb Champion Geraint

Under 45lb Champion Michael

Kelly Woolcockwith Serin

Clemmit with Jump The Gun

Under 55lb Champion Geraint Kelly Woolcock with Blue No Limit Champion Michelle Rafferty with Sally Hairy Dogs Conor Nolan /Liam Nolan with Prince Bull Cross Kirsty Jane Harpur and Peter Pyper with Regal Novice Small Dog Billy Kerry with Snowball Novice Overs Dead Heat Lisa Beggs with Joker and Geraint Kelly Woolcock with Rocky Supreme Bends Championship Veterans Cup Susan McCann with Bella **Showing Results** Children's Handling Class Meghan Tucker with Tia; Brooke Rafferty with Red; Mason Thompson with Prydz Ladies Handling Class Carol Ann Brown with Suki Gents Handling Class Barry Reavey with Sky Whippet Bitch Suzanne Addis with Poppy Whippet Dog Dean Spence with Rinty Whippet Pup Colin Tucker with Cooper Lurcher Pup Leigh Thompson with Jett U 24" Smooth Michelle Rafferty with Viper. Over 24" Lisa Beggs with Joker Bull X Lisa Beggs with Cirez Working Class Charlene Rafferty with Shifter Hairy Lurcher Leigh Thompson with Thor Champion Lurcher Lisa Beggs with Joker Champion Whippet Colin Tucker with Cooper Champion Veteran Susan Mc Cann with Bella Pure Bred Greyhound Michelle Rafferty with Tinga Ling



Gene Gallagher's Dog Show and Race Day, Sligo Agricultural Show, Show at Best in Terence McLaughlin with Woody.





Man O' War Dog Show and Race Day. Maurice McDowell with winning dogs Poacher and Blue

Left: Sporting Whippet Club NI Dog Show and Race Day. Sporting Whippet Club NI 18/ Overall Champion Whippet and Best in Show Davy Fyffe with Rosie



Armagh Sporting Dog Supreme Bends Racing Championships and Show. Armagh sporting Pedigree Whippet Dog Supreme Bends Racing Champion 2018 Barry Chambers with Alfie



Tully Castle Dog Show Saturday. Overall Champion and Best in Show at Tully Castle Maurice McDowell with Poacher Reserve Fiona Devlin with Mick



Wicklow Terrier, Lurcher and Whippet Club Dog Show and Race Day. Champion Terrier Reece Dunn with Misty



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Art & Antiques

ho said 'brown' furniture was dead and impossible to sell? Well, if you have the right item with a good provenance and a bit of age behind it, on a good day the world's your oyster. That's how Dublin based auction house ADAMS must have felt when a unique table went through the price roof at their Country House Collections sale at Townley Hall, near Drogheda, Co Lough recently.

Listed as 'The Armada Table' of the O'Briens that certainly gave it a good start, but its hammer price of €360,000, plus another 20pc buyer's commission made it one of the most valuable ever to come to auction in recent times. Constructed in part from wood salvaged from the wreck of a Spanish Armada in 1588 it had to be a 'one off'. It carried a high estimate of €200,000 and sold to an undisclosed Irish buyer, ensuring it will remain in the country.

"Yes, the good news is it will be staying in Ireland," stated James O'Halloran, managing director of Adams's after the sale. It is understood the State was outbid in the sale and that the new owner is a private buyer. While bidding on the

table started at €70,000, the fact there was a strong online bidder, three others on phones and one real enthusiast in the room, it did not take too long for it to romp past its low estimate of €100,000. "It got to €360,000 quite quickly," states James."We believed it could do reasonably well but, because there was nothing with which to compare it, we really didn't know what the final outcome would be."



Measuring three metres long, the table was the property of Lord Inchiquin having passed by descent through the O'Brien Clan of Lemenagh, Co Clare. It comprised a rectangular top sitting on a frieze of a dozen carved heads, with four carved heraldic lion corner supports and two figures of Hope and Charity, which would have been found on the stern of a galleon. The table spent around 300 years at Dromoland Castle before moving to Bunratty, where its elaborate series of carved masked became a key attraction. Without doubt an exceptional item, it has been

O'Briens €360,000 was one of the most valuable recently at auction

described by the Knight of Glin, Desmond FitzGerald as: "one of the most important and earliest pieces of Irish furniture.

In the autumn of 1588, it is believed some 27 ships of the Spanish Armada were lost off the Irish coast and at least two of them were wrecked off the West Clare coast.Wood from the ill-fated vessels when it was washed ashore was often used for many purposes. Some was burned, other pieces found a new life as supports in hovels and farm sheds. But the items which became the Armada Table were recovered by a

> prescient High Sheriff, who liked the decorative carvings and had them made into something of utilitarian use – a table.

Of course another item, but at a different auction certainly testified to the value some people place on an extremely rare bottle of whisky. A 60-year old Macallan Valerio Adami 1926, which came under the hammer at BONHAMS, in Edinburgh, rose to a new world record price for a bottle of whisky. It



Irish George III mahogany breakfront bookcase €75,000 (sold by ADAMS)



went for £848,750 which is \$1.09m or €947,000 and it beat a previous bottle from the same cask which sold last May in Hong Kong for £814,081. The buyer is believed to have come from the Far East where most of the rare and extremely expensive liquors are going at present.

BONHAMS now hold the record for the three most valuable bottles of whisky ever sold at auction. Their whisky specialist Martin Green says, "It is a great honour to have established a new world record and particularly exciting to have done so in Scotland." For the record the whisky was distilled in 1926 and kept in a sherry hogshead cask until bottled in 1986. Only 24 bottles were produced with labels designed by two famous pop artists of the time, 12 by Peter Blake, who helped create the sleeve of The Beatles' album' Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band and 12 with the label of Italian artist Valerio Adami. And the bottle sold in Edinburgh was one carrying an Adami label. It had been bought by the

vendor direct from the Macallan distillery for an undisclosed sum in 1994 and while it is not known how many of them still exist it is believed one was destroyed in an earthquake in Japan seven years ago, while another went the way of most drinks, it was opened and drunk.

I wonder do those who enjoyed that drink

know how much they consumed, in a monetary sense that is? Charles MacLean, a Scotch whisky expert says: "Whisky is the third most popular alternative investment during periods of stock market uncertainly, behind vintage cars and fine arts. "In recent years its appreciation has been higher than gold." Whisky prices have soared in recent years with buyers shifting their investment interests from bigger names to rare bottles from Scotland and Japan.

Unlike the Armada Table, which was something of an unknown quantity, the Edinburgh whisky had its earlier Hong Kong guide. On that occasion, one of the bottles bearing a Peter Black label, sold for US\$1.01m while the one, designed by Adami made the then record price of £814,081.



George III octagonal partners' desk €23,000. (sold by ADAMS)

William Ashford oil €34,000 (sold by ADAMS)

Ironically the Hong Kong bottles were never meant for sale, having been given to some of the Macallan's most loyal business partners or clients. It is believed the value of Macallans 18 years and older whisky has doubled in value over the past year and there could be a sound reason for this.

Today, new whisky tends to be more industrialised while in the earlier years, the 1980s and before that, it was handcrafted. And a well-kept whisky can last forever. With the growing interest for vintage whiskies in South East Asian countries like Vietnam, Thailand and Indonesia, as well as China, it may not be too long before we see another world record. Wealthy Asian buyers have shown



Jack Yeats' 'Pilot Sligo River,' €370,000.

frenzied interest and deep pockets at art auctions in recent years, helping to shatter the world record prices paid for paintings, diamonds and ancient and cultural ceramics.

AROUND THE SALES.

As mentioned earlier the Armada table may have been the star of the show at the **Adams Country House Collections** sale, other lots sold were also impressive.

An Irish George III mahogany breakfront bookcase went at €75,000 against a high estimate of €20,000; a Dromoland Castle prehistoric Giant Irish Deer antlers and skull made (sold by WHYTES)

Ashford oil, \in 34,000; Irish George II double leaf dining table \in 29,000; Irish Geo. II dining table, \in 26,000; and a fine George III octagonal partners' desk, \in 23,000.

ADAM's UTV Paintings Sale, held in early October, gave purchasers a unique opportunity to pick up a contemporary painting. Promising Ulster artist Jonny McEwen's oil,



Patrick Heron's 'Bedroom Mousehole' €125,00. (sold by WHYTES)

'Carraigmin' was a snip at €1,600 and a fine William Henry Burns, 'Lock Keepers Cottage' made €1,100.

Of course the earlier Irish art sale in September saw a Louis le Brocquy making ϵ 68,000 and a Paul Henry going for ϵ 60,000, while a Gerard Dillon was able to realise ϵ 46,000 and a Jack Butler Yeats ϵ 31,000. A piece of Frederick E. McWilliams sculpture, 'Woman of Belfast' realised ϵ 28,000 and a Daniel O'Neill, 'Mother and daughters' fetched ϵ 27,000.

WHYTE'S Irish and International Art Sale in October saw 80pc of the lots sold bringing in receipts of \in 1.6m. Among the highlights were Jack Yeats' 'Pilot Sligo River,' which made \in 370,000; Patrick Heron's 'Bedroom Mousehole' at \in 125,00; and Paul Henry's 'Evening Silence' at \in 80,000. A Sean Keating sold for \in 56,000, while a Walter Osborne made \in 40,000.



Paul Henry's 'Evening Silence' €80,000. (sold by WHYTES)

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Kids, these days

The Author - eventually - showing how it's done!

Then it comes to Kids, I have a bit of experience, having two of my own, but I also have been a Cub Scout leader for 17 years and a speaker in schools for many years. I know a lot of folk despair when trying to make sense of modern young people. But these are very different times and believe me I have seen the best and some of the not so good over the years. While speaking to schoolchildren about wildlife and marine issues in particular, it quickly becomes apparent that these days kids are very 'savvy' about a lot of environmental issues.

When I was young, we had "amough foirn Speir" on RTE and at home we were lucky to have "Animal Magic" with Johnny Morris and "The underwater world of Jacques Cousteau" only because we had three channels on our TV. All great for anyone interested in the environment back then, but nowadays they have all the marvellous productions from the BBC and David Attenborough.

So it would be a big mistake to think that young people these days are ignorant of the living world. However, they do have a slightly prejudiced view of it. If you go on safari in Africa it's very unlikely you will see a lion kill, or at sea that you will see a Great White Shark leap out of the water. The truth would not make interesting television. This is where I believe that kids should get out and see the world for themselves. Every child should spend at least one day beagleing. It's a great traditional sport and a day spent running around the countryside after dogs can only be healthy. As a kid I did it with my family for a few years and the fact that I have no memory of ever seeing a hare caught does not bother me now, nor did it then. The only downside was learning a healthy respect for horseflies.

While engaging in public walks last summer I saw something which I thought was an awful indication of the ways things are going. Walking with a group of interested folk I pointed out seals and birds as we went, then caught sight of a group of Harbour Porpoises not far off the shore. I had seen them at this point before, but it's not an everyday event to see these small whales as sea conditions need to be right. The group I was with were delighted to see them. As we watched the Porpoises for a while, I noticed other folk walking past with their faces stuck in their phones. I mentioned this to one of the group with me and she pointed out that these people were looking for Pokémon, these are virtual creatures in a game.

Instant gratification is the biggest obstacle

I thought it sad that these folk were



Down on hands and knees for a proper look.

looking for creatures that don't exist and yet were missing out on the wildlife all around them. Worse, these were not children but young adults and people in their thirties. Internet and phone games provide what I believe the experts call instant gratification, and this is the biggest obstacle to getting young people interested in outdoor pursuits. In truth many things in reality cannot match this apparent instant gratification.

However, one thing which may have started many of us older folk was knocking targets over with an air rifle at a fairground, but with all the concerns over firearms nowadays kids rarely get a chance to try this, unless we take them out to plink at a few cans.

I witnessed other things which disappointed me while showing schoolchildren examples of seashells. I always tell them not to be afraid to get down on their hands and knees for a close look, as many of our prettiest and most interesting shells are very small. At the end of our talk we spread out a selection of shells and I hand out some magnifying glasses to the kids. It came as a surprise to me to see that very few knew how to use such a simple devise. The vast majority of them put the glass right up to their eye and brought the object, the shell, up to their eye with the other hand, rather than hold the glass near the object and move it back slowly. I do not know how young people could not know how to use a magnifying glass. Never mind, this was simply rectified at our talks.



A selection of shells and some magnifying glasses for the children to use.

As I thought about this, perhaps the only magnifying glass they have seen in use is a jeweller's loupe which is used in this way, or maybe they have not even seen that. When I was young a simple magnifying glass opened up a whole new world for me and allowed me to see things which would normally go largely unnoticed and unappreciated.

Last summer, we brought a group of cub scouts to an adventure centre in Connemara, where I saw the other side of things. One example of this was noticeable right away, the group were eager to get close to the donkeys and were definitely not afraid to feed them and that was only the start. One of the activities provided was abseiling down the face of an old quarry. It was about thirty-five feet high and did not look too high from a distance, or looking up, but looked very high looking down.

Teeth gritted, she was actually going to do it!

The youngsters took to the abseiling like ducks to water. It was a case of simply wanting to prove to themselves that they could do it. We hear a lot about bullying among young folk these days, but it was great to hear them encouraging each other whenever one was hesitant to go over the edge. I have to admit I was too scared to try it the first two opportunities I had but these young people seized the opportunity and conquered their fears. Of course, some had to do the full Bear Grylls on it, jumping out from the face as they came down. One child who joined us this year, who was actually the youngest and smallest, just could not do it at first and she joined me at the bottom of the cliff to watch the rest of the group.

After a few others had taken the challenge, I saw her whisper to another little girl before telling me she was going up to do it. Three times she tried, but could not get take the first step over the edge. There was no 'slagging' or making her feel inadequate, just encouragement. Another little girl was very slow descending and I saw her legs shaking like a leaf the whole way down,



Conquering the cliff face.



Despite a little apprehension by some everyone enjoyed the cooked rabbit.

but she did it. And went up to do it again. Then, finally the young girl who had so far failed finally gritted her teeth and with huge encouragement for the others, she managed the descent and I don't know who was pleased most, the girl herself, the group or me!

As long as I have been a leader in this group I have been amazed by the kids and they constantly surprise me. I make sure they know that meat does not come wrapped in plastic for example bringing this home by preparing a rabbit for cooking with them, or butchering a deer with them. I gave two girls a rabbit one time and asked them to prepare it; no bother to them. I did open the abdomen so the guts were not cut but that was all I had to do as they did the rest. The whole group gathered around, and were amazed at how neatly all the guts fitted into the cavity (a topic which has not so far been covered by the BBC Natural History Unit)! In my opinion, kids today do still have that sense of discovery we all should have its simply a matter of someone taking the time to help stir that interest. By the way, They cooked up the rabbit over an open fire and we all tried it. Delicious!







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Hunting for the future

Teckels hunting as part of a pack in County Waterford.

beautiful November morning and the only sound I could hear was the rustling of the grass behind me, as a 5 month old Teckel called Poppy (I didn't name her, my wife did) did her best behind me to keep up. She was drenched from the dew, but it dampened her spirits little. She had only come with me as she had been making a nuisance of herself in the house and I had taken her out of the way.

By Steven Mcgoniga

I didn't expect any ducks along the river and had thought it might be better that there wasn't, as the little pup was not yet acquainted with gunshot and the last thing I wanted to do was make her gun shy. I had, however, associated her with everything else up to then, the Hoover, cordless drill, hammering in the shed, etc. I even put her in an old canvas bag back in Mid-September, slung her over my shoulder and let her share in the misery of grass cutting on an autumn day when there are so many better things to be doing. I took her in the car, on the butcher's bike and introduced her to people, cats and as many other dogs as possible. All these

early introductions I feel make things a lot easier for the long term.

There are many schools of thought regarding young dogs and how they should be treated and introduced to the world. Some might say let the puppy simply be a puppy and it will work the world out for themselves. If that pup is to be gun shy, then no number of small introductions and reducing distances will make it any different. Likewise, I think if a puppy grows up acting difficult with other dogs, no amount of socialisation will solve that and perhaps the same goes with hunting. All the small introductions and short days might be fine, but if it is in the dog to work well it will do so, regardless of how many introductions and small hurdles is the other school of thought.

As I meandered both on foot and in my mind with a Teckel in tow, a brace of Teal sprung up in front of me and I fired two successive shots, bringing down a bird with the second which landed on the bank. I realised I had the pup, thought I shouldn't have fired and looked round to find her looking up at me inquisitively. I doubt we will have any problems in the gun shot department thankfully!

I fetched the duck myself from the rivers edge and left it where she could find it. You will see in the photo that she had no problem picking it up and walking along behind me with it. Even this young, she is full of confidence and takes everything in her stride. I have little experience of dogs and gun shyness, simply because I have never trained a gun dog per se, but I just like my Teckels to work with the gun now and again, not to Field Trial level of course! But, if I can take them raking along a hedge on a frosty morning it adds so much more to them and to the day.

For gun shyness I have found, at least as far as Teckels go, they either are, or, they are not. I have one gun shy Teckel who was slowly introduced with starting pistols and so on because he was my first and I trod carefully. From the day he heard a shot gun it was over, he was terrified. Even if I took a gun into the dog yard he would run for his kennel. One of my other Teckels, Oscar, simply went for a walk one morning and I



An early introduction to the car.

happened to fire a shot and he carried on just as Poppy did, only now if I fire a shot he runs to look for what I was shooting at, as do the rest. So perhaps with my young puppy, nature will do her work and if she is to be good she will be good, but I don't see any harm in giving her a helping hand. She certainly does not lack instinct and I found very early on that it runs deep in her small veins. I do on occasion, usually in summer, set out tracks for the dogs with deer blood, if only to give them something to work at over the long evenings. I have been learning as much as them and after doing some trails in late August, I left a fallow skin out along the side of a field overnight and forgot it was there. A very small Poppy walked with me early the next morning, came across it and began to pull and bark at it!

Genetic memory in the canine blood runs deep it appears

I had a similar but slightly more peculiar incident only a couple of weeks back. I had been working in the garage and went round before locking up to feed the ferrets. I walked round the small path between the fruit trees to where they live and Poppy followed me. I had collected the feeding bowls, and begun to fill them up when my phone rang. I was probably 5 minutes or less, but during that time young Poppy was going mad outside, growling, barking and sounding very excited. I suspected a

ferret had got loose and went to investigate, to find her barking and growling at a dead fox on the side of the path I had just come down. It looked very fresh and I reached down to touch it, expecting it to be cold and stiff, but I found it still very warm, in fact it was almost too warm to be normal! Its mouth was still moist inside and it really did look as if it had literally dropped dead in the garden! The little pup was having none of it however and I had to remove the fox to settle her down! I then did notice it had a rather odd shaped head and was in poor condition so I froze it down and it is to be collected for testing by DAERA. It

appears that genetic memory in the canine blood runs deep indeed.

My older Teckels have been getting on very well this year and hunted as part of a pack in early September in County Waterford, where together they flushed a few foxes. Two days later, Oscar and Rubble flushed a large fox right behind my house which I shot. It was only the second fox I have shot, as I usually don't, and I regretted it as he hadn't been doing any harm — my farmer neighbours would have soon informed me if there was a fox causing problems!

A few days later while exercising along the river, Rubble started an awful racket and Oscar joined him as they bayed up and down the bank for ten minutes or so. I assumed an old fox scent, but when they settled at a larger than rat, smaller than rabbit sized hole, it appeared a mink was our culprit. We hunted the river many more times since and checked the hole, but it appears they ran him out of town as there has been no sign since!

Rubble's run-ins with aquatic mammals seems to be endless and a few weeks back I took him along duck flighting. Even at his young age he's incredibly sensible and very biddable, unlike his kennel mates. If he is asked to wait he will and, if he finds a duck



No problem picking up the teal and walking along behind me.



Rubble's only aim is to flush vermin from holes in the ground.

which I have shot, he will retrieve it. We were sitting on the riverbank under a glowing moon when something splashed in the water, which was low as the tide was out. I looked expecting a duck, but couldn't see anything. Rubble squared up beside me and began to check things out, when below us was a large otter, which could obviously scent us but not see us. It was standing looking up, a very unusual sight. He stood a few moments until my German comrade opened up like a mastiff and took off down the riverbank into the water after it! It took some shouting to get him back but he did in the end!

Rubble is a large Teckel, with very broad shoulders and a deep chest and, unusually for his type, is very biddable and well behaved. He was sired by a lovely German dog, Bruno, which I saw working back in September, and very much the old Rominten Del Lago type. He is also an obedient, laid back character but very much the genuine Iron hearted Dachshund when it is required.

Rubble has only been with me a short while, but in that time we have had much sport. He is as fond of duck hunting as blood tracking and will slip into a fox earth like a rat up a drain pipe. As is their wont, Rubble's only aim is to flush vermin from underground and that suits me perfectly, as have the time or inclination on a day's hunting to be carrying all manner of tools to retrieve a dog from deep under the ground! I will happily leave that to the terriers and terrier men. Teckels are not terriers, while terriers are not Teckels.

What one Teckel lacks, another makes up for

He has caught rats, flushed all manner of game birds, hunted rabbits, foxes and mink and trailed deer scent which I have left sometimes for up to 48 hours and together with my little Oscar, they make a great team. What one lacks, the other makes up for, and while Rubble may not be as fast as Oscar, he is more precise and slower with his nose and checks less when following a scent but can be slower to keep up. Together the pair make for some enjoyable sport.

While during the time Poppy has been duck hunting and learning from her kennel mates all about country pursuits, a small puppy has been born in Mannheim, Germany to Eyka Vom Linteler Forst. Sired by Sig Sauer of the Bismarck Eiche, 'Cider' has hit the ground running. In Germany, at only 10 weeks old, Cider has already tagged along with Julia Szeremeta to a driven fox hunt, a driven boar hunt and has some experience on the blood trail of a shot boar. When she reached the end of it she looked the boar in the eye and placed her paw on his snout as if to say no genuine Teckel bows down in the sight of a wild boar!

This weekend Cider will attend a working test in Germany to ensure steadiness to shot, along with some other formalities, before I travel to Mannheim in January under the guise of a shooting weekend. If a Teckel decides to end up back at my house there is not much I can do: I am hunting for the future. Merry Christmas once again to the readers, contributors and team at Irish Country Sports and Country Life magazine, and may the New Year be a good one full of sport. Good Hunting.



Only 10 weeks old but no genuine Teckel bows down in the sight of a wild boar dead or alive!



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The Working Clumber Spaniel



Rough shooting, small driven days and opportunities to work Clumbers on prestigious shoots.

he Working Clumber Spaniel Society formed in 1984, is an organisation dedicated to the development of this rare breed spaniel in the field. With HRH the Princess Royal as its president, over 400 members are actively involved in reestablishing Clumber spaniels as working gundogs. The Breed can be traced back to the mid 18th Century, when they are said to have been sent over from France by a French duke facing the guillotine, Duc de Noailles, to Nottinghamshire's Clumber Park estate owned by the Duke of Newcastle.

The Working bred Clumber spaniels of today resemble their ancestors seen

in the Victorian paintings, by Maud Earl and John Emms. They are athletic, well muscled dogs with that stunning effective pink nose, prized for their extraordinary ability to find game. The working Clumber spaniel is today a realistic choice for the shooting person keen to consider something a little bit different.



A great shooting companion

I am proud to say, I have been secretary of the Society for 20 years and in that time membership has grown and so have the number of events we put on for members across the country. The dogs have now become their own ambassadors at different shoots and people are now recognising the breed. We organise training days and working competitions including Field Trials. But the most fun we have, are the rough shooting days over our dogs and small driven days and opportunities to work on prestigious shoots across the country. These dogs make a great rough shooting companion; the pace they work, tail action, that large pink nose soon tells you there is bird or rabbit about. You learn to trust that large pink nose.

Recently one of our members, David Chilvers, organised a small driven day at Grafton shoot in Worcestershire for members and their dogs - great fun was had by all and a bag of 104 birds, mainly partridge.

We have been lucky enough to shoot in Northern Ireland with our dogs several times at two shoots which have both won the Purdey award. I'm also pleased to say there are two new Clumber pups about to arrive in Northern Ireland very soon for their new homes. Albert Titterington has kindly invited us in the past to the game fair at Shanes Castle, and when we get the opportunity we sneak over to the west coast of Ireland for walked up woodcock shooting, which is great experience for us all, a truly magical bird.

If you would like to find out more about Working Clumbers please look at our website www.workingclumber.co.uk or contact Debbie Zurick zurickd427@gmail.com Tel 01643 831427

Above Right: Debbie Zurick with her 4 year old Clumber spaniel Sedgehurst Boris. Boris who was bred by Debbie, is a very skilled rough shooting dog and has also won a field trial award.

Right: Another for the bag - you learn to trust a Clumber's large pink nose!





Hunting Roundup

Around the meets

The **West Wicklow Foxhounds'** biennial visit to the East Down Foxhounds took place on a cold first Saturday in February and Rupert Macauley brought ten riders and five car followers.

Former joint master of the East Downs (1990-2000) David Sandford and his wife Alison hosted a twenty strong mounted field under East Downs field master Pat Turley, while Rupert had on a 10¹/₂ couple mixed pack and was assisted by whippers-in Paul and Chris Harte (sons of his joint master Christy Harte) and by Ronan Moloney.

Having something of a busman's holiday, East Down huntsman Declan Feeney was on hand, in the mounted field, as needed and, the lawn meet over, Rupert first drew Myra Castle Estate. Here hounds plunged into some very deep covert from which came some strong music though neither the mounted field nor the car followers could see hounds or quarry. Nothing came of this so matters moved to Portloughan Farm but every covert was blank and a move to Press's brought no improvement.

At Audleystown, near the Cairn, matters improved as hounds suddenly spoke then emerged, equally suddenly, onto the road from Press's bog. They ran as far as a one acre covert from which a brace broke with one being holloaed away by Declan Feeney. Here, Craig Caven, former East Down joint master (1978-2013) watched approvingly as hounds recast themselves having briefly lost their pilot. He returned towards the covert from which Declan had seen him leave before running towards Sandford's.

This fox ran around both Press's and Watterson's switching between the two properties giving a good, bracing one and a half hour hunt. At one stage hounds ran for three and a half miles with a now strong wind blowing scent all over the place.

Their pilot again ran through Press's and Watterson's then continued parallel to the county road towards Audleystown Castle. At this stage he was seen by your correspondent (at 5.11pm!) to head for a big hedge on Audleystown Road. As on the other side of the road is national trust property, Castleward, which includes five hundred acres of forestry hounds were stopped when they came onto the road, Rupert Macauley considering that this was the last place he wanted his hounds to enter.

Hounds were one hundred and fifty yards behind this game fox, in very good voice and, as they came over the hill towards us they were exactly on the line he had taken.

It was 5.25pm as Rupert blew for

home in now fading light.

Once back at the meet everyone availed of a very welcome array of refreshments provided by Donna Quail and James Armstrong to end this good hound day.

The **Fermanagh Harriers'** visit to Belle Isle Estate, near Enniskillen, was repeated after last season's first visit in some fifty years, again by kind permission of Their Graces the Duke and Duchess of Abercorn.

Huntsman Patrick Murphy MH had on a $12\frac{1}{2}$ couple mixed pack and I was interested to see that this included $1\frac{1}{2}$ couple with Welsh blood, part of a $2\frac{1}{2}$ couple draft from the Dungannon Foxhounds.

A fifteen strong mounted field, under hunt chairman Padraig Sheridon, followed the huntsman, hounds and whipper-in Gerry Mullarkey to the first draw. Here, hounds put a brace afoot behind John Stubbs's cottage. They settled on one fox and gave the field a fifty minute hunt right around the Estate. Indeed, with good hound music throughout, we were able to remain on Their Grace's land the whole day. This hunt ended when this good fox went to ground on the south side of Lough Erne and was given best.

The second draw, behind the walled garden, saw a hare rise to give a short, but brisk, hunt running in a full circle before being lost back at the garden.

Another hare rose from the third draw, at the West Island, presaging another short, fast hunt before it, too, was lost.

At the fourth draw, on the north side, came a repeat performance with this hare giving a short, sharp hunt before being lost.

Patrick Murphy then blew for home, in mid afternoon, as this mild day was now turning very cold and the threatened rain had also arrived. The master told me that, the previous day, he had walked the Estate which was then covered by a coating of snow that the previous night's heavy rain had removed. Sure enough, after an excellent post hunt "feed" I drove home in torrential rain to confirm how lucky we were to have had our day.

The County Club, Dunshauglin Co Meath, hosted the **Ward Union Staghounds'** meet, rather unusually on a Monday, with the meet being delayed until 2pm due to the weather.

Huntsman Pat Coyle had Paul Carberry, Con Kennedy and Peter Reynolds whipping-in while joint masters Gerry Reynolds and Stephen O'Connor had some forty riders under their charge. Among a number of visitors on view was trainer Ciaron Maher from Caulfield, Melbourne Australia, who was the furthest travelled for his visit to the Wards.

Pat Coyle drew Lagore to presage a very fast hunt to Ratoath and, seemingly in no time we were crossing the curtilage of Fairyhouse Racecourse, then on as far as Cheeverstown. Here, our pilot entered a plantation and remained there.

This had been a very fast hunt with everyone doing very well to keep up so Pat Coyle blew for home in late afternoon with the day having proved short but bracing, initially with some sunshine but also a bitingly cold wind throughout

Ballymacad Foxhounds' huntsman Kevin Donohue is "off games" at present, due to a recent fall. In his absence hounds are being hunted by Alan Keogan, who acts as terrierman and helps out in kennels. He spends his working life with these hounds and it shows as they hang on his every word and work for him.

At their meet at Killallon,Co Westmeath, Alan was assisted by Bobby Kellet and Maurice Quinn while field master Ken Farrelly had a twenty five strong mounted field to oversee.

Alan Keogan first drew behind Killallon Graveyard where a fox went afoot to give a "three field" hunt before going to ground.

At Shanks's a brace went afoot and hounds settled on one fox, from Hartstown Boring, to give a fast hunt before it, too, went to ground.

The third draw, at Kilrush, saw another fox go afoot to give a fast, circular hunt before it also went to ground, towards Clonmellon.

Plunket Firs and Drewstown both proved blank before a draw of Gibney's at Kilskyre resulted in another short hunt before this pilot, too, went to ground.

The final draw, at Tom Stafford's, proved blank so Alan Keogan blew for home.

This had been quite a warm day, by recent standards, and scent was at a premium throughout though there were occasions when hounds hunted strongly and in good voice but, weather wise, this has been a season to forget.

At Stoneyford, Co Antrim, Noel and Noreen Fitzpatrick hosted the

Killultagh Old Rock and Chichester hunt on a bright but cool last Saturday in February. Noel, a former huntsman of these hounds, was mounted for the first time after recent hip replacements and did not seem to have been out of the saddle at all.

Huntsman Patrick Headdon, assisted by whipper-in Alan McAleavey, had on an 11¹/₂ couple mixed pack and field master Philip Swann had charge of a fifteen strong mounted field.

The first draw, at Michael Miller's racing stables, proved blank with hounds studiously ignoring a fast running hare and Tommy McCarthy's was also blank. The field then enjoyed some schooling thanks to Ivor McCrea, who was in the mounted field.

At Mairs's a fox went afoot and crossed Ballypitmave Road only for hounds to be stopped due to their not being allowed into that side of the road.

Jimmy and Johnny Wright's proved blank but, happily, a move to Hunts Hill Road saw a brace go afoot, with one fox going back towards Wright's.Hounds hunted the second fox over Hunts Hill Road then turned left towards White Mountain Road. A second left hand turn, back towards Hunts Hill Road, then Wright's, saw hounds lose their fox in fading scent.

White Mountain Road proved blank so Patrick Headdon blew for home as the weather had become considerably colder.

East Antrim Hunt puppy show

The Parkgate kennels of the East Antrim hunt have a special resonance for me as that is where I first experienced hunting, following huntsman Jack Taylor with my father, in his car sixty six years ago!

Huntsman Robbie Hodge had a small new entry of 1½ couple of doghounds and 2 couple of bitches for judges Edwin Bryson and Fred Kerridge. Fred hunted these hounds from 1980-1990 while Edwin was honorary huntsman of the Newry hounds from 1985-2005 and they were quickly into their stride.

They soon passed the following placings to George Logan for announcement.

Doghounds

Salesman Tynan and Armagh Linesman York and Ainsty (South) Sailor

Belfast Bingo Goathland Charity Cricklewood Tynan and Armagh

Linesman Stonehall Crafty Bitches.

Bangor Sibling of Belfast. Safety Sibling of Salesman

Sasha Sibling of Salesman.

The doghound, Salesman, was then declared Champion Puppy with the bitch, Bangor, as Reserve Champion.





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Summer / Autumn Field Trials for Pointers and Setters

he Irish red setter and Irish red & white setter are two of Ireland's native dog breeds. It is heartening to hear that they are currently going through the process of receiving heritage status. It is fantastic that these breeds exist for their original purpose and the breeds continue to improve mainly because of the formal competitions through kennel club field trials. Through my long association with the sport, while there have been some peaks with outstanding individuals, overall the standard of these breeds has shown an upward trajectory. I would encourage any sportsmen or women to support the breed as they are hugely adaptable, point early and are also superior retrievers. Appreciation to this magazine for its continued support of coverage of field trials.

With the extreme snow in springtime, all but one event was cancelled. The weather again played a factor in the events of the summer with extreme drought conditions affecting game stocks, albeit thankfully nothing to the extent of Scotland. Traditionally the red setter stakes in Galway start the summer schedules in the pretty village of Kilchreest. The Irish red setter breed stake had just one award with Pat Reape's Lisduvoge Lilly a very good winner. The open stake the next day was won by Pat Reape's Lisduvoge Patch who had a joint find on a clutch of wild pheasants with Brian MacDiarmada's red setter Oileannior Tinne. Donal O'Leary from the Kingdom was third with his English setter Kerry's Pick Up having diligently trailed a running cock grouse for quite a distance.

There was a day respite for dogs and handlers before competition resumed in the Slieve Bloom mountains with the Cashel field trials. Slieve Bloom mountains was the childhood home of Fionn Mac Cumhal. After Fionn's father Cumhal as leader of the Fianna was murdered, his mother Muireann sent



FTCh Malstabodarna Idun had another consistent year.

him into hiding in the forest of Sliabh Bladhma (Slieve Bloom Mountains). Here he was taught him all the knowledge they had including how to be a warrior. So, the tradition of the Na Fianna pertains over the same ground today. Sean Hogan was victorious with Concomrue Corona and subject to show qualification becomes an Irish Field Trial champion. This is Sean's first champion so there was great excitement. Second was Jim Crotty's pointer Brackbawn Thunder who had a joint find with the winner.

Competition resumed the following day in the heathery slopes of the picturesque Dublin mountains. Conditions were extremely hot and difficult both on man and dog which made scenting conditions challenging. Pat Dooley's pointers secured both first and second with FTCh Raigmore Sirocco and Wildfield Firedancer while Joan McGillycuddy's FTCh Ballydavid Gaelforce was third and Declan O'Rourke's Ballydavid Thunder in reserve.

The bank holiday Monday concluded the first week of the Summer schedule with the Cill Dara field trials, taking place further south in the Wicklow mountains. Hugh Bradys FTCh Malstabodarna Idun of Ballydavid took first while Joan McGillycuddy's FTCh Ballydavid Gaelforce was second.

The following week the trials were back again in Wicklow not far from where the Liffey rises, Michael Houston of Strabane was the winner of the Irish Pointer club trials with his Int FTCh Arclinis Francie Frank with Hugh Brady's FTCh Malstabodarna Idun in second place.

The English setter club stakes



Chairman of the Irish Kennel Club Sean Delmer presenting Pat Reape with the Championship trophies.

attracted a very large entry with many reserves not getting a run and Corkman George Forbes was the winner with FTCh Knocksmall Toru while Hugh Brady's Irish setter FTCh Malstabodarna Idun was second.

The circuit moved to Scotstown, home of perennial Monaghan county football champions and the stunning mountain over Bragan that has a long tradition in the sport. Game was very plentiful, and it was an excellent trial. The winner was Des Linton with his red and white setter Int. FTCh Craigrua Eoghan while Joan McGillycuddys' FTCh Gaelforce was in second and Michael Houston's pointer Koram Kendall in third. The red & white setter stakes returned to the Dublin mountains and in action -packed trial, Joan McGillycuddy's Int FTCh Starjet of the Kingdom was first with Aidan Dunne's red setter Maodhog Feoghadan was second.

The Irish Championship Stake

The highlight of every year is the Irish Championship stake on grouse which was held this year in the Dublin mountains. The event was organised expertly and all formalities including the Championship stake dinner were held in Roundwood. The stake was judged by Aidan Dunne (Maodhog), Billy Grace (Capparoe) and Hugh Brady (Ballydavid). The stake was won by Pat Reape's FTCh Ballinahemmy Mike who was also successful the previous year. Kieran Walsh was second with his English setter Blackmoor Cochise while Jim Sheridan's red & white setter FTCh Craigrua Devin was third.

The red & white setter confined stake was won by Ray Monroe's Granaghburn Nebraska with his own FTCh Rosie Jim in second. The following weekend it was back to the beautiful village of Kinnity where Kieran Walsh was the winner with his English setter Blackmoor Cochise. Cill Dara field trials resumed the following weekend with two English setter pups in the winner's enclosure with Billy Grace's Capparoe Evita winning and Kieran Walsh's Blackmoor Tyrell in second. The Wicklow and Wexford trials brought September to a close and Hugh Brady's FTCh Malstabodarna Idun was the winner.

Traditionally October brought the circuit to arable lands for the pheasants but with the ending of sugar beet a number of years ago, most clubs have substituted to bogs or mountain trials. However, the English setter club went to Carlow for their tillage stakes on pheasant. Kieran Walsh's Blackmoor Cochise was the winner in the English setter breed stake making Cochise a FTCh. The open stake went to Maeve Water's Irish setter Blackstairs Tess with runner up going to Brain MacDiarmada's Oileannoir Tinne and Jim Crotty's pointer Brackbawn Thunder in third.

The red setter breed stake returned to Kilchreest in Galway where the end of storm Calum deluged the day. Fr. Seamus O'Neill was victorious with Malstabodarna Balder with Hugh



Sean Hogan's Concomrue Corona



Aidan Dunne's FTCh Blackstairs Behenny. Brady's litter sister Malstabodarna Embla in second. The next day saw two stakes taking place, namely the Wicklow and Wexford in the Midlands on partridge and snipe and the Donegal field trials in Scotstown. Aidan Dunne was first with Blackstairs Behenny in the Wicklow and Wexford with Vincent Flannelly second with his red & white setter Benwhisken Stinger. This win on partridge made Blackstairs Behenny a FTCh.

Donegal field trials enjoyed excellent sunshine and a very hot trial where Bill Connolly's Sheantullagh Jessie won the day with Hugh Brady's FTCh Malstabodarna Idun in second and Mark Adams Hunshigo Donard in third. There were three other awards also including Joan McGillycuddy's FTCh Ballydavid Gaelforce, Mark Adams FTCh Ballydavid Spitfire and Gerald Devine's Gortinreagh Big Jake.

Then back to the west of Ireland and the beautiful village of Kilchreest and Roxburgh hill with its superb views of Lough Rea and Galway bay. The red setter club held its open stake for pointers and setters and again Aidan Dunne's FTCh Blackstairs Behenny was victorious again in a highly competitive stake. Neil Ryan was a popular second



A joint find on grouse with a red setter and red & white setter.

with FTCh Bold Jim of Felim with Hugh Brady's FTCh Mastabodarna Idun of Ballydavid in third and Joe O'Sullivan's Gardenfield Sheilin in reserve.

The historic town of Athenry was the venue for the Connaught field trial club's open stake. With almost a full card of 28 dogs, this proved a highly competitive stake with the judges having to decide between fourteen finds at the end of the day. The winner was first time winner Paraig Kiely with his Irish setter Ballinahemmy Rose with Hugh Brady's FTCh Malstabodarna Idun in second and his Mastabodarna Embla in third. Reserve was Joe O'Sullivan's stylish pointer FTCh Gardenfield Quest.

In parallel to the trials in the Republic of Ireland, field trials for pointers and setters are held in Northern Ireland under GB field trial rules. The circuit begins in mid-September with the Ulster Red Setter stakes where Bill Connolly's Sheantullagh Cormac was successful at the red setter breed stake at its traditional home of Murley mountains in Tyrone. Second place was Int. FTCh Ballydavid Starjet for Joan McGillycuddy and third Hugh Brady's Malstabodarna Idun. The following day was the Ulster open stake for pointers and setters and Ger Devine's FTCh Ballyellen Tango took the day with Int. FTCh Ballydavid Starjet in second and FTCh Ballydavid Spitfire in third for Mark Adams.

The following week the trials were held in Slieveanorra in county Antrim for the NI Pointer club where again FTCh Ballyellen Tango won the day. Mark Adams was second and third with FTCh Ballydavid Spitfire and FTCh Hunshigo Donard. The following day was Strabane's trial in the hills above Plumbridge on partridges and pheasant and Joan McGillycuddy's Int FTCh Ballydavid Starjet was the winner with Ger Devine's FTCh Gortinreagh Eppie in second and Mark Adams FTCh Ballydavid Spitfire in third. The end of September trials moved to Glarryford in Antrim for the annual pheasant stakes.



Bill Connolly with his team of Irish setters. FTCh Hunshigo Donard was the winner with Joan McGillycuddy's Ballydavid Gaelforce in second.

The next day and it was to the grouse moors in Glenwherry where conditions were quite difficult. An immense supply of game was reported and seemingly many dogs were lost in the second round. There was just one award, winner Ger Devine's English setter Gortinreagh Big Jake. Saturday 6th October and the circuit returned to Newtowncrommelin and the mountains of Slievenorra where outside some icy downpours the weather was reasonable for the time of year. Joan McGillycuddy's Ballydavid Gaelforce was the winner with Mark Adams' FTCh Hunshigo Donard in second and Craigrua Nevin in third for Des Linton. The competitors retired to the atmospheric Skerry Inn for some heat and hospitality. The next day was Ulster red setter open but for various reasons there was no awards.

Next issue will report on the Winter snipe trials and the inaugural Irish Snipe championship for pointers and setters.



Ger Devine with his team of setters.

Scenes from the Pointer & Setter Trials





Enjoying the craic.

(photo: Ray Monroe) A welcome seat for some.

(photo: Ray Moore)



Conal Dunne competing.



Checking the card.



The view from Kilchreest. (Photo: Ray Monroe)



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