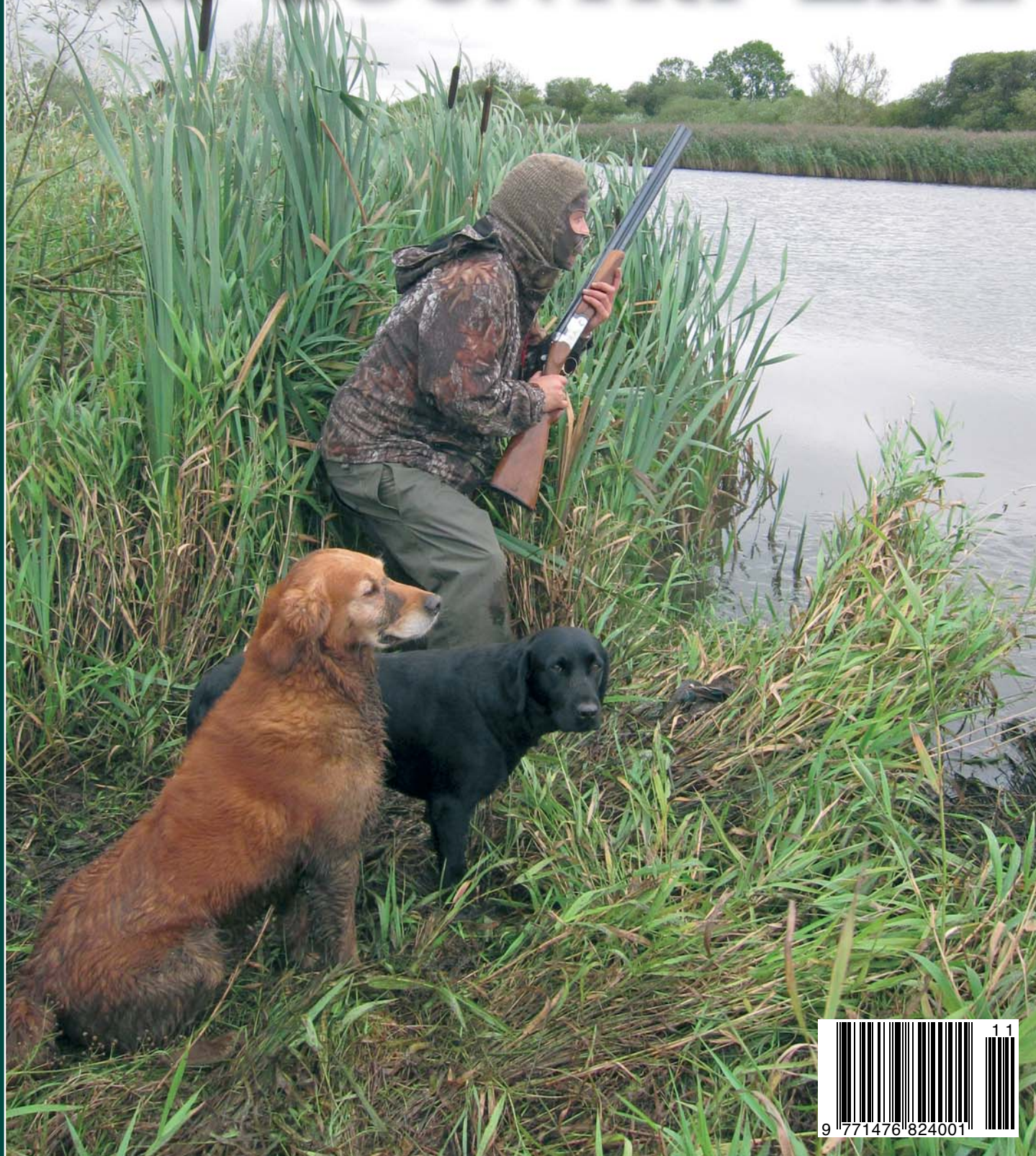


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Opening Morning'
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Paul Pringle

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Country Sports and Country Life

Rol Comment

Autumn has arrived and another game fishing season is closing with the new shooting and hunting season under way, but this time of year is always a little dull as the last game fair of the year is over. The Irish Game and Country Fair at Birr was a tremendous success with everything a REAL game fair needs to showcase the best in country sports and country life. Two new additions to the Arena programme at Birr were the Gentlemen Muzzleloaders and the Victorian Poacher, none having been seen in the Republic of Ireland before. There was a great selection of trade stands with a wide range of guns, fishing tackle and accessories as well as a magnificent food pavilion with products old and new. The organisers are working already to make next year's Great Game Fairs of Ireland better than ever. As they are all committed supporters of country sports and the country way of life they understand what a real game and country fair should be and work to give the best that can be produced in entertainment, education and value for money.

While I didn't manage a specimen salmon or a boat load of trout, I did enjoy my fishing and hope to see many more years of gathering the wild harvest of Irish waters. I have had my first brace of mallard and very tasty they were but I'm told there have been some instances of shooters not retrieving the fallen due to the lack of a properly trained dog or just laziness. That is not good enough and taints all sportsmen in the eyes of the public. The waste of good wild organic meat is criminal and I would ask all shooters to show the respect they should for their quarry. We are custodians of the countryside and need to look after it for future generations.

A beady eye required

The new government is busy with matters economic but they need to be watched carefully regarding the



various promises they made to hunters, shooters and anglers even if they seem minor matters in the present climate. The people of rural Ireland need to make sure that they are never treated in the cavalier manner which ignored their views and their traditions and was the hallmark of the Fianna Fáil / Green coalition. With the strengthening of various sporting organisations, any government which ignores the people which its actions affect will need to be very careful of the reaction they get. Once bitten, twice shy is an old saying that should be on the wall of every Ministers office.

And remember

As November 1st gets closer many shooters who aren't already shooting duck will be taking the gun out of its secure storage and it is well worth checking it over for any dents or spots of rust you didn't notice when you put it away. Even a small dent can cause a serious problem and ruin your day if not end your shooting career. The few Euros it will cost for a gunsmith to check your gun is money well spent and will add years to your gun's useful working life. As times are financially hard at present, many shooters will not buy a new gun as often as they used to so that extra care will keep you in the field for another few seasons.

When you do get out into the country for a shot please remember the rules of safe gun handling and the respect due to other people's property and the countryside itself. Be careful of your fellow shooters as a shared pheasant doesn't even make good minced meat and above all – stay safe.

Philip Lawton
ROI Editor

Country Sports and Country Life

Comment

Since I started editing this magazine, quite a few people have asked 'well, how is it going, are sales going up, or are you fighting for survival like so many in the economic climate?' What about the Great Game Fairs? Still going strong?

I have avoided answering until now, as I felt that whatever I said should be soundly based on performance over time and not simply a snapshot based on a handful of editions or PR activities for a just a few of the Great Game Fairs of Ireland.

Well, I am happy to report that we are doing fine. In fact better than fine - extremely well indeed, thank you very much.

In terms of this magazine, subscriptions are running at all time high and in spite of the launch of the FREE to READ online magazine (I prefer using that term rather than E-zine) sales of the hard copy magazine have actually increased. I firmly believe that many still do prefer hard copy to mull at a time and place of their choice, rather than be reliant on PC and internet connection. I know that I do. But despite my personal preferences, it is obvious that many people are reading Irish Country Sports and Country Life via the Internet. In fact this FREE to READ online version has been a huge success with on average 5,000 people per week reading it worldwide. A fact that has not been lost on both our advertisers and contributors.

Looking at the three Great Game Fairs of Ireland (Ballywalter, Shanes and Birr) for which I am responsible for media liaison and public relations, nearly 80,000 people attended the fairs with record numbers of exhibitors and competitors. In fact at all three Fairs we had to restrict numbers of exhibitors and many potential exhibitors were left disappointed. Bookings are already starting to come in for 2012. We said two years ago that we were bucking the economic trend and that has been borne out this year as well.

With programmes on www.fieldsportschannel.tv and www.dogandcountry.tv plus the Ballywalter Fair being featured in a BBC4 film and of course the massive reach of our advertising and PR in the general consumer media it is estimated that we have taken the Irish country sports message to well over 1 million people in 2011.

This has been the result of a team effort which sees each member not only work to their particular strengths but working together to achieve targets set annually and why am I telling you all this? To make a point. What we say in the press or on TV is firmly based on facts. When we say 'bigger and better' that is what the paying public get. If we get it even



slightly wrong, we fix it. There has been a lot of traffic on some Internet Forums knocking other fairs in Ireland for not delivering. Whether this has been justified or not I have no idea but I am delighted to see that - most recently - Internet comments have lavished praise on the Birr Fair. But that level of public satisfaction is past tense. If we want it again next year the Great Game Fairs Team needs to maintain their leading position in the public's opinion. To do so, we will need to be 'bigger and better' than ever before. We promise that every year. And you can bet your bottom dollar that we do just that in 2012 as well.

Conservation. A word that is often used by people whose contribution to conservation improvement is sadly

lacking. Maybe some of the bunny huggers have not actually ever been to a shooting estate where practical work results in habitat improvement that sees a huge range of migrants choose to set up their temporary HQ there every year. I know one keeper who not only gets on with his full time job but provides hides etc for at least one dedicated birdwatcher. Recently, a Red Kite was spotted with tags and the birdwatcher is currently encamped midway along one of the estate's best drives next to a lake, armed with binoculars and telephoto lenses. The keeper is almost as excited as the twitcher to find out the bird's history. In fact, chatting over a cup of tea he listed a few of the birds on the estate such as Long Eared Owls, Barn Owls, Merlins and Grasshopper Warblers to name but a few. He wants a survey done to see the exact extent and location of songbirds and others so that habitat can be improved for their benefit. Meanwhile his game keeping duties continue. Conservation in action. Not just a pound in a woolly hatted collector's charity box, this is the real world of country sports and conservation. And more should know about it.

It has been said that countrysports people are not good at blowing their own trumpet. Maybe not, and maybe that is where this magazine and the Great Game Fairs comes in - after all they showcase the best in country pastimes and conservation to a massive audience. We have the experience and the commitment to speak on behalf of countrysports and make people listen. Our ever increasing worldwide audience can't all be wrong. We are speaking out already and we have a worldwide audience to prove it.

Whether I am picking up for you, looking after a Novice Shot or merely picking up behind your Peg - best wishes to everyone for the new season.

Paul Pringle
Northern Editor

From Country Lifestyle to Country Pursuits, Barbour's Autumn Winter Collection Offers a Wide Choice for Both Men and Women



Sporting Featherweight

Autumn Winter 11 sees an infusion of colour and adventurous spirit blended into designs fit for every activity whether it's the daily commute, a Sunday afternoon stroll, long walks in deepest autumn or a day out in the field. Layers are key to the season; from chunky heritage sweaters to smart Fair Isle jumpers.

Lifestyle and Classic Country

At the heart of Barbour is the Lifestyle collection blending tradition with modernity. Taking inspiration from aspects of Barbour's heritage – country, village life and moorland, the collection features more refined fits and fabrications offering a choice of casual, relaxed country clothing. Muted tones and colour palettes compliment the subtle country influences on waxes, quilts and traditional tartans.

Drawing inspiration from its country roots, the Classic Country collection combines traditional and elegant pieces with new shapes and combinations. Easy to wear garments with flattering silhouettes make this collection fit for a weekend away from it all.

Layers are strong in colour with a wide range of chunky knitwear and cardigans, gilets, shirts and trousers that co-ordinate crisply and cleanly. Ladies shirts are feminine and fitted with a special use of Barbour's signature tartan and selected Liberty prints.

Barbour Sporting

New to Autumn Winter 11, Barbour Sporting features a co-ordinated, fit for purpose men's shooting clothing collection. The range utilises the best branded fabrics, including

GORE-TEX®. Considered to be the industry leading performance fabric GORE-TEX® delivers outstanding durability of waterproofness, windproofness and breathability, keeping the wearer dry and comfortable.

Designed by Vice Chairman and Head of Barbour Sporting, Helen

Barbour, the range is versatile and of the highest quality with a focus on ensuring total freedom of movement when out shooting. Two jackets that are ideal for early season are the Sporting Featherweight, Barbour's lightest shooting jacket, offering complete protection from the elements. With shoulder stitching to prevent slippage, large bellows pockets and a drawstring waist for shaping and warmth, it's a versatile shooting jacket which also works well later in the season when used in combination with a fleece waistcoat. The Sporting Superlight uses GORE-TEX® laminated outer fabric and has wadding for extra warmth. A very comfortable jacket to wear when shooting, it has fully unrestricted swing and large bellows pockets.

Barbour Sporting also includes gilets, co-ordinated knitwear, shirts, ties, waterproof trousers and accessories – all essentials for the discerning sportsman's kit for the season. For further details please visit www.barbour.com or call 0191 427 4210 for stockists.



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Sporting

RSPB Welcome new NI Wildlife and Natural Environment Bill

Just over one year ago, in June 2010 the RSPB attended the first reading of the Northern Ireland Wildlife and Natural Environment Bill - a marathon 8 hour question and answer session at the Northern Ireland Assembly. On leaving this reading last year RSPB conservation manager Anne-Marie McDevitt was pleased with RSPB efforts and said: "We worked hard to ensure that changes took place. We can say that Northern Ireland has done its bit to safeguard our beautiful and cherished wildlife."

Since then, the final consideration period is over and the changes have been made official. The new Act will be commenced on 17th August 2011 so all new offences apply from then. The amendments are great news for the RSPB as species that have been suffering worrying declines are now better protected.

According to the new Act bird of prey nests such as barn owl, peregrine and red kite are protected from damage or destruction at all times of year. This is great news for the red kite population here which hatched its first set of chicks last year after their reintroduction by the RSPB in 2008. The RSPB is pleased that the shooting of curlew is now illegal at all times of the year. The curlew breeding population has declined massively in recent years, mainly due to habitat changes, but this protection is another chance to help the species recover.

The new Act also requires all public bodies to further the conservation of biodiversity in their work, in line with the Biodiversity Strategy produced by the government every five years. The new amendments give stronger protection for Areas of Special Scientific Interest (ASSIs) and to protected species are now bigger financial and custodial sentences for anyone intentionally or recklessly causing damage to an ASSI, adding another level of protection for Northern Ireland's special places. Reckless damage or disturbance to protected species, including all birds during the breeding season, is also an offence. This puts the onus on the perpetrator to show that they took reasonable precautions to avoid damage, such as by doing works at the right time of year.

RSPB senior conservation officer Claire Ferry said: "This part of the new Act is important because it means all government bodies and councils must remember wildlife in their work. The threat of fines and custodial sentences to persistent individual offenders will also help. We hope this will benefit, for example, our declining urban species such as swift, house sparrow and starling which are often left homeless after construction work damages their nest sites, or our rivers and the species living in them threatened by pollution."

RSPB Northern Ireland Director, Dr James Robinson said: "We are delighted with Northern Ireland's new Wildlife and Natural Environment Act. Acting now to protect our valuable wildlife and special places will help stop biodiversity declines in the country and keep our special places in good condition so that future generations can enjoy them as we have. As part of our latest campaign "Stepping Up For Nature" we will be asking everyone to do their small bit for nature - we are really pleased that our government stepped up by implementing these protection measures. If we all act together, we'll achieve something big - a world richer in wildlife."

Publishers Note: The legislation regarding the curlew in many ways simply confirms the factual position that few if any curlew have been shot in Northern Ireland for many years. Although the curlew was on the quarry list, I personally know of no shooter who has actually ever shot a curlew. The main threat to the curlew population has not been shooting but loss of habitat.

New superior quality binoculars with integrated range-finder and angle shot programme from SWAROVSKI OPTIK

The EL Range 8x42 and 10x42 sets a new standard in hunting equipment. SWAROVSKI OPTIK is introducing a new binocular offering crystal-clear optics and a precision rangefinder. Uncompromising transmission values, precise measurement and the globally unique angle shot programme developed by SWAROVSKI OPTIK offer valuable prerequisites that enable you to shoot successfully over long distances. This makes the EL Range an ideal partner for ensuring a successful hunt.

Crystal-clear vision – exceptional optics

The transmission in both binocular halves is 91%. They are equipped with a 61° wide angle eyepiece which supports a field of view of 137m (8x42) or 110m (10x42). The large eye relief offers four positions, to which the eyecup can be adjusted individually. This means that even spectacle wearers can enjoy the full benefit, with a crystal-clear vision and great comfort.

Precise measurements thanks to smart ergonomic design

A steady hand is needed to take accurate measurements. The proven EL wrap-around grip allows you to hold the binoculars steady so you can aim at even the smallest targets over any distance. The binoculars' small, perfectly balanced weight of 900g, along with their distinctive streamline shape, also ensures that you can measure the exact distance to the desired target, even using just one hand. This makes the EL Range the lightest in the high-end category. The EL Range can measure with an accuracy of +/- 1m over the entire measurement range (30–1375m). The measurement button, ergonomically located on the bridge, helps you to use it quickly and intuitively, even during twilight. The small target mark allows you to take precise measurements at all times. You can adjust the brightness of the display to suit your personal requirements.

SWAROAIM – for a precise aim

To be able to set the downrange you want when going uphill or downhill, you need either an instinctive 'feel' with an experience in ballistics, or a corrective instrument with measurement accuracy. SWAROVSKI OPTIK has developed a completely new, globally unique angle shot programme called SWAROAIM. It is integrated into every EL Range and allows you to define the settings easily and precisely for a corrected shooting range, to ensure that you shoot safely in steep terrain. The EL Range can show either the angle or the corrected shooting range, which means, that you will have no more problems staying on target when shooting at an angle, even over very long distances. As usual when you are hunting, you will have to measure the distance to the target, read the corrected distance for the angle and adjust the ballistic turret or select the appropriate aiming point in the long-range reticule. If you are on flat terrain and do not need to use the programme, you can easily disable it via the menu. For more detailed information visit: www.el-range.swarovskioptik.com

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Ulster Reform Club shoot

Tuesday, 17th May 2011 saw the Annual Ulster Reform Club Clay Pigeon Shoot take place again at Hollow Farm Shooting Grounds, Comber. Although the event's main sponsor was Cunningham Coates Stockbrokers, it was also kindly supported by Countryside Alliance Ireland and Country Lifestyles Exhibitions Ltd publishers of the Irish Countrysports and Country Life magazine and organisers of the Great Game Fairs of Ireland.

The event is open solely to Ulster Reform Club Members and their guests, with the Members competing for the honour of Top Gun and having their name inscribed on the Wylie Cup, first presented in 1903. There are also prizes for Top Novice, Top Team, Top Guest and the like.

The prize-giving took place recently in the Club's Royal Avenue premises, with some of the photographs below showing the main players.



Above: Club President Jeremy Mills presenting the Award to Peter Rainey, Top Novice

Left: Nick Cochrane, Top Gun

Below: (L to R) Chris McCleane (Cunningham Coates), Peter Rainey (Cunningham Coates) Top Novice, Club President Jeremy Mills, Nick Cochrane, Top Gun, and Michael Copeland, Convenor House, Sports & Social Committee



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Antrim & Down Working Tests

The Antrim & Down Springer Spaniel club recently held their annual working test in Clondeboy Estate.

Starting of with the puppy test, all pups were of a very high standard, so good they had to have a run off to determine second and third. Next was the novice and another hard one to judge as they were all good dogs which handled well and showed style. The weather was great on the day, although perhaps a bit warm the dogs, but that didn't seem to put them off. After lunch, the open test was in held a different wood than the previous tests and it provided a long hunt and a marked retrieve. The dogs then hunted again and had to tackle a long blind forward. Some dogs found the blind retrieve a bit hard going, and they had to work longer, but it made it even better for the judges as it helped to sort out the positions. It was good to see that the judges gave every dog and its handler plenty of opportunity to show off their skills.

The judges for the Puppy Test were A Patterson and A Doris, while Novice and Open Test Judges were A Patterson and R. Gorman.

A good day was had by all and a big thank you to Lady Dufferin & Clandyboy Estate, and to the Irish C.L.A Team for their support, not forgetting Feedwell Dog Food for their sponsorship.

Results:

Puppy Test	1. Scroggwood Ester,	Handler: E Rowan
	2. Clearmeadow,	W Edgar
	3. Anohoe Tiara,	I Blair
	4. Killylin Freckle,	G Fleming

Novice Test	1. Clodahill Rosie,	A Dorris
	2. Merebrook Hale,	D O'Neill
	3. Killylin Spirren,	N McCrystal
	4. Spirrenside,	N McCrystal

Open Test	1. Fergus Fern,	D Smyth
	2. Moggies Brair,	E Rowan
	3. Aines in the pink,	R Patterson
	4. Johnerah Clarehill,	J McClure



Puppy Test Winners and Judges.



Novice Test Winners and Judges.



Open Test Winners and Judges.

Gun Quarter - what's in a name?

The Gun Quarter is an area of the city of Birmingham traditionally associated with the manufacture of firearms and sporting guns. Part of the Gun Quarter was demolished 40 plus years ago and the area split in two by the construction of the Birmingham Inner Ring Road. Now we read press reports that Birmingham Council decided to change the name of the Gun Quarter having received a petition from a mere 50 residents from a local church group to change the name to St George and St Chad's Quarter while over 4500 signed a petition not to change the name.

Our Northern Editor has some views on what he sees as one more step for the 'ban everything if appears to offend people who, some might say, simply wish to be offended.' This what he thinks about the matter.

A noble history

The Gun Quarter's industry started before the 19 century, but it was then that the skilled gun manufacturers of the town came into their own. Between 1804 and 1817 a total of 1,827,889 muskets, rifles, carbines, and pistols were manufactured for the Government alone. As well, 3,037,644 barrels and 2,879,203 locks were made for assembly in London and around 1,000,000 items were also delivered to the East India Company. It is estimated that production of guns and components in eleven years averaged more than three quarters

of a million items per annum, more than two thirds of England's production. Birmingham Proof House was built in 1813, then one of only two such proof houses in England, the other being in London. Around 800,000 weapons were shipped from Birmingham to America during the Civil War and obviously World War I saw Birmingham engineering companies heavily involved in arms manufacture as well.

Gunmakers have existed in Birmingham, some of the better known examples include firms such as Webley and Scott, WW Greener, Parker hale and Westley Richards to name but some whose names are still etched firmly on shooters' minds today. We are delighted to report too that there are still several gun manufacturers and traders based in the Gun Quarter and long may that be the case.

Our view

We think that this is another example of the inmates running the asylum and a kowtow to people who do not even like the word 'gun and have no regard for history. What is next? maybe there are some loonies in this country who do not like some place names. What would they make of Bangor? Change it to Gentle Pop-gor? Aughnacloy - changed to Oh DearNacloy? And farther afield - well we would not even dream of mentioning Bangkok. Never mind Phuket.

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Countryside Alliance Ireland News



Business as Usual

The summer recess is now over and the Assembly is getting down to business. As this is written, this week saw the relevant committees sitting and planning out their future work for the forthcoming term. Much work has been done over the summer recess and there are many items that will affect country sports enthusiasts coming down the line. The Department of Agriculture and Rural Development is currently reviewing regulations under the Welfare of Animals Act (NI) 2011. This piece of legislation concentrates on improving animal welfare standards within Northern Ireland.

Included in the regulations, which may be of interest to the readers, are the Welfare of Farmed Animals, the Procedures Permitted by Lay Persons and the Docking of Working Dogs Tails. These issues are presently up for consultation to the general public, and can be accessed via the Department's website. The closing date for these consultations is nearing; the opportunity to respond ceases on 23rd and 26th September 2011. Therefore, if you feel these issues may affect your livelihood or interests then do view the consultations.

The Department recently held a preliminary meeting for key stakeholders regarding dog breeding establishments. The objective was to discuss current breeding establishment regulations, namely the Dogs (Breeding Establishments and Guard Dog Kennels) Regulations 1983, and future breeding establishment legislation. The meeting proved educational with all the key stakeholders keen to provide an insight into their organisation's expertise. Countryside Alliance Ireland joined the meeting to ensure our members and all responsible country sports enthusiasts were represented, and whilst animal welfare is the priority, it must be ensured the new regulations are balanced.

CAI fully commends the Department for involving key stakeholders in the decision making process. There will be a full public consultation on the new Welfare of Animals (Dog Breeding Establishments) Regulations held later in the year, and CAI will keep our members informed of this.

New shooting season

With the shooting season now underway we ask all our members to be vigilant, responsible and to conduct all their activities in an ethical and professional manner. Please ensure that all your firearms are correctly stored when not in use and this includes both in your home and when you are out in the field. Over the past few years there have been a number of thefts from vehicles and we cannot over emphasise the importance of firearm security this year. Indeed the Minister for Justice David Ford MLA acknowledged the work we are doing in highlighting the importance of firearm security. However, it is down to the individual to ensure that they conform to the conditions of their firearm certificate. Be Safe, Be Secure this season.

The continued problem of poaching

Reports in the media recently have again highlighted the serious problem of poaching within Ireland. These reports raise important issues regarding the potential harm poachers can cause. The act of poaching is illegally taking wild plants or animals contrary to local and international conservations and wildlife management laws. These wildlife management laws are important in maintaining a healthy and vital game population. Once the law is ignored, our precious fish and game stocks start to suffer.

As many of our members and other responsible country sports enthusiasts know, it takes a substantial amount of effort to nurture and conserve fish and game stocks. For someone therefore to come and illegally deplete these stocks is against all the ethics of country sports. As many people know, there is a real feeling of betrayal when you get to your sporting area and find evidence of poachers being there before you.

For these reasons it is vital we all remain vigilant and persist in the fight against these selfish poachers. Where you suspect illegal hunting or poaching, it is recommended you contact your local Police or Garda station. Take note of all relevant details such as location, date, time, vehicle registration and other details however; please remember never to approach the suspects.

If we all work together, we can help to alleviate this problem and protect our wildlife.

Large Wild Game Food Chain Information (FCI) Document

There is important information for all Deer Stalkers and DAFF Registered Game Dealers in Ireland (ROI). Recent changes, with effect from September 1st 2011, will make the sale and quality of venison to game dealers and other game handling establishments, more transparent, traceable and accountable, at the same time improving the reputation of wild venison as a high quality and healthy product.

In future, where a Trained Person has signed the declaration, the carcass need not be accompanied by the head and viscera. However not all deer stalkers have the required Trained Person status and the carcass must be accompanied to the Game Handling Establishment by the head and all viscera, except for the stomach and intestines. This will be the case for all Irish hunters at the opening of the 2011 hunting season.

The Wild Deer Association of Ireland has organised and hosted carcass handling and diseases identification seminars in conjunction with the DAFF since 1999. As a member of the Deer Alliance, it is their intention to include FCI Module to form part of a revised HCAP Programme to be introduced in 2012. The Deer Alliance will shortly be offering an add-on module to those hunters who are already HCAP-Certified.

EU Birds Directive Derogations

Under the terms of the EU Birds Directive, all EU member States, including Ireland, are bound to take measures to protect all wild birds and their habitats. The Directive allows member States to make derogations from its protective measures where certain wild bird species covered by the declaration are causing damage to crops, livestock and fauna or represent a threat to public health or to air safety.

Since September 2010, the declarations provide for the deletion of the use of non-meat based poisoned or anaesthetic bait for the control of grey crows and magpies. The provision on the use of non-meat based poisoned or anaesthetic bait to control certain species of pigeon only under licence from the National Parks and Wildlife Service of the Department was retained. Grey crows and magpies can still be controlled by shooting or the use of legal cage traps.

The Minister has signed four declarations for the period September to November 2011 for the provinces of Connaught, Leinster, Munster and the administrative counties of Cavan, Monaghan and Donegal. For more information, visit the National Parks and Wildlife Service website at www.npws.ie

New Law on Coursing in NI

The Wildlife and Natural Environment Bill (NI) was introduced into the NI Assembly in 2010 to amend existing wildlife and environment legislation. The resulting Act has now been enacted and became law from Wednesday 17th August 2011.

Within this Act is the provision to ban hare coursing events. The Act clearly states that a person commits an offense if they partake in any aspect of a hare coursing event, or allow a dog to participate in a hare

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coursing event. The Act defines such an event as "a competition in which dogs are, by the use of live hares, assessed as to skill in hunting hares".

However, there appears to be some confusion resulting from the Act. It is only organised events that are prohibited. It is still legal for responsible country sports enthusiasts to course individually. All the Act has succeeded in doing is to reduce the extensive conservation effort that was undertaken by coursing clubs in Northern Ireland.

Coursing clubs are scientifically recognised as an important conservation force. Queens University Belfast research has stated: "Without legal, well organised and regulated coursing, much of the costs of conservation will fall exclusively on government." In fact, research undertaken by QUB (published in 2010) found that the Irish hare is 18 times more abundant in areas managed by coursing clubs than in similar sites in the wider countryside.

We believe that the sustainable and productive use of our natural resources is a defining characteristic of the Northern Irish countryside and of paramount importance in sustaining our rural communities.

Rathcormac Gun Club Charity Bike and Hike

The 2011 'Bike & Hike' in aid of the Mercy Hospital Foundation and the Irish Heart Foundation took place on Saturday July 16th in the south west of Ireland. Of the 200 participants who took part in the event, the Rathcormac Gun Club had a team of seven.

The cycle began outside the Mercy Hospital, Co. Cork, at 7:30am going through Ballincollig, Macroom, and Ballyvourney before climbing over the county bounds and onwards to Glenflesk and Killarney. The weather en route was mixed with a dry start, followed by heavy rain at Ballincollig and Macroom. However, the second half of the cycle was dominated by a strong head wind from the county bounds to Killarney which slowed progress and sapped energy. Changing facilities and lunch was provided by The Malton Hotel, Killarney, followed by a 2pm transfer to the base of Carrauntoohil, the mountain for the climb section. By 2pm conditions had worsened considerably with the strong wind now accompanied by driving rain, and this persisted for the rest of the day. This made for difficult under foot conditions on the lower part of the mountain; however it was the drop in temperatures, reduced visibility and the high winds which were the concern in the upper sections.

Thankfully, an experienced guide accompanied each group of 20 participants to advise on climbing technique, route choice to the summit and assistance in case of emergency. The summit was reached by 5:30pm, but adverse weather meant that time on the top was brief and a decent to the slightly more sheltered side of the mountain with lower wind speeds and increased temperature was a priority. The decent brought us through the spectacular "Heavenly Gates" route and back to Cronin's yard on the base of the mountain, which we reached at 7:30pm.

The atmosphere at Cronin's Yard was quiet and subdued, the cold, wet and exhaustion had overtaken the elation of completing such a gruelling event over 12 hours. However, later in the evening after hot showers and hot food the enormity of what we achieved on the day lifted our spirits. Only then could we truly reflect on another day where the Rathcormac Gun Club gave a little bit back to the community in which we all live. Assurance was received from the Mercy Hospital Foundation and the Irish Heart Foundation representatives that the money raised would be put to use directly on saving lives in the Mercy Hospital and the ongoing research into heart disease, which claims countless lives in Ireland each year.

Overall this event raised €50,000 with the Rathcormac Gun Club raising €2930. In what is a very difficult economy for raising sponsorship, they would like to thank all those who sponsored the team for this event and Countryside Alliance Ireland for sponsoring the cycling jerseys. For more information on this event and other previous charity events, please visit the Rathcormac Gun Club website at www.rathcormacgunclub.ie



Rathcormac Gun Club Team presenting a cheque to the Irish Heart Foundation.

Exciting Final in the RDS Hunt Chase

The first week in August means the same for all equine enthusiasts – the RDS Dublin Horse Show. This year the weather held (mostly) and the crowd turned out. Throughout the week the jumping and showing was at a high standard however, it was the last event of the schedule which drew the largest, and the noisiest, crowd; the Hunt Chase. The Hunt Chase has consisted of only eight teams for a few years now, and this year the spectators were treated to eight well matched and competitive teams. The first round of four heats showed the difference the main arena and a bit pressure can make, with most of the teams committing elementary mistakes. This purely added to the excitement for the spectators and the gasps could be heard throughout the RDS.

The four victorious teams that emerged from the first round were the Roscommon Hunt, the Streamstown Harriers, the Ward Union and the Kilkennys. Both semi-finals were fast and furious with the Roscommon Hunt going through to the final with last year's winners the Ward Union. The final was the best the RDS crowd has seen for a few years with the Roscommons showing no mercy when the Ward Unions made rare mistakes under pressure. The atmosphere really was electric, and it's just a pity the old 16 team format was scrapped as this really proved to be best spectator crowd of the week.

Well done to the eventual winners, the Roscommons and special congratulations to Danni Neilan, Amy McDonagh, Brian Cassidy & Brian Horohoe. They all coped well under the pressure in the main arena and truly deserved to win.

Point to Points Begin Again

The month of September heralds the start of point-to-points once again, with the opener being the Limerick Foxhounds meeting on Sunday 25th. Every autumn and spring people from all communities irrespective of age or wealth, congregate in a field to watch some of National Hunt's future stars. However, in recent months there have been threats to the future of point to pointing, both with the introduction of the Hunting Bill in Northern Ireland and the uncertainty of the current degree of funding and whether this will still be available. It is for these reasons that sometimes we all need a reminder of the genuine importance of these events.

For any uninitiated people out there, points to points are horse races held by hunts in their local vicinity. They are usually run over three miles and incorporate fences. Whereas before many hunt members rode, it has now become substantially more professional with both the talent of riders and horses improving every decade. These races are used by the majority of registered trainers throughout Ireland to introduce young horses to racing life, and to provide older horses and local trainers with a valid chance to compete. Volunteers and hunt members predominately run these meetings and in this way a unique atmosphere is acquired and the whole community becomes involved. Not many sports are predominately volunteer run, produce such community spirit and still showcase remarkable talent.

In addition to the social advantages, point-to-pointing provides a substantial injection into the economy. In 'The Value of Point to Pointing in Ireland' they study the autumn season of one year. The total cost of running 26 point to points throughout Ireland (North and South) in the autumn of 2009 was €386,438 which in turn, generated a huge €5,359,850. This money includes horses sold at sales, where a large amount of this income was not already in the economy. In the current economic climate, and indeed at any stage, a sport which generates this level of income with such low input from departmental bodies should be celebrated and most definitely protected for the future.

Point to points are also vital for the breeding and training aspects of Irish racing. Many horses that start their racing life at point to points graduate to the highest echelons of National Hunt, both in Ireland and GB. Out of the last 13 Cheltenham Gold Cup winners, 9 have emerged from Irish point to points. This is a tremendous record and adds strength to the fact that point to point horses are important in terms of the continuing worldwide reputation of Irish horses.

For these reasons, and many more, it is imperative that we nurture this sport. This involves looking after the people who run the point to points; the individual hunts throughout the country. From this we again go back to the absolute need to protect Ireland's country sports. Countryside Alliance Ireland can only ask our members, and all country sport enthusiasts, to remain proactive in the rally against the threats that are constantly facing our rural way of life, in order to ensure we have them to enjoy for future generations and many, many years to come.

Last Game Fair of the Season at Birr a Great Success

The last weekend in August hosted the final game fair of the 2011 season. Birr Castle in County Offaly provided a spectacular setting for a packed weekend of country sports.

Stephen Smyth was one happy bunny when his son John landed this 8 pounder from the boat at the Culiff Rock at the beginning of September. He says that it was taken on a size 12 trout fly using a single handed trout rod and adds: "I gave John the rod within 10 seconds of hooking it and he played it brilliantly. At the last minute I was scared of it going round the anchor rope so I did the last wee bit.

It was almost dark at 8:40, so that was the perfect, final cast. We were thrilled, so Dad & Son came straight home to Anca soaking and elated.



Well done young John Smyth - now that's what I call a fish!

As usual, the Countryside Alliance Ireland marquee had an extensive range of guests including BADA-UK, which promoted tick awareness. Ticks can often be overlooked however, if treated inappropriately or not given full care, many diseases can arise from such a small creature. In addition, there was comprehensive information on the correct method of removing the offenders in such a way to minimise the risk of disease. A steady flow of visitors to the BADA-UK stand were all educated and for those who missed the opportunity, visit their website on www.bada-uk.org. (See feature article elsewhere in the magazine. Editor)



Nessa from BADA – UK and Lyall Plant from CAI, in the CAI marquee at Birr Game Fair

Also present were Lindsay Carlisle with an extensive range of hand carved walking sticks on display, and the Wild Deer Association of Ireland.

Countryside Alliance Ireland would like to extend our thanks to all our members and non-members who took the time to visit our stand at all the fairs we attended, and all those who entered our prize draw. All the CAI team thoroughly enjoy meeting our members and we all now look with anticipation to May. (Ballywalter Game & Country Living Fair, Ballywalter Estate, Co Down will be held on 5th & 6th May 2012. Editor)

Side by Side success for Mark

Mark Edgar is no slouch with a shotgun! He is pictured with the fine trophy he won with a side by side shotgun at the Newtownards Wildfowlers' John Orr Memorial Shoot



Mark Edgar - Bang on target at the John Orr Memorial Shoot

COUNTRYSIDE NEWS

SHOOT HELPS RAISE £25,000 FOR CANCER CHARITY



The Cleggan Shoot's Francois O'Neill who conquered Africa's highest peak, Kilimanjaro, has helped raise £25,000 for the Royal Marsden Cancer Hospital.

Last weekend he was presented by 80 members in the Cleggan shooting party with a cheque for £1,300 for his efforts.

The chef restaurateur who is 27 and now owns and manages the Brompton Bar and Grill in central London is a regular

visitor home to the Cleggan family estate. He says he and his half brother Hugo Chittenden embarked on the Kilimanjaro trek earlier this year.

Neither of us was fully prepared for the five day ascent to the 20,000ft summit but we were determined! he says.

The popular Cleggan shoot has been raising money for different charities for the past nine years. Estate owner and father of

Francois, Lord Rathcavan, says the generosity of the shooting party has meant a significant amount of money has been raised each year.

We are delighted to complete the fund-raising this season with a generous cheque from the Cleggan shoot participants for £1,300 and in particular I'd like to thank Alan Stewart for helping us raise the money, says Lord Rathcavan.

Northern Ireland Water fined £2,300 for pollution offences

Northern Ireland Water (NIW) was fined a total of £2,300 plus court costs of £53 at Downpatrick Magistrates Court for two instances of making a polluting discharge to a waterway.

On 15 June 2009, a Water Quality Inspector, acting on behalf of the Northern Ireland Environment Agency (NIEA) inspected the Drumaness River and observed that there was a plume of grey sewage in the river for approximately 100 metres and significant growth of sewage fungus on the bed of the waterway. The source of the polluting discharge was traced to the Magheratimpany Sewage Pumping Station (SPS) which is owned and operated by NIW.

On 14 December 2009, a Water Quality Inspector, acting on behalf of the Northern Ireland Environment Agency (NIEA) inspected a manhole at the rear of Drumaness Wastewater Treatment Works (WWTW) and observed a trail of sewage related debris between the manhole and the adjacent tributary of the

Drumaness River. Whilst there was no discharge at that time, extensive sewage fungus was noted in the waterway below this point.

On 12 January and 13 January 2010, the Inspector revisited the WWTW and observed overflows of untreated sewage discharging to the adjacent waterway. The Inspector made a further visit to the WWTW on 14 January 2010 and observed that the discharge of untreated sewage was on-going. The source of the polluting discharge was traced to a manhole on the sewerage system adjacent to Drumaness Wastewater Treatment Works (WWTW) owned and operated by NIW.

Samples taken on 15 June 2009 at Magheratimpany SPS and on 14 January 2010 adjacent to Drumaness WWTW confirmed that the discharges contained poisonous, noxious or polluting matter which was potentially harmful to fish life in the receiving waterway.



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'Go For Game' Campaign catches public's imagination



Take one top Chef. Add some game, maybe a partridge, salmon, wild trout duck or succulent venison. Show how simple it is for anyone to cook a delicious mouth watering dish and what have you got? Answer: More people than ever cooking and eating game and game fish. And the secret ingredient - the 'Go for Game Campaign,' which is leading the charge to put 'game' and fish firmly on the public's menu.

Launched by The Great Game Fairs of Ireland and Irish Country Sports & Country Life magazine, Go for Game is a stunningly successful All Ireland campaign to get more people interested in cooking and eating wild game and fish.

Great Game Fair Director Albert Titterington explains: "We are presenting game and fish as the ultimate free range food which can be used in everything from the simplest dish to a gourmet delight. Some folk simply have never tasted game and we want to get them to try it. With more supermarkets and shops now offering game to the public there is really no excuse for not buying and trying. And of course there is the tradition of bringing home a couple of birds or fish at the end of a day in the fields - we want to build on that as well. But whether you want to 'catch it and cook it' or simply learn how to prepare that venison steak from the butchers, our Go For Game campaign gives novices and experts top tips for succulent dishes based on locally sourced wild produce."

Simplicity and wholesomeness

At each of the Great Game Fairs this year, one of the best game and fish chefs in the country, Emmett McCourt, showed thousands of people how to present appetising dishes using modern and classical recipes - with a dash of the Victorian/Edwardian period thrown in for good measure. Emmett is almost as passionate about fishing and shooting as his cookery, so it's no wonder that he uses local and ethically sourced and sustainable ingredients whenever possible. Emmett says: "The Great Game Fairs were perfect locations to launch the Go For Game campaign and to demonstrate the simplicity and

wholesomeness of game cookery to a massive audience. I showed classics such as Game Pie and Braised Saddle of Rabbit and Pot Roasted Pheasant along with simple dishes such as pan fried duck breast with raspberry jus and the feedback showed that hundreds of people were won over to game."



Emmett McCourt taking the Go For Game Campaign to the ROI on the NARGC stand at the Irish Game and Country Fair Birr.

"With Go for Game now well and truly launched, we will be bringing it to an even wider audience this winter throughout the country, with our restaurant - based roadshows and there is even a DVD being made which will put the campaign's message on the world stage," said Albert.

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Launch of Root & Branch Organic

Helens Bay Organic Gardens was the location for the launch of Root & Branch Organic, a new Northern Ireland Organic Brand. Bringing fresh, local, organic produce direct to you via their new website, www.rootandbranchorganic.com, their stall at St. George's Market and from their farm shop.

With over 300 people in attendance at the event, the organisers were absolutely delighted.

"It's wonderful to see so many people here, trying local organic food, learning about organic farming and having a real family day out. Root & Branch Organic is about building community, connecting with the earth and promoting wellbeing and that is what has happened here today," said Ben Craig, Root & Branch Organic Director.

John McCormick has been an organic farmer for 20 years, running Helens Bay Organic Gardens, which has had a delivery scheme attached to it for almost as long as the farm has been open. Today the name for the delivery scheme has officially changed to Root & Branch Organic but the farm has kept its own name.

John McCormick said: "I'm delighted to be working with Ben, I see this as an evolution of our work to bring about a change in agricultural production in Northern Ireland to be truly healthy and sustainable and to create an alternative to the large multiple retailers who cannot be a realistic market for small producers like us."

Root & Branch Organic are seeking partners to join with local business, charities, schools and community groups that would like to offer their patrons the opportunity to pick up their organic produce at a central location. If you would like more information please Email, tastyfood@rootandbranchorganic.com or phone 028 95 810232.



Custodial sentences for wildlife crimes

For the first time ever, there will be custodial sentences for wildlife crime. The most serious offenders can face a maximum of six months in prison. The Environment Minister Alex Attwood has almost doubled fines for people who transgress; with a new maximum of £5,000 for offenders. He has also introduced protection for more plants, birds and animal and is making the changes through the Wildlife and Natural Environment Act 2011 which has just come into effect.

Alex Attwood said: "There is a clear message today – those committing wildlife crimes will be pursued and prosecuted. DOE is about making Northern Ireland a better place to live, work and invest in. This Act does that. For the first time custodial sentences will be an option for the most serious and persistent offenders. This should make people think and think hard about committing wildlife crime. The public has a part to play as well in reporting wildlife crime to the PSNI so that prompt action can be taken against alleged perpetrators. The Act will also provide increased protection for a greater range of plants, animals and birds. I am giving enforcement authorities more powers to investigate alleged cases of wildlife crime, coupled with the introduction of new sanctions against those involved in such activity. The Act highlights the important role that the public sector can take in furthering the conservation of biodiversity when undertaking their functions. This is a positive approach as Government as a whole is now committed through the biodiversity duty to protect our natural heritage. This action will deliver social and economic benefits, as well as environmental gains."

Examples of crime which might attract these higher penalties include illegally collecting eggs of rare birds, poisoning birds of prey and badger baiting. The Act extends protection to a wider range of wildlife including the basking shark, sea horse, puffin, red kite and cuckoo. The higher level of protection for these animals and birds means there should be no circumstances in which they can be killed or injured. The Act also outlines the additional responsibility of all Departments to promote and embrace nature conservation when carrying out their daily tasks.

Hare coursing events banned in Northern Ireland

Hare coursing events are banned in Northern Ireland. The new ban is a permanent measure and makes it an offence for someone to organise, participate in or attend a hare coursing event, or to net, transport or be in possession of hares for the purpose of a hare coursing event. The ban is part of a series of tough measures the Minister has taken in the Wildlife and Natural Environment Act, which became law on the same date. Environment Minister Alex Attwood who made the legislation said: "Hare coursing events should not take place in a modern, progressive, civilised society. We all have a responsibility to protect our wildlife and certainly I want to do everything in my power to do that. While hare coursing events in Northern Ireland has been prevented for a number of years on a temporary basis, the ban I am introducing is a permanent one and a positive step forward."



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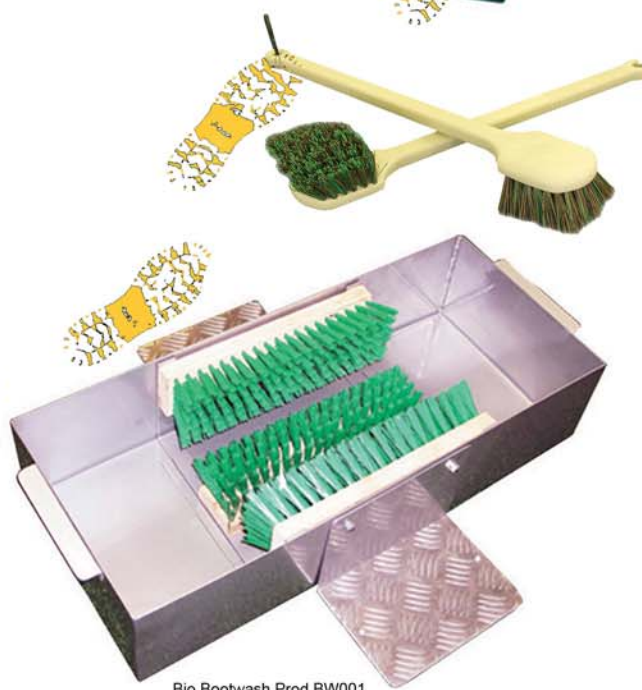
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Important information for all Deer Stalkers and DAFF Registered Game Dealers in ROI

Damian Hannigan of the Wild Deer Association of Ireland writes that with effect from 1 September 2011, the following changes will make the sale and quality of venison to Game Dealers and other game handling establishments, more transparent, traceable and accountable, at the same time improving the reputation of wild venison as a high quality and healthy product.

While we are concerned about the lack of notice been given and will be raising a number of other concerns with the department, in principle we will welcome this development.

The Wild Deer Association of Ireland has organised and hosted carcass handling and diseases identification seminars in conjunction with the DAFF since 1999. As a member of the Deer Alliance we engaged in discussions with DAFF and FSAI in 2008 but could not obtain support or approval for the "Trained Hunter" module which the Deer Alliance wished to incorporate at that time. However the Deer Alliance is already considering proposals for a FCI Module to form part of a revised HCAP Programme to be introduced in 2012 (subject to discussions and finalisation of planning for 2012, between now and year-end) and in the meanwhile expects shortly to be offering an add-on module to those hunters who are already HCAP-Certified.

FCI Document

The Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food has said that from 1 September 2011 a FCI document must be completed in respect of each wild deer received at DAFF approved Game Handling Establishments. The document should be completed by the hunter, the trained person (where relevant) and the Game Handling Establishment. It should be retained by the Game Handling Establishment. The first part of the document must be completed by the hunter. This includes the date and location where the animal was shot. There is a choice of three boxes to be ticked. The first box should be ticked if the hunter is a Trained Person as allowed for under the Hygiene Regulations. (Currently there are no trained hunters in Ireland, but training of hunters will commence in the near future.) The second box is ticked if the hunter is not a Trained Person, but a Trained Person was present when the animal

was shot. This person could be the gamekeeper or the game manager who is part of the hunting team, or located in the immediate vicinity of where hunting is taking place. In all other cases, the third box should be ticked and the carcass must be accompanied to the Game Handling Establishment by the head and all viscera, except for the stomach and intestines. This will be the case for all Irish hunters at the opening of the 2011 hunting season.

In future, where a Trained Person has signed the declaration the carcass need not be accompanied by the head and viscera. Box 2 should be completed by a Trained Person who either shot the animal or was present when the animal was shot. If the Trained Person is satisfied that;

- the animal did not display any abnormal behaviour before killing,
- the body and the viscera do not show any abnormal characteristics, and
- there is no suspicion of environmental contamination

Then the first part of box 2 should be signed. However, if the Trained Person has noted any evidence of health risks then the second part of box 2 should be completed detailing the possible health risks and the head and all viscera except for the stomach and intestines must accompany the carcass. The Game Handling Establishment should ensure that each wild deer carcass is accompanied by a properly completed FCI document. The final part of the FCI document should be completed by a trained operative at the establishment. The Game Handling Establishment should ensure that the carcass is accompanied by the head and the viscera, other than the stomach and intestines, unless the Trained Person declaration has been completed.

The FCI documents must be kept on site and made available on request for examination by Department staff. The FCI documents must be correlated with the relevant carcass identification.

Any abnormalities recorded by the Trained Person must be brought to the immediate attention of Department personnel.

Dog owners reminded of licensing changes

Agriculture and Rural Development Minister Michelle O'Neill MLA is reminding dog owners of changes to dog licensing rules which become effective on 3 October. She said: "Provisions of the Dogs (Amendment) Act 2011 which deal with the control conditions for problem dogs, dog licence fees and fixed penalty notices will come into operation on 3 October 2011. From that date, individual dog licence fees will increase from £5 to £12.50 while block licence fees will increase from £12.50 to £32. There will be concessions for dog owners aged 65 or over and those in receipt of certain benefits. Owners who have had their dog neutered will also be able to avail of a reduced fee."

In addition to changes in licensing fees, dog wardens will also have powers to impose certain control conditions on the licence of individual dogs in order to control problem behaviour where breaches of the Dogs Order have occurred. The range of control conditions available include a requirement to keep the dog muzzled when in public, keeping the dog away from certain

specified public places or keeping the dog securely confined.

Bryan Edgar, spokesperson for the NI Dogs Advisory Group, said: "The Northern Ireland Dogs Advisory Group welcomes the introduction of the changes to dog control legislation and in particular the first rise in licence fees since 1983. Councils will continue to promote and encourage responsible dog ownership to provide a better and safer environment for everyone. We would advise all dog owners to microchip their animals as soon as possible prior to the introduction of compulsory microchipping in spring 2012. Owners may currently take advantage of free chipping provided through local councils, the Dogs Trust and participating veterinary practices."

Recognising the work that local councils have undertaken to date, the Minister paid tribute by saying: "The collaborative approach between my Department and the councils has been very productive, resulting in guidance being produced for the public on the new dog control legislation."

Obituary

Denis Stephenson

1933 - 2011

Denis Stephenson died on 25 May 2011 after suffering a severe stroke. He is survived by his wife Muriel, daughter Denise and his grandchildren Ethan and Fraser.

Denis grew up with a great appreciation for the country way of life and the natural world. As he grew older this appreciation extended into many other areas; from work, to pastimes and family.

He had a great appreciation of fine workmanship which was reflected in his collection of vintage English shotguns and shotgun motor cases. However, it is the fine quality of his own work as a joiner for which he will be long remembered in the Bangor area. He is the only person I know who has had a poem written in honour of his work. Denis will be greatly missed by all his past clients, many of whom became his friends.

Photography was an important pastime for him, and he was usually seen at the Game Fairs here and on the mainland with his camera. His subjects ranged from people, to animals, and the flora and fauna of the countryside. To many of us who knew him, it will be his love and commitment to all country sports, that Denis will be best remembered. He loved to work his dogs, and use his Boss hammer gun on special occasions.

Denis was a founder member of the Strangford Lough Wildfowlers' Association, as it was then known. As a member of the club, he organised the exhibitions, which were an integral part of the educational programme put on for members of the public during the club's open week, and which contributed to the club winning the Stanley Duncan Trophy for the best Wildfowling Club in the United Kingdom three times. During his time in the club, Denis served as Chairman for a number of years and as a committee member and trustee up to the time of his death.

Although he was a very keen shooting enthusiast, Denis had a great love and respect for the natural world and all that it contained, as was apparent in his interest in the conservation and management of the countryside in general, and Strangford Lough in particular. He gave much of his time to serving on the Joint Council of the wildfowling clubs in the area, in which he served as Chairman, in addition to his service on the Strangford Lough Advisory Council.

It was important to Denis that the public should have the opportunity to appreciate their heritage of our beautiful country, especially Strangford, with its diversity of scenery and wildlife, and it is fitting that his last exhibition was at the Joint Council's stand at the Ballywalter Game Fair in April this year.

Denis Stephenson was a true country gentleman in every respect. He had a love of



the traditional way of doing things; proper dress in the shooting field, observer of etiquette, good manners, quick to apologise if in the wrong, and quick to forgive.

Dennis's passing leaves an irreplaceable hole in the local country sports community and he will be greatly missed but not forgotten by his friends

Ken Perrott

Publishers Note

I would like to thank Ken for his fine obituary of Denis. I know Ken and he were close pals and Irene and I often bumped into them at fairs in the UK.

I also had the pleasure of shooting with Ken and Denis on many occasions, the latest in the past season on 'Denis's Day' at Ballywalter. This was an annual event which Denis hosted on an estate which he loved. I took Denis round with me as we drove to the outer limits of the estate and he was in excellent form and shot very well.

We were delighted to award Denis one of the magazine's 'Lifetime Commitment Awards' for his country sports and conservation work. I often joke that these awards are not only given in an acknowledgement of the work carried out to date but are part of a contract of committal for the future. As one of Denis's last public duties was to put on a conservation and shooting exhibit at the Ballywalter Game Fair, the award was obviously richly deserved and the contract fully completed!

Reading Ken's obituary brought back fond memories of my first exposure to the Strangford Lough Wildfowlers Association it was in the early 60s when a friend and I reading about a shooting and wildfowl exhibition in the Town Hall in Newtownards decided to take the afternoon off from school and visit it.

I always consider it a defining moment in my life because although I was a keen target shooter at that stage, as an animal and bird lover I had ambivalent feelings about shooting birds or animals. A meeting with Bob Milliken, not only a great artist, target shooter and game shot but also a great conservationist, at the exhibition made me realise that shooting and conservation were not incompatible.

It was interesting to learn that Denis along with the late Tommy Wightman and the late George McMurray were responsible for mounting this exhibition and therefore were involved in developing my interests in country sports and conservation and in the founding of the Irish game fair tradition. So Denis's outreach work with the SLWA was part of something which has had a very positive influence on the promotion of country sports and conservation in Ireland.

Pictured at Ballywalter Park where 'Denis's Day' became a sporting fixture for his friends.



COUNTRYSPO RTS - ELECTORAL POWER IN POLITICS TODAY

The National Association of Regional Game Council's (NARGC) National Director, Des Crofton, was keynote speaker at the Stormont launch of the Great Game Fairs of Ireland 2011 in June, where he gave a hard hitting analysis of fieldsports today in Ireland and the political landscape in which it lies. Many in the audience, which included MLAs, MPs, Ministers, CEOs of Fieldsports Bodies and specially invited guests, including leaders from tourism, the economy and country sports, felt that, such was the importance of the speech, it should be brought to the attention of the widest possible audience. We are pleased to do so. Editor.



'Last year when I spoke here in Stormont I said the following: The revised programme for government agreed between Fianna Fail and its coalition partner, the Green Party, will go into the records as one the most shameful deals ever perpetrated on rural people by an Irish Government. The acceding to a demand from the Green Party to ban the Ward Union Stag Hunt and the inclusion of hunt kennels in legislation to regulate the activities of commercial puppy farms, are also likely to be among the most politically costly acts by Fianna Fail in terms of so much goodwill squandered for no gain.

One year on, there has been a general election and the election campaign was dominated not only by the Republic's financial crises, but by the behaviour of Fianna Fail and the Green Party during their term of office. The NARGC lead a superb campaign with other hunting associations through RISE (the acronym for Rural Ireland Says Enough) and this resulted in a huge mandate for Fine Gael. That campaign saw Fianna Fail, the once largest political party on the island of Ireland, decimated and the Green Party virtually wiped out with not even one candidate elected. This followed an earlier severe beating for both parties in local elections. They simply didn't get the message that fieldsports enjoys huge support on this Island and politicians ignore us at their peril. Since the general election, NARGC which is a Senate nominating body, has also successfully nominated two new Senators to the Senate.

The new Fine Gael/Labour coalition government in the Republic is still enjoying something of a honeymoon with the electorate despite having to abandon or seriously

modify some of the promises they made during the election campaign. However, it's clear that all parties in the south are now in no doubt about the electoral power which fieldsports wields. In particular, they know the influence of the NARGC and



how that influence was used to deliver the extent of mandate which the new government now enjoys. Conversely, this is also ruefully recognised by Fianna Fail and the Green Party. Let me tell you, never again will any political party ignore the hunting and shooting community. The political cost will always be too high for no gain. The Greens, who tried their best with the support of the anti hunting organisations, to dismantle everything which we as fieldsports enthusiasts hold dear, received the ultimate answer in the ultimate opinion poll from an electorate which simply became exasperated by their preoccupation with symbolic gestures which pandered to a tiny minority of zealots, while at the same time supporting the continuation in office of an entirely discredited government of which they themselves were part. Politicians need to ask themselves the simple question, and that is: "How many anti hunting voters are living in my constituency and how many fieldsports supporters." Most know the answer already. They got their wake-up call and now they need to take heed.

Fieldsports vital

North and South, fieldsports are important in Ireland. In the Republic alone there are some 300,000 people who participate in at least one fieldsport, whether that be fox hunting, coursing, fishing or shooting. Fieldsports provide employment and economic activity in local communities. The participants come from all sections of society, all religions and all social backgrounds. Political borders mean nothing in the world of fieldsports where everyone is bound together in a spirit of true camaraderie, in common cause to preserve this way of life which is so essential for rural communities. That's why we are all here today. We believe that our way of life is essential to our well being. The Great Game Fairs of Ireland act as an important focal point for our interest in fieldsports and all things rural. For many enthusiasts, this is their annual pilgrimage. The opportunity to spend time in an atmosphere which panders to our aspirations; to meet up and spend time with colleagues we may not have seen since the end of the last season; to see what is new; and

most importantly to simply be ourselves. NARGC is proud to be associated with the fairs and the event in Birr is always at the top of our calendar, as it is again this year. The support which the fairs attract is enormous, which is ample testimony to the support which fieldsports enjoy.

However, this is not a time for hunting, shooting and fishing groups to be complacent. There is still much to be done to defend hunting and shooting from the many threats which come from every direction. This includes not only the usual anti-hunting groups who are constantly vying for political and media attention, but also from institutional sources, sometimes wittingly and sometimes unwittingly. The next step for fieldsports in the Republic is to collect from Government on the political promises made in return for the support delivered. Lest there be any doubt in the minds of any elected public representative or public servant, I say start delivering now because if you don't, you will deliver an awful lot more in the longer term. I say we can just as easily end some of the new political careers which we bestowed. Do not for one moment doubt me on that.

Litmus test

The Ward Union Stag Hunt is the litmus test for the new government. The hunting season starts in September and we expect to see them back hunting then. We have seen our National Parks & Wildlife Service, which is the government department charged with responsibility for wildlife and conservation and the regulation of hunting, suffer a 56% decrease in its budget as a consequence of the financial difficulties we find ourselves in. It is a department which, even during the years of plenty, was always at the wrong end of the queue when it came to the share-out of funds and it always had consequential difficulty in fully meeting its mandate. It's all very well to talk about the benefits of tourism but the Irish Government's failure to commence Section 36 of the Wildlife (Amendment) Act 2000 on the regulation of tourist shooting is a very fine case in point. For ten years we have been told the reason this piece of legislation, which was passed in December 2000, cannot be implemented is because of lack of resources. The absence of regulation in this area has been a source of concern for decades and has resulted in widespread abuse of our hunting laws, not to mention of course the fact that tourist shooting in the Republic takes place to a large extent in the black economy. We expect the new administration to finally act to plug this gap in our hunting administration without any further prevarication.

We are currently in the middle of a bitter and expensive legal battle in the South in respect of the maladministration of our firearms licensing system. We are unique in Europe, and probably further afield, in having almost 200 legal challenges against the

administration of our new firearms licensing system awaiting hearing in the Irish High Court. I make no apology for saying this state of affairs is a national scandal, the blame for which can be laid squarely at the front gate of Garda HQ in the Phoenix Park in Dublin. Senior Garda management are solely responsible for the unconscionable costs now facing the already hard pressed taxpayer. They have tried to implement a gun ban through the back door by ignoring certain aspects of our legislation and by attempting to shove misinterpretation of the legislation down our throats. They have been so shameless in this that any banana republic police state would be proud of them. But let me be as clear as I can be. The NARGC exists to represent and defend the rights of its members and we intend to discharge that mandate fully, irrespective of whether our rights are threatened by anti-hunting organisations or by public servants, even if they wear a uniform. Because of the depth of anger among shooting people and because of the naked disregard which is regularly displayed by Senior Gardai for the provisions of the legislation and as a consequence, the rights of shooters, I predict that this issue will become, through RISE, a far bigger campaign and a much bigger problem for the government than the famous rod licence dispute. We continue to have an expectation that our new Fine Gael/Labour government will put an end to this utter nonsense. If they don't, not only will we not support them in future elections, but we will field our own candidates and they know our ability to deliver votes where they are needed.

This issue is only part of our role in working to preserve the countryside and the rural way of life. The ability to acquire a firearm for sporting purposes is important to rural people in the pursuit of a life style. To acquire it within the strictures of a legislative code is accepted. But we are fighting to hold accountable senior public servants who have decided together to act unlawfully in depriving shooting people of rights which they have under current legislation and under the Irish Constitution. If we don't fight for this cause, there will be little interest remaining in preserving the countryside. Employment will be further hit and the socio economic aspect of hunting which involves all our communities North and South will cease. It is surely the role of governments to act as a brake on such a scenario. Is it not reasonable to expect a government, particularly a new one which carries no baggage, to act decisively to end this fiasco?

I am hopeful our new government will not allow itself to become a hostage to the same civil and public servants who ran rings around the previous administration. NARGC is ready to play its part to solve these issues, but not at any cost.'

Des Crofton

There are country fairs, country sports fairs and then there are

THE GREAT GAME FAIRS

of IRELAND

When the organisers of fairs, which would seem to want to compete with our events, 'threw down the gauntlet' by making, what we considered to be unsubstantiated and apparently wildly exaggerated claims, the organisers of the Great Game Fairs of Ireland responded to the challenge. We invited public and sporting competitors to attend the events and 'See the difference between our Fairs and other country fairs and country sports fairs.'

From Ballywalter (via Stormont's hugely successful media launch), and Shanes Castle to Birr Castle, those who attended any of the photocalls, press conferences and fairs really did say they 'could see the difference!'

What was the X Factor? Simply the experience, creativity and marketing flair, but most of all the sheer commitment and dedication to delivering a very strong countrysports and marketing message by the Great Game Fairs team. Central to all of this is our commitment to giving the public what it wants at each of our events. No half promises, no wish list, everything you find at our Fairs is what we promised.

The payback for country sports and the Fairs - unequalled positive coverage on TV, radio, the Press and elsewhere. And for the public? - well you turned up in your thousands to create record breaking attendances at all three fairs and a real economic bonus for the three host areas.

Without fear of contradiction, we can now say the Shanes Castle and Birr Castle Fairs moved further ahead of the competition in terms of virtually every aspect and are now unquestionably recognised as the national game and country fairs in their respective parts of Ireland. Also a very strong performance in moving the 'rescued and relaunched' fair at Ballywalter from a one day event to a well attended and very classy two day event, fully justified the decision to take this fair into the Great Game Fairs of Ireland stable, after it was cancelled in 2010 by its previous organisers, BASCNI. With the marketing flair and the strength of the international Great Game Fairs of Ireland brand the Ballywalter Fair hosted truly international events and was graced by visits from the First Minister and the Chief Constable. In terms of competitions and prize funds, exhibitor base, positive publicity and attendance, it moved strongly up the table of game and country fairs in Ireland and in 2012 will be strongly challenging for the No3 position behind the Shanes Castle and Birr Castle events. No small achievement in two seasons!

The Year of the Dog

The theme of the 2011 Fairs was 'The Year of the Dog.' The objective was to stage three truly international class canine events within the fairs. While other events satisfied themselves with describing their North v South matches as 'international,' the Great Game Fairs of Ireland team, having already achieved the best of North/South competition through their Novice and All Comers All Ireland Game Fair Championships, pushed forward with their objective of bringing truly international canine competition to all three fairs.

Ballywalter

At Ballywalter we welcomed the Danish Retriever team to Ireland for the first time, in a triangular international match with a ROI team and an Ulster Select Team. Ballywalter also hosted a huge terrier, whippet and lurcher event with the inaugural heats of the Redmills Master McGrath Challenge to find the fastest lurcher in the UK and Ireland, not to mention the Redmills Five Nations Lurcher show champion. In addition, Keith Mathews the BBC's Dog Guru set a World Record for the largest outdoor dog training class in the World, a record that he bettered twice - at both Shanes Castle and Birr. The gundogs at Ballywalter and our complementary Georgian/Victorian theme were featured in a BBC4 film 'Kidnapped - a Georgian Adventure' and the Fieldsports Channel were there too to capture the magic for a worldwide audience.

Stormont

Moving on to our Great Game Fairs of Ireland launch at Stormont where, in spite of inclement weather, there was a fantastic turnout of not only media (including the 7.30 Show), tourism officials North & South, and politicians from all the main parties including Arlene Foster, the Minister responsible for Tourism for NI, but the widest range of dogs possible including spaniels, Labradors, Golden Retrievers, terriers, lurchers, whippets and hounds. And of course there was the unveiling of the painting of Ireland's most famous dog the legendary Master McGrath. The whole event hosted by Simon Hamilton MLA and other MLAs generated much positive publicity for working dogs and set the scene perfectly for the largest and most varied canine event staged at any game or country fair in Ireland - the canine extravaganza at Shanes Castle.

The Ballywalter Fair laid the foundation for the success of the 2011 Great Game Fairs of Ireland



High profile political guests at the fair l-r First Minister Peter Robinson, MLA, Councillor David Smyth, Mayor of Ards, Jim Shannon, MP, Lord Dunleath, Chief Constable Matt Baggot, Fair Director Albert Titterington. And Councillor Angus Carson.



From the superb press event in Ards Square.



Fair Director Albert Titterington welcomes Chief Constable Matt Baggot.



Lindsay Carlisle presents a stick to the Rt Hon Peter Robinson, MLA, accompanied by Jim Shannon, MP.



The guests at lunch in the house.



Philip Lawton, Fair Director presents Thomas Armstrong with his prizes on the first of his Great Game Fairs of Ireland Fly Casting wins.



Fair Director Liz McCracken presents Paddy Brown with the John McClelland Memorial Trophy on the first of his Great Game Fairs of Ireland clay shooting wins.



Keith Mathews draws the crowds for his World Record attempt.

Shanes Castle and Birr Castle Fairs – gundogs, terriers and lurchers, all sorts of dogs and more World Records.

The Game Fair at Shanes Castle hosted Ireland's largest gundog event, Ireland's largest terrier & lurcher event and, overall, Ireland's largest and most varied canine event. The range and quality of the competitions, prize funds, and the breeds of dogs on display have never been matched at any other event in Ireland.

Pride of place must go to two truly international events – the Feedwell International Retriever tests featuring teams from Holland, Wales, the ROI, Northern Ireland and the Ulster Select and the Chudleys Inter Club Golden Retriever featuring teams from all over the UK representing the 13 UK and NI golden retriever clubs. This was only the second time that the Ulster Golden Retriever Club had hosted this event and this year they did so in some style with the UGRC team coming first! Both events were superbly commentated upon by Peter Smith.

Other gundog events included All Ireland Gundog Handling Championships; the Feedwell Dog & Gun Even; the Redmills Cocker; and Springer Spaniel tests, plus an appearance by the Great Game Fairs of Ireland sponsored Irish CLA international team led by Willie Edgar; and a great Gundog Scurry final fought out between two of our younger handlers with 11 year old Leah Currie from Dromara and her Labrador dog Sasha winning the John McClelland Memorial Trophy.

Added to this were a KC open show for Gundog, Terrier & Hound groups organised by the Northern Ireland Gundog Field & Show Society; dog agility displays and a dog agility show organised by the Glandore Dog Training Club; the Victorian Poacher and his whippet; a display of 'dog mushing' by Country Hounds; beagle and horse and hound displays; an information stand by the governing body of pedigree dogs, the London based Kennel Club staffed by Nigel Dear the new Field Trial Secretary and his retiring predecessor Anne Greeves. Anne was presented with a beautiful crystal bowl by Philip Turner, on behalf of all the gundog clubs in Northern Ireland.

Two days of fantastic terrier, lurcher and whippet action completed a weekend, where Shanes really delivered on its 'Year of the Dog' theme. The whole weekend was organised under the aegis of the 22nd All Ireland Terrier and Lurcher

Championships. Racing including the final of the Redmills Master McGrath Challenge, an event which really had caught the imagination of lurcher owners from all over the UK. The search to find the UK and Ireland's fastest lurcher resulted in a win for John Humphrey's legendary bitch China.

The second day saw the lower field completely covered in cars for the showing part of the championships and one of the heats for the other international championship – the Redmills Five Nations Lurcher Championships with its final planned for Birr Castle.

Moving on to Birr

Following the huge success of achieving record crowds at Shanes Castle and the greatest international flavour to the fair yet it was on to Birr Castle for very successful press conference to launch the last of the Great Game Fairs of Ireland.

For the first time all the main countrysports organisations in Ireland were present at Birr in a united demonstration of support for the ROI's national game and country fair. We were delighted to see Des Crofton, from the NARGC; Noel Carr from FISSTA and Lyall Plant from the CAI there to demonstrate their commitment to helping make the Irish Game & Country Fair a major success. Their commitment to the fair was later demonstrated by all three organisations and especially the NARGC mounting excellent displays at the fair.

Also making their debut at the reception and later the Fair were the local Roscrea Working Dog and Social Club who were taking over the very important job of organising the terrier, whippet and lurcher racing.

A successful press conference over, it was then on to the main event.

Keith Mathews, having again at Shanes Castle surpassed his dog training record made at Ballywalter – rolled his show forward to Birr Castle. The NARGC, Ireland's largest country sports organisation, supported the latter World Record attempt by presenting prizes for the top Lady, Gentleman and Child handler in the ring with Keith.

Birr also saw the final of the Redmills Five Nations Lurcher Championship Final. Paul Reid's dog Storm which had qualified at the Mourne Show, and by winning the All Ireland Championships at Shanes Castle, became the first Five Nations International Lurcher Champion beating Graham

Bernie Leonard and Denis Duggan from Shannon Development with Fair Directors Albert Titterington & Philip Lawton and Des Crofton (NARGC), Noel Carr (FISSTA) and Lyall Plant (CAI).



In spite of the rain a very successful All Ireland Launch at Stormont



The Year of the Dog- dogs of all kinds.



Simon Hamilton, MLA, and the Mayors of Antrim and Ards with the North Down Hunt.



A very smart turnout of whippets & lurchers with Jenny Crozier and Gareth Connolly from sponsors Redmills.



Shauna McGroarty and Frank & Emma Archibald and their goldens with sponsors & Martin Lavery from sponsors Chudleys.



All aboard for further success - Fair Directors Albert Titterington and Edwin Dash with Simon Hamilton, MLA and Councillor Mervyn Oswald, Mayor of Ards Council.



Political and canine heavyweights - Minister for NI tourism Arlene Foster, MLA and Simon Hamilton, MLA with two Champion Golden Retrievers.



Cross border tourism - Fair directors Albert Titterington and Philip Lawton with Joy Bond (NITB) and Bernie Leonard & Denis Duggan from Shannon Development.



Cross border country sports - Fair directors Albert Titterington and Philip Lawton with Des Crofton (NARGC) and Lyall Plant (CAI).



Albert Titterington and artist Louise Barrett unveil the portrait of Master McGrath



Fair Director Albert Titterington being interviewed by Malachy Cush, host of the UTV 7.30 show.

*The Roscrea Club
with Terrier &
Lurcher Director
Matt Lee.*



Brennan's Gypsy the ROI Champion from Birr into reserve place.

Gundogs too were out in force at Birr with the Minor Breeds, Novice Test and Barbour All Ireland Game Fair Novice Retriever Handling Championship organised by the Irish water Spaniel Club adding to the more serious competition in the Spaniel and Retriever individual and team tests sponsored by Massbrook.

The Open Retriever Test and 'international' was organised by the Broadmeadows Club and featured teams from Munster, ROI, NI and the Ulster Select. The ESS Club of Ireland organised Novice, Open and a North v South team event.

Clay Shooting

Once again the prize funds at the Great Game Fairs of Ireland clearly eclipsed the very modest prize funds available at competing country and countrysports fairs. Due to the generous sponsorship of David Brennan from Ardee Sports; Donal McCloy from Donal

McCloy Guns Unlimited; Lakeland Sports and others, the overall clay shooting funds at the three fairs exceed €30,000.

Paddy Brown from Donegal was top gun at all three fairs and to mark the achievement the organisers are having a special tankard engraved plus, of course, Paddy won several very good guns!

Shooters were very well served at all three fairs with very good displays of modern and vintage weapons and at Shanes Castle both local coach Stephen Marsden and gun fitting expert Mike Yardley were on hand to offer shooters a better 'fit' between them and their guns.

Angling

The angling section of the fairs was also expanded with several more stands and they attracted the support of FISSTA, APGAI Ireland and GAIA. The competitions, demonstrations and displays put on were of a standard rarely bettered anywhere.

One competitor dominated the well organised casting competitions sponsored by the House of Hardy and Atkins Angling. Thomas Armstrong the young casting sensation simply dominated at all three fairs.

Stickmaking

Was well represented at all three fairs with the All Ireland Stickmaking Championship taking place at Birr Castle under the aegis of the Celtic Stickmaker's Club. Liz McCracken, a Director of the Northern Fairs, presented the John McClelland Memorial Trophy to the winner.

Fantastic Tented Villages

All three fairs featured living history exhibits, villages and main arena displays from Georgian & Victorian at Ballywalter to the Viking, Williamite and Elizabethan at Shanes and Birr Castles.

These added much educational and entertainment to the additionally huge villages of quality trade stands which had on offer everything to 'buy into the country lifestyle.'

This ranged from a fantastic range of country clothing, guns & tackle to mouth watering delicacies in the food hall.

Pride of place in the food department must go to this magazine's 'Go for Game' campaign mounted in association with fishing and shooting chef Emmett Mc Court. Through the three Great Game Fairs of Ireland and the magazine Emmett's magic in the kitchen has been taken to an all Ireland audience and through the medium of our TV programmes on www.fielsportschannel.tv and www.dogandcountry.tv to a truly international audience.

Talking about media coverage – there is no doubt that the Great Game Fairs of Ireland in 2011 generated much more multimedia All Ireland coverage than not only any other country sports events or country fairs, but virtually any event in Ireland. And there is equally no doubt that this coverage and the success of the fairs on the ground meant that the Great Game Fairs of Ireland brand's international and all Ireland impact was further enhanced.

For those who missed any of the fairs or those who like to reminisce programmes covering the fairs and the Stormont launch can be seen on www.fieldsportschannel.tv and www.dogandcountry.tv.

The Great Game Fairs of Ireland were supported by the NITB, Shannon Development, Failte Ireland, Ards Borough Council and Antrim Borough Council.

Irish Game Fair at Shanes Castle in Pictures



The action packed main arena programme held the crowds.



Donal Cloy hosted a superb display of guns.



Ivor Cowan from Field & Stream also had a good display of guns and shooting equipment.



Mike Yardley was present to give advice on gun fitting – his first customer was Liz Edgar.



Tommy Beattie made his debut at the fair with a good range of guns.



Dragoons in volley fire.



Dragoons with their cannon.



Spectacular smoke and noise from the cannon.



(Above) The Cochise display featured a real cow girl.



(Left) The Edgar family mounted a wide ranging display of antique weaponry and militaria.



A very smart horse and hound display.



(Right) Western riding with the Cochise Horses is very popular.



One of the youngest carriage drivers had a smart turnout.



Children mix happily with hounds.



Spaniel winners, judges and officials in the Redmills Spaniel Tests.



Golden retriever competitors in the Chudleys Inter Club Golden Retriever Team Event.



The Ulster Golden Retriever Club won the Chudley's Inter Club test.



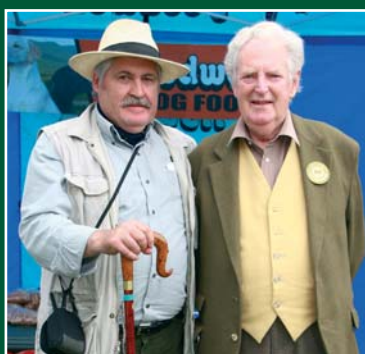
Philip Turner presents Anne Greeves with a memento from the NI retriever clubs to mark her retirement from the Kennel Club.



Albert Titterington presents Robbie McGregor organiser of the Feedwell International gundog events at the Fair, with his Lifetime Commitment Award.



Winner of the Feedwell Novice Test with Feedwell's Jeff McMaster and Jamie Clegg, the third generation of Cleggs in the business.



Lindsay Carlisle surprised Fair Director Albert Titterington with the presentation of a fine walking stick.



11 yo Leah Curry won the Scurry Championship and was presented with the John Mclelland Memorial Trophy by John's daughter, Judith and granddaughter Betsy.



The Judges in the Feedwell International test with their presentations.



(Left) John Carmichael from the NI School of Falconry continues to delight the crowds with his free flying falconry displays.



Nigel Carville was top dog in the Feedwell Open Test and in addition to his Feedwell prizes received other awards from Guy Carlisle of Haldane Fisher.



Marty Rush won the All Ireland Game Fair Handling Championships and as part of a prizes collected a fine dog carrier box from DT dog boxes.



Mayor of Antrim, Councillor Paul Michael paying a family visit to the fair.

Top Winning Dogs Thrive on **Feedwell**

Dogs such as those owned by Alan Rountree:



Alan C.M. Rountree with Int. FT Ch Waterford Edward of Tasco - 2nd in this year's IKC Championship. Alan's record in the IKC Retriever Championship is unlikely to be equalled, 5 times winner of the Championship, 5 times awarded 2nd place and 3 times awarded 3rd place over a 23 years period from 1976 to 2009

These owners of top field trial, working test and show dogs all consider that by feeding Feedwell products, they get the performance from their dogs that they require.

These are just some of the owners of all types of dogs who use Feedwell regularly and express their satisfaction with well formulated products available at sensible prices.

**Feedwell makes Top Quality Products
and Supports your sport**

Feedwell

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Tel: (028) 4377 8765 Fax: (028) 4377 1420

Email: info@feedwell.com www.feedwell.com



Damian Newman



Laurence Hennessy



Alan Rountree



Tim Crothers



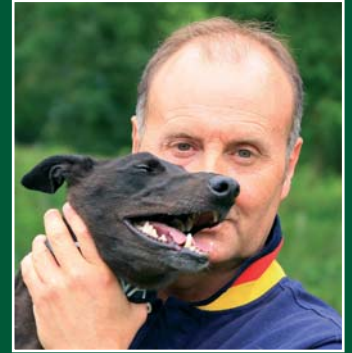
**Winston Kelly's
Glenloch Tyler &
Carraigairt Adam**



John Wilson



The Redmills Master McGrath Challenge lurcher racing was one of the highlights of the fair.



John Humphreys and China were the inaugural winners.



(Left) Jim Shannon, MP joined Fair Director Albert Titterington and sponsor's Redmills Jenny Crozier to congratulate the first and second in a tense Master McGrath final.



(Right) Lord and Lady Dunleath, hosts of the Ballywalter fair, being welcomed by ring steward Tom Fulton.



The Victorian Poacher lays his nets out.



The Poacher's athletic whippet is always ready for action.



Constable Lawton in pursuit of the wily poacher!



Willie Edgar (well branded by sponsor) plans the CLA team main arena demo.



(Above) Dog agility from the Glandore club is always action packed.



Dog mushing was a new addition this year.



Willie Edgar in action with the CLA team demo.



Keith Mathews the ever popular dog guru demonstrates that his ability ranges from the tiniest to the largest dogs.



The antique tackle stand was a new attraction.



Ingrid Houwers taxidermy displays always generate keen interest.

The Irish Game & Country fair, Birr Castle in pictures



An action packed arena programme held the crowds.



The shopping aisles were crowded.



Host Lord Rosse welcomes the crowd to Birr Castle.



Medieval entertainment in a perfect setting.



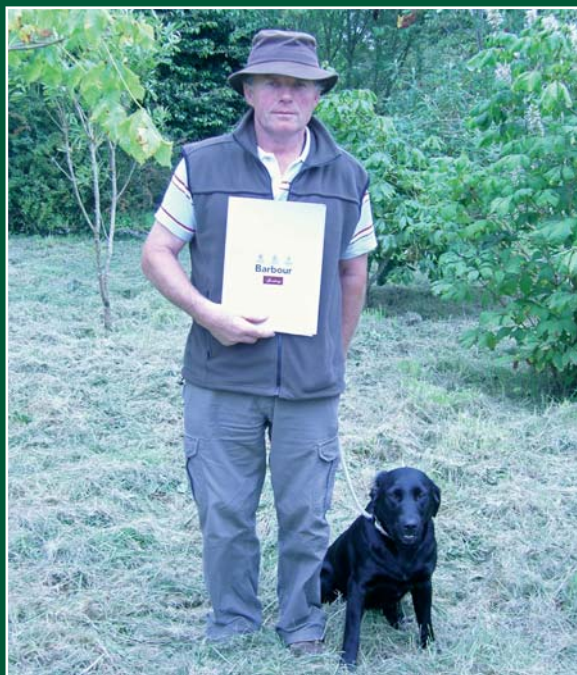
The NARGC unveiled a super new poster giving some details of their range of activities



The NARGC had experts on hand to give coaching to medieval marksmen.



Fair Director Philip Lawton with the campaign for Oran Molloy – the fair raised €2,600 for his appeal.



The winner of the Barbour Novice handling championships.



Arnout Vandevyvere Director of the European Yeswehunt organisation with Frank Brophy Counsellor Ireland and Fair Director Philip Lawton pictured at the first meeting of the Irish organisation hosted by Irish Countrysports and Country Life.



Chief Steward Tom Fulton had some charming veterinary assistance from Etain O'Connor and her assistant from the All Creatures Great & Small Veterinary Practice in County Tipperary.



The Victorian Poacher thrilled the crowd in the arena and dispensed useful advice on his 'Pugs & Drummers' Stand.



Lindsay Carlisle was on hand to present a stick to guest of honour Marcella Corcoran-Kenndy, TD.



The Muzzleloaders get the opening ceremony off with a bang.



Emmett McCourt and the Go for Game campaign was a big attraction in the crowded NARGC marquee.



Lyall Plant and the team from CAI take a break from a busy afternoon.



Liz Mc Cracken presents the John McClelland Trophy to the All Ireland Stickmaking Champion.



Keith Mathews and NARGC's Peggy with the top child handler and her Labrador.



The NARGC's Paula with the top lady handler and her boxer puppy.



The NARGC's Peggy and Keith Mathews and the top gentleman handler with his three well trained lurchers.



The team from Ardee Sports and Holts gave gun valuations all day Sunday.



Tom O'Donnell, outgoing NARGC chairman, encouraging children's participation.



Cooley – Charlie Jacoby interviews Michael Morris from the Cooley Distillery and we hear Charlie took back a bottle!



The top spaniel team from NI with judges, sponsors and Fair Director Philip Lawton.



Richard Binley from Massbrook and Paul McGurk from the Broadmeadows club make a presentation to Lord & Lady Rosse.



The Top Retriever team from the ROI with sponsors and Lady Rosse.



Andrea Cowan from Redmills with the top terrier & lurcher.



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Lifetime Commitment Awards 2011

Lifetime Commitment Awards, presented by the Great Game Fairs of Ireland and Irish Country Sports & Country Life, are widely recognised as the Oscars of the country sports and conservation world. Previous recipients have included people such as Orri Vigfússon, the Icelandic entrepreneur and environmentalist, whose objective was to work to restore the

abundance of wild salmon that formerly existed on both sides of the North Atlantic.

This year, the Lifetime Achievement Awards went to a number of people for whom the term 'lifetime commitment' was particularly appropriate and the categories ranged from involvement with gundogs to game keeping and conservation to fighting for country sports at the highest levels in government and elsewhere.



The special 'stick' awards by Lindsay Carlisle which have become a feature of the Shanes Castle event were presented to Peter Smith and Hugh Gates for their continuing contribution to gundogs.



Pictured L-R are: Hugh Gates (services to gundogs with the Mid Ulster Gundog Association and the Irish Game Fair at Shanes Castle); Joe Stitt, Chairman of APGAI Ireland (for his work with angling and the Great Game Fairs of Ireland); Cedric Simmons (one of the longest serving exhibitors with the Great Game Fairs of Ireland); Alastair Beattie (services to gamekeeping and conservation); Hughie Nicholl (services to gundogs, field trialling and conservation); Lyall Plant - Chief Executive CAI (for commitment in fighting for fieldsports and conservation); and Peter Smith (services to gundogs, the Great Game Fairs of Ireland and gundog related journalism).

Awards Presented at Birr Castle

Jane Sargeant (of Don Philpott, Daughter & Grand Daughters) receiving her Lifetime Commitment Award at Birr for the longest serving exhibitor with the Great Game Fairs of Ireland from Lady Rosse. Also at the presentation were Marcella Corcoran-Kennedy, TD for Laois/Offaly (who opened the fair) with host Lord Rosse and Fair Director Albert Titterington, who gave the citation.



Tom O'Donnell, outgoing Chairman of the NARGC, who received a Lifetime Commitment Award for his work with the NARGC and shooting in Ireland. Also at the presentation were Marcella Corcoran-Kennedy, TD for Laois/Offaly, who opened the fair, with host Lord Rosse, Fair Director Albert Titterington and Des Crofton (Director NARGC) who outlined the valuable contribution that Tom has made.

CHARLIE KEENAN



Charlie wears Hoggs Wax Indian Hat £25
and Big Bill waterproof, breathable
cammo parka £85



Tay

This is undoubtedly the best value for money quality neoprene welly on the market at this time, it combines a multitude of features to create a very comfortable, durable and practical field boot. There is a rubber outsole which has been bonded to a blown rubber sponge sole to create a sole unit which is lightweight, durable and 'cushy' underfoot, the firm rubber outer which is extended up the leg of the boot is reinforced in key areas to maintain utmost flexibility and also to provide support for the ankle and fore foot as well as protecting the neoprene inner of the boot from damage caused by the most unforgiving briar bushes and barbed wire. There is a breathable mesh liner in the boot to allow airflow around the foot thus minimising perspiration and in turn maintaining the comfort of the foot of the wearer. Sizes 4-12 Colour Green Price £75/€90



Spey

These 100% waterproof products are made with Breathable Airmesh™ lining and CR-grade foam for additional comfort. The Spey has the same style, fit and sole as the Tay, but features the realtree™ camouflage pattern. The standard 5mm neoprene lining has an additional soft fleece lining throughout, while the toe area has extra Thermo-foam™ for added warmth. CR flex-foam bootie (5mm) with four-way stretch nylon, snag-resistant cover is 100% waterproof, lightweight, flexible, buoyant, and will form to virtually any calf girth. Stretch-fit topline binding snugs calf to keep warmth in and cold out. Additional achilles reinforcement for added protection. Seamless quick-clean rubber overlay. Breathable Airmesh™ lining. Comfort range of 85° F to sub-freezing conditions.



Esk

A state-of-the-art working boot, the Esk has a high rubber covering on the leg and a superb sole tread. Other features include: a highly reinforced toe cap and instep; a removable 'Nitrocel' footbed for additional insulation and cushioning; an anti-shock heel made from MuckBoot's own 'Absorb' open cell polymer; a kick-rim to allow boots to be kicked off without damage; and a rubber Achilles protector to shield the wearer from blows to the back of the ankle. The Esk also has MuckBoots' own 'air-mesh' technology. Thousands of tiny vertical fibres allow air to circulate throughout the internal lining of the boot. When combined with the CR-Foam bootie, it provides an unmatched comfort range of +85°F to -85°F. Colour: Green Size: 4 - 13 Price £75/€90



Trent

A premium but lightweight general-purpose welly with a 5mm cleated field sole for a good all-round grip. Excellent for gardening, the Trent features a special 'Spade Contour' sole to protect the foot when digging. As well as a reinforced toe cap and instep the Trent has a rubber achilles protector, an Absorb (TM) anti-shock heel, a kick rim and a removable Nitrocell (TM) footbed. The leg is covered with a 4-way stretch nylon, snag resistant cover and the boot has an Air Mesh lining for optimal temperature/moisture control and comfort.

Colours: Moss Size: 4 to 12 Price £75/€90



Derwent

The Derwent from Muck boot, it has a high leg waterproof neoprene outer with protective rubber foot and ankle cover, lightweight sponge sole and can only be described as very comfortable footwear that functions as a wellington but fits like a boot. The materials are all very flexible and offer the utmost in comfort to the wearer whilst protecting from the worst of the weather providing a warm and dry environment for the feet. Available in sizes 4-12 Price £60/€70



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Ireland's Spaniels show the way at the CLA

With no disrespect whatever to The Great Game Fairs of Ireland, Willie Edgar always refers to the CLA Game Fair as 'the big one': which goes some way, perhaps, to explaining the special resolve he brings to leading the Irish team in that prestigious event's Gundog International. Blenheim Palace in Oxfordshire, with its grasses, herbs and thistle alongside the rush lined River Glyme, presents the most natural of gundog courses. Perfect, in fact, for showing off the hunting qualities of spaniels. And that is something Willie Edgar knows a thing or two about. For, three times previously -

including last year at Ragley Hall with his bitch Dolly in a Daydream of Countryways - he has taken the Neil Lamb Memorial Trophy awarded to the best hunting spaniel. At Blenheim, running in the last brace with his four year old bitch McGwyn Deallus, he did it again with 59 marks out of a possible 60. That speaks of everything Judges Jeremy Organ and Ken Lindsay would have been looking for: fast and stylish hunting with thoroughness of ground treatment and the sort of pleasing pattern which the headwind made possible.



The Team (standing) Declan Boyle, Thomas Hughes, Ricky Johnson and Tommy McMinn (kneeling) Bertie Barrett, Tim Crothers, Errol Rowan, Willie Edgar, Brian Caffrey and Jimmy Black.



Willie Edgar casts McGwynn Deallus for the water retrieve watched by Judge Jeremy Organ and Gun Justin Weeks



Tommy McMinn gets Rybrae Tapas Lady underway watched by Judge Derrick Capel.

Not content with wresting the Neil Lamb trophy for a remarkable and record fourth time, Willie Edgar put in the sort of performance on other elements of the course that made him the top individual overall as well. And he had around him the Best Team of Spaniels whose margin of victory over England, their closest pursuers, was no less than 35. The first test after the first flush, a blind back up the course and over a jump into the corner, posed big problems. Steve Wanstall, first to run for England nearly registered a zero and Wales, who did, never scored more than four. Ireland, by contrast posted very respectable scores and only Brian Caffrey's Megan of Rolaghbridge struggled. But he, along with the rest of the team, excelled at the water: a marked retrieve with a diversionary rabbit shot at before the dog was sent.



Spaniel Judges Jeremy Organ and Ken Lindsay.



Willie Edgar receives the Wilsons Challenge Trophy for the Best Dog of Either Breed from Game Fair host The Duke of Marlborough.



Simply the best: Willie Edgar with the fruits of his five visits shakes hands with the Duke of Marlborough.



The Duke of Marlborough presents the Corlett Trophy for the Best Irish Retriever to Ricky Johnson.



Ireland - the Best Spaniel Team - with Captain Willie Edgar with the Wilsons Challenge Shield and the other spoils from an exceptional performance along with Tim Crothers, Errol Rowan, Bertie Barrett and Brian Caffrey.

Near perfect retrieving and hunting

Five maximums at the water really spoke of a quality which was evident in all the team's retrieving. Indeed, on tests 2, 3, and 4 both Willie Edgar and Tim Crothers - whose exploits with FTCh Birdrowe Miss O'lene at Harewood in 1995 are part of Game Fair legend - Scroggwood Copper registered straight maximums. Willie's total was 97 and Tim Crothers finished on 94, as did Bertie Barrett whose Bold Black Beauty combined near perfect retrieving with hunting which gained 56 marks. With Errol Rowan scoring 58 for hunting with his young bitch Maggie's Briar this was an exceptional Spaniel Team performance, with four hunting scores in



The Great Game Fairs of Ireland were proud to support the Irish CLA Game Fair Team.

the high 50s, which emphatically secured the Wilsons Challenge Shield.

History proved not to be repeated

Ireland had the three best individual spaniels. But England, who were second in the spaniels, had the best three individual retrievers in a team which closed the competition 19 ahead of Wales with Ireland a further 50 adrift. So, a repeat of the historic overall victory at Broadlands in 2006 was not to be. Richard Johnson's Int FTCh Terminane Aisling of Shimnavale was the pick of the Irish retrievers with 85, whereas England's Mark Demaine with the top retriever Calderhay Adder posted a score of 93 and Ireland had to be content with second place overall.

England ratcheted up their third successive victory, but Ireland – third at Belvoir in 2009 and again at Ragley last year – are on the way up and, if resolve has anything to do with it, that won't be the end of the story.

Publishers Note:

Over the past 34 years the Irish Countrysports and Country Life magazine and the Great Game Fairs of Ireland have arguably put more back into country sports in terms of sponsorship than any other organisation. This year, in spite of the recession, we have sponsored

several prizes at the three Fairs - that's why our prize funds far outstrip those offered at other events - we have also sponsored other terrier & lurcher shows; gundog tests and trials; quite a few gundog teams; several charity shoots; a small company to help with its marketing; several newspaper competitions such as the recent Rex Factor in the Sunday Life newspaper and many medical charities. In fact it is one of our proud boasts that virtually no one who ever approaches us for sponsorship goes away 'empty handed.'

However one of the sponsorships that has given us most pleasure was to help the Irish CLA Gundog Team. Not only is it an area that we are interested in, but Willie Edgar's sheer persistence in, like Oliver Twist, 'coming back for more' each year always amuses. However it is this persistence that has enabled Willie, without a major sponsor, to take a strong team to the CLA each year. We are delighted to see that Willie led the team 'from the front' and captained them into second place overall, with his own performance being simply outstanding. We are delighted that the team put up this sterling performance branded with the name of Ireland's premier game and country fairs and of course the fairs with the strongest gundog events in Ireland. Well done Willie and the team on your great performance for taking our great brand into a major international gundog arena.

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Willie Edgar



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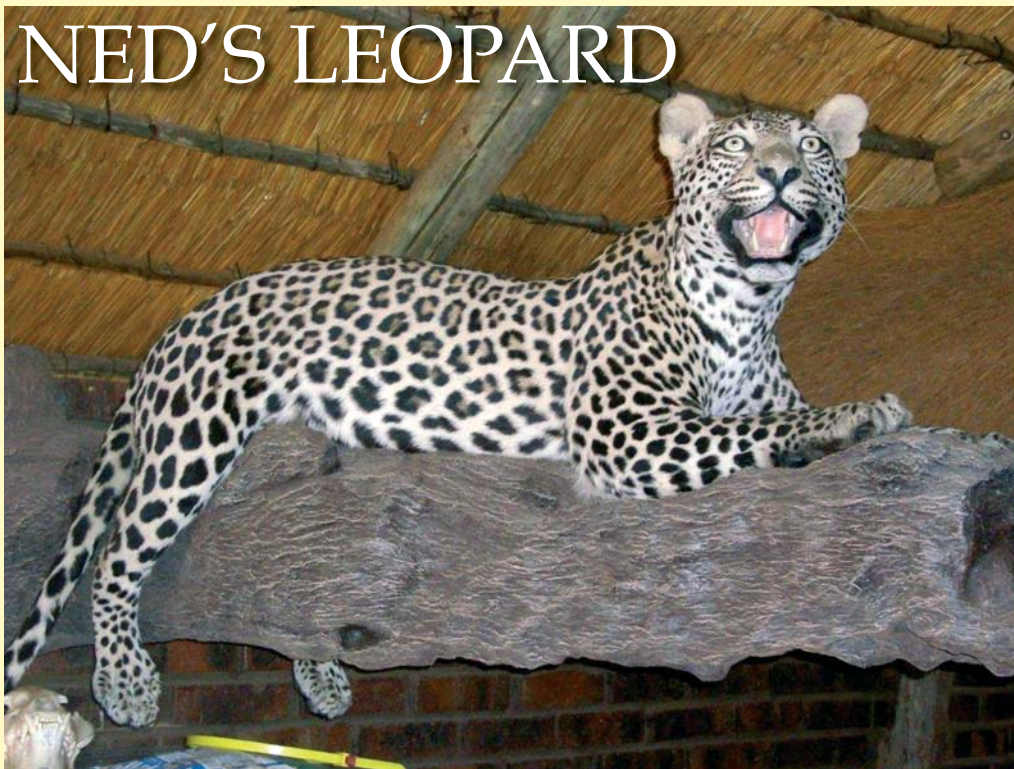
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Not everyone who hunts in Africa is prepared to take on Dangerous Game as distinct from Plains Game. The individuals who decide to hunt one or more of the Big Five - Elephant, Buffalo, Rhino, Lion, Leopard - are well aware of the risks involved and understand that they are putting their lives on the line. As dramatic as this may sound, dangerous game hunting usually involves long hours of stalking on foot in intense heat or many boring hours trying to stay awake in a hide - both followed by short bursts of intense activity which can result in a fine trophy or disappointment. Often, all the effort goes for naught and the hunter makes his way back to camp empty-handed.

My good friend Ned Minihan spent three annual African hunts in pursuit of a specific Leopard that was known to inhabit a particular area in South Africa's Limpopo Province. The Leopard, a Tom, was smarter than the norm in his ability to spot and avoid man-made traps of bait set in trees. By their very nature Leopards are solitary animals, tend to live in isolation and are at their most dangerous when wounded. Many an experienced professional hunter has been mauled, or worse, by a charging Leopard that has been wounded by a client's badly placed shot. For three years in a row, Ned was fortunate to receive a permit to hunt Leopard in Limpopo and for the record; it's worth mentioning that although approximately twenty-five Permits are issued annually, less than half a dozen are filled, the rest being returned unused to the Wildlife Authorities. That's not in any way a reflection on the PHs or the hunter's abilities, it's

mainly a result of Leopards outsmarting humans.

Motorcycling enthusiasts will remember Ned's achievements in the early 1960s when he was first across the line a number of times in Isle of Man Grand Prix Races and two-wheeled events in Britain. A former RAF man who later flew his own private aircraft, Ned is no stranger to risk-taking, so despite his seniority in life, the decision to hunt Leopard came as no surprise. He had previously hunted in Zimbabwe and listening to some colleagues and I talking about Buffalo hunting spurred him into the decision to go after another of Africa's dangerous, ruthless killers. It's not possible to walk-up a Leopard in the same way that other species are hunted. Shy, secretive and nocturnal, they have to be tempted by pre-set baits and shot when feeding. There's no other way, unless one is stumbled upon by accident.

Not for the faint-hearted

When the first of the three hunts was being prepared I volunteered to help with choosing a suitable site and we shot Impala, Warthog and Leopard's favourite dish - Baboon - for bait. Along with PH Louis we selected a number of trees which could be overlooked from within 40 metres, setting about placing the bait on easily protruding and visible branches. The next step was daily visits to the sites to see if the bait had been nibbled. The Leopard's modus operandi revolves around watching the bait from within deep cover and finally sneaking out after dark when all is clear, to feed. When the hunter becomes aware which bait is been fed from, a hide is set up early in the day and before dusk the hunter and PH crawl in - to remain silent and motionless until either the Leopard turns up or the following day dawns. Rifles are

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loaded and safety catches are in the off position - a Leopard's sensitive hearing will pick up the quietest of safety clicks and be gone instantly. It's not a scenario for the faint-hearted, sitting still all night with a lamp held by a Tracker on standby and the PH in position to take a back-up shot if needed - or worse - in the event of a charge. The latter is everyone's worst nightmare because these animals can move at phenomenal speed covering the 40 or so metres in mere seconds. If one gets its fangs into the human body, usually tearing at the neck while using the hind legs on the stomach, it can be extremely bad for one's health. Likewise in follow-up situations after a wounded animal in thick brush, many PHs use an old leather jacket wrapped around their necks for protection.

Ned put in long hours in the hide nightly, returning to base each morning for a few hours sleep, then going back out into the bush, checking the other baited positions for signs or tracks. This went on for almost a fortnight, with the wily cat switching from bait to bait so it was never in the same place two nights in a row. It literally played hide and seek with the hunters. One or two Trackers had seen this animal over the years and it was known that he was a big, older Tom. Ned persevered nightly without any success, while the others in our party went about their daily Plains Game hunting. Eventually, it was time to return home and we left for Ireland with Ned vowing to return after the elusive quarry.

Using local 'black magic' to disrupt us

For the next two years Ned indeed returned to resume the hunt and we went through the same preliminaries all over again - selecting new sites, baiting, checking and the nightly vigils. This was very strenuous work, even for a person many years Ned's junior, yet he persisted to the last morning in following a routine that many of us would have given up days previously. On the journey out that third year, with half a day free between flights, we took a train from Zurich airport to the city centre and ended up travelling at high speed for Lausanne. Somehow we had boarded the wrong train and later abandoned ship in a small country station, miles from anywhere, hoping to get back to the airport on time. We did! Someone suggested that Ned's Leopard was responsible, using the local black magic to disrupt us. On arrival in Africa strenuous effort went into preparing baits, checking rifles and doing everything to perfection - all to no avail. The elusive Leopard remained just that, for the third year.

Due to other commitments Ned was unavailable to travel on the most recent safari and was not present to see the surprise on our faces when we walked into the lodge on arrival. Looking down on us from a tree trunk was - Ned's Leopard! A well-built, sturdy Tom! Patiently, PH Louis told the story. A local man had paid to shoot one Impala for meat and accompanied by a Tracker, Joe, had set out on foot into the bush. That's quite a normal routine in South Africa, paying to shoot for food. Locals are not required to be accompanied by a PH. this regulation only applies to foreigners. Walking through the bush near its territory, the pair came face to face with the Leopard which apparently had abandoned the usual policy of moving about only after dark. As they stood facing each other the animal's tail began twitching from side to side - a sure danger sign. When the ears sweep back, you know you are in trouble and this is exactly what happened. Joe whispered urgently to the local man: "shoot it - it is going to eat us up." Raising his .303in rifle instantly, the man killed the animal with one shot. Normally there would be repercussions over shooting a Leopard without an official Permit, but when the Wildlife Authorities interviewed the pair they accepted immediately that it was necessary to fire in order to protect human life. However, specific conditions are attached to the taxidermy in these cases. It was licensed to be sent for processing but can only ever be displayed in the lodge on the property where it was shot. The trophy cannot be put on display at a game fair or sold to another person. It has to stay put!

It was several months later before I plucked up the courage to tell Ned about 'his' Leopard's fate, eventually e-mailing a photo to him. Currently we are arranging the 2012 Safari, and Ned is planning to travel. It remains to be seen what he intends to hunt. Perhaps another Leopard?



Ned on safari in South Africa recently, with a large Eland bull taken with one shot.

The National Woodcock Association of Ireland at Birr

At the Birr Game Fair, on the 27th and 28th of August we were invited to take a stand on the organisers' marquee, for Irish Country Sports and Country Life magazine. We were invited, of course, by Albert Titterington who has been a stalwart supporter of the NWAOI since its beginning and we are thankful to him for all his support. Over the two days we had a constant stream of woodcock enthusiasts calling to the stand and the main attraction was the display of wings from both Adult and Juvenile woodcock. The wings provided a great talking point and when a request to identify the differences between adult and juvenile was required a crowd would gather out of the blue. Booklets were also on sale in full colour which clearly identified the different stages of plumage on woodcock wings and also gave a clear picture of differences between Adult and Juvenile birds. We had of course a raffle over the two days for a framed print of a sitting woodcock by John Moore, tickets were a mere €5, the raffle was carried out on the Sunday under the watchful eye of David Brennan from Ardee Sports, the well known firearms supplier to the Irish market. The lucky winner was Mr David Mullen from Co Meath.

Many callers to the stand advised that they had seen woodcock during the breeding period in Ireland in late April, May, June and July. This is a good indication that we have a stable breeding population in Ireland as we have now had positive sightings of woodcock in 19 counties during this period.

I had a few minutes to look around the fair on the Sunday afternoon and happened on the BTO stand, as I have a wide interest in birdlife I listened to the staff on the stand offering information to likewise people interested in all things birdie. The BTO are an excellent group that are leaders in the field of Ornithology and are responsible for developing a great interest in this subject but sometimes information which they offer can be called into question. While at the stand I asked a question from one of the staff on the status of woodcock in Ireland.



David Brennan, Ardee Sports supervising the raffle draw for the framed print.

To my surprise I was given the answer that they are of unfavourable status Europe-wide and the basis of his assertion was the recent garden bird census woodcock



Raffle Winner David Mullen won the framed print.



The stand proved to be very effective in getting the Association's 'message' across to the public

did not figure well. WOW...Are we surprised, when have you last see woodcock in you garden or at you bird table?

Identifying densities of woodcock is based on roding males at prebreeding/breeding time at specific woodland sites. The BTO has in the past advised that in the UK the population of woodcock to be 5000 to 12000 pairs, this in it self is unusual as woodcock are polygamous.

Dr Andrew Hoodless of the Game and Wildlife Conservation Trust has proven beyond doubt that those figures are inaccurate and I quote from an article from him the following *"Perhaps not surprisingly given that we employed a dedicated survey method, our estimate of the national woodcock population at 78,000 males (95% confidence interval 62,000-96,000) is far higher than the general bird survey estimate. I would suggest that if each male has a minimum of two females this could indicate a large breeding stock in the UK alone.*

Woodcock are here and in excellent numbers and our numbers are swollen by visitors from Scandanavia and Russia during the winter. Data soon to be released for the Game and Wildlife Conservation Trust as a result of the NWAOI sending wings for isotope analysis will offer more and detailed

information of the origins of the woodcock in Ireland during the winter months.

Finally, we were presented with a very unusual photograph at the Fair, a photo of Mr. Charles Mollison, the Head Game Keeper at Birr Estate in 1949, and in his hands he holds four well fledged woodcock chicks. This is a piece of historical evidence of woodcock in Ireland which has never before been seen in public and we would like to thank all those from Birr Castle Estate for supplying us with this special photo.

A word of thanks to all who called to our stand at the Game fair and just a reminder if you wish to assist us in gathering information on woodcock

please do not hesitate to make contact with us, our website is www.woodcockireland.com

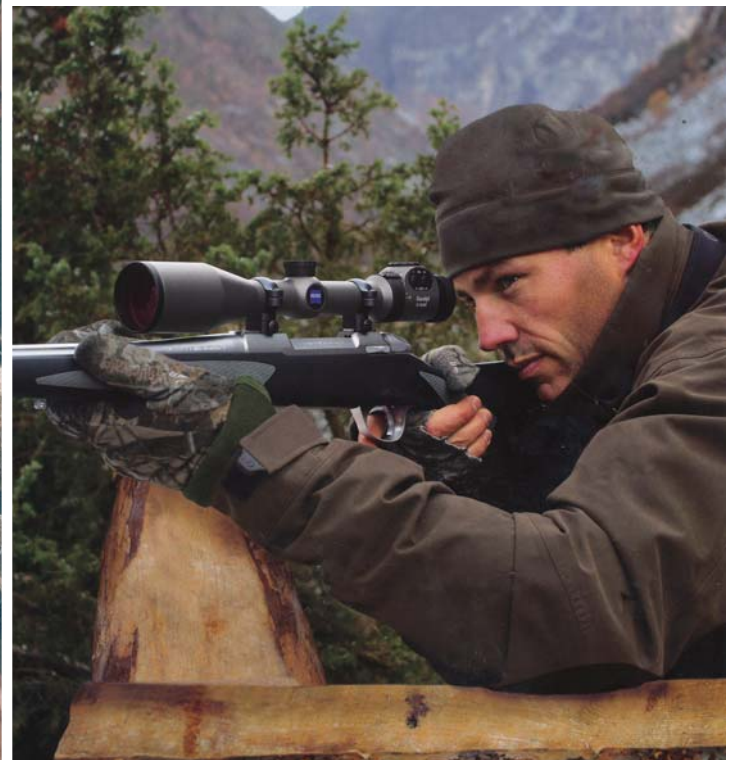
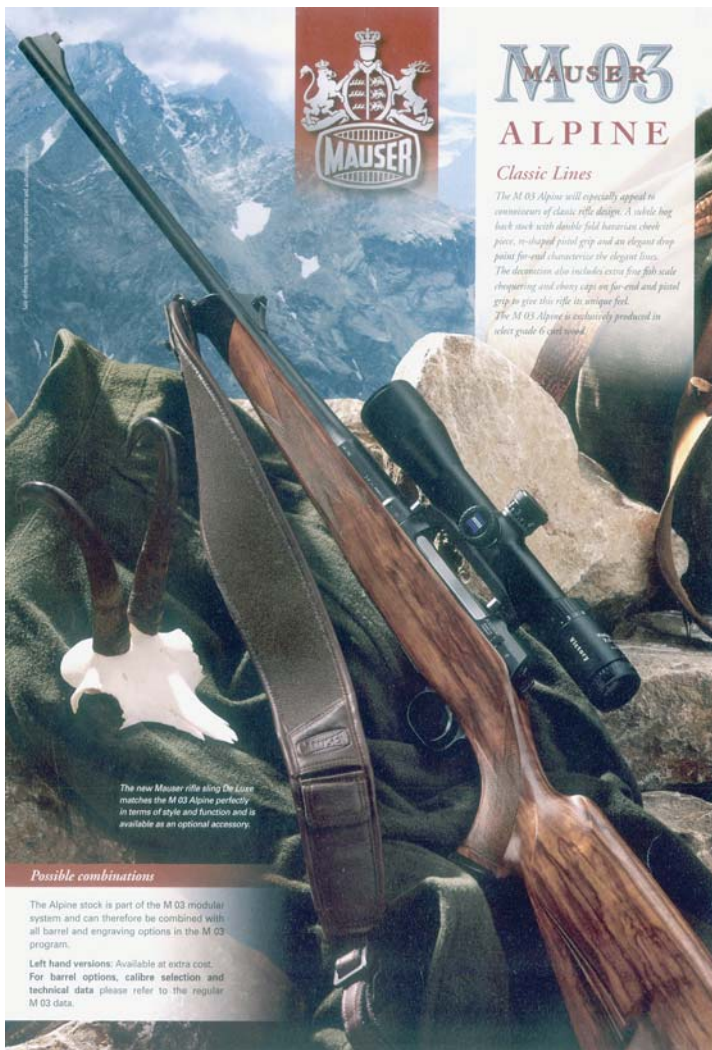
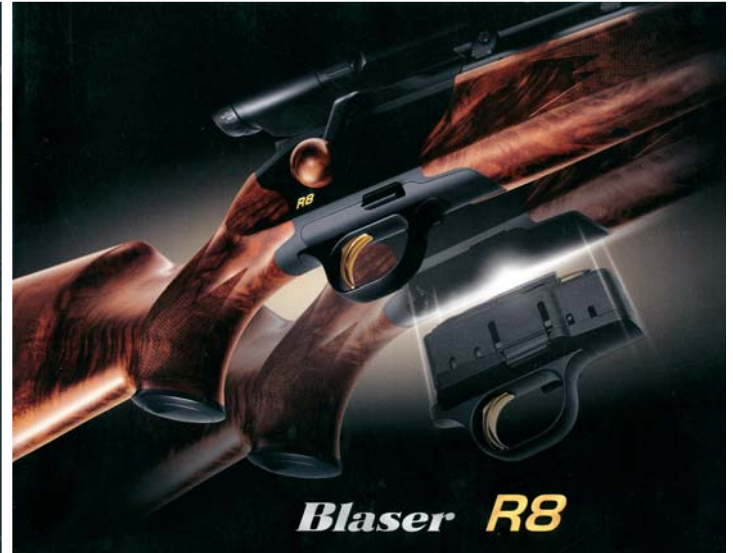


Mr. Charles Mollison, the Head Game Keeper at Birr Estate in 1949.

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THE HUNGARIAN VIZSLA

I'm an Irish veterinary student and I'm finishing my studies in Budapest, Hungary in a few months. In the time I've been here, I've really been taken by the Hungarian Vizsla and besides acquiring my own (after much searching) I've fallen in love with the breed. It wasn't until I went out hunting with some Vizsla friends did I really see what fantastic hunters they are. I think Vizslas are still relatively little known here in Ireland and a lot of owners still tend to use them for showing rather than in the hunting field. To do my little bit for the breed I'd like to promote interest in the Vizsla as a pointer, as opposed to a pet as many have come to regard it after winning Crufts last year. I hope that what follows might just promote debate and ensure that the breed continues to work in the role defined for it well over 1000 years ago in the Carpathian Basin.

The most beloved breed of dog in Hungary is most certainly the Hungarian Vizsla. It has many enthusiasts, not just in its homeland but worldwide. The key to its popularity lies chiefly in its character. It is exuberant, friendly and level-tempered. One of its primary traits is its excellent trainability. The Hungarian Vizsla's very existence is defined by accomplishing his master's every task. To this end, even the fledgling hunter can make a success of training if he does so with forbearance, consistency, and love. However the Vizsla will not tolerate capricious and

uneven handling. He cannot fathom why his master is angry with him, why he is being punished, becoming more unsure of himself, apprehensive, submissive and basically useless. The Hungarian Vizsla is basically non-aggressive, and gets along well with his own kind - in fact, prefers the camaraderie of others. This is an important prerequisite, as during a shoot many dogs must work in harmony together. At the same time, the Vizsla must never be timid or spooky. Unfortunately, I occasionally encounter nervous and fearful dogs. These are very grave and heritable faults, and such dogs should be debarred from breeding programs.

I must stress that the vizsla is by nature a working dog, and needs plenty of exercise for a balanced, healthy life. My own view is that only those individuals who are active outdoors and can provide their dogs with plenty of activity should consider owning a Vizsla. In particular, puppies require plenty of due care; in the absence of which they will find their own amusement, much to the detriment of your house (the devil makes work for idle paws!)

A step into the past

The ancestors of today's Vizslas most probably arrived in the Carpathian Basin with Hungarians conquering the plains. The word 'Vizsla' has been found in ancient manuscripts dating back to the 14th century, which included illustrations of a Vizsla-like dog, and before this in the Vienna Chronicles. There are written records of Vizsla breeding in the 1500s. In those days, hunting was the privilege of the nobility, and therefore, these were the Vizsla breeders of old. The best known of these families were the Batthyány, Nadásdy and Zay clans. In the 18th century, with the growth of gun ownership, the hunting of small game and waterfowl became popular and the functional significance of the Vizsla grew in proportion.

Throughout Europe, in the latter-half of the 19th century, committed dog breeding became more popular and it was at this time that English Pointers and German

Shorthaired Pointers grew in use in Hungary - to the detriment of the ancestral Vizsla. The first hunting trials in the 1880s were modelled on German and Moravian trials. Initially, only English and German Short-Haired Pointers were participation, although some 'non-pedigreed yellow Vizslas' were also entered.

1917 was an important date in



"There is hardly a Hungarian Vizsla that has to be taught to retrieve... in tracking, it is a veritable master" (Csizmadia Gyula)

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the story of the breed. Mr Béla Kerpely, Dr Kálmán Polgár and Mr Karóly Baba began a movement to preserve the ancient Hungarian Yellow Vizsla; they began their work with great skill and dedication. They surveyed various specimens throughout Hungary, but only considered those for breeding which the experts of the Vizsla Club of Hungary agreed met the criteria for conformation as well as inherent hunting abilities. It was on this basis that under the auspices of the Hungarian Kennel Club (MEOE), the breed standard was described, and was accepted by FCI (Fédération Cynologique Internationale) as the 57th recognised breed in 1936 - a relatively young recognition on a world scale.

The specific working/hunting attributes and requirements were laid out by the Hunting Test rules. Its natural abilities were written as "...of all the hunting breeds, the most easily trained... it forms strong attachments... there is hardly a Hungarian Vizsla that has to be taught to retrieve... in tracking, it is a veritable master" (Csizmadia Gyula). The first newly-established kennels were the Kaposi, Végvári, and Hevízi.

Unfortunately, by the conclusion of World War II, the Vizsla population was seriously threatened, with only a string of survivors ending up in Western Europe and the United States. The original official studbook registry was burned, and so, even among the surviving pedigree dogs, some had uncertified lineage. The Vizsla Club of Hungary set about re-establishing the stud book registry and the restoration of the vizsla. In this undertaking the National Breeding Colony, established in 1947 in Gödöllő, was of great support. Individuals without pedigrees, however meeting the conformation and hunting characteristic requirements, were bred with those of known pedigrees.

With economic growth and political change, the dog sport enjoyed a renewed and continued awakening. There were also major alterations in the Hungarian Vizsla breeding programme. During the 1971 World Hunting Expo, an International Vizsla Hunting Trial was held, which further promoted the sport for Vizslas. As a result, interest was now focused on the breed, and more and more people began to hunt them as a universal hunting dog, which had a positive influence on breeding as well.

To further indicate the excellent hunting qualities of the Hungarian Vizsla, in 1981, the Hungarian Vizsla Specialty Competition (HPR Competition) was founded, which continues to date, as one of the most important activities of the breed club. The major goal of the specialty competition was to provide the opportunity for the breed to demonstrate those specific capabilities which distinguish the vizsla from other pointing breeds, and makes it truly Hungarian. These aptitudes - such as its hardy nature, elevated intelligence, willingness to work in a team, surprisingly effective memory skills, and its particular talent for forming close social attachments - are the ones which make the breed ideal for today's constantly evolving hunting conditions, big city living, the changeable Irish climate and for family life in particular.

The Vizsla's work ethos

The vizsla is a universal hunting dog, that is, it must hunt equally well in the woods, field and water. Prime characteristics include excellent scenting power, precise and elegant pointing, exceptional tracking and retrieving skills and the no hesitation in water. Its most fundamental quality is its steadfast attachment to its master and communication with him.

There are two discrete stages to the work of a vizsla in the field. The first is the stage "Hunting in the field - quartering and seeking live game." It is especially in the hunt for small fowl and game that the Vizsla plays a presiding role. It is the dog's duty to rigorously search the chosen hunting field and find all the game that is hidden there for his handler, be it partridge, hare, or pheasant. When he discovers the game's scent, he locks on point, shows the quarry to the hunter, waiting calmly for the next instruction.

After the game has been shot, the dog's next task is to retrieve the fallen game, the second part of its rôle. Fowl which is quickly dispatched is usually found nearby and it is simply a matter of course for the dog to pick up its scent on the wind, locate it, and retrieve it to hand. The scenario can be quite different if the game has only been injured. In that case, the dog must track the wounded animal - sometimes over a distance of hundreds of yards - until finally he can catch it and recover it. It is of utmost importance that the game be carried with a soft mouth, without damage. An injured bird or hare should be retrieved alive and undamaged to the hunter for humane dispatch. With a good hunting Vizsla, there should never be any unrecoverable game.

A well-trained dog is crucial when shooting waterfowl. In between the sedges and reeds or on a bog, it would be unthinkable to shoot without a dog to locate and flush the birds. I would also argue, without a Vizsla, fowl that has just been winged could simply swim away and hide in the rushes: Vizslas are extremely fast over uneven ground.

When hunting large game - stag, deer or even wild boar - a dog worth its salt will never hinder the hunter in his blind, or while finding the game. In the unfortunate occasion when the game is only injured, it must be tracked down and this is where the vizsla again becomes indispensable. As a rule, a Vizsla is able to follow a scent for four to six hours. On trails older than this, only the professional scent-trackers such as the bloodhounds can be successful in finding the injured.

Even though the Vizsla is by origin a hunting dog, its character has endeared it to non-hunters as a companion dog. Its physique and personality makes it ideal for agility competitions, due to its agile and athletic nature. They are indeed fantastic athletes and personally I can vouch for the fact that they are excellent running companions! No matter what the weather is, my running partner is always waiting by the door. Try refusing that face! Even older dogs like to play like puppies and are constant happy companions for their masters. The Vizsla has a long puppyhood, in fact many would argue that they truly remain young at heart in their senescence.

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The Present Breeding Programme

The vizsla as a breed was conformed by the demands of the hunting field, and this also explains its outstanding intrinsic value. There was always healthy demand for intelligence and working ability, and only those hunters which possessed these refined characteristics were bred. At the dawn of the 20th century it was the breed's good fortune to have some master breeders found the its contemporary, systematic breeding programme. These breeders recognised the supreme importance of careful and rigorous breeding to the aim of improving and refining working ability. In the 1920s and 1930s only agile, working, hunting dogs were permitted to be bred and registered in the stud book.

Today the status quo is quite the opposite. The breed is more in demand than ever, due to its exceptional personality - one of the reasons it stands out from many of other breeds of good pedigree. Unfortunately its present popularity jeopardises the preservation of those very qualities which make it unique, especially concerning temperament and health status! Many litters are born, the vast majority of which never hear a gunshot, or scent game in the field. This in itself is not a particular threat, however, if over generations it is bred without reference to hunting ability, without filtering out those dogs from a breeding programme which do not make the grade, we will endanger a millennium of systematic breeding in Hungary and the future of this wonderful hunting dog. Without a comprehensive and logical breeding programme, those special traits which makes the Vizsla such a universal hunting animal will become diluted. Those dogs which are sheltered from their original work may have exceptional conformation, however they are no longer 'true Vizslas' in my opinion!

Hunting only 'on paper'

Sadly in over 50% of the puppies born are registered today as hunting dogs solely on paper. What I mean is that the ancestors have never been evaluated regarding conformation or hunting ability. It is quite possible that there are some talented working dogs among these, however there can be no certainty. Many will admit to a preference for a companion dog instead of a hunting animal. In a way, these dogs will have a more challenging time fulfilling expectations than those required of a working Vizsla - they must adapt to the requirements of today's modern world - the crowds, agitated dogs, traffic and so on. They have to learn not to interact with pedestrians, as they are continuously surrounded by them - yet at the same time, they have to be protective of their family or owner. These complex situations can only be overcome by clever, well adjusted dogs; only these will be unwavering, problem-free companions in our present hectic world where everyone needs to pull their own weight for the greater good of the 'pack.' In this regard, the goal of any wise breeding program should be the preservation of just such Vizslas.

To achieve this, the chief prerequisites have to be the

'breeder's critical eye' and the hunting ability test/Field Trials of previous generations. If prospective buyers would only buy puppies whose parents and grandparents had demonstrated good working ability through hunting and hunting tests, then breeders may be more inspired to enter their vizslas into field trials to get the appropriate proof of hunting ability, and out of this they may be more discerning in selecting stud dogs for their dams. Out of this we are more likely to meet more completely satisfied gundog owners. My personal opinion is that conformation shows do have a rôle, however, now that the spotlight is almost exclusively trained on looks alone, concern of inherent traits has taken a back seat. And on that note, breeders have a hefty responsibility concerning the nutrition of the dam and pups. According to the Barker theory, the nutritional status of the dam will destine the quality of the offspring's life.

As guardians of the breed, we should take great care with an eye to the future. We have little time to make a difference so above all we have to think! A shimmering copper epitome of the breed must also have the grey matter to match!



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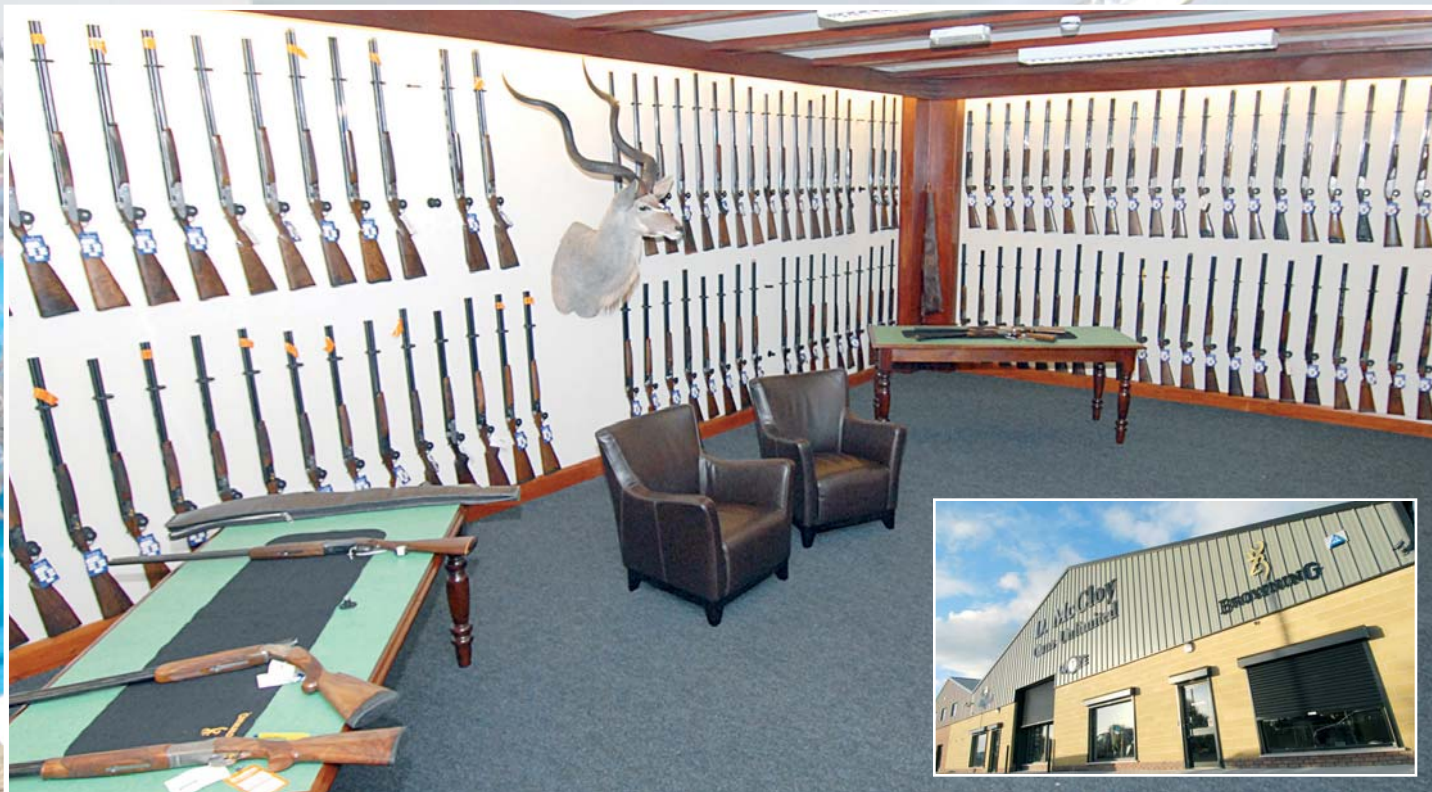
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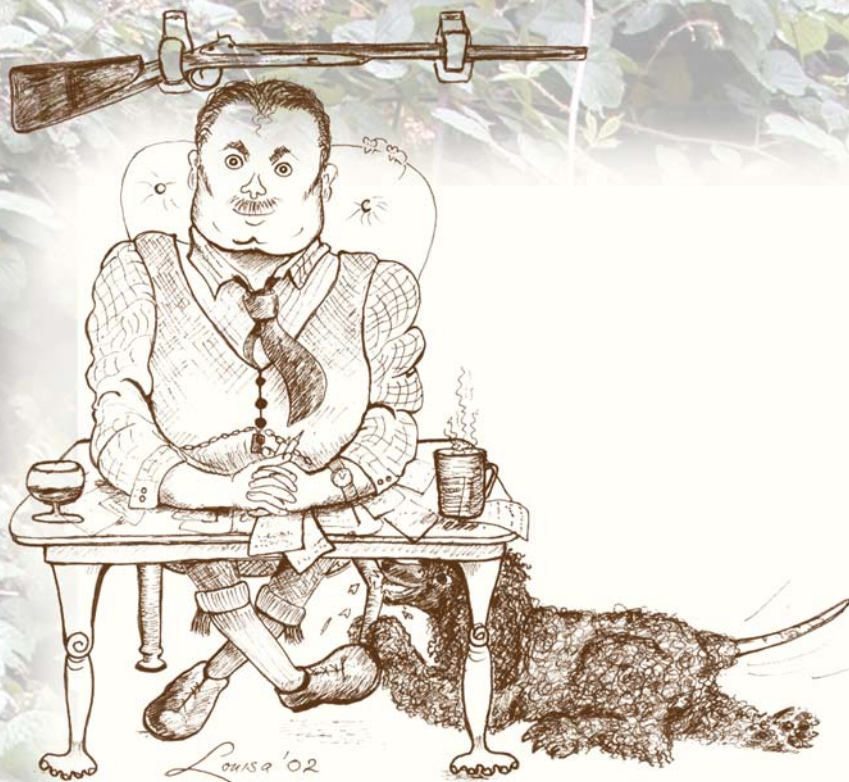
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Woodless is like a very large black hole into which money descends, never to be seen again, so any suggestion to raise a few bob is more than welcome – unfortunately, most of these schemes come to a sticky end at the expense of Plus Twos. The latest scheme looked like it might just about pay the school fees for the little blighters, Ivan and Sap, or so it seemed. One of Esso's London pals had sent a rather nice chap to call on us as he was in the 'event management' business and was looking for a suitable site to run a game fair or some such 'country' event and Woodless might fit the bill. It wouldn't be a 'game anything' from the few birds that survived on the place. Now, Plus Twos has managed to avoid any sort of work, other than keeping the wolf from the door and the revenue men from the gate for most of his life, and the

suggestion that he might like to take a 'hands on' part in this particular escapade did not attract. All that was required was for Plus Twos to accept a reasonable rental fee and wander about the place at suitable intervals on the two or three days of this 'game fair' looking like a squire, or even a pale imitation of the Lord of the Manor. That sounded like the need for a new shooting suit with a decent pair of solid plus twos and a stout waistcoat to support the family double Albert and watch, and Esso was so keen for this to go ahead that she suggested a trip to the tailor in London. I have never been one to avoid a trip to the metropolis, even though the place scares me silly – all those people and buses milling about the place and the only refuge a taxi to the club.

New Suit Required

Anyway, I left Esso to sort out a suitable rent with this chap and headed for the tailor and the club in that order. Now, the tailor is decent sort of cove and even supplied a snifter of port to help me decide on which particular pattern of tweed I would favour – Irish tweed of course as, like Scotch whisky, I find Scottish tweed a bit on the rough side for my delicate palate. The suit was built, rather than made and I headed back to the depths of Woodless Bog with the suit to follow in due course. When I returned, I found my study had become some sort of planning office, full of maps and plans and





lists and measuring tapes, as the 'chap' had taken it over with a bevy of female assistants marking out lines of marquees, open air stands, pony rides and even roundabouts and various whirligigs! Where Esso's friends find these chaps is beyond me, but they all seem to be of rather loose morals and even looser habits. (And their contact details... err? Editor) The only thing to do was to consult with Dixon and Purdey and the other old retainers of Woodless to save the place while there was still something to save. Purdey suggested that he and Dixon along with Mick Dillon, whose local knowledge, could be put to good use, could find some way to survive the onslaught.

Large numbers of people wandering about Woodless is not attractive to a chap like Plus Twos and, as far as I could see, this was the fate about to over take us. Purdey took exception to any idea of some security wallas wandering about his rearing pens and I was no keener on having my bit of rural peace ruined by all sorts and conditions of men, women and children strolling among my collection of ragwort, rushes and ruins just because they had parted with a few pieces of silver at the gates.

Local input

Well, Dillon really did come up with a triumph of local enterprise when he announced that a cousin was the proud owner of a couple of traction engines and

an antique threshing machine if only we could provide the raw materials. I didn't even think of what the raw materials could be and as usual that got me into trouble! Dillon organised that his cousin would call around with one of the engines so I could see how impressive it was and that's where I discovered the concept of 'firebox, footplate and fun' – or better put as fireworks, flames and fear!

It all happened on a weekend when the game fair chap was off doing whatever such chaps do of a weekend when not running game fairs, and also when Ivan and Sap were at home. Steam traction engines are beloved of small boys and the rest of us who have managed to avoid growing up, so I had to be in attendance, as did the terrible twins.

Dillon's cousin, who hails by the name of 'The Fireman Dillon' as he had once shovelled coal on an old GNR Dublin to Belfast Enterprise from the footplate into the firebox to make an Irish speed record, now turned up with clouds of sooty smoke and wisps of steam on an otherwise sunny June morning and after that it all becomes a little confused. Fireman Dillon hadn't enough coal, so Ivan and Sap were dispatched to the yard for more fuel and duly arrived with a wheelbarrow full of odds and ends – what was hidden under the odds and ends soon became obvious. Now, as you know, Purdey is something of an expert on the subject of black

powder, punt guns and assorted bangs but that is frowned upon by the local Gardai Siochanna, so he is inclined to hide his supplies in all sorts of places about Woodless. Ivan had come across one such stash in the upper reaches of the stables and spirited a few into a hide-hole only known to herself and Sap. It was just the time to put them into action among the sods of turf and logs scrounged from around the stables. Dillon was assisting with the firing of the engine and didn't notice the cylindrical tubes among the turf and Purdey didn't spot them as he was in full flight on the subject of the great days of rural railways in Ireland. Then it happened – a mighty bang with showers of sparks and clouds of smoke and all just as Supt. Tim Farlow swung up the drive! The previously magnificent engine was a mass of tangled steel, broken wheels and smouldering coals and the gathered family members and staff did a very good imitation of the Black and White Minstrels. Farlow exploded from the back of the police car just in time to be hit with a shower of hot dust over his immaculate uniform and there is nothing which aggravates him more than so much as a speck of dust on his lapel.

Now you would be forgiven for thinking that we were now in deep difficulty with the game fair idea, or any other idea to do with entertainment at Woodless, but it was one of those silver linings that occasionally brighten the skies over Woodless House. Farlow forbade any such event to be held as the public certainly couldn't be safe if that was what we did to ourselves and told the London chap in no uncertain terms that he wouldn't have a hope in wherever of getting it past Farlow never mind the local fire officer.

It couldn't have worked out better that that as far as Plus Twos was concerned as I could now go back to a bit of piece and quiet and perhaps call my study my own again. The chap from London wasn't seen again around Woodless and the twins went back to school so we could settle down into what passes for routine in the depths of Co. Westmeath or so we thought! We still had a heap of tangled metal blocking most of the drive and Dillon's cousin was showing no signs of turning up to take it away and Tierney complained constantly that it rather took away from the 'elegance' of the old pile – hard to take something away that doesn't exist but I could see his point. Purdey was all for cannibalising the parts into some sort of carriage for one of his punt guns and Tierney wanted the wheels for a chariot – what was I to do? It had to be got rid of but who was going to pay for it?

Dillon, as always, came up trumps with a scheme that only an old retainer like him could have even have thought of. Don't ask me how, but he had a

connection in some little known group of collectors who would not only remove the parts, but pay for the privilege of doing it. A truck load of bearded and overalled enthusiasts arrived and, in two shakes of a lamb's tail, it had all been cleared away. The threat of the great unwashed tramping over the fields of Woodless had been avoided or so I thought.

Esso Strikes Again

Esso had other ideas but at least it was only the usual rigmarole of pony club games and gymkhanas, church fetes and the local agricultural show rather than some extravagant town of tents and marquees or even worse a pop festival. Now that was a mistake to mention to Esso as she has much more advanced musical ideas than Plus Twos. My idea of music doesn't go much beyond Christmas carols, or the occasional organ concert in Woodless Church to keep old Mullet, our beloved rector, happy and away from his regular moans for funds, but Esso had other thoughts on the subject.

I wouldn't know the Caterpillars from the Butterflies, nor the Bongos from the Bangbongs, but Esso and her London friends seem to know them all personally – heavens only knows why? Whenever a gaggle of her friends descend on Woodless there seems to be trouble – it may be that they're strangely affected by the good strong air that sweeps around the place regardless of the season which they wouldn't be used to in the confines of the metropolis. Remember the troubles with the Rector and her friends? Anyway Esso was determined and so were her collection of flashy friends who arrived one Friday evening for some sort of pow-wow from which Plus Twos was excluded as usual. I headed for the study with Purdey and Dillon and a bottle of the famous Elixir to discuss the breeding programme for the coming pheasant season, as it looked to be the safer option. Nothing is ever safe for poor old Plus Twos, and Purdey was looking for more money to start a breeding programme for partridge no less – imagine on land that can hardly grow weeds never mind seeds! Ah well! It would be probably cheaper than Esso's musical extravaganza or would it?

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Birr's Stunning Terrier and Lurcher Events

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Gareth Connolly from sponsors Redmills with the finalists in the Five Nations Championships.

We started out for Birr at 5.00am on Sunday morning, met up with Rab Greer at Newry and were to meet with other friends too at 5.30am, but having waited and waited, 15 phone calls later at 6.15 we managed to get an answer. You guessed it - they had slept in! Not wishing to miss even a moment of the fabulous Irish Game & Country Fair, we decided to let them catch up with us at Birr Castle where we arrived at 9.30am. Birr Castle Demesne's gardens extend to over 160 acres with much more outside the walls, and is open to the public every day of the year. It attracts an average of between 25,000 and 30,000 yearly visitors. The Castle is set amidst beautiful landscaped gardens, waterfalls and lakes and an abundance of

As we had nothing to eat before we left, we headed straight to Foodies Event Catering, from Lisoban, Galway, which was situated near the main area. There we met Kenneth Connolly, Events Director and his most efficient chef and staff. A very nice breakfast was served up at a very reasonable price and kept us going for most of the day. From there we headed round the many stalls,

wild life all around. The Gods were definitely shining on Albert J at the weekend, as the Fair was blessed with good weather and was an excellent production and obviously well organised. A big, big bunch of happy people enjoyed another very successful third Great Game Fair of Ireland. The relaxing way people could stroll around the many stalls, or stand at the ringside with their dogs, even parking their vehicle at the ringside all helped add to the atmosphere. And the boss himself Albert J spent all day going from one end of the show to the other, co-ordinating, making sure all areas were going smoothly, and stopping many times on his rounds meeting and greeting people and welcoming his flock to the show.

searching for little bargains. We stopped off at Barking Dog Beds from Newry, and had a great chat with its director Martin Ryan. Martin knows his trade well and was selling doggie beds like they were going out of fashion. A very friendly man and has great value for money on his stall, good quality, and a big variety to choose from. We also visited Charlie Keenan's and



Gareth Connolly (Redmills) with Graham Brennan (Res Ch) and Paul Reid (Champion).

Edinburgh Clothing Co, Dinky Doughnuts, Fishing, Toyland, walking stick stalls and many more. Along with the bargains gained, my sore feet from walking certainly showed my age (Never! Editor), but was so enjoyable. We met up with some of our friends on the way: John Humphreys was there in full bloom, and we had a great chat with John. I have never seen John look so well. We also met up with Mark and Fiona Kerr from Kildare (Karl Kerr's Brother) and had a good evening's crack with them.

Racing

Now on to the terriers and lurchers, commencing with the racing on Saturday. Because of other commitments we could not make it on Saturday, but I learnt that the Lees had a great day, winning the Under 23 with Hugo, and also under 24 and the over 24. Eddie

McKinstry and Liz won the KC Whippet final. Well done Eddie and Liz, sorry we were not there to celebrate your big win. Martin Tucker won the non-pedigree final with Ernie. That dog is very hard to beat. Billy and Kirsty Harpur won the novice lurcher class. That's one nice dog Billy and Kirsty and will continue to win for you. Glad to see your other dog is getting better. Kirsty is giving that dog so much TLC he will make a good and full recovery. John Humphreys was there with his two wonder dogs Rebel and China. Those dogs never let John down, and he also had wins on the day. I was glad to see China's foot is

fully recovered, and he still looks so well. Congratulations to all the rest of the racing winners and a big thank you to Shane Lee and the Roscrea lads for running this event so efficiently and enjoyably for everyone.

Showing

Showing started at 12.30 noon on Sunday, to accommodate the Five Nations at 5.00PM. Many thanks to the judges who did a wonderful job on the day. Their tasks were not easy, as there were so many good dogs in



ROI Champion Lurcher Graham Brennan's Gypsy with Billy Harpur Reserve.



Joe Maguire was Champion Terrier with Roy Nixon showing Des Macken's Terrier Reserve. (Photo B Harpur)

the ring, but they carried out their duties in a very fair and courteous manner. The showing commenced with the children's handling class and top prize for this went to Aerin Houreghan with Purdy, a well deserved winner. You handled your dog impeccably, and really deserved to win. Well done Aerin, I hope to see you back again next year. All the other little children participating, including the youngest participant, little Jay Reid from Portadown, the son of Paul Reid, Five Nations winners at the show and following in Dad's footsteps, all got crisps and drinks for being good handlers. Well done to all our little friends, I am sure there were some sleepy heads later that night. Ladies handling class was won by Ann Forsyth with her winning dog Jack. Ann, like myself, has many year's experience in dog shows, and handling her dogs, and boy does she excel in that area. I always say in the ring its 20% of the dog and 80% on how the dog is handled and shown. The Gent's Handling Class winner was one of nature's gentlemen and a great sport, none other than Billy Craig. Billy attends all the shows, North and South, along with his beautiful well groomed black dog Diesel. Billy, you have done it again with the great Diesel who never lets you down.

Whippets

In the Whippet class, Overall Puppy Champion went to Janet Duke with her champion Whippet Finlay. What a beautiful dog and excellently handled by Janet, with years of experience in this area. Janet, may you go on to have many more

wins with Finlay. Reserve Champion was Fiona Devlin with Diva. Well done Fiona, Diva intends to make you very proud of him. Whippet Bitch class went to Tracy Gill's Flash; Whippet Dog class went to John McStay's Riley; Working Whippet Bitch class went to Michelle Rafferty's Sky; and the Working Whippet Dog class saw Nigel Braddish's Blue take the honours. Congratulations to all these winners, all the top class dogs and their worthy owners.

Overall Champion Whippet went to Tracy Gill with Flash. Tracy well done, your household should be very proud tonight, with Janet winning Overall Champion Puppy and you winning Overall Champion Whippet. Reserve Whippet Champion went to my husband John McStay with Riley. That dog is showing lots of promise this year, and has won three Championships already, and only 14 months old. Other Whippet winners included Alannah Harpur with her lovely dog. This little girl is a star and really loves her dogs. Charlene Rafferty with Spring and Tess and John McStay with Silver also featured in the awards.

Lurchers

The Lurcher classes saw Billy Harpur win with Whippet Cross Bitch Tina - there must be some trophies in the Harpur household! Graham Brennan from Dublin was another winner and his name crops up at every show in the country as a winner. Barry Holland also had a win in this class.

Smooth Under 23 class was won by Billy Harpur, followed in second place by John Humphreys. Well done



Champion Whippet was Tracy Gill showing Flash pictured with Andrea Cowan from sponsors Redmills.

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The three contenders for the best puppy award.

you two, what more can I say about these two professionals - you're a force to be reckoned with. Fiona Kerr won the Veteran Class with her half deerhound, and Roy Nixon had a win with his Terrier cross lurcher. Well done Roy, It was nice meeting you and putting a face to the name. Over 23 Smooth class saw first prize go to Mark O'Neill with Muzzle, followed by Fiona Devlin in second place and Billy Craig third. All were top dogs and worthy winners. Lurcher pairs were won by Billy Craig with Diesel and his friend's lovely black dog. These two are definitely a winning combination.

Terriers

On to the Terriers and in the under 12 years class, MJ Kerr from Kildare came tops with Skuddy. This little fellow is such a proud handler and enjoys showing his dogs. MJ you have made your mum Fiona and dad Mark very proud of you. In the Jack Russell Class Roy Nixon was the winner and in the Terrier Pup class top prize went to Peter Morgan with his terrier Chip. Pete is another experienced huntsman and show goer and will have to move house if he wins any more trophies as his home must be stuffed with them. Peter's friend, Jimmy Black, is also a keen huntsman and has some great racing terriers. Jimmy told me on Sunday in conversation, he has a few good terriers coming for next year. So watch out Jimmy's about!

The Working Terrier class saw a worthy winner in Eamon Lennon. Any Variety Hare class winner was John Laird's brilliant dog. The Overall Terrier Champion title went to Joe Maguire, a great achievement, while Reserve Champion was Dessie Macken's terrier, handled and shown by Roy Nixon. Well done Roy, you may leave the old man at home in future and you show his dogs. Best in show was Graham Brennan from Dublin with his wonder dog. This dog is a real winner and is hard to beat. The Reserve Champion title went to Billy Harpur.



The three welsh judges Eason Morgan, Wayne Morgan and Jason Powell with BIS Graham Brennan's Gypsy.
(Photo B.Harpur)

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*Fair Directors Albert Titterington and Philip Lawton with the chairman of the Roscrea Club and some of the young juniors.
(Photo: B Harpur)*

The Five Nations Lurcher Championship

And now for the big event of the day, and only the Great Game Fairs could put on a show like this - The Five Nations Lurcher Championship. This is the ultimate award in the doggie world, and it was won by a neighbour of mine Paul Reid from Portadown whose dog has won all over the place. Paul, we are so proud of you taking the trophy: you are a real winner with a Champion Dog. I hope you got all the prizes home safely, I suppose Terry Metcalfe had to do Security Guard for you!

Finally, there are a few people who I cannot forget to thank. The Judges for a job well done, Matt Lee and Matthew Lee for the showing and Shane Lee and the Roscrea team for the racing. To Billy Harpur for his photography, and not forgetting Bluebell (Deidre McCoy) for being there with her camera at this and every show taking photographs and putting them up on K9 and Hunting life for everyone to see. Deidre we all get such pleasure to see our faces in lights on our moment of glory. And finally, this just leaves me to say on behalf of all the canine community everywhere, North and South of the border here in Ireland, our Scottish and English friends across the water, a big thank you to Albert J

Titterington, Director of the Great Game Fairs of Ireland, for three Great Game Fairs, and for all the hard work you and your team put into organising this show and making it such a memorable and successful weekend. It will be nice to look back at these lovely memories you gave all of us in the winter when the snow is sitting on our window sills and Santa is coming down the chimney with all our presents. Here's to the Great Game Fairs 2012!

Photos: By Deidre McCoy and Billy Harpur



The Roscrea Club did a superb job of organising the racing.

(B Harpur)



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Country Chat



Autumn musings with Billy Lewis who may be going deaf but still thinks that Scotland has it all, while a 'young un' says it's the Dad that's missing - not him!

Billy says there is nothing so enjoyable as a Scottish moor.

(photo courtesy Claire Lewis)

For those of you, who enjoy your shooting or may be subjected to loud noises from time to time, be it at the workplace or elsewhere where loud noise is common, you would inevitably, without the proper hearing protection, experience some form of a hearing deficiency. Self explanatory I know, but unfortunately less obvious for those in the younger age bracket. I was made aware of my own hearing problems when I was in my early forties, more as a result of employment health checks than actually saying "what?" each time I was spoken to. Through a combination of my sport (shooting) and work, which in the early days would have been best defined as, 'any job is a good job' and not wearing adequate hearing protection for both, my own level of hearing has gone downhill at an alarming rate.

In the kennels where I now work, there are buildings and walls surrounding the complex, which obviously does not help to absorb the barking but actually amplifies it. Not only are some of the dogs' sleeping quarters inside a large hangar-type shed but the dogs themselves are by their very nature extremely vocal, so it is no surprise then that I and my colleagues experience loud noise at work and must under 'Health and Safety' wear the appropriate hearing protection.

If you were to walk along the same kennels today with a plastic cup in your hand, with the mouth of the cup turned in towards the dogs, the cup would actually vibrate in your hand. So, imagine being subjected to that type of noise for many years with little or no form of ear protection and couple that with sharing a hide when others are blasting off twelve bores with heavy calibre shells in your ears, it's little wonder that I have what in medical terms is listed as, 'degenerative hearing.'

Mobile phones - doh!

When I was out dog training one day at a large marshy area, not far from home, I dropped my mobile phone and of course I did not realise this until some time later. So, taking my seven year old son back to the marsh with me, and with the Missus cued to ring periodically by way of the house phone, it was generally accepted that I would hear my mobile phone ringing. Did I heck! If I had not had the young lad with me, my mobile phone would probably be lying out there still.

Both of us went to the water's edge where I had been doing water retrieves. "Can you hear it son," I ask. "Yes, dad, it's coming from the other side of the pond." Incredibly the young lad was picking up the ringing tones over seventy yards away. I hurried over to the other side, going around the left hand side of the pond whilst the young lad was sent by the safer and much drier route to the right and even though I was only a few

feet away, I still could not hear the wretched thing. He homed in on it from the other side! So 'young 'uns' take heed - if you don't want to end up like me wear ear protection.

I was out walking the team one afternoon about a little wooded glen at Crumlin, County Antrim. The team consisted of one Hungarian Vizsla, one Cocker spaniel and three German Shorthaired Pointers, well two and a half actually, the newest addition to the bunch then was only five months old, a lovely little black and white German Shorthaired Pointer bitch, who is a half sister to Heidi. I ear bashed Kieran Fox to breed Heidi's mother again to a lovely quiet b/w dog, which is doing very well at trials picking up many awards. In fact, Kieran in turn had to ear bash the dog's owner for use of the dog. Anyhow, watching the team playing and running about the woods, I noticed that the pup was carrying something in her mouth, cigarette fashion. When I managed to catch the wee runt, imagine my surprise when I discovered that she held in her mouth a five pound note!

All things Scottish

Now then, anyone who knows me will be aware that I love all things Scottish. It's immaterial what season it is, or indeed how unseasonable it may be at the time of my visit. Scotland's hills and mountains are a treasured playground; many of us go there to enjoy numerous recreational activities associated with Scotland, but ironically many of us go there just to enjoy its quietness.

It is said that if the words autumn and Scotland were used in the same sentence, then Perthshire would probably be the first destination that would spring to mind and there is nowhere quite like Perthshire for taking in the shades of autumn. The area markets its heritage under the banner 'Big Tree Country.' The great pinewoods provide wonderful subtle colours, especially along the forest floor and the smaller pockets of woodland with their beech and birch trees, and impart an incredible array of luminous orange, yellow, red and browns that many people associate with the season. If you have ever visited the forest at Killiecrankie in the autumn, or travelled up the A9 at such time, the



Great dogs give their owner so much satisfaction.

(photo courtesy Claire Lewis)

breathtaking diversity that the forests, moors and rivers bestow would inspire and comfort the most seasoned of travellers.

Andy Malcolm, a hill keeper in Scotland, once wrote that he has a soft spot for midges: "It's that little area just behind my ears," which is why he loves autumn so much; the first frosts of autumn heralds death to the midges - Hallelujah! And the other reason he loves autumn, it's the time for the red deer rut.

Stags and collywobbles

I defy anyone – even the most seasoned of stalkers – not to get the collywobbles when a huge stag comes looming out of the mist at close quarters. His antlers will be hanging with heather and moss, his eyes will be rolling and his tongue will be lolling out of the side of his mouth. Then he'll point his muzzle skywards and drive out a resounding roar that you can feel down in your chest. It's a primordial experience and it has my



An HPR Trial.

eyebrows and the hairs on the back of my neck fighting for space on the top of my head. A familiar feeling that we lesser mortals sometimes experience when we hear that haunting sound as a skein of wild geese pass high overhead in the darkness of the night.

Of all things Scottish and the colours of autumn, Andy is 'happy to swap grass cutting for leaf raking, skylark song for the cries of wild geese high overhead, the purples and greens for yellows, crimsons and golds. But it does mean that winter isn't far away and, by the time that's over, I'll be aching for green grass and skylarks again.'

Staying with Scotland for a while longer, I am reminded of a visit last year when I had a delightful weekend shooting geese under a full moon with walked-up shooting during the day. On my way back to the ferry, I stopped off at a lovely castle-type hotel for a spot of lunch. Later, in the loo, I was operating one of those soap dispensers whilst another chap was drying his hands. Cupping my hands under the soap dispenser and using the tips of my fingers, I pulled the lever towards me and, as I did so, a lot of foam came out, a lot more than would be normal that is. The foam then started to rise in the cups of my hands until it was almost

over a foot high, at the same time the man had finished drying his hands and, turning around, looked at me standing there with a foot of foam in my hands. He said nothing. Well, what could he say and avoid embarrassment. I was red-faced enough for both of us!

Finally, we all enjoy our own little seasonal outings throughout the year, be it the game fairs of the spring and summer or the invites of autumn and winter. But spare a smile for the little five year old boy who was found by a police officer, wandering around the Agricultural Show at Balmoral and, when he was taken to the day-care attendants, proclaimed as 'lost,' piped up clear as you like: "Excuse me Sir, but it is not me that is lost but my Daddy." Doesn't it sometimes feel good to be back home!



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The Irish Red Grouse Association Says Progress Can Be Achieved

For years and years it had been the same old story - we simply must do something about reviving the red grouse before it is too late. That the grouse population here has been in serious and steady decline is beyond any doubt. Loss of habitat and predation have been the principal culprits, but total indifference and lack of any type of remedial action have also been to blame. Once the shooting or trialling seasons are over there are many other interests to take up one's time and the very few dedicated who do work receive the mandatory 'clap in the back' with mutterings of "I will do something to help." Except that this help is somehow never forthcoming. For some time now there has been general disquiet about grouse numbers and the lack of any visual effort to increase stocks throughout the whole country. There has, though, been a vigorous, not to mention costly, campaign to introduce raptors such as sea eagles, red kites, golden eagles and hen harriers. There is nothing wrong with such birds of prey using our airspace, but should we not have put our own house in order first? In all this frantic rush to comply with European Directives concerning Special Areas of Conservation (S.A.C.) the poor genus *Lagopus* seems to have been forgotten. It is only common sense to suggest that if you increase grouse numbers, you will automatically provide feeding for some of these raptor species, but no one seems to have tumbled to this yet.

Historically, it is suggested that the advent of the breech-loading shotgun led to an explosion of grouse numbers in England and Scotland. Moor management and predator control produced huge numbers of grouse for driven shoots and thus, some would say, a lucrative 'industry,' for want of a better term, evolved. Grouse numbers in Ireland could never reach such heights. We do not have the large estates for a start, and a lot of our best moors have been planted, but there is no real ambition abroad to undertake such work. From many forays across the water to count grouse on moors in Scotland and



England, one fact became very clear. If you control predators and manage the habitat, you will improve grouse stocks. That is a given. The scale of this increase is in direct proportion to the amount of effort put in on the ground. If you strip-burn a section of moorland, the benefits are many. Firstly you generate young and good quality heather for grouse, you increase insect life, you improve habitat for ground-nesting birds. Burning is the best form of regeneration. Flailing is a poor substitute which must be used in some circumstances. However the removal of the chopped heather is a must to prevent fungal development which will cause serious degeneration. I was in Durham last March and found the moor management there truly amazing. The notion of a twelve or seven year burning cycle has been totally discarded and a four or even three year cycle seems to be the norm. The result is that there are grouse everywhere. Every small patch of vigorous young heather held a pair, and this despite the most severe winter. The moor established a new record last year of 4000 brace which they hope to extend. Bear in mind that a stock must be retained for next year's hatch and that road kills account for some one hundred brace, then there is a huge amount of grouse on the ground at the beginning of the shooting season.

What about research and then more research? Forget about it. There has been enough research done already to stock a library. That the grouse have endured even through neglect shows their resilience and what is really required is action, and action now, to halt and reverse this decline.

Positive conservation efforts

It was when Vincent Flannelly was elected onto the Executive Board of Countryside Alliance Ireland that the idea of setting up a structured Support Group to assist Grouse Projects here 'took wings', so to speak. On 3 November 2010, a meeting was held in Portlaoise, as a result of a directive passed by the Board of Countryside Alliance Ireland to invite like minded organisations to participate in a programme to deliver positive conservation efforts to increase Red Grouse numbers and its habitat in Ireland. The Irish Red Grouse Association was launched following this meeting. Why Portlaoise? There are many of us who are of the opinion that Ireland

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begins rather than ends at Inchicore and Portlaoise is as near to a central location as we can get. This meeting was attended by representatives from Countryside Alliance Ireland, Field Trials, I.F.A. Countryside, National Parks and Wildlife and although not physically present, some support was offered by Bord na Mona and Coillte whose officials have attended subsequent meetings. It was the unanimous opinion of the meeting that an action plan should be developed to propagate grouse numbers across the land. Some eight sites were identified as potentially suitable to develop grouse programmes, indeed some of these were already up and running. The Irish Red Grouse Association would make available resources and expertise from its extensive panel of persons knowledgeable in grouse conservation and habitat management.

A very important tenet of the Association from the outset was that no expenses be sought or given for attendance at meetings, visiting projects, that kind of thing. Rather, there is some vital equipment to be purchased, materials for crow and fox traps – we haven't even considered the mink yet - that would require some funding, although Countryside Alliance Ireland gallantly stepped into the breach with initial funding for this.

The first tangible effort was the manufacture and supply of crow cages to the various sites. These were simply made, by the purchase of site guards/security fencing that had been used around building sites. All four sides were covered with chicken wire with a gate added to one and a top was made by adding a fifth. This section was modified to accommodate a chicken-wire funnel. These structures could be easily erected on site and fastened by wire or cable ties. These cages have proven to be extremely effective. (Aside: Some misbegotten bogman stole two sides from one trap in Galway.)

Numbers compared yearly

Along with regular fox drives already in being, The Irish Red Grouse Association will make fox traps available to the identified sites. These traps will be placed in suitable locations.

The boys in the North have mostly got the jump on us and have several projects up and running. The recorded grouse numbers encountered will be compared year by year, but what was really staggering was the numbers of predators: foxes, grey (hooded) crows and magpies that have been removed from the several sites. Areas such as Glenwherry, Aughentaine, Cushleake, Lough Fea and Slieveanorra are active already and have results to show for it. So far The Irish Red Grouse Association has assisted projects in Wicklow (three), Galway, Tipperary and there are more in the pipeline. One site in particular, in North Tipperary where a group of people had already formulated the idea of grouse regeneration, met with some official opposition and asked for our help. If the goodwill

is there, these problems can be overcome.

The late Captain Jimmy Hamilton launched an appeal back in the '80s for capital to undertake revival of grouse stocks. He didn't look for much, he just asked for a fiver from anyone who had ever shot a grouse. He subsequently reported that he had only received one reply from a Welshman! The Irish can be slow in the matter of parting with money. In order to carry out any meaningful revival, finance will be a requisite. To this end, the Association will hold a raffle and tickets will be circulated widely. There will be many very interesting and useful prizes available, all of which have been donated and the Draw for prize winners will be held in December. All we ask is that people 'throw in an auld fiver' and hope for the best. Even if you don't win, you will have the satisfaction of knowing that your donation will go directly to grouse projects. How about it?

There are many clubs and associations that are now inactive for diverse reasons and each of these would have little bits of money mouldering in bank accounts. Why not close these accounts and forward the monies to the Irish Red Grouse Association. The Government is actively keen in having such monies returned to the exchequer anyway, and all donations will be acknowledged, whether big or small.

This Association is not an offshoot of Countryside Alliance Ireland, but Countryside Alliance Ireland have assisted and encouraged this initiative from the outset and have committed their continuing support. All or any other sporting bodies are welcome to support the idea. Countryside Alliance Ireland, I.F.A. Countryside and Country Sports and Country Life Magazine have agreed to accept any donations on behalf of our Association or donations can be sent directly to our Bank: Allied Irish Bank, Moate, Co. Westmeath Bank A/C Sort Code 93-22-64 Account No. 31466068.

It is hoped that by getting some projects started and assisting in the work, that even a little initial success will spread enthusiasm. Association members are ready to assist by providing handlers and dogs for grouse counts, by providing manpower for strip-burning or giving expert or technical assistance when needed. For some of us this will probably be our last serious attempt to bring back the grouse population to what it was in our dim and distant youth. That Ireland could achieve the stock levels seen in England or Scotland would never happen, we accept that, but rather to achieve sustainable numbers in all areas is our target.

Progress will be somewhat less than dramatic of course, but progress can be achieved. The most vital component of any such project is the commitment of those locals who will do the necessary day-to-day chores. This is a serious attempt to save our noble grouse from extinction. It must not fail. It will not fail.

I.K.C.'s 53rd Championship for Pointers and Setters, 2011

*'All my life's a circle; But I can't tell you why;
Season's spinning round again; The years keep rollin' by.*

Isn't that the truth? It seems only a short time since I reported on Pat Reape's fine win in 2010 and now the 53rd Renewal of the Championship is over. As always, Kinnitty was the venue on 27th/28th August and this year we had a new Chairman in Jim Sheridan who stepped into the hot seat that James Dalton had occupied with distinction for twenty six years. Entries were unaccountably slow in arriving, but a late Christmas-like rush brought a total of 54 dogs – four above the limit. The breakdown was: 23 red setters, 3 red and whites 11 pointers, 12 English setters and one Gordon which had, unfortunately, to be withdrawn before the Draw and replaced by an English setter. The card included five previous winners and was liberally littered with Field Trial Champions.

The Judges this year were Anthony Mulhall, a local boy from the foot of the Slieve Blooms who started off with pointers but changed to red setters and is quietly establishing a strong line of good dogs. Patsy McCarthy hails from County Cork. He is actively involved in several Field Trial Clubs and also has a yen for springer spaniels. Jon Kean has come for many years from Scotland with his pointers to compete and compete well. A former winner of the British Championship, he is the Hon. Secretary of the Scottish Field Trials Association and has run twelve British Championships to date and counting. The Official Gun is largely unsung, but Declan Whelan and Leslie Maher walk as much as anyone and are always up with the play when a shot is needed. Stewards of the Beat were Chairman, Jim Sheridan, Neil Ryan and Paddy Collins while Control Stewards Tom Hayes, Christy Davitt and Vincent Flannelly manfully performed that most onerous of tasks.

By any yardstick, Kinnitty is tough. Jon Kean writes: "The Irish Kennel Club's Championship Stake for Pointers and Setters is the greatest test of stamina, drive and guts you can witness anywhere in the United Kingdom and Ireland put together. It is the toughest test for both man and dog. This is my unequivocal judgement after more than 30 years field trialling in Scotland, England and Ireland."



Richard MacNicol with FTCh Kissing Kate of Gerensary who won the Red Mills Trophy for most stylish dog on Day 1.

The weather up to the Championship could, at best, be described as 'changeable' which is an understatement. In fact, it was accurately described to me as "a wintry kind of an auld summer." On top of that, Kinnitty has the knack of generating its own weather anyhow. There had been some mutterings last year when the number allowed to compete was reduced to 50, but the reasons behind this were amply shown on this first morning. Fog and rain were our lot and as we sat in the cars and could see the sun shining gloriously on the lowlands, so we idled away the time until 10.30 am



Kieran Walsh with Blackstairs Geronimo (Best English Setter and Best Backing dog) and Aidan Dunne with Ikerrin Crouch and Hold about to cast their dogs.

when the skies and the hill cleared. There were intermittent showers all day, but not enough to halt the Stake through lack of visibility. To run 25 brace of dogs takes a long time anyhow and our aim was to be off the hill by 5 pm.

Day 1

The first six brace ran dry on beats near the road, but birds began to show as the trial moved in across the moor. While everyone might love to get into game straight away, these dry runs gives a dog the

search wider beats. Long runs were the order of the day and this spongy ground really tested both handler and dog. The first game taken, although earlier chances had been spurned, was in the 7th brace when Carol Calvert's IRSD Glenlark Apollo had a smart find on a single after a good run. Lunch was taken after 9 brace and then the trial moved further in across the hill.

The pairing of Richard MacNicol's PB Kissing Kate of Gerisnary and Brian Kirwin's PD Mountemple Kirwin's Boy saw Kate give an A-Plus run and her brace-mate have a good find on a pair. Brian was in action again in the next brace when his PD Aughtnaclappa Mine Rocket had a pack. His partner, Pat Reape's IRSB Lisdovogue Aileen was then paired with Ollie Kelly's IRSB Lisdovogue Breda whose drawn brace-mate had to be withdrawn due to a toe injury which was unfortunate. Aileen had an excellent, if dry, run in heavy ground.

P. Collins' PD Boston Jingo had a good find on a pack on the left wing and had an excellent running mate in Jim Crotty's PB Brackbawn Beauty the Second. Vincie Flannelly's IR&WS Pallasgreen Halloway had a single with another breaking off to the left and the card was finished at 6.05 pm with no more birds taken which was later than expected, but the delay in the morning had lost us a lot of time.

Back to Kinnitty and Father Seamus O'Neill, who was one of our competitors, said Mass in the Community Centre. With the magnificent display of trophies nearby, a most thoughtful touch was his remembrance of all the fine



The judges conferring on the hill.

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STAY AHEAD OF THE GAME



Gerald Devine casting his ESB FTCh Lefanta Tinka in the 3rd Round.

people now gone who had competed in and made the Championship what it is today.

A lovely meal in the pleasant Kinnitty Community Centre followed with some short speeches and Bill Connolly presented the Red Mills Trophy for most stylish dog of the first day to Richard MacNicol's pointer Kissing Kate of Gerisnary. A beautiful trophy was presented by the Committee to Kieran Walsh's E.S.B Capparoe Tintreach in recognition of her achievement in winning Irish Kennel Club Dog of the Year in 2010. Discussing the merits of the dogs among ourselves is always a futile exercise and we have long ago discovered that trying to pump judges for the inside track is useless

with a light breeze and a little heat in the air which perhaps improved conditions. With the wind from the same direction, the Stake resumed beyond yesterday's ground. Some of the dogs maintained their standard of yesterday, but some more found the going tough. No further finds were added and a third round of the ten top dogs was called.

Stephen Clark with Glendrisock Sapphire and Carol Calvert with Glenlark Apollo, both reds, were first down and Apollo had another good find on a pair. Lisdovogue Aileen and G. Devine's ESB Lefanta Tinka came next with Aileen having an excellent find and production.

K. Walsh's ESD Capparoe Tintreach and H. Brady's

anyhow so we had a few relaxing drinks and retired at a respectable hour.

Day 2

The second morning brought the dreaded list. Only twenty dogs survived the cut. If the first round runs were long, then the marking was hard. Only right. What is required is fast, stylish, search and quartering and judges can only adjudicate on what they see before them on the day. The draw was swift and everyone headed for the trial grounds again, but this morning was much better, dry



Three Wise Men: the Judges - Patsy McCarthy (Cork), Jon Kean (Scotland), Anthony Mulhall (Offaly) with Chairman Jim Sheridan.



Championship Treasurer John Philips presenting the winner Pat Reape with some of his awards.

Remkilens T-Ebba IRSB ran with the bitch getting into trouble Kissing Kate of Gerisnary ran next with Boston Jingo who had another find. J. Crotty's pointer Brackbawn Beauty the Second with his neighbour A. Dunne's IRS Ikerrin Crouch And Hold, but the red suffered a mishap and exited. Kissing Kate and Blackstairs Geronimo were selected for yet another run before the Judges called 'finis.'

To appreciate the Judges' task, each would have walked over forty miles over both days. Bad enough in easy going, but there is no part of Kinnitty easy. They were unsparing of themselves to give the best dogs every chance.

Results

The atmosphere in the Community Centre is always electric as the gallery awaits the result. It does take a little time to organise everything as everyone, especially those in contention, is on tenterhooks. The mandatory speeches were mercifully brief and then Hon. Secretary, Aidan Dunne, gave the result.

First: Mr. Pat Reape's IRSB Lisdovogue Aileen (Mayo Keano x Lisdovogue Behy) Classification: Excellent

She did it again. Aileen was last year's winner also which

is a remarkable feat. This is a class bitch, hunting with serious commitment in every round. She ran with real pace and power and her find on a single bird in the third round was straight out the top drawer. A really excellent setter

Second: Mr. P. Collins' P.D. Boston Jingo (Sugarloaf Zak Darinish x Bilboa's Buddy) Classification: Excellent

The winner in 2009, he had 2 good finds and his dog ran with real drive. Slight blemishes knocked him into second position.

Third: Ms. Carol Calvert's IRSD Glenlark Apollo (Glenlark Flynn x Rushfield Santa) Classification: Very Good

Carol's setter had two excellent finds, pinning from good distance. Again, little blemishes pegged him back to third place.

There were other awards too. The Angling and Shooting News Trophy for the most stylish dog over both days was awarded to Kieran Walsh, of Wexford, with his four year old ESD Blackstairs Geronimo. This eye-catching dog ran three times on the second day, but



James Dalton making the award of the cup for Best Pointer to Paddy Collins.

didn't meet any game. He also received the Red Mills Silver Salver for the best backing dog and Trophy for best English setter.

Kudos:

Top praise is due to Laura McDonald from Red Mills for producing quite a magnificent programme and providing all kinds of goodies for the competitors on the morning. RED MILLS themselves deserve our lavish praise and heartfelt thanks for their continued support now stretching over nineteen years and without whose largesse the Championship would be much the poorer. There were those, too, in the background who can always be relied on to for the smooth running of the Championship. John Cassin even came the day before! He erected a display of Red Mills Banners on the hill and had the Community Centre open and ready bright and early on the morrow for the Draw and then quietly helped in other small, but necessary chores. Pat Martin has the onerous office of Trophy Steward which he always carries out diligently and the myriad trophies are always present and in good shape at the awards. Tom Hayes, as Call-up Steward, made sure no time was lost between runs while Christy Davitt and Vincie Flannelly performed the most thankless task of all as Control Stewards. All of this contributed to the smooth running of the Championship.

The overall classification of this Championship was very good, if not excellent. The bad weather on the first morning and the absence of game for the first few brace prevented the event from 'getting going' so to speak-



Paddy Collins receiving the Runner-Up rosette from the Chairman Jim Sheridan.

from the outset. Still, all braces in the third round had game on the beat, when it really mattered. There were several missed opportunities and some birds did, as grouse will, jumped before the dogs came near. Overall this was a good, well-run Championship and the award winners were very worthy of their placings.

Visit

www.irishpointerandsetterchampionship.wordpress.com if you wish to browse our website. We do like comment and would be most grateful for more information about previous Championship Stakes, snippets of incidents, that kind of thing, but above all photographs. Please email to irishchampionship@hotmail.com or gooddogs@eircom.net

Kieran Walsh receiving the awards for Best English Setter and Best Backing dog.

Suppression is good for you!

Iwonder if you, like me, have noticed the growing number of sporting rifle shooters who are now appearing on the range or arriving into the hunting grounds with great cans attached to the barrels of their rifles? On my last stalking trip to the beautifully rugged Scottish isle of Jura it was 'tactfully' drawn to my attention that I was one of the very few stalkers who came to the estate with an unsuppressed rifle. This was immediately after I had temporarily deafened the head stalker, Gordon Muir, who had grown so used to his clients using suppressors, he had not protected his ears. His heart felt appeal to me to get a sound moderator fitted for my next visit hit home. I am sure the volume of the delivery of his message was entirely due to the momentary loss of hearing I had just inflicted upon him. I am now aware that health and safety considerations are encouraging the use of moderators on other estates and within forestry organisations that are involved in deer control. This may very well become the major driver for their use in the future, but as I was to discover there are other benefits to using them.

I have two rifles, a .270 and a .243 and both were acquired many years ago before factory threading of barrels to accept moderators became the de facto standard it appears to have become today. Having made the decision to get them both threaded, the first

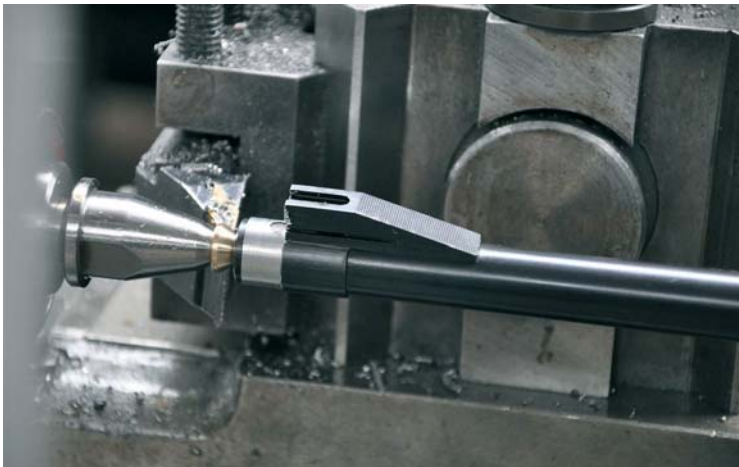


Preparing to make the first cut.

step was to choose a moderator and the internet revealed a huge variety of styles, types, materials, weight and size. They all fell into two general types. The reflex, most of which when mounted lies behind the muzzle and along the barrel. This has the advantage of reducing the overall length of the whole assembly and using custom bushing to the barrel at the rear of the moderator ensures central alignment with the bore. The other type is almost entirely in front of the muzzle when mounted and certain types significantly add to the overall length of the rifle. Both add weight. The other thing both types have in common is that their cost, along with the threading operation, is a significant investment and I wanted to be sure that I made the right choice. I consulted with owners of both types to get their views and I contacted a number of suppliers for more detailed technical information. I heard a number of stories of poorly fitted moderators which were not concentric with the rifle bore, others that had 'cold' welded to the

barrel, of barrels heavily corroded by reflex units that had been left in place for prolonged periods even after getting wet and moderator bodies that had perforated in use through poor maintenance. I was shown a barrel which had to have the moderator cut off, the outer surface was very deeply rust pitted. I could see that the acquisition and use of these units needed to be taken seriously and that I needed some expert advice and the services of a skilled gunsmith.

I was fortunate to track down Jim Young of Continental Sports based at the North Ayrshire Shooting Grounds. Jim's 20 years experience as a custom rifle maker, and veteran of 100s of



Barrel reduction and foresight removal. Note the brass cone to align the bore and prevent muzzle damage.



A new crown is fitted.

moderator fitting operations, for me was an ideal recommendation. Jim discussed my requirements over the phone and recommended that I investigate the Finnish made Ultrajet Z compact by ASE, which is a front of muzzle mounted unit as he knew that I was looking for high noise attenuation, durability, low maintenance and a unit that would not add excessive length to my rifle. The big bonus for me was that Jim had calculated that the barrel dimensions on both my rifles were such that this particular moderator would fit both rifles saving me the cost of an additional moderator. Better still, if I brought the rifles to him, I could watch the process. I swung into action immediately, applying for the necessary variation to my firearms certificate and advance booking an early morning passage to Stranraer that would allow me to arrive at 9.00 am on the appointed day and if all went to plan I could return to Belfast the same day with the job done.

Concentrating ... he made the first cut

Jim met me at his extensively equipped workshop and lost no time in stripping out the barrel from my Remington .270 keeping up a running commentary on the process, the physics, use and maintenance of moderators. The barrel was deftly mounted into the huge chuck of Jim's lathe and as he ran the tail stock in to locate the brass cone that he had turned for the job into the muzzle, Jim warned me not to be alarmed if there was some wobble as the barrel rotated up to speed. This was normal for barrels he explained, as bores were quite often not perfectly concentric with the outer surface of the barrel. In any case he pointed out that the brass cone and tailstock would ensure that the muzzle was totally steady and would ensure that the machining and threading on my rifles would be

concentric with the bore. Jim made some final checks and measurements before running the barrel rotation up to full speed. There was indeed a perceptible slight wobble as predicted. Jim concentrated as he made the first cut. I wondered how my expression looked as I realised that the point on no return had just passed. He cut and measured with increasing frequency as he approached the required diameter for undercutting and threading. Jim changed cutting tools and started the threading operation continuing with his commentary in between cuts; there was no conversation during cuts. Again, he slowed the process as

he approached the required thread depth and fit, running on a standard thread gauge until it ran on smoothly. The next stage was to check the fit of the moderator and again he warned me that the correct fit for the unit was crucial to the unit alignment. This required a measured amount of lateral movement between the barrel and the moderator until the unit contacted the newly cut square face at the rear of the threads, which action causes the unit to align itself perfectly and firmly with the barrel. Jim chased the threads by tiny amounts between very frequent checking of the fit and agreed that at this stage fitting was as much about feel as measurement. At last, he was satisfied that the fit was perfect, but to finish the operation he re-crowned the muzzle, which on the Remington is a recessed square cut crown, cutting this to a shallow 11 degree target crown. Jim assured me that this would ensure that bullets would leave the muzzle with the absolute consistency vital to accuracy.

Nervous

I have to say that it was with some relief that I



Screw cutting the Remington.

watched Jim reassemble the 'Remi' but I have to confess that I was nervous about how the process would go with my CZ .243 which unlike the Remington had a substantial foresight that had to be removed by a combination of machining and de-soldering. I need not have worried: soon he had the CZ barrel mounted into the lathe and was repeating the process with even more care this time. Much of the foresight had to be turned off the barrel to accommodate the threading operation and then heat applied to remove the remainder of the sight base. I can tell you that there was no journalistic detachment during this operation on my first and favourite rifle! Jim had completed both rifles in under five hours; using extreme care, undoubted expertise and experience he produced the perfect job. I am very impressed with the moderator I have chosen. It is certainly compact, adding only 150 mm to the length of each rifle and with its small outside diameter I was able to retain my low profile scope mounts. It is heavily constructed but its life is rated in 10s of thousands of rounds and the additional weight was easily off set by the prospect of reduced recoil, improved accuracy and being able to shoot safely



The sad results of leaving a reflex moderator on a rifle. without ear protection.

Jim had promised reduced recoil and the high likelihood of improved accuracy both statements were proven on the range at home. Recoil reduction was very significant and caused both rifles to shoot approximately eight inches low with the moderator fitted and when re-zeroed were grouping consistently under an inch at 100metres. The sound reduction was incredible no louder than an unsuppressed .22 HV round. I can now return to the isle of Jura and Gordon with a clear conscience.

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Photo : Lars Duren (Sweden) with his 12 pointer 2010



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A day shooting at Drumlanrig Castle

Somewhere as prestigious as the seat of the Duke of Buccleuch isn't where I would normally find myself shooting but things conspired to provide me the chance. We had arranged our annual trip to Scotland for goose and woodcock shooting, only the severe weather upset the organised plans and we had to think on our feet whilst we were there. Affordable accommodation for the week, for nine of us including the girls, was found by renting Orroland Lodge, a secluded spot amongst the cliff top woodland near

Kirkcudbright and overlooking the sea. It was wonderful and came with a cook for breakfast who understood the needs of shooting parties. Evie was not just very flexible with breakfast times but also very well connected, her uncle is the shooting agent for Drumlanrig Castle amongst other estates and when we found ourselves without any shooting for a couple of days she suggested we contact him for ideas, so we did. Jeremy suggested an informal driven day for an estimated 40 bird bag between the five of us shooting. It was too good an opportunity to pass up, even though we had really been looking forward to the planned woodcock days, but driven pheasants would make a very suitable alternative.

We met Jeremy Culham at a civilised 08.45 and followed him to the shoot. At this stage we did not know where we were going to be shooting, but as we swung off the road at a sign pointing to the entrance to Drumlanrig Castle we couldn't believe we had come out of our predicament so lucky. The Queensbury Estate at Drumlanrig Castle has been ranked as one of the best shoots for many seasons. It was a far cry from the scratching day for woodcock we

Heading for the first drive.





Motionless as the birds arrive.

had originally booked. As we came around the hill the castle stood majestically in front of us, what a start to the day.

This was no big, formal driven day, we had the two beat keepers, Nick and Adam with their Labradors and Jeremy with his as our beaters and pickers up. We were only five guns, so we had to shoot on a narrow front and setting the guns was a bit of a challenge to put us under the flight lines. On the first drive we were set at the end of a long, thin covert and I was pleased to get a good crossing jay as my first bird of the day, having missed a couple of high pigeons. The pheasants came out and were fairly equally shared between us, the joy of joys though was that Pierre and Colin, the two brothers on their first shooting trip and who had shot their first goose yesterday could now bask in the enjoyment of shooting their first pheasant too. We picked up our birds, thankfully there were no runners, and headed back to the vehicles.

The next drive, after a leisurely coffee and a whisky mac, was just a short walk along the farm track. We were lined out in a similar pattern of a curve around the bottom of a long covert while the birds were chivvied along by the eager Labradors. Guy was on my right about 100 yards away with the freedom to work back towards me as the drive progressed. On my left was his

son, Colin, behind a small hillock and down in the valley out of sight. I had a space to move both left and right. I wish I had taken up a more right handed position earlier in the drive because an absolute screamer of a cock pheasant came out and curled into the gap between Guy and I, well out of range of the pair of us. Another high, fast bird came out closer to Guy and I watched as he swung through and folded it cleanly. Colin had his share of the shooting too, with a beautiful shot on another good pheasant overhead. We were blessed with the luxury of not having the pressure to bag big numbers and so we were able to savour every shot at our leisure. The first two drives had resulted in 16 pheasants and my jay in the bag.

Thorns were tugging

The next drive was something different in that it wasn't a drive, it was a walk-up through a young plantation to try and find a woodcock. There were pigeons everywhere but they soon departed upon our arrival. Pushing through the thick undergrowth, with the thorns tugging at any piece of clothing they could get a purchase on was quite hard going. Pheasants were pushed out but they weren't shootable and we were to get another go at them on the next manoeuvre anyway. A couple presented reasonable opportunities further down the line as they went back and were taken, but no woodcock showed. Eventually the line broke out onto the ride and we were all relieved to see the end of the big push. With the pheasants now corralled into the

The Author swings as birds whistle over.





It had been a good shot.

remainder of the plantation the other side of the ride Jeremy took the guns round the outside and placed us in the field ready for the dogs to work the remainder of the plantation forward.

The pheasants were strong fliers and with the strong wind in their faces many were curling back gaining height all the while. Those that fought their way forward presented excellent shots and quite a few went through the line unmolested. I was stood out on the far side and could only stand and watch until a real screamer came back over the trees and offered no more than a snatch shot, which folded it most satisfyingly. I had only just reloaded when another cock, even faster came on a similar line and I just managed to get in front. Quite a few birds were lost to the wind sending them back, but those that came forward had gained good height into the wind and made the shots all the more satisfying and gave us something to talk about over lunch in the castle.



A rapid mount and a chance is taken.

Flight ponds in the hills

With our hunger satisfied we headed off for the hills overlooking the Nith Valley. Here there are some flight ponds that the keepers feed to attract wild ducks. The first pond is set in a shallow dip on the crest of a hill and on marshy ground surrounded by flowering rushes. We walked in silence out from the cars and ringed the pond downwind, about 75 yards out. The keepers stood well back and waited to send their dogs forward to flush whatever was resting on the pond. As we stood quietly waiting a rabbit hopped across the grass in front of me, no more than 20 yards away. I refrained from shooting it for fear of ruining the duck shooting for the others. Just then the keepers sent their dogs in to flush the pond anyway. Oh well, it was only a bunny.



A fine reward for one of the highest shots of the day.

A party of Canada geese got up and headed straight out over Guy who pulled one down with number 5s intended for the mallards that came out at the sound of the reports. Those who hadn't emptied their barrels at the geese had shots at the rocketing ducks and a couple were added to the bag. I was stood in a small patch of rushes, trying to blend in with the surroundings as much as possible. It worked, a singleton came high overhead and I surprised myself by actually hitting it.

We reassembled and followed the keepers to the next flash, about 400 yards away. We placed ourselves in a similar ring around the pond but the only shot was by Colin at a surprise teal which folded to his single report. That was the last shot of the day as the hills were now starting to get bathed in a warm glow as the sun dropped low in the sky. It was time to head home and reflect on a very simple but enormously successful and enjoyable day. Who needs big bags?



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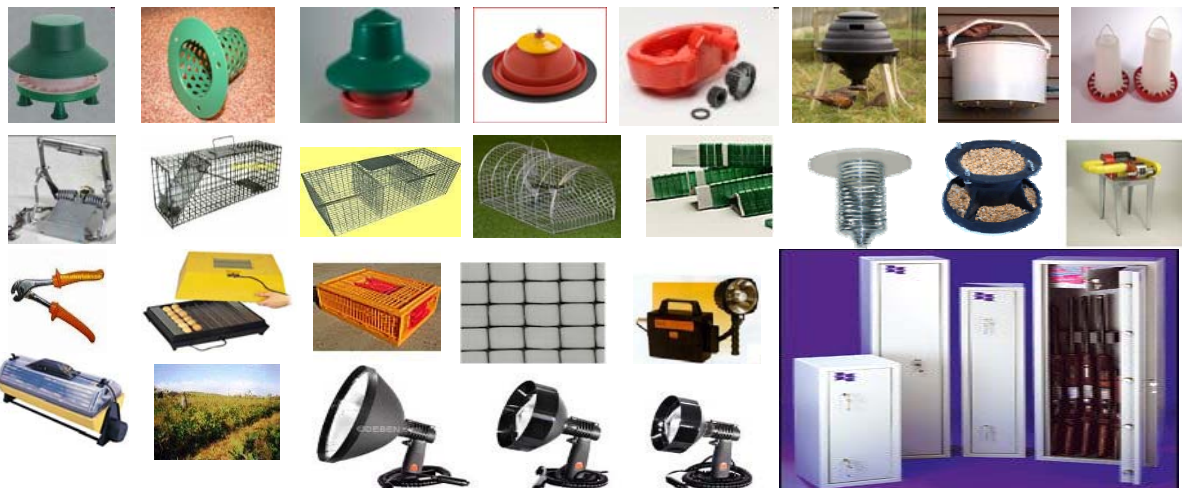
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Following family footsteps at the Somme

On the 11th of November 1918, in Compiègne forest, France, an armistice was signed to mark the end of war. Aboard the private rail carriage of the Allied Commander in Chief 'Ferdinand Foch', a French General who served in the War, before becoming Marshal of France, was Matthias Erzberger, a German politician. It took three days to reach an agreement but it was finally settled at 5am, allowing six hours before coming into effect on the eleventh hour, of the eleventh day, of the eleventh month, with the last soldier, being killed in the war at 10.58am, a Canadian. The Armistice agreement was to mark the 'End of the War to End All Wars' and, as we know today, this was not to be the case, as in just over 20 years later, World War Two was declared and lasted for a very long, horrific six years.

Following the Great War, much of Europe changed, borders were redrawn, new countries were formed and old countries abolished. In the Treaty of Versailles, the War was blamed entirely on Germany, who were refused representation and thus were forced to pay back 132 billion Marks, today's equivalent being around 6.6 billion pounds, which was only paid off in October 2010. Germany lost parts of their territory with land going to Denmark, Czechoslovakia, Belgium and a greater amount to France and, due to any future potential threats, their army was reduced to 100,000 soldiers. Many German nationalists believed this treaty to be unfair, so later supported Adolf Hitler when he opposed



Thiepval

it. It is interesting that during World War Two, SS soldiers destroyed the carriage where the first armistice was signed.

Optimism died after the war, many countries were in huge debt and inflation flew out of control. The memories of what happened still circulated in soldiers' minds, shell shocked, they chose to never speak of it. Today we commonly refer to this as post traumatic stress disorder, something which at the time many soldiers suffered from; they couldn't cope with the horrors of war and tried to escape it all. Under army law those who were deserters would have been tried and then shot at



Close together the graves of three friends.



The Ulster Tower

dawn, even soldiers who fell asleep while on sentry duty suffered the same fate. Families, torn apart having to cope with the loss of their husbands and sons, became known as the 'Lost Generation.' The UK's 1921 census found 19,803,022 women and 18,082,220 men in England and Wales, a difference of 1.72 million. There were also 1,209 single women aged 25 to 29 for every 1,000 men, a big difference, which meant many women, could never go on to marry. In respect for the soldiers, memorials were erected throughout the Europe and elsewhere. They were used to remind people of what had happened, to mark battle sites, record who fought and



The Irish memorial

died and the missing as well. By looking at the size and number of memorials today you can start to see the sheer price the soldiers paid for our countries. In Tyne Cot, Belgium's largest cemetery there are a total of 11,956 burials and in Etaples cemetery, France, there are 10,773 burials, these being only two of 940 cemeteries in France and Belgium alone.

Like many homes in Ireland with a member of the family having fought in the Great War, mine is no exception. I have written previously about my Great, Great Uncle, Sergeant James Edgar of the 13th Royal Irish Rifles, who fought in the Great War as a sniper. He was wounded three times and there was even a letter notifying his death which was sent home to his mum - in fact he was still alive in a London hospital! James came home from the War and unlike others, was able to talk about his experiences, but unfortunately it was never written down, so much of the information was lost. I believe that today it is our

responsibility to note these things for posterity, and this prompted my research.

The Ulster Tower is a replica of Clondeboye's Helen's Tower

After the Great War, James returned to France for the 'Dedication at Thiepval of the Memorial to the 36th Ulster Division.' The Ulster Tower as it is known, was built as a replica of Helen's Tower in Clondeboye, County Down, where soldiers of the 36th Ulster Division were drilled and trained before going for inspection at Seaforde, and then to the Western Front. The tower would be the last remaining memory of Clondeboye, before the soldiers marched on to Belfast, with many thousands never returning to walk the streets again. In a video clip taken at the time of the soldiers leaving home, it was remarkable to see that it took approximately an hour and a half for all the soldiers to pass by the City Hall, Belfast. The Ulster Tower, as it stands today, marks the German Front lines during the Battle of the Somme; it was a great stronghold with advantageous views. The tower lies in the well known battlefields of the 'Schwaben Redoubt,' where back in 1916 stood 300 yards of trenches, supposedly impenetrable. Opposite, was Thiepval Wood where the 36th Ulster Division launched their attack at 7.30am (zero hour) on the 1st July 1916. They were the only division to achieve their objectives during the



The grave of a Royal Dublin Fusilier.



A German machine gun post still stands.

battle, but it came at a heavy price because in the first two days of fighting they had casualties of around 5,500, almost half of their entire force. Alongside the 36th Ulster Division, fought the 16th Irish Division, who also suffered heavy casualties of 4,000 soldiers. They were two opposing divisions, one formed from the largely Protestant UVF, opposing Home Rule and the other Roman Catholic Irish Volunteers, fighting for an Irish Government; both groups ended up fighting and dying side by side.

It is said that, in 1921 when James went to the dedication service, the land around the tower, with the German trenches, barbed wire and battle debris remained almost untouched; at the time the Prefect of the Somme announced that the land would be left intact 'for eternity', although this was not the case. When James went he, along with other surviving soldiers of the 36th Ulster Division, planted trees from Ulster in memory. Recently I found out that they disappeared along with their plaques because before the late 1980s, the tower having fallen into disrepair but was later restored thanks to the Somme Association, who also bought Thiepval Wood and now provide tours by prior arrangement.

Following my Great, Great Uncle's footsteps

This summer I decided to follow in the footsteps of my Great, Great Uncle James Edgar, to discover more about the battlefields where he and his unit would have fought, to take in a greater sense of our history and pay respect to the soldiers who fought on our behalf. Unlike James I did not travel by 'auto-car' to France but instead took the bus and ferry over to Belgium. On the first day, we met our tour guide Florent, a Belgian man who guided us around the Ypres Salient and explained the history of the land and the three battles of Ypres. We were taken to a large mine hole from the Great War (approximately 250 feet in diameter, 40 feet deep, created by 42 tons of explosives); to look at it today you would not picture it as a place of so much disaster, but peaceful due to the clay ground underneath which flooded it into a lake, although at the time the explosion could be heard even in London. We also visited Ireland's peace tower, a memorial in the shape of a round tower dedicated to all the soldiers from Ireland who fought in the War. It is located close to the Messines Ridge where, symbolically, soldiers from both backgrounds fought together, for a



German and Jewish graves side by side.

united cause. At the site you can also see an old German machine gun post, overlooking the lower ground, where our soldiers would have fought.

In the afternoon we went on to visit John McCrae's field hospital, where he worked as a field surgeon during the second battle of Ypres, John McCrae being the famous Canadian poet who wrote 'In Flanders Fields.' We then travelled to Tyne Cot, the largest cemetery in Belgium. When we arrived by bus we were greeted by the sound of drums, as a parade commemorating soldiers of the 36th Ulster Division was just starting to take place. It created such an atmosphere to listen to the last post being played by those dressed in the wartime uniforms, graveside. Little did we realise then that this year was the 95th anniversary of the Somme. Following the service we travelled to Hill 62, where we experienced original WW1 trenches, with the original mud! The museum had many interesting artefacts, but my poignant memory had to be the wartime photos, depicting battle scenes, with soldiers strewn across no man's land, with nothing but mud, craters and horror everywhere. In evening we returned to Ypres to watch the last post at Menin Gate. Buglers from the local fire brigade sound out the last post each evening at 8pm to commemorate soldiers of Britain and the Commonwealth killed in the Ypres Salient who have no marked graves. Inscribed on the walls there are 54,896 names, excluding another 34,984 names which are inscribed on the walls at Tyne Cot and the New Zealand and Newfoundland soldiers, who are remembered elsewhere.

Inscribed on the Menin Gate walls it says: "Here are recorded names of officers and men who fell in Ypres Salient, but to whom the fortune of war denied the known and honoured burial given to their comrades in death." This was taken from Rudyard Kipling's writing who's own son fought and died in war. Kipling always held himself responsible for the death of his son John (or Jack as known) because while the young man had been denied entry to the army due to his extremely poor eyesight, his father's influential friends were able to get him commissioned in the Irish Guards.

Life expectancy was 14 days

I thought that it was very interesting that an army



The trenches where men lived and died.

officer's life expectancy then was only 14 days, mainly because they lead their forces into battle and were easily identifiable to the Germans by their boots and uniform, and they also they carried a black thorn and pistol, rather than rifle and bayonet, although this changed in the latter years.

Next day, we travelled from Flanders Fields to the Somme in France for the memorial services at Thiepval and the Ulster Tower, both located within walking distance from each other. The crowds at the services were remarkable, with representatives from both France and Britain. Thiepval memorial was created to honour the missing of the Somme, on the Portland stone walls you can see inscribed the names of 72,000 soldiers. Each time a soldier is found their name is removed and buried close to their location, with full military honours. That afternoon it was great to see the Ulster Tower which had a special significance for me. It was remarkable to think that my Great, Great Uncle had once fought here, returned to inspect the tower and now I was standing where he once stood. At the service, Northern Ireland's First Minister Peter Robinson was present along with the Secretary of State and many of our other local councillors.

Throughout the service I couldn't help but feel sorry for the poor bugler on top of the tower standing in full uniform in the scorching heat. This reminded me of the soldiers in their uniforms 95 years ago, when they often had to cut the legs off their trousers to deal with the heat, the only problem being that because they defaced their uniforms they did not get another pair, so had to fight in the winter trenches in the same shorts.

On the last full day of our tour we got to visit many of the other graves at British, French and German cemeteries. Looking at each British cemetery, we noticed they are not all the same. Often they placed headstones close together when they believed the soldiers buried were friends, maybe from the same regiment, or died beside one another. Often inscribed on the headstones was 'An Unknown Soldier,' the soldier being unidentified. Sometimes could be seen two regimental

badges overlapping one another, when the bodies of two soldiers had been buried together, or inscribed 'Five Soldiers,' when multiple unidentified soldiers had been buried together, perhaps after being found in a mass grave. If the soldier was Jewish they would have a Star of David instead of the cross, but any other soldier's grave if a religion had been unidentified would normally be given a cross. When we visit the French Cemetery, Notre Dame de Lorette, the headstones were totally different, shaped in crosses with names on either side; if they were Muslims like many of the Moroccan soldiers, they had headstones which faced East.

Mines, shrapnel and bullets

One I found most interesting, was the German cemetery which didn't have flowers growing around, only a few wreaths. Leading through to the graves they had iron doors; the headstones comprised black Iron Crosses, with names on each side front and back. For Jewish dead, one side was left blank and a separate headstone was erected with the Star of David. Many visitors also left pebbles on top, as in the film Schindler's List. I found it remarkable to think that in the First World War, Jews fought alongside Germans but later were persecuted by Hitler in the second. That afternoon we visited Vimy Ridge, site of the impressive Canadian Memorial, their largest overseas memorial, which stands where the Canadians fought the German Sixth Army in the Battle of Arras. What really shocked me, were the signs and electric fences everywhere which restricted access due to unexploded mines, craters, trenches and tunnels. It shows you that 95 years later, a major cleanup operation is required all over the Somme and Flanders to get rid of the mines, shrapnel and bullets. Our guide even mentioned how farmers today could still be ploughing their fields only be killed by these mines. The tour definitely give me a great insight to the war: It brought more meaning and understanding to all the stories I had heard, and the images will always remain in my memory. Before I could not grasp the lives lost, but looking at all the cemeteries and memorials spread across Flanders and the Somme, I began to piece together the fate of the 32,186 soldiers killed, missing or wounded from the 36th Ulster Division; 6,363 from the 10th Irish; and 28,398 from the 16th Irish during the Great War.

On Remembrance Day, I think that it is fitting to think of the inscription of the peace pledge on the Irish Peace Tower, which reads: "As we jointly thank the Armistice of 11 November 1918 - when the guns fell silent along this western front - we affirm that a fitting tribute to the principles for which men and women from the Island of Ireland died in both World Wars would be permanent peace."

The last big bag of snipe on the Shannon

With the Irish Game and Country Fair just complete we had spent a few days before and after around Banagher and it brought to mind the last chapter of the late Michael Twist's book 'Irish Sporting Memories.' To set the scene for this great, yet true account of shooting in Ireland in a golden age for wildfowl and shooting, we can do no better than describe Michael's enthusiasm for all things Irish than to use the opening words of his book: 'Many have dreams, but only a few realise even a small proportion of them.'

However, fortune smiled on me on the morning of the 5th November 1947, as I walked down the gangplank off the Liverpool to Dublin ferry, minutes after docking. I was about to take up residence as Land Agent to the 2nd Duke of Westminster in charge of his Irish estates and interests. I had made a fleeting, but whirlwind visit with George Ridley, the Duke's Chief agent, three weeks previously. Great! I was delighted to join His Grace's staff and had been warned by Ridley that it would entail one hundred percent commitment. That in no way fazed me, for I had, on being invalided out of the army early in the war, become resident land agent, managing the Roundhill Estate in the Vale of Aylesbury, for a MFH, who was also one of the country's leading industrialists and probably the most dynamic personality I ever met. However, whilst the prospects of working for the Duke was a great incentive for moving to Ireland, there was an even greater one - the hunting, shooting and fishing for which the country was renowned.'

The years passed quickly. Agricultural 'progress'

reached the Emerald Isle. The leisurely life in the country changed rapidly. In many areas, where once relaxed and convivial hours were spent delivering milk to the creameries, now lonely minutes served taking the churns out to the roadside, from where they would be collected by lorry. Tractors took the place of horses and, still a novelty, combine harvesters began to make their appearance. The value of land was beginning to be appreciated and rising in price at an alarming rate. This in turn led to widespread drainage. It wasn't just ditches being cleared and marshy fields drained. Rivers were dredged. Whole areas that had been the natural habitat

of snipe and duck disappeared to be replaced by a wealth of arable land and lush pastures,

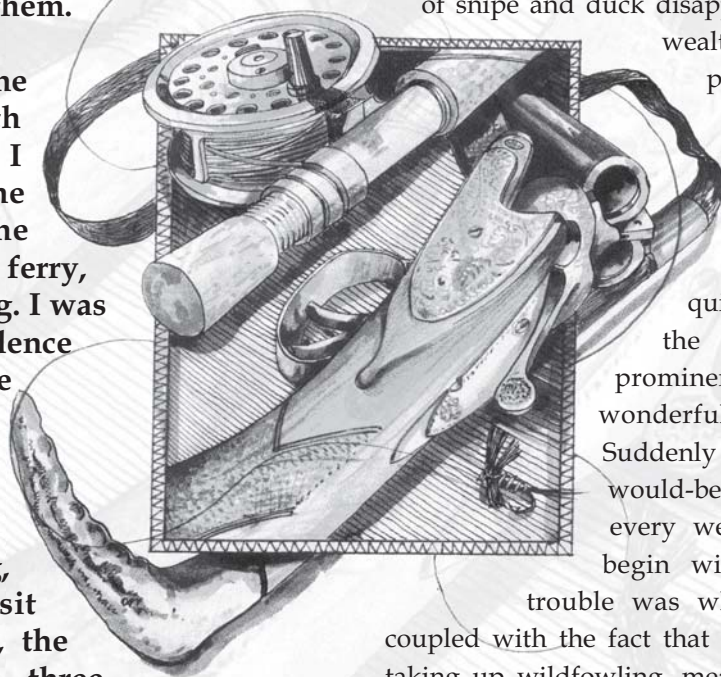
However, this was not all that confronted the wildfowl in their fight for existence. The Irish Tourist Board, in their quite proper efforts to improve the economy, gave much prominence to the country's wonderful fishing and shooting. Suddenly it seemed that parties of would-be sportsmen were arriving every week. It wasn't, at least to begin with, what they shot, the trouble was what they disturbed. This,

coupled with the fact that many more residents were taking up wildfowling, meant that marshes and bogs shot five or six times in a season at the most in past years were now being disturbed two, sometimes three times a week. The interest in snipe, certainly by the Irish wildfowlers, was negligible, but, alas, snipe do not like being continually chivvied and harassed.

Those days it seemed that nothing had changed

In spite of this we still walked the countryside for hours, loving every minute of it and ever hopeful. Sometimes we would be amply rewarded, others not. It truly became a case of 'you never can tell.' There were days when it seemed that nothing had changed. One such day was the 22nd October 1960.

David and Bobby Ganly and I met Mount (The Earl of Mount Charles) early one morning in Kinnegad, on our



way to Banagher to shoot snipe. Danny had phoned to say that the like of the snipe had never been seen before. Bobby quickly joined our guest in his car and we were on our way. I knew Mount quite well, had judged Field Trials with him and had once shot pheasants at a shoot where he was a guest. He was a noted pheasant shot, but I had no idea how he would perform at snipe. Not infrequently, guns who are brilliant at high overhead birds, are lost when it comes to shooting something flying away from them, particularly when it jinks and swerves as do departing snipe. We pulled up outside The Shannon View just as dawn was breaking. Even in the poor light, I thought Mount had a distinctly jaundiced look about him. As they say in Ireland, he did not look in the whole of his health! I was right. It transpired that he had been up most of the night consoling a friend whose wife had left him. Consolation, amongst other things, apparently, had been derived from a bottle or two of vintage port!

Bobby, David and I went up to an empty bedroom to change into our bog-trotting clothes. Mount said that he was already suitably attired. When we came downstairs we found him, nearly asleep, at a table in the dining room. Rose followed us in with a tray bearing four plates heaped with fried eggs, bacon, black pudding and fried potato. She put one down in front of Mount. He turned several shades paler and pushed it away and asked Rose to fetch him a pint of Guinness. Bobby divided the unwanted helping between the other three plates!

David and I, who were shooting together, were soon ready for the off. Mount, contrary to the advice offered by all three of us, insisted on wearing waders. This led to David turning to me and saying that we'd better get going because, from the way Mount attacked his pint and was now going to don waders, it would be up to us to shoot any snipe that we took home. This led to a quick rejoinder from our friend and the suggestion of a bet of a fiver a corner on who would shoot the most snipe by lunch time. David and I, without hesitation, took up this offer. The handicapping was all in our favour! We were sure we were on a 'cert.'

Suddenly the air was full of snipe

David and I were to shoot the Brosna Callows. Danny and Bill were going with Bobby and Mount. Not having a driver would mean that we had to walk some of our territory into the wind, but there was so little that it was really of no consequence. Having decided on our plan of campaign we spaced ourselves out and moved forward.

We hadn't gone more than forty or fifty yards when, suddenly, the air was full of snipe. I downed a right and left, as did David, but he went one better than me, for he had two with his second barrel. Snipe seemed to be rising everywhere, but with virtually no wind, they were very wild, getting up to a hundred to a hundred and fifty yards ahead. Over the thirteen years I had been in Ireland, I had seen a lot of snipe along by the Brosna, but nothing comparable to what there was that morning. Fortunately, a small percentage sat tight, but it was infuriating to see the numbers that went screeching off well out of range every time we fired. Had there been a

wind there is no knowing how many we might have shot. It was an exciting morning and David and I were agreed, that at a most conservative estimate we must have seen something in excess of six hundred snipe. It was, therefore, disappointing that when we returned to the car to go for lunch the count was only thirty-seven for we had both shot well. However, we were confident that we had done enough to comfortably win the wager.

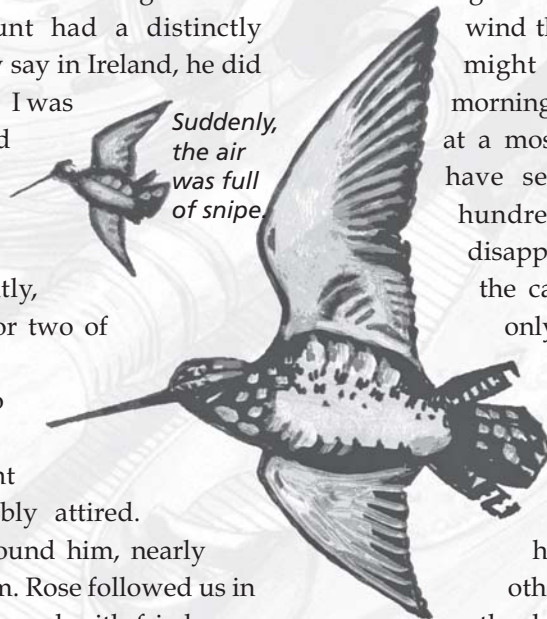
We did not waste time when we got back to the hotel and were halfway through lunch when the others returned. Danny looked round the door. "Well men?"

"A great morning," I replied. "Never seen so many snipe."

"We'll buy you an extra pint out of our winnings," added David. "We shot thirty seven."

A broad grin spread across Danny's face. "Begob, yer bate, so you are. Didn't Mr Bobby an' himself shoot thirty eight and an ole green-neck. I'm telling you your man's like a Jack Snipe so he is, boots an' all." At that moment the others entered and confirmed Danny's report. We paid up willingly, for seventy-five snipe in a morning was no small achievement, whatever the conditions.

Mount had definitely recovered and attacked his lunch with gusto. As soon as he had finished, he rushed up the street to buy a pair of cheap shoes – he'd had enough of waders! Bobby agreed with us and said that, in all the years he had shot at Banagher, he'd never seen so many snipe. As we waited for Mount, we made plans for the afternoon. David had an important meeting in Dublin that evening so our time was limited. We had to be away by 4.00 p.m. at the latest. It was agreed that David and I would shoot, where we liked, across the bridge; which really meant in the time available the Town Callow. Bobby and Mount would stay on the Banagher side of the river. Danny said he'd come with us.





Only in one place, for no explicable reason, did they 'sit'.

The hole at the back of the town

We were about to leave the hotel; the others had already gone, when Danny enquired. "Did you ever shoot the little hole at the back of the town?" He looked at David. "No, can't say I have, in fact I didn't know there was one there." "There is, an' I'm thinking it'll be alive with snipes." Much discussion then ensued as how best to shoot it. Finally it was decided that David would enter it from the hotel garden, or to be more accurate, where the garden would be if the ground was cultivated. I was to go and stand on the end of the station platform, to shoot anything going forward! I must have looked a bit uncertain at this suggestion, for Danny, grinning from ear to ear, cut in. "Be the hokey don't be worryin' yourself. There'll be no train coming an' won't you be keeping your feet dry?"

I walked down the street the eighty or so yards to the station, Drake, my golden retriever at my heel. I no longer had my beloved Jill. I walked along the platform and took up my position. I felt most conspicuous! I saw David climbing over the fence at the end of the 'garden' and observed Rose hanging out of a back bedroom window, the better to watch the sport. David entered the marsh. The whole area became alive with snipe; they appeared to be going in all directions, but plenty came hurtling out towards me. I kept pushing cartridges into my gun and firing as fast as I could. In a couple of minutes it was all over. I had downed five. I sent Drake to retrieve them. Four were dead, but one gave him a lot

of trouble and proved to be a strong runner on the 'up-line'! It is surprising how fast and far a snipe can run. David joined me, he had added four to the bag.

We crossed the bridge and made our way out onto the Town Callow. If we thought we had seen a multitude of snipe in the morning it was nothing to what we saw in the afternoon. They were, however, still unbelievably wild. Only in one place, for no explicable reason, did they 'sit' and here we shot nine without moving our feet. We were back at the hotel just before four o'clock; Bobby and Mount were already there. The bag was 131 snipe, 1 mallard and 2 golden plover.

I may be wrong, but I would say with some certainty, that it was the last sizeable bag of snipe shot around the Banagher area. The big freeze that followed later that year, starting on Boxing Day and carrying on well into 1961, decimated the snipe population. As we climbed into our cars to head for home, Danny, his face flushed from porter and unbridled elation, called out from the doorway. "Good luck now, I'm telling you men, you'll be a long time dead, so you will, afore you see as many snipes again!"

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Louisa Nally

Celtic Canine Artist

Louisa is undoubtedly one of Ireland's most accomplished canine artists. Born in Clare, she has established herself internationally as a specialist in the Irish native breeds of dogs and gundog and sporting art, producing an uncanny likeness of her artistic subjects. The soul of each of the dogs she has painted can be seen through the lifelike expression in their eyes. The atmospheric and magical content of her work leads to each painting becoming truly creative and almost inviting you into each picture.

Aged three, her creative talents in sporting art were discovered by her grandfather, a very talented artist who was a friend and colleague of Paul Henry (who painted so many well known scenes of Connemara). On one of

his visits, her grandfather found her lying on the floor with a box of crayons drawing bunnies and designing a cardboard cart for her tortoise in which to pull her teddy bears for a picnic feast. Her Grandfather said: "You certainly have got my talent and also my nose." She was so pleased about having his talent but rather cross about having his nose and indeed still is over half a century later. The drawing won her first prize in a competition on radio, a large paint box and brushes. She was on her way into the world of painting and all the magic it was to bring her. Stories of Ancient Ireland, its pagan religion and Celtic fables were to feed her imagination and so came her first Irish dog breed to be portrayed. The hound of Cullen and Cu Cullen emerged as a detailed illustration.

At school in Sion Hill, Blackrock now aged six, she was encouraged to enter the Texaco Art competitions every year and won many certificate awards. When Louisa did her inter cert at 15 years old she received the highest marks in the country. She did not continue school after that but was sent to commercial college instead which she absolutely hated. At night she attended technical college where she studied engineering and mechanical drawing. Leading from this she went on to work for 15 years as a draughting assistant in electrical, mechanical and technical drawing, hence her attention to fine detail in her work today. She also went to Art College at night but in the late 60s abstract art was all the rage and she left the college to spend more time studying art by herself. But determined to follow this artistic path she studied on her own for the Art Teaching Certificates.

A greater interest in canine art develops

Next was a period working on the restoration of Victorian paintings, her part in this work was to return any dogs which were damaged to their original state. This helped to create in Louisa a greater interest to paint dogs. Artists whom have influenced her in her work have been Sir Edwin Landseer, William Osborne the Irish animal and portrait painter, Albrecht Dürer for his detailed engravings and Leonardo da Vinci not just for his



Thirty Years of Irish Game Fairs.



The Dogs of Our Forefathers - nine native Irish breeds

art but for his fascinating life. When working at restoring art many of the setters were Red and Whites which led to Louisa seeking out Ann and Alan Gormley who were striving to see that the breed did not die out and one of their dogs 'Harlequin of Knockalla' was the subject of Louisa's first serious dog picture which she presented to them for all their help with her research. She was now truly fascinated with the Irish breeds and started to visit dog shows and nothing would do Louisa but to purchase a Water Spaniel for herself. A bitch called 'Uisce' whom she did not show but trained for working and had some success in competition when she gained a first in a preliminary cold game test with her son Heath Cliff coming in second. She now has a daughter of his and grandson as well and a drawer full of rosettes. There have been many more dogs in the family including GSDs, Jack Russells and collies with many a 'tail' to tell.

Important commissions

There have been many important and interesting commissions but not all her commissions are for dogs. Amongst her favourite commissions is the most famous Irish show jumper "Rockbarton" ridden by Gerry Mullins. This painting was commissioned by the Irish army officers to raise funds for the Irish Red and White Setter Club. "Garfield" the Clumber Spaniel owned by Ralph Dunne was another, painted just months before he became Crufts Supreme Champion. Also a commission

which saw her heading North to paint was a magnificent depiction of the East Down Hunt. A few prints of this large watercolour painting are still available for sale from Irish Country Sports and Country Life magazine. The original has been sold for an undisclosed price. Some years ago she was chosen from 11 European animal portrait artists to paint three of the Irish Breeds for a dog food advert by Paul Reynolds of C & D Dog Foods. Another of her most loved portraits was of International Ch. "Dirmuid" painted for Philip O'Brien. Spotted in a photograph by a well respected New York attorney, he contacted Louisa and wanted to purchase it at any price. His disappointment was immense when he discovered it was not for sale.

Louisa goes to Prison

A very interesting and unusual portrait of the famous Irish patriot P.W. Nally, one of the leaders of the Irish Land League and the first Sec. of the IRB in the late 1800s was some time ago commissioned by the GAA. Louisa was asked to paint his portrait on the cover of a book on his life called 'Nally as Maigh Eo'.

Worldwide recognition

There were several interesting commissions to follow. In '07 Louisa was commissioned to do a celebration limited edition print for 'Thirty Years of Irish Game Fairs' (also available from Irish Country Sports & Country Life magazine) which contained several important old castles and mansions with the Irish Dog Breeds intertwined and with a Celtic designed coloured border surrounding it. Print Number 1 was to presented to none other than Dr. Ian Paisley.

Since the early days in '88 Louisa had also been traveling the world, her popularity growing. She traveled first to Germany to research the Red Setter sponsored by Bus Eireann who had also commissioned her to paint Red Setters on a couple of occasions. This was a very interesting trip visiting the President of the Setter and Pointer Club of Germany and receiving a warm welcome and several commissions. She was brought to see a competition of the HPR breeds, including Red Setters. In fact a Red Setter named 'Fee' won the competition gaining over 100 points.

Other countries include Sweden with the famous Red Tails Kennels and several shows exhibited her work there, while the Swedish Kennel Club have some of her work displayed. Popular in Finland she has visited twice on the invitation of Jarmo Kinnunen of the famous 'Finn Master' boats who live up near the North of Finland in Kokkola, where he has English Pointers and

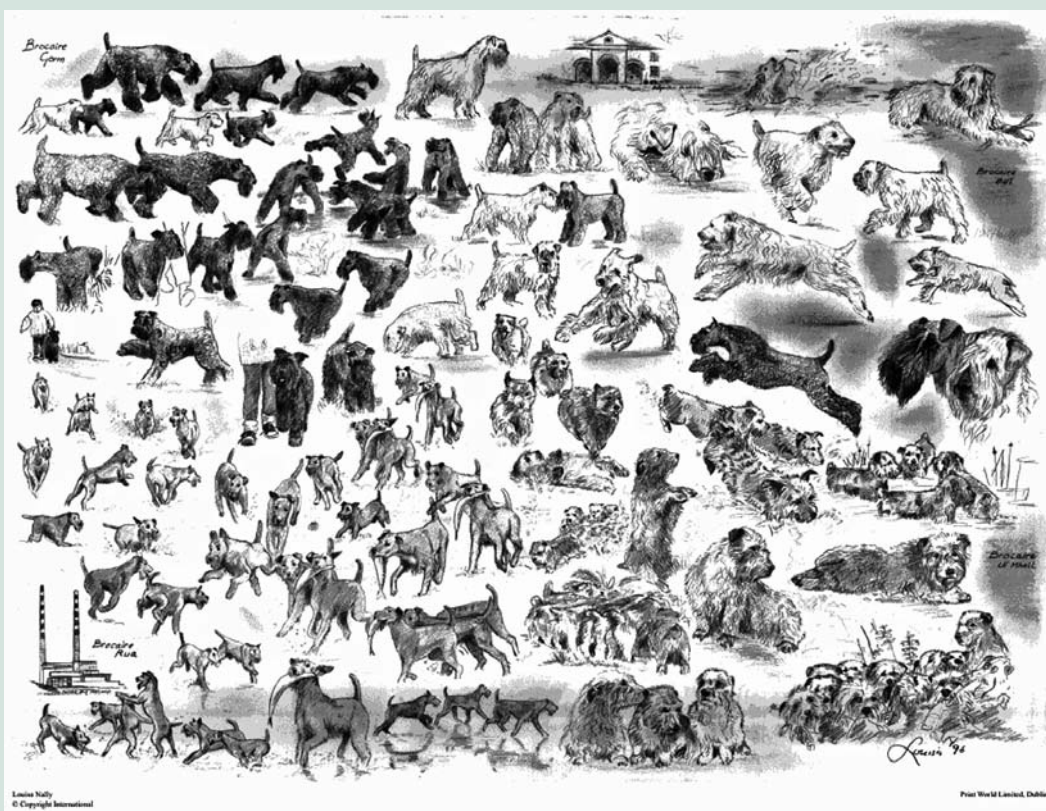
Irish Red and White Setters.

In the USA and Canada she designed one of the Logos for The I.W.S.C.A featuring a Water Spaniel and the Steel Bridge of St.Louis. Today, Louisa's work continues to travel ahead of her to countries she hasn't visited such as Russia and Israel.

Note: Louisa's first two Ltd. Edition prints 'The Dogs of Our Forefathers' the nine Native Irish Breeds with scenes of Trinity College and other well know architectural buildings, and 'Action Irish' (the four Irish terrier

breeds) are available in a 2nd edition making up a lovely trio with 'Thirty Years of Game Fairs in Ireland'.

Louisa will also undertake commissions and prints are available from:



Action Irish - the four Irish terrier breeds.

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Hunting Roundup



*Hurworth Ruby 07 – a good type of Old English Foxhound Bitch.
(Photo Equestrian & Rural Event Photography)*

Hurworth Foxhounds' generosity to Irish Hunts

A name which has become increasingly familiar, in recent times, to Irish hunting people is that of the Hurworth Foxhounds from North Yorkshire. Thanks to the generosity of huntsman Joe Townsend and his masters, Mr Ian Anderson and Mr Ken Fox, Hurworth hounds and their progeny are to be found in several kennels on either side of the border. In Northern Ireland the Co Down Hunt and the Newry Hunt feature Hurworth blood, while in the Republic the Co Clare, the Ballymacad, the Louth and the Ormond have all received drafts from the Hurworth.

Old English Foxhounds, which the Hurworth are, tend to be lower scenting and stouter of build than Modern English Foxhounds and have certainly proved popular in Ireland. In fact, the Republic has been home to several exclusively Old English packs for many, many years.

The Limerick, the Waterford and the Muskerry packs are all very long established Old English packs and, on a recent visit, I was surprised to see that the Galway Blazers are now approximately 90% Old English in their breeding. Given the preponderance of Old English hounds here it is hardly surprising that the Hurworth blood has been so warmly welcomed.

It is somewhat ironic that there are at least as many Old English packs in Ireland as in

England and their renowned low scenting qualities, longevity, hardness and tenacious hunting ability have all made them firm favourites with their followers. These hounds tend to be much more uniform in their

colouring and, up until very recently, have been of a sturdier build than Modern English Hounds which are found in greater numbers in today's hunting circles.

In attending some of the major cross channel hound shows this year I was impressed to see that Joe Townsend continues to enjoy showing successes, especially in the stallion hound and brood bitch classes. It is, of course, vital to breed from the best available hounds and the successes at Harrogate and Scotland (where Landseer 08 won the respective stallion hound classes) and Peterborough, the Mecca of hound showing, (where Ruby 07 won the brood bitch class) put Joe's hounds in that category - underlining why they are so eagerly sought and so gratefully accepted.

It is not only Irish packs which have benefited from the Hurworth's largesse as, some ten years ago, Joe Townsend drafted a doghound, Shepherd, to the Ootacamund Hunt in Wellington, near Madras, in India where hounds hunt jackals in very hot conditions. Somehow I think that the Hurworth Hounds hunting in Ireland will find that their quarry and the weather which they encounter will be very different to what Shepherd and his offspring will have met!

County Down Hunt raises £2,000 for charity

The County Down Hunt ended their season with the now traditional charity meet at the Hill House Bar outside Crossgar. A very testing course had been laid out by Norman Welsh and his team and some sixty riders followed huntsman Steve Collins and whipper-in Ossie Jamison, all determined to pit themselves against drag



Mr Ossie Jameson with the County Down Hounds at Crossgar.

layers Norman and Neill Welsh and Joe Bell over the some eighty fences. With three joint masters Wilson Dennison, Eric McClelland and Robert Steele out a fast day was expected and no one was disappointed.

Hounds were laid on Max Irvine's land and were immediately into their stride although scent did not seem to be particularly strong. As hounds pushed on hard scent did appear to fade further which was just as well as some of the field needed a break. Two ladies from Fivemiletown in Co Tyrone, Sonya Boyd and Hazel Hall, got left behind and only rejoined the "hunt" in its later stages to an accompaniment of offers of geography lessons!

The layers then put in a second leg which saw Neill Welsh giving his father and Joe Bell a good lead over some testing obstacles before Norman 'bought some land' near David McClurgh's farm. Norman's wife Julie delightedly captured the moment on camcorder!

This leg seemed to coincide with an improvement in scent as hounds pushed on harder and in stronger voice giving the field much to do to keep in touch. Among the many car followers was Max Irvine's mother, Mrs Hilda Irvine, who has only comparatively recently given up a front seat in Max's short wheel based Land Rover for a more comfortable seat in her daughter's car. As Mrs Irvine is in her 102nd year I think she is entitled to take things more easily, especially as she has lost none of her enthusiasm for the chase.

After a further hard riding leg Steve Collins blew for home to enable everyone to make a safe return to the meet where we were served with some very welcome refreshments and a raffle was organised to supplement the cap money. The day had a very happy postscript when Robert Steele was able to announce that a total of £2,000 had been gathered and that two charities, Kidney Research and Action Cancer, would each receive £1,000 at the forthcoming point to point.

Hunting Association of Northern Ireland hound show.

The HANI annual hound show was again held alongside Armagh Agricultural Show at Gosford Park at Markethill and we enjoyed a bright sunny day to allow ten competing packs to show hounds to their best

advantage. Judges Mr Rupert MacAuley, MFH (West Wicklow Foxhounds) and Mr Hugh Hutchinson (former huntsman of the North Down) worked their way through the Foxhounds and Harrier classes.

Results:

Foxhound Champion Doghound: Champion East Down Draycott 05 Reserve Meath Greatrev 10

Foxhound Champion Bitch: Champion Ballymacad Saintly 08 Reserve Ballymacade Melody ue

Supreme Champion: Ballymacad Saintly 08 (Foxhound)

Reserve: Sunnyland Admiral 07 (Beagle)

Meath Foxhounds win both Championships at Stradbally

The Cosby family again welcomed a large crowd to the Irish Masters of Foxhounds

Association show at their home, Stradbally Hall, Co Laois. On a day bathed in bright sunshine thirteen packs put forward some high quality hounds for the consideration of judges Mr Antony Sandeman MFH (Crawley and Horsham Foxhounds) and Mr Charlie Shirley-Bevan MFH (Mid Devon Foxhounds).

The Restricted Unentered Doghound class set the tone of quality and was won by Westmeath Actor while the Unentered Doghound "Old English Type" class was won by Waterford Prosper. The Tipperary Foxhounds



Meath Foxhounds Whipper in Garry Finnegan with their Champion Doghound Merlin at Stradbally.

Unentered Couple of Doghounds, Cricketer and Ambridge, took that class and the Meath Foxhounds won the Unentered Doghound class with Merlin. A second first prize then fell to the Westmeath Foxhounds when Whalebone 10 won the Entered Doghound Restricted class and the Kildare Foxhounds then took the Entered Couple of Doghounds class with Ballboy and Badger 08. In the Stallion Hound class the Westmeath again took a first place with Whalebone 10 and the Doghound classes were completed by a high standard Championship class to which the judges gave due consideration before making the following announcement **Champion Doghound:** Meath Merlin UE **Reserve:** Westmeath Whalebone 10

The West Wicklow Foxhounds marked their showing debut by taking first place in the Restricted Unentered Bitch Class with Mistletoe and, in the Unentered 'Old English Type' Bitch Class, the County Limericks took first place with Solace.

Following on from their success in the Unentered Doghound Couples class, the Tipperary Foxhounds added the equivalent Bitch Class with Crafty and Crusty while the Unentered Bitch Class saw Crusty take the red ribbon, just beating Crafty into second place. The Louth Foxhounds took first place in the next class the Entered Doghound or Bitch 'Old English Type' (which is, apparently, unique to Stradbally). Here, their Spicy 10 took the red ribbon to give new huntsman Alan Reilly a nice showing debut and Spicy repeated this success in the next class, the Entered Bitch-Restricted class. The Entered Couple of Bitches class saw Ballymacad Dobbin and Bounty 08 prevail and the Entered Two Couple of Bitches class saw the Kildare Foxhounds win with Bantam 08, Sable 08, Picture 10 and Saffron 07. In the Brood Bitch Class the Meath

Foxhounds took the honours with Patsy 07 and the Bitch Championship then saw the Meath again prevail to bring the show to a close.

Champion Bitch: Meath Patsy 07 **Reserve:** Tipperary Crusty UE

Death of Charlie O'Neill, ex MFH Kildare Foxhounds

One of the most popular figures in Irish hunting circles, Charlie O'Neill, has died after a serious illness. A former master of the Kildare Foxhounds, Charlie was as well known for his expansive personality and supreme generosity of spirit as he was for his exploits in the hunting field.

He supplied hirelings in great numbers to people to follow a number of Hunts in the Dublin, Meath and Kildare areas and, in addition to providing hirelings, he hunted, farmed, did some race riding and devoted much of his prodigious energy to organising events for a number of charities. These events raised a huge amount of money over the years and Charlie's efforts were scarcely reduced by his illness.

One of the methods Charlie used to generate money for these charities was to ride his Harley Davidson motorcycle to various destinations in the South of France, Africa and Alaska. In fact, he had planned to ride his motorcycle around America later this year but it was not to be.

Charlie's funeral at Clane Parish Church was followed by interment in Mainham Cemetery. Every sympathy is extended to his wife Mary and to their children Alan, Sarah, Charles and Darragh on their loss which has been so keenly felt by so many people. Charles and Darragh on their loss which has been so keenly felt by so many people.



Meath Patsy 07 The Bitch champion at Stradbally.

Rabbits - a 'delicious' pest

This year looks like its going to be one of those good rabbit years. Every couple of years, rabbit numbers build up and farmers are desperate to reduce the damage they do to crops. Unfortunately for us sportsmen who like a nice rabbit stew now and again, it is often the case that just as you are ready to fill the freezer with some stock, the plague of mixy shows its ugly head. It's now June as I write this and there are loads of rabbits about. Thankfully, I have not seen any evidence of the disease so far and farmers near me are crying out for

anyone to shoot them, And to follow on from my last article, there are still loads of wood pigeons causing damage to peas and cabbage crops, but remember to only shoot them in the vicinity of the crop. A friend gave me a few that he had shot over decoys and they will do nicely at a barbecue. But back to the rabbit.

Ireland is full of references to rabbits as a domesticated animal. Any reference to 'warren' as in Warrenpoint or 'Conin' as in the Irish for rabbit shows an association with rabbits. There are plenty of 'Coney Islands' around our coast too. There is a townland near me called Balconnin, Baile conin - the town of the



A wheat field before the rabbit onslaught.

rabbits. Coincidentally it is not far from this spot where a local farmer has been having big problems with rabbits destroying his winter wheat. Until I actually saw for myself how bad the damage was I could not have believed it. In a field where the winter wheat shoots should be a foot tall, the ground was bare. Last year, there were rabbits enough to necessitate him resowing a portion of a large field because the damage had been so great. My friend Dan and I had removed a fair few - but obviously not enough. This year, we have resolved to concentrate on pest control rather than shooting for the pot. This means shooting any rabbit we can, regardless of size or age. It is not nice but every so often their

numbers just explode. The baby rabbits grow into big mammy rabbits very quickly so baby rabbits also get shot whenever possible. And the hind legs of even a baby rabbit are delicious on a barbecue. Due to the very dry spring a lot of wheat did not germinate until the first heavy showers in May but even then the rabbits were devouring them and the shoots were topped a few inches from the ground.

During the war years, rabbit supplemented the rations of many and there was a thriving market for them. It is odd how quickly things change; most of our parents and certainly our grandparents would have regularly eaten rabbit. Rabbit was freely available from game dealers and butchers. Nowadays you would have to go to a game dealer's shop and ask for rabbit and I do



New growth is high on the rabbit's menu.



They often grazed beside the ditch.

Anyone who has witnessed a rabbit suffering from this virus can understand why you might not want to eat one again. But over the past fifty years or so rabbits have built up a certain degree of immunity to myxomatosis, and populations have recovered to the point that once again their numbers need occasional controlling. Things seem to have reached a balance now, in that when rabbits become too numerous there is an outbreak of the dreaded Mixy and a certain percentage of the rabbits die, but they are not wiped out. However, many farmers are often still grateful if you offer to reduce his rabbit numbers.

Wild meat harvest

not know if you could get it, even at that. I do know that in France you can find prepared rabbit alongside the chicken in most supermarkets. But these are farmed rabbits, bred and reared for the table, and as such probably just as full of artificial foodstuffs and antibiotics as any farm animal.

The loss of the tradition of eating rabbits in this country possibly came about after the outbreak of myxomatosis in the early fifties. It was first reported in Kent in 1953 and spread like wildfire. In a matter of months the rabbit population was nearly eliminated.

This year armed with our air rifles, we have been getting a better grasp of the challenge of harvesting this wild meat. At first we could see up to fifty rabbits feeding near the ditches when we stalked up to this field. These quickly learned that they should not hang around so at the first sign of us, they bolted for cover. We have learned to sneak in and conceal ourselves in a ditch and wait them out, literally. Eventually they will return to what is left of the crop to feed. Sometimes you can be surprised as one will hop out of the ditch beside you.



Soon the crop was totally wasted and resowing was required.

Having the sights zeroed on fifty yards means that the close rabbits are often quite difficult to hit properly as the pellet flies over the head before dropping down again to hit the zero at fifty yards, so range estimation is important. As with shooting pigeons with an air rifle we always aim for the head, a miss will be a clean miss but if you hit, it will be fatal quickly. I have to admit that a few rabbits now have .22 calibre pierced ears but they will survive. I am not going to say that we always get a clean kill, but that's what we try for.

Often these rabbits graze right beside the ditch so it is important to drop them dead. Others I have hit in the head and they have somersaulted into the nearest cover - dead of course. We have concluded that the only sure spot to hit is just below the ear. If you hit the head above the eye to ear line they can still jump and twitch into cover albeit dead. A hit below the ear will often drop them on the spot. Anyone who has shot deer will know that you can shoot them through the heart and they can still cover a hundred yards before they realise that they are dead. I am confident that the majority if not all the rabbits we hit die swiftly. No one wants to be irresponsible and leave a wounded animal to die a slow death. Better to forsake the shot. The key to our method is to remain still and quiet. The rabbits underground will hear any movement and not emerge. Of course we sometimes take the other less patient approach and stalk along the ditch trying to get within range without alerting the rabbits. This often works but you have to be quiet and slow, sinking to one knee to get a steady shot. We have found that a good dog can be a great asset if the dog is steady, and will sit when required. But in a situation where a hit rabbit has got into the ditch the dog often can retrieve it quickly.

Only four 'lucky' feet - unfortunately

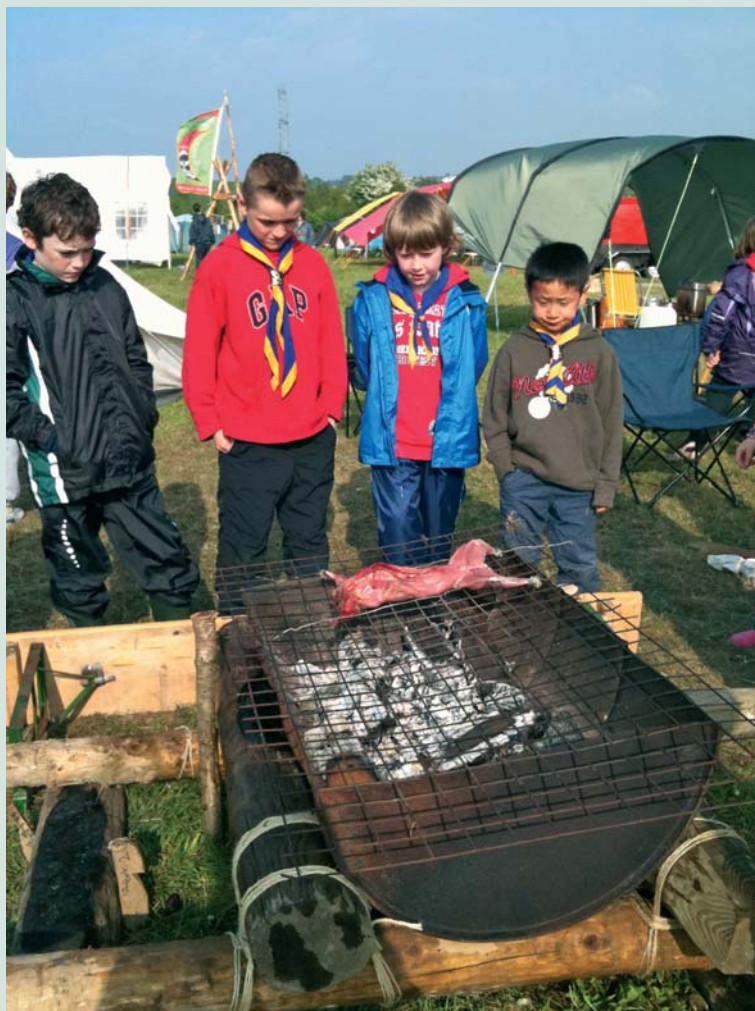
This year I brought a rabbit to our annual Cub Scout camp because I believe it is important that kids realise that meat does not come ready packed and jointed from a supermarket. The other leaders supported me in this and asked that I tell them when I was going to skin the rabbit and cook it. I made it clear that the cubs did not have to watch me prepare it, but they could if they wished. Some of the boys were delighted and many of the girls turned up too, but I got the impression that they felt that they had to look disgusted even if they were fascinated. The biggest disappointment was that the rabbit only had four 'lucky feet' because they all wanted one. I was a bit cautious about how to cook it as it was an old buck rabbit, its ears were tatty and I knew

it could be tough.

I wanted to cook it in a way that it would be recognisable as a rabbit when cooked so instead of a stew, I slow roasted it over the embers of a wood fire. I tied its legs to two pieces of wire to keep it open and it roasted to a lovely crispy brown colour. Pure white meat protected by the browned layer, and it turned out to be very tasty and tender. The kids loved it and queued up for a slice as I cut small pieces off the rabbit. Of course they compared it to chicken and even encouraged others to try it. One little girl came up and even asked me for a "wing!" One rabbit did not last long, but all who wanted to try it got a piece and I heard no complaints, except that there was not enough - and I would not give the guys the skin to play with.

Rabbits are one invasive species (brought to England by the Normans) which every fieldsports person can enjoy. I am looking forward to summer barbecues of rabbit and encourage everyone to have a go at this agricultural pest. I just wish that wood pigeon would be added to the pest species list here and I know a few farmers who wholeheartedly agree.

The youngsters learnt that meat does not actually come from 'plastic bags'.



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Polo, Pampering and Horse Trials

With the UK Polo season at an end, winter setting in and Christmas looming, what are the options for those with a passion for Polo. Indeed, in recent years Ireland has seen a resurgence in the game but, alas, our better players choose to play the season across the water. Our land is not green for no reason and rain is the enemy of the sport thus the exodus to England. So to play more and longer this requires travel further afield, as Jodhpur is the home of Polo where else should those passionate about the game make a pilgrimage. During December, Indian Polo resides in Jodhpur; here the best players in the world compete for the highest spoils. Tournaments include The Hermes Cup, Abu Sier Cup, with Royal Salute presenting the most prestigious trophy on New Year's Day.

All month long ponies thunder across a lush green playing field, players ride hard to compete for adulation. In what is the oldest team sport known to man, it is fast-paced, thrilling and pulsating with excesses of glamour and excitement. Polo is an exceedingly physical sport not for the faint hearted, you need great upper body strength, sensitivity and fine tuning to last the course.



Polo: the action is fast and furious.

So for those participating, on your way through New Delhi rest a night or perhaps two see the sights and experience the ultimate in pampering at The Imperial Hotel. In itself, The Imperial is as grand a monument as you will find in Delhi. It is steeped in history; Lutyens' vision, conceptualised by Bloomfield and inaugurated by Lord Wellington it is a blend of Victorian, colonial and art deco with pillared verandahs, 24-carat gold leaf rotunda, Italian marble, Burmese teak, fountains from Florence and dressed with an art and antique collection exuding shere style better than anything seen in any museum. Consequently, The Imperial Spa can only be monumental. This heavenly retreat envelopes you with spiritual luxury and smothers you with its pungent mix of oils blended from flowers, roots and age defying resins.

Deep relaxation

Imperial Depth is the most amazing 90 minutes signature massage, the therapist possessing the most therapeutic hands epitomising the philosophy of the spa, to provide a living awareness of the value of a healing touch, a nurturing environment, cleansing, peace and a deep relaxation as essential in maintaining a healthy lifestyle. The perfect antidote for the riggers of this fast and furious equine sport. They recommend you arrive 30 mins before your treatment to unwind and experience the hydro therapy suite and so gain the ultimate de-stress



His Highness the Maharaja of Jodhpur with one of his vintage cars.



Pampered relaxation is just one of the attractions.

and rejuvenation of your senses. Factor this address into your itinerary out and home and all tensions will dissolve, your mind will be calm and your spirit uplifted.

Jodhpur in Rajasthan, south west of Delhi, boasts a more venerable history than rival Jaipur. The former capital of Marwar State on the edge of the Thar desert can trace it's origins in legend to the 15th century and Hindu Gods. Meherangarh the "Majestic Fort" seems to grow out of the hillside and behind it's defensive gates is a domestic fairy-tale of elaborate beauty and luxury flaunting the unimaginable wealth of it's rulers.

Indian Miniatures dating back to the 17th century depict nobles playing a game of polo, historians can trace a game called pulu played by tribesmen in Manipur, in North Eastern India, as early as 3,100 BC. During the late 1800s tea-planters and Army officers picked up the sport giving it the structure and rules that are followed to this day. Polo was the perfect outlet during peace times and also provided for healthy competition with British Regiments. It is here, at Meherangarh, that the famous New Year's Eve party takes place.

Refreshed and invigorated

During the height of the season and in the climatic last week of December "The Royal Salute Cup" is contested, a Vintage Car Rally and a display of Marwari Horse takes place all on the historic polo field beneath the magnificent Umaid Bhawan Palace. Jodhpur enjoys a delightful climate during the day, perfect for play, but can be chilling early morning and evening. Pack cashmere or better still just travel with an empty suitcase and purchase your every need in the city where cashmere is King and doesn't cost the earth. In addition to propagating curry and polo the pukka sahibs of the British Empire also transformed the baggy riding breeches of Jodhpur into equestrian fashion and a household word. India during late December and early

January will prove the perfect venue for those with a curiosity to see different locations and to keep fit and healthy and desire to return home refreshed and invigorated.

Virgin Atlantic fly every day from Heathrow to Delhi and Jet Airways and Indian Airlines fly daily to Jodhpur. The Rass is a boutique hotel in Jodhpur but more 'Indian' is Pal Haveli with fabulous views of the Fort and Jodhpur. For those wishing to extend their tour you couldn't get better than Rohet Garh in Rohet where you can also ride The Marwari Horses.

The excitement at Burghley

If you are toying with the idea of a quick break, then something to think about a bit nearer to home are 'The Land Rover Burghley Horse Trials. The horse trial autumn season is in full swing and the main driving force for competitors to focus on gaining a place on teams for next years Olympics. So with our premier trials 'Land Rover Burghley' coming up next month this promises to be a competition of competitions. They have the largest ever number of entries from all over the world. We can't of course forget this is Burghley's 50th anniversary year and so all the stops are being pulled out to ensure it offers the best spectacle ever.



The opulent Imperial Spa.



Going for it!

With family links to the Olympics it's not hard to see why the main arena on cross country day will feature a three hurdle fence. The 6th Marquess of Exeter who brought the horse trials to Burghley won the gold medal in the 400m hurdles at the 1982 games. After an environmental survey revealed that the lake was home to protected white clawed crayfish who have now packed their shells and moved house and now a fabulous new water complex complete with duck house resides on the lake.

Probably the most positive addition is a AHT Bursary of 15k to the Newmarket based veterinary charity to help fund the development of a rapid result blood test to identify horses infected with Strangles.

As ever during the horse trials Burghley offers everything, country show, the finest equine sport in the world, and an amazing array of retail therapy. A shopping village, which I am reliably informed, people travel to simply for the shopping experience. Our locals Holmstead Saddlery, Khan Tec and Winnie Magee won't disappoint and will be in attendance offering something new to tempt you.

Stylish Lodge

With all this going on it's not surprising to note that Burghley Estate is taking care of our every need and this year sees the launch of the new and improved, fantastically stylish lodge. 'The William Cecil' named after Queen Elizabeth 1's Lord High Treasurer who happened to

build and design Burghley House.

It has been completely refurbished and strives to offer quirkiness rather than quaintness, with an atmosphere of informality, fun, friendliness and efficiency. The lodge oozes individual character, attention to detail and style in abundance. The Bull and Swan is housed in the most beautiful Dickensian stone building once a private home then a travellers inn and now with every modern convenience.

Clearly both properties have had the benefit of the same interior designer. In all Land Rover and Burghley Estate have things sewn up and absolutely intend to make your visit in September complaint free.



Now for the finish.

Art and Antiques



Paul Henry's *West of Ireland Landscape* €106000 (sold by Whytes)

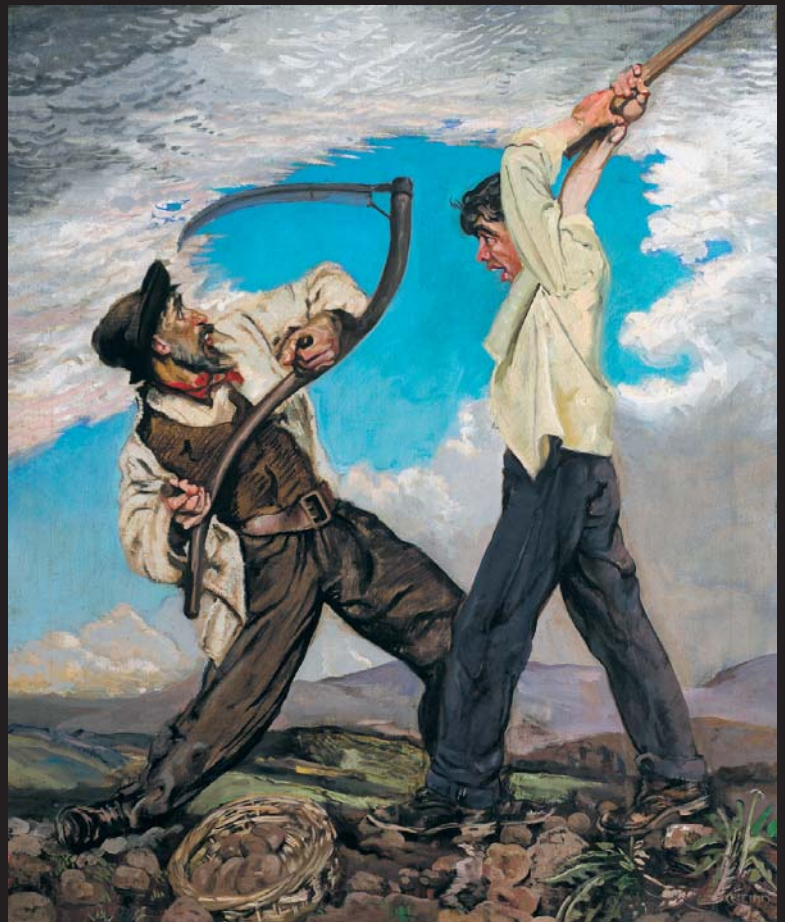
this statistic. The top price of the day was the €110,000 paid for Paul Henry's 'Connemara Landscape' against an estimate of €60/80,000. Numerous bidders competed for this lovely work and it finally fell to a private Dublin purchaser. The same buyer fought a prolonged battle for the Gerard Dillon 'Italian with Fowl,' which soared past its estimate of €25/35,000 to make €85,000. Walter Osborne's 'Her Garden' was also a popular lot amongst potential buyers and three bidders fought for it – with a Dublin private winning with a top bid of €68,000."

According to James living artists too did well with strong prices being paid for fine works by John Shinnors, Sean McSweeney and

Forget about falling house prices, low returns on investments and the cost of fuel for the home or the car. According to those at the coal face of the sales scene things are not as bad as had been predicted they would be a few months ago. "Our summer season of auctions has just concluded with a sale of period furniture and collectables which was over 75% sold, indicating yet again that the auction market in Ireland is as strong as ever," states James O'Halloran, Managing Director of prestigious Dublin based auction house ADAMS. "Despite the economic woes the market is proving to be a rich source of interest for those people who are looking for less worrying ways to keep their savings safe. Our two major sales of the past season were the June Irish Art sale and The Kelly Collection sale also in June. Irish art is continuing to flourish at auction here in Ireland and Adams is consistently at the vanguard of this movement.

The sold rate at our Irish art sales, which is a real measure of success across the price range, is in excess of 80% and the June sale maintained

Trevor Geoghegan. The healthy results across the board confirmed that 'fresh to the market,' quality



Seán Keating's *Illustration for Playboy of the Western World* Sold for: €41000 (sold by Whytes)



Gerard Dillon's Young Couple in a Landscape €30000 (sold by Whytes)

paintings and sculpture with good provenance were almost guaranteed to sell for prices more than their estimates.

The Kelly Collection auction held on the longest day of the year was a splendid event with over three thousand people tramping through this magnificent Fitzwilliam Square townhouse. "The auction was held in our St. Stephens Green rooms only a five minute walk away from the house and all the lots were shown on screens in the salerooms," he tells me. "The excitement on the day was palpable and prices reflected this with the highest price of the day being paid for a pair of ormolu Bouillotte table lamps which sold to a Co. Galway buyer at €17,000. One of the first antiques bought by Rose and Kevin Kelly were a pair of Louis Seize armchairs which they purchased from Dublin dealer Ronnie McDonnell back in the 1970s. They went at the next highest price at €16,500." He adds: "The sale grossed over half a million euro and was almost 90% sold by lot, making it the best furniture sale of 2011 so far. The autumn season will no doubt be just as exciting and if the entries we've received so far are anything to go by then this should hold true.

Ian Whyte of the long established and internationally renowned WHYTE'S auction house, also Dublin based, had some pertinent observations to make on the sales scene from March to May.

"Although our selling rate of an average of 74% of items offered was excellent, we had very few

high ticket paintings consigned," he says. "Collectors are hanging on to the really rare and desirable Irish works by Yeats, Orpen, Osborne, Lavery, Henry and the like, as they rightly feel that they are still blue chip investments. We did get a few "Premier League" paintings such as Paul Henry's Western Landscape which sold for €106,000 and Sean Keating's Playboy of The

Western World Frontispiece which made €41,000, both in our 31 May sale. In our March sale Gerard Dillon's Young Couple at €30,000 and Sir John Lavery's Steamers in the Bay at €28,000 were the high sellers. "Many collectors regard the present market as an opportunity to buy at reasonable prices. We have noticed that quite a number of collectors who have just retired are buying art with some of their tax free lump sums and this has helped the selling rate.

What about the season just coming in. Adds Ian: "For autumn it is early days yet but we already have over 100 works for our 10 October sale, including the largest Percy French ever to come up for sale at auction, good works by Harry Kernoff, Grace Henry and Dan O'Neill. The latter includes one of the best oils we have ever seen and is modestly estimated at €30,000 to €40,000 compared to the record €180,000 we achieved for a work by this Northern artist a few years ago.

"Our recent Belfast valuation day was a busy one with plenty of great works looked at and valued but few willing to sell. Nevertheless we still came back to Dublin with some nice works by JH Craig, Frank McKelvey, Maurice Wilks, Markey Robinson, and



Connemara Landscape by Paul Henry €110,000 (sold at Adams)



Sir John Lavery's Steamers in the Harbour, St Jean De Luz €28000 (sold by Whytes)

several other great Ulster artists.

"We are actively promoting sales in the USA and Canada, having neglected one of our most important markets during the Celtic Tiger years when we were more active in repatriating Irish art from there. Now some of the same paintings will be tripping across the pond again. This is nothing new to us as we have observed the other collectibles we handle often make three or four return trips in a period of 40 or 50 years.

"The main interest in North America is in traditional landscape and figurative studies,

particularly from the West of Ireland where most of the Irish emigrants came from in the last 170 years. Among the new Irish immigrants who have good jobs in the financial and computer based corporates there is some



Her Garden by Walter Osborne €68,000 (sold at Adams)



Italian with Fowl by Gerard Dillon €85,000 (sold at Adams)



Pair of French ormolu Bouillotte table lamps €17,000 (sold at Adams)

interest in Irish contemporary art, but most are buying fashionable American and Asian works."

Geoffrey Simpson who runs the highly successful Viewback Antiques & Auctions business in Omagh, Co. Tyrone is a man who always keeps a weather eye on the auction scene. He tells me: "Recently, there has been a noticeable decline in the demand for even good Georgian pieces of furniture – they can still be sold but at a much reduced price. For example, a George 111 Dumb Waiter recent went at £140 while a Regency caned seat arm chair made £130. Victoriana remains slow but decorative items and the unusual articles have a ready market. Collectables remain steady sellers – like Beswick, Sylvac and tractor seats for a few pounds but needs must! The internet serves me well through our own website, we have live bidding on occasions – it was a great help during the recent visit by the Great Antiques Road Trip to our last auction, allowing us to sell Royal Worcester, Silver and paintings to international buyers.

"Our system permits remote bidding by Skype and does not involve the buyer paying an extra 3% plus V.A.T. on their purchases as is the case with the other online bidding systems. As for E-bay I do not think that



Louis XVI blue and grey painted Fauteuils €16,500 (sold at Adams)

it is much use to us, in that like so many sites, Gumtree, etc., the lack of realistic regulation some say allows inaccurate and deliberately misleading description. Just look at the sale of "Ruby Oil Lamps on e-bay & you will see what I mean.

"As for the future I suggest, as always, buy the best you can and avoid things like "Irish Art" and the 'Killarneywork' reproduction drop leaf tables that have been turning up occasionally during the last 18 months. There has never, in my experience of 40 years, been a better time to buy – real antiques at today's prices are better than "money in the bank!"

Gerard McAfee of McAfee Auctions, Ballymoney says: "The Auction Scene has been particularly busy with us over the last 4-5 months, with our usual Saleroom Sales each month and three good house clearances. In particular we have noticed a greater demand for the more quality pieces of furniture, and there is an increased demand for gold bracelets, coins and pieces of solid silver. As before, there is always a good demand for large dining room tables (one recently made £2400 at a recent house sale) and good sideboards, and generally the smaller quality items are always in demand."

So there you have it, the sales scene as seen recently through the eyes of the experts.

The Castillonnois - an ancient breed from Ariège Pyrénées



*A fine
Castillonnois
with
members of
the
Bethmale
Folk Group.*

"The Merens is not the only breed of horse, you know! Yes, it is beautiful and yes, it is called the Black Prince of the mountains. But, I want to tell you that it is not the only equine star we have here in Ariège Pyrénées." I was told this in no uncertain way by Denise, a woman who has been associated with the other breed of horse native to this department of southern France; the copper brown, handsome, generous natured and splendidly named Castillonnois. We are very near the Spanish border, and the name has a carnival sound to it. I couldn't help getting a real feeling of fiesta and celebration about this breed, when I met the Supreme Champion Castillonnois. All of us who love horses agree that sometimes, there is just a special something about a

particular animal, a feeling we get when we see it. It cannot be explained, even after years and years of being in the presence of these animals, sometimes, one will appear and here we go again.

I have recounted many times, a story from almost



The proud owner with his Supreme Champion.



Denise admires a fine specimen of the breed.

forty years ago, when I knew for certain that I was in the presence of more than just any old horse. It happened in Oughterard, gateway to Connemara, one day while out walking when a horse came galloping towards me through a field of high ferns. The almost black shiny coat, the strong, well muscled body, the striking head with a gentle, intelligent look in his eyes, the long black mane and tail flying, all made an awesome sight as he came crashing through his green and gold jungle-like ferny growth. This wasn't your usual, ordinary pony. This fellow was a star, still unbroken, the stuff of dreams and worth a fortune; he possessed the magic. It seemed as if the animal in front of me was possessed of the spirit of all that had gone before; in him was somehow distilled the very essence of the breed.

The official description of the Castillonnois begins by telling us that 'he has a noble look' about him. And it's true. With a totally different look to the black Merens, the Castillonnois does have a certain something about him. Perhaps it's the Arab and Iberian blood that gives him something of a special look. This is a horse really well suited to the mountains, which is just as well, since the mighty Pyrénées rise up almost behind the main street of the pretty village of Castillon, the place that gives the

breed its name. Experts on the breed claim (maybe romantically) that it ran with the ancient wild herds and certainly, in the caves around here, there are drawings of ponies that look remarkably like the Castillonnois. Some claim its origins are Greek. This might sound like a curious link, but it is entirely believable, because a definite link exists between Greece and some of the tiny hamlets here in the foothills of the Pyrénées.

A centuries old lifestyle

The people of the Bethmale and Biros valleys here in Ariège Pyrénées preserve a way of life that has existed for centuries. This includes the clothes worn, especially during festivals. Some items from their folk costumes look amazingly similar to traditional Greek clothing. The Bethmale clothes are full of colour, with fabulous embroidery, braids and ribbons adorning the costumes, while the outfits of the Biros are totally different, but still, some suggest, with a nod to Greece. The large black hat worn by the Birossans may have come from the Petasos, the large hat worn by Greek farmers. It appears the large, roughly made cape was also worn in parts of Greece, acting as a protection from the weather and used as a blanket at night. One of the ideas mooted here is that at some point, people from this area travelled as far as Greece, bringing the clothing and some horses back with them. A stronger theory is that in the distant past, travelling Greeks, having crossed Italy and travelled along the long border between France and Spain, simply settled in the valleys of the Pyrénées. Who knows?

Here in the Couseran hills, a certain rustic lifestyle still exists and this good sized, strong horse is absolutely perfect and is used for both work and leisure. It is not, nor will ever be, a prairie landscape here. Farms are small; fields are small, sometimes quite rocky, like parts of Connemara. It's not an easy life and the Castillonnois is the perfect small horse to work these areas. It is a really versatile horse, with a wonderful, willing nature, suitable for all types of recreational equitation; excellent in a harness for driving, equally great for riding. It wouldn't be a suitable horse to jump in a top competition obviously, but it will easily jump smaller bar fences with a little training. It is up in the high mountains where the Castillonnois really comes into his own. His capacity to cope with the testing ground of the mountains is impressive. He even looks at home, being perfectly surefooted, up at these heights. Despite his relative small size, clearly nothing up here poses any difficulty. The terrain with craggy, rocky routes at high levels, steep inclines and sometimes scary twisting mountain paths; nothing frightens it.

Ancient paths and Roman roads

The Castillonnois stands between 1.35 and 1.55 meters

high, is normally brown, with what is called a fox nose, a medium, well positioned neck, a beautiful head and kind eyes. He has a wide and deep chest and a good strong back, a truly beautiful coat, shiny, coppery, luxurious. I was told he transforms into a teddy bear as soon as winter arrives. They are very well muscled, resulting from the long periods spent in the wild, those months when they live in complete liberty in the high mountains. The grass in the valleys dries up during the summer months, and then hundreds of animals are brought up to the high mountains for summer grazing, during the Transhumance. It takes three days to walk them up to these Alpine like pastures. It is a wonderful sight as they walk through the countryside, climbing higher and higher, using ancient paths, old Roman roads and high mountain trails, before being released for up to five months of freedom.

It hasn't all been plain sailing for the little Castillonais, whose future became endangered due to a number of things, the crossing with other breeds, no longer being used as an army or



Taking time out after the show.

carriage horse and of course, most importantly, the introduction of mechanisation into the world of agriculture. Add to this, the depopulation of this area during two world wars, and this worthy little horse might have disappeared entirely. Then, in the late 1980s, its fortunes changed when a group of friends came together and made up their minds to save it. My friend Denise is one of this marvellous group; an indefatigable lady who, with the others, their love of the breed and positive attitudes, did much to ensure its survival.

Today the Castillonais breed is thriving, winning prizes at top competitions; the day I met them, I encountered two champions. The breeding programme aims to double, by 2014, the number of excellent broodmares, thereby securing a future for these wonderful animals. With their special brand on the left thigh, the Sabot (the clogs worn by the Bethmales and Biros groups), the Castillonais is definitely another star in the equine world of Ariège Pyrénées



The clothing and lifestyle has remained largely unaltered for centuries.

Ticks - Practical Advice and Avoidance

Lyme disease? Can you get that here? Yes, you can and have been able to for many years, but it's just more common now. Why? Well, it's thought for many reasons, such as changes in farming practices; more large wild animals to spread the ticks; weather conditions; and our interaction with the countryside has changed too. This is a typical conversation we might have when raising public awareness about tick borne diseases. And where do I come into the equation? I live on a farm near Ahascragh, Ballinasloe and a couple of years ago I fell very ill with what turned out after much searching and misdiagnosis to be Lyme disease (borreliosis) along with bartonella (cat scratch), both of which I contracted through a tiny tick bite, so I can tell you exactly what it's like to get Lyme disease. After a time of not feeling very well, but not really sick either, I suddenly could not move my hip for pain. Over the next few days, bit by bit, this pain and swelling spread to all my large joints. I looked like Michelin Man and was unable to get out of bed, or even

pull myself up in it if I slid down off the pillows. It went on for weeks. I became confused, in pain everywhere, depressed, dizzy, and what a racket in my ears! Suffice to say, after a very long battle with my joints, eyes, glands, liver, hormones, and fatigue, I am back to health and out enjoying people and life again. While I am working on the farm and in our vegetable plot, I now have a passion to encourage people to take care of themselves, as I now know all that I went through could have been so easily avoided had I known the dangers of ticks, and what to do. So the aim of this article is to make people aware of the dangers associated with ticks (even the tiny ones) in your own area, learn how to deter ticks from attaching and, if bitten, the best way to remove a tick safely.

Ticks can carry a cocktail of diseases such as Q fever, cat scratch, redwater, louping ill and most commonly in humans Lyme disease. Tick bites are usually painless as their saliva contains numbing properties so they can feed undiscovered for several days at a time. This combination of their numbing saliva, tiny size and

choice of feeding location (often the underarm, groin or scalp) make them difficult to detect. Many people get bitten without even realising it. Lyme disease (also known as Borreliosis) can affect every system of the body and symptoms can resemble those of many other medical conditions. Understandably, this can make it difficult to diagnose. The only symptom specific to Lyme disease is an expanding red rash, often resembling a bull's-eye, and called an Erythema Migrans (EM)

Adult male tick on a blade of grass.



rash, but less than 50% of laboratory-confirmed cases present with the rash.

After an infected tick bite, (not all ticks are infected) it is common to show flu-like symptoms such as headaches, sore throat, neck stiffness, fever, muscle aches and mind numbing tiredness. This may come and go and can be difficult to put your finger on the problem. If untreated, the disease can progress to joint pains, an irregular heart beat or heart block, meningitis, visual problems, cognitive dysfunction, and even paralysis of the face or limbs. These complications are often resolved with antibiotic treatment, but for some people, the tissue damage can remain permanent.

Risk of infection

The longer a tick remains attached to you or your animals the higher the risk of infection. Removing a tick incorrectly (such as burning, freezing, or smothering it in substances like spirits, oil, vinegar, butter or Vaseline) can cause the tick to regurgitate infective fluid. A quick way to get sick! To remove a tick safely, ideally wearing gloves, use a proper tick remover such as the Tom Tick Twister, or with fine pointed tweezers which should be available from your chemist or vets. The bite area should be disinfected, the whole tick trapped in a fold of selotape and then burnt, flushed or disposed of in the bin. I find the twister is the easiest to use. With the tweezers it is hard not to squeeze the tick, causing regurgitation, or its head is chopped off leaving you with more complications.

Ticks and the diseases they carry are not a new problem, but it is a growing problem as a result of several factors, such as changes in farming practices, different chemical usage, several warm, wet summers in a row, and the increasing wild deer population. Unlike some smaller animals such as mice or rabbits, deer do not carry *Borrelia burgdorferi* themselves, but they are a very efficient way of spreading ticks over a large area in a short space of time.

Ticks tend to live in well vegetated areas, such as fields, woodland, mountains, bogs, parks and gardens. They feed on a diverse range of animals from mice to deer and anything in between, including birds, farm animals and pets. So for starters, it is recommended that you protect your pets with a 'spot-on' type dose, or an impregnated collar, available from your vet, or the *Borreliosis and Associated Diseases Awareness UK (BADA)* web site.

Calendula oil is particularly good for hunting dogs that are in and out of water a lot, as it can be safely used repeatedly and in conjunction with chemical protection. When treating livestock, consideration should be given to a pour-on treatment which also offers tick protection. Certain areas are seeing a massive increase in the tick bourn diseases this year especially in young stock, so it would be worth talking to your local vet or animal product stockist and see what they recommend for your area.

If you are going hill walking, shooting, or working in a 'ticky' areas, be sensible, use an insect repellent that also protects against ticks. There is now a wide range of (Dethyl-meta-toluamide) DEET-free products on the market, which are felt to be just as effective and less harmful to you than DEET based products. But, if DEET works for you stick with it. Tucking your trousers into your socks or wearing gaiters can also help to deter tick attachment, as can calendula oil. As well, light coloured clothing makes ticks easier to be seen. If you stop for a rest, check for ticks and once home do a thorough body check all over. Having grown up in Wicklow, I spent my childhood 'covered' in ticks and never thought anything of it. Now I know differently. I use repellent and carry a dinky plastic 'tick twister.' I am careful to keep the tick whole and trapped safely in a fold of tape before disposing of it! My final piece of advice is to take ticks seriously and protect yourself.

More detailed information on all the subjects touched on in this article, and much more, can be found on the BADA-UK website www.bada-uk.org. You can also send an email with more detailed questions.

Female tick and nymph.



Federation of Irish Salmon & Sea Trout Anglers

Conaidhm na Slat Iascairí Bradáin agus Breac Geal

VISIT US AT www.fissta.com



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

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Season ends well – now the real work begins

FISSTA are busy implementing the list of urgent issues which need resolution before the next season starts in 2012. The lowest point of this year had to be when the Castlemaine nets were opened on 4 July to take the 1,132 fish that would have been better off spawning up river. There was disbelief and absolute dismay when NASCO's international salmon conference learned that the Irish government had decided to open up again a closed mixed stock fishery that the government bought out in 2007. The policy u turn, despite it being recommended by the statutory advisers IFI and SSC was met with a very strong reaction from the local Greenland commercial salmon fishermen KNAPK. The National Executive Council of FISSTA condemned the decision as a huge loss of ground on the wild salmon conservation campaign to end commercial netting of all kinds. For the first time the scientific data was used to kill more salmon than save them in the Castlemaine Bay. FISSTA's reaction is to redouble efforts politically to ensure no further bays are opened up next summer. FISSTA agreed to lobby harder to ensure no further extensions to the nets are granted in future and demand that all salmon rivers, especially the ones that are currently on life support and classified as closed, be treated as the Moy and Corrib where no commercial exploitation by nets are permitted. The Moy management template proves that if we remove nets then the rivers will recover again. The predation issue of over populations of sealice emanating from fish farms, cormorants, mink and seals have a very serious impact on our stocks. The state must act to save the fish otherwise very few will survive.

FISSTA and European Anglers Alliance's strong message

The EAA released a very strong and supportive statement to all including the salmon states of the EU that outlined 'a state of the salmon' address at their General Assembly in London at the end of August. The EAA has joined international salmon conservation organisations like the Atlantic Salmon Federation (ASF) and North Atlantic Salmon Fund (NASF) in their deep-felt concern that the high seas fisheries for Atlantic salmon near

Greenland and the Faroe Islands might be reopened following demands and protests by Greenland fishermen at the recent annual conference of the North Atlantic Salmon Conservation Organisation (NASCO).

A copy of this statement will be sent to the European Commission and governments of European countries where Atlantic salmon are indigenous, along with a call for a complete cessation of mixed-stock fisheries.

European countries have admitted other 'mixed stock' fisheries in their home waters or along their coasts, where salmon from many rivers in other countries are intercepted. These mixed stock fisheries are the result of bad judgement by governments or simply because scientific facts were ignored. The fishermen from Greenland and the Faroe Islands appreciate the yearly financial compensation they receive from NASF and/or ASF, but they feel left behind in comparison with commercial fishermen in countries like Norway, Scotland and England who are allowed to fish for salmon in the sea again.

The EAA is demanding that all mixed-stock fisheries for Atlantic salmon are outlawed because they set a bad example and are very damaging, especially for the rivers with threatened salmon populations. The EAA also demands that there should be no resumption of the commercial fisheries – not even on a small scale – in the Greenland and Faroe Islands areas.

In the letter to NASCO, the EAA also draws attention to the growing problems for salmon caused by the proliferation of hydropower in Europe, especially small scale hydropower, and the impact caused by salmon farming on an industrial scale. Hydropower stations make the migration of salmon more difficult – sometimes even impossible – and can kill many young salmon (smolts) on their migration to the sea. Salmon farms pose enormous problems for the salmon too, by releasing chemicals and masses of parasites (sea lice) that attach themselves on passing wild salmon smolts, so endangering their survival. Accidental escapes of millions of cultured salmon from the pens endanger the genetic integrity of local strains of salmon and the species as a whole.

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This boat will make its Irish debut at the Irish Game Fair at Shanes Castle on the 26th & 27th June

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Fishery Protection staff losing environmental battle

Attending an EU Anglers Alliance conference in Oslo, it was enlightening to read press coverage on what is a common Norwegian story about another salmon farm being investigated for alleged damage to the coastal environment. This time it is the Finnmark region in the Northern tip of Norway that is in the news. This fish farm company, Grieg Seafoods, was already fined €123,000 in 2008 after 54,000 salmon escaped from another of their farms. I was surprised to learn that this company now under investigation had taken the responsibility to report this news in a press statement, while in Ireland such escapes are seldom reported and frequently denied. The main reason is that offenders are investigated by the Norwegian National Authority for Investigation and Prosecution of Economic and Environmental Crime. Yes, they have such a body to protect their treasured wilderness and wildlife while Ireland has yet to raise the very low bar on such standards.

The campaign to end the scourge of these highly damaging Irish salmon farms continues as we seek to divert some of their generous state grant aid to safely close the cages off from the wild marine environment. Little has changed since such escapes were highlighted by FISSTA in an RTE Prime Time programme of 2003. The outcry then led to a Joint Oireachtas Committee investigation which produced a transcript and triggered a fact finding trip on fish farming to Chile, but little else. It is past time that Norwegian standards are applied to all Irish salmon farm companies, many who are in Norwegian ownership along the western seaboard. Indeed, they are often located in the most scenic areas where our tourism potential is impeded. We must not allow such light touch regulation to damage our wildlife and earnings any further. We have ample research and studies to know the very reason people visit us and it is not the salmon

cages despite attempts by some in Connemara to promote them as attractions. We must repair and maintain the very reason people come to fish our clean waters and walk our mountains and pristine beaches. It is now time for the joined up and fresh thinking of



Brian Hegarty with a fine 9 pounder from the Glen River

Ministers Coveney, Hogan, Rabbitte and Varadkar now have the power to clean up our fin-fish farming scandal while saving the king of fish for future generations. We hope it will be included on the 100 days list. Only then will the wild Atlantic salmon smolts avoid the sealice (emanating from such farms) to survive in their feeding grounds and return as mature fish.

Birr Country Fair – BEST ONE YET for anglers

At the Irish Game and Country Fair at Birr Castle, we had many anglers calling with us at Fisherman's Row where the public really came out to support all the traders as well as FISSTA's stand managed by our members the stand. Our Chairman, John Carroll, said: "This annual event is the highlight of our country sports season as this is always where we meet our angling fraternity to discuss and debate the salmon and seatrout runs and returns throughout the great rivers of Ireland. The 2011 fair was once again a very special time for FISSTA to promote the youth angling programmes throughout our clubs. The flycasting exhibition at the fair was excellent. The Game and Country Fair at Birr Castle allowed FISSTA to consolidate its angling base by promoting their sport and issues throughout Ireland as increasingly club members travel to what is now Ireland's premier country sports event in the country calendar for anglers. These Great Game Fairs of Ireland partnered with Irish Country Sports & Country Life magazine allow us to spread our angling message to a very broad country sports fraternity who support us in our everyday work. We are most grateful to the Great Game Fairs Team and Irish Country Sports & Country Life magazine for their fulsome support and cooperation in bringing angling to a wider public.

Angling Youth Competition winners 2012 (sponsored by Irish Country Sports & Country Life and Coch Y Bonddu Books

Kerry National Schools Team emerged the victors and the presentation of prizes, including a very much in demand fly tying book by Charles Jardine, took place after the Birr Fair when Secretary Noel Carr deputised for Master Flycaster Robert Gillespie due to the bereavement of his father Hugh.



Kerry National Schools Team pictured with their prizes near the Oweycrea River, Barraduff

(obituary to be published in next issue)

Winners:

- 1st Barraduff NS (Trevor Cremin, Captain)
- 2nd Knockanes NS (Ceysan Danther Captain)
- 3rd Rathmore NS (Fiona Nagle Captain)

Best individual performances were: Paul Hearly, Michael Shannon, Colm Hickey, Trevor Cremin and PJ McAuliffe. Congratulations to all for participating and a special thanks to Michael O' Keefe and Donal O' Doherty of Owneycree Anglers who hosted the finals.

Chairman John Carroll is encouraged by FISSTA's progress

There are many issues we as a federation are confronting and I am encouraged by the overall progress to date. As a salmon and seatrout angling conservation body we are encouraged that overall, the fish runs are recovering, despite the numerous and obvious setbacks which are outlined in this newsletter.

We continue to lobby hard to improve the salmon and angler's lot at the highest political level and as a rod licence payer we can claim a certain right to be heard on the issues and where the funding is invested for the future of our sport. We attend all the key conferences and meetings and play a pivotal role in international and national organisations related to our sport and salmon. In particular, the European Anglers Alliance, NASCO, and of course the Inland Fisheries Ireland board where I now serve as a member and where many salmon matters are considered and decided upon after consultation with the National Inland Fishery Forum which is now being established under the IFI 2009 Act. As a founding member of North Atlantic Salmon Fund, FISSTA maintain a very close relationship with their chairman Mr Orri Vigfusson who certainly inspires and motivates us all with his constant pursuit for the abundance of our stocks.

I thank the members on the National Executive Council of FISSTA who travel to our meetings and assist in the making of key decisions on how we approach the various issues. Such a varied body brings to our table the best information to decide our strategies and for these individual contributions we are most grateful.

There is always increased demand on us to provide more to assist our members and as a federation; we strive to achieve the highest level we can under our limited resources and appeal to you to support our fundraising draw underway at present. We are very happy to provide our members with a structure that unites the salmon anglers under one voice to lobby at the political table and also with the highest quality insurance cover. This protects you as a member and officer of your club. Please continue to send in your comments and letters on all items we detail in our newsletter as it is this feedback that arms us with the best information to improve our angling and salmon.



Pictured at FISSTA's National Executive meeting in Donegal

National 'Spring Clean Up' Day

A great many of the clubs in our federation took part in our national clean up of our rivers and lakes. This year FISSTA signed up to the national spring clean programme run by An Taisce and we are grateful for the kits our clubs received to assist them undertake the work. The pictures of skiploads of plastic bags and cleanup groups including youth anglers were sent to provincial papers for each area and we congratulate the Pollution & Protection Officers of all the clubs that participated.



The Glen River was the place to be for Billy Millar from Belfast who landed a 3 pound grilse.

Ireland must lead the way for salmon recovery in EU rivers says NASF

So the new Minister and Government have changed salmon policy and opened a closed mixed stock fishery despite a huge campaign by the international and national salmon community during the 30 day consultation period to mid June. This period coincided with the NASCO conference in Greenland in the first week of June and FISSTA and the NGOs attending this gathering must be forgiven for hoping the Minister would change his mind and keep the fishery closed. No such luck. The fishery was opened and the 1,162 so called surplus fish were divided up for exploitation which we fear will open the floodgates to other estuaries in the coming seasons.

The EU head of delegation mentioned in his opening

statement to NASCO Council the progress the Irish were making in finding new scientific methods to justify killing more of brood stock. "In Castlemaine Harbour, Co Kerry... it has been possible to consider the reopening of a public commercial fishery on mixed stocks without the risk of jeopardising the contributing stocks from individual rivers, each of which are meeting their individual conservation limits. The additional information supporting this re-opening was gathered from a comprehensive monitoring programme covering the duration of the season and all areas of the Castlemaine harbour, thereby covering both the temporal and spacial presence of the stocks concerned. This was also supported by genetic sampling of fish during 2010."

The only way to react to such comments is to regroup and rethink how this was allowed to happen. We must then redouble our efforts to ensure greater spawning takes place in Irish and EU rivers despite such body blows to our work. Furthermore, we must convince politicians that such decisions are futile and short sighted if they are to be remembered as having served their people well.

The wild Atlantic salmon world in countries of the North Atlantic are astounded by such announcements from Ireland that have further exposed the wild Atlantic salmon to increased exploitation that will seriously hinder any progress made since the ending of driftnetting in 2007. Salmon know no borders but if the €30m buyout is to return anything of value we must make sure such slippage as the June decision to open Castlemaine is a once off mistake or product inherited from the previous regime...the future of the wild Atlantic salmon is in the hands of all the club members who are working hard to get their rivers and habitats spawning salmon once again. NASF will continue to support you by protecting your fish in feeding grounds by paying for agreements with the commercial netsmen so that they return safe and healthy to your natal rivers.

National Inland Fisheries Forum - FISSTA & TAFI to be represented

Minister Rabbitte stated: "I believe that the establishment of the Forum will provide a meaningful channel of communication between the stakeholders and management of the inland fisheries resource. It will provide the various stakeholders with an opportunity to influence policies on how the resource is managed and developed in the current challenging economic climate and into the future."

NASCO Conference - FISSTA fear for salmon stocks

FISSTA were pleased that Greenland will uphold an agreement banning the commercial harvest of large Atlantic salmon this year. But FISSTA agrees that negotiations will be tough next year when the deal is up for renewal. FISSTA said

that all those gains that we inched ahead on ... all the gains of the Greenlanders not fishing, we will lose them. NASCO is made up of countries where large Atlantic salmon are known to spawn or migrate, including Ireland, EU, Canada, the United States and Denmark, which represents Greenland and the Faroe Islands. FISSTA says it fears the 2009 deal is in jeopardy now that fishermen in Greenland are pushing for a resumption of a commercial fishery for the first time in a decade. However, the scientific advice is still clear: the abundance of stocks remain too low to consider in what is considered a mixed stock fishery area of the North Atlantic.

An organisation for professional fishermen in Greenland held a demonstration at the meeting to request a commercial quota for this year but it was denied.



The Greenland netsmen's protest

Obituary - Robert Mollard

In July, Robert Mollard, a dear friend of salmon angling and FISSTA passed away following a short illness. Robert was known and appreciated by all who came to know him on the rivers of Ireland, from the Slaney in Wexford to the Glen in Donegal.

His turn of phrase entertained all and his love and enthusiasm for his salmon angling was evident in his greeting to us whenever we would meet on



The late Robert Mollard.

the river bank. Robert appreciated the FISSTA ethos where membership of the club was open no matter what your address was provided, the conservation rules were respected. Everyone knew Robert as a true and courteous gentleman who

greatly enhanced our club and federation. He will be sadly missed. Ar dheis De go raibh a h-anam dhilis.

Fight continues to defend Anglers rights on the Gweebarra River

The legal case to defend our angling rights on the Gweebarra River continues as the new Inland Fisheries Ireland body have decided to waste our rod licence money on taking us to court for defending our angling rights to the Gweebarra River. As well, the Gweebarra Conservation Group and Donegal Game Anglers Federation continue to resist the wind turbines etc planned to be erected in the area.



The Gweebarra Conservation Group along with FISSTA are pledged to continue to raise awareness on this and other issues such as the erection of pylons, turbines and dam building which would affect the environment, tourism and people's enjoyment of this region.

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Fishing In The Fall



Summer passing into Autumn was plain to see but there was still a fish to catch.

Autumn comes in a day. One day it is summer, a summer as endless as a playground's babble, as comforting as ice-cream - but then the next you look again - and it is gone. One day you wake up and step out into the river and you don't know why you can't put your finger on it immediately but the year suddenly feels that little bit older. There is a new chill in the air pushing aside that pillow warmth you had grown so comfortably accustomed to. Maybe today there are a few too many leaves scattered on the water. The sky, the clouds suddenly different, taking on faces, old faces, knowing faces. Autumn comes in a day. And another milestone for you is laid bare. It didn't happen so suddenly of course.

There were signs of its coming. As the air cooled, the water too, and the trout had been getting a new spring in their fins - you notice with hindsight now - starting to rise freely again. Suddenly, on this day you notice it is suddenly autumn, you notice that the fish are rising more like it is early summer again, and the hatches are plentiful and the river is moving again, crystal and sparkling, no longer steamed down to that sapping inertia of a summer's slump.

Those baking summer days, when the only sign of life was the occasional trout barely bumping the surface, taking something but you never really found out what -

other than whatever it was it must have been very small - are a memory now. The trout in the summer were just kicking their fins, treading water, feeding for maintenance without sense or purpose, vessels only for their half share of tomorrow's trout. But the trout in the early days of autumn have found their purpose again, like those in the early days of the season, at opposite ends of the segment of the cycle that is the aimless days of high summer.

Your response is elation, defiant in the face of summer's end as suddenly you are really fly fishing again. Sedge patterns, crane fly, up-wing emergers and the ubiquitous midge are all bringing up fish again.

The breeding season takes it out of a trout. The late spring and early summer is restorative, as the embattled trout that has made it through the rigours of breeding and a battened-down winter seeks to regain its condition and strength.

Try a weighted nymph

And so with the late summer and coming of autumn, food is plentiful again and the trout are gorging again, this time in preparation for the spawning to come. And the fly fisher is fishing again. If the fish are not rising on these early autumn days, they will be feeding. Try a weighted nymph. Cast the nymph upstream, a rod length or two, and as the nymph returns raise the rod tip so there is a taut bow in the line. Lift it a little quicker and cause the nymph to rise in the water and you may



Even late into autumn, a small weighted nymph such as this Goldhead Hare's Ear tied on a size 22 hook will still catch fish.

just induce a take, if a trout happens to have it in its line of sight. If not, a deft roll cast will put the nymph back out in to play again.

Cover the river. Keep the line taut with the fly - that way, when you feel the twitch of a trout sucking in the nymph it will need the merest flick of the wrist and it will all but hook itself. Lift at any interruption to the nymph's progress that you discern. Early autumn this will invariably result in the satisfying tug of a fish, but as the days shorten and autumn progresses, as often as not your reward will be a waterlogged leaf that has caught on the nymph, or the black twig snapped from the top of

a tree by a wind which is beginning to find a darker side.

It is all but the end of season now. Fly life seems absent, though a closer inspection will reveal that there is still the hardy midge about. But the last rise is a memory, kept back there with those of the summer. If a last fish is to be caught it would probably be most sensible to tie on a tiny, gold-head nymph, or a pupa pattern.

But it doesn't always do to be sensible.

Go on...it's your last chance!

It is the fading light of the last day of the season. You look up into the grey skies of a looming winter and a

If the fish are not coming to the surface, it's always worth going down for them with a weighted nymph such as this plain head Stonefly Nymph.



gust of wind frees a sweep of leaves that fall to the river like the drape of a curtain. Your weekend escape is all but over for the year. Home beckons, it's fireside, it's jobs, chores, tidying up, the kicking of tyres.

Go on. It's your last chance - do something a little stupid. Let's see if you can bring one more up, one last time, before the covers go on and the shutters go down.

Go really mad, pick out the biggest, gaudiest fly in your box, something to frighten the horses, something to

cut through the grey of the day like the blade of a razor. And put it out there. You never know, you might find a trout in similar mood. Down there, at the bottom of the river, when it suddenly sees an irresistible excuse to have one last dash towards the laden sky, a taunting of winter, stoking up one last time for an edge, before the preening and posturing, the fighting and defending, the winning and the losing - must begin.

It does sometimes work.



Butterbur were showing autumn tints.



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AJ's Angst

'lets off steam' with his
frank opinions

A Brickbat

A brickbat to those event organisers who hyped up their events during the year and by doing so caused disappointment to many and generated much criticism of outdoor events in general on various forums. Since we started our events 34 years ago, we have always tried to describe them accurately and without hyperbole. We think that is why in spite of the recession our events continue to grow, while others appear to have stalled very badly.

At such events we hear of sponsors being asked to supply more bags of dog food than there were dogs entered, and of bags of dog food being split into supermarket plastic bags for prizes. Such treatment of sponsors' products and sponsorship also reflects badly on such event organisers.

Country sports are not well served by such disappointing events.

The need for consultation – plaudits where they are deserved and suggestions for improvement.

Over the last 18 months our representative organisations were more active than ever before in dealing with potentially hostile legislation. They had some undoubted successes and, generally, we supported the stance they took on our behalf. However we still consider that there is a need for organisations, particularly those in Northern Ireland, to have greater consultations with their members and to try to reflect their members viewpoints and opinions more accurately.

As the organisation arguably reaching more country sports people than any of the representative organisations, we feel it our responsibility to provide opportunities for the organisations to meet members and non members at our fairs, meet press and politicians and put their news and views to our readership. While we love to report on successes, help campaigns, sponsor events and generally support the hard work put in by the staff of our representative organisations, we are not 'cheer

A Plaudit

To all those involved in the organisation of the three Great Game Fairs of Ireland for delivering record attendances at all three fairs and superb overall events. A great vote of thanks must go to all the sponsors and exhibitors who in these difficult times entrusted us, financially, to deliver good commercial business for them – I think we achieved that. Also our thanks go to all those who competed at and attended the events. We tried to give you the best possible prize funds and good value for money events and the research findings to date show that you appreciated our efforts.

It is now clear that the two premier game and country fairs in their respective parts of Ireland are the Irish Game Fair at Shanes Castle and the Irish Game & Country Fair at Birr Castle. In 2011, in terms of virtually all of the parameters of success, these two fairs pulled 'streets ahead' of would be competitors.

The new revitalised Ballywalter Game & Country Living Fair also moved smoothly from a one day to a two day event, putting nearly a 60% increase on the gate from 2010 and was the venue for the launch of a truly international gundog event and the new international terrier and lurcher competitions. It is reckoned that in 2012 the Ballywalter event will be challenging strongly for the No 3 slot behind Birr and Shanes as the top country sports event in Ireland.

leaders' for them and reserve the right to make constructive criticism in order that these organisations can better reflect and defend the interests of their members like our readers and our staff.

A couple of issues where I feel consultations with the wider membership would have been valuable was, first, the stance taken on firearm reform and the 'young shots' issue. I am a member of both BASCNI and CAI and have not been asked for my views on these issues, yet both organisations have made strong representations on my behalf.

Secondly, I parted company with the BASC stance on dog licences and compulsory micro chipping of dogs. I put forward the idea that it would be preferable to put forward as our policy for effective dog control that there should be compulsory micro chipping accompanied by the abolition of the dog licence. There are many good reasons for the implementation of the former and none that I can see for the latter. However, in spite of the fact that the two Kennel Clubs and the veterinary profession are in favour of compulsory micro chipping, BASCNI took a stance against it – again I was not consulted on this. (Was anyone? Editor) THE RESULT as can be seen by a report elsewhere is that we got INCREASED Licence fees and COMPULSORY micro chipping. Thus what was achieved was a fairly large increase in the cost of keeping a gundog!

I think the organisations operating in NI should look at the following suggestions:

To hold Irish AGMs where members can ask questions and air their views.

To have elected local committees. I think it is important that Chief Executives or Directors of membership organisations have the benefit of advice from independently elected committee members, rather than from people who they have appointed.

That all staff positions for these organisations be the subject of a proper recruitment campaign in order to attract the very best candidates and that the person appointed can have the legitimacy of having been appointed on the basis of having been judged to have been the best candidate for the job AND the best person to represent the interests of the members of the organisation.

We do recognise the dedication of the staff of our representative organisations and our Editor recently took a look, on our readers'

behalf, at the diary commitments of Lyall Plant, CAI Chief Executive. Both Paul Pringle and I very quickly decided we wouldn't want his job! And Paul suggested we recognise his efforts, over and above 'the call of duty', by awarding him one of our magazine 'Lifetime Commitment Awards.

CAI do at least partially meet some of the suggestions above but I personally think they and BASCNI could serve their members even better by implementing them fully.

Meanwhile we are very happy to commit to working positively with all country organisations to help them represent us even more effectively.

A HUGE Brickbat to ICAB - the Irish Council Against Bloodsports

This organisation has chosen to attack our magazine by writing to advertisers accusing us of aiming the magazine "at those involved in some of Ireland's most horrendous animal cruelty."

Our readers know that this allegation is totally without foundation and we trust our advertisers will realise that such wild allegations are totally without foundation especially as they come from an organisation which apparently lurks behind a PO Box address. I trust that they also recognise that whilst the country sports market place, as can be seen from the success of our fairs, is still a large and vibrant marketplace – the potential for product sales to the tiny number of followers of ICAB is rather minute. I think the old adage 'empty vessels make the most noise' is a very appropriate way to describe the allegations of ICAB.

As a graduate biologist, and lifelong animal lover and ardent conservationist, I totally deplore and reject this allegation that this magazine encourages or condones cruelty to animals. We make no apology for supporting all legal sports and have an objective of promoting these within a balanced and sustainable environment by working with farming, tourism and real conservation bodies.

The fact that all the sports which we promote and defend are legal, means that the allegation made by ICAB appears to be defamatory to us, our readers and our advertisers. The states in which we live decide what is legally cruel and what is not, not some small cabal of animal rights activists.

I have challenged the writer of these emails that I am prepared to debate the 'ethos' of our magazine with him in any forum including the

High Court! To date he has not taken up the challenge by giving me his address!

A Plaudit to an indefatigable political supporter of country sports – Jim Shannon, MP

It gave me immeasurable pleasure to see the late Major William Brownlow's widow Eveleigh and their son Jamie, present at Stormont for the inaugural presentation of the new Brownlow Trophy. 'Bill' Brownlow or 'the Major' as he was affectionately known by the Irish country sports community was, in my opinion and that of many others, the finest country sportsman of his generation.

It was particularly fitting that this Brownlow Trophy be awarded annually to the person 'who has made the greatest contribution to country sports and conservation in Ireland' in that year should go to Jim Shannon, MP. Jim has been a fearless and often outspoken supporter of country sports who has been in the forefront of virtually every political battle involving country sports in Ireland. This was a well deserved award

and I know what made it even more special for Jim was that Eveleigh Brownlow, one of his constituents, was there is person to present it to him.

Jim, when receiving his award, told a delightful story about 'the Major' which summed him up very well. At the height of the 'troubles' Jim was serving in the UDR, when they stopped Major Brownlow. Apparently in order to show that everyone was treated with the same thoroughness, the Major's car was gone over very thoroughly indeed, leading to an inevitable roadside delay for him.

When Jim and his colleagues returned to base their commanding officer informed them that he had had a call from Major Brownlow. Jim fearing the worst thought they were about to be 'carpeted' but the call from William Brownlow had been one to congratulate the young part-time soldiers on their thoroughness and professionalism!

Our heartiest congratulations go to Jim on a very well deserved award.



Eveleigh Brownlow presents the Brownlow Black Grouse Trophy to Jim Shannon, MP for his outstanding work on behalf of country sports

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Shine a light into murky corners

It must be close on 80 years ago but I remember it as though it were yesterday – a little boy running down the street, tears streaming down his face, screaming: “He’s going to kill Alex.” How do I remember it so well? Because that little boy was me. Alex was a pet pig which we got from a neighbour of that name and Old Hugh had arrived at our farm near Cushendall in the Glens of Antrim with his big knives and other equipment to slaughter the pigs and there was to be no reprieve for Alex.

I remember my mother, a very caring woman, taking me into the house and trying to comfort me with explanations that simply did not register with me, although she was a former teacher and good with words. I had set outside the pig crews with the tears not too far away, while the other pigs were being taken out for slaughter, but the thought of Alex meeting a similar fate was too much for me.

When we got Alex he had to be fed from a bottle, but he was very hard to get on to solid food although my brother Archie and I tempted him every day with juicy morsels and milk on a dish. For what seemed an eternity Alex refused to put his head down and was not thriving the way he should. Then one red letter day, Archie burst into the kitchen with the news: “Alex is putting his head down and eating out of the dish.” It was all go with Alex after that.

Why do I tell this story? Because I fear that at least 90 per cent of people outside the farming and veterinary communities have not grown up when it comes to being realistic about animals, wild and tame.

And they are certainly not being helped by the behaviour of those individuals and organisations who should know better, but who have a vested interest in blindfolding the people about the real facts of life as they affect the environment and its wildlife.

This happened to me three years ago. My son Daniel and a group of neighbours were hunting foxes about four miles from our home near Cushendall. I had been at a funeral and was just home when Daniel rang to say that Mitzy, the old lead hound, had not returned with the younger hounds after they had put up and accounted for two foxes. I rang the police immediately to tell them that Mitzy had not come back as expected. The hunters waited for some time and sent one of their numbers souring the roads nearby. Mitzy was nowhere to be seen and for a very good reason she had been taken into custody and delivered to the USPCA pound at Benvariden. That was on a Sunday and we heard nothing more until one of the men who had been with Daniel on the hunt heard from a friend on the following Wednesday that a ‘dog’ was in the pound.

Top hunting condition

A farmer and I went to see if it was Mitzy. Sure enough it was. I was told that I had to pay £73 to get her out to cover vet’s fees and for keeping her for the three and a half days. The girl in the office said the vet had been worried about Mitzy’s condition and that he might not agree to her release until she

was ‘better.’ The farmer and I went immediately to see the vet and he pronounced her to be in top hunting condition. So I paid the £73, took her home and she hunted happily for another three years.

It transpired that it was the police who had taken her to the USPCA pound. Why were we not told about that, for both Ballycastle and Ballymoney police had been told that a foxhound was missing? We’ll let that go but the point I want to make is that the vast majority of urban and village dwellers have not grown up when it comes to animal husbandry and animal welfare. And, sadly, the media is greatly to blame for this state of affairs. They swallow bucketsful of propaganda by vested interests without questioning it. I watch and read lovely stories about animals being ‘saved from death.’ How often did we watch the release of ‘saved’ seals into an over crowded sea amid a welter of self congratulation and glory, although the likelihood is that many of those seals either dined well on salmon, or wouldn’t last too long when they attacked salmon nets?

No thought for victims

My considered opinion is that 60 per cent of the work done by the do-gooders is either harmful to wildlife or wasteful and it is up to those who know the facts to stand up and proclaim them loudly. I would say that the red squirrels in Craigagh Wood near Cushendun have been killed by buzzards, that hundreds of racing pigeons and game birds are being killed by peregrine falcons, that our grouse moors have been severely damaged by hen harriers and that sparrow hawks, magpies and buzzards kill thousands of indigenous species like blackbirds, sparrows, thrushes, larks, meadow pipits and leverets every year. Why does no one in authority seem to care about the victims?

We hear about costly projects to save lapwing and curlew in Northern Ireland but I know of areas where both species are doing well without any help for either them or the owners of the lands. What we need is a blueprint from a reliable and responsible organisation setting out in detail what is and what is not helpful in restoring the environment and its wildlife to the state they were in 60 or 70 years ago, before these overpaid busybodies came on the scene with their juvenile gospels of arrant nonsense.

I would suggest that such an organisation would be the Game Conservancy Trust in Hampshire which has both the knowledge and integrity to produce a reliable blueprint. If we fail to do that things will only get worse while the wide guys rake in thousands of pounds.

I know only too well that sob stories about animals and wildlife in general sell papers and fill the coffers of the 50 and 60 year old ‘juveniles’ who hold the purse strings and who have effectively, some might allege, been positively encouraged by the media to mislead their readers and viewers at enormous cost to indigenous wildlife.

It might help if all those professing to be concerned about wildlife spent a few years on a farm or with a gamekeeper. There they would see life in the raw – not though jaundiced or blinkered eyes. Could there be any more honourable vocation for young journalists and other students than to shine a light into the murky corners of greed and indifference? I think not.

There are Irish country fairs and countrysports fairs
... and then there are the
GREAT GAME FAIRS OF IRELAND
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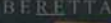
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