

Irish COUNTRY SPORTS and COUNTRY LIFE

Including The NEW IRISH GAME ANGLER magazine

ON SALE
Until 25th November

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The Ballynahinch Harvest and Country Living Festival

- Ireland's newest Game Fair and a unique 'Country Comes to Town' event

COUNTRY: Saturday 27th & Sunday 28th September 10.00 am – 5.00 pm
GAME & COUNTRY LIVING FAIR Montalto Estate, Ballynahinch, Co Down

The Festival at Montalto organised by the Great Game Fairs of Ireland team combines all of the attractions of the game fairs with the style of fine country living and includes:

- An actioned packed Main Arena Programme sponsored by JN WINE from Crossgar (www.jnwine.com) featuring a rich mix of countryside and living history attractions including gundogs, horse and hounds, horse drawn vehicles, fly casting and falconry displays and demonstrations, living history re-enactments, a Medieval jousting tournament, TV shepherdess Katy Cropper and much, much more.
- A full Game Fair programme of competitions including international class clay shooting, gundog tests, angling, terrier, whippet and lurcher championships.
- A country focused retail exhibition village focusing on all that is finest in country sports and country living including a Fine Food Festival bringing together select artisan food and drink producers and suppliers from all over Ireland and the UK and a country fashion show.



- Living history re-enactments celebrating the famous Battle of Ballynahinch, complete with a Living History Village where visitors can interact with combatants.
- A Medieval theme including a Jousting Tournament, John de Courcy coins minted on site and a Medieval Buffet in the baronial themed hall complete with costumed servers, falconer and harpist playing Medieval music.

BALLYNAHINCH TOWN CENTRE

COUNTRY COMES TO TOWN EVENT Saturday 27th 10.00 – 7.00pm

In parallel with the Montalto event on SATURDAY ONLY there will be a FREE family event in Market Square featuring the U105 Roadshow; a horse drawn vehicle cavalcade; a Battle of Ballynahinch re-enactment; The Beat Carnival; Potato Juggling; Hog Roast; Stilt Walkers; The Bramble Pixies; Great Ballynahinch Bake off; Three little Pigs; Just Adam Band; Johnny Cash Line Dancers and Street Music Competition.

Followed by music session in pubs.
 See further details www.downdc.gov.uk
 Facebook: Downfestivals

FESTIVAL ADMISSION: £30 per two persons or Family (2A: Up to 4C).
Car parking and Programme FREE.

For further details of the events see
www.ballynahinchharvestfestival.com or call 028 44839167/44615416
E: irishgamefair@btinternet.com

The event is supported by



**northernireland
tourist board**



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Main Cover: From a painting 'Wild Boar at Montalto,' by John R. Moore

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Visit www.countrysportsandcountrylife.com/Magazine

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Country Sports and Country Life Rol Comment

The Irish Game and Country Fair in Birr Castle drew in a very large number of people once again this year when it was held in beautiful surroundings during the weekend of August 23rd and 24th. The hardworking organisers were very happy with the way things went and visitor numbers were about the same as last year. Last year 30,000 people visited the Birr Fair over the two days, and this year it was about the same. On Saturday the weather was lovely and there was a record crowd, up 2,000 people on last year. On Sunday the weather was poorer and the crowd was down 1,500 on last year.



Albert Titterington told me that he felt the decrease in the Sunday figure might have been linked to 'the dire forecasts' being promulgated by Met Eireann in the days beforehand. 'Met Eireann was forecasting torrential rain and we received a lot of concerned emails beforehand,' he said, 'with some even suggesting we should call off the Fair on Sunday. I follow Accu Weather and that website was more accurate, forecasting showers and brighter spells, which is what actually transpired.' The weather on Sunday was actually ok apart from one or two heavy downpours which soaked those who had turned up without umbrella or coat, which would hint that perhaps a lot of people hadn't been checking the weather forecasts!

The traders did well this year. In the UK Fairs the traders have suffered in 2014 but in Birr a lot of the UK traders did very well. The clay pigeon competitions were once again buoyant, and the terrier and lurcher events were very successful, possibly even bigger than their counterparts in the Shane's Castle Fair.

The Welsh gundog team did extremely well in the shooting dog tests winning the team and individual competitions. The best two retrievers competed against the best two spaniels and the Welsh team won that as well, bringing home with them almost 1,000 Euros. Competitors from southern Ireland won the terrier and lurcher competitions, bringing home with them 1,000 Euros each.

Unfortunately, due to a problem, the Viking ship didn't make it to the Fair, but people enjoyed the Viking village nonetheless. And the jousting was a great spectacle and hugely appreciated by a large crowd at the main arena.

There wasn't a bed to be had in the general area during the Fair and the organisers estimate the weekend brings in revenue of €1.5 million to the Birr region. There were many UK visitors this year and a huge amount of visitors from Northern Ireland. It's planned to make next year's Birr Fair even bigger but that will be contingent on being able to find extra funding.

Now, Albert and his team are focussed on organising the Ballynahinch Harvest and Country Living Festival in Montalto Estate, Ballynahinch on the 27th and 28th September. Montalto is a beautiful, impressive estate and Albert is

hoping for an Indian Summer.

Philip Donnelly, Director Hunting with Hounds with FACE Ireland, told me during the summer that Stradbally Hall in County Laois was once again blessed with sunshine at the IMFHA National Hound Show on Sunday the 6th July. 'In fact,' said Phil, 'the only time it rained (as if on some celestial cue) was between 1 and 2pm when all were safely ensconced in the marquee tucking into a splendid lunch of salmon, potato salad and a delicious white wine.'

Seventeen foxhound packs entered this fine show and displayed to the crowds, with hounds and hunting folk excellently turned out. There were three new packs showing this year, the Killultagh, Old Rock & Chichester; the South Tyrone; and the United from Cork. The Judges assigned to the doghound class in the morning were Captain Ian Farquhar (Duke of Beaufort's), Mr Jacky Thomas (Glamorgan), and in the afternoon the bitch classes were judged by Mr Richard Sumner (Heythrop) and Mr Matt Ramsden (Bedale). The standard was excellent, with the laurels for champion doghound going to the Kildare Foxhounds' Monty '13. Reserve champion also hailed from Punchestown, Kildare Pluto '12.

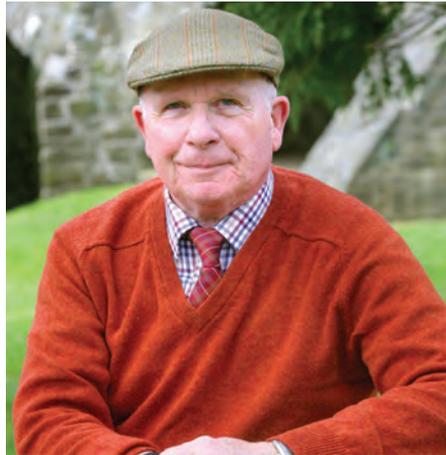
Champion bitch was Ballymacad Sapling '11 with reserve champion going to South Tyrone's Beauty. Harriers and beagles also showed. The Harrier judges were Mr Oliver Ryan-Purcell (Ormond) and Mrs Jane Hall (Staffordshire Moorland) and the champion harrier hound was Doon & District's Bouncer. Reserve champion was Mullinavat Harrier's Opal. In the Irish Masters of Beagles Association ring, the Woodrock & Blackwater Valley Beagles took many of the rosettes with an impressive line up of well-made hounds. The beagles competition was judged with considerable skill by Mr Simon Dunn (Chilmark & Clifton Beagles) and Mr Kevin Price (West Somerset Beagles).

Great credit must go to the show chairman David Lalor (MFH Laois Foxhounds), Rupert McAuley (chairman IMFHA) and Roddy Bailey - and many other unsung heroes and heroines - for a well-drilled, tightly run ship. And as always huge gratitude must be extended to the Cosby family for providing their land for the show. Stradbally Hall is a beautiful building surrounded by attractive estate-land. It's a magnificent setting.

During the show, hunting historian Noel Mullins pointed out that the Irish have been hunting with dogs for at least four millennia, if not longer. Noel explained that hounds hunting by scent were known in old Irish as 'Cu Selga.' The use of scenthounds by people in fact dates back to Assyrian, Babylonian and ancient Egyptian times. Scenthounds were used by the ancient Celts when they were hunting deer and boar. The earliest record we have of hunting foxes with hounds comes from England in the mid 1500s. The history of hunting with hounds is a fascinating subject and something which I will return to in future articles.

**Derek Fanning,
ROI Editor**

Well the Indian summer we were all hoping for (as I write this) is just beginning to make a welcome appearance. Over the last few months, as is so often the case it seems, I wasn't able to take full opportunity of the good fishing and fly-life which was on the water from quite early in the season, although a couple of outings for brown trout to the Six Mile and the Bann were very enjoyable. OK, no fish of the quality usually caught and released by the Stevie Munns of this world, but good enough for us lesser mortals.



The run-up to the Great Game Fairs of Ireland at Shanes and Birr was as hectic as ever, more so this time as we have the prospect of seeing the first ever event of its type, the Ballynahinch Harvest & Country Living Festival on Saturday 27th and Sunday 28th September.

It will be staged at the stunning traditional estate of Montalto which will be open to the public for the first time in decades. But that's not all, as literally round the corner the centre of Ballynahinch will be in full flow as well, crammed with everyone playing their part in the event as well. Along with exciting Main Arena acts - see details inside this issue - there will be a host of traders, exhibitors and living history with the re-enactment of the story of Betsy Gray and the Hearts of Down, and the Battle of Ballynahinch recreated almost on the very spot where it occurred.

That will be the final fair of 2014 for me and then the shooting season will get underway. I'm really looking forward to it, not just the shooting days but the picking up - I have a new dog in the team this time, Bailey a yellow labrador, the one I wrote about being able to open the patio doors from the kitchen. He still hasn't worked out how to close them and I might have to ask the Dog Guru himself for some ideas next time he's back from some international training jaunt or other. Come to think of it the only time he seem to be here is at our game fairs. So another opportunity has been missed as I was talking to him at both Birr and Shanes.

But all may not be lost as I'll be in his company at Gelnnoo where he manages the shooting. That's one of the days I'm really looking forward to and you will see in these pages that I have taken the opportunity to chat to some of the shoots where I'll be a Gun this season, to see what's happening on some shoots around the country.

There is no doubt the game season ahead is looking very good indeed. Early sun and pleasant conditions have done well for you birds almost everywhere and keepers are keeping their fingers crossed that we don't get any deluges to undo the good work.

Talking of shooting reminds me of a conversation I had at the game fair at Shanes Castle. The PR and news stuff had gone well, Harry Cook - the film director who must be obeyed - was having a well earned lunch, and I was having

a chat with a couple of friends who were on holiday from darkest England.

We'd been watching the excellent gundog work and were discussing how the doggie chaps and chapesses worked their dogs during the shooting season on local estates. No Formula 1 machines resting in the garage between trial outings, these people and their dogs got down and dirty in all weathers, every season, doing dog work on shoots, not to mention the dogging in, etc., before the shooting proper got underway.

Then came the revelation. Beaters and pickers up in their patch were actually entitled to be paid at the minimum wage. Minimum wage eh! Paid! I had to check my hearing aids.

Well, that was what they said anyway and it was, according to them, the way things were going over there. Personally I think that many of us would almost pay for the opportunity to be on fine estates working our dogs and enjoying the company of like-minded souls. As I say almost pay or, come to think of it, some of my friends...pay...really?

As that subject drew to a close we were joined by a friend from the Irish Republic whose family had owned a small traditional estate for generations, generations which had seen better days as he would readily agree. Never one to miss the opportunity to stir things up a bit, I thought I'd mention the financial situation across the pond.

I told him that if things were not addressed I thought this magazine would probably back a series of negotiations, then walkouts and strikes on estates across the country this coming season - if things didn't improve sharpish - in a gallant stand for downtrodden shoot workers and that, unfortunately, the disruption would probably impact on his shoot too if he didn't mend his ways. That was the gist of it anyway.

Yes, I said, even in his neck of the woods the impact from this 'cause for workers rights' would likely deal a devastating blow, if those that called the tune failed to pay the piper. I obviously left him in no doubt about this new 'cause celebre.'

My friends and I watched and waited for his outburst. It didn't come.

He paused for a moment and I imagined his thoughts bouncing down the path of shoot closures, his income shrinking even further, the end of life as he had known it...that sort of thing.

'Great!' he said, 'and when the beaters and pickers up start getting that sort of dosh, maybe you would turn your hand to getting it for me as well! Where do I sign up?

He had a point of course.

Have a great season everyone and if you see me in the field or working my labs please say hello.

Straight barrels!

Paul Pringle
Northern Editor

Surveying our wonderful wildlife

This summer farmland across east County Down in Northern Ireland is being surveyed by RSPB trained volunteers. The dedicated team will be discovering which birds and wildlife have made their homes on more than 20 local farms so advice can be provided on how to protect them.

The area has been selected as it's a stronghold for priority seed-eating birds like the yellowhammer and linnet, both of which have declined in the UK and Ireland, mainly due to a loss of seed-rich habitat.



Linnet (photo RSPB images)

Worryingly, the 2013 State of Nature Report found that 60 per cent of farmland species assessed have declined over the last 50 years. Specialist birds like the reed bunting have suffered most due to their dependence on specific habitats.

RSPB Northern Ireland Project Officer Hayley Sherwin commented: "The priority seed-eating birds that we are targeting through this work have three main requirements - a summer insect source, a winter seed source and suitable nesting habitat. If one of these requirements is lost or depleted, the birds will find survival increasingly difficult especially during the winter when food is already in short supply."

One of the farmers who took part in the survey last year, Derek Robinson from Killinchy, commented: "I found the survey highly educational and hugely rewarding - I didn't realise I had such a diversity of bird species around me! The survey rekindled my enthusiasm for birds and wildlife on the farm and heightened my awareness of suitable habitat and feeding sites."

Surveys will be completed by mid-July and farmers will then receive tailored advice on how to best manage the habitat for the species recorded. The surveys will be repeated on a three year basis to monitor the wildlife populations.



The State of Nature report has also highlighted declines in local butterfly populations of around 32 per cent. RSPB NI, working in partnership with Butterfly Conservation Northern Ireland, will also be carrying out butterfly surveys later this summer. With less funding now being made available for agri-environment schemes it's more important than ever that farmers and landowners protect the birds and wildlife that their land supports. Advisory support by the RSPB can help them make the most of their land - both for production and wildlife.



Small tortoiseshell. (photo Grahame Madge, rspb-images.com)

O'Neill visits Bovine TB Badger TVR Research Project

Research into badgers is vital to add to our understanding of TB disease, badger ecology and their interaction with cattle, Agriculture Minister Michelle O'Neill has said.

During a visit to the Test and Vaccinate or Remove (TVR) Wildlife Intervention Research Project currently taking place in the Banbridge area in Co Down, Minister O'Neill met with some of the staff who are implementing the study on the ground.

Minister O'Neill said: "Bovine TB is a major animal health problem in these islands. It is costly for the taxpayer and for farmers and places added pressure on the families of those farms affected. Its eradication is therefore a key priority. The TVR Wildlife Intervention Research Project is a unique piece of research throughout these islands and is vital to our understanding of the disease in badgers and their interaction with cattle.

"Today I have witnessed the professionalism of DARD staff in delivering this research project on the ground. This year all captured badgers will be identified, assessed, sampled and vaccinated. Next year all captured badgers that are TB test negative will be vaccinated and released, while those testing positive will be removed. In addition, up to 40 badgers will have GPS collars fitted so that their movement can be

recorded and analysed."

Highlighting the importance of a joined-up approach to tackle TB, Minister O'Neill acknowledged the role of farmers and industry in supporting the TVR research project.

She said: "Eradicating TB in cattle requires a joined-up approach between Government, industry and farmers. I am encouraged with the high level of co-operation from farmers and land owners in the Banbridge area in agreeing to be part of the TVR research project. With the continued support of local land owners, farming representatives and environmental groups I am optimistic that the number of permissions will exceed that achieved during last years' Badger Set Survey. This continued co-operation will help us add to the pool of international knowledge and assist in designing the longer term path to eradication. I know that the results of the TVR research project will be of interest to those in the south of Ireland, in Britain and further afield who similarly grapple with the difficulties inherent in bovine TB eradication."

Over the next five years cattle TB incidence will be monitored in the Banbridge area and in several similarly sized non-TVV areas. Information will then be compared between the TVR and non-TVV areas two areas to identify any change in TB incidence in cattle.



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Latest data show 16% drop in NI greenhouse gas emissions from 1990 to 2012

The latest emission figures in the Greenhouse Gas Inventories for England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, 1990-2012, have been published today.

Northern Ireland's 2012 greenhouse gas emissions are estimated at 21 million tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent. This is an increase of 2% compared to 2011. There are two main reasons for this increase. Firstly, the 2012 figures include emissions from widespread forest wildfires which occurred during a spell of particularly dry, windy weather. Secondly, global fuel prices have caused a shift from burning natural gas to coal in the energy

supply sector. The 2012 emission levels show a longer term decrease of 16% since the base year. The current Programme for Government has set a target for a 35% reduction in greenhouse gas source emissions by 2025 from the base year.

The largest sources of emissions in 2012 are agriculture (30%), transport (20%), energy supply (18%) and residential (15%). Most sectors show a decreasing trend since the base year with the greatest decreases in emissions observed in the energy supply and residential sectors. Emissions from the transport sector have increased over the same period,

although they have been reducing since reaching their peak level in 2007 which is likely to be related to the economic downturn.

Greenhouse gas emissions in the UK have reduced by 27% since the base year. Scotland and England have the greatest percentage reductions (31% and 28% respectively). Wales and Northern Ireland have lower reductions (18% and 16% respectively). Caution is advised when comparing relative performance due to the levels of uncertainty around each of the estimates. Northern Ireland's greenhouse gas emissions account for 3.7% of the total UK greenhouse gas emissions.



Kildare Ch Doghound

Phil Donnelly of the HAI sent us this photograph taken at the the Stradbally Hound Show which shows the Champion doghound and Reserve champion (Kildare Foxhounds).

O'Neill announces Forestry Public Opinion Survey

Forestry Minister Michelle O'Neill has welcomed publication of a new Public Opinion Survey on forestry.

The survey shows strong public support for the forestry programme when it improves the environment and mitigates the effects of climate change, and supports the social use of forests. Many people would like to see more woodland planted close to where they live. Respondents were also asked for their opinion about tree cutting, and three quarters agreed that trees should be cut down to prevent the spread of tree diseases.

Minister O'Neill said: "I am pleased to see that around three quarters of respondents have visited our forests or woodlands in the last few years, for walks, picnics or other recreation.

"Gaining an insight into the public's perception of our service is essential for developing our forestry policy in a way that meets peoples' needs and expectations."

The survey found that the majority of respondents found their visits good for unwinding from the stress of everyday life, or for physical exercise. Leisurely walking was given as the most popular activity, and around half of respondents walked for at least an hour.

Minister O'Neill concluded: "The survey adds to the growing body of evidence that our forests and woodlands have a significant role to play in improving our physical, psychological and social wellbeing, and in encouraging people of all ages, from every walk of life, to partake in healthy and affordable physical activity. This is a vital contribution to improving the health and wellbeing of our people."

The survey can be viewed on the Forest Service website at www.dardni.gov.uk/policy-and-legislation.htm.

Ballyduff Fishery - advance booking recommended.

Set in the heart of the Blackwater valley, 7 miles from Fermoy and 30 miles north east of Cork lies the small sleepy village of Ballyduff Upper. It is here where you can expect some of Ireland's finest salmon fishing. The Ballyduff Bridge Salmon Fishery has a prime beat, mostly single bank running from below the bridge downstream to almost three quarters of a mile upstream. The beat has numerous named pools and is ideally suited to fly fishing which the management always encourages when conditions allow. Other methods, excluding shrimp, are permitted at certain times of the year depending on season and water conditions.

The Fishery also has other beats up river - Ballincurragh, Magners and Blackstones - all at Killavullen, about ten miles west of Fermoy. When conditions are not favourable at the Ballyduff Bridge Fishery these up river beats can produce outstanding results and at Ballincurragh, the famous 'Churchill' pool rarely fails to produce. All Fisheries are managed by two very experienced Gillies and they are here to help at all times including separate tuition if required. Families are always welcome and assistance with good local accommodation can be provided if required.

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

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

Visit our website at www.blackwatersalmon.ie/ or Facebook @ BALLYDUFF Bridge Salmon Fishery.



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Sporting

Technical innovation and understated style combine in this season's Sporting collection. Knits, shirts and trousers feature alongside a choice of jackets from early season to cold winter days. All jackets are designed with full movement for unrestricted swing and an exclusive 'Barbour Tech' waterproof membrane.

Men's Shooting Collection

For early season, the Darley jacket is ultra lightweight, waterproof and machine washable. Microfleece handwarmer pocket, retainers for cartridge pockets, spandex cuffs and a suede microfibre inside collar add comfort and provide protection. For mid season, the Swainby is a lightweight jacket with a polar fleece lining for extra warmth. Waterproof zips add ultimate protection to the body.

The Garrowby is rugged and robust. Made from 52% polyamide and 48% Cordura, this jacket has a soft feel and is very comfortable to wear yet provides maximum strength and durability for a day in the field. With micro fleece hand warmer and cartridge pocket retainer flaps, the Garrowby provides full movement for unrestricted swing.



*Swaledale Covert Coat Colours Available: Olive
Sizes Available: 8 – 18 RRP: £329.00*

For those who prefer tweed to shoot in, the Fellmoor jacket is warm and stylish. In a 100% lambswool, the Fellmoor has washable leather detailing on the collar and cartridge pockets giving it the added bonus of being machine washable. Complementing the jacket is the matching Fellmoor waistcoat and breeks for a very smart and sophisticated outfit.

As an alternative to jackets, quilts and gilets feature throughout the collection. Stand out pieces include the Highfield quilt which is waterproof with washable leather collar and shoulder patches and large bellows pockets and the Sports Wool waistcoat which can be worn over a shirt or under a jacket depending on weather conditions.

Women's Shooting Collection

This season's ladies sporting jackets are versatile and designed with both style and practicality in mind. The Bishopdale jacket, designed for early season shooting, is ultra lightweight, with articulated sleeves, spandex cuffs with thumb loop, handwarmer and cartridge pockets and a very stylish Alcantara trim throughout. The Chapeldale jacket is a good all weather jacket with a zip in waistcoat that can be worn alone in warmer weather or zipped into the jacket for extra warmth on chilly mornings. The diamond quilt on the shoulders allows for extra gun grip and an elasticated waist to pull in the jacket ensures that style is not forgotten.

The ladies tweed Dentdale jacket in a beautiful light olive and rustic tweed is made from luxurious wool with leather trims. Waterproof with articulated sleeves and large cartridge pockets, it is both warm and elegant. It forms part of a family of tweeds with waistcoat, skirt, breeks and blazer ensuring the wearer remains stylish on and off the field. Knitwear complements the colours of the tweeds and crisp white shirts are lined in tartan for a feminine touch.



*Langdale Gilet Colours Available: Olive, Navy
Sizes Available: S – XXL RRP: £74.95*

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

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

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NSN Event Sees Young Anglers Hooked for Life!



Salmon Conservation Group No Salmon Nets (NSN) catered to budding young anglers attending the Irish Game Fair at Shane's Castle and provided the opportunity for juniors wanting to try their hand at fishing.

With a record breaking attendance at the two day game fair, the NSN team provided full guidance and supervision including rods, tackle etc. Over ninety boys and girls took part and for many this was their first experience in catching a fish and while many decided to take their first fish home for supper, many were happy to experience the principle of catch and release. Some even partook of the skills of local celebrity chef Emmett McCourt and tasted their catch before leaving the fair!

Dr. Bethany Sinclair, represented DCAL and observed the proceedings and was invited to choose the winners of the fundraising raffle and drew the name of Edmund Hughes from Belfast as the winner of the star prize of a custom made fly tying vice, hand crafted by Paul Smith, the NSN Vice Chairman.

The "put & take" event was made possible by the co-operation between the Great Game fairs of Ireland and DCAL Inland Fisheries who kindly provided strong fighting rainbow trout from their hatchery at Movinagher. The trout were stocked in a contained stream, prepared specifically by NSN for the event. All methods of angling were catered for and the uptake was high over both days.

NSN Chairman Willy Darragh commented: "It was great to see so many boys and girls having a go. The future of angling in this province requires a concerted effort to encourage and educate kids from an early stage. We commend both Albert and the game fair team and DCAL fisheries for putting this enterprise together for the benefit of junior angling. For many children this was their first time fishing and their smiles said it all. Nearly everyone left with a fish, parents were delighted and the NSN team found it to be a rewarding experience and would like to extend our thanks to all who helped and supported in any way."



Two year old Ted Beattie was the first customer

The very first child to have a go was Ted Beattie, pictured here with his Dad Gareth. On catching the fish, the delighted youngster was said to have asked if his grandfather Alastair (a well known gamekeeper) would like it - as he never seemed to have much luck himself!

Rural Development funding of £123,000 will make Lough Neagh safer for visitors - O'Neill

Rural Development Minister Michelle O'Neill has announced that visitors to Lough Neagh will benefit from an additional layer of safety following £123,394 funding from the Rural Development Programme (RDP) for a new rescue boat and an off-road rescue vehicle.

Officially launching the 'Martin Kidd' rescue boat at the Lough Neagh Rescue's Antrim station Minister O'Neill said: "The Lough Neagh Rescue team provide a vital service to users of the Lough and it is befitting that they were successful in being awarded £123,394 to purchase a bespoke design rescue boat and other rescue equipment by GROW South Antrim under Axis 3 of the Rural Development Programme.

"A key aim of the RDP is to generate increasing numbers of visitors to our rural attractions, although this is one of the few occasions where I hope that new equipment provided through RDP funding is not used too often.

"Whilst I advise visitors to always think safety first when enjoying the beauty of Lough Neagh we are all too aware that accidents can happen. It is therefore encouraging to know that, through the RDP, visitors can be reassured that the Lough Neagh Rescue team have an additional modern rescue boat to enable them to provide blanket coverage of the Lough from either of their three stations at Antrim, Kinnego and Ardboe, continuing to provide the vital service to all users of the Lough."

Chair of GROW South Antrim Local Action Group, Vera McWilliam, said: "GROW is delighted to award Lough Neagh Rescue this much needed funding to ensure that we have a talented team of volunteers in Antrim keeping the Lough users safe at all times. This additional service will reassure potential visitors and users of the Lough and in turn will benefit the entire rural area."



Scores of happy children got their first taste of fishing at Shanes Castle.

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Judgment upheld as SWAROVSKI OPTIK wins patent case in the UK

On May 15 2011, the Court of Appeal in London upheld the judgment against Leica Camera AG due to its infringement of the Z6 rifle scope patent belonging to SWAROVSKI OPTIK.

SWAROVSKI OPTIK has emerged victorious in a patent dispute against Leica Camera AG at the Court of Appeal in London. The judges rejected an appeal lodged by Leica and upheld a decision made by the UK Patents Court in May 2013, according to which Leica Camera AG had infringed a patent for the Z6 rifle scope belonging to SWAROVSKI OPTIK. The judgment is binding in the UK.

The patent dispute arose on the basis of a rifle scope from Leica that was presented in 2011 at the IWA & OutdoorClassics trade show in Nuremberg, Germany. During this event, SWAROVSKI OPTIK's patent law experts noticed striking similarities in terms of optical and mechanical design with SWAROVSKI OPTIK's patented Z6 rifle scopes. Subsequently, legal proceedings were brought against Leica Camera AG due to its infringement of this European patent.

Dr. Gerd Schreiter, Member of the Executive Board and CTO at SWAROVSKI OPTIK, welcomed the judgment from the Court of Appeal in London: "The judges upheld the decision. This has maintained the protection for our innovations that continue to guarantee SWAROVSKI OPTIK's position as the leading technology provider in the industry."



Michael O' Kane Wins Irish Open Spey Casting Competition

The Irish Open Spey Sasting Competition was held on August 24th in Foxford Co. Mayo on the River Moy, as part of the Foxford River Fest taking place from 22nd August to 24th August. The casting was held to international standards for 15ft rods with wading, so competitors were in water with a 40% angle change on the cast.

Winner Michael O'Kane is only 22 years old and has been working as Mount falcon resident ghillie for the last two years on the two miles of the River Moy owned and run by Mount Falcon Hotel Ballina Co Mayo.

Results: First – Michael O'Kane – Derry - 151 feet, Second – Martin Kiely – Limerick - 145 feet, Third – Derek Doyle – Dublin - 136 feet.



Jack Murphy Autumn Winter 2014 Collection is Almost Here!

The Jack Murphy Autumn Winter 2014 Collection is simply gorgeous. Arriving in stores and online in August, their new collection of menswear and womenswear encompasses a selection of exceptional tweed styles, beautiful knitwear, fantastic waxed jackets, stunning quilted jackets, classic shirts and ultra cosy fleece styles. Pictured above is the Jack Murphy HARRY Tweed Jacket RRP: €275.00 Sizes Available: S – XXXL colours available are Burren Tweed, Glendalough Tweed.

The epitome of country chic with an inimitably unique twist, this new collection from the niche Irish brand showcases their signature fusion of classic country styling and choice contemporary influences, along with a refreshing sense of sophistication, elegance and finesse.



Jack Murphy NEVIN Quilted Gilet RRP: €90.00 Sizes Available: S – XXXL colours available: Woodland, Heritage Navy, Heritage Brown

From hacking to hunting, working in the yard or heading for a pint in the local, Jack Murphy's Autumn Winter 2014 Collection has you covered, no matter what they day has in store.

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RED MILLS IKC Pointer & Setter Championships Sat and Sun 30th and 31st August

This year marked a return to the Wicklow mountains for the first time since 1997. The meet took place in The Coach House in Roundwood, where the secretary Ed Flannelly made the draw. 49 dogs (there was 1 withdrawal) were included in the draw. The maximum size of the stake is 50 dogs.

Judges for the Championship were Aidan Dunne of Maodhog kennels who had won the championship previously with Irish setter Jamail Adam, Colin Forde of the Irish setter Bownard kennels and Pat Dooley of Wildfield pointers.

The trial the first day was in the Glenree in the Dublin mountains but the weather was cold and blustery with some heavy rain falls making scenting conditions very difficult.

The second day 10 brace were called to the second round and the meet was again at Roundwood where the draw was made. The weather was extremely hot with temperatures up to 24 degrees on the day.

Included in the 20 dogs were:

Kieran Walsh's ESD FTCh Blackstairs Geronimo, Carol Calvert's Int FTCh Glynark Apollo, Pat Reape's Irish setters FTCh Lisduvoge Aileen and Lisduvoge Roxy, Ollie Kelly's Irish setters Cummer Grace and Cummer Cindy, Christy Davitt's English setters Blackstairs Sioux and Blackstairs Frank, James Coyle's pointer dog GB FTCh Koram Kaiser, James Dalton pointer Lagopus Ezar, Joan McGillicuddy's Irish setters Int. FTCh Creg Rena and FTCh Ballydavid Starjet of the Kingdom, George Forbes English setter FTCh Ballyellen Moss, Ed Flannelly's Irish red & white setters FTCh Shannonbally Barry and Shannonbally Nitro, Donal O'Leary's English setter Cindy's Pick Up, Joe O'Sullivan's Irish Setter Gardenfield Prince, Jim Sheridan's Gordon setter Ebony, Jim Crotty's pointer FTCh Brackbawn Beauty II, Davy O'Neill's Irish setter Shanrycon Andraid. That group was made up of 5 English setters, 2 red & whitesetters, 2 pointers, 1 gordon setter and 10 Irish setters.

The judges brought 4 brace to the third round. The first brace was James Coyle's Koram Kaiser and Carol Calvert's setter Glynark Apollo. The next brace was Ollie Kelly's Irish setter Cummer Cindy and Pat Reape's

Lisduvoge Aileen, the third brace was Joan McGillicuddy's Irish setter

Ballydavid Starjet of the Kingdom and Christy Davitt's English setter Blackstairs Sioux. The final brace was George Forbes English setter Ballyellen Moss and Davy O'Neill's Irish setter Shanrycon Andraid.

There was some outstanding running in the third round and 4 dogs got some extra running to give them an opportunity on game. Lead sponsor Bill Connolly of Red Mills spoke at the prize ceremony as well as IKC Championship Committee Chairman Jim Sheridan who thanked the excellent committee for their hard work and efficiency. There was general consensus that this Championship was an enormous success.

Results:

1st with an Excellent award was Joan McGillicuddy's Irish setter female FTCh Ballydavid Starjet of the Kingdom. This was a very young winner born in May 2012. She also won the most stylish dog of the Championship, most stylish setter of the championship, best Irish setter and best young Irish setter (winner trophies listed on schedule). Joan also received the plaque for the breeder of the Championship winner.

2nd with a Very Good Classification was Pat Reape's Irish setter female FTCh Lisduvoge Aileen

3rd with a Very Good Classification was Carol Calvert's Irish setter dog Int FTCh Glynark Apollo

Judges comments:

The first dog first round was in the toughest ground of the Championship in very long heather. The dog had an excellent run and quartered well in tough conditions. In the second round the dog ran very hard and had a very good find on a single bird though there was provocation from her bracemate. In the third round she had fast quartering and gave the judges what they were looking for. That is why she received an excellent award.

The second dog had excellent running and had a find in the first and third rounds.

The third placed dog had two unproductive points in the first round but with excellent quartering. The dog had a point on a snip in the second round but was not as free on the production. The third round this dog produced excellent

Holts Sales Report - 19th June 2014

Total hammer for the day was slightly over £1m which has already risen significantly due to aftersales. Once we have added the sealed bid (which closes 3rd July) then I predict a total of circa £1.3m, slightly higher than December and March.

Amongst the pairs, was a duo of classic single-triggers by Boss (Lot 1301) that were completed in 1908 for Earl Fitzwilliam. Their quality shone through and they sold for £20,000 in spite of being re-stocked and without their original case. We saw the usual competition for good sidelocks and a highly original example by Purdey (Lot 1400) built for shooting duck was hotly contested and sold for £18,000 followed by a good example of Murcott's 'Mousetrap' snap-action 12-bore (Lot 1401) that sold above estimate at £3,400; an excellent result. Further testament to the importance of originality came in the form of a fine 12-bore by Rosson of Norwich. With much original colour-hardening and blued finish, this well-balanced gun reached a well-deserved £7,000, a fine figure for the maker. The small-bores always sell well, and last week didn't buck that trend. From this section I'm going to mention a lovely Holland 'Royal' in my favourite calibre, 16-bore, (Lot 1515) that sold in the room for £20,000 and another 16-bore, but this time a boxlock by W. Richards of Liverpool (Lot 1523) that reached £1,800.

The highest hammer price of the sale went to an exceptional over & under Boss 20-bore (Lot 1605) with engraving by Rizzuto that sold to a commission bid of £85,000. This was preceded by another English over & under by Greener that employed the unusual Richards & Taylor patent (Lot 1604) and this sold for £5,000. Interest has risen again on good boxlocks after a period of them seeming to be a little flat, and we began the section with a little used wildfowler by Lewis with much original finish (Lot 1700) that sold for £3,600, a good result for the vendor whose father had commissioned the gun shortly before the last war. For more information visit www.holtsauctioneers.com



Boss 20-bore (Lot 1605) with engraving by Rizzuto.

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Re-iterating the Value of Shooting Sports to the Economy

Shooting is worth £2 billion a year to the UK economy and provides significant conservation benefits according to the results of independent research recently released by leading shooting and countryside organisations, including the Countryside Alliance.

The figures are outlined in a new report – The Value of Shooting – conducted by Cambridge-based Public and Corporate Economic Consultants (PACEC). It is the most comprehensive research into the economic, environmental and social contributions of shooting ever undertaken in the UK.

Lyall Plant, Chief Executive of Countryside Alliance Ireland, said: "The message of this research is clear – shooting is a crucial part of our rural economy and plays an essential part in managing and conserving the countryside for the millions of people who enjoy it each year."

The Value of Shooting reveals that shooting supports the equivalent of 74,000 full-time jobs.

At least 600,000 people shoot in the UK and between them they spend £2.5 billion each year on goods and services, bringing income into rural areas, particularly in the low-season for tourism. The re-search shows that an established shoot generates local economic benefits for businesses in a radius of up to fifteen miles.

The figures show that the amount spent on shooting (£2.5bn) equals almost 10% of the total amount spent on outdoor recreation in a year, which has been measured at £27bn by the Sport and Recreation Alliance.

To view or download a copy of the report - www.caireland.org

Minister Coveney Hosts Animal Welfare Conference, Dublin Castle

Countryside Alliance Ireland Board Member, Jim Fitzharris, attended the recent Animal Welfare Conference in Dublin hosted by Minister Simon Coveney. The Conference went very well and there was a large turnout from animal rights organisations, some of whom had three delegates. Minister Coveney was very impressive in his opening address and stayed all day. He stated that this was the first of regular consultative conferences and that the objective on the day was:

- Brief on the amendments to the Animal Health and Welfare Act.
- Focus on legislation regarding dog fighting, attendance at, and betting on.
- Legislation banning tail docking for domestic purposes, except for hunting dogs.

The Minister stated that:

- Only vets or veterinary nurses can dock tails on pups under six days old.
- Microchipping of dogs will be compulsory by 2016.
- He will be establishing a Code of Practice for Coursing for the use of dogs and that the sale of animals to minors is now banned.

His Department is seeking tenders from NGO's and local authorities for the implementation of the measures adopted. Lastly the Minister stated that they are setting up an Animal Welfare Helpline.

Mark Beazley from Dogs Trust gave a presentation on Dog Welfare with the focus on the five freedoms; freedom from hunger, discomfort, distress, abnormal behaviour, and confinement. The Dogs Trust is to provide practical and financial assistance to all in getting animals microchipped.

Eddie Downey, IFA President, highlighted the role that his 85,000 members play in the welfare of 13.5 million farm animals and 75m poultry. He recognised the valuable service the veterinary profession gives to agriculture. In the drive to meet the Food Harvest 2020 targets Mr Downey stated that we need more animals with better care and the need to work together on an early warning system for identifying animal welfare problems. The fodder crisis of 2013 was an example of working together. He stated that legislation alone was not the answer and that working together in a well funded agri-food production system was the way forward in protecting best standards of animal welfare and food production.

COUNTRYSIDE ALLIANCE IRELAND

Love the countryside

Brian Gillen, DSPCA spoke on their history and challenge in looking after 25,000 animals annually. He stated that their work includes an inspectorate, education, re-homing, free microchipping and helping the needy. Brian stated that they have a problem with the traceability of online selling of animals in a system where the seller is not identified at present. He stated that the population of stray horses must be controlled through castration.

Martin Blake, Chief Veterinary Officer went through the activities where they will be establishing a Code of Practice and these include; coursing, hunting with hounds, and horses, game hunting, dog trialling and dog shows. It remains to be clarified as to who will be involved in designing these codes of practice. Martin went on to outline who is going to be involved in the enforcement of the new legislation and that some of this work will be farmed out to NGOs. He already has an agreement with the local vets, ISPCA and DSPCA and will be adding others as the protocol is agreed. These inspectors will be trained in appropriate skills and act in a professional manner at all times with close cooperation between all organisations. He said that the focus will be on remediation and early warning with a reduced emphasis on the expensive prosecution route to animal welfare. He stated that we will have four microchipping databases. Mr Blake then addressed the issue of feral cats and there were obviously a large number of cat lover organisations in the audience.

In the Q and A session, Feral Cats Ireland was very agitated about the need to curtail the trapping or killing of feral cats and was informed that there is currently no legislation to control the feral cat population which is continuing to grow. The digging out of foxes was the next focus of the animal lovers and the facilitator, Sharon Ni Bheolain, asked the Minister about what he intends to do about 'sending terriers down holes after foxes.' The Minister responded that a Code of Practice will be put in place for fox hunting, as well as hare coursing. Philip Donnelly IHA, eventually gained the facilitator's attention to express concern about the extent of the authority that is given to NGOs.

The next session was on horse welfare and the Minister announced that he is allocating extra funding for horse welfare. At present his Department is giving €3.2m to local authorities and an unspecified amount in ex gratia payments to NGO's. Barbara Bent, Wexford ISPCA gave an excellent presentation on horse welfare and the need to adopt a preemptive approach to unwanted horses and uncontrolled breeding of horses that there is no need for.

The afternoon session was on the consumer and animal welfare and in his introduction Tom Moran, General Secretary of the Department of Agriculture stated that we need to increase food by 70% by 2050 to feed the projected growth in population. The three pillars of food production are quality, safety, and sustainability of which Ireland are world leaders. Mr Moran emphasised the primary guardians of animal welfare are farmers and that the Irish family farm system is welfare friendly. The Irish farming system is carbon friendly and our established reputation can be easily lost. He emphasised the need to put measures in place to promote and guard this reputation.

Aidan Cotter, CEO of Bord Bia gave an excellent presentation on their activities in promoting quality assurance and sustainability through their audit system. He stated that welfare friendly products are considered to be healthier and of better quantity. He stated that sustainable targets should be economical, environmental friendly and sociable. Their target is to be the world's no 1 by 2016 in food quality and safety. Other contributors to this session were Neven Maguire, Chef, Sean Leahy, Hilton

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It was a worthwhile conference and interestingly most of the animal welfare organisations left after the first session. The conference was well attended and highlighted the need to ensure that CAI have representation on the committees who will be establishing the various codes of practice for countrysports involving dogs. CAI has been involved with similar legislation in NI and will be proactive in recommending that the Department takes heed of this where feasible.

Irish Ladies Fly Fishing Association Take 3rd Place at the International in Wales

The Irish Ladies Fly Fishing Association competed in the Ladies Fly fishing International against England, Scotland and Wales on the 20th to 22nd May 2014.

Ireland, captained by Julie Gerry of Maynooth, won bronze taking third place. The overall winners were Scotland, with England second and Wales fourth. It was one of the closest competitions ever held with Wales and Ireland each having 33 fish, just 4 short of England's 37, while the winners Scotland caught 44 overall. This was Scotland's first win away from home for 20 years and celebrations went long into the night.



The ILFA Team in Wales

Top Rod overall was Janice Sharp from England who caught an impressive 11 fish for a total of 19lb 10 oz. Top Irish Rod and winner of the heaviest fish of the competition was Madeleine Kelly from Hilltown who caught five rainbows and a brown trout weighing 11 lbs 2 oz. Her heaviest fish was 3lbs 1oz. Ireland had 4 new caps on their team – Cher McCrave, Lisa O'Hagan, Pauline McClenaghan and Pat Byrne and they all thoroughly enjoyed their new experience of fly fishing at International competition level.

On Thursday, the competition day, the weather was cold and cloudy with a change in the wind to a cold easterly direction. Hubert Smith, the Irish Coach, from Dundalk, with his friendly, calm and encouraging manner organised and motivated the team. Team spirit and togetherness were higher than ever before. Hubert was ably assisted by Mick McShane (flytyer), also from Dundalk who tied beautiful flies all week and got the flies spot on for the final day as can be seen by the close results at the end of the final day.

The 2015 International Ladies Fly Fishing International will be held on Grafton Water, in England. Any ladies interested in joining the Irish Ladies Flyfishing Association or competing for the Irish Team competing in England in 2015 please visit www.irishladiesflyfishing.com or ring the Irish Captain Julie Gerry on +353 (0) 87 205 5094.

Wildfowling and Recreational Sea Angling Survey

The Department of Environment (DOE) is currently bringing a Marine Plan into legislation, in accordance with the Marine Act (NI) 2013. Countryside Alliance Ireland has been working closely with the DOE and the Marine Plan Team to ensure that such legislation does not unduly hamper our members' activities. We are endeavouring to ascertain the environmental, economic and social benefits of traditional coastal wildfowling/shooting in Northern Ireland so as to pass this information onto the Marine Plan Team to reinforce CAI's representation of our members.

We would be grateful if you could please take the time to fill in this short survey on behalf of your club and members – www.caireland.org

BDS Honours President of the NI Branch

This year, those in the Countryside Alliance Ireland marquee at the Northern Ireland Countryside Festival were privileged to witness The British Deer Society honouring Tom Brown, President of its Northern Ireland Branch, as this year's recipient of its prestigious Jim Taylor Page Trophy. The award is announced each May at the Society's Annual General Meeting in recognition of a member's long and distinguished service to deer, their welfare and management.

Presenting the award on behalf of the Society, NI Branch Chairman Greg Kane said: "This is the first time in the history of the award that the Society has chosen someone in Northern Ireland to receive it. They could not have chosen better. Locally, there can be few people with such a detailed knowledge of deer and such a long-standing commitment to serving the aims of the British Deer Society as Tom Brown. This award is thoroughly deserved and I congratulate Tom on being its first NI recipient."



Tom Brown receives the prestigious Jim Taylor Page Trophy

Receiving the trophy, Tom Brown said: "It is a great honour to have been given this award and I am surprised and delighted to have been chosen. The Society has been very active in Northern Ireland since our local branch was formed in 2000. I have been privileged to serve the Branch in a variety of key roles including Training Manager and over the last 14 years we have delivered deer management training to some 300 people.

"This is crucial as wild deer have no natural predators. They are beautiful and delightful creatures, but unless herd numbers are managed they can do significant damage to forestry, agricultural crops and in some circumstances even suburban gardens. The BDS provides comprehensive training in legal, sustainable, ethical and humane deer management to help address these issues. It is a very real honour that my role in this work has been recognised through this award and I am privileged to be the first NI recipient of the Jim Taylor Page Trophy."

The late John Shaw Brown

We are deeply saddened by the passing of John Shaw Brown, following a brief illness.

A former member of the CAI Board, Joint Master and huntsman of the Sunnyland Beagles for over thirty years, John Shaw devoted his life to hunting and he will be truly missed by all who knew him.

John Shaw's funeral was held in Annalong and a fitting tribute given for this remarkable gentleman, reflecting his passion for hunting. John Shaw's final resting place overlooks the sea where he enjoyed idyllic holidays since childhood. CAI extends deepest condolences to Liz and the family circle.



The late John Shaw Brown exercising hounds.

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Barry Sullivan – A Man With A Mission!

The Chairmanship of the NARGC one of the most important roles in Irish country sports coming up for election. Paul Pringle speaks to the only declared candidate so far about the challenges facing the person taking over as chair of such a large and important organisation.

Like many young rural men before him, Barry Sullivan's interest in wildlife and conservation began as a young boy through his local gun club, Street Wildlife Club. He has been an active member of Street Wildlife Club and Longford Shooting & Conservation Council since he was 18 years old and has served in various officer positions, including County Chairman. In 2007, he was elected as Honorary Secretary of the NARGC and has held that position since. During the past seven years he has been at the forefront of every important issue facing the Association and he has participated in all the relevant decisions, some of which at times have been hard and unpopular. But as Barry says himself "It's easy to make popular decisions because they will never upset anyone. But often the best interests of the Association are better served by a difficult decision, which may not be popular." Barry is a man with a mission and his ambition is to lead the NARGC as its Chairman following the retirement of Sean Doris in

October. He says the experience he has gained over the past seven years as a senior officer has given him the ability, the knowledge and the ambition to lead the Association to even higher achievements.

Barry believes the NARGC is the benchmark for all hunting and conservation in Ireland. In particular, he points to the fact that no other association anywhere in Ireland offers anything close to the back-up, support, defence and representation of members' interests in addition to providing a wide range of member services. When we interviewed him he challenged us to suggest a comparison and of course we have to admit we were unable to. As everyone knows, conservation costs money, but so also does defence and representation of members' interests. Barry has always believed money spent on these core issues is money well spent. But he acknowledges that members don't always see or understand the benefits immediately of such expenditure. He says this is principally a matter of communication and education.

On the subject of competition, he says that NARGC must never become complacent. While the Association is undoubtedly the largest and most active in the country, it must always strive to maintain and improve on the service it delivers to its membership. When one considers that most of the work is carried out on a daily basis by just four employees delivering service to some 25,000 people, it is truly a remarkable feat which would be the envy of many commercial companies in terms of productivity. He says: "Our performance in this area is a credit to the dedication and commitment of the NARGC staff."

Barry remembers that it was not so long ago that the NARGC struggled to cope with an ever expanding agenda and the service to members was hit and miss. He also remembers the times when important agenda items were lost or even discontinued with the arrival of a newly elected Chairman who may have had different priorities to that of his predecessor. He notes that the professionalising of the Association through the appointment of full time staff has largely addressed that.



NARGC's National Secretary, Barry Sullivan presenting a special Irish Countrysports and Country Life award to outgoing Chairman Sean Doris, in appreciation of his work for country sports in Ireland during his tenure. Barry also presented a similar award to Seamus Denning in recognition of his dedicated work in organising the NARGC participation at the Great Game Fairs of Ireland over many years.

Driving the issues to finality

Barry says: "I believe that the Association must drive the issues in which it is involved in a consistent manner to finality. This may mean taking a long term approach but if that is what is necessary, then he believes that is the course which should be followed." He thinks that all too often in years gone by, issues which should have been followed were dropped or forgotten simply because of different views at the top of what was important at a given time: "This of course is the nature of a volunteering association. But the arrival of full time staff has brought the required stability and consistency which keeps everything moving," he added.

Voluntary organisations can be notorious for internal feuding and infighting. While the NARGC has had its own flash points in the past, Barry says that to be fair, in an organisation of its size, it is quite a peaceful and friendly association: "I am adamant that stability is the most important element which binds large organisations together. People in voluntary associations get involved to do some good. No one wants to spend precious time fighting and arguing and anyway, he believes most arguments are often over matters on which everyone already agrees in principle. The only issue is often just emphasis or interpretation."

Barry enjoys excellent relations with the staff and the members generally. He is a good listener and is well capable of weighing up advice and different views. He is committed, if elected as Chairman, to growing the Association's membership. He says: "A very open discussion needs to take place around this subject in a way which has not happened previously. Only such an open discussion can result in a truly inclusive and innovative approach to significantly increasing membership. We have to listen to all our members, right down to gun club level and not just to those at the top." He has also firmly committed to maintaining peace, stability and unity in the Association, because as he says, 'without this we cannot make any progress on anything.'

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SUN SHINES AS RECORD NUMBERS STREAM TO A TRADITIONAL IRISH GAME FAIR AT SHANES CASTLE

Photographs by Derek Laverty, Jim Masson and David Titterington



Game Fair Director Albert explained why nearly 28,000 visitors had poured into the sun-soaked splendour of the Irish Game Fair in the beautiful settings of one of Ireland's most magnificent estates:

"We simply provided what the public wants and expects from the Great Game Fairs of Ireland team - delivering great country sports and countryside events in beautiful traditional settings. This year we worked hard to make sure that Shaness was extra special, we accurately described to the public what

was on offer and they were not disappointed.

"We had a brand new focus on activities for young people, to give them a taste of the pleasure to be had in country pursuits. Our new Northern Ireland Angling Show ran inside the fair and people of all ages had the chance to learn flytying and casting, then go to the fair's special put and take fishery to catch their very first trout. Youngsters could then bring their catch to one of our celebrity chefs in the FLOGAS Fine Food kitchen to see how best to prepare and cook it. I think we have hit on a great way to hook new converts to the sport.



The old castle was the perfect backdrop for George Logan complete with medieval maiden to take on the role of John de Courcy. De Courcy's work in Ireland will be one of the attractions at the new event at Montalto Estate, Ballynahinch on the 27th & 28th September.





“We had the best ever range of competitions and the biggest prize fund, a huge tented village of trade stands with a real country lifestyle theme and three arenas operating with action packed programmes - the Main Arena; the 'CountrySports in Action' arena where the public could interact with the stars of the show and the Living History arena set in the midst of the re-enactors' Living History Village, with a timeline from the Vikings to the Normans, in the lee of the ancient Shanes Castle.

We even had a Viking longboat for youngsters to clamber over and explore.

The jousting display by the Knights of the Damned saw some thrilling action. The Main Arena buzzed all day long along with star displays of gundogs, muzzleloading, horses and hounds, falconry, long netting, ways of the old poachers, pipe bands and so much more as our aim was to try to entertain all ages and interests. While other events boasted about having a great arena programme we delivered much more in three arenas!

“Shanes also catered for the public's fascination with fine food especially with locally sourced produce and at Shanes, we had the best ever Fine Food Festival - the largest ever seen at any Irish Game or Country Fair - and some really exciting top notch game and fish cookery demonstrations.”

Commenting on the economic boost which the game fair makes to the local area, Albert said: “The record crowds at Shanes Castle, Antrim meant a vital economic boost for the

whole area. I know that hotels and guest houses were fully booked over the weekend and understand that some have even taken repeat bookings for next year. The economic boost is a huge bonus for the local economy given these tough economic times.”

And the last word on Shanes comes from just one of the thousands who enjoyed the event: ‘We had a wonderful family day out on Saturday - lovely mix of stands to keep us all happy! The food, clothing and shoes, apple juice and cider we got are top notch as usual and we met many old friends and made new ones along the way. In this day and age there's not many occasions where teenagers and parents are all in agreement about a good day out - this is a special day!’ This is what one of the person posted on Facebook and we are delighted that it is typical of the comments that our visitors made on Facebook, Twitter and to our researchers.

This year's Fine Food Pavilion organised by Kathy Jensen from Flavour Ireland at Shanes Castle Game Fair was the best yet, with an eclectic line up of food and drink producers and a programme of cookery demonstrations that wowed the thousands of visitors who thronged the marquee over the two days.

Newcomers to Shanes in 2014 included Birgitta Curtin from the multi award-winning Burren Smokehouse, whose exquisite hot and cold smoked salmon proved a huge hit with visitors. Not suprising, as three of Birgitta's products won the ultimate accolade of three stars each in last year's Great Taste

FINE FOOD PAVILION PROVES A HIT



Chef Emmett McCourt discusses rabbit dishes with Dave Mc Cullough.

Awards, with her Cold Smoked Irish Organic Salmon with Seaweed being named on of the Top 50 Foods in the UK and Ireland. It was also served to the Queen at the state banquet when she visited Ireland two years ago.

We also had some amazing breads and sweet and savoury baked goods from Daisy Cottage Farm in Wicklow and Amber Catering & Cakes from Antrim, while Mr Muffin Man from Cavan sold out both days.

RARE BREED BEEF

Outside, the Bruces Hill Cattle Company's Dexter burgers commanded lengthy queues, with satisfied customers then making their way into the Fine Food Pavilion to stock up on the company's fabulous range of rare breed beef to take home. And the perfect accompaniment to your steak was at hand in the form of Cracked Black Peppercorn or Diane sauces from Dunola Fine Foods.

If it was jams, chutneys and relishes you were after, you could choose from traditional to those with a modern twist from Crossogue Preserves, Made with Love xo and Linen Hill Kitchen Deli, who also had some delicious buttery shortbread and traybakes on offer.

Old Irish Creamery is always a hit at Shanes and this year was no exception, with their range of plain and flavoured

cheddars in big demand.

Flavours from around the world could be added to your shopping list too, with an amazing selection of top quality herbs, spices, oils, dips and much more from Your Inspiration at Home, while Stopinn offered an incredible array of Mediterranean olives, feta, stuffed vine leaves, nuts and baklava.

DRINKS GALORE

To wash all that food down, there was refreshing apple juice and cider from Armagh Cider Company and Tempted, Crabbies Ginger Beer, the finest vodka and gin from Chase Distillery and craft beers from Carlow Brewing.

Taking centre stage in the Fine Food Pavilion was the Flogas Kitchen, where Game Fair Chef Emmett McCourt demonstrated three delicious game dishes both days – one with rabbit, one with trout and the third with venison.

On Saturday, Sandy Cole from Broughgammon Farm made a beautiful loin of cabrito goat, while on Sunday he made a goat meat breakfast, complete with sausages, liver and kidneys and boxty. It was wonderful to see so many people tucking into offal and saying yum before heading over to Sandy's stand to buy some of his fresh goat meat products.

Emma Cowan came along on Saturday afternoon with two

delicious desserts to showcase ArmaghBramley Apples - Almond Eve's Pudding and Apple and Oat Crumble, while special guest on Sunday was Asha Chada from Indian Nights Inn who wowed the crowds with her simple but very delicious Coriander Chicken Curry.

Last but by no means least, on Sunday afternoon, BirgittaCuritin from Burren Smokehouse joined Emmett McCourt on the Flogas Kitchen to talk about her multi award-winning hot and cold smoked salmons, while Emmett rustled up a couple of light and fluffy smoked salmon ommelettes!

GUNDOGS

Ireland's largest and only truly international gundog weekend was, as usual, a huge success.

Saturday saw record retriever and spaniel test entries and a triangular Red Mills international match featuring English, ROI and NI teams. Nick Gregory from the English international team also carried out some super gundog demonstrations with his team of cockers.

Sunday saw international action with the Feedwell international team and individual events. A 10 strong Scottish team had made the journey and took on strong ROI and NI international teams in the morning and the cream of Irish individual handlers in the afternoon. Scotland took the major honours with the team win and the top dog overall – a retriever with a perfect score!

In a run off between the top two spaniels and top two retrievers for top Game Fair dog overall the top retriever was the overall winner.

As usual the prize structure for these events was much in excess of that on offer at other smaller countryside events and it was good to see young and old competitors involved.

TERRIERS, WHIPPETS AND LURCHERS

Once again the fair staged the largest terrier, whippet and lurcher weekend in Ireland and arguably one of the largest in the UK with the 27th Annual All Ireland Terrier, Whippet and Lurcher championships. This year being organised by Kieran Young and the Mourne Club. It was good to see former director Seamus Erwin present at the Fair. Seamus was responsible, with Albert, for developing the All Ireland Championships into Ireland's most prestigious terrier, whippet and lurcher event.

This year the weekend started off with a very exciting Red Mills Master McGrath final which had two previous winners in the field. A very exciting final heat was won by Gary Smith with Bono.

Other exciting racing sponsored by Feedwell followed.

On Sunday it was the turn of the Massbrook All Ireland Show Championships and a record turnout under three UK judges saw Chris Angus with Gunner become Supreme Champion. The weekend came to an end with a new event the Five Nations Whippet Championships in the main arena. This was judged under a three judge system with two all round

judges and a specialist whippet and was won by Graham Fyffe with Bolt David Best Runner Up with Penny.

ANGLING



This year with the support of DCAL, APGAI Ireland, NSN, FISSTA and the UAF and a number of members of the trade, Shanes Castle was the place to be for the launch of an angling show within the fair under the direction of Stevie Munn. With great prizes supplied, the casting competitions were a huge success, with celebrity chef Emmett McCourt showing he is no slouch with a fishing rod by coming second. AM Angling also played their part in making this a fair to remember for one angler by putting up a package not far short of £500 for a draw for all anglers visiting their stand.

However the real plaudits must go to Mark Tierney and the team from NSN backed up by APGAI Ireland and Emmett McCourt who really delivered a unique angling experience for kids. Having had lessons in fly tying, and casting from APGAI



Two year old Ted Beattie was the first customer.

Ireland team including Glenda Powell and Stevie Munn, they then could try out these skills at the 'Put & Take' Fishery supported by DCAL but organised impeccably by the NSN team. Having caught a fish they could then have it filleted by Emmett's assistant and cooked by Emmett in the Flavour Fine Food Pavilion

With a record breaking attendance at the two day game fair, the NSN team provided full guidance and supervision including rods, tackle etc. Over ninety boys and girls took part and for many this was their first experience in catching a fish and while many decided to take their first fish home for supper, many were happy to experience the principle of catch

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and release. Some even partook of the skills of local celebrity chef Emmett McCourt and tasted their catch before leaving the fair!

Dr. Bethany Sinclair, represented DCAL and observed the proceedings and was invited to choose the winners of the fundraising raffle and drew the name of Edmund Hughes from Belfast as the winner of the star prize of a custom made fly tying vice, hand crafted by Paul Smith, the NSN Vice Chairman. The "put & take" event was made possible by the co-operation between the Great Game Fairs of Ireland and DCAL Inland Fisheries who kindly provided strong fighting rainbow trout from their hatchery at Movanager. The trout were stocked in a contained stream, prepared specifically by NSN for the event. All methods of angling were catered for and the uptake was high over both days.



Scores of happy children got their first taste of fishing at Shanes Castle.

NSN Chairman Willy Darragh commented: "It was great to see so many boys and girls having a go. The future of angling in this province requires a concerted effort to encourage and educate kids from an early stage. We commend both Albert and the game fair team and DCAL fisheries for putting this enterprise together for the benefit of junior angling. For many children this was their first time fishing and their smiles said it all. Nearly everyone left with a fish, parents were delighted and the NSN team found it to be a rewarding experience and would like to extend our thanks to all who helped and supported in any way."

John Blair from DCAL commented: "The DCAL Inland Fisheries Group is delighted to have been involved as a main exhibitor at the Shanes Castle Irish Game Fair 2014.

This increased the Department's profile and we were pleased by the organisers decision to offer admission fee discount vouchers to DCAL licence holders. Staff at the event saw an increased number of visitors to the DCAL stand and welcomed the opportunity to engage with anglers and other stakeholders at the show.

We look forward to forthcoming shows at Birr Castle and Montalto and participation at such events, coupled with our



This budding angler learns the best way to cook his catch.

current Angling Community Outreach Programme, is attracting new groups and individuals, particularly young people, to the sport.'

We have been encouraged by the number of groups that have contacted DCAL Inland Fisheries Group to enquire about getting involved in angling following our attendance at the Game Fair."

SHOOTING

As usual the clay shooting organized by Kenny Thomas and the Ballydugan club was a huge success. With three guns to be won sponsored by Donal Mc Cloy and David Brennan and a number of excellent prizes it was great to hear the sound of shooting echoing across the fair throughout the two days.

Organisations – The sporting organisations were there in force.

THE SPORTING ORGANISATIONS

All the main Irish and NI sporting organisations were there in force. CAI, NARGC, FISSTA, UAF, NSN, APGAI Ireland, IWTF plus all manner of smaller campaigning organisations and conservation organisations such as RSPB, Woodland Trust, UWT, etc and SACS made their debut.

CLAY PIGEON RESULTS

Saturday A/AA 1st David Marshall, 2nd William Carroon. B/C 1st Eric Johnston, 2nd Boyle. U/C 1st Richard Lightbody, 2nd Ken Hugh's

Overall winners A/AA 1st D Marshall, 2nd J Burns, 3rd C Carronn, 4th P Brown, 5th C Aiken. B/C 1st W Johnston, 2nd G Donnelly, 3rd J Kirkpatrick, 4th N Boyd, 5th C Gorman .U/C 1st M Keatley, 2nd R Lightbody, 3rd C Kearney, 4th K Hugh's, 5th G Donnelly.

100 Yard Teal Winners £100 each day

Saturday M Keatley / N woods Sunday C Gorman / S Owens Pool Stand Winners Saturday D Marshall £150 Sunday D Marshall £155

20 Bird Compact Saturday J Burns £200 Sunday J Burns £200

All results were heavily fought out by shoot-offs and well done to all the winners

Shanes was Fantastic, Birr was Great now it's on to Montalto

Following hard on the heels of record breaking crowds and what was widely regarded as one of the best Irish game and country fairs ever, the focus moved to Birr. The estate was looking magnificent and was a great testament to the hard work of the demesne staff. There was an excellent selection of both country sports and country living stands, as usual a prize fund for excellent competitions only rivalled by the competitions at Shanes and one of the best main arena programmes ever mounted – make no mistake the best arena programmes are always delivered at the Great Game Fairs of Ireland!



Crowds voted with their feet to enjoy the best main arena programmes and countrysports events at Birr.

The crowds rolled in early on Saturday and this surge was maintained during the day delivering a record crowd for a Saturday. Sunday's Irish weather forecast was dire but the forecast torrential rain avoided us and we only took some showers from mid afternoon. Attendance was down slightly on Sunday from 2013 but up overall and traders reported brisk business both days with some posting record sales.

A full report on Birr will be carried in our Winter magazine but for now some examples of the arena acts which were enjoyed by the huge crowd.



Really exciting jousting action.



Where can I land with all these people?

Thus an excellent attendance at Birr firmly consolidated the reputation of the Great Game Fairs of Ireland as Ireland's leading events in the country sports market and the organising team as setting the standards



Horses & Hounds also drew the crowds.

for others to aim at. With a quick turnaround the team's focus is now on delivering a huge end of season success at Montalto Estate, Ballynahinch, Co Down on the 27th & 28th September.

Birr Castle was a superb backdrop for a medieval event. Spectacular jousting will also take place at the Montalto Game Fair.



The Ballynahinch Harvest Festival – Ireland's latest Game Fair - set in the beautiful traditional surroundings of Montalto Estate, Ballynahinch, Co Down

A TRADITIONAL GAME FAIR WITH ADDITIONAL STYLE!

The great Game Fairs of Ireland team's objective is to deliver great country sports and lifestyle events that celebrate the Irish countryside and the rural way of life. We consider that the best and arguably the only venues for such events are beautiful and historic country estates. Birr Castle and Shanes Castle have proven to be superb venues for very successful events where visitors cannot only enjoy the content of the event but also enjoy the beauty and history of the estates.



The glorious Montalto Estate.

Montalto Estate, the venue for this new and in some ways more stylish event has not only a rich history which ties in well with the attractions planned for both the country festival and the town event, but also has been beautifully restored to possibly even surpass its gracious past. The promotional video posted on our website gives just a few glimpses of the beautiful grounds and facilities which we trust visitors will not only enjoy but respect.

Montalto is a privately owned estate nestled in the picturesque surroundings

of the Co. Down countryside. The Estate has been a family home for centuries and offers the exclusive use of 400 acres of Irish countryside along with the services you would expect from the greatest 5 and 6 star hotels throughout the world. Private, yet still convenient to Ireland's airports, famous links golf courses and the attractions of nearby Belfast, this special hideaway is one of Ireland's best kept secrets.

From its humble beginnings back in the 18th century, Montalto Estate has been available for private hire since 2010. Renovation work in 2012,

involving the creation of The Carriage Rooms, make Montalto the perfect wedding location for couples who are looking for that unique something extra. The Carriage Rooms won the prestigious 2014 Hudson's Heritage Award - Best Wedding Venue in the UK.

The Estate can make your dream wedding come true by accommodating the ceremony, the reception or the entire wedding day. The stunning surroundings The Carriage Rooms is situated in, opulent ambiance and warm welcoming staff - who are always on hand to ensure your guests can relax and are well taken care of - are just a few of the wonders of Montalto.

Perhaps you've always wanted to become 'Lord' and 'Lady' of the manor with the attention of both the house and venue managers. Perhaps you wish for you and your guests to sample sumptuous food by renowned chefs on your 'big' day. Then why not let the estate ease the stress of your wedding day and replace it with that something which nowhere else can really offer?

The Carriage Rooms offers exclusivity on your day together with services you would expect from the greatest venues throughout Ireland and indeed the world. The romance and

beauty of the fine estate offers the perfect backdrop for any photographs and its central location make it easily accessible from the capital and beyond.

Depending on your requirements, Montalto House, the gardens and lake can all be made available to guests for the duration of their stay and The Carriage Rooms include beautiful ceremonial areas, a formal walled garden, a magnificent banquet hall and an evening area like no other, with both an on-site bar and paved outdoor area. In terms of a wedding, Montalto can cater for the small and intimate or the large and lavish and very much welcomes the opportunity to discuss all of the possibilities with you, confident you won't be disappointed.

For further details of the Carriage Rooms see www.thecarriagerooms.com and for the house www.montaltoestate.com.

Please note the house will be closed

to the public over the days of the Festival but visitors can enjoy it as a background to the competitions and to the re-enactments.

Over the time of the festival the upper floor, the Carriage Rooms will host a Medieval buffet in the Banqueting Hall, where visitors to the fair can feast on traditional and historic fare at realistic prices while they mingle with medieval knights and wenches to the haunting sound of harp music. Going through the adjoining room to the walled garden they will be treated to fashion shows and Scottish Dancing and a great display of Barbour Clothing by Smyths of Coleraine.

The lower floor of the Carriage Rooms features major displays of the history and tourism potential of Down District by Down Council leading through to a very beautiful bar where you can relax to the sound of Jazz music and enjoy a coffee, a range of

wines, beers and spirits and even seafood and champagne.

COUNTRY SPORTS AT THE HEART OF THE FESTIVAL

The team from the Great Game Fairs of Ireland are unashamedly country sports enthusiasts who believe passionately that farming, country sports and conservation interests can work together for a balanced environment and one that conserves and preserves the countryside and the rural way of life. In this we find common cause with organisations such as the Countryside Alliance Ireland, FISSTA, UAF, etc., and other sporting/conservation organisations.

So country sports competitions will be a very important part of the Festival and as one would expect from the Great Game Fairs of Ireland team they are of an international focus and a top quality nature with superb prize funds.

The Red Mills gundog and FEEDWELL terrier, whippet and lurcher events are focused on bringing the finest quality competition to Ballynahinch. All competing dogs will have demonstrated their competence by being winners in their area of competition. And thus our challenge competitions will be of the nature of 2014 championships. The competitions will be supported by other demonstrations and displays, including a North v South Spaniel event; gundog demonstrations by Joe Morrison and the Labrador Club of NI and a repeat of the Springer v Labrador Challenge between Willie Edgar and Nigel Carville.

Clay shooting and Angling competitions are open to all. The clay shooting will be run over a rather spectacular course by Kenny Thomas and the Ballydugan Club. The prize fund is growing steadily and will include at least three guns - a Caesar Guerini Auto Shotgun sponsored by Francesco Morelli from Casale 2000 Ltd; an ATA shotgun with adjustable stock sponsored by Brian Connaughton from Wildhunter and a Bettinsoli Shotgun sponsored by Donal Mc Cloy



The Carriage Rooms – hosting a medieval buffet and a wine & seafood bar.



Countrysports in abundance



Spectacular clayshooting.



The traditional carousel

Guns Unlimited; cash and other valuable prizes to be won.

Angling displays, competitions and instruction are in the capable hands of APGAI Ireland and it is hoped to have displays of casting over water by the use of a floating platform from Tom Clarke of Lakeland Floating Jetties.

Tom will also be displaying another innovative product for anglers and lake owners – a wind turbine that oxygenates water.

LOTS FOR FAMILIES

The event is family orientated with a rich mix of attractions such as a large trade village of quality products providing an exceptional country living shopping experience; fashion shows; cookery demonstrations; first class country sports competitions; the chance to meet and get up close with a range of

animals from ferrets to falcons and possibly even wolves; 'have a go' opportunities with air rifle shooting, archery and angling instruction in fly tying, casting, a Living History village where kids can meet combatants from the Battle of Ballynahinch, medieval knights and their chargers; Vikings and a medieval coin maker. Plus - as one would expect - an action packed main arena programme running from 10.00 am – 5.00 pm.

AND as a special treat accompanied children are not only admitted FREE



TV shepherdess Katy Cropper and her sheepdogs will be a huge attraction.

but they get free rides on one of Ireland's most impressive traditional Carousels.

A SPECTACULAR MAIN ARENA PROGRAMME sponsored by JN Wines from Crossgar

Running from 10.00 am to 5.00 pm the action packed main arena entertainment will be a rich and eclectic mix of country sports and living history entertainment and will include re-enactments; medieval jousting; free flying falconry; The Victorian Poacher and long netting displays; TV Shepherdess Katy Cropper; ferret showing and racing, carriage driving ; muzzle loading; canine displays; fly casting displays; horse and hound



Two innovative products from Tom Clarke from Lakeland Floating Jetties.



Medieval Knights

displays; terrier, whippet and lurcher action and traditional music.

LIVING HISTORY

Montalto Estate, the Ballynahinch and Down Council areas are steeped in history which will be reflected in the displays and demonstrations. The Battle of Ballynahinch was fought not only in the streets of Ballynahinch but also on Ednavaddy Hill in the estate. Re-enactments of skirmishes in the estate and town will be recreated and there will be a rebel/army encampment on the estate where children can have a real living history lesson by interaction with re-enactors from Living History Ireland. And the legendary heroine of the battle, Betsy Gray, will be brought to life.

The area also has a significant link to John de Courcy who was a great supporter of the work of St Patrick and was responsible for the building of Inch

Abbey and Dundrum Castle (also in Co Antrim he built Carrickfergus Castle). He was also responsible for striking the first NI coin which forms the basis of the logo of the Down County Museum. It is based on a coin minted by de Courcy, about 1190, probably in Downpatrick. It has the name of Patrick, with a crozier, on one side and of de Courcy on the other. It was a symbolic linking of the religious and political associations of the area and because it did not bear the head of Prince John, Lord of Ireland, it was a declaration of independence by de Courcy.

A facsimile of the coin will be struck at Montalto by Dave T. Moneyer (Grunal Moneta), facsimile coin maker to the British museum who will be present with his colourful display of vintage coins.

The memory of John De Courcy will also be brought to life through medieval



Grunal Moneta

jousting and other displays.

And of course the Down District played host to the Viking raids, and because the Viking longship was such a success at Shanes Castle it will make a re-appearance at Montalto.

FASHION FOR ALL TASTES

There will be fashion shows on both days of the event in the beautiful setting of the walled gardens of the Carriage Rooms.

The first show organised by two local Ballynahinch Fashion Shops: Magowans Fashions and Isabella Paige's Boutique and will take place at 12 noon until 12.45 pm. Then the focus will move more towards country fashion with a wide range of products on display in three other fashion shows on Saturday pm and Sunday am and pm featuring well known country fashion brands such as Barbour, Schoffel, Laksen etc from Donal McCloy's and Smyths of Coleraine. Many of these products will be on display for immediate purchase.



Skirmishes on the estate and Betsy Gray.



Viking longship



The Walled Garden - a beautiful location for the fashion show.

TRADE VILLAGE

For this event we have concentrated on attracting quality trade stands featuring the best products that one can purchase for stylish country living – this includes a great range of guns & tackle; country clothing & fashion; sporting art & crafts; a fabulous range of fine food and drinks; garden furniture and equipment and cars, 4x4s etc.

EMMA COWAN LOOKS FORWARD TO SOME FASCINATING FOOD FACETS OF THE BALLYNAHINCH HARVEST AND COUNTRY LIVING FESTIVAL

Festival Director Albert Titterington

has claimed that this event could be the most spectacular country sports and country living event he has ever organised. If this is true, and through my involvement in parts of the planning it would tend to indicate that the veteran of 55 game and country fairs over 36 years has taken this to his heart as a ‘pet’ project. Having arguably delivered the two best ever Irish game or country fairs ever at Shanes and Birr Castles in 2013, he stated his intention to make 2014 a real celebration of Irish country sports and the Irish countryside with two magnificent fairs leading up to an end of season spectacular at the stylish new venue of Montalto Estate. The Great game Fairs of Ireland team have

delivered the largest and best Irish game, country sports or countryside event ever at Shanes Castle in June (see an independent video www.irishtv.ie/antrim-matters-11 and an equally successful event at Birr Castle in August, now focuses on the launch of this new event.)

Apart from the Flavour Ireland Fine Food Festival that will be staged in the stable yard and feature a wide range of attractions including a superb display of the finest wines from the award winning JN wines company from Crossgar; a fantastic array of artisan produce including the inimitable Peter Gott and his game pies and great cookery displays from Emmett McCourt, Peter McErlain and other chefs, fine food will be ‘on the menu’ for everyone visiting the festival.

CATERING WITH A DIFFERENCE : A MEDIEVAL FEAST THROUGH THE YELLOW DOOR

The Yellow Door’s Simon Dougan, one of Northern Ireland’s top chefs, will be responsible for the food options available for visitors.

The Yellow Door have popular delis and restaurants in Belfast, Lisburn and Portadown and it’s the Yellow Door’s professional outside catering team who will be managing the food offering for the entire two-day event but the



The Team from JN Wine join caterer Simon Dougan from Yellow Door, Betsy Gray and combatants to toast the success of the Festival.

undoubted highlight will be the Medieval Buffet Banquet to be held in the Carriage Rooms fine dining hall.

“I’m really excited about the concept of the Medieval Banquet and I’ve got great plans in store,” said Simon. “The room will be set out in period style with long tables and bench seating, featuring reindeer hide covers for a bit of comfort with a difference. This will be totally open to all visitors to the festival and at a realistic price.”

A keen shot himself, Simon is particularly excited about the chance to cook up game recipes with a Medieval flavour and a modern twist. “I can’t

reveal all just yet but expect the food to be gutsy and really flavoursome, with game dishes like pigeon pie, lots of meaty flavours and wholesome soups served in freshly baked bread bowls,” he said.

“There will be a hedgerow harvest too with elderflower drinks and dishes and I’ll also be putting a strong focus on desserts, like lemon posset and traditional puddings in a mouth watering display.”

Adding to the Medieval theme, the Carriage Room Banquet will feature a falconer with an owl flying up the aisle, a harpist, knights in armour and

servers in Medieval costume.

The Yellow Door will also be providing food on site around the Festival. Among other things, look out for a burger food station with a difference, providing food theatre with chefs demonstrating the art of burger making while you wait for your freshly made, truly delicious burger.

Find out more about Simon Dougan at www.yellowdoordeli.co.uk or visit the Yellow Door Deli on Lisburn Road, Belfast or Woodhouse Street, Portadown. Simon’s book ‘The Yellow Door, our stories, our recipes’ is available to buy in store.

BALLYNAHINCH TOWN CENTRE COUNTRY COMES TO TOWN EVENT Saturday 27th 10.00 – 7.00pm

In parallel with the Montalto event on SATURDAY ONLY there will be a FREE family event in Market Square featuring the U105 Roadshow; a horse drawn vehicle cavalcade; a Battle of Ballynahinch re-enactment; The Beat Carnival; Potato Juggling; Hog Roast; Stilt Walkers; The Bramble Pixies; Great Ballynahinch Bake off; Three little Pigs; Just Adam Band; Johnny Cash Line Dancers and Street Music Competition.

Followed by music session in pubs.

See further details

www.downdc.gov.uk

Facebook: Downfestivals



FEEDWELL/Irish Countrysports & Country Life magazine All Ireland Champion of Champions Terrier, Lurcher & Whippet Challenges

Ballynahinch Harvest & Country Living Festival, Montalto Estate , Saturday 27th September 10.00 start

Please note there will be no racing and entry to the championships is restricted to dogs qualified as below AND MUST BE MADE IN ADVANCE OF THE SHOW.

Any Dog that has been Champion Terrier, Lurcher or Whippet or Champion Puppy at any Show in Ireland qualifies:

ICS&CL Champion Lurcher £150 ICS&CL Champion Terrier £150

ICS&CL Champion Whippet £150 ICS&CL Champion Puppy £150

Overall Champion £50 and a watch sponsored by Gardiner Brothers, Belfast

Other prizes of dog food will be presented.

ALL IRELAND CHAMPION of CHAMPIONS TERRIER, WHIPPET and LURCHER CHALLENGES

Owners Name:	Address:	Telephone No:
Dog's Name:	Where Qualified:	Competition Entered For:

Please complete and return form together with Entry fee of £10 payable in advance to Mourne Terrier & Lurcher Club: K Young 21 Oldtown Lane. Longstone. Annalong. Newry County Down. BT34 4XF Tel: 07834064086 Each entry receives two admission tickets value £30

RED MILLS/Irish Countrysports & Country Life magazine All Ireland Gundog Test Handling Challenge.

Ballynahinch Harvest & Country Living Festival, Montalto Estate, Saturday 27th September 10.00 am start.

Please note entry to the championships are restricted to dogs qualified as below AND MUST BE MADE IN ADVANCE OF THE SHOW.

Novice Dog handler:

Any dog that has been placed 1st to 3rd in a Novice or Unclassified/Prelim Tests anywhere in Ireland.

1st Prize £200 plus Watch sponsored by Gardiner Brothers, Belfast; 2nd Duck Dri Coat

Open Dog handler:

Any Dog that has been placed 1st to 3rd in an Open test in Ireland qualifies.

1st Prize £200 plus Watch sponsored by Gardiner Brothers, Belfast; 2nd Duck dri Coat

Other prizes of dog food will be presented

IRISH GUNDOG HANDLING CHAMPIONSHIP MONTALTO ESTATE Saturday 27th September

Owners Name:	Address:	Telephone No:
Dog's Name:	Where Qualified:	Competition Entered For:

Please complete and return form together with Entry fee of £10 payable in advance to Mid Ulster Gundog Association, c/o Joe Johnston, 43 Ballynargan Road, Stewartstown, Co Tyrone, BT 71 5NF Tel : 028 86736432. Each entry receives two admission tickets value £30

It has just been announced that leading independent wine merchant, JN Wine, will take centre stage as sponsor of the main arena programme at the Ballynahinch Harvest and Country Living Festival in Montalto Estate.



James Nicholson, founder and managing director of JN Wine



Quality wine guaranteed at Montalto

The partnership between JN Wine and The Great Game Fairs of Ireland for the forthcoming Montalto Fair is one that shouldn't be a surprise, it seems, indeed, a perfect pairing. JN Wine has been part of the Co. Down landscape now for nearly four decades and is widely regarded as one of the best wine importers and retailers in Ireland. From

the company's head office and shop in Crossgar, the team at JN Wine works tirelessly to source great wines from around the world and to share them with customers the length and breadth of the country. And one of those customers is none other than Montalto Estate.

"We have a longstanding relationship with the estate and have been providing wines

for private functions and weddings for many years," said James Nicholson, founder and owner of JN Wine. "Against that background, we are naturally excited to be sponsoring, and exhibiting, at the Ballynahinch Harvest and Country Living Festival at Montalto. It seems fitting that we will be there on the weekend that the public gets to see the

estate in all its glory."

The synergies don't stop there. JN Wine has a very impressive record as an award-winning wine importer. Last month, for example, the company was celebrating after winning 'Regional Merchant of the Year' at the prestigious International Wine Challenge Awards in London. This marks a record 22 wins for JN wine in the competition and is just one example of the national and international accolades that have been bestowed on the company over the years.

Set this alongside the Great Game Fairs of Ireland, organisers of the Montalto Estate event, with over 30 years successful trading at more than 50 great outdoor events and also an award-winning company,



JN Wine is headquartered in custom-designed premises in Crossgar

JN WINE .COM

company, having been recognised for marketing and tourism promotion by the Northern Ireland Tourist Board. As partners, both JN Wine and the Great Game Fairs of Ireland simply excel at what they do and, working together, visitors to Montalto can expect great things.

WINES TO DELIGHT

Naturally, JN Wine will be at the Festival in force, with the pole position in the Fine Food Village based in the Estate's refurbished and very beautiful stable yard. The JN Wine team will be bringing their bespoke tasting stand exclusively to Montalto Estate, where visitors to the festival will have the opportunity to sample and purchase a selection of wines from the JN portfolio. Naturally, staff will be on hand to answer any wine related questions and help customers make their selections.

James Nicholson commented: "We particularly pride ourselves on finding wines that are that little bit out of the ordinary - we love nothing better than finding an excellent artisan vineyard - and we feel confident that guests at Montalto Estate will love what we have to offer. Indeed, our artisan approach to sourcing the best quality wines should tie in perfectly with the ethos of the Food Village and we'll be happy to

help visitors match wines to their food buys.

"We're confident that our selection of quality wines will be a real attraction to visitors and, of course, each member of the JN Wine team is a professionally trained, educated, enthusiastic wine drinker and they will be happy to share that knowledge with visitors to the Festival at Montalto Estate. We think it's a wonderful opportunity to showcase our wines and also for visitors to try and buy something that little bit different. We have wines across a broad range of prices but they all have one thing in common - they are superb quality wines for the price."

ARENA ATTRACTIONS

JN Wine is the headline sponsor for the main arena entertainments programme, which promises to deliver everything you would expect from a Great Game Fair and perhaps a little something different as well. Horses are something of a passion for James Nicholson and certainly the main arena will showcase the noble beast. The Medieval Jousting tournament sees a new team of knights and horses battle for supremacy, while horses and hounds will provide a colourful display of the quintessentially country sport of hunting.

There will be much

more, of course, including the full gamut of country sports from long netting to falconry and dogs events, displays and shows. Headlining the canine contingent in the main arena, TV Shepherdess Katy Cropper will put on a highly

entertaining display working her sheepdogs on a flock of ducks!

Let's not forget the living history element and here the famous Battle of Ballynahinch takes centre stage with various re-enactments in the arena as well as a living history village.



James Nicholson is renowned, not just for his wine knowledge but also for his passionate love of horseracing, indeed he has been awarded an OBE for his services to the sport. So, whether it's Beef or Salmon, rest assured the JN Wine team will know the wine for a winning combination



Visit the JN Wine stand in the coach house at the top of the stable yard, which hosts the fine food village. Find out more about JN Wine and buy online at www.jnwine.com.



Peter and Caroline McErlean

The Cuan - Relax, dine and enjoy

The Cuan Licensed Guest Inn has a reputation for good food and hospitable environs going right back to 1811. Emma Cowan visited and discovered why this establishment is just so good...

Arriving in the sleepy village of Strangford, one building immediately draws the eye. Of traditional construction with sash windows finished in two shades of green, it would be a sin to pass by The Cuan without stopping to visit.

Inside, The Cuan is a charming mish-mash of rooms large and rooms small, all cleverly lit and furnished to give an old world feel replete

with modern comfort. The ground floor hosts the bar, dining and function rooms, while upstairs there are nine beautifully appointed bedrooms, all en suite.

The bedrooms are spacious, many offering family accommodation, and this is a four star guest inn, so expect all the little extras to be there too.

I was told The Cuan also owns a self catering cottage and I couldn't resist taking a little stroll along the Shore Road. It's a delightful, mid-terrace, two-bedroom cottage in grey stone with red brick detail and I certainly

made note for future reference - I love self catering breaks and, with The Cuan's entertainment and great food a mere five minute walk away, it offers what I consider a great combination.

EXCEPTIONAL FOOD

I'm a bit of a 'foodie', so naturally I was interested to find out about the food ethos and offering. I soon discovered that food at The Cuan is very much a reflection of its owners, Peter and Caroline McErlean.

The couple took over the inn back in 1991 and they really have put The

Cuan on the culinary map in Northern Ireland. The Cuan is the first ever food outlet in Northern Ireland to win a perfect one hundred score in the Taste of Ulster inspection - indeed, Peter and Caroline's venue has won Taste of Ulster three times in a row, another first and only accolade.

For Peter McErlean, who is a baker by profession and a trained chef who has worked both sides of the Atlantic, good, wholesome and local food is at the very core of his professional and personal life. Peter tells me: "The use of genuinely local

sources of supply helps The Cuan to stay where it belongs, both historically and at the heart of the local community. The Cuan is well over 200 years old and I'm proud to know that we are still sourcing so many of our ingredients from the local area - we have some really excellent suppliers right here on our doorstep."

Take a look at any 'specials' menu at The Cuan and you will immediately discover the truth of this statement, where your dinner came from, who supplied it and how it was cooked. Expect to see Churchtown Organic Farm beef and lamb, Finnebrogue venison, locally caught seafood, vegetables, leaves, herbs and fruits from the McErlean's own family gardens as well as local suppliers featuring on The Cuan menu and plates and, of course, game in season from the nearby Portavo Estate.

Other Northern Ireland suppliers whose names feature on Cuan menus include McQuillans of Glenariff - wild seatrout and mackerel - and Noel Taggart's Gun Island dressed crabs and crab claws. Wines to accompany The Cuan menus are imported and supplied by James Nicholson's JN Wine in nearby Crossgar.

It's not just where the food comes from, however, it's also how it's cooked. Again, The Cuan has it down to a fine art - Peter and his team in the kitchen serve the best food, beautifully cooked and from personal



Above: One of the exceptionally well appointed bedrooms at The Cuan. Below: Reception

experience, I can tell you Peter's bread and butter pudding is to die for.

THAT'S ENTERTAINMENT

With such a strong focus on food it is only natural that dining is an important part of the entertainments on offer at The Cuan and, in this regard, Peter and Caroline combine a real sense of fun with fine food and wine to create great evening for their guests.

Readers may be most interested in the Game Evenings hosted twice yearly at The Cuan, one for the opening of the season coming up on 1 November and another in February to mark season's end.

Peter explained: "To me, game products like pigeon, mallard, rabbit, pheasant and so on are as close to completely natural and organic as it's possible to be. We get a lot of our game from Portavo Estate locally and we also use Finnebrogue venison products."

At times, Peter has been highly adventurous in his



offering, once putting on the menu a 'trio of birds': a pigeon within a partridge, within a pheasant, slow cooked and served with a cranberry and port jus and Duchesse potatoes. "That was a challenge," he said. "We boned out all the birds and that was the easy part! Then we stuffed them into each other and stitched them up. The cooking was the difficult bit - ensuring that the inside meat was cooked to perfection without overcooking the exterior meat, but we used a combination cooking process to ensure we gave the whole thing as much

moisture as possible. It was a success!"

Another favourite is the 'Celebration of Fish' - the next one is taking place on 13 September with another on 20 September. Twice? Peter explained: "This event was so popular last year that we have extended it to two weekends! Seafood is a speciality of The Cuan. Our close relationship with Marty Johnston of East Coast Seafoods ensures that a diverse range of fresh seasonal fish is always available.

Add to that the depth of knowledge in our



kitchen team and you are always assured of a choice of delicious fish dishes."

Special events at The Cuan are not restricted to food, however, and one in particular caught my eye. The Creative Writer's Weekend from from 3 - 5 October looks just amazing. Sessions with author and poet Brenda Liddy PhD, who teaches creative writing at Queen's University and input from an experienced editor sounds right up my street and, good news, I've a birthday coming soon...

Then there's the very popular and totally hilarious 'Faulty' Towers night where the food will be delicious as ever but you must expect Basil to give you a good dressing down to go along with it. Never mind, Sybille is guaranteed to give old Basil what for! The next 'Faulty' Towers evenings run on 24 and 25 October.

Later in the year, 15

November sees another favourite - Murder Mystery Night, with the Georgian Christmas Feast on 6 December. Expect sloe gin to start you off, with turkey, goose, mutton or venison likely candidates on an authentically Georgian menu.

GO, STAY AND ENJOY

The Cuan is simply a delightful place in beautiful surroundings, with so much to offer both inside the venue and all around in the gentle landscape of the Strangford Lough area. There is shooting at a number of estates, golf, National Trust properties and more to explore, with fine food, exceptional wine and a comfy, luxurious bed to enjoy. What could be better and when will you go?



Seafood Chowder

The Cuan signature dish

INGREDIENTS

- 2 carrots
- half a leek
- 1 medium sized onion
- ¼ red, green, yellow pepper
- 4 sticks celery
- 5 medium sized potatoes
- 100g / 4oz of butter
- 500g / 18oz mashed potatoes
- 2 litres of fish stock
- 1.5kg / 3lbs of any combination of fish available e.g. salmon, haddock, whiting, cod (shell fish optional)
- You are only limited by your imagination!
- cream to taste
- dash of Pernod (optional)
- slivers of smoked salmon to garnish

METHOD

1. Dice all vegetables
2. Sweat all diced vegetables in butter, without colouring and remove from the pan.
3. Add fish stock and bring to a rolling boil, then reduce to simmer.
4. Add all the raw fish for 5 minutes and then remove into separate dish with a slotted spoon.
5. Return all sweated vegetables and mashed potatoes to stock, bring back to boil.
6. Add all fish and mixed peppers.
7. Finish with cream and a dash of pernod just before service and garnish with slithers of Irish smoked salmon.



The Cuan at Montalto

If you want to sample Peter McErlean's cooking for yourself well, you can, at the Ballynahinch Harvest and Country Living Festival, Montalto Estate on Saturday 27 September.

Peter's will be taking to the demonstration kitchen in the Stable Yard Fine Food Festival to cook up some special treats for visitors to the Fair. It promises to be a tantalising adventure in taste so come along and enjoy. You are sure to want to visit The Cuan once you've experienced Peter's culinary talents.

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Obituary

Jimmy Magee 1922 – 2014

A tribute to that most remarkable gentleman

His passing has brought sadness to a wide circle of friends and relations all of whom are proud of the fact that they knew and shared in his life. It is not difficult for me to pay tribute to this popular and well loved character.

Jimmy Magee had a natural easy dignity, he was always honest and his integrity earned him the respect of those who came into contact with him. He was blessed with a good sense of humour and he will be missed by a lot of people both in this country and wider afield. Jimmy knew his own mind; always friendly and welcoming he was in many ways a natural gentleman and many will have had personal experience of the warmth of his friendship.

A man of many talents, he was passionate and very knowledgeable on diverse subjects. With a fine singing voice and knowledge of art, antiques and anecdotes, he often entertained gatherings of like-minded people at club dinners and after trial post-mortems with historical yarns of events and characters. His memory for people, handlers and their dogs was legendary; he could recite pedigrees and tell stories of the good and the not so good dogs and of field trials.

He 'loved the dogs,' loved to talk dogs with the highest or the lowest in the land, always willing to pass on nuggets of advice. A talented handler and trainer, he loved nothing better than to walk behind a good hunting spaniel. His motto, his deeply held belief, his opening line, his constant reminder given the opportunity was "Talk about the dogs — it's not about people, it's about the dogs" He has left us this sound advice which we could do well to remember.

Jimmy often related his early days in trials, traveling from Belfast out to Shanes Castle and back by bus with a spaniel under his arm, having to duck his head when a photograph was being taken for publication in the Belfast Telegraph, since he was supposed to be in work, not trialling. He remembered visits by the famous, such as Talbot Radcliffe, Keith Erlandson and many others.

Along with other like-minded competitors such as Johnny Burrows, Bob Garvin, Bob Clemitson, Martin Greenwood, Hugh Clark and Harry Thompson, he rose to hold office in the Spaniel Clubs. They set high standards in club business dealings, in draws, in judging, and in all matters pertaining to gundogs generally. They set principles as a matter of policy. It was natural; it was how they ran their lives. These standards were set for the benefit and improvement of our gundog breeds in Northern Ireland. A principle, which is enshrined in the constitution of all the gundog



clubs in these islands. We in the clubs today are the beneficiaries and, hopefully, the keepers of those standards, which Jimmy helped to create and establish.

Jimmy had some fine achievements in his life in gundogs. He travelled for many years on the Pointer and Setter circuit in Scotland and England with the famous Bertie McElhinney; John Nash and Sean Dennehy were close friends both top pointer trainers. He was an "A" panel Judge for Spaniels. He also judged retrievers on occasion.

He judged the Irish Spaniel Championship and Refereed the British A. V. Spaniel Championship at Bala. For many years he was President of The English Springer Spaniel Club of Northern Ireland and Vice President of The North West Ulster Spaniel Club.

Winning many trials, he made three Springer Spaniels up to Field Trial Champion status. FT Chs Ballyrobert Ben, Ben of

Knockmore and of course the famous stud dog Sliguy of Ardoon, bred in Newtownards by Will Sloan. Until recent years no one here had ever made up three Ft Champions. He competed in the Second Irish Spaniel Championship in 1978 with Aughnabrack Fieldmouse and Fillem-Up Jasper.

His passing has brought sadness to a wide circle of friends and relations all of whom are proud of the fact that we knew him and shared in his life. Proud to count myself amongst his many friends and on behalf of all those who knew him in our world of field sports, I offer deepest sympathy to son Peter, daughter Jan and to the family circle. He will be sadly missed. We all have our own fond memories of Jimmy. Memories which are respectfully locked in our minds, Jimmy Magee is a man we will never forget.

Victor McDevitt

Obituary

John Shaw Brown

A passion for beagling

John Shaw Brown, who died in May aged 58, was a lifelong friend, so that while he was perhaps best known in the wider community for his devotion to beagling and his position as a highly respected – and much-loved – member of the hunting community on both sides of the Irish Sea, I think of him first as a true and loyal friend whose light shone so brightly as to be irreplaceable. In that, of course, I am not alone – at his send-off there was the overwhelming sense that we had lost one of nature's gentlemen, whose sense of humour, generosity of spirit and unassuming nature infected all who met him. His legendary wit was deployed in all situations, good or bad. When he asked me to give a eulogy at his funeral I tried, like so many before me, to beat him at his own game. I said that this would present me with a problem because the point of a eulogy was to eulogise; to which he replied, 'No one said it was going to be easy!'

Beagling was his great passion. He began going out with the Sunnyland Beagles as a child during school holidays (he attended Mourne Grange Preparatory School near Killeel, Co. Down and Sedbergh School, Cumbria), helping to exercise the pack on summer mornings. After leaving school he whipped in for several seasons before becoming Joint Master in 1979, continuing in post for 35 seasons and indeed hunting hounds until very nearly the last day of the season in March 2014. Apart from a sojourn with the family firm of Browns Linens in Canada, he never missed a season, and indeed once said of his two-year stint in Calgary: 'Great fun – but not much beagling!'

For most of his hunting career John Shaw, with the help of his equally dedicated wife Liz, was responsible, alongside full-time jobs – latterly at Greenmount Agricultural College – for feeding and exercising the pack, cleaning the kennels at his Co. Antrim home, planning breeding and rearing puppies. He showed the Sunnyland beagles with great success at the main Irish hound shows, winning the Supreme Championship at his last National Beagle Show in summer 2013 and he regularly took hounds to compete in England at Rydal Show, and at the Scottish Hound Show.

John Shaw served at various times as Chairman of the Hunting Association of Northern Ireland and Chairman and Vice-President of the Irish Masters of Beagles Association. Most notably, for 28 years he kept the Irish Masters of Beagles Stud Book and organised their National Show. He judged beagles at some of England's leading hound



shows, including Ardingly, Rydal and the Great Yorkshire Show, as well as judging at the puppy shows of various foxhound, harrier and beagle clubs. He was one of the first elected members of the board of the Countryside Alliance in Northern Ireland. Over many years, he achieved much in terms of public relations and recognition of the sport by inviting children to meet the beagles at country shows and fairs in the summer months – the record was 1,400 children through the hound pen in two days. I recall seeking him out with my mother at Castlewellan Show three or four years ago. Someone pointed to the Sunnyland stand in the distance, and all we could see were children; as so often, they outnumbered puppies in the pen and John Shaw was engaged in good-natured crowd control for much of our visit, to the obvious delight of his temporary charges. Youngsters, it may be telling to note, loved John Shaw and when he walked hounds out on exercise he would often attract a following of local children like the Pied Piper of Hamelin.

He knew his hounds, and hound craft, intimately and was renowned for his ability to keep up with the pack in the hunting field, and for the degree of control he exercised, not just while hunting but while parading at game fairs and country shows. Although hunting was his greatest pleasure, he also enjoyed hound exercising in the summer and had some interesting 'finds' with his off-duty pack – on one occasion a bag in a drain containing an abandoned puppy, for which he was able to find a loving home. In the field, he was rarely defeated by an obstacle. On one hunting afternoon he had to swim the River Quoile, near Downpatrick, three times, reporting that it had taken 16 strokes per crossing. He was a second cousin of Albert Uprichard, legendary master and huntsman of the Iveagh Harriers, who died in 2012. Albert passed on to John

Shaw much of the wisdom gained from a lifetime's experience; and interestingly, another beneficiary of Albert's knowledge and a fellow devotee of the art and science of hunting hounds was my father, Brian Faulkner, who hunted the Iveagh Harriers for exactly the number of seasons that John Shaw hunted the Sunnyland. My father, who was killed in a hunting accident in 1977, was very fond of John Shaw and I am certain would have been immensely proud of his achievements.

John Shaw was a familiar figure throughout the countryside, running with his hounds attired in green hunt coat and cap with white shorts irrespective of the winter weather (on one occasion he arrived at the meet and took off his trousers to discover he had omitted to put on his shorts – the only time he hunted the pack in jeans!) and he always greeted everyone with his trademark huge smile. This, together with his unfailing courtesy and his enthusiasm, ensured that he and the Sunnyland Beagles were given a warm welcome by the rural community wherever they went.

Close to five hundred mourners attended the funeral on 2nd June at Annalong Parish Church. The service was an upbeat and celebratory affair – it could hardly have been otherwise – and the procession included the Sunnyland whips in hunting regalia and two couple of handpicked hounds: Zulu, Zero, Admiral and Jumble. John Shaw chose to be buried in his own field on a cliff top overlooking the most magnificent stretch of coastline in Northern Ireland, with the Mourne Mountains for backdrop, and masters and huntsmen from all quarters blew the long horn as he was laid to rest.

John Shaw and Liz agreed between them that in due course a stone should mark the spot. The inscription will probably read, 'Thank you Master. Goodnight.'

Michael Faulkner

Obituary

A tribute to Rachel Gosling and her Parkmaple Springer Spaniels

Rachel Gosling was born on 6th of August 1914 at the outbreak of the First World War and passed away at the end of the Field Trial and Shooting seasons on the 18th of January 2014 just 6 months short of her century. Rachel was something special a real lady, a character, a talented trainer and handler, a real competitor. When an opportunity arose she was swift to seize the moment which often lead to victory, much to the chagrin of less observant handlers. She was a formidable opponent.

I first met her and her late husband in the mid-seventies, when competing with the Irish International Gundog Team at the CLA Game Fair. Mike and she invited my family to dinner at The George Hotel in Stamford. We were mighty impressed with the old coaching inn, the food and the company and we were always welcomed at Parks Farm in Suffolk and Rachel became a regular at Ballymartin when competing in Ireland. Some years later, she even flew in to Newtownards Airport in her son's private aeroplane to deliver a pup to someone when he had business nearby.

On our first visit to Parks Farm we came away mesmerised. A beautiful old timber framed house, ten spaniels sitting on cushions around the large living room, each one called individually to greet us. Outside, stable doors were opened to spill out more dogs, forty from memory. There was a bitch with pups, there were six black and white, six liver and white, six dog pups and six bitch pups, twelve in all. The bitch later became International FT Ch Dewfield Measles. I was offered my choice of pup but declined since I had pups at home. Amongst that litter was the fabulous bitch who became Int.Ft Ch. Parkmaple Jolly.

The Irish Spaniel Championship was in its second year when I was at the British Championship at Bala, with John Agnew, Bob Clemitson and John and Frank Orr. We were promoting the Irish with photos etc. in the hotel one night when Rachel said she was interested in coming over. This she did, bringing with her Dr White, Wendy Knight and Edward Martin. She won the 1980 Irish Spaniel Championship at Slane Castle with F.T.CH. Dewfield Measles, thus making Measles an International Ft Ch.

This was under Judges Bob Clemitson and Hal Leopard and I was Judges' Steward. Second was the wonderful Irish bitch, John Orr's Int. Ft Ch Inlers Harryslyn.

Rachel and her spaniels achievements in Ireland are a matter of record.

1980 First with Ft .Ch. Dewfield Measles,

1981 Second with Parkmaple Miss Bracken.



1982 First with Int. Ft Ch. Parkmaple Jolly

1983 First with Int. Ft Ch. Parkmaple Jolly
Handled by Eoin Robertson

1984 First with Ft Ch. Parkmaple
Honeybee Bred by Rachel, Handled by Eoin
Robertson

1985 First with Int. Ft Ch. Parkmaple Jolly

1986 Second with Int. Ft Ch. Parkmaple
Jolly

All the runs gained in the Irish were from
Qualifying Open wins in either Scotland or her
native England including:

1982 First in the British A V Spaniel
Championship with Int. Ft Ch. Parkmaple Jolly

She presented a trophy for the Spaniel
placed second in the Irish Championship, two
silver Partridges mounted on a block of oak
salvaged after the fire which destroyed her

centuries old stables.

In between running in trials or picking up she was Joint master of The Essex Hunt with husband Mike. She won many prizes for her horse riding skills, many prizes for her showing of Koi Carp and she once told me she had captured a German airman who parachuted into her fields during the war. On top of all that she herself, with the help of a local labourer, dug out and created a very smart swimming pool in her garden.

What a woman! A formidable foe in trials, staunch friend, plus the setter of a record that might never be equalled for many years to come. Rachael will be fondly remembered in Field Trial circles.

Victor McDevitt

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Hunting Roundup

Irish Masters of Foxhounds Association present cheque to Motor Neurone Charity.

Northern Ireland's premier agricultural show, the Royal Agricultural Society Show at Balmoral Park Lisburn, always concludes with a frenetic Inter Hunt Chase and this year's event was contested by six teams from the Irish Republic and three from Northern Ireland. There was also a presentation on behalf of the IMFHA, of a cheque to a Charity and this year the Motor Neurone Disease Association received a cheque for £500 which was presented by Craig Caven, on behalf of the Masters Association, to Stephen Thompson who gratefully accepted it on behalf of the Charity.

A series of frenetic early rounds culminated in a Final, equally hotly contested, between the Killinick Harriers from Co Wexford and the Co Meath based Ward Union Stagounds which saw the Killinick's win to send the large crowd, which had stayed to watch this enthralling contest, home happy.

It was entirely appropriate that Ian

Wilson, proprietor of the eponymous sponsors Wilson's Auctions presented a rosette to every finalist as the company has sponsored this event for a long number of years.

As I have said before, this event, no matter how fiercely contested, invariably ends in grins and handshakes and is an excellent advertisement for the Hunting community, as is the annual donation to charity.

Johnny Henry receives an award for services to Hunting

Johnny Henry, who has been involved with the Meath Foxhounds since 1959, has received the Irish Country Sports and Country Life magazine's award for services to hunting. In that time Johnny has filled whipper-in, huntsman, fieldmaster and kennel huntsman roles, as well as overseeing a highly successful hound breeding programme for much of that time.

The decision to make the award was taken last year and should have been presented at the Irish Game Fair in Birr, Co Offaly, in August 2013 but, such is the modesty of the man that his family

said that there was no way that he could be persuaded, or even deceived, into attending so the presentation was made at this year's Meath Hunt puppy show before a large number of his family and friends.

Not the least of Johnny Henry's achievements is that the hounds are now hunted by two of his sons John jnr, who hunts the bitches, while Kenny hunts the doghounds and John's son Evan whips-in when not pursuing his education. Indeed, the entire Henry family seems to have some role to play in the daily life of the Hunt!

This was a popular and well merited award to mark Johnny Henry's massive contribution, not only to the Meath Hunt but to hunting throughout Ireland with the ovation he received marking his standing with the large crowd at the puppy show.

IMFHA Bursary Scheme places another entrant

Keith Broderick (23) from Kiltullagh, Co Galway has secured a place on the IMFHA Bursary Scheme and has joined the Ballymacad



Craig Cavan presents the cheque to the Motor Neurone Disease Association on behalf of the IMFHA at the RUAS show at the Maze.

Foxhounds in Co Meath. Having hunted with the Galway Blazers since childhood Keith, once he completed his examinations, moved to Co Meath to join the excellent team under huntsman Kevin Donohue, who has been there since 1998 and from whom Keith will receive first class tuition.

Around the puppy shows

My first puppy show of the summer was that of the Meath Hunt where judges Marion Goodbody MFH (Tipperary Foxhounds) and Muskerry Foxhounds' huntsman Ken Grandon had eight couple of doghounds and eight couple of bitches, from nine litters presented by Kenny Henry (who hunts the bitch pack) for their consideration.

With litters sired by stallion hounds from the North Shropshire Foxhounds, the Exmoor Foxhounds, the Oakley Foxhounds and the Tipperary Foxhounds as well as two by Meath Limerick 10 the judges had considerable food for thought.

In the event they were able to give Pat Dillon MFH the following placings to announce.

Doghounds

Moonstone Limerick 10 Molly 10
Parson Exmoor Belfry 08 Pansy07
Buster North Shropshire Pirate 09
Busy 08.

Bitches

Passion Sibling of Parson
Passive Sibling of Parson
Party Sibling of Parson.
Moonstone was then declared

Champion puppy with Passion as Reserve.

A return, the following Friday, to Co Meath for the Ballymacad Foxhounds' puppy show saw continuing good weather and another quality new entry. Judges Philip Desmond MH (Cloyne Harriers, Co Cork) and Wicklow Foxhounds' huntsman Philip Lazenby had no less than twelve litters sired

by stallion hounds from the North Shropshire, the West Meath, the Duhallow, the Heythrop, the Morpeth, the Cotswold Vale Farmers, the North Herefordshire and the Vale of White Horse packs, as well as two by home bred stallion hounds to consider.

With six and a half couple of doghounds and seven and a half couple of bitches shown by huntsman Kevin Donohue the judges had much to consider and they were to relay the following placings for announcement by Tosh Kellett MFH.

Doghounds

Major Morpeth Guardsman 10
N Herefordshire Magpie 08
Guardsman Morpeth Guardsman 10
CVF Fountain 08
Carter VWH Coldstream 09
Kildare Dazzle 10

Bitches



James Armstrong MFH welcomes judges Alistair & Tess Jackson to the East Down Puppy Show.

Bossy Heythrop Wiseman 11

Bobbin 08

Bonnie West Meath Poacher 10

Billis 11

Boisterous Sibling of Bossy

Bossy was then announced as the Champion puppy with Major as reserve Champion.

Alistair Jackson, former Director of Hunting, Great Britain and his wife Tessa, both former Masters of the Cattistock, were the judges at the East Down Foxhounds puppy show on a disappointingly wet day at Seaforde. They were greatly taken with the Kennels which date from 1841 and were based on the Quorn kennels of the day.

Huntsman Declan Feeney had 2½ couple of doghounds and 4 couple of bitches from four litters for their consideration and, despite the weather, the usual large crowd was in attendance.



The HANI Show Champion Foxhound Dog Meath Beaufort '13 (photo: carrollcreative.co.uk)



Champion Foxhound Bitch Ballymacad Ribbon '13 at the HANI Show (photo: carrollcreative.co.uk)

The judges worked their way through the new entry and James Armstrong MFH then announced the following placings.

Doghounds.

Wizard Heythrop Wiseman 11

Sapling 08

Tatler Middleton Gunner 07

Island Ballad 10

Richmond Heythrop Wiseman 11

Rascal 08

Bitches.

Wishful Sibling of Wizard

Willing Sibling of Wizard

Ringlet Sibling of Richmond

As the judging ended so too did the rain enabling us to take our refreshments outside!

Declan Feeney is still recovering from a bad ankle injury but he assures me that he will be able to get into his boots to parade hounds at Dublin Horse Show! The heavy rain also inflicted itself on the Tynan and Armagh Hunt's puppy show where judges Patrick Murphy MH (Fermanagh Harriers) and Louth Foxhounds' huntsman Alan Reilly had 4½ couple of doghounds and 1½ couple of bitches put before them by huntsman Keith McCall.

After due deliberation, the following placings were announced by Dr Ken Livingstone.

Doghounds.

Chaplain Partner 11 Limerick China 11

Chieftain Sibling of Chaplain

Layton Busker 11 Hurworth Larkrise 11

Bitches.

Cherry Sibling of Chaplain

Chutney Sibling of Chaplain
Chickweed Sibling of Chaplain
Chaplain was then announced as
Champion puppy with Cherry as
Reserve Champion.

The Hunt had gone to a lot of trouble to ensure that the puppy show took place and the marquee and tent were very well received by the large crowd of spectators.

Liz Brown reports that the Killultagh, Old Rock & Chichester Foxhounds held their Puppy Show at the kennels at the end of June, where a large crowd of followers, landowners and supporters of all ages were welcomed by the Joint Masters, Mrs Rose Boyd and the recently appointed Mr Geoffrey Porter, and enjoyed a bright and sunny afternoon. Huntsman Mark Casserly, ably assisted in the ring by Miss Sinead Boyd and in the collecting yard by Mr Christopher Sterling-Berry, presented a young entry comprising 6 1/2 couples of doghounds and 3 1/2 couples of bitches.

Amongst the doghounds, the "W" litter by Heythrop Wiseman out of Westmeath Grapevine caught the eyes of the judges, Keith McCall (huntsman of the Tynan & Armagh) and Chris Francis (huntsman of the Kildare), but it was no easy task, as all the young hounds were presented in lovely condition and showed themselves with impressive confidence - a credit to the hard work of Mark and his volunteer helpers.

Wiseman eventually took the honours ahead of litter-mates Wilcombe and Willy. Wiseman and Willy were walked

by Miss Holly Fitzpatrick, daughter of former Killultagh huntsman Noel, while Wilcombe was walked by Miss Amy Agnew.

Amongst the bitches it was the tricolours that took the ribbons. Grapefruit, by Louth Granite out of Mendip Farmers' Portrait, and walked by Miss Sally Dawson, was placed ahead of her sister, Grackle, who was walked by Sally's brother, Edward. In third place was Bonnet, by Ballymacad Bosco out of Westmeath Russett, and walked by Miss Mollie Casserly. It was the bitch, Grapefruit, who was adjudged Champion Puppy. The trophy for the Best Hunting Hound from the 2013 entry was won by Bodkin, who had been walked by Miss Sophie Clugston.

This show reflected the strong community and family orientation of the Killultagh Hunt and it was particularly pleasing to see so many young people involved in puppy walking. Another pleasing touch was the presence of two local Community Police Officers from the PSNI. They remained to watch all of the showing and one of the officers claimed to have picked out both the winning dog and bitch - perhaps he will find himself invited to judge at a future show!

Heard it on the grapevine

At the County Limerick Foxhounds, whipper-in Fergus Stokes has been promoted to succeed James Bradley as huntsman.

Nathan O'Connor, from the



The IMFA Hound Show Champion BITCH Ballymacad Sapling '11.



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Master Mrs Rose Boyd with Miss Sally Dawson and Grapefruit (photo: Liz Brown)



Master Rose Boyd, Miss Sophie Clugston and Bodkin (photo: Liz Brown)

Duhallow country in Co Cork, has been appointed whipper-in to the Co Galway (The Blazers) Foxhounds in succession to Jason O'Donnell.

Shane McGillick from Kells, Co Meath has entered Hunt Service with the Kilkenny Foxhounds as whipper-in to Sam Stanniland.

Death of John Shaw Brown, Master of Hounds

John Shaw Brown MH, master and huntsman of the Sunnyland Beagles since 1979, has died at the age of 58 years, from cancer. In that one short sentence the hunting community, particularly the beagling fraternity, has lost a hugely popular, knowledgeable and influential figure.

A member of one of Northern Ireland's leading linen families John Shaw initially joined the eponymous family firm, which was based at Edenderry. However, he wanted only to hunt so, on his return from a sales campaign in Canada, John Shaw took a staff job at Greenmount Agricultural College which enabled him to join the mastership of the Sunnyland Beagles.

His wife Liz, a fellow beagler, to whom he was married for 23 years, enjoyed their wedding service, then had the wedding reception coupled with the Hunt's annual puppy show. From the start hunting was central to this relationship and this typified their commitment to the sport and those who enjoyed it. In addition to being a Board Member of the Countryside Alliance Ireland John Shaw was, at different times, Chairman of the Irish Masters of Beagles Association, Keeper of its Stud Book and Secretary of its annual national Hound Show, the latter two roles he still held at the time of his death.

For a small, slight man of jockey-like proportions John Shaw had an iron hard constitution and strength of will, never better illustrated than at the funeral of his mother-in-law, Mrs Mary McComb, who died some six weeks before John Shaw. Those who attended Mrs McComb's funeral will not easily forget John Shaw's own attendance where, despite the ravages of his illness, he was there to support his beloved wife in this sudden, unexpected loss. In that attendance were illustrations of John Shaw's determination to behave normally, to show that this awful disease would interfere as little as possible with his life and, that he would continue to do the right thing by Liz.

I know, from my time as Vice Chairman and Chairman of the Hunting Association of Northern Ireland, how good John Shaw's advice could be delivered, as it always was, with a dry, sometimes acerbic but never, ever, malicious sense of humour. His determination to foster the interest of young people in hunting and to prompt other hunting people to do the same was a central theme of his own involvement as was his resolve that hunting would be 'fun.'

John Shaw Brown's death leaves a huge, literally unfillable, void and every sympathy is extended to Liz, to John Shaw's sister Jill Ellis and to her family, of whom John Shaw thought so much. For a small man he was a giant of our sport who is already greatly missed and who will never, ever be forgotten.

By Tom Fulton

Away from the hunting field

The first of a new series from Tom Fulton about 'what country sports people do' as well as hunt, shoot or fish!



Dessie Gibson oversees the development of another young horse at home.

Those who hunt usually also have other interests or pastimes off, but sometimes not far from, the hunting field. In the case of County Down man Dessie Gibson producing high standard show horses, which will go on to make top class eventers, is his abiding interest and passion.

His late father, Hugh, imbued Dessie with his love of horses and hunting as, in addition to farming, he bred and dealt in horses giving Dessie an ideal basis for his own successful career. He has followed his father in farming sheep and cattle, as well as producing top quality horses. Ideally, Dessie looks

for 'bone, quality and a good step' in a foal which he shows in hand then sells at three years of age as a potential top quality eventer. The standard to which Dessie became accustomed, as a young man, was the mare Meta 2 which was Royal Dublin Society brood mare Champion for five consecutive years



Dessie with Lethal Lass, Supreme Young Horse Champion at the Royal Dublin Horse Show in 1994.

(1964-1969), a record which he still holds to this day.

Over the years Dessie, himself, has had some notable successes, including Lethal Lass the first yearling filly to be made Supreme Champion at Dublin (1994) and Coalminer, who repeated that Championship success the following year. This horse went on to win under saddle, with Meggy Hennessey riding him, before also becoming a successful eventer in England. This standard was maintained when Mystery Man won the 2001 Supreme Championship in Dublin. Jumping forward to 2007, Dessie took Belfast's Balmoral Show by storm with his entry of eight horses taking seven first prizes, in their respective classes, while his foal won its class too. Having shown horses for over forty years Dessie is justifiably regarded as 'the one to beat' so where does he find the type of winners in which he specialises?

Dessie prefers Irish horses, rather than Warmbloods, though he says: "There is still some mediocre stuff about and the good stuff doesn't hang around for long," so he tends now to go

to Goresbridge for the full four days of the Sales. In 2013 he bought four foals there to add to two homebreds and two found 'in country.' He prefers foals from proven stallions, such as Emperor Augustus and Puissance, each of which sired one of his 2013 foals.

Dessie regards showing as a bonus, but one which assists the horse in its development, which is also how he views hunting, from which they learn self preservation, thereby adding to their education and enhancing their athleticism.

Having suffered three strokes since 1995 and a broken leg in 2000, Dessie's career has had its share of interruptions – I well remember him, with a metal cage on his leg, energetically collecting the cap money for the County Down Hunt, with which pack he has hunted for over forty years and of which he was joint master 1996-1998. Nothing stops him!

In his time a huge number of horses has passed through Dessie's hands, many ending up with such luminaries as Jethro, the entertainer, for whom the renowned show rider Robert Oliver

competed Never Will, a horse with which Dessie won the Championship at Scotland's Royal Highland Show.

In looking at a foal Dessie likes to see: "A good foreleg and an active, athletic animal," with a preference for colts, though he does buy some fillies too. He prefers to give his horses individual attention eschewing such aides as horse-walkers and these methods have certainly brought consistent success.

These qualities are honed by Dessie with a number of his horses appearing in the hunting field, mostly with the traditionally hard riding fields following the County Down Hunt which is, in itself, an excellent proving ground for a horse. And he keeps himself up to date with the careers of his former charges, takes great pleasure from their successes and the horses he hunts illustrate how useful and important hunting is to their development. Away from the hunting field Dessie Gibson is busy, successful and always thinking ahead to the benefit of his horses and their eventual owners.

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The BVA/ISDS Health Schemes - Where are we now?

From time to time it is interesting to review where we are with the BVA Health Schemes and think about their use and usefulness in the breeding of dogs, particularly at the high end where functionality to do the days work is paramount. In the working dog that is where reputation and innate skill is genetically determined and everyone who sees a working dog working well will say to themselves 'I wonder if I can have some of that ?' — which means purchase or breeding.



Nobody wants to breed in defects which will catch up and give trouble as life goes on. The health schemes started back in the sixties to try to prevent Irish Setters going blind with Progressive Retinal Atrophy by identifying those carrying the defective genes has grown enormously, not only in the number of breeds with identifiable eye disease, but the number of hereditary conditions that can be identified with eye examinations and with DNA testing.

The difficult thing about all this is that an animal can be carrying the problem, but the eyesight is unaffected. In other words, waiting in the wings for the right (or wrong) dog to come along and mate and produce the true blue disease in the litter that can be seen in the eye.

Identifying those dogs showing hereditary eye disease is everything, and the simplest and cheapest way of doing this is group testing where a session is organised for 26 or more dogs. This may be organised by a breed club, but any breed of dog can come along. All you need is the registration certificate. We have a horse box kitted out so a convenient field or car park can be used anywhere in the country.

There are obvious difficulties with the scheme and this can be divided into the Congenital diseases (those which can be seen in puppies because they are born with it) and the Non-Congenital that may not appear in the eye for several years before they can be identified. No one is expecting you to wait until something might appear. All

that is expected is that, during the life of the dog it is presented for examination on a regular basis, especially if it is used for breeding

Carriers cannot be identified with an eye examination. The examination will only identify those which are affected and should not be used for breeding and it is important that a regular examination is carried out to identify, over time, those animals which display symptoms later.

As someone who is on the BVA/KC/ISDS Eye Panel, my focus from a practical point of view is threefold:

- Convincing the owners of the merits of getting their dog examined.
- Convincing the owners to do this regularly
- Getting eye examinations done over 8 years to pick up late changes.

I have identified a few difficulties and this involves the feeling that having had an eye test that is it for life, ignoring the fact that a lot of disease is progressive and needs to be picked up as it shows itself.

DNA testing, whilst it is the gold standard for those diseases it can be used for, is not a catch all and I have seen adverts for dogs saying 'eyes DNA tested and free from inherited disease.' This is untrue because Hereditary Cataract in Labradors and most other breeds does not have a DNA test but does have one for the PRA problems.

By ignoring the Health Schemes, that is the eyes, the hips, and the elbows, you are not doing the breeds any favours if breeding with stock that

is not measured at that point in time.

There is no doubt that in the field situation weakness will be weeded out. A dog going lame with hip dysplasia is not likely to be used, or going blind with PRA or Cataract where it starts missing game, but is it not better to pre-empt these difficulties so that the bad ones are bypassed and the good ones promoted?

I am sure DNA will become all encompassing and become more and more accessible to identify all the hereditary diseases but we are not there yet. It is definitive, but also expensive, and without eye testing we lose the screening of eyes for emerging diseases of the eye. DNA and the Eye testing scheme work hand in hand. Both have their merits and their limitations but together give the breeder the best knowledge of the status of inherited disease in each animal.

It is only by the physical examination of an eye that the observations of all the panel members throughout the country collectively reveal an increase in, say, cataract in a breed that has never had it before. In this way we can alert the various breed societies that a problem is looming and preventative measures be instigated.

On a brighter note the vast majority of dogs examined do pass and we reckon the incidence is no more than 5%. But remember the vast majority of dogs bred in this country never get sight of the BVA/KC/ISDS Health Scheme. This has to change to benefit the breed and their reputation as quality animals.

Ian Millar is a canine eye specialist at the Earlswood Veterinary Clinic, 193 Belmont Road, Belfast, Northern Ireland - 028 9047 1361 www.earlswoodvets.com



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CLA Game Fair 2014 at Blenheim Palace

Margaret Mellor and Sponsors Tourism Ireland with the Team.

This year, I again had the privilege of travelling with the Ireland Team to this most prestigious event in the Game Fair Season. After much prevarication on the part of Captains Tom Hughes and Ken Lindsay the team assembled very early on the morning of Thursday 17th July in preparation for the arduous journey by boat and coach to deepest Oxfordshire.

The teams were:

Spaniels
T McCann and Salamere Kit
E Rowan and Anna Bell of Broadbog
S Moriarty and I FTCh Tearsol Flash
I Blair and Clodagh Hill Nofler of
Cartneel
W Edgar and Int FTCh McGwyn
Dealus
Labradors
T McMinn and Blaithin Rose
M Lambden and Petitswood Prince
of Tamrose
L Hynes and I FTCh Trumpetaker
Ash
T Hughes and Int FTCh Apache Joe
S Diamond and Doohooma Lad

The team was largely made up of those who successfully took the title last year, with a few new selections who were faced with navigating this hugely competitive Course set up in front of a massive gallery. Spaniel Judges were Damien Kelly and Dai Lloyd and for the retrievers Roddy Forbes and Nigel Carville.

Day 1 for the Irish went well for the spaniels, but some bad luck and pressure -induced errors for the labs left Lorezo Hynes to pull out a massive performance with I FTCH Trumpetaker

Ash who posted a top first day score of 95x100. In celebration, and in front of a great crowd of encouraging supporters, Lorenzo produced some celebratory dance moves worthy of a disco star.

Day 2 went very well for all dogs, with Sean Moriarty coming out top spaniel for the second successive year, and Sean Diamond coming out top Irish Retriever, also for the second year.

The Retriever team also uniquely had three out of the top of the top six dogs, with Tommy Hughes and Lorenzo Hynes performing well in addition to the superb performance from Sean Diamond. The spaniel team put in a memorable performance to again win the team event.

Where did it go wrong you may well ask, as the team finished fourth overall?

Well, in this event, consistency counts for everything, and the slightest slip can be severely costly. As John Halstead was so rightly quoted, echoing words of the great Tom Creamer, 'in this competition it is the horse and the jockey that maintain high scores that really count.' The Irish team put in a very creditable performance, one small error and a bad run on the first day was enough to leave the second day runners with a lot to do. But they did it with style and a little bit of Irish panache that comes from good teamwork. Better luck next year!!

Thanks must go to the team sponsors, Discover Ireland and the irrepressible Margaret Mellor as well as to Hanratty Fuels who generously provided clothing, as well of course the event organisers the CLA.



Errol Rowan gets down to business.

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- 1. Every picture tells a story
- 2. Lorenzo watched by Roddy Forbes completes the water
- 3. Retriever Judges Roddy Forbes and Nigel Carville
- 4. Top Overall Spaniel again - Sean Moriarty
- 5. Top Irish Retriever again - Sean Diamond
- 6. The Winning Spaniel Team



5



4



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By Paul Pringle

How many sleeps til the game season?

As one door closes another opens, a saying never more true than in countrysports. Just as flyfishing for trout becomes a memory I'm looking forward with bated breath to the game season just around the corner.



Over! Photo: (Paul Pringle)

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I have never lost that feeling of expectation as the season approaches, as my mind flits back to other days, and looks forward with just as much excitement as every season past. I really do enjoy the sport, not just the shooting as I'm just as happy working the dogs over a bit of rough country, or picking up, as I am at a peg on some estate or other. I like it all, from the dog work to wildfowling, from pottering to the driven stuff. Good birds are great, but I rate good company and the whole countryside experience higher than the numbers game - even if I could ever afford the shoots I read about!

Thinking about the season I contacted some of the people from shoots where I will be lucky enough to see some sporting action in the months ahead.

Keith Mathews, Shoot Manager at **Glennoo Game Sports**, in the Clogher Valley region of County Tyrone, told me how shooting there has moved up a very considerable notch. Keith said: "We have increased the shoot fourfold for the 2014 season and will be offering around 86 shoot days. We now have access to 26,000 acres offering 20 drives at four different locations, including a superb new walked up area for less formal days.

"We have worked hard to make sure that we have everything our guests require for a hugely enjoyable experience. Along with the actual shoot management, we take beating and picking up very seriously as well and have already mounted training days for our teams to make sure that everyone knows exactly what is expected of them on a shoot day.

Now with everything in place, guests will literally be spoilt for choice, whether it's driven partridge off a mountain or pheasants over woodland, stalking or indeed on one of our dog training days."

Alastair Beattie, Keeper at **Castle Dobbs** is just as keen to get the season underway. Alastair said that, as is invariably the case, most of the Guns are familiar faces who re-book year after year and the coming season is no exception.

He said: "I am looking forward to seeing our regular teams coming back again this season along with one or two new faces I'm sure. Interestingly, one or two Guns who come here started off standing alongside their father at his peg and now are enjoying the shooting themselves. Even the beater and pickers up are familiar faces to the guns as most come along to each and every shoot day when they can."

Even the food at Castle Dobbs is something really to look forward to, as Alastair explains: "Guns arrive to a full Irish

breakfast and usually settle down to enjoy a 'proper' shoot lunch at the end of the day. Just make sure when you are asked 'full or half fry' at breakfast that you know what is entailed with the larger option!"

At Castle Dobbs, you can expect quality pheasants with a sprinkling of partridge off natural hills and over mixed woodland and the chance of a woodcock in season at Castle Dobbs and, in my experience, everyone is sure of a memorable day.

At the heart of **Drumbanagher Shoot** are three core values: high birds, a relaxed convivial atmosphere, continuous improvement. Those who know Drumbanagher will doubtless be familiar with its high-bird capabilities and renowned hospitality. And whilst striving for improvement at Drumbanagher may seem a bit like gilding the lily, Shoot Manager Brian Byrne is both confident and enthusiastic with regard to the efforts that have been expended in the run up to this year's season.

Brian told me: "We've expanded a number of our release pens this year and these have offered enhanced facilities at wood for our particular strain of Kansas Pheasants, which are strong-winged and alert birds that fly particularly well given Drumbanagher's steep topography and variety of habitat." Brian continues, "We've also been continuing the development of our extensive acreage of cover crops with the planting of a range of new and improved crop mixes amongst the various sites. These have done particularly well this year. In combination these efforts and will no doubt enhance both the holding and presentation of the birds."

Brian said: "Although the shooting and the sporting quality of our birds are very important at Drumbanagher, amongst our main priorities on the day is always that our clients enjoy themselves in the good company of like-minded people. We view Drumbanagher as a fine example of a traditional game shoot, where Guns can meet old friends and make new acquaintances whilst experiencing some of Ireland's most memorable sport."

I grabbed a moment with David Forde who runs the **Moyle Shoot and Game Farm**, near Islandmagee and he told me he'd had a very successful rearing season and was working flat out to make final arrangements ready for the shooting. He said: "It's a very promising season for Guns with us this season. There's a lot to offer from the new Spanish partridges to even more opportunity for Guns with different drives. Our Facebook page updates show exactly what we've done improving pegs, siting new ones and clearing paths for beaters, and to make it even more enjoyable for Guns with the spectacular views."

The shoot currently supplies game birds for customers in Ireland and recently entered the Scottish and English game bird market. "We offer nine different strains in pheasants, mallard, French partridge and we have had a huge increase in demand for our famous grey partridge. We sourced another supplier from Spain who provided us with eggs from birds (whose grandparents we were told were caught from the wild) which are producing a stronger, harder birds than others previously on the shoot. It's very exciting and we can already see that it's proving to be a much stronger high flying bird. There's been a lot of interest in the social media and at the game fair at Shanes Castle, and we are really excited to get the season underway as it promises to be the best ever for clients at the Moyle Shoot."

One of the last shoots for me will be a welcome return in January to **Ballydugan Estate**, near Downpatrick. It's an open secret that I've loved this shoot many years and am eagerly looking forward to being back. I asked estate owner Simone Beach what was in store this time. "Ballydugan prides itself in offering Guns what might be expected of a truly 'traditional' day. From the time they arrive to the time the final horn is sounded, they will experience testing birds out of mixed woodland, over the drumlins that the county is famous for. And Keeper Kenny Thomas said to expect woodcock later in the year as well, as the ground is particularly attractive to them. But with pheasant the main quarry, I asked how the birds had done this year. "Better than ever I'm glad to say," said Kenny "and from what I have seen so far we expect they'll be very fast flying birds, certainly of the standard we like to see at Ballydugan."

I will be shooting at a field trial and asked if that would make much difference to the day. "Not really," he said "we will still be making sure that things go according to plan for the guns who will have the added fun of watching some of the top dogs in action as well."

Thinking back to a day in January last year at Ballydugan I know well what can be expected: quality birds, every Gun having ample opportunities, the only sound the tap, tapping of sticks - no loud beating on this shoot! And of course there will be the hospitality and fun that is so much a part of the whole experience.

So, as the days roll by, the temperature drops and the familiar sights and sounds of shooting are upon us, I can honestly say that this particular Editor will be enjoying every special moment of it. I hope that it's a good season for you all too. It's probably the child in me yet but, as my children would say 'how many sleeps is it now?'



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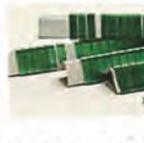
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The Last Shotgun To Be Made In Ireland

It's a great shame that there isn't a gun-making factory in Ireland. The guns which you see in the shops have all been imported from abroad. The last gun-making factory in the country closed its doors for the final time in 1970 and was located in my hometown of Birr County Offaly. The business was called Fenian Gun Limited and in the late 60s there was big hope for it, but sadly the company petered out pretty quickly. The man who managed the business was James Kavanagh. Many stories were told about Mr Kavanagh and when reading his life it's hard to separate truth from fiction.

The company lasted about two years and employed, according to different estimates, between 60 and 90 people. The trademark for the gun was an engraved drawing of a Fenian pikeman based on the statue in the Bullring, Wexford. Among the myths which arose during this time around Kavanagh, included the story that he managed to obtain a 40,000 pound grant to set up his Birr company because he knew something which the Irish government would rather keep secret. Another Kavanagh myth is he was stopped by the Gardaí when trying to smuggle guns to the Unionists in Northern Ireland. One writer described Kavanagh as being an inventor 'with great charm and persuasiveness but a hopeless businessman, and an Irish accent was definitely no asset to an aspiring gunmaker in England in the

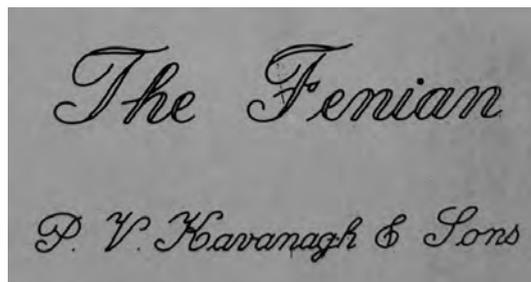
late 1960s and early 1970s.'

Kavanagh's son, when speaking to a magazine writer many years later, said he had the fondest memories of a gun-nut father who was forever tinkering and experimenting with guns. He recalled the model field guns his Dad made for him as Christmas presents, working models firing .22s.

Kavanagh believed it was possible to redesign the sporting under and over shotgun to produce a cheap, sound gun for the mass market. His design entailed the abandonment of the drop-down pivot-open principle, and the old idea of having the barrels slide forward was to be resurrected in its place.

In 1968, at the 17th international

exhibition of inventors, the gun was awarded the gold medal and the plaque of honour. There's a picture of the inventor on the stand bedecked with the Union Jack holding his gun which with wry humour he had christened the Fenian. A report in Offaly newspaper,



The trademark for the gun was an engraved drawing designed by Paul Barber of Barber's Jewellery Shop, Birr.

The Midland Tribune, told readers that some 2,000 entries from 49 countries took part in the exhibition and Mr Kavanagh's entry was the only one from Ireland. 'Widespread interest,' stated the report, 'was expressed in the Fenian gun by manufacturers, distributors and buyers from all over the world. There were dozens of enquiries for deliveries and at present the firm is studying these. The Fenian Gun company was set up only a few months ago by Mr Kavanagh and his family who reside at Ettagh, Birr and guns are now in production at Syngfield Works. The firm is also carrying out an intensive training course for its new staff with the help of fully trained gunsmith craftsmen who they brought over from England and also with the cooperation of Birr



James Kavanagh pictured aiming his Fenian gun, with employees of his Birr factory in the background.

Vocational School, where a special engineering class is conducted by Mr Tim Sexton for their operatives.'

Another article of the time, which appeared in a national publication, had the headline 'Why we need more Fenian Guns.' The article pointed out that plans for a gun proofing house in Dublin were being pushed ahead urgently to counteract difficulties abroad which had impeded the Birr firm's efforts to build up a thriving gun export business. It said the trouble with foreign gun proofing arrangements was the only obstacle now preventing the Fenian Gun Company from exploiting a lucrative export market to the full. 'Set up late last year,' stated the report, 'by a family with a long tradition in gun-making the company has already manufactured some 400 shotguns to their own patent design which has been widely acclaimed overseas. Ambitious plans to build up to a production target of 50 guns a week with employment of about 65 people were voiced last week by the head of the family concerned Mr Jim Kavanagh. But he says this can only be achieved when we have got a proof house in Ireland.' Kavanagh explained to the reporter: "We have been sending all our guns abroad to Belgium or England for proofing and we have had a fantastic number of them damaged either in transit or through bad packing at the other end. This method is just not viable any longer. But all guns sold to European and British Commonwealth countries must carry the proofing mark of an internationally recognised proof house. This is a warranty that the gun is safe to use and can be used up to the pressure marked on it."

Famous in many parts of the world

'Ireland,' the report continued, 'has not had a proof house for generations. To safeguard our chances on the export market one is being constructed again with all the fine skills and equipment needed for it. The Institute for Industrial Research and Standards in Ballymun,



Gunsmith at work on a Fenian shotgun.

Dublin has been entrusted with the task of setting it up and running it.' Readers were told that in his 60,000 square foot Birr factory Kavanagh, along with his sons and daughter, had reestablished a family tradition which was temporarily broken with the closing of the Kavanagh Gun Company in Dame Street Dublin in the 1920s. Up to that time Kavanagh Guns were famous in

many parts of the world. 'I have since found Kavanagh Guns in Rhodesia, South Africa and elsewhere,' said Jim. He said he had a Kavanagh made engraved flintlock pistol dating back to the 18th Century. 'We have always built guns,' he added, 'and it's always been my idea to build cheap good quality superimposed guns like this. We have had orders from Hong Kong,



The Fenian gun on Display in The Irish Fly Fishing And Game Shooting Museum near Durrow, County Laois, which also contains a sign from the Birr factory.

Malaya, Africa and the US for example.’ The report said he was now hoping to extend production to small arms and had designed versions of .32 and .22 calibre revolvers and derringers and even a teargas pen. He also hoped to make claypigeon release equipment, reloading cartridges and in fact everything to do with shooting. ‘In entering the gun export field he is taking on some very big guns as competitors,’ concluded the writer.

Another shooting writer said the Fenian was an ingenious mechanism. However, the article continued, the quality of the gun's design was not sustained through to the quality of the product. One owner of a Fenian gun wrote a letter to a shooting magazine complaining about the gun. His opinion of the Fenian could be summarised in one word - coarse. ‘It was poorly made. You need hands like a blacksmith to push down the opening lever and the gun was in his opinion heavy and ill balanced. The weight and handling I am sure came as a result of using excessively heavy industrial tubes for barrels while the lack of finish was a direct result of trying to build the gun too cheaply.’

Looking back at newspaper pictures of James Kavanagh, his shotgun and his factory, we can feel an energy and sense of hope. People in Birr were very glad to see a new company in the town employing a large number of people. It

was a brave and challenging venture. There was a gap in the market and success was a possibility. Sadly, like so many brave ventures the industry misfired. In its aftermath one was left with supposition, conjecture and myth.

Here are a few points of information which are definitely true: Kevin James Patrick Vincent Kavanagh was born in Wexford in 1918. After living in England for many years he returned to Ireland in 1967 and leased part of Birr Workhouse. Not many shotguns were in fact manufactured and in May 1970 Kavanagh returned to England claiming that his factory was sabotaged. He tried to set up a gun-making factory in Cornwall but the Cornish police wouldn't give him permission. There were rumours among locals that he wanted to make guns for the IRA.

A story about him appeared in Cornish local newspaper, The Falmouth Packet, in February 1974. The headline read ‘Inquiry into allegations against Police.’ ‘A major investigation,’ stated the report, ‘involving the conduct of senior police officers in Devon and Cornwall was continuing today at Camborne police quarters. It's believed the inquiry is into allegations against the police of perjury, conspiracy to pervert the course of justice and of planting evidence. The investigation was undertaken following allegations by Mr

James Kavanagh of Antron bungalow, Mabe.’

The paper pointed out that in September 1971 ‘Mr Kavanagh was back at quarter sessions when he faced charges of being in unlawful possession of firearm components (four revolver cylinders) and of making false statements for the purpose of procuring a variation of a firearms certificate. At that court hearing it was said that when Mr Kavanagh arrived at his new home in Penryn his property was immediately searched by police. He was given a six month suspended prison sentence which was later quashed in the appeal court in London and an absolute discharge substituted. At the appeal hearing Lord Justice Edmund Davies said he was going outside his strict duties in expressing the hope that an application by Mr Kavanagh for a new firearms certificate would be received with sympathy. The Judge also said that Mr Kavanagh was a man of impeccable character and he hoped the authorities would have second thoughts about him.’ The Judge told him that there was no evidence that he intended to use the parts for criminal or political purposes.

There is now no firearms industry in Ireland and there's definitely a niche in the market. However, manufacturing decent shotguns and rifles is a complex, skilled and expensive process. From the 17th to the early 20th centuries there was a significant firearms industry in Ireland. One of the most famous bespoke English gunmakers John Rigby and Sons began their business in Dublin, as did William Greener and others. Each major city in Ireland had a gun-making facility. The Fenian over and under shotgun was the last firearm to be made in Ireland, north or south. The Fenian gun was a decent concept on paper, however it had design flaws which meant it didn't sell well, and the project was also beset with political controversy. James Kavanagh died in Cornwall England in, according to different reports, either 1975 or 1976.

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Pointer & Setter Champion Stake 2014

The 2014 Pointer and Setter Champion Stake was held on the Duke of Roxburghe's Byrecleugh Estate in the Scottish Borders on 10th and 11th August. There was a very strong Irish representation: nine of the eighteen owners/handlers and eighteen of the thirty-three runners were Irish and when the awards were announced five of the seven went to dogs with Irish connections. To continue the cosmopolitan theme the overall winner had a French owner, a Scottish handler and an Italian sire and the trial was almost ruined by the after effects of Hurricane Bertha crossing the Atlantic from America.

The winning dog Laurent Hild's Gerensary Minerva on point.

Drew Ainslie, Byrecleugh's Head Keeper, made every effort to find good ground to test the dogs and Dr David McRobbie was Steward of the Beat. The entry was somewhat smaller than in recent years and with five non-runners, including last year's winner, Maurice Getty's FTCh Gentle Jim, there were only sixteen brace plus a bye dog competing. Despite the Met Office predicting high winds and heavy rain, conditions on the hill were not

unpleasant as the trial got underway: a steady breeze, overcast skies and with the odd spit of rain in the air. It looked like a good scenting day with the heather cleaned up by recent rain but the first brace of dogs down had both missed birds within a couple of minutes of being cast off.

Initially it seemed possible that the grouse might have been disturbed as the competitors, Judges, Gun and spectators walked out to where the dogs had been

cast off, but the pattern was to be repeated frequently during the morning session. Several dogs flushed or missed birds altogether, while others were caught up by scent where grouse had lifted ahead of the trial and pointed without producing game. The Judges, Wilson Young and Carole Brown, wisely took conditions into account and were a little less harsh on no-productive points than they would have been had scenting conditions been better, but by the time we broke for lunch with eight brace and the bye dog having been under the Judges only five survivors were earmarked for the second round.

That said, there was some excellent work done by a few of the dogs, with an outstanding performance from James Coyle's Koram Kaiser: a big, rangy, handsome orange and white pointer. He got in some nice quartering before coming on point just ahead of the Judges. The Irish setter he was running with came in and stole the point but Kaiser never moved despite the provocation. Grouse rose as the setter's handler came past Kaiser to remove his dog from the scene and the Gun, James



Gerry Devine casting off English setter FTCh Ballyellen Cody.



Billy Darragh and Dominic Goutorbe with Irish setter Erinvale Ice Flare and English setter Gilbel Tarik Troy at Upperwood.

Grigg, fired a shot. Finally, James went in to work out the rest of the covey and Kaiser was through to the second round with a performance of a standard that was not to be topped throughout the trial.

We broke for lunch and then set out again with a few more spots of rain falling and grouse even more unsettled by a fly past from a hen harrier that had lifted several coveys while we were eating. Conditions were still far from easy with grouse often rising well ahead of the dogs. If they held until the dog had pointed, then rose as the handler, Gun and Judges were approaching all could be well with the dog being credited with a find even if, on a shooting day, the grouse would have been too wild for a Gun to take a shot, but when coveys lifted well ahead – possibly unseen by the Judges and handler – all too often the dogs would come on point on the residual scent from the birds. Result: a non-productive point. Even so, the eight brace seen in the afternoon held things together rather better than the morning runners and a further nine dogs were earmarked to run in the second round making a total of seven brace.

The second round with all but four having Irish owners or handlers

We had started the trial with 12 Irish setters, 11 English setters, 9 pointers and a single Irish Red and White setter. The second round consisted of 5 pointers plus 6 Irish and 3 English setters with all but four having Irish

owners or handlers. The favourite from the first round, Koram Kaiser was paired with Gerry Devine's English setter FTCh Gortinreagh Eppie, but his hopes were short lived. The setter pointed a covey: James stopped the pointer and waited for Gerry to work out his birds. Judge Carole Brown started to walk across to where James and Kaiser were standing and a grouse jumped from under her feet. Missed bird, and Kaiser was out.

He was perhaps particularly unlucky in that the grouse had sat so tightly when most of its compatriots were rising and flying off long before dogs or handlers could get anywhere near them. Heavy rain overnight and gale force winds following had made the birds extremely lively and liable to fly with very little provocation. Drew Ainslie

had done his best to find a sheltered beat on the lee side of a slope but even here the grouse were rarely willing to sit once they had seen and heard the competitors and spectators coming across the heather. Once again, there were numerous non-productive points where grouse had lifted and again the Judges did their best to make allowances, within reason, because of the conditions.

For some it was touch and go. Richard MacNicol, handling Monsieur Laurent Hild's pointer Gerensary Minerva must have felt he was on the edge of elimination after two non-productive points in quick succession, but a third point produced a single bird – a leftover from the covey that had risen moments before – and he was safely through to the next round.

Judging cannot be easy when the grouse are unwilling to sit tightly. Dominic Goutorbe's English setter Upperwood Hera pointed in the middle of the beat while Billy Darragh's Irish setter Erinvale Ice Flare was pointing well out on the right – perhaps a hundred and fifty yards away. The English setter had barely started to rode in when a mass of birds – I counted at least forty – rose on the skyline a long way ahead. They were clearly the birds that the English setter was pointing, but were they also the ones that had stopped the Irish setter? Wilson went across to Billy and the Irish setter



Dominic Goutorbe's English setter Upperwood Va Va Voom was flying in the first round.



Irish Red and White setter Dalraich Neige getting into her stride.



Carol Calvert casting off Irish setter Glynlark Midas.

cleared the ground without producing any more grouse, suggesting that both dogs were on the same pack of grouse.

Perhaps a more difficult decision for the Judges came when dogs pointed and then roded in for perhaps a couple of hundred yards, always indicating that grouse were ahead but not actually producing them. Were the grouse running ahead of the dog: was it taking scent from so far ahead, or was it roding forward in hopes rather than expectation? Even if a grouse is finally lifted it can be difficult to say whether it was the subject of the original point or whether the dog has simply crept forward until it came across game. Fortunately such things are for the Judges to decide: the rest of us can simply look on.

Eight dogs were called back for a third round with Billy Darragh's Irish

setter FTCh Glendrisock Arabella paired with Richard MacNicol and Gerensary Minerva for the first brace. At this stage I felt the trial was between these two, with Arabella probably marginally in front, but the next couple of minutes turned things around. Minerva was straight into her running and found a covey out on the left, while Arabella, unusually, took a couple of short casts and a back cast before she settled to her work. Richard and Minerva produced their birds and the Judges told the handlers to pick up. The next three brace all had short and largely uneventful runs: then the trial was over and we headed back, under the wind turbines, to the meet to await the Judges' decision.

The awards

They made seven awards. The

winner was Monsieur Laurent Hild's Pointer bitch Gerensary Minerva handled by Richard MacNicol with second place going to Billy Darragh's Irish setter bitch FTCh Glendrisock Arabella. Billy also took third with another Irish setter bitch Erinvale Ice Flare and Carol Calvert was fourth with her Irish setter dog Int FTCh Glynlark Apollo. There were Diplomas of Merit for Dominic Goutorbe's English setter bitch Upperwood Hera, Sue Langford's Pointer dog Papermill Flashman handled by Alan Neill and Gerry Devine's English setter bitch FTCh Gortinreagh Eppie.

This was not the spectacle that one would hope to see at the Champion Stake but, like every trial, the standard of work on display was largely dictated by the conditions. The grouse were wild and there was little chance of seeing classic pointer and setter work with coveys being pointed and lifted from right under the dogs' noses, but as always, the dogs that could adapt to those conditions were the ones that came out on top in the end.



The winners: Richard MacNicol with Monsieur Laurent Hild's pointer FTCh Gerensary Minerva.

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6

1. Judges Carole Brown and Wilson Young in discussion with Kennel Club Chairman Professor Steve Dean looking on.

2. Brian Morris and James Coyle with Irish setter Erinvale Frosted Flame and pointer Koram Kaiser.

3. Billy Darragh's Irish setter Erinvale Ice Flare at pace.

4. David O'Neill with Glynlark Aramis and Carol Calvert with Int FTCh Glynlark Apollo waiting to run.

5. Gun on the second day Rory Butler with Head Keeper Drew Ainslie.

6. Int FTCh Glynlark Apollo on point.

7. Dominic Goutorbe's English setter Upperwood No Fly Zone on point.

8. Winner Richard MacNicol was presented with the trophy by sponsor Bill Connolly of Connolly's Red Mills.



8

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Jersey – A Shooting Haven

The Channel Isles' largest island Jersey is renowned for many reasons – from tourism to potatoes and everything in between. The island has a population of 100,000 people, occupies a total area of 45.5 square miles, its coastline is dotted with scenic bays, coves, harbours and comfortable hotels. Inland villages, connected by narrow country roads with low speed limits all lead to the capital St. Helier - a bustling business city with all the usual trappings, while VAT-free status is enjoyed by residents and tourists alike. A lesser known fact about Jersey is the 29 shooting clubs that operate within that island's small land mass.

The club total is made up of 1 Clay Pigeon range, small-bore indoor rifle ranges (10), ISSF rifle (outdoor) Long Range Rifle, Modern and Military rifle and pistol, black powder classic firearms (late 19th century), vermin control, 3 parish shooting clubs and 1 collectors club. Shooting sports are more or less a way of life! Jersey Pistol Club, situated at Crabbe, about 10 minutes drive from the island's airport boasts both 50 yard and 25 yard pistol ranges. Immediately adjacent is a 500 yard rifle range and literally just down the road both clay pigeon and black powder ranges feature. All are well sign-posted and display safety notices supplied and erected by the local Department of Education. J.P.C. has a full shooting calendar encompassing training days, visitors and schools introductory events, club shoots, competitions, inter-island games, internationals, commonwealth games, etc. Twice yearly a team travels to neighbouring France to compete with the local Association de Tir Civile et de



Jersey Pistol club's 50 yard range.

la Police in Alençon. Then there's the annual match with the German BDMP (Bund Der Militar und Polizei Schutzen) at Obermarsberg, which alternates between the Jersey range and a superb indoor premises in Germany. The local licensing regime is straightforward – one certificate covers all firearms held by an individual. A central office with civilian

staff deals with all applications – speedily and efficiently. JPC has a huge membership (by our standards), with an annual fee that is rather modest. Members carry out all maintenance, grass cutting etc and the range which includes a comfortable club room is always in top class condition. There's even a resident cat – Mr. Magnum - he's fed on a daily basis by club member Victor Musso.



WW2 armoured range-finder turret.

Vic is a long standing club member who was a teenager when the Germans invaded the Island back in 1940. It's been well documented elsewhere that Islanders suffered many privations including deportations to concentration camps in Europe during that period so it was with slight trepidation that I asked Vic about his experiences and memories. He related how his father's hotel had been commandeered for use as a civilian administration headquarters with his family being allowed to retain some



WW2 German Casemate - today.

living space. One particular German officer was “quite decent” to the Mussos, to the point of sharing such a scarce commodity as food with them which slightly eased the horrors of occupation. Apparently when the Germans departed, the island was littered with weaponry of all descriptions which the local children played with until the authorities rounded up the hardware. All the German gun emplacements and casemates built with slave labour during the war are still to be seen dotted around the island and have become quite a tourist attraction.

Last May, I found myself beside Vic on the 25 yard firing-line as he drilled holes in the target’s bulls-eye with his 7.63 Walther PPK pistol. Not bad for a gentleman in his 90s who also reloads his own ammunition! I resisted the temptation to ask if the pistol was a relic of the German occupation. Jersey is fortunate to number Derek Bernard among its shooting population. Derek is

acknowledged world-wide as a highly respected and leading figure in the ongoing debate about ‘gun control.’ His numerous papers on the subject have been published throughout the English-speaking world and are regarded as the



bedrock of common sense. With such a huge shooting population and large number of firearms that 29 clubs entails, Jersey does not suffer from the usual ‘anti’ nonsense from the State that prevails in other democratic jurisdictions. All Channel Island states are self governing and while they are members of the British Isles with a legal

system based on Britain’s, UK laws don’t apply there. The Islanders make their own decisions and can be quite vocal should a public representative show antipathy towards licensed firearms. Crime rates are almost non-existent and while it is unforgivable to mention crime and licensed firearms in the same sentence, its worth stating that gun crime simply doesn’t exist. Jersey Police perform normal duties as any police force would, with the interesting exception that while Police can carry out an arrest, they cannot actually charge a person. An individual may only be charged with an offence by a Centennier - a local honorary member of Police. Co-operation is ongoing between Police and the shooting organisations even to the extent that all Police firearms training is carried out on JPC’s 500 yard rifle range and many club members are serving officers.

Jersey is literally a shooters’ paradise - club facilities for all disciplines abound within this tiny island. I first went shooting there back in 1980, visiting the ranges at Crabbe where I had access to rifles and pistols that we could only dream about in Ireland. A growing number of Irish shooters visit these days

for both a holiday break and some shooting. As an overseas member of JPC and visiting Range Officer, I look forward with great anticipation to each and every trip there. Jersey is only a short flight from Dublin – Aer Lingus runs scheduled flights and will carry licensed sporting guns. Why not give it a go?



Jersey’s Pistol Team, Germany 2010, with Derek Bernard (extreme right) and the Author (third from right).

Grouse Shooting – Past and Present



The team on the hill

‘On the Twelfth, Cousin Alan and myself set out to shoot Shurrery beat over dogs. We did not start shooting until after ten o’ clock and finished about five, having taken the better part of an hour over our lunch, but we returned to the house with a hundred and forty-two brace of grouse shot over six dogs.’

Of course, ‘myself’ in the above passage does not refer to me, but to Stephen Pilkington who was writing about the 1934 season in a delightful little book I was given recently, called ‘With a Gun to the Hill.’ I doubt if anyone, anywhere, will shoot one hundred and forty two brace over dogs in one day this season, or possibly ever again, though given two good Guns and a decent team of dogs there are probably still moors on which on would be possible – though not, I am afraid on Shurrery, or anywhere else in Sutherland.

The most grouse I have seen shot over dogs in a single day was twenty two brace, coincidentally not far from Shurrery at Loch Choire in Sutherland. There were just three of us out: two Guns to shoot the grouse and me with two pointers to find them and retrieve them and a game bag to carry them in. I remember that the game bag got heavy

enough for me to stash ten brace or so near some rocks to be retrieved later with the Argocat, and I wonder how those two Guns back in 1934 managed to get their two hundred and eighty four birds back to the game larder. They would have weighed somewhere around three hundredweight. Indeed, if we make a generous assumption that the two Guns managed a fifty per cent kills to cartridges ratio they must have started out with around six hundred cartridges that themselves would have weighed in at over sixty pounds. No doubt they would have been accompanied by at least one hill pony with a ponyman as well as the dog handler and a boy to lead the dogs when they were between runs. Whatever the logistics, it must have been a wonderful days shooting though far from a record bag for grouse over pointing dogs. In 1871, the Maharaja Duleep Singh shot 440 grouse over dogs in just one day, though he had six dogs

working at the same time and rode from point to point on a pony – a far cry from the way we shoot over our dogs today.

Looking back, though not quite so far, two days from last season stand out in particular – one because the sheer abundance of grouse made the Guns decide to ration their shots from each point and another where we made a decent bag despite grouse being much, much thinner on the ground.

The first day took place on a driven moor in North Yorkshire. We had four Guns shooting and a bag limit of eight brace. It was an ideal day for shooting over dogs: a steady breeze, not too hot and with a good scent and we knew that there were plenty of grouse on our beat. Although they had been driven once already they sat well to the pointers and the setter and given that all four of the Guns are decent shots we could easily have reached our bag limit from the first three or four points.



A grouse falls as the rest of the covey rises right under the Ellie's nose.

Plenty of running and several points

My Irish setter pointed, then worked hard to pin her covey as the birds were moving through some long heather. When she did get them four birds rose initially of which Ian and Eric killed one each. Monkey then produced the rest of the covey in ones and twos but the guns stayed down. Why? Well, had they tried I would have backed Eric and Ian to have killed at least three brace from that one covey, and the other Guns, Dougie and Douglas are at least as good. Four points, four coveys that got up in ones and twos and we could have been heading back home after perhaps just an hour on the hill. Instead, the Guns had agreed to take just one bird apiece from each point. We all enjoyed a good walk,

there was ample time for the retrievers to do their stuff whenever a grouse was down; there was no hurry and no pressure on anybody. We had six brace at lunchtime, and completed the bag by mid-afternoon. Everybody was happy, including the dogs who all had plenty of running and several points. Given a long day and no restrictions we could probably have shot thirty or forty brace, but then the cost of the day would have soared into the realms of fantasy.

A few days later we were up in Perthshire, shooting grouse over dogs



Irish setter Amber

again but on a very different piece of ground. Where the Yorkshire moor was a proper kept grouse moor with the heather well burnt, medicated grit supplied to combat strongylosis and crows, foxes, stoats and the like strictly controlled, the Perthshire ground is pretty much left to itself from year to year. There are deer, both red and roe, in good numbers, a few grouse, the occasional blackcock or greyhen and a snipe or two in the wetter bits. In order to find the grouse you absolutely need a team of wide-ranging pointers or setters and to shoot them some decent Guns who are prepared to walk a long way for their sport.

And that is what we had on the day in question. Our Guns were two visitors from Germany – both called Cristoph, which made it easy to remember their names – and we had four dogs: Angela's Irish setter Amber, Ian's pointer Ellie and our own two pointers, Ziggy and Giovanni or Joe for short. We had several thousand acres of hill to aim at, a fine day with a good breeze and two Guns who quickly picked up what we wanted them to do when a dog pointed. All we needed were a few grouse.

The ground here is much rougher than the moor in Yorkshire. There are hills and valleys, peat hags and bogs, rocky outcrops and deep pools in contrast to the almost flat heather on the Yorkshire ground. The dogs need to get well out if they are to find the widely scattered grouse and to be really steady on point while the Guns get up to them. Since it can take a good while for the Guns to reach the pointing dog there is always a chance that the birds will have run before we get there, so once at the point it is not a case of simply standing and waiting for the dog to flush the birds.

Grouse running through peat hags and broken ground can put a lot of distance between them and the pointing dog in quite a short time. They will twist and



Ian and Ellie at lunch.



Ellie keeping an eye on a brace of grouse at lunchtime.



Douglas with the picking-up team at the Yorkshire shoot.

turn and sneak back behind the dog and the Guns need to watch what the dog is doing and where his nose is pointing and get themselves into position accordingly, else they are liable to end up watching birds rise out of shot. Although neither of the Cristophs had much experience of

shooting grouse over dogs they listened to what we asked them to do and then did it. As I'm sure any dog handler will agree, half the battle when grouse are running is for the Guns to 'read' the dog and get into a position from where they will have the best chance of a shot, and

our two Guns did it to perfection. As a result, we ended up with seven brace of hard-earned grouse – our best day of the season in Scotland.

To add to our satisfaction with the dogs, who had all worked beautifully, we had no specialist retriever with us for most of the day due to an Argocat malfunction. Even so, we never lost a shot bird, despite one or two tucking tight into the heather. Amber, the Irish setter, picked a couple and Joe twice pointed wounded birds that would never have been found otherwise. By the time we made it back to the vehicles we were all just about beat: dogs as well as humans, but it was that satisfying tiredness that comes from a long day on the hill and a job well done.

By the time this article appears another season will be upon us, and our plans are much the same as for last year. We have another day booked on the driven moor in Yorkshire and half a dozen days planned for the Perthshire hill. Which am I looking forward to the most? Well, it is great to go out knowing that there should be grouse aplenty, but nothing can touch the satisfaction of a really hard day on a hill where the dogs, the handlers and the Guns all have to give one hundred per cent if there is to be anything in the game bag at the end. We certainly won't have a hundred and forty two brace or anything like it, but we will probably get as much pleasure from the day as Stephen Pilkington did back in 1934.

What more can a man ask?



The author with pointer Giovanni and Gun Cristoph.



The bag – seven brace of grouse.



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

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

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

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The shooting season's here before you know it!



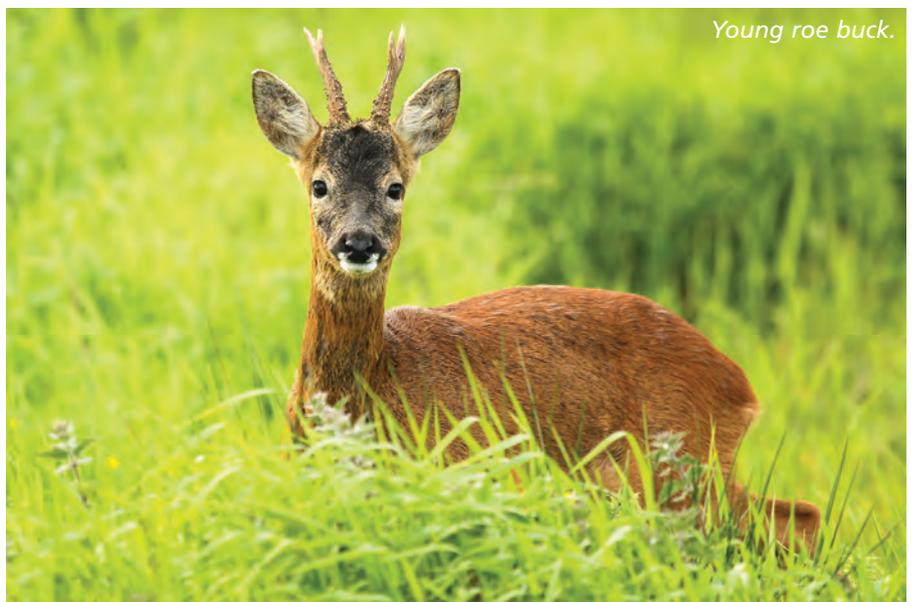
I know it feels like an eternity in between the shooting seasons, but keeping busy over the summer months means time ticks away rather nicely.

The warm weather and the extended light make everything easier; the light allows for fantastic opportunities for me to capture the local roe deer population with my camera. I enjoy getting out early and testing my stalking skills; one morning I got to within fifteen feet of one young buck and took a sequence of great photos. I have also enjoyed a number of evening roe buck stalks, one recent one with Johnny Readhead on a new permission over some farmland in eastern Fife. We stalked downhill through woodland to watch two bucks in different locations. Tucked in close to a wall on the edge of the woodland, we patiently sat and watched the bucks before Johnny shot one. The buck was gralloched before we headed uphill back to the vehicle, that warm summer's evening just got warmer with the additional weight of the buck!

Thankfully, this year, we have not been plagued by any extreme weather conditions so our countryside, crops and game are thriving. Mark Robson, of Fife based Pigeon All Day Long, had a very

busy time last season on the geese and is very optimistic about the forthcoming one. Mark said: "Last season we did not have any harsh weather and had good numbers of birds. In December we were getting temperatures as high as 14° when we were shooting geese and the duck ponds didn't freeze once. It is quite a contrast to the hard winter of 2010 when we had a wildfowling ban on shooting

because of the prolonged and challenging weather. This year, the easy conditions and a plentiful food supply meant the geese went back to Iceland in tip top condition and will probably have had a very good breeding season. So all the signs are looking good." Mark's goose diary is fully booked for 2014/15 and he's taking bookings for 2015/16 and he also offers roe deer stalking,



Young roe buck.



Deerstalker Johnny Readhead



The Author (centre) and her Dad (far left) sharing the day with Mark Robson (Right) of Pigeon All Day Long.

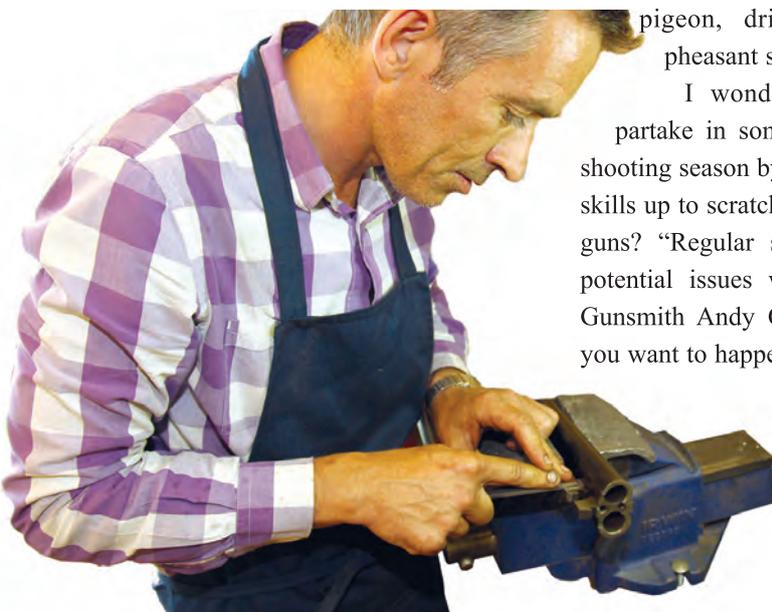
or a number of shooting days because your gun has developed a problem. We usually see the worst weather in January so your gun may have been exposed to rain, sleet and snow. If there is any moisture getting into your gun it will generate rust which can be very hard to remove as it regenerates all the time. Metal has one purpose in life and that is to return to its original form of Ore.”

Andy continues: “Ideally you should book your gun in for a service at the end of the previous shooting season. A service entails a minimum four hours to have your gun properly stripped, cleaned and oiled. This will give you confidence in the performance and reliability of your gun.”

One of the best ways to ensure you make the most of the season is to shoot well. Over the years, I have seen a few struggle to get back in the swing of shooting especially on driven grouse days. When the first grouse propel themselves over the butts the comments from the guns are usually unprintable!

Commonwealth Games shotgun coach Iain MacGregor says good game shooters are the ones who have a series of lessons and become competent. “There are different shooting styles with grouse, partridge and pheasant so plan ahead and book two or three sessions with a coach. This requires some advance planning as it is impossible to work miracles on the Friday before the shoot.” Iain points out many shooters spend money on shoot days but do not invest in lessons. “The last thing you want to do is to have a low base of preparation, turn up and expect to go out and shoot well. With coaching you will go into a shooting day ready and not frustrated.” Iain suggests dry mounting at home or going along to your local shooting ground but do it with an instructor because you could be rehearsing your mistakes.

Fasque Estate Head Keeper Mark Ancliff said: “Our 10,000 acre grouse moor is well managed and in peak condition. This year the grouse chicks were a little later, but they have done well and coveys are good sizes and as we



pigeon, driven and walked-up pheasant shooting.

I wonder how many of us partake in some preparation for the shooting season by keeping our shooting skills up to scratch and looking after our guns? “Regular servicing can prevent potential issues with your gun,” says Gunsmith Andy Coull. “The last thing you want to happen is to lose out on one

Gunsmith Andy Coull - servicing can prevent potential gun issues.



Commonwealth Games coach Iain MacGregor advises lessons for shooters.



Fasque Estate's Head Keeper Mark Ancliff.

don't have any sheep or deer on the hill there is nothing bothering the grouse so the tick issue is minimal. I am very happy with what I am seeing so we are looking to have a good, steady season. Last year we shot around 500 brace and would expect to do more this coming season." Mark and his team are set to be very busy as their walked-up and driven grouse days are fully booked with a waiting list of eager shooters. Mark, a keeper on Fasque for 30 years, takes a non-aggressive approach with the grouse and doesn't shoot them hard. I had a great time on Fasque last season with a group of guns on a driven day. Mark's welcome of fresh coffee and bacon rolls was a worthy start to an exciting day on the hill. I recall being tucked into grouse butt with one of the guns and smiling when I heard his unprintable words as the grouse flew over. Fasque also provides pheasant, partridge and duck days. It is clear the birds and the land are thriving under Mark's experienced eye.

I had a very enjoyable day on the banks of the Tay at Meikleour. A group of ladies, organised by Fishpal's Lady Angler Anne Woodcock, were fly



Fishpal's Anne Woodcock raising funds for Casting For Recovery.

fishing to raise funds for 'Casting for Recovery,' a charity helping women recovering from breast cancer by offering them retreats across UK and Ireland where they teach them how to fly fish. Our host, and keen angler, Claire Mercer Nairne made everyone extremely welcome and put on a fantastic lunchtime spread of local produce from the Meikleour Arms, said: "I only came across CfR last year and was surprised by how little awareness this fantastic charity had in Scotland. Supporting CfR and contributing to a



Host, and keen angler, Claire Mercer Nairne.

life changing experience for someone who has suffered is an incredibly satisfying and moving experience." Anne's hard work paid off as the ladies had a fantastic day on the banks of the Tay and over £1,000 was raised for the charity.

Keeping in with the year's busy theme, I am in the middle of writing my very first photography ebook on how to capture shoot days, clay shooting and stalking. Time flies when you are enjoying yourself, oh look, the shooting season has arrived.



The wonderful Tay at Meikleour.

Factfile

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Art and Antiques

With the progress of summer and the auction scene slowing down what better time to visit galleries, museums and exhibitions than now.

And one event, which has really been captivating many during recent weeks is the Summer Loan Exhibition mounted by leading Dublin sales house ADAM'S. This starts in early July in their premises on St Stephen's Green and then moved to The Ava Gallery, based in the idyllic Clondeboye Estate, in Co Down. Running there from August 7th to September 5th it features Irish Women Artists, 1870-1970 and places the visitor in a spoiled-for-choice-position when it comes to assessing who was top-of-the-tree in that century. This is ADAM'S fifth Summer Loan Exhibition drawn exclusively from private collections both north and south of the border. The event, in its own unique way celebrates the significant role women have played in the history of Irish art, be it through their own craft, their organisational skills and the role models they played for the many others who followed them in later years. In total over fifty artists are featured but the number on exhibition at Clondeboye has been a



Helen Mabel Trevor's 'Children playing in a barn' (ADAMS)

little smaller due to space restrictions. Over 120 works have found their place into this unique exhibition and twelve of them will come under the hammer at ADAM'S Important Irish art sales in

October and December.

The exhibition catalogue itself is a collector's gem, not only because of its high quality production of so many works of art but also because of the informative, biographical details relating to the artists themselves.

One of the exhibition's earliest featured artist, Helen Mabel Trevor, (1831-1900) was born in Co Down and did not study art seriously until she was in her forties, staying in Paris around 1880. She excelled at painting children in her works and 'Children playing in a barn' captures the innocence and pre-occupations of their private world.

This exhibition too, well illustrates the strong attraction the galleries and salons of Paris held for female art students of the day. It is believed nearly all Irish women artists of the late 19th century and early 20th century were students there at some stage in their careers.

They're all featured: Rose Baton, Lilian Davidson, Letitia M Hamilton,



Roderic O'Conor oil on canvas sold for €210,000 (ADAMS)

Mainie Jellett, Rosamund Praeger, Estella Solomons, Margaret Stokes, Anne Yeats, Camille Souter and many others. Each in their own right contributed so much to the survival of Irish art in their time, not forgetting the history they left behind. For in truth, each woman artist in that period had an individual background story worth relating. And that's exactly what Claire Dalton has done in her extensive essay about this extremely important period in Irish Art, and the ladies who played their parts in it.

AROUND THE SALES

At Belfast based ROSS's, auctioneer Daniel Clarke says it has been a busy summer, both with online sales for paintings and jewellery and also at the weekly auction room sessions: "Our main business is still with our in-room sales but I must say we have been doing very well with our on line sales for art and jewellery. For quite a number of people that appears to be the way forward and it is another strand to our business strategy now. We will continue with our quarterly art sales but in between we will be giving vendors and buyers the facility of our ever popular on line sales. Of course the mobility of houses is still well down in Northern

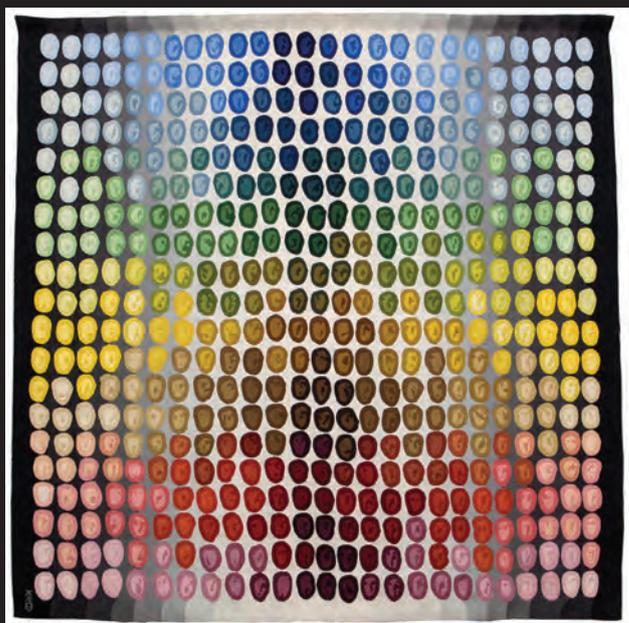
Ireland and this will continue to have an effect on what shakes down into the auction room until this returns to normal again. But the housing situation does not seem to have an effect on what people are buying in art and jewellery."

DOWN IN DUBLIN

Dublin based ADAMS had a busy summer with extremely significant sales throughout May and June. The fine jewellery

and watches sales in May attracted many valuable lots including a diamond single stone ring which went at €50,000 followed by a three stone diamond ring at €40,000 and an emerald ring at €35,000. An Art Deco diamond bracelet went at €30,000 while a diamond necklace from the same period reached a similar price. A gentleman's 18 carat gold Ellipse wrist watch by Patek Phillipe made €11,000 while another from the same maker realised €8,500.

ADAMS Irish art sale in May saw a Roderic O'Connor oil on canvas sell for



Louis le Brocqy Aubusson tapestry made €120,000 (ADAMS)

€210,000; a Louis le Brocqy Aubusson tapestry made €120,000 and a William Conor oil on canvas go for €97,000. A Sean Keating oil made €80,000, a Sean Scully oil €80,000 and a Jack Butler Yeats oil on panel €62,000. Another Roderic O'Connor, an oil went at €35,000 while a Gerard Dillon, oil on board sold for €29,000.

ADAMS Sunday Interiors sale in June also brought out some choice lots including a Salvador Dali bronze horse which made €19,000, a diamond single stone ring which went at €4,500 and an Irish George III style mural table which sold for €4,200. A fine matched suite of Victorian silver Hanoverian pattern cutler, London 1890 & 1892 went at €4,000, while a 19th century Dublin fusee bracket clock made €3,800. A set of twelve Victorian hoop back dining chairs sold for €3,200, followed by an Irish George III silver serving tray at €3,000; a fine George III partners desk at €3,000 and a John Frederick Herring Junior oil on canvas €2,800.

WHYTE'S

Ian Whyte of WHYTE'S, the Dublin based international auction house says: "Our year so far has been much the same as 2013. We are finding it extremely difficult to persuade collectors to part with really rare and valuable works of art. The low interest rates and high



This William Conor oil on canvas went for for €97,000 (ADAMS)



The Salvador Dali bronze horse made €19,000 (ADAMS)

Capital Gains Tax rate is deterring people from selling. If they sell the Revenue takes 33% of the gain and the interest rates are almost negative by the time the Revenue take their share. It's no wonder there are more buyers than sellers at the top end of the market.

“At the other end of the art market demand for works under €10,000 is slack. This is directly related in most cases to the low number of young house buyers. There are not enough entry level houses or apartments to buy and not enough mortgages even if there were affordable properties. Almost the first thing a young couple will do when they buy a house is to buy a picture; this market is almost non-existent at present. People living in rented accommodation are not as inclined to decorate the walls.

“So art auctioneers are looking for more walls to be built and less taxes on capital gains! The collectibles market is still very busy with great demand for rare coins and banknotes. Medals and militaria are extremely popular and the commemoration of the First World War is creating demand for medals and memorabilia of that period. The first dedicated Movie Posters auction ever to be held in Ireland went well, raising €80,000 gross, including €4,800 hammer price for the first Hammer Dracula poster.”

MASSIVE LONDON SALE

The Queen of sales to date this year had to be CHRISTIE'S, London evening event of Post-war & Contemporary art

in early July. It realised a total of £99,413,500, selling 87% by value and 84% by lot.

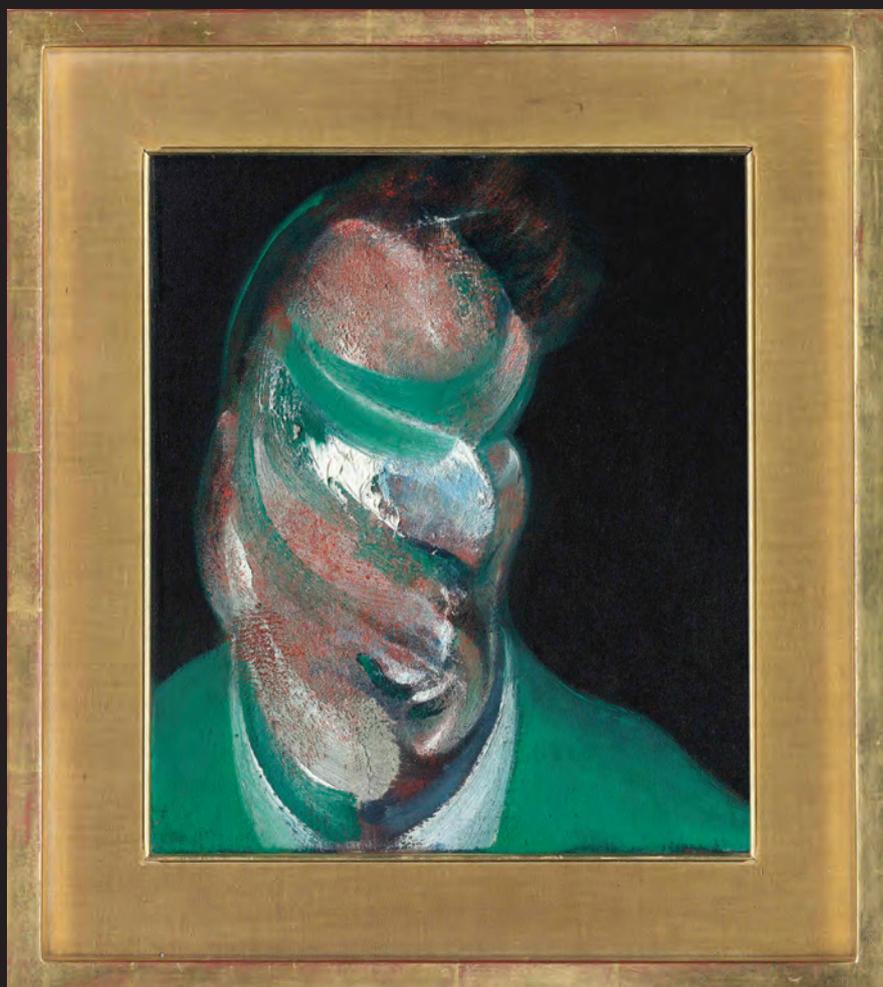
The top item in the sale was Francis Bacon's Study for Head of Lucian Freud which sold for £11,506,500.

Building on CHRISTIE'S recent record breaking successes the even helped the sales house achieve no less than seven world record prices for the artist including others for Peter Doig,

Tracey Emin and Michelangelo Pistoletto. Peter Doig's extremely rare self-portrait, Gasthof made £9,938,500 against a high estimate of £5m while Tracey Emin's My Bed went for £2,546,500 achieving a world record for the artist. It was an iconic piece exploring the relationship between her life and her art and had caused a furore when shortlisted for the Tate's Turner prize in 1999.

After the sale, Francis Outred, International Director and Head of Postwar & Contemporary Art, Christie's Europe, said: “This sale was especially strong in portraits, particularly those with fascinating provenance and back stories. This was the third highest Post-War & Contemporary Art evening sale in Europe ever and we have seen seven new world record prices for artists from the 1960s to today.”

The following day's sale, again of post-war and contemporary art, realised £16,6m for lots sold. Two every good days' work on the rostrum.



Francis Bacon's Study for Head of Lucian Freud sold for £11,506,500 (CHRISTIE'S)

MAGNIFICENT CHATSWORTH

The annual Gundog Festival at Chatsworth organised by The Kennel Club was held this year from 28th May to 1st June, by gracious permission of the Duke and Duchess of Devonshire. I had the privilege of being in attendance for the 4-Dog Team Working Test for Retrievers held on the Thursday and Friday which was judged by Bill Rostron, Linda Partridge, Alan Rountree and Roger Tozer, with Graham Jones, who set up the Course, as Chief Steward.

This was an absolutely splendid event with teams from across Europe. I was particularly interested in the UK team which was: Tommy Hughes (NI) and IntFTCh Apache Joe, Nigel Probert (Wales) and Slipside Danzy Jones, Ally Kennedy (Scotland) and Abergowan's Harris and John Halsted (England) with FTCh Asterix Aguzannis of Chatsworth under team captain Joe Maclure (Scotland).

And of course the Irish team which was: Captain Declan Boyle and Leadburn Jamie, Sean Nolan and Tweedshot Trimble of Lettergreen, Tony O'Hare and Tyrellison Star Dreamer and Gary McCutcheon with Altiquin Rain of Camgart.

The course was difficult and demanding with, on the first day, four retrieves on moorland which simulated a walked up trial followed by four long blinds after a drive. The second day of four retrieves included a double mark, across water to a retrieve on an island, a mark with a diversion, and a water mark with close diversion. Handler and dog really had to be at their best as the work was not easy, but sensibly and painstakingly constructed, and judged with absolute authority by the very experienced A – listers appointed to the task.

At the end of the first day, which was slightly spoiled by appalling weather, the top three teams were UK, Germany and the

Netherlands. Many of the dogs from the continent were home bred from solid UK stock, with the Golden Retrievers present setting a high standard. Some individual work was superb with the top dog from Germany, Int & B FTCh Go Back Fyne handled by Roy Ehbel dropping 4x160 points. Also in contention were Tommy Hughes and Nigel Probert from the UK team.

Day two was conducted under the safari system and consisted of the double marks or blinds. Fail the first and the dreaded zero was the result, and this really sorted out the handlers who by now were under pressure to perform not only for the team but for individual honours. The last section of four retrieves was conducted in pairs. A dummy was fired from a launcher over a wall, but the first retrieve was a cunningly placed dummy just short of the wall as a blind. Any slip ups, such as being on the wrong side of the wall were ruthlessly punished, and this "bonus team score" inevitably and dramatically changed the final places.

After a suitable period of reflection and much spread sheet work by dedicated Kennel Club Staff, the results were announced as follows:

1st Netherlands 910 points, 2nd Germany 897 points, 3rd United Kingdom 889 points, 4th Italy 858 points, 5th Denmark 815 points, 6th Ireland 803 points, 7th France 783 points,

8th Finland 769 points, 9th Switzerland 758 points, 10th Norway 634 points.

Top individual awards:

1st Nigel Probert (UK) and Slipside Danzy Jones with 222 points

2nd Rob Schmidt (Netherlands) and Cerbel Ambassador with 219 points

3rd Ingrid van de Ven (Netherlands) and Bubbles van de Vaortkaant 218 points

4th John Halsted (UK) and FTCh Asterix Aguzannis of Chatsworth 218 points

5th Tommy Hughes (UK) and Apache Joe 216 points

Roy Ehbel (Netherlands) and Int & B FTCh Go Back Fyne 216 points

This was a very fine event, skilfully put together by Anne Heading and her team from The Kennel Club, which included the indefatigable Nigel Dear, Cheryl Maguire and Debbie Deuchar. The hospitality, which included formal dinner in Chatsworth House for all teams and their supporters on the Thursday evening, was of the highest order.

The "making a difference for dogs" mission statement from The Kennel Club was certainly maintained at Chatsworth, and we all came away looking forward to the 2015 event.

All photographs by
Andy Biggar Photography



Irish Team Declan Boyle, Sean Nolan, Gary McCutcheon, and Tony O'Hare.



UK Team Tommy Hughes, Joe Maclure, Hannah Dugdale (WuffitMix) sponsor, John Halsted, Ally Kennedy and Nigel Probert.

Helping Hand

Standing on the crumbling sea wall, Liam gazed out over the marshes to where a crimson dawn bled across the eastern horizon. Chill and salt laden, the rising north easterly carried with it the wail of the curlew, and tugged at the hem of the fowler's jacket like the fingers of an impatient child. Little in nature can match the desolation of a grey December dawn, but when widgeon are flying along the coastal creeks, it isn't hard to trade the warmth of an eiderdown for sport on the saltings.

Being uncharacteristically without a canine companion, Liam realised that any duck shot that morning he would have to retrieve himself, his black Labrador dog having received six stitches from the vet earlier in the week, following an unfortunate encounter with barbed wire.

Jumping down from the weathered concrete rampart, the young fowler strode out across a pungent raft of dried bladderwrack and broken fish boxes, flotsam which formed an uneven hem along the tide's edge. Here and there, squares of torn orange fishing net added the only colour to an otherwise monochrome winter landscape.

The meandering path which Liam now followed led out to the tidal creek, where he had flighted duck since his late teens. Experience had taught him that when conditions were right and migrating fowl were seeking shelter following a southerly gale, this could be a place of prolific sport. He also knew the saltings well enough to pay them due respect, for over the decades, numerous wildfowlers had vanished into the marsh's shifting quick sands, without leaving even a trace.

With the creek's sheltering bank now achieved and the sky beginning to lighten, the young fowler took his gun from its protective sleeve, and with an eye for approaching duck, looked back toward the dark elongated hump of the sea wall. There, silhouetted against the growing light, stood a lone figure, which even at a distance of several

hundred yards, Liam could easily identify as a fellow wildfowler. Clearly male, the figure was clad in heavy waterproofs, and cradled a long barrelled gun of large bore, over his right arm. At the man's side stood a tall and heavily built retriever. Probably a curlycoat or flatcoat Liam thought, certainly both uncommon breeds and

most often seen in sepia sporting photos of the Edwardian era. Liam slipped two cartridges into the chambers of his side by side twelve bore and, crouching low behind the bank of a creekside gutter, awaited the arrival of his quarry. Glancing back inland, he saw that both wildfowler and dog had vanished from the seawall and assumed that they had made their way out onto the marsh in search of sport.

Borne lightly on the breeze, the whistle and growl of widgeon suddenly focused the young man's attention as, swiftly, a pack of a flying duck approached along the course of the ebbing stream, and directly toward his place of ambush. Arising from behind the gutter's bank, Liam mounted his gun and picked two birds from the maelstrom of flaring wings. Swinging



Against the growing light stood a lone figure.

well through and firing, he was delighted to see two drake mallard crumple and fall with a resounding 'smack' into the creekside mud. Being dogless, the young fowler decided to leave picking up until the morning flight was over, rather than risk spoiling things by giving away his position.

For a full twenty-five minutes both widgeon and teal flew along the creek bank and over his hide, presenting themselves more like driven grouse than coastal wildfowl! The shooting was frenetic, and the mud around his feet soon littered with empty cartridge cases. During a brief lull in the action,

Liam scanned the grey panorama of creeks and gutters, and thought it strange that he hadn't heard shots from elsewhere on the marsh. Odd, especially as he knew that at least one other fowler was out that morning.

Steadily, the weak winter daylight grew to replace the crimson dawn and the morning flight was ended as suddenly as it had begun. Unloading his gun, Liam wiped creek mud from its stock with the sleeve of his jacket, and placed the well used weapon back in its canvas slip. With the flight over, it was time to pick up. The young fowler could count on the fingers of one hand,

those occasions when he had shot without the assistance of a good retriever. It seemed odd now not to give the command 'hi lost' and send out his questing Labrador in search of fallen birds. Undeterred, Liam set about gathering those duck that had fallen close by him, carefully placing each of the cooling fowl into the net of his game bag. The majority of the shot duck lay scattered across an area of samphire and yellow marsh grass, and were scarcely more than thirty yards from the improvised hide. Two widgeon however, remained where they had fallen by the edge of the ebbing creek, and these Liam had still to retrieve.

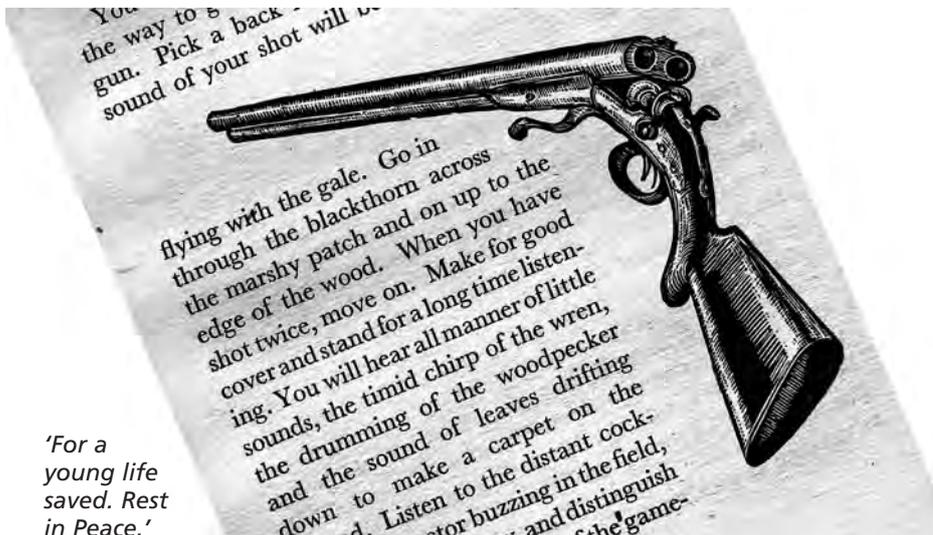
Ooze slowed his every stride and clawed greedily at his waders

Placing his gun and game bag on top of the riverbank, the young fowler slid down into the sucking creek mud and, with laboured progress, made his way out to the edge of the grey stream. With the consistency of cold treacle, the ooze slowed his every stride and clawed greedily at his waders. With a shuffling, waddling gait, Liam reached the first of the widgeon, and bending, scooped it from the mud, and placed it in the pocket of his jacket. Another ten yards would bring him to the second bird and complete the morning's pick up. Within two strides both the situation and the ground beneath his feet altered dramatically, as mud which had merely been an annoyance gave way to that terrible, semi fluid world of quick sand.

On the edge of the creek and within arms reach of the dead widgeon, Liam was thrown momentarily off balance as his right leg sank instantly to the knee. Reacting quickly, the young fowler tried to retrace his steps but, as he transferred his weight to his left foot, he found that that also sank beneath him. As he struggled to free himself the quicksand writhed like a living thing; all the time increasing its grip upon his legs and drawing him deeper into its sinister embrace. With the cold voice of panic now whispering in his ear, Liam



Two drake mallard crumpled, fall with a resounding 'smack' into the mud.



clawed at the mud around him in a desperate attempt to pull himself free. Exhausting and futile, this action merely caused him to sink deeper; the quicksand now rapidly approaching the tops of his waders. He glanced toward the game bag which held his mobile phone, and the only hope of rescue. Although on the creek bank a mere thirty feet away, it might as well have been on the moon for all the good it could do him.

Hopelessly trapped and still sinking, Liam shuddered as a terrifying realisation crept over him. In a matter of a few short hours the rising tide would completely cover both the creek edge and himself, condemning him to a slow death by drowning. Under feet of cold, grey seawater, his chances of survival were nil.

In desperation he called out for help and scanned the marsh for any sign of human presence. Nothing! Only the wail of the curlew and the 'pip-pipping' of the redshank answered his cry. Dropping his head and filling his lungs with air, he roared out: "Dear God I can't die like this," and it was then that he smelled the tobacco smoke. In his state of torment it hardly registered at first, and then once more he caught the distinctive whiff of smouldering Virginia tobacco.

In startled disbelief Liam raised his eyes, and saw before him the figure of a man, where only seconds before the river bank had been quite empty. No more than thirty feet away, the motionless figure was clad in a dark

oilskin smock and greased leather waders. Over his arm he carried a long, single barrelled hammer gun, which Liam could easily identify as a muzzle loader of large bore. Upon his head the man wore a grey, woollen balaclava, this garment hiding much of his face, save for his eyes and mouth. Clenched between his teeth a meerschaum pipe smouldered, and by his side stood a large, black, curlycoated retriever. Neither dog nor man moved, nor made any gesture of any kind. They were most unnaturally still.

This was an encounter with the unearthly

"For God's sake help me," Liam cried, not for a second questioning where man and dog might have sprung from. Without speaking, the figure clambered down the bank and strode out toward the trapped young fowler. Liam then realised that this was the person seen standing on the sea wall, earlier that morning. By his odd garb, gun, and choice of dog, he was obviously a member of some muzzle loaders club or association, for what else could explain his archaic appearance? Seeming to be little troubled by the sucking creek mud, Liam's rescuer reached him in a matter of a few seconds, and again without uttering a word, extended an arm to the young fowler. Eagerly grasping the hand of his rescuer Liam was shocked by what he felt, as far from the expected warmth of a human hand, the young fowler gripped something as chill as a sea fret. He also felt the tidal sand

which had ground its way into the pallid skin, and saw the dark estuary mud embedded beneath blackened fingernails. He noticed also that his rescuer was soaked in sea water, and carried with him the distinctive odour of the longshore. It wasn't until Liam stared up into the man's eyes however, that he realised this was an encounter with the unearthly. Dark, hooded, and set back within the opening of the balaclava, the figure's eyes conveyed a terrible sorrow, and a deep, penetrating melancholia. They seemed to communicate a wordless cry for help and a desperate longing for rest and resolution.

Liam felt the grip upon his hand increase unbearably, as with strength beyond that of man, his silent benefactor hauled him from the quicksand's lethal grasp. Like a rag doll he was dragged through the creek mud, and then up onto the bank where he lay exhausted, face down. Chest heaving, the young man gasped for breath, well aware that he had just been delivered from slow and certain death. Aside from his own breathing Liam could hear no sound, and certainly not the movements of his unearthly saviour or his dog. With a sense of dread the young man rolled onto his back, uncertain just what horror might face him. The creek bank however was quite deserted, and the marsh to its far horizon showed neither human nor canine form.

If you visit the marsh today, you may well see mallard, teal and widgeon flight along its meandering tidal creek and you will almost certainly hear the call of both redshank and curlew. Stand upon the crumbling sea wall and you cannot fail to be impressed by the wide vista of coastal landscape. You may however, be a little surprised at the sight of a memorial wreath bearing a hand written card, laid just where the twisting path leads out across the saltings.

Walk out and take a closer look, and you will see that the card on the wreath bears the heartfelt inscription, 'For a young life saved. Rest in Peace'.

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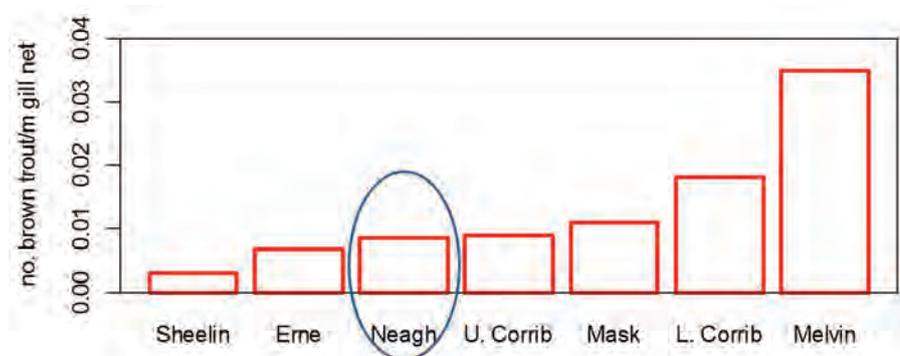


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The Future Management of Fisheries on Lough Neagh

The Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure (DCAL) has responsibility for the conservation, protection, development and promotion of salmon and inland fisheries. The fish stocks in Lough Neagh are an important natural asset and it is therefore important that they are managed in a sustainable way. The commercial fishing and recreational angling sectors not only make an important contribution to the socio economic development of the local economy through employment and income but they also contribute to the health and well being of those participating. To derive the maximum benefit from the opportunities available on Lough Neagh, we need to ensure the conservation and protection of the fisheries resource guaranteeing its sustainability for current and future generations.



Catch Per Unit Effort (CPUE) of brown trout per meter of survey net for Lough Neagh in comparison to other Irish Loughs.

Key to managing fisheries is to develop our scientific understanding of the fish stocks in the lough including their current status and how they are exploited. This requires a holistic approach that examines all the various interactions and impacts on all the fish stocks throughout the catchment. Any changes to fisheries management on Lough Neagh will be based on the best scientific evidence available and on the sustainability of fish stocks.

Fish stocks in Lough Neagh

The decline of both salmon and eels stocks in Lough Neagh (and throughout Europe) are well documented and steps have been taken to address some of the issues affecting them. In 2014 DCAL brought in the new legislation which requires that all salmon in the DCAL area are fished for on a catch and release basis, except for those rivers meeting their management targets. This complies fully with the scientific advice

provided by the North Atlantic Salmon Conservation Organisation (NASCO) of which the EU is a member. Under EU legislation an Eel Management plan is required for each river basin district and the current Lough Neagh plan in place has been approved by the EU. DCAL funds the Agri-Food & Biosciences Institute (AFBI) to carry out a research and monitoring programme to ensure the effective management of these and other fish stocks. Much of this fisheries information is now available for the public to view on the DCAL website at http://www.dcalni.gov.uk/fisheries_digest_2013.pdf.

In addition, DCAL commissioned AFBI to provide a report on the current status of brown trout stocks in the DCAL area and this report will be available on the DCAL website. The feeder tributaries of Lough Neagh include a number of well known game fisheries and these rivers are critical to the life history of Lough Neagh

dollaghan, providing the spawning habitat for adults and subsequently supporting juvenile fish prior to their emigration to the Lough. Several rivers in the catchment are now routinely surveyed each year to monitor the distribution and relative abundance of young-of-year salmon and trout (0+ age class) and fish counters on the Clady and Main provide information on adult fish moving upstream. The recruitment index derived from these surveys provides a relative measure of juvenile salmonid recruitment and is comparable between years due to the consistent annual survey coverage. In recent years trout fry densities have increased in some Lough Neagh tributaries with high levels of up to 61 and 71 fry per sample detected at individual sites on the Sixmilewater and River Main respectively in 2013.

Complimentary to this work has been another EU funded project, entitled DOLMANT (Development of Lake Management Tools) and this provided an opportunity to characterise the current status of the fish community in Lough Neagh, provide a base-line data set against which to compare future assessments and facilitate science-informed fishery management for the Lough. The DOLMANT work involved close collaboration between AFBI & Queens University Belfast. The preliminary data on brown trout stocks in Lough Neagh has been



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informative and indicated that the current abundance of trout in the Lough, measured as a standardised Catch Per Unit Effort CPUE (mean number of trout/m of survey net), was similar to that recorded in other large Irish Lough systems such as Corrib and Mask. (Results have also indicated

excellent stocks of Pollan and this has provided a useful tool for predicting future stock levels through annual larvae surveys. Such information is critical and needs to be collected on a routine basis as part of a modern fisheries management approach for Lough Neagh and one which is

responsive to the needs of individual stocks

In 2013 DCAL provided funding through its partnership with AFBI to allow the completion of the Queens University Belfast Dollaghan genetics project. This major study (one of the biggest in Europe) will build a detailed genetic baseline for brown trout from the Lough Neagh tributary rivers and many angling clubs have

contributed to it by providing samples. The work has important implications for fishery management and has the potential to outline the relative contribution of individual riverine populations to the Lough Neagh fishery. The preliminary results are exciting and have indicated considerable genetic structuring amongst the tributary rivers.

Fishery Management on Lough Neagh – The future!

DCAL considers that the management of fish stocks are best addressed through the creation of a fisheries management plan for the catchment. Critical to this plan will be the required fisheries research and regular monitoring of fish stocks collated from independent scientific studies which will be funded by DCAL and the collection of other data derived from both recreational and commercial fishing

sources. DCAL has set an ambitious target date for the draft plan to be completed by the end of March 2015 when it will then be subject to a public consultation.

Stakeholder engagement is an important part of the process and DCAL has already held a number of workshop / meetings to discuss the issues that affect fisheries with both commercial and recreational fishing groups. Further meetings are planned over the Autumn to discuss possible proposals for the draft fisheries management plan. The plan will aim to provide a strategic approach to sustainable management of the fisheries resource and its habitat in Lough Neagh and to maximise its social and economic value. A review of fisheries legislation is being undertaken and full consideration will be given of all the potential fisheries management options.

Habitat enhancement will also be an important factor to consider and the benefits for such schemes have been widely documented. A habitat improvement scheme on the River Main in County Antrim in 2005 – 2006 where 19 discrete river sections were improved through the addition of boulders or flow deflectors, post enhancement monitoring has indicated that older trout (>0+ age classes) showed significantly higher densities at enhanced sites in comparison to un-enhanced control sections.

The focused use of in-stream enhancement schemes can improve local fish densities, providing opportunities to increase habitat complexity and boost salmonid numbers, particularly in habitats artificially depressed by previous human activities such drainage works. To capitalise on this finding several local angling clubs, trusts and statutory agencies have engaged in a range of habitat improvement works on other Lough Neagh tributaries including the Sixmilewater, Ballinderry, Blackwater and Moyola Rivers and this work will continue subject to funding and work permissions.



Section on the River Main before habitat enhancement.



1 year after enhancement.



9 years after improvement works began.



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TO CAST FOR SILVER TROUT IN THE LAND OF FIRE

Located at the southern tip of South America, the Tierra del Fuego archipelago includes one large island which is 18,571 sq. miles in size and a series of smaller ones. It was reportedly named by the famous Portuguese adventurer, Ferdinand Magellan in the 1520s He named it 'Land of Fire,' because of beach fires that he observed which the indigenous people made to cook and keep themselves warm. Magellan was the first explorer to circumnavigate the globe, his route through the Magellan Strait proving to be the fastest and safest connection between the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans for sea-going trade and exploration. The western half of the main island, as well as all islands to the south and southwest, is part of the Magallanes region of Chile. Situated on the edge of the Magellan Strait, the capital city of Punta Arenas was, in the past, one of the most important supply stops for mariners, until the Panama Canal opened for business in 1914. The eastern half of the main island is a part of Argentina's Tierra Del Fuego Province; its capital is called Ushuaia and this is where I was to fly to; incidentally Ushuaia is the southernmost city on the planet and the gateway to my first fishing adventure in the southern hemisphere.

As a guide, angling writer and fly tying and fly casting instructor, I am basically an individual that tries to get by, working in the angling sector to pay the bills but, maybe even more importantly, to pay for my addiction, which is of course fly fishing. Occasionally I have been extremely lucky over the years, though I must admit at times I wish there was paid

work more frequently as it can be very hard at times when you have slow periods between events or work. But that said, I am sometimes invited to teach fly casting or to go fish and write about magnificent places where I also meet wonderful link minded people.

One of the most enjoyable trips I have ever had taken was back in 2011 when I was invited to attend The Fourth

National Fly fishing meeting of the Rio Grande, at the bottom of the world in spectacular Tierra Del Fuego. This event was held at the Maria Behety Lodge, where I was a special guest of The Riograndense Fly Fishing Association, which was sponsored by INFUETUR (Secretary of Tourism in Argentina). My host for the show was a great man and wonderful fishing guide,



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RE0318	#7/9	WF8F + 150m 20lb backing	£89.99	£54.99	RE0319	#7/9	£39.99	£27.99
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				HR1130	WF10
				HR1131	WF11

Intermediate			Wet 2			Wet 5		
55ft head	65ft head	AFTM	55ft head	65ft head	AFTM	55ft head	65ft head	AFTM
HR1120	WF8	WF8	HR1132	WF8	WF8	HR1112	HR1136	WF8
HR1121	WF9	WF9	HR1133	WF9	WF9	HR1113	HR1137	WF9
HR1099	HR1123	WF10	HR1134	WF10	WF10	HR1114	HR1138	WF10
			HR1111	WF11	WF11	HR1115	HR1139	WF11

Stillwater TAY JACKET

- Adjustable peak hood
- Waterproof and breathable fabric
- Double storm flap
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- Articulated sleeves with adjustable cuffs
- Awesome Quality

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£74.99



TS ORKLA WADING JACKET

A fantastic breathable and waterproof wading jacket. We find the sizing on this model a little small so we recommend you order one size up from normal!

Code	Size	RRP
LS0072	M	£199.00
LS0073	L	Now £100.00
LS0074	XL	



HARDY SINTRIX JET FLY RODS

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

The 4pc Hardy Jet is available in a range of sizes and line ratings, including short lightweight streamrods, powerful #7 and #8 rods for modern loch styles, and even a selection of long, light line weight rods for modern European nymphing techniques. The Jet features Fuji hardwire guides, superb, high grade cork handles with a reversed half wells on everything below a #6, and a full wells and fighting butt on everything above. The Jet comes packaged in a protective, cordura hard tube.

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



HARDY 2012/3 ZENITH 12FT 6 DOUBLE HAND FLY ROD

Here at Glasgow Angling Centre, we have recently got our hands on some old style Hardy Zenith rods, delivering the original model of these groundbreaking rods at a fantastic price. This range consists of all model with the Old Style metallic reel seat. This rod features a super fast action and is fitted with shorter Scandi-style handles and capable of dealing with a much wider range of line weight.

- Incredible strength to weight ratio
- High performance, fast action design

Code	Length	Casts	Pcs	RRP	Now
HR1774	12ft 6"	#7	4	£849.00	£400.00

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These are the best Switch rods we have seen at this price point! Made from 30/40 Ton graphite and featuring all new tapers and actions these rods offer exceptional value for money. All models are 4 piece with AAA Grade cork handles, Multi Weave tapers and complete with Bag and tube.

Code	Length	AFTM	Pcs	RRP	Now
GC1587	10ft 8	#6	4	£249.99	£125.00
GC1588	11ft	#7	4	£249.99	£125.00
GC1589	11ft	#8	4	£249.99	£125.00

HARDY MARKSMAN 2 SALMON RODS

"T" Double Handed Salmon Rod
 For those who like casting, or fishing rivers which traditionally use, or favour a full line, these rods fit the criteria perfectly.

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

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



LOOP ADVENTURE 15FT #10 SALMON ROD

The Adventure from Loop is a superb, 3 piece Double Handed rod with a fantastic mid-to-tip action. Fully lined stripper guides and durable snake guides for the remainder.
 Rod tube/bag not included.

Code	Length	AFTM	Pcs	RRP	Now
LP1692	15ft	#10	3	£499.99	£94.00



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Code	Re-arm pack	Price
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Estancia Despedida Lodge



Robert and Tommy - Robert cradles a nice fish while guide Tommy celebrates.



The Author with a nice trout.

a fly fishing hero in this part of the world, Mr Angleo 'Goma' Carrillo. I was one of two European flyfishing pros asked to give fly casting clinics at this high profile event which took place in Rio Grande city and on the rolling pampas on the banks of one of the world most famous fly fishing rivers in the world the Rio Grande. The other European was the great Danish caster Henrik Mortensen and I must say it was great to meet him as, strangely, our paths had never crossed before. Henrik is an extremely talented and well known fly caster and fisher and I enjoyed his demonstrations immensely. Over the years, I have seen many casting demos and Henrik really is first rate, the man I must say knows his stuff.

There were also anglers that came from all over South America and some that had made the trip down from North America and it was very nice to meet Mrs Fanny Krieger, the wife of the renowned fly casting teacher the late Mel Krieger. Fanny was a real lady and I had a long chat with her about fishing and her husband; in fact everyone I met on this adventure were wonderful including a multitude of great South American fly anglers. At this point I must give a special mention and thank my interpreter and now friend Jorge Luis Calvo Laubli or Tato for short; he is a genuinely good guy who speaks perfect English and has a great sense of humour and is also an enthusiastic and gifted fly fisher. There were so many remarkable people I really would like to express thanks to them all for their hospitality. Also at the event there were people from the media and I was even interviewed by Argentine TV with an interpreter speaking in Spanish trying to translate my English with my Northern Irish brogue. I have to say I really did have a tremendous time and I really enjoyed this phase of the trip, even if I was I must admit a little nervous at giving my casting demos in front of such a renowned gathering of anglers. To be honest I was made to feel very welcome by all my new flyfishing

friends and they enthusiastically clapped my casting demonstrations and I gave a few tips with the new Hardy fly rods. Of course, I did get in some fishing during this experience and met and cast with some very skilful fly fishers.

The second part of his trip was where my fishing however started in earnest. I was to stay at the Estancia Despedida lodge, near the banks of the river with a few people who had been staying at the lodge and fishing while I was at the angling show. My fellow anglers were there upon my arrival - Robert Hayes and Piaras Kealey, both from Northern Ireland who had fished with me many times in Canada on trips I had hosted. Also joining us was Ricky Ray from Texas. They all had been there battling the westerly winds and I caught some very large seatrout or as they are called in this part of the world sea 'run browns.'

Estancia Despedida Lodge is an amazing place, hosted by Danny Lajous and Ozzie, two great characters. The lodge is lavishness, tranquil and set in a beautiful wilderness with not only fishing on the Rio Grande, but also the picturesque rivers Rio Menendez and Rio Mc Lennan. Danny and Ozzie are the ultimate hosts. Their kind nature along with an abundant fishing knowledge made me feel right at home and, as the only owner-operated lodge on the Rio Grande, Despedida has the comforting sense of staying with a fishing family. On top of this, Danny's son Tommy and his friend Jorge are truly fantastic guides with an uncanny ability to find big fish that will take a fly, and Ozzie's interesting conversations at the dinner table ranged from Argentine history to rock, jazz and blues.

Being a lad from Belfast, a place steeped in history that is also into music, I found we had a lot to talk about, not only fly fishing but everything from Led Zeppelin to world affairs. I liked him almost immediately, the same as the others I had met so far on the trip. I ought to add that chef Oscar served



The Wall of Fame told many a tale of fine fish.



Mrs Fanny Krieger, wife of the renowned fly casting teacher the late Mel Krieger.



Getting a closer look at what was going on



Filming for Argentinian TV.

excellent four course meals with elements of Argentine and European cuisine, well-matched with best Argentinian wines. Indeed, we were looked after extremely well as it's simply a terrific place to eat, sleep and, most importantly, fish.

Wall of Fame

When I arrived at the lodge one of the first things I noticed was the bar and not for the obvious reason that I wanted a drink. On the contrary for, perhaps an even better motive, hanging on the walls were pictures of many anglers holding great fish. They called it the Wall of Fame, as simply or maybe not so simply, if you are fortunate enough to hook and land a sea-trout over 20 pounds during your stay, you would get your picture hanging beside many other great anglers holding mammoth fish. I looked at these framed pictures in wonder and I can't deny I hoped that I might be privileged enough to someday land such a magnificent fish as many of these other guests had done over the

years. I knew that Robert, Piaras and Ricky Ray had all landed fish during their stay, some magnificent fish. Even though we were quite early in the season, they had all managed to land double figure fish and many others, so I was in with a chance.

I remember the first night in the lodge them telling me about their astonishing battles over the last few days. I also laughed when they told me that guide Tommy had returned fish before they even got a chance to take a photo of them with what Tommy thought was small seatrout of only about 10 pounds. To be honest I thought this must be a joke, I was later to find out that it was not. You see in my part of the world a seatrout of this size is a great fish but here it is not out of the ordinary, in fact it's common.

The first brown trout were stocked in Tierra del Fuego by an English man called John Goodall in 1935. He shipped from Puerto Montt in Chile, 60,000 eggs which survived the gruelling journey to be planted on the

Candelaria and McLennan rivers, both tributaries of the Rio Grande. It is believed that those brown trout that did survive found the rivers to be largely void of significant food sources and, over time, the trout found their way to brackish water and eventually to the sea or maybe more accurately, to the huge estuary of the Rio Grande, where they thrived on the rich krill and bait fish there and prospered. Through recent scientific research, we know that sea-run browns in the Rio Grande remain in the river from one to four years after hatching, before they head out to sea. They will then feed and get larger in the ocean for about 6 months to a year before returning to the Rio Grande for their first spawning run. Upon the first return, the fish will average about six pounds in size. Like their relations, the Atlantic salmon, sea-run brown trout often survive the spawn and then head back out to sea to feed and grow until it is time to spawn again. A fish on its fourth return journey can weigh over 20 pounds, and fish in the 20-30 pound range are becoming more and more regular. It's not uncommon for the sea run browns to return to the river as many as six times to spawn. In the Rio Grande, the trout have no natural predators, and catch and release laws have been firmly put in place to safeguard this fishery for almost thirty years now, something I think we, as anglers, can all learn from.

One of the best days of my angling life

Now, against this wonderful backdrop, let me tell you about one of



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the best days of my angling life. I was fishing the main river and had watched Ricky Ray and Piaras both land magnificent fish. Ricky had a mighty fish just below 20 pounds and Piaras had a few and a big one of about 18 pounds. Robert and I at this point had not landed a fish, or had a pull, but were fishing as hard as the others that had done well. I had fished down though a stretch of the river with my double handed rod but, where the river narrowed, decided for a change to fish with a single handed rod for a while, a Hardy 9' 8 weight set up with a Rio Versi tip fly line with a sinking tip. This is gear I am very familiar with, as I have used tackle like this often in Canada for steelhead and Pacific salmon.

I had attached to my leader a fly that was given to me by the angling show's interpreter Jorge Luis Calvo Laubli - Tato - which was a red Intruder-style pattern again similar to many of the flies I have used in British Columbia. I noticed in the middle of the long pool a huge bulge. At first I thought this was a rock just breaking the surface, but the Rio Grande is not really a rocky river, in fact it offers easy wading to fly fishers as it is on fine gravel. The whole river seems to be just one perfect spawning bed and I never saw one large rock in the river while I had been there. Then, just as these thoughts rushed through my mind, the large swelling vanished and I realised to my amazement it was definitely a fish.

I immediately made a cast so my fly would cover the spot where the fish showed and as my line swung around it tightened then stopped and for a second I thought perhaps my fly had stuck on the bottom. Then the rod was almost ripped from my hand and all hell broke loose as I felt my rod bend, dip and plunge as the huge fish started to shake its colossal head. After a long fast run that pulled line and backing from my reel at an amazing pace, the fish hit the air and started to cartwheel like a possessed gymnast on strength enhancing steroids whose leotard was

far too tight and was hurting their nether regions. Then the fish dived again for a few more long runs with powerful head shakes. There were times during the struggle that I had to run along the gravel bank - fast - just to try and just keep the tension on the fish. But after a long and I must say one of the best fights of my life, during which many times I thought that I should have stayed with the long double handed rod, I eventually landed my prize. I stood there in wonderment as the huge seatrout glistened in the sunlight. Guide Jorge weighed the big cock fish with a knowing grin on his face and then said: 'Stevie Munn my fine amigo your fish is a 'Wall of Fame fish' as it is a good 25 pounds.' I almost imagined I heard a fanfare in my head.

I have had many large fish but this fish ranks with some of the best. I was I must admit shaking with the adrenalin rush when I held this gorgeous creature

in my wet hands for my picture, before I slipped him back into the river to swim off and spawn and to make more strong amazing fish. I recollect lying on my back on the bank and looking into the clear skies and thanking John Goodall for his pioneering spirit. Without his efforts so many years ago, these great game fish, and this incredible fishery, would not exist today. I was so contented, to be honest I did not even fish again that day; Jorge and I sat on the bank and chatted and watched the others fishing. That evening Robert also landed an immense fish, this time a bright bar of female silver of about 19 pounds, a great way to end a fabulous day.

I have to say this was an amazing trip and I will return to the 'Land of Fire,' wind and of course huge trout; it is after all the place where I hooked and landed one of the most memorable fish of my life.

Fact File

I would recommend bringing double handed rods, as well as a single handed rod. The single handed rod is used to fish when the wind is not too strong and also a good option for good casters as the river is not so wide. A single handed rod from 7 to 9 weights is a good idea. Light two handed rods are popular and allow anglers to cast a comfortable line with less effort, particularly on windy days which you will get. Mending and controlling line is also easier with a double hander 13 to 15 feet for an 8 to 10 weight line. A quality reel is crucial for playing big sea trout. A strong, smooth drag is a must. Reels (and spare spools) should have capacity for the fly line and 100 yards of 30 pound backing

To be well prepared for Tierra del Fuego, anglers should include at least three lines to accommodate water levels and wind conditions. Weight forward fly lines are generally used on the Rio Grande Floating lines are typically most useful in low water conditions and during early morning and evening hours, when sea trout are inclined to be nearer the surface, often floating line with polyleader as intermediate to extra fast sink tip. A good range of polyleader is a must. For single handed rods, 5 to 10 feet are the best, and 10 to 15 feet for double handed rod. Also a sinking shooting taper is very important. The Teeny T-200 and T-300 lines have proven to be excellent, and at least one or both of these lines should be considered as must-bring items. Skagit line of Skagit head is very good for this type of fishing. The pros are that they load the rod very easily and are also very effective to cast big flies, or casting in the wind. Bring good monofilament in sizes that will turn over the array of fly sizes Spools of monofilament should include 15, 12 and 10 lbs breaking strengths, Maxima Ultra-green is a good choice.

About the Author

Anyone interested in sampling this magnificent part of the world and its great fishing please contact Stevie Munn at anglingclassics@aol.com or get more info at www.Irishflyfair.com

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A June Charter Boat Trip

This year had started off a bit slow for me as, far as sea angling was concerned, but that was soon to get a whole lot better!

My friend Damian and I tried a few times for bass from the shore with no more than a few small flatties to show for it, plus one bonus seatrout, which had to go back as it was above the size to keep without a licence. Then I was asked if I would be interested in joining a group from Balbriggan Sea Angling Club on a charter boat trip out of Wicklow in early June. Many boats work on a per day basis for the entire boat, so it pays to have as many as can comfortably fish go along as the charter price is divided up among all going. I immediately replied that I was interested as it's always great to get out on the water with a rod, and these trips are never too expensive anyway. While Damian is a member of the club, I am not, but that did not bother me as I have been on too many trips like this where I knew no one setting off, but at the end of the day have made new friends and hopefully caught some fish.

The venue for this trip was another



A nice bull huss.

reason for me being keen to go.

Although Damian and I fish a lot off County Dublin, and I have done so since I was a child. I have not fished

offshore anywhere else in the Irish Sea. I was keen to see what was on offer, or maybe to be more precise what would still be left.



Kit quickly heads to net Anthony's catch.



Smooth hound on the official measuring mat - a specimen is over 100 cms.

As a regular reader of the angling press, I was aware of Kit Dunne's operation, Wicklow Boat Charters. I knew he regularly catches ray, specimen sized smooth hounds and bull huss along with tope and other bottom dwelling fish, but he specialises in these four species. I have caught a specimen smooth hound before and know that they can be great fighters on lighter gear. I also know that their favourite bait is hermit crab so I asked a friend who fishes to keep an eye out for some hermits for me. By the end of May he had only managed to get me two hermits, but the winds did not suit him getting out. Crabs will also work very well, and I had some frozen mackerel in the freezer. I need not have worried because the Balbriggan boys had a box of fresh mackerel and a few bags of hard and peeling shore crabs. Anyway, we would not be stuck, as Kit can supply any bait you need for the day.

The lads picked me up and my rod was added to those on the roofrack and off we went. Less than two hours later, we pulled up beside Wicklow's South Quay, where Kit was preparing one of the two purpose built Offshore 105 charter boats. We were going out on the Castle Maiden, and the Lisin 1 was staying in port. Both are fast,

comfortable 35-foot charter boats. Kit himself is a very experienced sea angler, with many international caps and is also a qualified coach so newcomers to the sport are well catered for.

Hooks were baited with fresh mackerel and lowered over the side

We were lucky in that the seas were almost flat and the sun shone as we set out from Wicklow for one of Kit's marks. He had asked what we wanted to target and brought us to a mark not far north of the Windfarm on the Arklow bank, where the depth plunged to 46 meters or so. As we headed out, the rest of the guys, many of whom regularly fish boat competitions got their rigs set up. I was surprised that most opted for a three hook rig with beads and Muppets, complete with flashy rubber skirts, above the hooks. I stuck with what I know, a single hook on a short wire trace. Kit advised us that this mark produce bullhuss, a much larger version of the lesser-spotted dogfish, sometimes a spurdog, and maybe a tope. With this in mind the hooks were baited with fresh mackerel and lowered over the side.

It did not take long before someone

said: "Tap, Tap Tap - got him" and a rod bent over. The sea was quite discoloured, so we had to wait until the fish broke surface to see what it was. A decent bull huss broke surface and was scoped into the boat by Kit with the net. Next a lesser spotted dogfish, before a real fight was on when three doggies on a single trace were hauled aboard.

This was quite a workout as we were in fairly deep water and the tide was running so our lines were streaming out behind the boat with up to a pound and a half of lead trying to hold the bait in place. Then Anthony in the stern really hit into something heavy and pumped the line in to reveal two bull husses and a doggie on one trace. I was happy to get a single average sized huss and a couple of doggies before lunch, the huss removed a piece of skin from my hand before it was ejected back into the sea. But it's often the way that, if the lesser spotted dogfish get the scent of mackerel baits, they will arrive in packs. Shortly before lunchtime, Damian's reel started to scream as something headed off with his bait. The run indicated that it must be a tope, all eyes on the boat were on him as he tightened into the run only to have the line go slack in his hands.

While all this was going on Kit had been around asking who wanted tea or coffee and how they wanted it. He produced a grand 'cup of scald' for everyone and netted anything that needed netting while offering advice anytime a question was asked. He managed this while also having the time to assist sorting out the inevitable tangles that always come with fishing in a strong tide when more than one person is fishing at the same time. Anyway, around about then, Kit asked us if we wanted to try for something else at a different mark. All agreed to a move as the small doggies were becoming a pest. Not that they were really, but we wanted to try for something else.

We returned the fish

Kit hauled the anchor and we headed



Anthony's two huss and a doggie.

inshore to the next spot where he expected us to get a few smooth hounds. He advised no mackerel baits to discourage the doggies, so crab it was; I put on one of my hermit crabs to try it. Sea anglers can be fussy how they put a bait on the hook and some of the lads were tying neat little rolls of crab and squid with bait elastic ready for the off. I suppose fishing competitions means you have to maximise your time on the seabed. It was not long before I lifted my rod to be greeted with that bouncy pull that tells there is a fish on. Up came a feisty smooth hound, not that big but a fighter. A couple of the others got smooth hounds as well. All were measured on the official mat, which the skipper uses to determine length. We had agreed a pool for a prize for the longest fish and a smaller prize for second. One of the other smooth hounds was 87 cms and mine was 83 cms so I was in second place. Kit

releases the fish alive and research has proven that rod caught sharks and rays survive very well. He is working with the Marine Institute and I.F.I. providing samples for DNA testing as well as tagging fish to track their movements.

The tide had turned once more and the boat swung around its anchor, signalling that we had less than an hour before our day was up. Of course this was when Anthony's rod bent over and started screaming as a fish headed for England with his hook in its mouth. We all watched as he tightened into the fish and could not even slow it down. This had to be a decent Tope. But a fish is not caught until it's in the boat and it was not long until curses were heard as the line went slack. On reeling it in he showed his hook which had been straightened by the pull of the fish. Much hilarity ensued about not being able to catch a fish, but Anthony pleaded innocence, now Kit got it too as he had not told Anthony that there

were tope at this mark, great banter with good humour. Of course you can never be exact about what can be caught and surprises do happen. The seas had grown quite a bit by now so we headed in, one of the group had headed into the toilet a few times, and wanted to stay there, despite all the advice to remain on deck.

All in all a great day out with everyone catching lots of fish, All-right, there were no monsters, but two tope runs and plenty of other fish was all that was required to make it a great day. Good company and a knowledgeable skipper had combined to make it a great day, one which I recommend to anyone. It's great to see that there are still fish in the Irish Sea to be enjoyed and released for someone else to catch. I had even managed to win a few euro from the pool so what more could anyone ask for?

For more information sea fishing trips go to www.wicklowboatgarters.ie



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Attention Anglers & Hunters!

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The Non-native Species Project is co-ordinated by Inland Fisheries Ireland in association with the National Biodiversity Data Centre and supported by the National Parks and Wildlife Service.



Stalking The Slicks

It's a mild evening in late May, the air is heavy with the scent of Hawthorne blossom and the smell of wood smoke as the last glowing embers of the old Kelly Kettle smoulder away. Overhead, thousands of mayfly spinners are performing their nuptial dance and the females are already making their way out over the Lough to conclude the final chapter in their short lives, laying their precious eggs on the water surface before expiring and their mortal remains have already begun to litter the surface of the dark waters.

The day had been a rough one; a cold north easterly had blown squalls of rain across the building grey waves, a few mayfly duns were hatching but it was impossible to hold the boat on a drift and most of the anglers had retired early but, as we also pointed the boat toward home, I had sensed a change and we stopped on the lee of the island for tea, just to see! Sure enough the wind swung around and dropped a little, then gradually the air became milder and now bright shafts of sunlight are breaking through the dark clouds. Suddenly the Lough feels like a different place and the heat stimulates the mayfly, which take to the wing in tall columns, out of the breeze in the shelter of the trees on the island. The thrush and the warblers begin to break into chorus, a cuckoo calls in the distance and soon gulls and swallows are working the water – a sure sign of abundant fly!

A light breeze carries the mayfly out over the Lough, they seem to follow the calm water of the slick that stretches below the island and far out into the

deeps. As the spinner numbers increase, it soon becomes apparent that a good fall of spent gnat is taking place and the air grows heavy with anticipation as the scene unfolds before us. It's not long before a disturbance far out in the wind lane betrays the presence of a feeding trout confirming

that sure enough, 'they're on the gnat!'

We quickly snuff out the fire, gather our gear and begin to set up the delicate dry fly rods, oiling the flies, degreasing the tippet, a touch of Mucilin at the end of the fly line to make sure it rides high. My brother Phil and his mate Bill will take the downwind side of the wide



Golden rewards of fishing the 'wind lanes' or 'working the slicks' as Irish anglers sometimes call it.



Scanning cobwebs, leaves and the shoreline can reveal what the trout may be feeding on.

slick and Dad and I will take the upwind side, travelling a few hundred yards behind, holding the boat just off the slick on quiet, carefully placed oars. Eyes strain as we scan the water for signs of fish and, after a few minutes, I see Bill's rod bowed tightly over and Phil rows him away from the calm water to play the trout. A fish shows upwind of us, is travelling too fast to follow, but I know it won't be long before another passes as this is the only slick for some distance and the fly are concentrated in it.

I spot a slight movement some distance downwind and gradually a good trout comes into view, he's working his way up the slick or wind lane, picking off the flies trapped in the smooth surface – sometimes delicately sipping down a fly, sometimes a dorsal fin and wide tail rolls over. By the way he moves the water, I know this is no small trout. I gently guide the boat into position and Dad lengthens line and drops the fly some ten feet above where the trout is feeding. Time stands still as the trout shuffles up the side of the slick; he takes several mayflies before Dad's imitation disappears in a tiny dimple. There's a short pause before the fly line is ripped off the surface of the water and the strike drives the hook home. The reel screams as the fish tears

off line as he bolts for safety then throws itself clear of the water, the spray sparkling pink in the light of the glowing sunset.

For me this is the ultimate thrill of Lough fishing and even though conditions are often not suitable, when the weather gods are kind and everything comes together, it's always a magical experience and something which can help sustain the weary angler through the long dark days of the close season.

Traditional Lough Style

When we began fishing the great Irish Loughs many years ago, it was a case of stick on the wet flies and drift likely looking areas of the Lough paying special attention to features such as headlands, offshore reefs etc. and generally just covering as much water as possible. On a good day we might run into a few fish, but on a bad day we'd return home utterly exhausted from the continual casting with little to show for our efforts and I always felt there had to be more to fishing these wonderful places than this.

Two things changed my perception of Lough fishing and now I always approach angling with an open mind, always trying to learn and willing to take advice if it is offered. The first

thing that always stuck in my mind in those wet fly days was an evening fishing Portacarron Bay, out of Lal Faherties angling centre. My brother Phil and I had been buying flies in one of those bar/off licence/petrol station /hardware/tackle shops in Oughterard and the proprietor announced that we would 'need some of these,' presenting us with some spent gnat patterns, which we hadn't a clue how to use as we'd only ever fished wet fly before, but we gladly accepted them anyway. As usual Lal was patient and helpful when we asked him about fishing the new flies, but we set up that evening for wet fly, keeping the spent gnats handy 'just in case'. As we made our way down to the jetty some other anglers proffered advice on fishing the spent gnat and one of them joked: "As for timing the strike, when the fish takes count to three or you Northern boys might say 'God Save The Queen' before striking, whatever you say, if a big trout takes your fly don't strike too soon!"

The evening turned out to have a cool breeze which put a chop in the water and few mayfly were about. We fished the wets for a couple hours but nothing was happening. Disappointed, I pointed the boat toward home as the sun dipped in the horizon but on the way back I spotted one of these wind lanes or slicks that Lal had talked about. "This is where the fly collect," he had said. Sure enough when I took the boat over there were dead and dying fly all along the band of calm water and even more impressively, large trout were patrolling up and down along its length. Now at that time we were still school boys and the sight of those huge trout moving up and down the slick, gulping down these flies, fairly made our hearts race! I held the boat just off the slick and we dropped our wet flies delicately in front of them as they cruised up and down, but they didn't take the slightest notice. Then I remembered about the newly acquired spent gnat dry flies and, in the fading light, I told Phil to set his rod up while I held the boat in position, then when he was set up I could change



The cause of all the excitement - favourite trout foods, an emerging dun mayfly or what is known in Irish fishing circles as the Greenfly and the egg laying female known as the Spent Gnat.

my tackle. He quickly tied on the spent pattern and greased it up, then it was my turn and I could hear the swish of his little nine foot river rod as I tried to tie my new fly on with trembling hands. Suddenly, from my position in the bottom of the boat I heard his voice say: "One, two, three." I thought he was taking the Micky until there was a sharp strike and the little rod hooped over and line peeled off the wee Rimfly reel as it had never done before! The trout bored down deep and stayed there for fifteen minutes while the line sang in the breeze and the old rod creaked, pulled over in a perfect hoop - apart from the flat bit where it had been repaired. Somewhere, down in the deeps, a large trout was swimming around attached to Phil's line and as two schoolboys we had never been in this situation before; the thrill was balanced by the fear of losing it but eventually it came to the net, which was just about big enough! Four and a half pounds of Lough Corrib beauty lay in the bottom of the boat, a trout to admire! We were so excited that we headed straight for the jetty to show Lal and the other anglers; the youngest angler on the lake had caught the biggest trout!

After this, I tried to learn more about the insects that the trout were eating and why they end up on the trout's menu, what time of year they appeared, their life cycles and what stages of their lives that they are of interest to

trout. I practiced the dry fly fishing on the smaller lakes at home and refined my technique on put and take fisheries such as Straid and Craigmore, where you can study the trout taking the natural flies. At that time the English anglers were devising dry flies for reservoirs and I searched the magazines for new patterns and tied them myself as they weren't commercially available. I was fortunate to meet other anglers who were doing the same thing, some much more talented than myself, and we shared knowledge and patterns. I remember, at Straid one evening, I was fishing with the late Jim Poots during a buzzer hatch, he was using a Bob's Bits and I was using a Shipman's Buzzer and we were catching a lot of fish.

The manager came over in the boat and I could tell there was something up because of his attitude and manner and after a while he apologised and explained that the other anglers were convinced we were using bread! It's a mark of Pootsey's generosity of spirit that he got me to take the boat over and we gave the other guys some flies; they couldn't believe that such simple flies could be so effective but they imitated the buzzers at the point of hatching which is when the trout were taking them, as they were temporarily stuck emerging from their shucks in the meniscus. After using the dry flies on the small fisheries it was only a small

step to try them on the wild brown trout of the Boghill Dam, where they worked just as well and where I met some other master anglers such as Bobby Bryans, Stevie Munn and Frankie Haddock who all taught me more about the dry fly fishing and insect life, especially for wild trout.

Change of Strategy

Now I normally try to work out a little strategy for my fishing day. Before I start fishing I will be looking for telltale signs of what the trout may be feeding on, cobwebs, leaves or insects trapped in the waters' edge can give an indication of what might be hatching. Often I just thread the fly line through the rod rings and don't set up a leader or flies until I see what's happening out on the Lough. How many times have you seen anglers who just can't wait to get into the boat and get casting, often overlooking the signs that would bring success. A patient approach will bring greater rewards as you can take the time to assess the situation, find the flies that the trout are keyed in to, spot the feeding patterns and the likely places for trout to be concentrated and feeding. There are skills to learned such as boat craft, rowing quietly without splashing, holding position in a wave, spotting wind lanes or slicks as we call them. Spotting fish and identifying rise forms is another skill which must be practised



A lovely Irish wild brown trout, photographed & returned.

and learned, people often don't believe you when you point out a movement but this is a skill which must be acquired. There are also different features which will concentrate food on the surface of a Lough and where these will occur will be largely dependant on the wind where it blows off a headland, around a bay or an island, in wind lane over open water; these are the type of locations where insects can be blown into the water, or washed into a bay or slick. Instead of simply covering the water, we are now using our skills to determine where the fish are likely to be patrolling for food – find the food and the trout will already be there.

The Menu

Lough trout are opportunists and any food items present in significant numbers is likely to be taken; dry fly fishing on slicks isn't confined to mayfly duns and spent gnats; there are olives, sedges, midge, caenis and terrestrials such as black gnats, hawthorne flies, daddy longlegs etc. All of these insects have their season and specific habitat which means that usually somewhere in a lake or Lough there will be something of interest to trout and therefore anglers; on Lough Sheelin for example, Bog Bay will often have good hatches of midge

while other parts of the Lough are having a Mayfly hatch because the nature of the bottom of Bog Bay is more suitable for that insect. Often tiny insects will bring up big trout and a fall of black gnat or hatch of caenis (anglers curse) will not be ignored by trout.

For those with the knowledge of where the insects are likely to be concentrated and the skills to imitate them, present the flies well, spot the rise forms and control the boat, then Lough fishing can be a lot more interesting and rewarding than just 'covering the water' with wet flies.

You can develop an instinct for what is going on, what areas are suitable for mayfly, sedges, midges etc, when the trout are likely to be feeding etc. I think these skills are what separates the better anglers from the also-rans, but it's within everyone's grasp and these skills make a day on the water much more challenging, enjoyable and rewarding. For me, finding and carefully making my way down a wind lane littered with mayfly or sedges, olives, black gnats etc takes some beating for excitement and sport and all the effort developing the necessary skills to take full advantage of the situation only add to my love of the sport and the beautiful Irish Loughs where great brown trout haunt.

Postscript: all fish shown in the photos were returned safely to the water. Lee Wulff once said that the greatest gift one angler can give to another is to return his fish. Our great Irish Limestone Lakes have a capacity to feed huge populations of fish and now many spawning streams have been enhanced so why not allow the lakes to meet their potential by releasing them to produce more offspring.

Fishing these magical places is part of Irish angling tradition & heritage, it's part of the fabric of society and our culture. Enhancing these beautiful Loughs will be good for the economy, tourism and angling in Ireland, we have a world class asset so we should respect and manage it as such. I think fishery rules should also reflect this and no angler should be allowed to take more than a couple of fish per week from a wild fishery, there are any number of put and take fisheries for those anglers wanting to fish for the pot!

Our Limestone Lakes & rivers are too valuable to be exploited for greed or selfishness, let's make them world class fisheries, take a quick photo of your prize and allow it to go back to grace the spawning redds in autumn so we can enjoy fantastic sport on the unique Loughs that we love!

Ballynatray Revisited

How often do we look forward to revisiting a place that has made such a lasting impression on our first visit that we can't wait to return and, when we do, the place just doesn't seem the same.

Something is missing, something not quite the way it was before. We just can't put our finger on it. Perhaps it's because we were that bit younger, or because a certain person is missing or even something as trivial as the weather is different. Whatever the reason, the rose tinted glasses have slumped down our nose and we leave disappointed. This was prominent on my mind in the days preceding the return of the goshawk section of the Irish Hawking Club to the Ballynatray Estate in County Waterford. Our party had booked the last two days of the hunting season in January 2014.

On our last visit in January 2013, which also happened to be our first, the sport we experienced was second to none and it was made all the more enjoyable as it was shared in fine company and in a glorious setting; all a sportsman could ask for. I had many good memories from the visit but strangely enough the one that sticks with me most was a sound, a sound that belongs in the valley. Just as much as the gentle lapping of the broad Blackwater's flow on the shoreline, or the wind among the oak woodlands that stand sentinel over its shores. It was the haunting call of the enigmatic curlew. A call that transfixed the moment and made time itself irrelevant. As we stood near the shores with that mesmerising sound that seemed as if the valley itself was calling, there was no one but ourselves to mark the passage of time.

Our hunting party could have been from any century. Could a return trip live up to the magic time we experienced on our first visit?

Word had spread how much the group of hawkers, or to give us our correct title, austringers, enjoyed



The team - John Duggan, Neal Carroll, Sergio Zenere, Don Ryan, Keith Barker, Eoghan Ryan, Martin McGeehan, Mick Docherty & Robert Walton.

the previous visit and the places for a return tour were not surprisingly oversubscribed. I felt privileged to be one of the lucky ones.

As the day and hour arrived and the automatic barriers on the side gate of the estate rolled back, we drove up the narrow driveway under strict instructions to not drive on the grass. Trying to stay in the middle of the road as well as taking in the incredible views on either side was no easy task but by the end of the journey, my concerns had all been banished. The beauty of the demesne had revealed itself. Time faded into the light mist that hung over the Blackwater estuary and we were once more in paradise.



Eoghan Ryan's male goshawk Frankie.

Steeped in history that is palpable as soon as you step into the estate, from bronze age and monastic settlements to Viking and Norman invasions, the area has attracted a variety of civilisations over the centuries due to its magical aura and natural beauty. The current Ballynatray mansion is an 18th century grand country house, recently restored by developer Henry Gwyn-Jones and set on an 850 acre estate of well tended grounds with breathtaking views over the valley. As well as one of Ireland's most romantic wedding locations, it also offers a self catering holiday resort with a variety of activities. One of those activities, when in season, is a sporting estate. The grounds are well managed

and healthily stocked with pheasant, partridge and duck. It is this very reason that brought us here last season to test our hawks against the estate's head of game and it had drawn us back again this year.

We pulled up to the stable yard with its row of converted outbuildings and were greeted by the very personable gamekeeper, Martin O' Riordan. Martin re-introduced us to Matt Fitzgerald from the Cork Field Trial Association, whom we were well familiar with from the previous



Keith Barker with male goshawk Barrabas.



Eoghan waits his turn.

year as we witnessed one of his FTCH Springer spaniels perform wonders and produce game time after time under testing conditions.

This year's hawking party contained myself, flying a four year old male goshawk called Finn, Keith Barker from Waterford flying his three year old male, Barrabas, Martin McGeehan from Donegal with his six year old male, Sioux, Neal Carroll from Dublin with his three year old male, Squirt. Eoghan Ryan from Wicklow flying a seven year old male named Frankie and with two of this season's goshawks in bright new plumage were John Duggan flying his fine female, Anna, and Robert Walton flying his smart male, Marlon. Of those that came along to spectate, there was Mick Docherty from Dublin, Gerard Grant from Kilkenny and Italian falconer, Sergio Zenere, who flew over from Italy especially for the occasion.

With the usual banter and cajoling out of the way, the slipping orders agreed, the dogs and hawks all roused, shaken down and ready, Martin led the eager party past the pond of chattering ducks to the hunting grounds beyond. Our first challenge was an ox-bow

shaped woodland that bordered the river and sat on the side of a hill that led to open fields above. The mature oak forest, carpeted with brambles and briars is not only ideal cover for the wily pheasant but also a fair challenge for the enthusiastic spaniel.

The action began as soon as we entered the wood. The austringers never got a chance to dwell on whether their hawks would perform, as the following hours consisted of countless numbers of whir-ring pheasants and a flurry of excited spaniels of all varieties, shouts of encouragement and a number of mid-air binds in full view of the entire hunting party. A party of six to seven austringers is a good, comfortable number for a day's field meet and if each hawk gets three flights (slips), it is considered a very good day. Within a matter of hours it was clear we would exceed this quota.

In terms of flight speed, the pheasant and goshawk are pretty evenly matched, although over time the goshawk will eventually catch up as the pheasant tires, but generally the pheasant will have baled to cover long before this happens. There's an ongoing debate

about which is faster, the male or female goshawk. It is widely argued that the male is faster off the fist but the female, once she gets into her stride, is equally as fast and possibly more so. This for the most part is true and I witnessed John Duggan's bird prove this point as she powered passed me through the woods in pursuit of a fine cock pheasant that flew like a woodcock. She was rewarded for her fine efforts and this worthy quarry graced John's game bag.

With such sport and the following day's forecast for heavy rain, it was decided to skip lunch and make the most of the day. The hunting party moved closer to the shores and up to a smaller wood and the afternoon continued pretty much as the morning began with plenty of fine healthy game bursting from cover under pressure from the eager spaniels.

With each austringer more than satisfied with the day's sport and the performance of their hawks, the day ended with a total bag of five pheasants, a good number considering these were the pheasants that outflew the guns all season.

The following morning broke just as

the weatherman predicted, with heavy driving rain that looked like it wouldn't clear for a week never mind a day. It looked so bad, two of the falconers phoned to cancel as they couldn't foresee any improvement likely. For the remaining optimistic party that could see through lead grey skies to silver linings, we were pleasantly rewarded. The storm finally blew northwards before mid-morning and we made our way to the estate to meet Martin the gamekeeper and Patsy McCarthy from the Cork Field Trial Organisation who very kindly agreed to run his spaniels for us. Chairman of the Irish Red Grouse Association, Vincent Flannelly and Jim McCormack also joined the fray to spectate. Although Patsy would argue, Vincent's true reason was to give him a hard time.

Ireland's weather has often been described as having the possibility to experience four seasons in one day. It was half true on this occasion, as the rain appeared to have driven away the winter and left the first on-comings of spring. The ground beneath warmed by the sun began to emanate its earthly aromas for the first time in months. The spring like conditions even had some of the astringers strip down to their shirtsleeves. Despite the glorious weather, for whatever reason and they weren't telling, it was clear the hawks were unsettled as they flew with little conviction. Thankfully, after a couple of flights, they got into their stride and soon were flying more convincingly. The gamekeeper directed us through new ground in another part of the estate we hadn't been the previous year, with good pockets of cover and open ground on either side, where we met some fast moving partridges. Martin McGeehan's bird, Sioux, added one of these partridges to his game bag after a good flight caught in mid-air that made Vincent Flannelly make serious enquiries about where one of these fine goshawks, known as the 'cook's hawk' could be had, and how difficult it was to train.

As the party drew nearer to the

shoreline, the mist that hung over the river had cleared and the far bank became visible. It was here I heard that captivating call again. It instantly drew my mind from the intimacy of the hunting party to the timeless beauty of the estate and my eyes drifted round to take in the moment. I couldn't locate the elusive curlew that cast the spell but as I looked out over the Blackwater with the spring-like conditions at the hunting season's end, my mind turned to other sporting pursuits. That silver tourist, the noble salmon, must already have begun his return journey up through the tidal stretches and as the estate can arrange access on some fine beats on the river, it was a very tempting proposition to return when the days were longer. My reverie of what rod and line I'd use on this broad stretch was broken by the shouts of encouragement as Eoghan's hawk was slipped at an erupting pheasant.

It was a modest bag at day's end with one pheasant and one partridge but, like the old adage, 'piscator non solum piscator' or there's more to fishing than catching fish, the same is also true of falconry. It is more about the flights and being a part of nature on its own terms, harsh and beautiful, cruel at times but magnificent in all its splendour. The gamebirds we saw were plentiful and in great health. It was enough that we saw them and had the opportunity to test our birds against their cunning and fitness and to come away with a modest degree of success.

As we made our way back to the stable yard past the pond, I'm sure I detected a mocking tone in the duck's chatter. Last day of the hunting season and they survived to tell the tale. My reflections on this past season are favourable with many fine days spent in the field with birds and dogs and good company; the two days spent at Ballynatray had been a cracking way to round off that season. If the opportunity to attend arises next year, I'll happily put my name forward, safe in the knowledge that the enchanting beauty of Ballynatray remains timeless.



Robert Walton's first year male goshawk Marlon.



Neal Carroll in woods.

Country Chat

‘Gender-changing’ cats, ancient wren hunts and timeshare hunting dogs spring to mind at Billy’s bird table

My good lady wife, AKA her indoors, nowadays can be frequently spotted outdoors, because she has kindly accepted the role of looking after old age pensioner Leo, a retired cocker dog. That’s to say, retired from as far back as 2009 and still going strong. I can’t help feeling I have been diddled somewhere along the way by releasing his early retirement funds as I still hear tales of him finding and flushing pheasants. Ceara, the oldest in kennel, is due to retire at the end of this year and pension funds are subject to her being the only one in retirement.

Anyway, as I was saying, her indoors has three main hobbies or interests in her life: Tilly and Susie the cats, (that’s numbers 6 and 7 by the way). Tilly, when young, was taken to the vets for ‘her’ to be spayed, only to be told on collection that ‘he’ had been neutered. Then there’s Leo the cocker, and her third interest is the little bird table. All sounds rather conflicting I know, but the cats are allowed outdoors only when they are on a leash, in order to prolong their nine lives as we live on a crossroads. So they haven’t the opportunity to stalk the bird table, or rather the odd looking cherry tree that substitutes as a bird table. And under supervision, Leo doesn’t bother the cats, nor them with him.

But my main point of interest in this

strange little set up is the bird feeding station at the cherry tree. House sparrows, robins, chaffinches, gold finches, green finches, blue tits, great tits, coal tits, blackbirds, collared doves and my favourite little visitor the tiny wren all frequent the tree daily. Not many bird table proprietors can boast of goldfinches as diners, but the good woman has managed to entice no less than thirteen to hers. Incidentally, the goldfinches all vanished as one about the second week in February and the two seed containers remain untouched. But as I write this, I have been told that nine have returned, the missus maintains that they weren’t too partial to the new brand of seeds she had bought, so she went back to her regular supplier.

Back in December, I supplied her

with a contact number to enrol in the RSPB’s Big Garden Birdwatch, granted, they have been a pain ever since, because as she entices the wee visitors to her diner, the RSPB have been trying to entice her into the fold. I can tell them now, they have no chance. After twenty plus years, my wife still sends me out shopping with the exact cash to buy the exact goods. The only reason she agreed to take part in the first place, was because it was all free, including the Big Garden Birdwatch booklet. And no, I am not one of those people who thinks its cool, to be a member of country sports and subscribe to the RSPB at the same time. Personally, I have no time for them.

Although the birds are easily enough identified as some are attracted to certain foods, some are ground feeders and others bird table or hanging feeders. No one watching them, could fail to be captivated by the array of delicate colours and quaint habits of these lovely little birds. I find myself standing for unseemly long periods fascinated by the antics of them all.

Just to the left of the bird table is the rockery. It is over twenty years old and seems to be the little wren’s favourite hangout. In legend, the poor little mite is condemned to live a skulking life of shame for cheating in the great election to find the king of the birds. The story goes that the birds decided to choose as their king, the one which could fly the highest. Hoping to win the contest, the cheeky wren concealed himself in the



September grouse party in Perthshire.

plumage of the mighty eagle, hitching a ride for most of the way, only emerging to outfly the eagle when the eagle finally tired.

Its origins go far back into history

One curious and ancient custom - the wren hunt - which is said to have originated over 1000 years ago, took place in many parts of England and was popular in Ireland, parts of Wales and the Isle of Man.

The hunt was specially associated with St Stephen's Day, 26th December. Wrens were hunted along hedgerows, and through woods with sticks, stones, bows and arrows or birch rods; any

found were killed - often ritually. They were then borne through the town or village on an elaborate bier or specially constructed wren house by grotesquely dressed 'wren boys.' The hunt persisted right up until the sixties, Ireland being the last to curtail the practice. (No, really!) The little bird's origins go far back into history: it is said that a wren hopping on a drum awakened the Danes and foiled a stealthy Irish attack. The poor little hen incubates the five to twelve eggs herself, can you fathom how tiny those little eggs must be. When the young hatch, (14 to 15 days) the male leaves the female to do all the feeding. The hen usually rears two broods a season, the male bird - not the most diligent of parents - may install several females in succession in different nests.

There is no doubting the enjoyment that can be experienced by a well placed bird table. I have discovered (more by accident) that the little diners feel a lot safer if there are trees and other shrubs adjacent to the bird feeder, although it should be said, not swamped with them, especially about



This became a regular feeding point for the birds.

the feeder, or that scourge of bird tables, the moggy, would have a field day. Nor should it be isolated either, for it will prove more enticing to sparrow hawks than to those who dine there.

During my travels along the country roads, I happened upon a little cottage with various models of Land Rover, of similar vintage to my own, sitting about the occupant's garden. Now then, when your favourite mode of transport falls into the less likely mode of transport one is likely to see on the road, it is refreshing to see and meet fellow enthusiasts out and about in similar models to your own. In fact, it is normal practice to flash your lights or acknowledge with a discreet wave a 'fellow' enthusiast in a similar model on the road - bad manners not to. In fact it's the only vehicle that I am aware of, whereby the driver/owner does so, because they are driving similar vehicles.

An amusing little story

So, not one to be hampered by shyness, I drove into the yard and balled out with an outstretched hand.

Within a few minutes, I discovered not only a new friend, but a keen doggy man and a keen shooting man as well. He told me an amusing little story, of how he and his mate use to regularly travel to parts of Fermanagh to shoot. For years they would stop in a little village on their flight path to pick up a little setter type dog who would accompany them and hunted and retrieved like no other throughout the day. On their way home they would drop the wee spud back off in his home village. Year after year, they would pass through the village and always, there he was, sitting outside the post office waiting for them. The first time they

encountered the little dog, he tried to get into their vehicle as apparently he would regularly accompany shooting folk, work his little heart out all day, and then it was seen to be the proper thing to drop him off at the post office on the way home. It was thought that he belonged to a retired school mistress who lived nearby. When she died, the little dog disappeared.

Thinking back to my own experience, brought up in a small cul-de-sac housing estate, with no more than twenty-eight houses, ten of us would share the one little lab cross back in the early seventies. The owner would do a bit of shooting himself, but as long as you made yourself known to him, (initially that is) he didn't mind you borrowing the little dog. The oddness of it all was that this sharing only materialised because if someone got there before you, well you were snookered, so we all got together and constructed some sort of a half-baked pact to contact each other and book the little dog. Mind you, nobody ever thought of informing the dog's owner of the arrangement!

Memories are sweeter than dreams

As the seasons move they dictate a lot of things, small things, but relevant nonetheless.

I keep my ferret run in the yard side of the house in winter, for not only is it easier to clean on a dark night, but I can keep a closer eye on it and there is less chance of them straying too far, should a rough night do any damage that should let them escape. In summer they go to the far side of the house onto the grass, the sun isn't on them all day; its cooler and their summer 'aroma' isn't hanging in the air close to the house.

This summer I have acquired three lovely young ferrets after losing some of my old ones to just that, old age. I have very much enjoyed having the young'uns around the place, they look well, eat well and are extremely friendly with me and the dogs, so we are off to a good start.

In spring and into summer, dog exercising changes from dark evening road walking to early morning runs

behind the bike and long evenings along the river bank, chasing ducks and fetching sticks. My shed, too, changes from season to season. In summer I pull out my fishing rods and pigeon decoys and tuck the duck decoys, long nets and shooting waders in their place. Just a few weeks back I hauled out one of several Larsen traps and got it placed for the summer months, in the hope that I may have a hand in holding down a booming magpie population. Only a couple of weeks ago for the first time in my life I counted eleven magpies together, so many the rhyme doesn't even go that far and stops at ten.

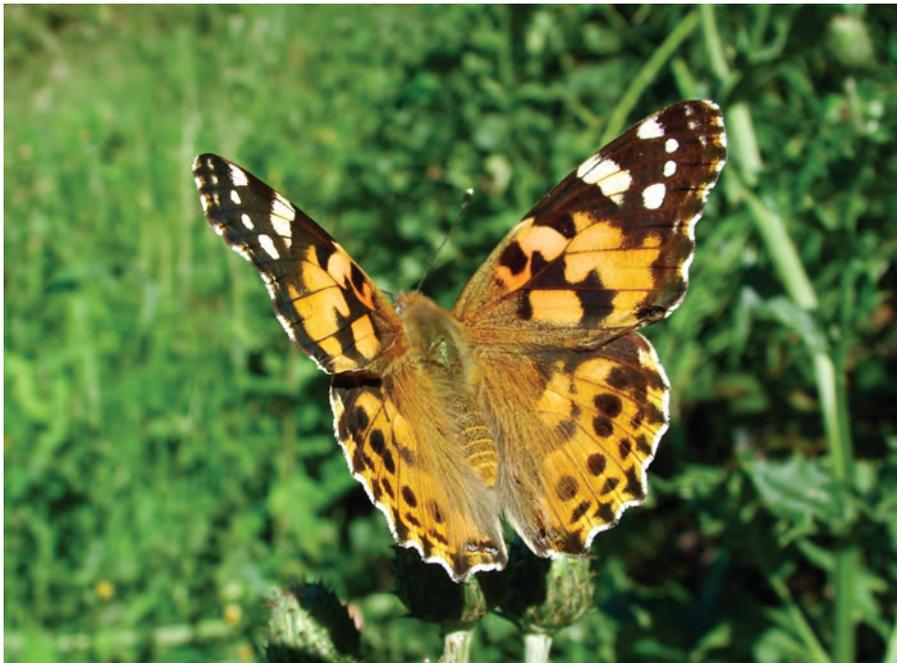
Seasons also dictate my own habits. A winter Saturday is always taken up regardless, whereas a summer one can be a lazy day if that is what I want it to be. As last summer died away and autumn came around, my mind turned

to ducks as it always does. I was up to my waist in water, my shotgun, wellingtons and trousers on the bank. My feet sank deep into the mud as I walked and I thought only I could be doing this, only I could be in the river in my boxer shorts chasing ducks. Ahead of me lay two mallard drakes floating on the water in the inky darkness. Wet or not wet I was taking them home, not a chance would I let them go to waste! I edged forward carefully and scooped up the first and then the second, before following my steps back the way I had come and hauling myself onto the bank.

Only ten minutes earlier I'd come here for a quick look after walking the dogs further down and happened to have my gun with me. As I got over the wire I stirred some ducks on the waters edge and sat tight in against the hedge hoping they might come back round.



Winter mallard swinging past.



A painted lady pauses for a moment.

Unusually for me they did, and even more unusual I managed two for two shots that landed right in the middle of the river with a slap. That's how I ended up into my waist after them with no boots or trousers, and that's why my good wife shook her head in dismay as I climbed out of my truck back home, wearing wellingtons but no trousers, with two ducks, a rabbit and my lurchers tagging behind! The rabbit they had caught earlier as we walked, that too was an unusual occurrence on that particular area, so all in it was a lively old Tuesday evening in September.

I pulled two cartridges from my pocket

I continued duck shooting right through the month and had some great sport and some of my most memorable shots. One evening, as I approached a fence leading to a spot that had been very lively over the previous few weeks, a brace of mallard went straight up in front of me. I don't know who was surprised more and I didn't even have a cartridge in the gun. As quick as my hands would let me, I pulled two cartridges from my pocket, slotted them in the barrels and steadied at the bird which was now almost directly above my head, although it was very high. I squeezed the trigger, there was

a pause and the bird spun to the ground with a thump. A lovely mallard drake, in perfect condition with that iridescent green neck that felt as thick as my wrist. I got tucked in where I had been on my way to when the ducks got up, but after fifteen or twenty minutes decided my fine drake was plenty and made for home.

As September left, it took with it the mallard that were so plentiful, but in return October brought with it a seemingly endless supply of teal. My first teal was among a group of ten or twelve that sprung from a drainage ditch in early October. It was a sunny evening and as I approached the ditch I assumed it was empty, as the birds are usually up and away. I kept on along the left side and as I began to think about turning, the group sprung and banked left. I missed with my first barrel and dropped a bird with second. My last teal was on a very wet and dark Saturday evening on the far side of the ditch. My friend John and I had just shot a brace of mallard a piece and were returning home by way of the ditch, when three teal sprung and went right, I took a snap shot and it came off.

In between these first and last ducks I had a few others. I spent many evenings on the stubbles of home and getting the odd grain fed mallard. I also spent a lot of time in my hide decoying,

sometimes successfully and a lot of the time not. And then the widgeon arrived. For us this means frost, sleet and long cold days searching, waiting and trying. This year above all, there have been massive numbers of widgeon, but I have shot less than half a dozen. However it worked out I just didn't seem to get on to them, instead having more success with mallard and especially teal.

The teal above all is my favourite bird, both as a sporting quarry and as a bird for the pot. I find them superior to any other ducks. The times I surprise them from a drain or bend on the river, it never ceases to amaze me how they can seemingly lift vertically from anywhere. The smallest drain or the hardest wind is never too much and those two quick successive vertical lifts, usually followed by a sharp turn, can twist up any shooter and leave him wondering what just happened!

Sometime in early November as I sat waiting for a shot along the river, a pair of teal were coming to my left at a great speed. I got ready, and as they levelled I fired twice thinking I would fold the pair. As I did so they immediately dropped in height and flipped sideways and avoiding the spread of shot entirely, what fantastic little birds they are, I could only bid them good luck.

A highlight of the season was several days in Galway with the Sunnyland Beagles. In contrast to most years when I usually find myself travelling down at all hours of the day and night, I had a few days off work and made it down on Friday afternoon where I spent a few hours in the City of the Tribes and fed my fieldsports literature addiction in both Kenny's and Charlie Byrne's book shops, before heading back to Tuam for what was a very enjoyable weekend of sport.

Something you could never find again if you tried

Saturday morning was nippy but sunny and John Shaw Brown, Liz, David, Lee, Naomi and I took the



The peacock is just one of many to be seen in a single day.

hounds out a little after daybreak to settle them for the day. As the mist hung in the air and among the grass the sun came up and the hounds ran among the hollows and heights, among the blackthorns, brambles and whins and gave tongue at the rabbits darting between them, leaving little trails of broken dew across the grass below. Lee and I stood leaning on a stick each, saying nothing to each other but saying everything at the same time. There was something special about that morning and we knew it, something I could never place my finger on, something you could never find again if you tried. I didn't get a photograph, but I doubt it would have done it any justice, and it matters little because it will be forever engraved on my mind.

By lunchtime we had been hunting a large bog for a few hours and although perhaps a little warm for good scenting, the sport was very good. We saw some great runs and got up close with a few hares. I had been trying all day to get a good hare action shot when a shout from Liz that one was coming my way got my attention. I managed to spot her among the heather going from right to left and followed her along for as long as my camera would go. I managed a shot of sorts but it wasn't just as good as I hoped! Sunday was an equally enjoyable day and although

very wet we enjoyed some great sport and I managed more hare photographs in a small field which always holds a one, usually in the same clump of reeds in the same corner, which always goes the same way out. I drove home that evening very content. I replayed it all over and over in my mind and decided that beagling has to be one of the finest country sports anyone can take up. Pearl S. Buck said: "Many people loose the small joys in the hope for the big happiness." I think she must have gone beagling now and again!

This year things have been a little different as the season simply has not ended as is usual. Almost completely by accident, back in late September last year, I took on some rabbit work on a professional basis. It was a small job which quite quickly became a large one and I have been busy ever since. It has taken some getting used to and has been a very different scenario for me, not only have I been working seven days a week for months at a time, but I have been required to keep my nose firmly to the grindstone at all times! Being a roustabout rabbit catcher, and being a professional rabbit catcher are two very different trades indeed and the transformation has not been easy!

A typical day previously was always an early start, but an early start wherever I wanted it to be, high on the

hills or low on the banks of the river. I was quite simply a free spirit, roaming with my lurchers and longnets wherever my desire took me and if should decide to pack up at lunchtime and go to shoot pigeons then that was exactly what I would do. If I decided to leave the nets and simply have a day's sport with the ferrets and dogs, I would do that too. Now it is a little different and time as well as numbers are of the essence.

The particular area in question has been a haunt of mine for considerable years; in fact I first ferreted here when I was a little more than 12 or 13 years old and have been there off and on since. But although I have been spending a lot of hours here several days a week since last autumn and right through into summer catching rabbits, I have been privy to some fantastic sights. I never realised just how much wildlife this area held and when I look back over the last few months I have had some unforgettable moments.

Large dark mysterious eyes

One of my finest occurred just a few weeks ago. It was around 10.30 in the evening and I was laid up along a fence line waiting for rabbits to come onto some ground opposite to feed. The mist was falling heavy right across the area and, as the light fell, an inky darkness began to swallow up the light as the mist got thicker and deeper by the minute. Directly in front of me something caught my eye and as it glided silently out of the mist and directly towards me I squinted to make out what it was. Closer and closer it got, eerily silent, alluring and almost spooky. As it reached the fence line I stood up for a closer look and it went skywards while looking directly at me, our paths were no more than two feet apart for a split second and I caught every detail of my fellow hunter. The large dark mysterious eyes that reached far into her soul and mine, a face that told of 1000 dark nights and a beak that was gentle enough to feed the most



At the double!

delicate chicks but tough enough to tear apart even the toughest rat to do so. I had been face to face with one of our most endangered birds, the barn owl. A bird that has always fascinated me, I had finally had a really close look at in the wild, and what a way to see her. Gliding almost ghostlike from the mist, I wish my camera had been in my hand instead of my gun, it would have been the shot of a lifetime.

This was the most recent — and only one — of some of the fantastic moments I have had on this ground over the course of almost a year. It was fantastic to watch the wildlife roll through the seasons. As spring broke the fieldfares which had wintered here along the marsh disappeared and were replaced by huge numbers of wheatears. The old rooks built tirelessly from dusk to dawn, and as it is only a small rookery I spared them from a pie this year at least. The wood-pigeons too nested in significant numbers, their scantily built nests holding usually no more than a pair of glossy white eggs and strangely left alone by the rooks who were close by. How wood-pigeon's nests and eggs survive is a mystery as anyone would

think to look at the nest it is only half-built and the eggs will fall at any minute! The smaller birds also nested throughout the area and I found some fantastic works of avian architecture from tits, sparrows, blackbirds and thrushes, and to my delight a Dunnocks nest tucked in a small tree.

One particular wet morning, I spotted some movement on a rabbit warren and noticed a rabbit ducking in and out. Knowing something wasn't quite right I got my binoculars for a closer look. I watched a stoat, a fellow hunter, in hot pursuit of a rabbit for ten or more minutes until neither party returned, my friend obviously having delivered the coup de grace. I have always loved stoats and take delight in any chance I get to watch them, which isn't very often.

The cubbing earth I found and kept an eye on for some months has now been abandoned, the cubs are out on their own and I have bumped into two of them together several times while on my rounds. One evening, they came running at the beam of my lamp, and the next time we met they were quite obviously hunting through the long grass, and appear to be getting bigger

and stronger each week. The huge quantity of insect life that makes this area the small eco system that it is, is another fascinating angle I have kept an eye on during my time here. Meadow browns, ringlets, peacocks and small tortoiseshells are just a few of the many various species of butterfly we have seen in a single day. Butterflies are something that never interested me until a few years ago, and I liken them to a new type of car that you haven't noticed until someone shows you one, then you see them everywhere! I have been feeling recently that time has been going a little too fast for my liking, my grandmother told me years ago that when I got to 21 time would go by in a flash and to try and catch it all as I go. She was right as she always was, and these days I try to savour every moment I have and soak up every second of whatever I am doing. From wet ducks, to fast Irish hares, ghostly barn owls, speedy stoats and dainty butterflies, I have enjoyed them all and I hope there is more to come, because one thing I am sure of is that memories are most certainly sweeter than dreams.



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Terrier, Whippet & Lurcher Roundup

Dessie Mackins Dog Show and Race Day Saturday 26th April

I woke up early on Saturday morning, with the joys of spring in my heart, and foremost on my mind that Saturday had arrived. Yes it was Dessie Mackins show and race day, and time to get out of bed and on our way to Laurencetown. The dog chorus was wafting its way into our ears, signalling our Canine friends way of telling us to get them into the trailer and on our short journey to Dessies show. The weather was good, with a sharp cold breeze, but got very cold in the evening. It was nice to see all the children out playing around in the spring sunshine. There was a good crowd in attendance and some really nice Terriers, lurchers, Whippets and Strong dogs in the show ring and on the race track.

Overall Whippet Champion: Graham Fyffe with Bolt; Overall Champion Lurcher: Jed Donagh with Flick handled by Mal McFall; Overall Terrier Champion: Peter Morgan. Overall Show Champion and Best in Show: Graham Fyffe with Bolt

May I take this opportunity to thank judges Tommy Cullen (Lurchers)/Tracy & Alan Crosby (Whippets)/Arthur Faulkner (Terriers) and Eddie Shaw (Strong Dogs) for a job well done. And finally, finally, I must not forget the man at the helm of this brilliant show day. Many thanks to Dessie Mackin and his brilliant band of helpers for a great show on Saturday. Also a big thanks to Tom Barry on the lure.

The Mourne Show, Sunday 11th May

As we left rain soaked Portadown on Sunday morning and headed into the sunshine of the beautiful

countryside of Mourne, I can understand what the great Percy French had on his mind when he wrote 'Where the Mountains of Mourne Sweep down to the Sea.' This was the picturesque setting for the now famous annual Mourne show on Sunday 11th May. We arrived in the field at approximately 10.30am, and to be honest, it was very hard to get a parking place at that time of the morning. Every year this show grows in capacity, but this year topped them all. By the start of showing there was not a vacant parking place on this vast stretch of show ground.

The venue for this dog show is superb, as it runs alongside the shoreline between Newcastle and Kilkeel, and the fresh air coming up from the sea is to die for. As the cars and trailers emptied out on the field, it was quite evident that this was not only a dog show, but also a great family day out. It was nice to see so many local stands displaying their goods to the Canine Community with their country sports clothing, ice cream van, burger and chip van, and of course not forgetting the lady with the tea and coffee and beautiful fresh buns for all at very reasonable prices. It was good to see the IWTF there with their stand, and from what I could see, they were kept very busy all day. I made a couple of attempts to speak to Mark Brown, but there were crowds around the stand, and I could not make it.

The Mourne Show brings people from all parts of Ireland/England/Scotland/Wales and further afield, and is now an annual event to look forward to. Some new faces this year. I was speaking to a couple from Dundalk, Irra Rogers and

her friend Chris Lee. Irra and Chris brought along their lovely Whippets Topper and Rocky and had a couple of good wins on the day. Along the way I stopped with John Humphries, who was out for a days enjoyment with his lovely sister and niece, whom I had pleasure of been introduced to. Lovely people.

I had a little banter and some relaxing conversations with Mr & Mrs Game Fairs, Irene and Albert J Titterington. What a dedicated couple to Country Sports these two are. It was special to speak to Albert and Irene out of work, because come the 28th and 29th of June they will be up to their eyes with Shanes Castle Game Fair, followed by Birr Castle in August. In general conversation with Irene and Albert, Mourne brings back some happy memories for this couple. When their children were young they would rent out a holiday home in the Mournes, just over looking our show grounds on Sunday. Lovely memories. Thank you for your company on the day. What a great couple.

The Showing, Digging, Racing, Ferret showing and racing, and Weight pulling all went like clockwork, thanks to the brilliant organisation of Kieran Young/Joanne Young, and the very efficient Mourne team behind them. The children had a field day. They played around all day happily in the shadow of the Mourne Mountains. I am sure it was early to bed for the wee people Sunday night. Remember these children are our Game Fair and Show organisers of tomorrow, and we must treasure them.

The Digging Competition was won this year by Breandan Coleman and Peter Conn, and the trophies were presented to the winning pair by Irene

Titterington. A big congratulations to Breandan and Peter, who will now qualify for the all Ireland Digging Competition at Birr Castle in August. Also congratulations to all the other diggers who took part.

Overall Whippet Winner - Graham Fyffe With Bolt; Overall Lurcher Winner - Glen Doherty with Diesel;

Overall Hound Winner - Steven McNally With Scrabble; Overall Terrier Winner - Gavin McAleavey with Cheeko;

Overall Strongdog Winner - Davis Boyd with Max.

Many thanks to the Judges on the day. Whippets : Michael Quinn; Lurchers : Shane Gilmartin; Terriers : Declan Lynch; Strong Dogs: Karl Roche; Hounds: Tommy Rowen; Ferrets: Paddy Cauldwell Judge /Glen Ferret Box.

Finally, may I take this opportunity to thank Kieran Young/Joanne Young and their hard working band of helpers for a great show and a great family day out. I know Kieran, you and Joanne have been working tirelessly behind the scenes to make this day enjoyable for all. Without your hard work and dedication, none of this would happen. It is also so rewarding to know for all your efforts and hard work, a worthwhile cause will benefit. This year's nominated charity, and nominated by the Mourne team is PIPS in Newry and Mourne area. What a worthy charity. None of us know when we will need them, and they are always there in the wings willing to help and understand, when we need them most.

Gilford Lurcher, Terrier, Whippet and Strong Dog Show, at the Countryside Festival at the Maze, Saturday 31st May

The sun was shining in abundance as we made our way to the new venue for the Gilford Terrier, Lurcher, Whippet and Strong Dog Show at the Maze, Lisburn. on Saturday the 31st. Although I was so used to going to Moira to this show for years, it was

great to see the new venue working out so well. There was an added bonus as well on site as the dog show was part of the National Country Fair. This enabled everybody to go and have a walk around the fair with their friends and pick up some bargains along the way before the Racing and Showing began.

May I thank the Judges for a job well done. Kieran Young: Whippets; Paddy Mc Carthy: Lurchers; Pete Dodds: Terriers; Philip McKinstry: Strong Dogs A lot of hard work and organisation went into this brilliant dog show at the Maze. This would not of been possible if it were not for three very important people, Ian Davison, Justin Hill, Ben Davison and their brilliant band of helpers, and all the people in the background that worked so hard to make this show so successful.

Minerock Harriers Hunt Club (Matt Slevins Dog Show) Sunday 1st June

The strawberry alarm clock jingled at our bedside at 4.30 am, signalling it was time for us to rise and shine, hitch up the dog trailer and head for Matt Slevins show, in Enniscorthy, Co Wexford. We arrived in Enniscorthy at 11.00am, and the field was nearing full to capacity.

This show was well supported by good Canine folk from North and South of the border, who came out in force to support this great Working Dog Show. The weather was very kind to us, Although it was cloudy all day, there was just a little drizzle of rain at the end of the day.

You could smell the lovely country air of Slaney Valley, the minute we stepped out of the car and onto the dewy green grass of the show ground. For a moment I thought I was at a show back home, there were so many familiar faces looking back at me. John Shaw was there with his new Camper Van, cooking breakfast for Paul Reynolds, Chrissy Loughran and Jason Dunwoody. I also met up with Mickey and Michael Quinn from

Lurgan, Barry Holland and Joe Boggs from Strabane, Denis Couch from Cork, and too many more to mention.

There was Flapper Racing, followed by the Digging competition, and that was when the fun began. Matt Slevin gave the starting orders, and soon the puffs and pants were clear to be heard of hard digging men, all with one goal in mind to qualify for Birr Castle in August.

As the dig progressed the shirts and shovels were flying in the air, with wives, partners and girlfriends all cheering on their favourites. Very soon Matt blew the whistle and the dig was over. And the winners were declared as Trevor Moody/John O'Toole.

Champion Terrier was Kevin Maguire; Champion Lurcher was John Sheehan; Champion Whippet was Mark O'Neill; Champion Hound was The Kilkenny Foxhounds

NILRC Club Members Raceday and Dog Show at Annaghmore, Co Armagh Saturday 7th June

Orchard County has had many top class shows and race days this year. Another trophy was added to this brilliant line up, with the club members of the Nilrc holding a race day and showing at Annaghmore, Co Armagh on Saturday 7th June 14. Although the weather was dreadful, this did not stop like minded sportsmen and women coming together to support this great event.

The organisation of this show was good from start to finish and the venue was superb. A good long race track, and a brilliant lure operator, topped up with quality dogs, all out with one thing in mind, to catch up with the lure, and bring home so nice trophies for their masters and mistresses.

This year, I have noticed so many more women taking part in our dog shows, and this trend is growing fast up and down the country and further afield. It is good to see the opposite sex taking over, or on a par with the male population in country sports. We need you ladies to keep up the good

work. You are part of the driving force that make our Country Sport and shows so interesting and successful during the show and hunting seasons.

Champion Lurcher - Marty McCartan (Mclock) with Turbo; Champion Whippet - John Shaw with Mango; Champion Terrier - Niall O'Claghan with Rex

Clayton Hastings was master of ceremonies and handled the PA system with great vigour, and kept everybody on their toes. Fiona Briordy/Charlene Rafferty/Barry Holland/Gerald Maybin/Lee Archer/Arlene Greer/Davy Best, and everybody who played a part in organising this event on Saturday, a job well done and a fantastic display of great team work. You are a credit to your club and the Nilrc, and may the club go from strength to strength.

Shannagh Working Terrier, Lurcher, and Whippet Show Sunday 15th June

Seaforde is situated near the village of Clough, Downpatrick, County Down and lies in the shadow of the beautiful Mourne Mountains. Famous for its majestic Butterfly House, Seaforde has added another straw to its bow, with the now Annual Shannagh Working Lurcher, Terrier and Whippet Dog Show in its midst.

The weather was good to us, as the saying goes, 'the sun only shines on God's people' and he gave us the weather we yearned for on Sunday. As this was a new venue this year, it was first class, with Plenty of ringside parking and a brilliant race track.

There was a big turnout at this show of Country Sports enthusiasts and like minded people from North and South. By 12noon it was hard to get a parking place near the ring, as the field was full to capacity with dogs, trailers, families, all good Canine folk who came out for a days enjoyment away from the trials and tribulations of everyday life.

That's what I like about dog shows. They take me away into another kind

of world for a day, robbing all the ugly thoughts from my mind. As I grow older, these kind of days make me glad to be alive, fit and healthy and able to attend and partake in the shows. Long may it last, as in my case the days are growing shorter.

It was nice to meet up with old friends once again. Breandan Coleman was there with his new tattoo. What a work of art, and one Breandan is very proud of. I turned around and there was the Grand Master of Country Sport and Irish Game Fairs Albert Titterington getting out of his jeep, and coming to Shannagh, supporting his local show and his fellow show and Game Fair goers. It was nice to chat with Albert again, and seeing him taking a well earned break from organising The Great Games Fairs of Ireland at Shanes Castle.

The quality of dogs at the show on Sunday was of a very high standard and would be a judges nightmare. All our little people were there, contributing in their own little way, and playing around the field with all their little Canine friends, our sportsmen and women of tomorrow.

Overall Champion Whippet: Davy Best with Penny; Overall Lurcher Champion: James Woods with Rusty; Overall Terrier Champion and overall Show Champion: Paul Flood with Sarson

After the showing the Catapult Competition went into full swing. Men and women demonstrated their target punching with great determination and Zest. As this was the first year for this competition, it certainly generated much interest. Great idea, and great craic too. The winner of this competition was avid canine man Jude Lynch from Strabane. Congratulations Jude and well done.

Another new idea at Shannagh show was the 'Nail Hammering into Log' competition. The banter and fun was hilarious in this competition, and again very successful. This winner was none other than Paddy Gilmore himself. Congratulations Paddy and

well done.

Next on the menu was the Digging Competition. Again the craic was mighty. Leanne Hawthorne was there with her stop watch, with Kieran Young there to oversee the proceedings, and the digging started.

Paddy Gilmore and Shane Larkin, and qualifiers for the All Ireland Digging Competition at Birr Castle. Congratulations Paddy and Shane and all the rest of the teams taking part for being such a great sport.

May I take this opportunity to thank judges Leanne Hawthorne Whippets/Eamon McErlain Terriers/Aaron Beattie Lurchers, for a job well done. There are two people who have worked tirelessly behind the scenes to make this show a success - Leanne Hawthorne and Paddy Gilmore, and of course your brilliant back up team of helpers.

The Sporting Whippet Club of NI Dog Show and Race day Sunday 22nd June at Dunsilly Kennels, Antrim.

What a really relaxing day we had in the sunshine at The Sporting Whippet Club of NI Show and Raceday at Dunsilly Kennels, Co Antrim Sunday 22nd June. The sun shone in abundance and the craic and banter was excellent. It was definitely a day for the sun cream and sunglasses.

The weather certainly brought out the Whippet people from North and South along with some visitors from further afield. Yes, Kevin Mallon, his partner Charlie, and little daughter Aoife, and of course his winning whippet Stig dropped in to say hello and join in the days itinerary. Kevin and his family are home on a well earned holiday in his native Belfast. You and your family were most welcome, and thank you for calling and supporting our show.

Again this month, another show ring full of Whippets and their proud owners. Some top Class Whippets in the ring on Sunday at Dunsilly, all

with one thing in mind, to qualify for Shanes Castle 5 Nations Whippet Championship this weekend. And they were not disappointed.

Grading started at approximately 12.45pm, Followed by showing, and racing completed after the showing.

Best In Show – Davy Best with Penny.

Thanks to our judge of the day, Cheryl Donaldson for judging our whippets with efficiency and integrity, and a job well done.

We cannot forget the sponsor of our dog meal at the club show today, 'Nutts about Pets.' A big thank you to Basil Thompson, owner of 'Nuts about Pets' and Marty McIlmail for your kindness to the Sporting Whippet Club of NI. Again this month our Whippets will be eating top class nuts. Wait to you see the shine on their coats at Shanes Castle this weekend.

Dunsilly is a superb venue, and all thanks goes out to Victor McDonald, owner of Dunsilly, for allowing the club to have their shows at this stunning piece of heaven in the County Antrim Countryside.

Chairman Paul Reynolds, who worked hard making sure that everything kept moving along swiftly. To help Paul was his son Pearse, his secretary/treasurer Carol Hill, with committee members, John Shaw/Mickey Quinn/Michael Quinn/John Mc Stay/Patsy Mc Coy and Margaret Mc Stay, all waiting in the wings to carry out any duty allocated by our Chairman.

The Irish Game Fair and Flavour Fine Food Festival 28th and 29th June

Shanes Castle, Co Antrim was the venue for The Irish Game Fair and Flavour Fine Food Festival on Saturday the 28th June and Sunday 29th.

Set in one of the most glorious, yet easy accessible regions of Ireland, this Castle and its beautiful surroundings, played host last weekend to the biggest ever Game Fair, and crowd

attendance held in Ireland. Blessed with continuous sunshine on both days, and complimented with a swirling breeze coming in from the northeast shores of Lough Neagh, Shanes Castle was the place to be last weekend.

It was here in the vale of the Green Glens of Antrim, thousands of country sportsmen and women, visitors, and families, from north and south of the border and further afield came to view the challenges for the sporting elite, and to partake in the many areas of Country sports.

Whether you are an experienced Country Sports enthusiast interested in trying something new, or an out of town visitor eager to try your hand at something totally different, the Game Fair provided a vast array of sporting interests. This was run with and under the guidance of people who are passionate about Country Sports.

What a memorable weekend we had at this ruined Castle.

Thursday morning seen the Press launch of the Game Fair, carried out by Director of the Great Game Fairs Of Ireland Mr Albertj Titterington, in the presence of the Mayor of Antrim, Co-Directors, The Northern Ireland Tourist board, The Angling community, Terrier/Lurcher/Whippet fraternity, and a host of enthusiasts from the world of Country Sports.

What I have looked forward to all year, arrived early on Saturday morning, and heralded the start of the Great Game Fair of Ireland at Shanes Castle. The fair at Shanes Castle has already had a long established excellent track record, being Northern Irelands premier country sports event, but this year surpassed all of what had come before.

The Directors and team behind the Great Game Fairs of Ireland, has a history of delivering successful quality events, and this year was no exception. There were many more trade stands this year, and all of top quality. A brilliant range of international class competitions, a full programme of Showing and Racing

for Terrier, Lurcher, and Whippet people, including the prestigious Master Mc Grath and 5 Nations Whippet Championships, all with an international prize fund to back them up. Amusements for our little people, and many more events too many to mention.

John and myself started Saturday morning off, with some retail therapy. As our legs got weary, and age beginning to show, our money all spent, we headed back down towards the car, not to miss the The Master Mc Grath and a great day's racing ahead. We packed away all the many bargains we had acquired from the stands in the heart of this brilliant Game Fair, as my husband John bought enough Shirts and Dog leads to do him a lifetime.

After a great days excitement on Saturday, Sunday morning arrived very quick upon us. After buying the Game Fair out on Saturday, the big occasion for us on Sunday was the dog Show. Cars, Vans and Trailers came in droves, Canine folk with their families and dogs in tow, and had the parking areas filled to capacity in no time.

The highlight of the day for me on Sunday, was the Ferrett Racing and Showing competitions, along with the pony/trap, and lamping display. All of these events were carried out and organised by Darren Moore, Graham Fyffe, and Stephen Mc Gonigal. I lost my voice shouting for these little Ferretts to win their race, setting aside that I am scared out of my wits of them. I have never seen grown men and women, and children, having so much clean fun at this competition, and all down on their bellies on the ground, looking up the racing pipes and trying to persuade these little creatures to win for them. I can honestly say this was the best audience participation I have seen in a long time. What a display of Sportmanship, carried out so efficiently by all three. A special thank you Darren/Graham and Stephen for

your magnificent work, and look forward to seeing the Ferrets, at shows very soon again.

It was so nice to meet so many regular show goers, and to meet some new people. Paul Pringle, Editor of Irish Country Sports and Country Life Magazine was there in all his glory. What a real gentleman and a very good friend. I had a wee chat again this year with Catherine Lawton, daughter of the late Philip Lawton, Co-Director of the Great Game Fairs of Ireland. Our meeting this year was a happier one, as time is a great healer, but Catherine will never forget the memories and love of a loving father who passed away this time last year.

Doing my usual trips around the race track and show rings, the first person I met up with, was keen huntsman, Mark O' Neill and his brother Joe, who travelled from the deep south of Ireland, and their first time at Shanes Castle. By speaking to both men, it was clear to see they were really enjoying their first time at Shanes Castle.

Kevin Mallon and his partner Charlie, beautiful little girl Aoife, and of course Stig, Kevins winning whippet, travelled from England to be at Shanes Castle. What a lovely little family. Concepta O'Goan and her family from Strabane, came over to have a chat with me. Concepta is a person in a million, with a heart of gold. Another proud lady I spoke to at Shanes Castle was Tricha Donagh, wife of Jed Donagh. Jed supports all our shows and Gamefairs up and down the country, and is a regular winner, with his winning Terrier and Lurchers and hunts in winter. Its always a pleasure to meet up with Jed and Tricha.

27th ALL IRELAND CHAMPIONSHIPS RACING

Over 23 Elite: Gary Smith with Lola; Under 23 Elite: David Nolan with Julie; Under 21 Elite:Nigel Greer with Kildrun; Over 23: Jed Donagh with Flick; Under23: Nigel Greer with

Lady; Under21:Michael Lynch with Jill; Terriers: Jed Donagh with Boe;Whippets: Charlene Rafferty with Lush.

HIGHLIGHT OF THE DAY 'RED MILLS THE MASTER MC

GRATH' WINNER: Gary Smith with BONO Reserve: Michael Quinn with Mo'charra

ALL IRELAND CHAMPIONSHIP SHOWING:

Overall Champion Lurcher: Chris Angus with Gunner; Overall Champion Terrier:Dessie Mackin with Frostie; Overall Champion Whippet: Jason Dunwoody with Maggie; Overall Show Champion: Chris Angus with Gunner; Overall Puppy Champion: Dessie Mackin with Lucy

5 NATIONS CHAMPION

WHIPPET: Graham Fyffe with Bolt
RESERVE: Davy Best with Penny.

Many thanks to the Judges, Lurchers /Darren Gallagher, Terriers/J Gilfillan, Whippets/PJ Walker, 5 Nations/ Felicity Thompson,and Ferret Judge, for a job well done. Judging is not always an easy job, but you carried out your duties, with fairness and integrity.

Many thanks to Kieran Young, Racing and Showing Director at Shanes Castle, and his back up team of helpers for job carried out 100%. Kieran, you and your team are a credit to Country Sports and may you continue in this roll for many years to come.

Deidre McCoy/Derek Lavery/and Billy Harpur were there with their cameras, recording our every moment of glory.

And Finally, Finally, major investment over the years by the Great Game Fairs of Ireland team has seen its Fairs at Shanes Castle and Birr Castle developed to a stage where they are unchallenged in the domination of their sector within the Irish Market place. The Game Fair at Shanes Castle has impeccable

credentials, and annually attracts more than 30,000 people to the region, this year being the biggest, delivering a timely boost to tourism and an opportunity for town and country to come together to celebrate and enjoy the craic, along with some of our finest Country Sports and traditions.

None of this would be possible without the man of the moment and his brilliant back up team. Yes, Albert J Titterington, it is you I am writing about. You are definitely the" King of the Castle," and in a league of your own. What can I say to describe a kind family man, thoughtful and generous, has reared a family, and has given his life to Country Sports and all the good causes that goes with it. Your life has been enriched with the excellent work and enjoyment you give to many families across the country, young and old through your Game Fairs. At the end of the summer season, when winter draws in upon us and the hunting season begins, you give us so much to talk about, around our roaring coal fires, with the snow outside hitting of the window panes. .Such happy memories to look back on. You are our Rock in the Country Sports world, and long may you continue. "Simply the Best"

Behind every good man is a good woman: Irene you fit this category with gold medals and flying colours. What would Albert do without you?

Many thanks Albert, Irene, Co-Directors, and your back up team for a very enjoyable and memorable weekend at Shanes Castle, full of joy and excitement, lovely atmosphere, and above all a great window for Country Sports in Ireland and further afield. It's an honour to be able to call you our friends.

I would like to pass on the sincere thanks of so many people in the canine world to Margaret McStay, who puts in a tremendous amount of time and effort in reporting on dog events throughout the country. So Margaret - please 'take a well earned bow!' (Editor)

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(Top) A tight finish to the Red Mills Master McGrath - these were the four dogs involved.



(Left) Master McGrath winner Gary Smith with BONO Reserve: Michael Quinn with MO'CHARRA.



ALL IRELAND SUPREME CHAMPION Chris Angus with GUNNER and sponsors Massbrook.



Whippets --- WINNER & RUNNER UP Graham Fyffe with BOLT and Davy Best with PENNEY with judges & sponsors in the Feedwell FIVE NATIONS WHIPPET CHAMPONSHIPS.

AJ's Angst

Frank opinion on the issues facing the Irish country sports scene

THANKS

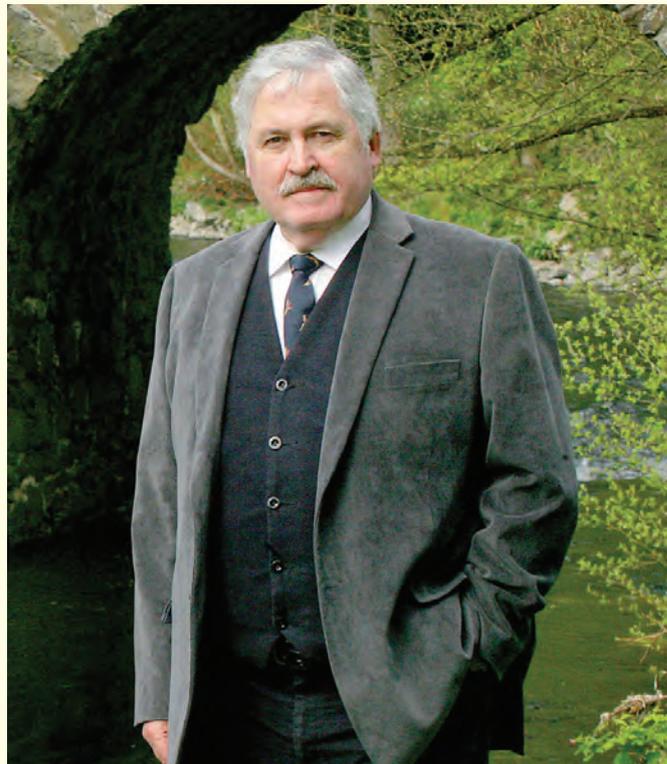
This column is a bit different to others I have produced in that I wish to start by giving a sincere vote of thanks to everyone who made the first two of the Great Game Fairs of Ireland a tremendous success this year. This includes our own team; our event organisers; performers; contractors; sponsors; exhibitors; competitors and the sporting public who turned out in their tens of thousands to create happy, successful and family friendly events with a great atmosphere.

SUCCESS TINGED WITH SADNESS

Elsewhere in the magazine you will see obituaries for two people who made major contributions to our fairs for many years Jimmy Magee and John Shaw Brown. And these and memories of other people who made memorable contributions to the fairs mean that our success is always tinged with a little sadness each year.

'Gentleman' Jim helped develop the Shanes Castle Fair's gundog section as one of the premier events that it is, by serving on the committee organising the event and most impressively, as part of the gundog commentary team, giving an informed description to the public of the superb gundog work they were watching. His repartee with his commentary partners Jack Skelly and Peter Smith was legendary. A snappy dresser who loved a cigar Jim will be sadly missed by the whole gundog community.

It was hard for me to realise that this year we would not see 'John Shaw' of the famous shorts, knobby knees and large boots loping around the arena at Shanes like the 'Pied Piper' leading a 'mixed pack' of beagles and children! Or to see him in a green boiler suit with a ready smile invite children into the pen to pet the beagles on



the CAI stand. As others have said he was a true country sports icon who sadly was taken from us far too soon. I was delighted that Liz agreed to the posthumous award of the Brownlow Trophy and very bravely attended our press breakfast to receive it from Eveleigh Brownlow.

At the fair at Birr more memories of great friends who worked with us at the fairs came flooding back as dedications were made for Big Davy Meredith and Colette Gannon and annual trophies were presented in memory of two of my fellow directors John McClelland and Philip Lawton.



Liz McCrackens present the John McClelland Memorial Trophy to the overall winner Tom Cavanagh, Judge John Lutton.



Margaret Lawton presenting the Philip Lawton Memorial Shield to the winner. John Lutton judged.



The 'Meredith' girls Hayley, Glenda, Beverley and Emma with the Memorial Bench.

John and Philip both made major contributions to the development of the Great Game Fairs of Ireland brand . They were both ' larger than life' characters and I cannot help but smile when I think of them both. I was pleased that John's partner Liz and Philip's widow Margaret were present to present the stick making trophies as both guys were often to be seen with a fine stick!

David Meredith was a country sports man through and through and his daughters follow his interests still particularly Glenda , through her fly casting and Hayley through her game keeping. My own involvement with 'Big Davy' was in his capacity as our Security Director at our fairs for several years. He and I sorted out many potential problems and set the standards for what are fun filled family events.

Big Davy died at Birr when he was on security duty for us and it was fitting that his daughters, partners and children wished to provide a beautiful bench to sit in the Birr woodlands in his

memory. A small gathering of family and friends gathered to dedicate the bench and I was privileged to be asked to say a few words.

Kieran Young, who has taken over as Terrier, Whippet and Lurcher Director of our Shanes Castle and Ballynahinch events, lost his partner Colette Gannon during the year. A lovely gentle person Colette loved the fair at Birr and had told me that she as so proud when Kieran received his Countrysports and Country Life Lifetime Commitment Award in the main arena at Birr in 2013.

This year her daughter Joanne, joined me in the main arena to present a beautiful Memorial Trophy in memory of her Mum. The trophy was a most beautifully

carved goblet and the fact that it was being presented for the person(s) demonstrating the most sportsmanship in the terrier, whippet and lurcher world was extremely appropriate. I can well remember Colette acting as 'hostess' at the Mourne Show and helping create the very sporting atmosphere that always prevails at this event.

The two very worthy recipients were the Quinns – father and son – I know Colette would have approved.



L- r Kieran Young; the Quinns; Joanne Young and Fair Director, Albert Titterington.

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The 5th Irish Fly Fair and International Angling Show

*Galway Bay Hotel, Salthill.
15th and 16th November 2014*

From the organiser Stevie Munn comes news of what he describes as “Ireland’s biggest fly fishing extravaganza”. Stevie claims the event will again feature “the largest ever host of fly tyers and game angling stands under one roof in Ireland at an angling show.” A number of the greatest fly dressers, fly casters and angling celebrities from all over the globe will once again gather at the Galway Bay Hotel, in Salthill to participate in the 5th Irish Fly Fair and International Angling show. Visitors come from all over the world to this celebrated event and will have the opportunity to see some of the finest fly dressers from around the world practice their art, while champion fly casters will be available to demonstrate and advise on fly casting techniques and fishing tactics.



Stevie Munn went on to say “Last year’s Irish Fly Fair saw some of the best fly casters and fly tyers in the world descend on The Galway Bay Hotel in Salthill. The show has been a fantastic success with many of the fly dressers, demonstrators, exhibitors and the tackle trade rebooked for this year’s event. With thousands of visitors to the show the feedback is always exceptionally positive, with many saying it was the best game angling show they have ever been to, we hope to build on this and have many new trade stands, fly tyers and celebrities again for this year.

The tackle trade will be very well represented at this year’s event with a huge range of quality trade stands in form of tackle, outdoor clothing, and fly tying gear and many others, so something for everyone!

The event team would like to welcome back angling celebrities,

Charles Jardine, Hywel Morgan, Glenda Powell and Peter O’Reilly who will be demonstrating and advising on all aspects of fly fishing! We also would like to welcome our new guests including, Spey casting legend and Hardy Pro Team member from Scotland Ian Gordon . We also have tuition from qualified angling instructors APGAI who will give free casting and fly tying lessons during the two day exhibition. Experts from the Inland Fisheries Ireland, Tom Doc Sullivan, Dr Ken Whelan, FISSTA and many more will be hosting talks and seminars on various angling related topics.”

He also highlighted the focus on the young with the "Youth Fly Tying Competition" giving the kids a chance to show the “Pro Fly Dressers” what they can do.

And finished off by claiming “The Irish Fly Fair is hailed as one

of the finest shows of its kind in Europe, a great weekend to meet up with old friends and make new ones! This show is a must for all angling enthusiasts. A Big Thank you to all who support the show. Including the sponsors Veniard, Partridge, Hardy, Greys and Emerger Tackle.

This is the undisputed best Fly Fishing and Fly Tying Show in all of Ireland, and one not to be missed. In one of Galway’s best Hotels, many visitors now come for the weekend with their families and experience the whole atmosphere of the show. Please come along and give it your support angling needs ‘feel good’ events like this. For more details see web. www.irishflyfair.com or contact Stevie Munn by Email, anglingclassics@aol.com“

(Below) Organiser Stevie Munn.



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Barista Pinotage 2013, South Africa

A huge success since its introduction to JN customers a couple of years ago. Pinotage is a result of crossing Pinot Noir and Cinsault (known as Hermitage in South Africa). This is a wine bursting with intense, rich coffee and chocolate aromas with ripe nuances of plum. The Barista Pinotage is very food friendly and partners with ease meat dishes and rich creamy casseroles. *£9.45 per bottle*



Paco Garcia Seis 2012, Rioja, Spain

The Rioja Seis spends 6 months in French oak barrels (*seis* being Spanish for six). This young wine retains the fruitiness and freshness of the Tempranillo grapes. It is round, full and expressive with tons of fresh red fruit, floral tones and richness. *£10.75 per bottle*



Soalheiro Allo 2013, Portugal

The grapes for this wine, exclusively from Alvarinho and Loureiro (two noble grape varieties of Minho in northern Portugal) are harvested by hand into small boxes. The wine sports a yellow colour and presents citrus flavours with elegance and minerality. The Alvarinho, full of tropical fruit and structure, contrasts with the Loureiro, floral and full of elegance, which gives this wine a lovely balance. It is ideal as an aperitif or to accompany seafood dishes and fish. *£9.95 per bottle*



Heart of Stone Sauvignon Blanc 2013, New Zealand

Produced by renowned NZ winery Forrest Estate, this is among JN's most popular Sauvignons. This is a vibrant wine with flavours of blackberry, gooseberry and passionfruit underscored by appetising, crisp acidity which produces a refreshing finish. *£9.99 per bottle*



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