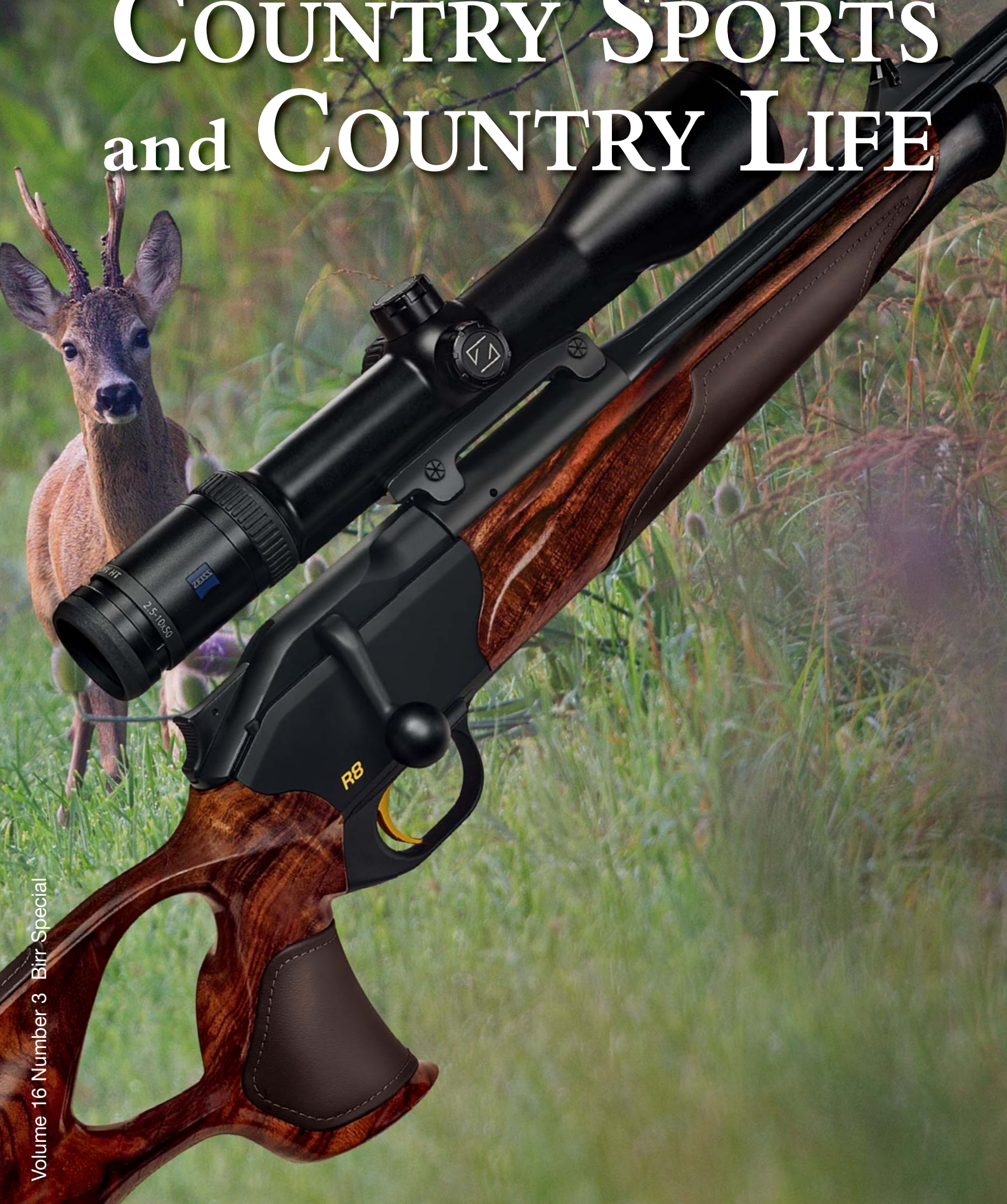


Irish COUNTRY SPORTS and COUNTRY LIFE



Volume 16 Number 3 Birr Special

Including THE IRISH GAME ANGLER



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IRISH GAME & COUNTRY FAIR



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See the full Blaser range at the Irish Game Fair & Fine Food Festival 26th & 27th August, Birr Castle, Co Offaly.

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Country Sports and Country Life Northern Comment

You know what - I get a great kick out of being involved in our Great Game Fairs of Ireland.

Being on the magazine stand at Shanes Castle meant I was able to chat to hundreds of people and the more I chatted, the more I got the feeling that our countrysports are indeed in enthusiastic hands.

Now, you may have noticed that in previous editorials I sometimes wondered where the next generation of country sportsmen and women were coming from. Were youngsters still being introduced to country pursuits as much as a generation or two ago?

I realise I see some new young faces every year in the beater line every season and some too on the riverbank, but I often wondered if there were many other young people in other necks of the woods who were stepping out on the fieldsports journey by sharing those first steps with, say, their father, or some other family member, which after all was the way that I and many of my contemporaries started.

Well, chatting to hundreds of folk at the magazine stand over the two days, a number of things impressed me and one of those was that the countrysports world of the future will definitely be in good hands.

I made a point of asking the family groups who stopped by the stand what was it that they did for fun in 'the field'. Well, the response was amazing from grandparents, parents, cousins, brothers and sisters. It seemed by the chat that everyone was starting to fish, tie flies, or join the beating line or shoot, try clay pigeons, or help out at the local stables, etc. Big kids were getting their younger siblings to join them and so on. Simply brilliant.

And guess what — a sizeable proportion had decided on countrysports as a result of coming along to the fairs with their parents etc and 'having a go.' Just like the youngsters who enjoyed our put and take fishery for the first time ...they become hooked for life!

There were record crowds, some even coming all the way from France and Italy. And a lovely group of Americans who were tracing their family roots tracked down the magazine stand to say how much they enjoyed reading it on the Internet. And they said that it was last year's reports of our Fairs that had helped them decide their date to trace their roots 'back home.'

They visited on Saturday and called again on



Sunday to say goodbye. Well, that was the intention but in fact they had met so many folk at the fair who lived in the area where the family had emigrated from in the 1800s that they had rearranged their itinerary to stay on a bit longer. How nice to think that we had been part of their journey and they had been part of our very special Great Game Fairs Diaspora.

We also had many competitors from England, Scotland, Wales and all over Ireland taking part in a great range of competitions. There will be a more detailed report and photographs covering all our events in the Winter magazine.

As one of our stand holders posted on Facebook after Shanes: 'I was delighted with the huge crowds, and very encouraged by the amount of tourists from, America, Scotland, England and loads from "down south" who were attracted by this event.'

It was a fairytale ending for the Smith family at Shanes who travelled from Carlow to compete in the RED MILLS Master McGrath Challenge Final for elite lurchers. This is the top racing event for Elite Lurchers, with qualifiers held in Ireland and the UK to compete in the hotly contested final at Shanes Castle.

The Smith's dog Scooby and owner Nicky Smith had twice finished second overall in the event, and a huge crowd gathered at Shanes Castle to see if that consistency might finally see Scooby emerge as winner this year.

It had the closest racing ever seen at Shanes Castle resulting in a blanket finish, and Scooby taking first place by the smallest margin over his closest rivals.

The very popular win was soon to become the talk of the lurcher racing world, when owner Nicky Smith's immediate response was to pledge their winnings of £250 to a charity of the organiser's choice and the money will be added to that raised by Spaniel Director Ken Lindsay at the Cocker Spaniel tests and presented to the NI Hospice.

Nicky Smith's gesture further resonated throughout the countrysports world when Fintan Kelly, captain of the ROI Spaniel team at Shanes Castle Fair also donated their expenses of £200 to the charity. In total the Hospice will receive a cheque for £600.

After the Fair we were delighted to help sponsor two successful teams and one of them, the Tafi Ulster junior angling team became interprovincial champions. We don't usually allow bucket collections at the fair but these very polite young men needed

£1,000 for their challenge. They reached this through the donations from our patrons and a top up from Bobby Bryans and ourselves. We also joined up with Red Mills to sponsor the Irish gundog team at the Scottish Game Fair. Top retriever, top retriever team and second overall — well done guys! Although our sponsorship budget is limited it is rare that anyone who requests sponsorship goes away 'empty handed' without some sort of sponsorship. The one exception was a club that demanded it!

Paddy Keenan is seeking help as there was a young man and his son at the game fair on Saturday, who had travelled up to Antrim from Belfast by train. On leaving the grounds on Saturday evening Paddy gave them a lift back into Antrim to get the train back home and in their conversation he told Paddy he ran lurchers and had taken his son to the fair just as his father had taken him. We feel that this man did something very special for his son and we would like to thank him for keeping a 'Game Fair family tradition' alive. He is in his late 20s early 30s with a red ginger beard and his son was no more than maybe 5 years old. If anyone knows him or indeed if you are reading this please contact us (see inside page of any edition of this magazine) as we would like to offer him complimentary tickets for next year.

Now on to Birr and the blueprint for the event on 26th & 27th August which was drawn up months ago to make the Irish Game & Country Fair at Birr the greatest ever event of its kind in Ireland is firmly in place.

We have the biggest turnout of Trade Stands ever — we are simply booked out! And hunting, shooting and fishing have a very special emphasis this year as you will find out if you come along.

The very special Main Arena acts have been commissioned — including the world class Knights of the North all the way from Bonny Scotland. These rip roaring Knights of Old will draw gasps of amazement from the crowd as the spectacle unfolds.

The gallant (and not so gallant)! knights will duel in full armour, and you'll be simply amazed at the thrilling displays as they clash with swords and lances in mortal combat. Pick a champion - but watch out - the opponent may have a dastardly trick to two up his (or her) flowing velvet sleeve!

You can read all about the tremendously exciting Great Game Fairs of Ireland Mick the Miller Race which will have its scintillating final at Birr elsewhere in this magazine.

Space prevents me from telling you about the other exciting things for all the family to see and do at Birr - the gun dogs, angling, archery, falconry, horse drawn vehicles, fine food, clay shooting, and all the competitions and 'have a go' events around the beautiful Birr Castle, but you can find out all the latest news on our website

<http://www.irishgameandcountryfair.com/>

I hope to see you all at Birr where Jill and I will once again be delighted to chat with you on the magazine stand.

Paul Pringle,
Northern Editor

SPECIAL VOUCHER FOR FUTURE VISITS TO BIRR CASTLE WHEN THE GAME FAIR IS OVER

Please present this voucher on your return visit to Birr Castle Gardens & Science Centre and enjoy a unique discounted offer of €18 for a general admission family ticket (2 adults and 2 children up to 16 years) or €15 for two adults.

This offer is valid up to 30 April 2018, valid on general admission only and not valid in conjunction with any other offer. T&C apply.

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For more information visit birrcastle.com

Country Sports and Country Life Rol Comment

The Irish Game & Country Fair and Fine Food Festival 19th in Birr is always an enjoyable weekend, a couple of days among likeminded souls enjoying the many special things associated with hunting and the great outdoors. I love the couple of days because, as a hunting man, it is a relief to be amongst thousands of people who love the hunting world as well and don't want to cast aspersions on your character or imply that you are morally inferior. It is a relief to leave the politically correct world behind for a weekend and enjoy the pastimes of hunting, shooting and fishing in a non-judgemental environment, in an environment without fear or censure.

The politically correct often quote the wise words of Native Americans from 19th Century America. They are often beautiful words, revealing enlightened modes of thought, which remind me of the poems of some of the great poets of the Romantic movement, such as Coleridge or Wordsworth. However, what the politically correct always fail to mention is what wonderful hunters many of these Native Americans were and what a splendid hunting tradition they had. They showed that one could be both wise, beautiful in spirit, and a lover of the chase as well. In the contemporary world we often create a divide between those who are beautiful in spirit and those who enjoy the chase. With a little bit of probing, with a little bit of investigation, we find that this dichotomy breaks down time and again.

But this is an argument which the politically correct won't listen to. Their minds are closed. Therefore we fall silent, realising it's best to avoid any conflict or harsh exchange of words. We realise that getting involved in heated arguments about hunting is, as the French memorably say, "ne vaut pas la chandelle."

When hunting people visit the Game Fair in Birr our silence falls away and we begin talking happily about the pastimes we love with other aficionados of country pursuits. Those who are uncomfortable with hunting are also very welcome and perhaps as the day goes on they will feel their prejudices slipping away, as they realise that the vast majority of hunting folk are very ordinary people, no different to most others.

I love watching the gundogs working during the Fair and I love watching the flycasting displays. I enjoy strolling through all the stands and buying unusual



foods such as wild boar burgers. It's a pleasure to ramble at one's leisure through all the stalls with their innumerable items, whether clothing, paintings, food, or guns. It's a pleasure to watch the skill of the claypigeon shooters and view the different presentations in the display arena including the stars of the show, the jousters.

Many people attending the Fair enjoy the terrier & lurcher section and they are in for an extra special treat this year because of the new, exciting Mick the Miller race which will feature a number of lurchers racing hell for leather against each other. Their watching owners will hope they win because there will be a valuable prize fund. Everyone else looking on will be appreciating the speed and the elegance of these lovely dogs.

It's very appropriate that there will be a Mick the Miller race in Offaly this year because Mick is Offaly's most celebrated dog of all time. His tale is an extraordinary one, and the people of his home village of Killeigh are very proud of the connection. They have erected a fine life-size statue of Mick on the village green and some of them will be present in Birr to watch the race named in his honour. They are delighted that one of the races has been named after Mick and they are looking forward to a fun day out amongst dog lovers in the beautiful gardens of Birr Castle.

When the Mick the Miller statue was unveiled in Killeigh in January 2011 greyhound enthusiasts from all over the country attended. It was unveiled by beleaguered Taoiseach Brian Cowen, who hadn't long left as head of the country after weathering a perfect storm of unfortunate events, some of them beyond his control. However, when he arrived in Killeigh he received a rapturous welcome. The people wanted to convey the impression that he was still a much-loved son of Offaly, despite adverse events. From 2.30pm onwards people gathered on the Green. Children ran around while a piper performed and a greyhound was petted by the attendees.

When the speeches began it was pointed out again and again that Mick the Miller was the first superstar of

greyhound racing, he was the Arkle of his day, he was looked upon as being "the dog who made greyhound racing."

Mick was trained in Killeigh between 1926 and 1929 by Michael Greene and Mick Flanagan. Local children were often called upon by Michael Greene to help run and walk the dog in the fields and bogs around the village.

25 years ago local man Brendan Berry became interested in the famous dog and he came to the opinion that this "genuine Irish sporting legend" should have a fitting memorial. Therefore a committee was formed and set itself the task of erecting a statue. Sponsors were approached and the Irish Greyhound Board supplied a cheque. Sculptor Elizabeth O'Kane was commissioned to create the sculpture. The committee asked Elizabeth because they were very impressed with her former work and because her family had a strong connection with greyhounds. Her father Des had a dog that won the English Derby in 1948.

MC Damien White told the January 2011 unveiling that many people in the Killeigh area became involved in the fundraising. He said Paddy Guilfoyle built the stone plinth on which the bronze statue rests, the stones taken from Mick the Miller's birthplace. At the unveiling local boys wore their t-shirts, which they designed themselves and which stated Mick the Miller Killeigh-born Thriller.

Dick O'Sullivan, Chairman of the Irish Greyhound Board, described the unveiling as the most pleasant ceremony he had attended in his five year period in

office. "Greyhound racing today is as popular as it is because of Mick the Miller," he said. "He was a superstar of his time. Greyhound racing has the support of ordinary people and events like this bind communities together." He thanked the Taoiseach for his ongoing support of the greyhound industry.

Elizabeth O'Kane spoke as well. The sculptress said she had decided to sculpt the famous greyhound "standing tall and proud and a little larger than life." The Taoiseach pointed out that there was a wonderful camaraderie among the greyhound fraternity. That camaraderie will be evident for all to see in Birr Castle on August 27th.

Derek Fanning
ROI Editor



After a fantastic Master McGrath race at Shanes Castle we can look forward to a great Mick The Miller race at Birr. This fabulous painting and limited edition prints by John R Moore will be on display.

Special discounted rate for IFI Licence holders - simply fill in your licence number to get a €5 discount

ANGLING FOR ALL at the IRISH GAME & COUNTRY FAIR, Birr Castle, Co Offaly 26th & 27th August

The angling section features fisheries, tackle dealers, boats, and representative organisations, fly tying, casting instruction & demos, competitions and an emphasis on encouraging children. **PLUS** a major information stand by Inland Fisheries Ireland  and access to the attractions of Ireland's largest country sports event and the world famous gardens & attractions of Birr Castle Estate. Other attractions include medieval jousting and re-enactments plus the Fine Food Festival with a celebrity chef cooking all types of fish dishes.

**For further details see: www.irishgameandcountryfair.com Tel: 048 44839167
E: irishgamefair@btinternet.com**

The Angling Section is supported by Inland Fisheries Ireland and all IFI permit holders or licence holders can have a €5 voucher for admission off the cost of an adult ticket (normally €15); a family ticket (normally €35) or will cover a child's admission (normally €5). To activate this voucher simply put in your permit/licence no below and present the voucher at the gate:

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**€5
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Countryside Alliance Ireland at Birr Castle

Countryside Alliance Ireland (CAI) is once again delighted to be exhibiting at the Irish Game and Country Fair at Birr Castle on 26 and 27 August.

The fair gives CAI the ideal opportunity to showcase the organisation's work while engaging with members, potential members and the public in general.

The CAI marquee will this year host the Wild Deer Association of Ireland with their collection of heads and deer stalking equipment, Irish stickmaker, Tom Kavanagh, with his impressive display of hand crafted sticks, Kildare Regional Game Council, renowned taxidermist Mick Dunne and for the first time the Courtlough Ladies Club who are trying to encourage more women to take up shooting sports.

CAI Chief Executive, Lyall Plant, comments, "The Irish Game and Country Fair at Birr Castle is the perfect forum for CAI to meet and chat with our members and supporters. With fieldsports, foods and a superb atmosphere all together in one of the country's most stunningly beautiful locations, the Fair offers something for everyone who loves the countryside and rural way of life. We are delighted to have a significant presence and to play such a vital part."

A visit the CAI marquee is a must, where a warm welcome is guaranteed! Gary McCartney, Development Officer, is a new member of the CAI team this year and he will be in attendance, so please come along and say 'hello'.

Countryside Alliance



Some of our members who stopped by enjoying the 'craic' our stand

New research indicates angling visitors spend more than non-angling tourists

Angler tourists to Waterville, Co. Kerry spend on average €644 during their stay, according to research published today by Inland Fisheries Ireland with assistance from the Economic and Social Research Institute (ESRI). The research, which was carried out with the Waterville Lakes and River Trust, highlights the significant recreational and economic value of the fisheries resource to the area.

The Waterville Angler Survey, which surveyed 207 anglers during the 2015 angling season found that, on average, angling visitors to Waterville spend €644 per fishing trip or €114 per day. The impact of this expenditure is far reaching across the local community with €451 spent on non-angling items such as accommodation, restaurants/cafes and groceries and €193 of angling expenditure on items such as angling guides, boat hire and equipment.

The daily spend of anglers in Waterville (€114) far exceeds the spending of non-angling visitors to Ireland. Fáilte Ireland's Tourism Facts Report 2015 cites expenditure of non-angling visitors and holiday makers at €68 and €89 per person per day in 2015.

Angling visitors also show huge loyalty to Waterville which is a renowned fishing destination for domestic and overseas anglers. Of those surveyed, 40 per cent have visited the area more than 20 times with 60 per cent visiting 10 times or more, an extremely high return rate in tourism terms. Anglers tend to spend a few days in the area with almost a quarter (24 per cent) staying longer than a week, 25 per cent

staying two nights and a further 24 per cent staying two or three nights. An incredible 99.5 per cent of those surveyed said they would like to return to Waterville again.

Angling was often the sole attraction of the area to these visitors with 40 per cent taking part in no alternative activities during their stay. The majority of anglers travelled to Waterville with friends or family with two thirds (68 per cent) reporting that their party contained between two to four anglers who fished during their stay. They came from Great Britain (17.5 per cent), mainland Europe (5 per cent), other overseas areas (2 per cent) and Ireland (75.5%).

Ciaran Byrne, CEO of Inland Fisheries Ireland said: "Waterville is one of Ireland's many precious fishing locations. Ireland is known for its indigenous wild fish populations and beautiful scenery which make it a top angling destination. This research in the Waterville area confirms that angling is bringing huge economic value to this rural community. We know that anglers to Waterville often visit outside of the Summer Months (May 40 per cent, April 28 per cent and October 19 per cent), thereby extending the season for tourism season providers. Anglers also tend to develop a relationship with an area which can lead to them taking multiple trips per year. We cannot underestimate the importance of protecting this resource both in terms of our responsibility to the aquatic habitat and the fish that live there, but also to the community and local businesses which benefit hugely from the resource throughout the year."



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Auctioneers' achieve over £1 million in sales

Holts Auctioneers' summer auction demonstrated a gratifying consistency to the market with the 768 Lots returning a total hammer price of £1,025,935 and 75% of the Lots sold on the day.

The viewing days were well attended, though the sweltering conditions in central London seemed to encourage a higher proportion of telephone and commission bids than normal and true to current form, internet participation was increased yet again, with a total of 2,914 registered live online bidders.

Confidence in online bidding is certainly growing both in terms of the numbers of participants and also the average value of successful bids via the Invaluable platform, with the average online purchase/winning value equating to £1,050 and almost 13% of auction Lots sold online. The initial reticence to spend money over the internet is being replaced with growing confidence, as proved with some larger figures of £3,000 and £7,600 being spent over the internet.

The lion's share of buyers once more remained within the UK, accounting for just under 60% of purchased Lots, with Continental Europe still being responsible for the next largest level of participation but with the United States accounting for the second highest individual total in terms of outlay and number of Lots purchased.

The highlight of the auction was undoubtedly the small collection of rifles owned by the Windsor-Clive family, Lots 1150 – 1155. The quality of the rifles, combined with their extraordinary condition really caught the imagination of the crowd and each one exceeded its estimate by some proportion – the most dramatic being Lot 1155, a fine Rigby .450 nitro express sidelock non-ejector double rifle, soaring past a conservative £10,000-£15,000 estimate to achieve a staggering £56,000 (making it the top Lot of the auction). The other 'top slots' were filled by an even mix of best English and Italian guns and rifles, with Piotti, Holland & Holland, Boss and Fabbri taking the honours.

The market for antique firearms proved as strong as ever, with the second part of the Harold Bull Collection repeating the success of the first. Arguably the most impressive Lot (575) offered in the Antique section was the pair of outsized John Dickson percussion horse pistols ordered by the eccentric collector Charles Gordon – and they fetched an equally impressive £20,000 hammer price against a robust estimate of £20,000-25,000.

Editor's Note: We hope to include a very helpful article on buying guns at auction in the next edition of Irish Country Sports & Country Life.

CPR Saves Fish - new campaign highlights importance of conservation

CPR saves fish according to Inland Fisheries Ireland at the launch of a new campaign to highlight angling and the importance of conservation. The hashtag #CPRsavesfish has been placed across a number of bridges and high footfall locations across the country to engage the public around the pursuit of conservation focused angling.

'CPR' stands for 'Catch, Photo, Release' and refers to a method of angling where a fish is caught and subsequently returned unharmed back into the water. This angling technique is proven to contribute to the maintenance of healthy fish stocks and ensures future generations can continue to enjoy the recreational and economic benefits of the fisheries resource.

Inland Fisheries Ireland is supporting catch and release across all types of angling including pike, coarse, salmon and trout fishing as well as sea angling. The method results in positive survival rates for fish when caught using best practise methods. Research carried out by Inland Fisheries Ireland and the Norwegian Institute for Nature Research in 2014 examined the survival of salmon after catch & release fishing in three Irish rivers – the Owenmore in County Mayo, the Mulkear in County Limerick and the Feale in County Kerry. Overall, 92% of the Atlantic salmon recorded after tagging survived post Catch & Release*.

The #CPRsavesfish stencils can be found in urban locations in each River Basin District in Ireland including Dublin, Cork, Galway, Limerick, Letterkenny and Kilkenny. The hashtag stencils, which have been power washed with water onto pavements, are completely environmentally friendly and are expected to fade naturally in the coming weeks.

Suzanne Campion, Head of Business Development at Inland Fisheries Ireland said: "This awareness campaign aims to put angling on the general public's radar by playing on the concept of CPR as a lifesaving mechanism and to engage existing anglers around the practise of catch and release fishing. Catch, Photo, Release (CPR) angling ensures the sustainability of our fisheries resource in the long term with most sporting anglers in Ireland already practicing catch and release to some degree, recognising that it ensures the maintenance of healthy fish stocks and the sustainability of the sport in the long term."

New wildlife crime leaflet to protect the Common Skate

A new leaflet has been launched to raise awareness about the Common Skate and to remind recreational sea anglers that it is a protected species in Northern Ireland as part of the ongoing 'Watch out for Wildlife Crime' public awareness campaign by the Partnership for Action Against Wildlife Crime NI (PAW NI).

Common Skate is an endangered species and is protected in Northern Ireland out to six nautical miles. While once abundant, it has become very rare in UK shallow seas and in European waters. It is a criminal offence to intentionally or recklessly take, injure or kill Common Skate and sea anglers must not deliberately target Common Skate. The maximum

penalty on summary conviction for such an offence is a fine of £5,000 and/or imprisonment for six months.

Marine Scientist at DAERA, Dr. Joanne Hanna said: "The new leaflet on the Common Skate is a great opportunity to raise awareness about this protected species. With the support of recreational sea anglers we hope that this magnificent fish will continue to return to its former haunts around Northern Ireland."

PSNI wildlife liaison officer Emma Meredith said: "We take all reports of wildlife crime seriously and are pleased to be working with our partners within the PAW group. This is a wonderful initiative to raise awareness about this species."

To report a wildlife crime for Common Skate please call DAERA on: 02890 569262 or the PSNI on 101.



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Inland Fisheries Ireland welcomes safeguarding fisheries legislation and confirms protection operations continue as normal

Inland Fisheries Ireland has welcomed the Inland Fisheries (Amendment) Act 2017 (No.16 of 2017), following the signing of a commencement order by Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment, Denis Naughten T.D yesterday.

The Inland Fisheries (Amendment) Act 2017 confirms the explicit power on Inland Fisheries Ireland to bring and prosecute summary proceedings for inland fisheries offences. This act resolves an issue concerning Inland Fisheries Ireland's power to prosecute which arose in February 2017 and resulted in required amendments to the fisheries legislation.

In February, the Department of Communications, Climate Action and Environment informed Inland Fisheries Ireland that it had received legal advice to the effect that Inland Fisheries Ireland did not have explicit power to prosecute offences under the Fisheries Acts. The Department also advised that pending the enactment of amending legislation, which was urgently progressed, Inland Fisheries Ireland summonses for such offences before the Courts were, regrettably, not able to proceed.

The legislation commenced yesterday confirms that Inland Fisheries Ireland has the power to prosecute once again for offences under the Fisheries Acts. In the interim period since the legislative issue came to light, Fisheries Officers continued to work as normal with the detection of offences continuing in the intervening period. This means that any offences detected during the past six month period will now be able to proceed to prosecution in the normal manner.

Dr Ciaran Byrne, CEO of Inland Fisheries Ireland said: "We welcome the commencement of this new legislation which safeguards our ability to prosecute, and as a result, protects our fisheries resource which is of significant environmental, social and economic value to our country. This means that our staff can continue to ensure that this valuable natural resource is protected, conserved, managed and developed for the communities it serves across Ireland."

Inland Fisheries Ireland has worked closely with the Department of Communications, Climate Action and Environment which has been advised

Inland Fisheries Ireland's Dublin Angling Initiative off to good start

Inland Fisheries Ireland's Dublin Angling Initiative has kicked off for the 2017 Summer Season with several local schools and youth groups already enjoying fishing lessons and field trips. Sphere 17 from Darndale and Whitechurch Youth Services from Rathfarnham were among the first groups to get out fishing, while Chapelizod's Community Festival incorporated angling and environmental lessons from the Dublin Angling Initiative into its programme of events.

Sphere 17 Youth Services from Darndale, Dublin 17 travelled to Malahide, North County Dublin to take a charter boat, Fish & Trips, for a few hours of sea angling. The group spent the evening learning how to fish beside Ireland's Eye, catching pollock and mackerel. While fishing, they also reported seeing plenty of local resident birds and seals as well as wallabies and deer on the island. The fishing trip was one of six over the past month with the group also enjoying lessons in coarse and game fishing.

Meanwhile, Southside youth group Whitechurch Youth Services were also out fishing recently with the Dublin Angling Initiative. They were taken to Courtlough Fisheries, Balbriggan where they were coached in bubble and fly fishing for trout. Participants learned about fish handling and catch and release fishing.

In addition to fishing lessons and field trips, the Dublin Angling Initiative has also been attending community events with a view to introducing young people to the fisheries resource in their own locality. At the recent Chapelizod Community Festival, 16 young people between the ages of 10-15 years enjoyed an environmental and history lesson on the River Liffey which runs through their community from fisheries staff. The lesson was followed by a more practical invertebrates sampling and identification session and an opportunity to examine juvenile trout and salmon which were taken from the river before being safely released again. The group finished with a fly fishing lesson where they learnt the basics of getting started in the pursuit.

Oisín Cahill, Co-Ordinator of Inland Fisheries Ireland's Dublin Angling Initiative said: "The Dublin Angling Initiative aims to empower young people to appreciate and enjoy their local amenity by showing them what it can offer alongside and giving them an understanding of the importance of conservation and protection. We combine theoretical lessons with practical sessions across environmental and angling themes.

Angling is a hobby that can be enjoyed in an urban location such as Dublin at any age or ability. We hope that the young people who participate in the programme and who are introduced to fishing will continue to enjoy it into later life."

For information contact Oisín Cahill, Dublin Angling Initiative Coordinator at Inland Fisheries Ireland (E: oisin.cahill@fisheriesireland.ie) Enquiries are welcome from any groups or individuals interested in the programme and availability will be on a first come, first served basis.

Open Invitation Extended To All Beagle Packs

The Balgarrett Beagle Hunt Club are pleased to announce that even though they have disbanded their hounds their hunt country is still being kept open and their club is still going. With that in mind they are throwing open an invitation to any registered beagle pack to come and hunt the country, either from Ireland or Britain. For more details any pack can contact the Secretary Liz Rosario on 087 2788595 or liz1rozario@gmail.com.

The Secretary sent letters to all the club's members a couple of months ago stating that it was with "a heavy heart" that she was informing them that at a meeting on the 11th of May an agreement was reached that "the Balgarrett Beagles will be

drafted out to other packs. We will continue as a 'hunt club' which means we will invite other beagle packs to hunt our country and hunt with other packs whenever possible. We will need some financial input to keep the club afloat, so it was decided that the subscriptions for membership of the club will remain as they were. Kieran Lambert has deservedly been made an honorary master, while Simon Steel, Ian Hamilton and myself will continue as joint masters. If in the future, somebody is in a position to keep and hunt beagles in Balgarrett country, it will be possible to put a pack together without too much difficulty. In the meantime, we can only KEEP HUNTING!"

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Proposed Guidelines for Night Shooting in ROI Clarified

The Sports Coalition writes to say there has been much hysteria published in various media about the proposed guidelines for night shooting, much of it false and virtually all of it ill-informed. From some of the comments made, it is difficult to understand why anyone would wish to confuse landowners and hunters on such an important issue. The purpose of this communique is to provide a factual explanation of the proposals, their origins, what they mean for landowners and hunters alike, and the legal implications.

Origins

At a meeting of the Firearms Consultative Panel (FCP) in early 2016, which is chaired by the Department of Justice and Equality (DOJ), public safety issues in relation to night shooting, i.e. lamping, were raised as a result of reports of unregulated, and often illegal night shooting. Several people had anecdotally heard of several instances of public safety issues and it was noted there is under reporting of this. The farming representative confirmed the concerns of farmers and that there had been some instances reported of livestock being injured, and in some cases fatally, from night shooting. They also reported under reporting. Further discussion revealed instances of lamping being used as a cover for some rural crime, particularly on farms. Illegal night time deer hunting and shooting from the road were also raised. Separately, there are published reports elsewhere of this aspect of lamping and the concerns around it being discussed at meetings between farmers and the Gardai e.g. at a meeting in Ennis earlier this year. The majority view was that this form of hunting should be examined by the Firearms Consultative Panel before someone is injured or a fatality occurs and also to assuage the concerns of landowners and the general public alike. A working group was established to examine the matter and make recommendations to the FCP before any decisions are taken in relation to the practice. The working group comprised the NPWS, the IFA, the Sports Coalition, the Irish Deer Society and An Garda Síochána.

The Proposals

A number of meetings were held where further information and various options were considered. During the course of those meetings An Garda Síochána reported some quite frightening incidents which had occurred during night shooting, particularly in Wicklow, and again the issue of under reporting was mentioned.

In the final analysis it was agreed that a ban would be inappropriate and would present difficulties for farmers, game clubs and commercial gamekeepers in their ability to protect their stock. However, the working group unanimously felt that some guidelines should be recommended as the current practices posed a serious public safety issue which could end in a human tragedy. Regard was had to what occurs in other European countries and particularly in the UK where lamping is allowed also, for foxes and rabbits. The UK controls lamping through both primary legislation and compulsory guidelines. While new legislation and compulsory regulation was considered to be inappropriate in the Irish situation for a number of practical and historical reasons, the UK guidelines nonetheless contained a number of practices which it was felt would be appropriate and would represent best practice. The IFA recommended that while night shooting should not be banned, in general it should cease at midnight unless there was a specific problem of stock, game or crop protection which required to be addressed beyond that time. This was agreed as a commonsense approach. It was also agreed that it would be appropriate to adopt some of the elements in the UK guidelines. In particular, it was felt that anyone going out lamping should at the very least, inform the landowner over whose lands the shooting would take place. It was further decided that people lamping should also inform the nearest local



Garda station. It was noted that many clubs are already doing this. There was widespread agreement that these simple courtesies would ease many of the current concerns and foster good communications between the principal parties who might be involved. It was also felt that An Garda Síochána might consider from time to time using their existing powers to apply appropriate conditions on the licenses of particular individuals who engage in activities which, while not illegal, give cause for concern from a public safety point of view.

What the Proposals Mean for Landowners and Hunters alike

Contrary to what has been widely published by some:

- There is **NO** proposal to change the existing legislation.
- There is **NO** ban on night shooting with a lamp.
- There is **NO** prohibition on a landowner, gun club or gamekeeper protecting their stock at any time of the day or night.
- The proposals are simply a voluntary set of best practice guidelines which relevant land user organisations are being asked to recommend to their members to ease safety concerns of landowners and the public.
- There is **NO** prospect of anyone being prosecuted for lawful lamping, irrespective of the time of night while out shooting with a lamp. *(There is no change, or proposed change, to the current law which allows lamping without any restriction of time.)*

The debate, if in fact it can be called a debate, which has raged across various media over the past few weeks has sought to distort the facts for reasons about which we can only speculate. There are some who apparently consider, if their published statements are to be believed, that their sporting interests take precedence, and are superior, to the safety and income interests of the people who own the lands which they use free of charge and that they don't need to give the landowner the courtesy of letting him/her know when going out night shooting on their land. This is doing a grave disservice to both hunters and landowners alike for fairly obvious reasons. A representative of one organisation is reported in the Farm Ireland section of Independent.ie to believe it is not necessary to inform the landowner when lamping is taking place. He said: "The proposal that these farmers should be notified for every visit stating when you are going to(sic) on their property and for how long, even though they have already given permission for you to shoot over their land is totally unworkable." It seems this organisation considers a simple courtesy phone call to the landowners to be an inconvenience. Of course landowner permission is not, and should never be considered to be absolute in all circumstances. It is further reported in the same publication "In a statement, on the group's website Seamus Heraty of NARGC said among the implications of the proposals was that gun club members will not be able to use their Firearms for Vermin Control for seven months of the year." This is utter nonsense and it is manifestly untrue. The nonsense is compounded by an attempt to get a petition signed against the non-existent ban. Other misstatements of fact are also made.

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The Legal Implications

The simple fact of the matter is there are no new or extra legal implications to those which already exist currently.

THERE IS NO CHANGE, PROPOSED OR OTHERWISE, TO THE CURRENT LEGISLATION. WHAT IS PROPOSED IS A SIMPLE VOLUNTARY (NON-BINDING) BEST PRACTICE SET OF GUIDELINES.

The situation in other EU countries bears consideration. Very few countries allow lamping and where it is permitted, there are strict legal restrictions. The table below illustrates the position.

NIGHT HUNTING WITH LAMPS IN THE EU

ESTONIA

Lamping is allowed only for wild boar from high seats. This means the shooting position is fixed and the trajectory is into the ground in all cases if it results in a missed target.

FRANCE

France allows the use of lamps for fox control in only two areas and even then with strict rules which include the prior written permission of the local municipality.

LITHUANIA

Like Estonia, lamping is allowed only for wild boar from high seats. This means the shooting position is fixed and the trajectory is into the ground in all cases if it results in a missed target.

IRELAND

Lamping is allowed for foxes and rabbits. There is no specific regulation/restriction.

NETHERLANDS

Lamping is allowed for foxes. However, a special permit must be

applied for and the permits restrict the fox control to areas which are in the vicinity of free range poultry farms and to areas where there are specific species protection/conservation programmes.

UK

Lamping is allowed for foxes and rabbits. There are controls through both primary legislation, governing permitted calibres, and compulsory guidelines.

SWEDEN

Sweden allows the use of lamps for fox control in only some areas and even then with strict rules which include the prior written permission of the local municipality. All missed shots must be accounted for.

If anyone doubts the veracity of this communicate we suggest they submit the following questions to the Department of Justice and Equality which has oversight for the proposals at the email address below:

- Is there a new ban on lamping foxes at night?
- If there is, is it compulsory?
- What changes have been made to the firearms and/or wildlife legislation for this?
- It is being said that I must inform the landowner and the Gardai before I go lamping. Is this true?
- Can I be prosecuted for lamping after midnight if I have the landowner's permission?
- Where is the law on this?
- Why is it intended to change things from before?
- What can I do if a fox is attacking my bird pens late at night (after midnight) or a farmer has a problem with dogs or foxes attacking his sheep?

Department of Justice: firearms_inbox@justice.ie

Mysterious Pink Salmon reported in West of Ireland River Systems

There have been several reports of non-native Pink Salmon in Galway, Mayo and Donegal rivers according to Inland Fisheries Ireland. The Pink Salmon species, which is of Pacific origin from the west coasts of the United States and Canada as well as Northern Asia, has been reported on several occasions during the past two weeks. The appearance of the species is of concern to Inland Fisheries Ireland as it may impact Ireland's own Atlantic salmon species.

Catches of Pink Salmon have been reported on the Foxford Fishery, Co. Mayo, the Coolcronan Fishery on the River Moy, the Galway Fishery on the River Corrib, the Cong River on the River Corrib and the Drowes River in Donegal.

Pink or humpback salmon are a migratory species of salmon, native to river systems in the northern Pacific Ocean and adjacent regions of the Bering Sea and Arctic Ocean. Outside of its native range, the species has established self-sustaining populations in rivers in northern Norway and in the far northwest of Russia. These populations are believed to have originated from stocking programmes undertaken in this part of Russia in the second half of the 20th century. In Ireland, there is no license to farm pink salmon.

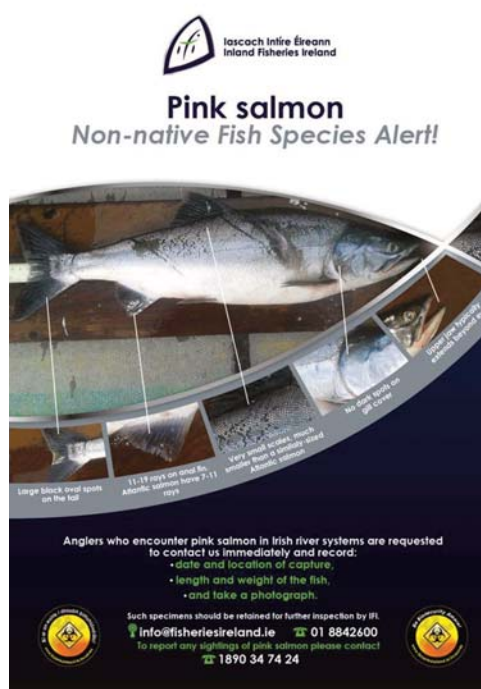
Inland Fisheries Ireland is appealing to the public to be vigilant and to report catches of Pink Salmon with a view to helping to establish the abundance and extent of distribution of the species in Irish waters. The species has a number of

unique characteristics which are different to Atlantic Salmon. Pink salmon can be distinguished by the following:

- Large black oval spots on the tail
- 11-19 rays on the anal fin
- Very small scales—much smaller than a similarly-sized Atlantic Salmon
- No dark spots on the gill cover
- Upper jaw typically extending beyond the eye

Dr Greg Forde, Head of Operations at Inland Fisheries Ireland said: "The appearance of pink salmon in the West of Ireland is currently a mystery to us. It seems unlikely that these fish made a migration due to their small size. We are appealing to the public, and the angling community in particular, to be vigilant and to report any catch of Pink Salmon to Inland Fisheries Ireland so that we can undertake examination of size, maturity stage and genetic origin. The concern is that when angling, anglers are only exploiting about 15% of the salmon stock so there are likely to be several more of these fish in rivers."

Inland Fisheries Ireland is asking members of the public who catch a Pink Salmon to contact Inland Fisheries Ireland without delay and to record date & location of capture, length & weight of fish and to take a photograph of the fish. The fish should be kept for further examination by Inland Fisheries Ireland. Reports can be made to Inland Fisheries Ireland's 24 hour confidential hotline number - 1890 34 74 24 or 1890 FISH 24.





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Country Sports Ireland News

Game Management Seminar - outstanding success!

Country Sports Ireland's Game Management Seminar which took place in Beltrim Estate, Gortin on Saturday 15th July was an outstanding success.



The packed audience at the seminar

The event which was designed to provide local gun clubs and shooting syndicates with expert advice aimed at helping them get the very best from their birds had been fully booked for some time and judging by the tremendous feedback from all those who were there - attendance was very worthwhile.



One of the outside presentations to delegates

There were very informative presentations from Dan Day from A-One Game Feed, Country Sports Ireland's Ronan Gorman and Ivan Wilson, Gamekeeper at Beltrim Estate on a range of issues including release pen location and construction, feeding, disease recognition and treatment, game crops and predator control.

The star of the show was undoubtedly Beltrim Gamekeeper, Ivan Wilson who shared his enormous practical knowledge and experience both in a formal presentation in the morning and in an estate walk in the afternoon - in what can only be described as the ideal setting of Beltrim Estate. The estate walk included a visit to a newly built release pen and some triticale cover crops which add an extra dimension to the shoot.



Ronan Gorman, Chief Executive Country Sports Ireland presenting Beltrim Estate owner, Dick Blackiston Houston with a gift as a token of our thanks for his hospitality.

Country Sports Ireland would like to thank Ivan Wilson and Dan Day for their expert input, Beltrim Estate, Dick Blackiston Houston for hosting the event all especially to all those who attended and contributed to a really enjoyable and informative day.

Game Keeping and Predator Control Advisor Announced!

Country Sports Ireland is delighted to announce that Ivan Wilson has agreed to take on the role of Game Keeping and Predator Control Advisor with immediate effect. Ivan has been Game Keeper in Beltrim Estate, Gortin for 30 years. He also runs his own excellent shoot in Trinamadan, Gortin where he offers smaller walked up days suited to the grass roots shooter. Ivan has also extensive game rearing experience; rearing thousands of birds for gun clubs and working closely with and advising many clubs throughout the country on game management and predator control issues for over 30 years. Ivan therefore is uniquely placed to be able to help local gun clubs and shooting syndicates get the best out of their birds.

Speaking following his appointment Ronan Gorman Chief Executive Country Sports Ireland said: "There is absolutely no doubting Ivan Wilson's knowledge and experience on game management and predator control issues and we are delighted that Ivan will now be in a position to share this knowledge and expertise with Country Sports Ireland members and member clubs. We are delighted that Ivan has agreed to take on this role and with his support we intend to continue to provide local gun clubs and shooting syndicates with unrivaled access to expert advice and support - helping them get the very best value and sport from their game release work."

Commenting on his appointment Ivan Wilson said: "Country Sports Ireland is doing outstanding work in providing its members with important information, advice and value for money and I am delighted to be able to support Country Sports Ireland with this work."

Show for Shan

Country Sports Ireland would like to congratulate to Jed & Trish Donagh and all those who delivered the excellent "Show for Shan" in Duleek, Co. Meath on Sunday 9th July. The terrier and lurcher show was an outstanding success with great crowds, excellent competitions and also raising a €4,000 towards medical treatment for a seriously ill 19 year old Carlow girl - Shantelle Tynan.

Country Sports Ireland was very pleased to attend and support this event and we were delighted with the fabulous feedback we received from many of those attending the event. We were also pleased to welcome some new members on the day. As a grass roots organisation that values our members and their opinions highly it is always good to spend time amongst them!

Contact Country Sports Ireland:

Phone: +44 7542 111542

Email: ronan@countryssportsireland.org

Web: www.countryssportsireland.org



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Inland Fisheries at the Irish Game Fair Shanes Castle 2017

The Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA) Inland Fisheries team were once again at Shanes Castle for the Game Fair and were, as in previous years, able to report after the show that they had many, many visitors to their stand.

The increased DAERA profile at the show since 2013 has seen exhibition space increased, allowed Inland Fisheries to offer additional attractions and facilitated opportunities to engage with more individuals and groups of people during the busy weekend.

This year, offering something new to customers and potential customers, Inland Fisheries representatives invited people to try out the recently acquired 'Virtual Angling Experience' on which 'virtual anglers' could hook and land a fish, complete with running and weighted rod sensation.



A show visitor and DAERA rep trying the Virtual Angling Experience

Although the 'Virtual Angling' stand was very busy and there was sometimes a queue to try this, show visitors were patient and often availed of the waiting time to discuss angling in Northern Ireland and the DAERA Public Angling Estate.

Inland Fisheries has also expressed thanks to the volunteers who managed the kids' Put & Take angling facility at Shanes. This popular feature saw huge numbers of young people try angling and for many this was a first time experience.

DAERA stocked the facility prior to each day's crowds at the Game Fair and departmental representatives have confirmed they received very positive feedback from those

taking part. This was another example of the community outreach, which Inland Fisheries has been involved in for some time now, achieving new uptake and reaching the angling generation of the future.



Young participants and qualified coaches at the young people's Put & Take fishery

DAERA Inland Fisheries has concluded that the Game Fair at Shane's Castle in 2017 was, as in recent years, a valuable opportunity to meet with thousands of the general public, the existing angling customer base and many who are considering trying angling as a health, enjoyable and accessible outdoor sport.

The Department was involved in all events leading up the show – the Brownlow House Irish Game Fair launch, the media launch at Shanes Castle, a radio interview on U105 with Frank Mitchell and the distribution vouchers giving £5.00 off the entry price.

The team at Inland Fisheries is already making preparations and looking forward to the Birr Castle Game Fair on 26th and 27th August 2017.



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The Irish Game Fair and Fine Food Festival, Shanes Castle, Saturday 24th and Sunday 25th June.

Shanes Castle in its beautiful picturesque grounds on the Shanes Castle Estate Co Antrim was the venue again for this years Irish Game Fair and Fine Food Festival. And what a memorable weekend that was. The Irish Game Fair and Fine Food Festival was the most comprehensive, biggest and best organised event of its kind in Northern Ireland and was a brilliant window for countrysports and country life in Ireland and further afield.

Margaret McStay reports: Whether you were an experienced countrysports enthusiast interested in trying something new, or an out of town visitor eager to try your hand at something totally different, the Irish Game Fair provided a vast array of sporting interests for both young and old.

Each year this event goes from strength to strength, with a jam packed itinerary for gun dogs, lurchers, terriers, whippets showing and racing, ferrets, archery, clay pigeon shooting, fishing, and many more events too numerous to mention, and this year proved to be a real gem in the heart of our beautiful country.

We arrived pretty early at Shanes Castle and straight away headed for breakfast, and take in some retail therapy. We strolled around at our leisure visiting the many stands along the way, one being the dog rehoming stand which is very close to my heart. Keith Kirkpatrick and Colleen Cunningham do such wonderful work here to rehome these lovely animals, and long may it continue.

Our next stop was at Stephen Smyth's Barbour stand. I love this man; he is always so welcoming and has time for everybody. We moved on to see my good friend and top chef Emmett Mc Court in the Fine Food Marquee. The smell of great food was definitely

flowing in the air here. It was nice to meet up with Emmett, and hijack him again for my now annual photograph. We could not miss visiting Denise and Trevor Cahill's canine stand with every type of dog lead you could mention.

Along the way we met up with many good canine friends that we have made over the years, out of going and showing our whippets at nearly every show north and south of the border. We are like the bad penny - we show up everywhere. Helen Hunter and her lovely family were there to greet us, as was Mc Grath Family and Smith families from Carlow. We met Neil and Philip Pinkerton, the twins from Belfast. Gregg Murphy travelled all way from Donegal with his lovely family to enjoy and be part of this great sporting weekend.

The people I have spoken about, and many more too numerous to mention, have become good friends of ours, and we have made all these friends and many more through the Canine world. Although John and myself are getting older, and cannot get in the field or over the ditches as quickly as we used to, we still love our canine world, countrysports, and our dog shows and racedays.

Before the racing took place I watched the showing of the Teckel breed. These little wire-haired

dachshunds are a sporting 'sausage dog' and have proven themselves both in the field and in the show ring as a top quality breed. These small but sporting dachshunds will find a place in every working household I am sure. Congratulations to these worthy winners and also to Judge Janet Duke for a job well done.

Time passes so quickly when you are enjoying yourself, and all to soon it was time to get back to the Canine Country Sports section, and to one of the highlights of the weekend, on Saturday "The Master Mc Grath Racing Championship".

With the lure flyng up the track, the dogs were off and the 2017 Master Mc Grath championship final was on its way. As the cheers and roars of encouragement rang out around the wee blue hills of Antrim, Nicky Smiths Canine friend Scooby came romping home in full glory and crossed the white line to take this prestigious accolade home to Carlow with her. The thrills and tears of winning and the excitement from the winning family was just a sight not to be missed.

And the icing on the cake was when Nicky Smith announced she was donating her cash prize winnings of £250 to The Cancer Charity at the NI Hospice. I can honestly say, there was not a dry eye around the ring when

Nicky and her dad Donal told Albert Titterington of their intentions. As Nicky told me, it was never about the money, it was just nice to win after Scooby getting Reserve for two years running. What a display of generosity from this young lady! Such a lovely family and a well deserved win. And another little bit of news for us women. Nicky is the first woman to ever win the Master Mc Grath.

Reserve Champion in the Master Mc Grath went to one of nature's gentlemen, Pat Mc Grath and his winning dog Tucker. Pat, a big congratulations and a well deserved win. Mammy Mc Grath and your family were there to cheer you on. Well done Pat and maybe Tucker will be the winner in 2018.

Full Racing Results

Elite under 21 Joe Leonard with Amber

Traditional under 23 S Mc Grath with Meg

Traditional over 23 C Canavan with Maggie

Heavy Bull Mickey Quinn with Hoss

Light Bull Kirsty Harpur with Regal

Elite under 23 Joe Leonard with Pepsi

Elite over 23 S Moore with Seven Mick The Miller Qualifer Eddie Kane with Scooter

Greyhound James Anderson with Theresa

Directors' Challenge Gabriel Frank with Dash

Pups Charlene Rafferty with Dash Terrier Racing A Finlay On Island

Special guest Adrian Horan, whose father trained the one and only Mick The Millar, presented the trophies for the racing. What a lovely man and congratulations to all the winners.

Sunday came bright and early and we arrived at Shanes Castle for another packed day of country sports and fun. First on the menu was the Ferret showing and racing. We had some craic in that arena. I really love this part of the show. This sport brings a great buzz of excitement and laughter and is very

popular. Darren Moore and Graham Fyffe, you are experts in this field, and display a very high degree of sportsmanship, backed up with Stephen Mc Gonigal's brilliant commentary. Many thanks for this part of the show. Ferret judging was carried out by Leeroy Mc Cullough, who did a wonderful job and did not even get bitten once!

Ferret Results

Ferret Showing Michael Quinn with Sandy

Ferret Racing Paul Baxter with Bell

Showing Results

Teckels Billy Cauldwell with Biscuit, Res James Greer with Denzel.

Ladies Handling Class Ashton Wylie with Keeta

Gents Handling Charge Mickey Quinn with Lady

Overall Champion Whippets Colin Maguire with Pepsi, Reserve Janet Duke with Oscar

Overall Champion Lurchers Mojo Kearney with Max, Reserve Nick Irvine with Lilo

Overall Champion Terriers Terence Mc Laughlin with Flapper, Reserve Dessie Mackin with Frankie.

Overall Show Champion and Best in Show Mojo Kearney with Max

Overall Champion Pup Ashton Wylie with Keeta, reserve Miranda Hicks with Flint.

The 5 Nations Terrier Championship

Dessie Mackin with Frankie, handled by Peter Conn, reserve Dessie Mackin with Jet, handled by Tara Hunt.

The 5 Nations Whippet Championship

Kirsty Fyffe and David Campbell with their winning Whippet Bobby, reserve Janet Duke with Oscar.

Many thanks the Judges on the day. Judging is not always an easy job, but you carried out your duties with fairness and integrity. I cannot forget the man of the moment, and Canine Director Tom Barry for organising another great show and raceday. Tom and your wife

Leanne, Morgan and Ethan and your brilliant team of helpers done a first class job. You organised and carried out one of the best Dog Shows and Race days I have ever seen at Shanes Castle and I enjoyed every moment.

Major investment 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 in Ireland. The Game Fair at Shanes Castle has impeccable credentials, and annually attracts large numbers of people to the region, 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 countrysports and traditions.

None of this would be possible without the man at the helm, and his brilliant field team. Yes the "King of the Castle" himself, Albert J Titterington, you are in a league of your own. What can I say to describe a kind, thoughtful and generous man, that has given his life to countrysports and all the good causes that go with it.

Our lives have been enriched with the enjoyment you give to many families across the country, young and old through your Game Fairs. At the end of the summer season, when the home fires are burning bright, you give us all such happy memories to look back on. You are our Rock in the countrysports world, and long may you continue.

Behind every good man is a good woman. And Irene you fit this category with gold medals. What would he do without you. Many thanks Albert, Irene, Co Directors, Edwin Dash, and magazine editor Paul Pringle, and your back up team for a very enjoyable weekend at Shanes Castle, full of joy and excitement, and above all again a great window for Country Sports. And yet again Albert, you produced a brilliant and enjoyable weekend for all of us. Thanks for the memories.

And now for Birr - I simply can't wait!

The 30th Annual All Ireland Terrier & Lurcher Show and Racing Championships Shanes Castle



Overall Show Champion and Best in Show Mojo Kearney with Max.



Ashton Wylie with her Champion puppy.



Special Guest Adrian Horan whose father trained Mick The Miller presenting the Racing Trophies.



Champion Ferret Showing Michael Quinn with Sandy and in Ferret Racing Paul Baxter with Bell.



Five Nations Terrier Championship Dessie Mackin with Frankie, handled by Peter Conn, reserve Dessie Mackin with Jet, handled by Tara Hunt.



Winners in the hotly contested Master McGrath Challenge for ELITE lurchers (both Over and Under 23" Both winner and runner up received a presentation coat for their dog sponsored by Jaydee Coats and Whippet Supplies.



Five Nations Whippet Championship Kirsty Fyffe and David Campbell with their winning Whippet Bobby, Reserve Janet Duke with Oscar and the judges.



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'A Show for Shan'

Jed and Patricia Donagh's Charity Dog Show, Duleek, Sunday 9th July

Duleek, situated in the quiet valley of the Nanny River, in the beautiful County of Meath, was the venue for this outstanding Working Dog Charity Show and Race Day. That very popular country sportsman with a heart of gold, Jed Donagh, had a dream come true by reaching out a helping hand to Shan, a young lady from Carlow who is fighting a severe illness.

Margaret McStay reports: The canine folk of Ireland came out in force to support this special cause. I have never seen crowds like it at a dog show. I have said it before and I will say it again, the generosity of our countrysports fraternity knows no bounds when it comes to charity events.

There was a real carnival atmosphere in the field with the laughter of children playing on the Bouncy Castle, and on site a Country Sports Clothing stand, Catapult Tent, Cahill Leads and Collars, Video stand with the eye in the Sky Drone, Burger and Ice Cream van, and a knickknack stand, something for everyone.

Everybody from the dog show scene was at this show, all out to contribute in some small way to this very special cause.

I was so proud to see at last a dog show recognising the now famous Plummer Terriers, and giving them a ring and a judge all to themselves. I counted 20 Plummers around the ring on Sunday. What a turnout. Hopefully this will be the norm at the shows in 2018.

Patricia Donagh, was in charge of the PA system and MC and did a great job. A real professional and as Patricia's beautiful southern brogue rang out over the field, the money kept rolling in.

Show Results

Plummer Terriers Best In Breed Phil



Overall Champion and Best in Show David Dickenson with Rusty, Reserve Champion James Boyd with Fran People's Champions Karen Cummins with Maisie.

Pugh with Brimar Nathy Reserve Best In Breed Sam White with Dargle Valley Viper

Children's Handling Class Brooke Rafferty with Millie

Champion Lurcher James Boyd with Fran

Reserve Lurcher Maurice McDowell with Blue

Overall Champion Ferret Showing 1st Michael Quinn with Sandy 2nd Niall O Cloghan with Bonnie

Overall Champion Ferret Racing 1st Rose Mc Coy with Conker 2nd Niall O Cloghan with Bonny

Overall Champion Strong Dog Pup 1st Charlene Martin with Willow 2nd Jamie Lee Mc Kinistry with Hank.

Overall Champion Strong Dog 1st Sean Lawlor with Rondal 2nd Charlene

Martin with Rohan

Overall Champion Whippet Pup 1st Janet Duke with Levi 2nd Gabriel Frank with Todha

Overall Whippet Champion Karen Cummins with Maisie, Reserve Melissa Greer with Turbo.

Overall Champion Plummer Pup Sam White with Dargle Valley Viper, Reserve Ava Moran with Dargle Valley Dixie

Overall Champion Plummer Alan Kenny with Brimar Nathy, Reserve Ronan Mc Kenna with DRD Rambo.

Overall Champion Terrier Pup Darren Martin with Castro Handled by Mariano Parisella, Reserve Jack Lynch with Jackie

Overall Champion Pup Darren Martin with Castro, Reserve James



Champion Whippet Pup Janet Duke with Levi.

Woods Buster

Overall Pet Champion Overall Pet Champion
Melissa Greer with Turbo, Reserve Gail Canning
with Roe

Racing Results

Lurcher Pup Michelle Rafferty with Dino,
Charlene Rafferty with Jet

Whippet Pup Barry Chambers with Alfie, Janet
Duke with Florence

Under 21 Elites Joe Leonard with Whitney, Joe
Leonard with Amber

Over 23 Master McGrath Stephanie O'Connor
with Bear, Gary Smith with Seven

Under 23 Elites Mal McFall with Bandit, Karen
Cummins with Angel

Mick the Miller Qualifier Shane Ennis with Flash,
Paddy McCarthy with Pip



Overall Champion Plummer Pup Sam White with Dargle Valley Viper.



Overall Champion Ferret Racing Rose McCoy with Conker.



Overall Champion Ferret Showing Michael Quinn with Sandy, Reserve Champion Niall O Cloghan with Bonnie.



Show Champion James Boyd with Fran Reserve Maurice McDowell with Blue.

Whippets Charlene Rafferty with Zio, Barry Chambers with Ruby Under 23 Lurcher Eddie Kane with Shelby, Seammie with Jessie Over 23 lurcher Paddy McCarthy with pip, Ian Greer with Bud Bull Cross Kirsty Harper with Regal, John Ryan with Roy Hairy Lurcher Eddie Kane with Frank, Eddie Kane with Scooter Terriers Sonny, Sam White with Finn

Under 21 Lurcher Mal McFall with Buster, Niall with Blade

This charity 'Show for Shan,' was a roaring success and as a result, the Shan fund will get £4000 from the proceeds, and the Boyne Fisherman's Rescue will also receive £200.

It is a thrill to know that these two Charities will benefit from the giving hands of the canine community and the other sponsors that contributed to this worthy cause. Hopefully this large contribution will help Shan along the way to getting a cure to ease her awful painful days. Again, Jed and Patricia Donagh and your brilliant band of helpers, we want to thank you for a wonderful day in Duleek, a beautiful ending for a great cause.

Editor's Note: Jed thanks all the sponsors and people who donated, (too many to mention by name), and his family and close friends who worked so hard to make this show work. Also thanks go to Mr Aidan Ryan for the use of his excellent field and everyone who turned up to show their support for Shauntelle Tynan the young lady for whom it was all about.

Nineteen year old Shauntelle from Carlow was diagnosed in 2015 with a very rare form of cancer. In March, her condition was life threatening so she put out an appeal for help, a small heart breaking video on Youtube from her bedroom indicating that she didn't want to die and her only lifeline was a children's hospital in Texas which would cost hundreds of thousands to have any chance of surviving. We decided to try and help in any way we could and Shauntelle will have to spend one full year in Texas to have any chance of beating this terrible illness.



The smiles say it all - an amazing cheque for £4000 goes towards treatment costs for Shauntelle.



Boyne Fisherman's Rescue also received this cheque for £200.



For working and active dogs

A black dog, possibly a Labrador Retriever, is standing in a grassy field. In the foreground, there is a branch with small, reddish-brown flowers. The background is a soft-focus landscape with trees and a blue sky.

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IRELAND'S NATIONAL GAME & COUNTRY FAIR, 26 & 27 August, Birr Castle, Co Offaly



The objective of the Great Game Fairs of Ireland is to organise events with real family appeal for all those who live, work or play in the Irish countryside.

Apart from the fantastic in situ attractions offered by the Birr Demesne including the world famous gardens, the largest tree house in Ireland and the revamped Science Gallery, the Fair has a wide range of top international countrysports competitions, displays, demonstrations, a huge range of countrylifestyle trade stands and exhibits to appeal to anyone who loves the Irish countryside and rural traditions.

Birr Castle Demesne

Full details of the attractions of the estate much of which is open to the public throughout the days of the fair can be seen on www.birrcastle.com.

The Gardens of Birr Castle and the newly revamped Science Galleries are rich in flowers, rare trees, extraordinary feats of science and engineering and wonderful wildlife. The Parsons family invite you to



Tree House adventure area

explore one of the most extraordinary places in Ireland. Created over generations it is an environmental and scientific time capsule.

This adventure area inside the Garden houses Ireland's largest tree house as well as picnic areas, a bouncy pillow, sand pits and dens there is a small additional charge for the treehouse

Ireland's Ancient East certainly brought to life at Birr with a Living History Village and exciting re-enactments

It is thought that the present Birr Castle building was developed on the site of a previous tower house and bawn probably built by the Anglo-Normans. Birr Castle became a stronghold of the O'Carrolls who are associated with many castles in South Offaly and North Tipperary and resisted domination by the Anglo Normans and other powerful neighbours.

History is brought to life at Birr in the Living History Village set up under the battlements of the castle. The village has timelines from the Vikings who attacked the Birr Monastery in 841AD to Sarsfield's attack on the Castle in 1690.

In this village Game Fair visitors will be able to wander around an amazing encampment of re-enactors dressed in period costume, showing life as it was hundreds of years ago. They can speak to experts about cookery, dress and weaponry of various periods and this will be in addition to stunning portrayals of 'moments in history' all around the Game Fair site and in the Main Arena.

Thrilling Medieval Jousting at Birr

Two of the real living history highlights will be the appearance of the world famous Knights of the North from the borders of England and Scotland who will definitely to showcase their incredible medieval combat skills.

Making the announcement from historic Birr Castle, Fair Director Albert Titterington said he was delighted that the international team of jousting and medieval combat experts are confirmed to be among the acts to headline at Birr Castle Game Fair.



Albert said: "It's 'joust' the news we were waiting for! We are absolutely delighted that Scotland's Knights of the North will be displaying astounding skills when they gallop to do battle in full armour in the Main Arena.

"The Knights of the North have carved an enviable reputation for their thrilling shows, which are action packed with jousting and hand to hand combat with sword and dagger. You will be knocked out by the amazing stunts, tricks, jousting, combat, skill at arms, classical riding and authentic costumes. The show includes story, narrator, music, dashing knights performing stunts such as roman riding, — with one unlucky combatant being dragged behind a horse!"

The Knights will have a dramatic new show at Birr with its theme the 'invasion of Ireland' which will be showcased in addition to the exciting military re-enactments at Birr which will recreate Patrick Sarsfield's attack on Birr Castle in 1690.

The Knights of the North's thrilling show is the icing on the cake making the Main Arena's jam packed entertainment programme a real 'must see' for budding action heroes of any age. And afterwards the public can get up close and personal with the Knights of the North at their on site encampment.

Moving forward in time another piece of Birr Castle history brought to life - The Siege of Birr Castle in 1690

In September 1690 Birr Castle was besieged by Patrick Sarsfield and the Duke of Berwick fresh from their success at



the siege of Limerick. Although they had a large force of several thousand camped at Banagher, they thought that the Castle would offer little resistance and the attack was carried out by 160 infantry and depending on accounts three or four field pieces - one of which blew up and one which remains outside Birr Castle today.

Sarsfield, who may even have previously been a guest in the castle had hoped it would be surrendered and did not wish to attack it but the Duke, the 20 year old illegitimate son of James II launched the attack.



According to the Castle archives "The infantry marched towards the castle.... colours flying , trumpets sounding , drums beating and bagpipes playing.... the besieged hoisted a bloody flag on top of the castle , being determined to hold out until relief arrived."

The Castle inhabitants held out valiantly even melting down the lead cistern to make bullets for their musket which proved quite successful against the attackers whereas the light cannon of the attackers were largely ineffectual against the castle's thick walls. Some lodged in the east flanker and are now displayed in the hall of the castle. The siege lasted for nearly three days and was eventually called off at sunset when news of a relief column caused Sarsfield to withdraw

Living History Ireland will recreate the siege of the castle on Sunday afternoon when Sarsfield's forces will attack the castle with cannon and muskets.

And stepping back in time again to when the Vikings attacked Birr Monastery in 841AD

The Viking theme is not only carried through in the village

where families can interact with costumed re-enactors from Living History Ireland but also in the 'Have A Go' archery stands in the walled garden. Here families can 'have a go' with weapons of the period under the supervision of Cavan Instinctive Archery. Including being invited to slay the dragon

Sporting Organisations at the fair

Quite uniquely the Fair is supported by all the main Hunting, Shooting, Fishing and Countryside organisations including the NARGC, FISSTA, CAI, IFA Countryside, CI, HAI, IWTF and the Deer Societies.

The main sporting organisations recognise the Irish Game & Country Fair status as the ROI's national game fair and we are delighted in facilitating them to take a strong promotional message not only to Ireland's country sports enthusiasts but also members of the public. Please do take time to visit these organisations on their stands and also the many others who are exhibiting.

The NARGC Sponsors Birr Country Fair Main Arena In 2017

The NARGC is delighted to have the opportunity to sponsor the Main Arena Programme at the Irish Game & Country Fair 2017 in Birr Castle on the 26th and 27th of August next. The NARGC has been a big supporter of this event in Birr for many years and has consistently increased its association with and participation in the Fair over those years. As Ireland's largest game shooting and country sports organisation, the NARGC welcomes the opportunity to meet its many members who attend the Fair over the two days and to impart specialist knowledge on varying aspects of hunting and shooting. In addition, information on game rearing, trapping and grouse management will also loom largely. There will be a wild bird display which is always a winner, especially with the Fairs' young enthusiasts who always find pheasants, partridge and such like especially exciting.

All organs of the NARGC will be represented at the Fair.

Quite apart from the focussed activities of the NARGC itself, there will also be a number of commercial outlets in the NARGC Stand this year, as before. The finishing touches are currently being put in place for those who wish to acquire display space to exhibit and sell their wares.

We will be delighted to welcome all field-sports enthusiasts to the NARGC Marquee located along the front of the main arena which, like in previous years, will be in excess of 35 metres long and where our NARGC personnel will provide expert advice on the benefits of the Association in their many facets. If you come to Birr this year, be sure to pop in to the NARGC Marquee where you will not only receive the traditional welcome experienced in previous years but where also, you will meet old acquaintances, make new friendships and truly feel that you are a meaningful part of the wonderful organisation the NARGC is.



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COUNTRYSIDE ALLIANCE IRELAND at The Irish Game & Country Fair at Birr Castle

Countryside Alliance Ireland (CAI) is once again delighted to be exhibiting at the Irish Game and Country Fair at Birr Castle on 26 and 27 August. The fair gives CAI the ideal opportunity to showcase the organisation's work while engaging with members, potential members and the public in general.

The CAI marquee will this year host the Wild Deer Association of Ireland with their collection of heads and deer stalking equipment, renowned Irish stickmaker, Tom Kavanagh, with his impressive display of hand crafted sticks, Kildare Regional Game Council and renowned taxidermist Mick Dunne and for the first time the Courtlough Ladies Club who are trying to encourage more women to take up shooting sports. CAI will also be sponsoring some of the terrier and lurcher events.

CAI Chief Executive, Lyall Plant, comments: "The Irish Game and Country Fair at Birr Castle is the perfect forum for CAI to meet and chat with our members and supporters. With field sports, foods and a superb atmosphere all coming together in one of the country's most stunningly beautiful locations, the Fair offers something for everyone who loves the countryside and rural way of life.

We are delighted to have a significant presence and to play such a vital part."

The CAI team relishes the opportunity to get out and about to speak with fellow country sports enthusiasts face to face, so please do come along to the CAI marquee where a warm welcome is guaranteed!

The Federation of Irish Salmon & Sea Trout Anglers Conaidhm na Slat Iascairí Bradáin agus Breac Geal

The Chairman of FISSTA - Ireland's Premier Angling body - Mr. Paul Lawton, is delighted to announce once again their participation in the Irish Game Fair at the very special venue of BIRR CASTLE.

Paul Lawton said: "Angling generates over €800m. and supports 10,000 rural jobs to the economy (source TDI) and Birr Game Fair has played their part in promoting this vitally important country sporting business at this time every year.



"This annual event is the highlight of our country sports season where we meet our angling fraternity to discuss and monitor the mid season salmon and sea-trout runs and returns from the great salmon and sea-trout rivers of Ireland. It is a very special time for FISSTA to promote the salmon youth angling programmes which are run by over 80 clubs on the island."

FISSTA National Secretary, Noel Carr said: "For the past few years we had all our members assisting in our many campaigns to conserve our wild salmon and sea-trout and in particular to stop the mega salmon farms planned by the state run BIM which, if granted a licence would wipe out our wild fisheries.

"Thanks to the support of the Great Game Fairs of Ireland and the Irish Country Sports Magazine who gave us access to this huge country sports audience attending Birr Game Fair, we are delighted that the application was withdrawn six months after last years Birr Castle Game Fair. It is events such as these that gives our angling and country sports the focus and impetus to intensify our campaigns and to bring them to successful fruition."

Everything For Angling & Angling Enthusiasts

Anglers from all the main rivers and clubs of Ireland now gather in Birr to participate at The Irish Game Fair at Birr Castle to meet and exchange notes on developments in salmon and sea-trout angling and conservation. The fair has built up a huge following over the past few years as a venue where clubs and businesses can promote their brand of sport angling to a fast growing market of angling enthusiasts who are planning and placing bookings for the 2017 season. This is where all issues are raised and addressed by club members who travel to what is now Ireland's premier country sports event in the countryside calendar for anglers. The Great Game Fairs of Ireland partnered with the premier magazine Irish Country Sports and Country Life which features our quarterly newsletter allows us to spread the FISSTA message of angling to a very broad country sports fraternity who support us in our everyday work. We are most grateful to Albert Titterington his excellent team at the fair and magazine for providing such professional fora and for their fulsome support and cooperation in helping FISSTA to bring salmon and sea-trout angling to a wider public.

The Association of Professional Game Angling Instructors - Ireland (APGAI)

APGAI will be attending the Birr Game Fair with a programme of continuous workshops for casting and equipment plus fly dressing covering the hot topics of today's game angling scene. We will have a full complement of experienced coaches to create a number of interactive learning and discussion groups for the serious angler as well as a number of attractions for the young anglers with games and fly dressing competitions plus casting classes for young



Joe Stitt & Arthur Greenwood will be at Birr

casters. We will be running a casting competition based around skill as opposed to distance with two levels "professional" and "amateur" with prizes of kit and equipment.

www.apgai-ireland.ie

Irish Working Terrier Federation

This is the fifth year that the Irish Working Terrier Federation (I.W.T.F.) will be fully involved at Birr Castle, giving the I.W.T.F. the ideal opportunity to display their commitment to their work while engaging with all those in attendance at this prestigious country sports event.

"Our goal is of a vital, working and thriving working terrier service for the benefit of the farming and mainstream hunting communities. Through campaigning, lobbying, publicity and education we influence legislation and public policy that impacts on the working terrier world and rural activities. The Irish Game Fairs at Shanes Castle and Birr Castle are the perfect forum for the I.W.T.F. to meet and engage with our members and supporters".

The Salmon & Woodcock Pavilion

The Salmon & Woodcock Pavilion hosts quite a few of the sporting and angling bodies including Inland Fisheries Ireland, DAERA Fisheries Division, FISSTA, APGAI Ireland, Irish Working Terrier Federation, plus the Woodcock Group and internationally acclaimed artist John R Moore and taxidermist Ingrid Houwers.

John has produced the painting of two of Ireland's sporting icons Master Mc Grath and Mick the Miller to coincide with the launch of the Mick The Miller Challenge for traditional lurchers at Birr.



John with Painting which will be at Birr

An Action Packed Main Arena Programme

The action packed arena programme of the Irish Game & Country Fair features one of the widest range of entertainment to be seen at any event in Ireland. Apart from thrilling medieval jousting and Sarsfield re-enactions from Living History Ireland, you add in flying falconry, muzzle loading shooting, gundog and dog training displays, the Victorian poacher and long netting display, horse & hounds and even carriage driving and dancing horses from the Cochise Stud, there really is no better day out in the country for the family.

The All Ireland Stick Makers Championships organised by the Celtic Stickmakers Club

The championship judged by Les Glen (Scotland) will take place at the Irish Game and Country Fair, Birr Castle, Co Offaly on Sunday 27 August. The Champion will win a prize sponsored by Countryside Alliance Ireland and the John McClelland Memorial Perpetual Annual Trophy. Second place Rosettes in each class sponsored by the Celtic Stickmakers Club. Special Memorial Perpetual Trophy presented in memory of Philip Lawton for the best fancy stick. Philip was the club's first secretary.

For further details contact: Tom Kavanagh 057-8629068
E: kavanaghtom@eircom.net



The late Philip Lawton (who was a Director of the Fair) presenting John Lutton with the first championship award and the John McClelland Memorial Trophy.

A Huge Tented Village Of Trade Stands

Wide range of trade stands for the whole family to enjoy including a Gunmakers Row; a Fisherman's Row and a Gundog Row - all bursting with products necessary for your sport.



Mouthwatering Game Pies & Much More in the Fine food Festival.



And award winning chef Emmett McCourt will be in action in the Flogas Kitchen

Plus country clothing and fashion to suit all tastes and pockets; a Craft Tent; Art Gallery; THE FINE FOOD FESTIVAL; Sporting Holidays; Renewable Energy; home & Garden equipment - in fact something to interest anyone who lives, works or plays in the Irish Countryside.

The Victorian Poacher Remains At Large

Over a century ago one type of person made their living by keeping a wary eye out for the local village constable. Every rural county had at least one of these rogues - the poacher - who caused the local coppers no end of trouble.

Unafraid of the law or the judges who might well choose to send the poacher to jail or even to the colonies, he went his wily way on a 'shiny night' in an effort to put food on the table, or maybe even make a shilling in the process.

Steven McGonigal is keeping the traditional skills of the poacher alive with this unique act.

Longnetting, with the help of his amazing little whippet towering over the nets in their attempt to catch coney is what Steven does best - legally of course - in an effort to reduce the rabbit population in infested areas of the countryside and help farmers protect their crops. He showcases this lost art alongside many of the poacher's long lost arts.

We have heard the poacher bragging 'no one can stop me especially a gamekeeper!' What he doesn't realise is that the keeper is in fact dangerous adversary just recently employed by his Lordship.



The Poacher and his nemesis the Keeper

This is none other than the bucolic, no nonsense and bewhiskered keeper known as 'Fast Hands Eddie Dash' - so named for his fame as bare knuckle fighter in his youth and for the fact that not only did he pack a fearsome punch in either hand but his hand speed was such that his opponents didn't see the punch coming. Although now slightly slower of hand and foot 'Fast Hands Eddie' is still rather fond of exacting summary justice with gnarled and rough hands or more often now with a pick axe handle on anyone caught poaching on his patch.

It's time to take the gloves off with regard to this slippery poacher. And how better way than to pit the former Bareknuckle Champion of Dalriada against the elusive poacher!

So if you ever had a hankering to see the wily ways of the poacher, all will be revealed at Birr - right under the nose of Fast Hands Eddie.

The Game Fair at Birr Castle includes: a Fine Food Festival, Living History Village, medieval jousting; an action packed arena; Gunmakers' Row, Fishermans' Row Arts & Crafts, and a huge tented village of trade stands supplying everything required for the country lifestyle.

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Falconry at Birr

Falconry is one of the oldest of the countrysports with its beginnings stretching back to 2200 BC in the Far East, though its true origins are unclear. It was brought to Europe by Germanic tribes who introduced it to Roman culture.

Photo : falcons at the fair

It thrived during the Middle Ages as both a method of hunting food (small game etc.) and as a sport in its own right among the nobles of the time. Falconry also flourished in the Middle East and Asia where the crusaders learned much from their Arab counterparts.

However in Europe in the late 18th century, with the advent of guns and their use in hunting, the sport dwindled and was limited to a few who continued the practice. The skill of the falconer and the amazing aerobatical prowess of the birds continues to inspire awe amongst Game Fair crowds.

This year we are fortunate to have John Carmichael from the NI School of Falconry with his team of assistant falconers to put on impressive free flying demonstrations and a large static exhibition.

In addition there will be a second static exhibition from the Irish Hawking club.

And Another VERY SPECIAL Living History Attraction



For the first time at Birr Dave T Moneyer (Grunal Moneta) facsimile coin maker to the British Museum will be bringing his coin making skills to the Birr Fair. He has designed a couple of very special coins based on the Castle's history which visitors can strike for themselves at his workshop.

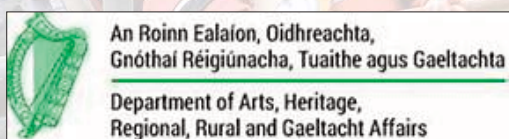


Lots of public participation in the free flying falconry display.

Add in one of the best clay pigeon shooting layouts in Ireland with three guns to be won, lots of 'have a go' opportunities including fly casting, air rifle shooting, archery, pony rides, children's play area plus all of Birr Castle Demesne open to the public for the two days - this really is one of Ireland's most actions packed family days out.

The Irish Game & Country Fair and Fine Food Festival will take place from 10am – 5.30pm on Saturday 26th & Sunday 27th August. If you are a countrysports enthusiast – this is your chance to demonstrate your support for your sport and its future.

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GUNDOGS AT BIRR CASTLE GAME FAIR

26th & 27th August 2017

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The largest and best sponsored Gundog events at any Fair in Ireland are staged at the two GREAT GAME FAIRS of IRELAND and the superb gundog events at Birr Castle are sponsored by RED Mills so do show your appreciation of this by visiting their stand at the fair.

SPANIELS SATURDAY 26TH AUGUST

Puppy, Novice & Open & Spaniel Tests (organised by the ESS of Ireland) Starts 9.00am.



AND ALSO A GUNDOG SCURRY OPEN TO ALL BREEDS

Puppy Test:

- 1st €50 RED MILLS Dog Food
- 2nd €30
- 3rd €20

Novice Test :

- 1st €50 RED MILLS Dog Food
- 2nd €30
- 3rd €20

Open Test :

1st €80 plus RED MILLS Dog Food plus a Duckdri Coat
Plus the Derek Ryan Perpetual Trophy

2nd €60

3rd €40

4th €20

Perpetual Shield for the best hunting spaniel

SCURRY OPEN TO ALL BREEDS OF DOGS

Fastest Time Each Day €50 Runner Up €30

RETRIEVERS ON SUNDAY 27TH AUGUST

National NOVICE Open and International team events.
These events are organised by Derek Harford and the Broadmeadows Gundog Club.



Prize Structure team event:

Winning team: Win RED MILLS dog food and €150.

National Novice Retriever Test: Prizes

- 1st €50, a bag of RED MILLS Food
- 2nd €30
- 3rd €20

National Open Retriever Test: Prizes

- 1st €80, a bag of RED MILLS Food plus a Duck Dri Coat
- 2nd €60
- 3rd €40
- 4th €20

Please note: Entry this year is through the main gate of the estate. Admission is free for competitors entering the ground before 8.00am after that normal admission prices apply

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THE ROI TERRIER, LURCHER & WHIPPET CHAMPIONSHIPS IRISH GAME & COUNTRY FAIR, BIRR CASTLE ON SUNDAY 27TH AUGUST 2017

NOTE: Following suggestions from competitors it has been decided to run all of the terrier, lurcher and whippet events in one day Sunday 27th August with RACING Starting at 11.00 and Showing Starting at 14.00 hrs. Full Time Table below:

1. Before 11.00 am Registration of competitors for Mick the Miller Racing at Game Fair HQ on the main site.
2. Before 12.00 am Registration of competitors for Five Nations Lurcher Championships at Game Fair HQ on the main site.

3.THE FEEDWELL TERRIER, WHIPPET & LURCHER RACING CHAMPIONSHIPS



SUNDAY 27th August starting 11.00 am sharp.

LURCHER RACING

- The Over 23" ROI Lurcher Racing Championships. - Winner €30 sponsored by Countryside Alliance Ireland Plus Trophy, Rosette & Bag of Feedwell Dog Food; Runner Up

Rosttte & Bag of Feedwell dog food

- The Under 23" ROI Racing Championships . Winner €30 sponsored by Countryside Alliance Ireland Rosette, Plus Rosette, Trophy & Bag of Feedwell Dog Food Runner Up Rosette & Bag of Feedwell dog food.
- The Under 21" ROI Racing Championships Winner €30 sponsored by Countryside Alliance Ireland Plus Rosette, Trophy & Bag of Feedwell Dog Food; Runner Up Rosette & Bag of Feedwell dog food.
- Bull Cross ROI Racing Championships Winner €30 sponsored by Countryside Alliance Ireland Plus Rosette, Trophy & Bag of Feedwell Dog Food; Runner Up Rosette & Bag of Feedwell dog food.
- The Whippet ROI Racing Championships Winner €30 sponsored by Countryside Alliance Ireland Plus Rosette, Trophy & Bag of Feedwell Dog Food; Runner Up Rosette & Bag of Feedwell dog food.

- The Terrier Racing Championships Winner €30 sponsored by Countryside Alliance Ireland Plus Rosette, Trophy & Bag of Feedwell Dog Food; Runner Up Rosette & Bag of Feedwell dog food.

4. 12.30 MICK THE MILLER CHALLENGE

This is restricted to dogs that have not won a race at any event in the UK or Ireland

There will be three sets of heats for dogs classified as follows:

Rough Coated Lurcher Any size
Winner Trophy

Bull or Terrier /cross Lurcher Any size
Winner Trophy

Smooth Coated Lurcher/Long dog any breeding other than (2) Any size.
Winner Trophy

The top two dogs from each classification will run in a six dog final

Winner €30 sponsored by Countryside Alliance Ireland plus Rosette, Trophy plus a bag of Feedwell Dog Food ; Runner up Rosette & bag of Feedwell Dog Food.



The two GREAT LURCHER RACES IN IRELAND are the MASTER McGRATH & MICK THE MILLER CHALLENGES Followed by THE DIRECTORS CHALLENGE

Used by Field Trial Champions across Ireland

Tim Crothers – Birdrowe
(www.birdrowegundogs.com)



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

Damian Newman – Maighmor
(www.maighmorgundogs.com)



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



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5. ROI CHAMPIONSHIP SHOW 2.00 pm Rosettes, Trophies & Cash Prizes sponsored by Irish Countrysports and Country Life magazine Dog Food sponsored by



OVERALL SHOW CHAMPION

€50 + Trophy + Rosette

CHAMPION LURCHER €40 + Trophy + Rosette + Dog Food. This is the final qualifier for the Red Mills & Irish Countrysports and Country Life Five Nations Lurcher Championship.

CHAMPION TERRIER €40 Rosette + Trophy + Dog Food.

CHAMPION WHIPPET €40 Rosette + Trophy + Dog Food This is a qualifier for the 2018 Red Mills & Irish Countrysports and Country Life Five Nations Whippet Championship.

PUPPY CHAMPION Trophy + Rosette

CHAMPION PET Trophy

Bag of NUTTS PET FOOD for all class winners - Rosettes to fourth place

TERRIER CHAMPIONSHIP SHOW

Judge: JOHN HENDRICK

- Terrier Pups under 1 year
- Terrier under 12".
- Best Pair of Terriers
- AV Working Terrier
- Jack Russell Type Dog over 1 year old
- Jack Russell Type Bitch over 1 year old
- Lakeland Type Dog over 1 year old
- Lakeland Type Bitch over 1 year old
- Fell or Patterdale Dog or Bitch over 1 year old
- Border Dog or Bitch 1 year old
- Plummer Terrier Dog or Bitch
- Cross Bred Dog or Bitch over 1 year old
- Veteran Dog or Bitch over 7 years of age.

Championship - from unbeaten terriers other than pairs or puppy. Puppy goes forward to the puppy championships.

LURCHER CHAMPIONSHIPS:

Judge: NIGEL QUINN

- Any Variety Lurcher Pup under 1 year old
 - Whippet/Lurcher Dog or Bitch over 1 year old (NO PURE BRED WHIPPETS)
 - Best Pair of Lurchers
 - Any Variety Lamping Lurcher Dog
 - Any Variety Lamping Lurcher Bitch
 - Smooth Lurcher Dog over 23" over 1 year old
 - Smooth Lurcher Bitch over 23" over 1 year old
 - Rough Lurcher Dog over 23" over 1 year old
 - Rough Lurcher Bitch over 23" over 1 year old
 - Rough or Smooth Lurcher Dog under 23" over 1 year old
 - Rough or Smooth Lurcher Bitch under 23" over 1 year old
 - Collie Lurcher over 1 year old
 - Terrier Bred Lurcher over 1 year old
 - Bull Bred lurcher over 1 year old.
 - Veteran Lurcher - Any Lurcher over 8 years of age
- Championship - from unbeaten Lurchers other than pairs or puppy. Puppy goes forward to the puppy championships.

WHIPPET CHAMPIONSHIP:

Judge: TRACEY CROSBIE

Whippet Puppy Dog under 1 year old
Whippet Puppy Bitch under 1 year old
Whippet Dog over 1 year old
Whippet Bitch over 1 year old
Working Whippet Dog
Working Whippet Bitch
Whippet Pairs
Veteran Whippet
Championship 1st from classes 3,4,5,6

FAMILY DOG SHOW

Any Variety shown by a child under 12 years of age
Any Variety shown by a Lady
Any Variety shown by a Gent
Champion Handling Class from the above classes Receives Trophy & Rosette.

6. THE FIVE NATIONS CHAMPIONSHIPS



The FINAL of the RED MILLS /IRISH COUNTRYSports & COUNTRY LIFE FIVE NATIONS LURCHER CHAMPIONSHIP JUDGED BY A THREE JUDGE SYSTEM WILL TAKE PLACE IN THE MAIN ARENA AT 5.30pm. WILL ALL QUALIFIERS REGISTER WITH FAIR HQ BEFORE 12.00 noon.

Winner : £250 plus Bronze Trophy plus Barbour Coat ; winners cap and Racing Coat. Runner Up £100, runners up coat, plus Carriage clock plus racing coat. All qualifiers attending the fair get a limited edition qualifiers cap.

All qualifiers attending receive a special commemorative cap sponsored by www.jointhemigration.com

The GREAT GAME FAIRS of IRELAND Mick the Miller Challenge for non elite Traditional lurchers –

We define lurchers as any cross other than whippet x greyhound or 3/4 or greater greyhound.

To qualify for this race dogs at the time of qualifying MUST NOT have run as an elite dog (whether they have won or not).

Winner: £250 plus Bronze Trophy plus Barbour Coat ; winners cap and Racing Coat. Runner Up £100, runners up coat, plus Carriage Clock plus racing coat. All qualifiers attending the fair get a limited edition qualifiers cap. Note at the time of registration at Game Fair HQ before 11.00 am for the final at Birr all owners must declare the breeding of their dog. Any dog that is more than three quarter greyhound or has run as an elite will be excluded at this stage.

STRICTLY NO DOGS OR PUPS TO BE SOLD ON SITE. ANYONE BRINGING DOGS OR PUPS FOR SALE WILL BE ASKED TO LEAVE THE SITE – NO REFUNDS WILL BE GIVEN FOR ANY BREACH OF OUR RULES.

MICK THE MILLER SPECIAL FEATURE AND NEWS PLUS

'THE GREAT GAME FAIRS OF IRELAND MICK THE MILLER CHALLENGE' FINAL AT BIRR CASTLE GAME FAIR SUNDAY 27th AUGUST 2017

Mick The Miller - An Offaly Sporting Icon Of The Depression

Motorists passing through the small Offaly village of Killeigh often have their attention drawn to a beautifully executed sculpture of a greyhound. This is a lifesize sculpture of Mick the Miller, probably the most famous greyhound of all time. It's a lifesize depiction of the famous dog and sits on top of a stone plinth which came from his nearby birthplace, Millbrook House. The impressive work of art was created by Elizabeth O'Kane, who was commissioned by the Mick the Miller Commemoration Committee, and was erected on the village green in January 2011. As an Offaly person I know that many people from the county take considerable pride in the fact that such a magnificent racing dog was raised and trained here. We take great pleasure in

telling his story to those who are willing to listen.

It is appropriate therefore that a new Lurcher race in Birr Game Fair has been named after the county's most illustrious dog. These Lurcher races are very popular with enthusiasts at fair gatherings throughout Britain and Ireland, and the Birr Game Fair organisers feel their event will be no different, and it will be a major attraction for enthusiasts.

One of the nice things about the The Great Game Fairs of Ireland Mick the Miller Challenge for non elite Traditional lurchers is that it will cater for less elite and more traditional dogs in this wonderful breed. Qualifiers are taking place all over Ireland and the UK for the Final which will be staged at

Birr Game Fair on Saturday, the 26th August.

A brief history

Mick the Miller was born in Millbrook House in 1926. His owner was a curate, Fr Martin Brophy, who adored greyhounds and loved the thrill of greyhound racing. At the time this was a pastime which was sometimes frowned upon by the morally superior, therefore Fr Brophy tried to deflect attention from himself by registering his name, for greyhound racing purposes, as Mr B Murphy. Newspaper reporters were aware of this deception, but didn't know the priest's name. One newspaper report referred to 'Mr Murphy' as being 'the assumed name of an Irish priest'.

Fr Brophy is looked upon as being one of the finest greyhound breeders in the history of the sport. He had bred a couple of successful dogs prior to Mick the Miller. When he was a curate in Wicklow his bitch Crom Abu came first in a number of coursing meets. Another successful bitch, Na Bac Lei, was the Dam of Mick the Miller.

When he moved to Killeigh the village's parochial house became known locally as Millbrook Kennels. Greyhound enthusiasts were regular visitors there and the curate sold his dogs to breeders from all over Ireland, the UK and America. He liked using the letter M in his dogs' names. Therefore, some of his other dogs included Macoma, Musty Miller, Merry Miller, Metalligon, Metalloid, Meconic,



A photograph of the time of Mick the Miller.



Fr Brophy and Michael Greene (who reared Mick) are pictured with Mick the Miller and litter brother Macoma.

Millbrook, Mitella and Magical Maud. Macoma, who was a brother of Mick the Miller, is regarded as one of the greatest hurdlers of all time.

At his birth Mick was the smallest and weakest of the litter, but local man Michael Greene could see something special in the puppy. Michael said he believed the pup had the makings of an excellent dog and asked to rear him. Michael fed the pup milk from a bottle and sometimes brought him to his bed. As the dog grew Michael walked with him for many miles around Killeigh building up his muscles and stamina.

Training sessions proved that Michael was right in his initial hunch about the dog's potential and Mick and



The statue raised to commemorate the famous dog was initiated by the local Mick the Miller Commemoration Committee. (Photo Paula Nolan)

his brother Macoma both demonstrated promise in the coursing field. However track greyhound racing had opened up at Celtic Park in the North and Shelbourne Park in the south and Father Brophy took the decision to target Mick at the track. The licensed trainer he chose was Michael Horan based at Shelbourne Park and the two brothers went to him in March 1928. On the 18th April Mick won his first race.

He went on to survive a bout of distemper and to win 15 of his first 20 track races. When he was three Fr Brophy entered him in the English Greyhound Derby at White City, London. In his first heat Mick broke the world record, becoming the first greyhound in history to run 525 yards in under 30 seconds. Following this dramatic race Fr Brophy received many offers to buy the dog. He eventually sold him to Albert Williams. Under his new owner but still trained by Horan he went on to win the 1929 Derby. He won the same race a year later, but under a different owner, Arundel H Kempton, who moved the dog from his first English trainer Stan Bliss to Sidney Orton.

Mick's triumphs mark an incredible career

During an incredible career in Britain, Mick triumphed in 36 of his 48 races, including the Welsh Derby, the St Leger, the Cesarewitch and the Derby. He set two new track records and six world records. He was the first greyhound to win 19 races in a row. He won about 10,000 pounds in prizemoney, several of his records were not beaten for over four decades, and he became a household name.

Mick's huge fame attracted thousands of newcomers to the sport. He was a massive shot in the arm for greyhound racing, with some believing he saved the sport. His celebrity status continued after his retirement and he was called upon countless times to open shops and attend big races. He starred in a film about his life, called 'Wild Boy' (1934), and he attended a number of charity

events at which King George V and other royalty were also present.

When he retired from racing and stud work he spent his remaining years with his trainer Sidney Orton, at Burhill Kennels in Hersham in Surrey and when Mick died in 1939 aged 12 his body was donated to the British Natural History Museum in London where he remained on display until 2005. He was then moved to the Natural History Museum's sister museum in Tring, just outside London. In 1981 he was inducted into the American Hall of Fame (International Section) and in 1990 a book was published about his life - 'Sporting Icon of the Depression.'

A tremendous local feeling expressed in verse

A poem by local man Danny Coughlan expresses the strength of feeling which Killeigh people felt at the time when Mick was winning on the tracks in Britain:

'While the Killeigh folk were overjoyed
when they heard of Mick's great win;
They went and told each other
that a party would begin.
They all assembled on the green
and a bonfire they did light.
They gave a twilight procession
and a welcome home that night.
Let's sing the praises of this dog,
Sing them low and high.
Let's give three cheers to good old
Mick
As he goes flying by!'

(Below) Michael Greene whose father reared Mick The Miller.



Mick the Miller Commemoration Committee

The Mick The Miller Commemoration Committee was formed in 2008, with the aim of erecting a monument to Mick in Killeigh, to highlight the fact that he was born and raised in the village.

At the earliest meetings it was decided that only the best would suffice and the most appropriate monument would be a lifesize bronze statue. The next step was to try and get funding.

Over the course of the next three years donations were received from local businesses and local people and even from a fan in the USA. We also received fantastic support from the Irish Greyhound Board (Bord na gCon) who

contributed €7,000 to the fund.

In November 2009 the committee commissioned artist Elizabeth O' Kane to produce the sculpture. Elizabeth is renowned for her incredible lifelike sculptures of people and animals. One of her most famous pieces is her bronze of Count John McCormack which stands in the Iveagh Gardens in Dublin. Elizabeth also happens to have a particular interest in greyhounds as her father and grandfather owned Priceless Border who won the English Greyhound Derby in 1948!

You can see more of Elizabeth's work on her website www.elizabethokane.com.

Elizabeth spent a lot of time researching greyhounds to help create an accurate likeness of Mick The Miller. She began by visiting the Natural History Museum in Tring near London to examine and measure the real Mick on display there, she consulted with a veterinary surgeon on greyhound anatomy, she visited Shelbourne Park regularly and even brought a live greyhound into her studio to model from.

The committee supplied her with every available photo of Mick, as well as newspaper cuttings, memorabilia and even some video footage.

The job of casting the sculpture went to Leo Higgins of CAST Bronze Foundry, South Brown Street, Dublin. Leo also advised on the monument plinth and installed the sculpture in Killeigh. See CAST's website www.cast.ie.

To give a very fitting and poignant link with Mick The Miller's birthplace, the plinth was made from stone from the ruins of Millbrook House where Mick was born. It was built by local man, Paddy Guilfoyle who also designed and laid out the paving area.

The sculpture was finally unveiled at a lovely ceremony on the village green on 29th January 2011 by An Taoiseach, Mr Brian Cowen. A crowd of over 400 people from Killeigh and all over Ireland attended. Dick O'Sullivan (Chairman of IGB) was guest speaker and many descendants of those involved in Mick The Miller's upbringing were also present.

ICS&CL would like to pay tribute to Derek Fanning for his research and short history of the dog and the Mick the Miller Commemoration Committee especially chairman, Brendan Berry, for allowing access to their material including providing some excellent photographs of the monument by Paula Nolan. We would also like to thank Brendan and the committee for their support for our own tribute to the great dog with our Mick the Miller Challenge



A view of Mick the Miller seldom seen by other racing dogs.

(photo: Paula Nolan)

race at the Game Fair at Birr Castle. It is fitting that the committee will be there to present the awards in the inaugural year of the race.

More details of the dog and the monument can be found on the committee's very informative web site www.mickthemiller.com. But why not

pay your own tribute to the dog when visiting the game fair by visiting his birthplace and monument at Killeigh, Co Offaly.



Members of the Mick the Miller Commemoration Committee and friends. Elizabeth O'Kane's mother and father brought the English Greyhound Derby Trophy (won by her Dad's dog Priceless Border in 1948) with them. It is the old type trophy which was the same as the one Mick The Miller won. It was the first time the trophy had been back in Killeigh since 1929.



Nick Bliss, the grandson of Mick's first English trainer.
(photo: courtesy Jill Bliss)



Michael Tanner, author of the book on Mick entitled: 'The Legend of Mick the Miller: Sporting Icon of the Depression'.
(photo: courtesy Michael Tanner)

Mick the Miller – another Sporting Legend brought to life by the Great Game Fairs of Ireland

Over the years, as part of the Great Game Fairs of Ireland and the old Irish Hunting, Shooting and Fishing magazine, now the Irish Country Sports and Country Life magazine, we have brought several sporting and animal legends with Irish connections 'to life.' The background and life of the subject has been rigorously researched, including original photographs or earlier paintings being accessed as part of a magazine feature which includes a true historical record. We also commission a new painting of the subject which is displayed at our press receptions and on the artist's stand at the Fairs.

The subjects featured have included the Byerley Turk – a horse which fought at the Battle of the Boyne and won the first race to be staged at Downpatrick; David of Westley – the only golden retriever to become an international Dual (Field Trial & Show) Champion (owned by a great friend of mine and a doyen of the Ulster Golden Retriever Club which runs the gundog events at the fair); The Massereene Hound -the wolfhound which legend has it saved Antrim Castle; and the Great Master McGrath which won the Waterloo Cup three times for Lord Lurgan, from the Brownlow family in Lurgan. Now it is the turn of Mick the Miller, the great Co Offaly greyhound who became sporting legend throughout the world.

The Master McGrath Challenge has been a huge success and enthusiasts all over Ireland and the UK have a chance to qualify their dogs to run against the fastest dogs in Ireland at Shanes Castle for some valuable prizes. The Master McGrath name has a connection with the fair as one of the co-founders of the Fair was the late Major William Brownlow who was a relative of Lord Lurgan, of Brownlow House in Lurgan, the owner of the great dog.

Mick the Miller's connection with Birr, Co Offaly

It was suggested that the Fair at Birr, Co Offaly

should have a similar prestigious international lurcher race and one of our ROI correspondents came up with the idea of using the name of Mick the Miller - a dog with a great connection to County Offaly having been born 'just down the road' from Birr Castle at Millbrook House, Killeigh, County Offaly.

However, many thought that this championship should not be for 'elite dogs' as these are catered for by the Master McGrath Challenge. So the concept of a race for 'traditional lurchers' was born and a trial for this was staged at Ballynahinch with two fine traditional lurchers 1st & 2nd.

A painting of Master McGrath and Mick the Miller has been commissioned from John R. Moore and we are delighted to have acquired an original Mick the Miller limited edition Royal Doulton figurine from 1993 for the winner.

UK & Ireland Qualifiers to compete in grand final at Birr

Qualifiers for the race to be run at the Birr Fair are being staged all over Ireland and the UK. The prize fund for the winners is:

Winner : £250 plus Trophy plus Barbour Coat ; winners cap & Racing Coat Runner Up £100, runners up cap and a watch plus racing coat. All qualifiers

attending the fair get a limited edition qualifiers cap and a year's subscription to the Irish Country Sports and Country Life magazine.

Mick the Miller Commemoration Committee Support

We are delighted to have the support for this race of the official Mick The Miller Commemoration Committee from the birthplace of the great dog in Killeigh, Co Offaly . As mentioned earlier the committee raised the finance to erect a fine statue of the dog on the village green and as can be seen from the various photographs virtually everyone with an interest in the dog's memory has visited this tribute to him. The Mick the Miller committee has also brought together a huge amount of valuable historical material on the dog which can be accessed at <http://mickthemiller.com/>

The final of the GREAT GAME FAIRS OF IRELAND MICK THE MILLER CHALLENGE will be run at the BIRR CASTLE GAME FAIR on Sunday 27th August 2017 at 12.30pm

An original Mick the Miller limited edition Royal Doulton figurine.





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CLAY SHOOTING -SOME GREAT SHOOTING PRIZES AT BIRR CASTLE!

Some of the biggest clay pigeon shooting prizes in Ireland will be on offer at the annual Irish Game & Country Fair over Saturday 26th and Sunday 27th August at Birr Castle, Co Offaly. And according to the organisers even novice and rough shooting shots have a chance of winning some of that prize pot, including amazing shotguns up to €3,000.

SATURDAY 26TH AUGUST 50 BIRD OPEN SPORTING CLAY CHAMPIONSHIPS.

1st prize a Cogswell and Harrison
sponsored by David Brennan from
Ardee Sports

2nd prize €100.00

3rd prize €50.00

NEW -10 bird springing teal
competition this year with a minimum
payout of €100 each day.

10 bird pool stand 33% pay out main
prize €100.00

5 bird long teal 33% pay out
minimum €100.00

SUNDAY 27th AUGUST

50 BIRD OPEN SPORTING GAME FAIR CHAMPIONSHIPS

Top PRIZE is a fantastic BLASER
F16 (Game Gun) sponsored by Tom &
Niall Kirwan from Lakeland Shooting
Sports

2nd prize €150.00

3rd prize €75.00



Ardee sports will be displaying their range of Rizzini Shotguns at Birr with a special €100 off voucher.



Tom & Niall Kirwan with the fantastic Blaser F16 to be won. They will be displaying a super range of guns including the full Blaser range.

NEW -10 bird springing teal competition this year with a minimum payout of €100 each day.

10 bird pool stand 33% pay out main prize €100.00

5 bird long teal 33% pay out minimum €100.00

50 bird ladies competition each day,

sponsored by Peter Fox pharmacy Birr
BOTH DAYS - Enter Saturday or Sunday

SPECIAL PRIZE for NON CLASSIFIED NARGC MEMBERS over 50 bird sporting layout

Well known gun dealer Francesco Morelli, from Casale 2000 Ltd, in

Cashel, Co Tipperary has sponsored a magnificent Caesar Guerini Gladius Automatic Shotgun for the best score over two days by a non classified NARGC member. Francesco says "Quite a few of our customers said that the top prizes at clay shoots often go to the real experts but we wanted to both



Francesco with the fantastic Caesar Guerini Auto

introduce clay pigeon shooting to a wider audience and give the ordinary shooter a chance to win a gun of a lifetime."

Francesco invites you to visit his stand for some excellent deals on guns, clothing, archery and other shooting and fishing equipment.

SPECIAL PRIZE FOR TOP NARGC MEMBER SCORE over 25 bird sporting – 100 pheasants sponsored Fiach Dowling, Coollatin Estate County Wicklow

SPECIAL IFA Countryside Members Prize - a €200 voucher for Paul O Halloran, Drangan County Tipperary for IFA members only, special completion over 25 bird

TOP JUNIOR PRIZE OVER TWO DAYS - €200 Voucher sponsored by Countrysports Ireland

NB Please note that anyone winning a shotgun must arrange to claim this prize from the gundealer sponsoring the prize within one month of the fair. Anyone failing to do this will lose the

prize.

Also note we are operating a one person one prize rule each day.

We are offering price concessions for early bird shooters who come between the hours of 9-11:30. We will be offering them €20 cards, €25 cards after 11:30 for both Saturday and Sunday.

All shooters must bring gun licences if they wish to purchase cartridges on the day.

Enquiries contact Seamus 087 2664191 or Joe 087 6604604

Gun Fitting at Birr - get a personal consultation with Michael Yardley and improve your shooting

The Great Game Fairs of Ireland have confirmed that Mike Yardley, one of really 'big guns' in the shooting world, would be present at the Birr Castle Game Fair.

Albert said: "A renowned broadcaster and writer, practical shooting coach and much more, Mike Yardley is one of the best known personalities in the shooting world. Along with gunsmith Chis Symonds, Mike will be fitting guns and testing eye dominance at the show, using the unique methods that have led him to write two books on the subject.

"Without doubt, a well fitted gun is essential to good shooting and may transform performance. Many struggle on for years with ill-fitting guns or eye-dominance issues not realising just how much they are impeding themselves. And now there is a unique opportunity to sort out your gun fit before the season commences. Mike will also be available to discuss all matters related to guns, shooting and competition as well."

Mike Yardley has shot clays and game big and small all over the world. He writes on guns and shooting for The Field and has acted as a design consultant to some of the most famous gunmakers as well making films with various television companies. His documentaries on John F. Kennedy and the Red Baron - where his vast technical knowledge of shooting is applied forensically - will have been seen by many. He has also been the voice of shooting many times when the sport is attacked in the media.

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Hunting Roundup

Hunting Association of Northern Ireland Hound Show

Armagh Agricultural Show, at Gosford Forest Park, Markethill, was again the venue for HANI's show. Our judges Alastair and Tessa Jackson, former Joint Masters of the Cattistock, had entries from ten packs for their consideration, four from Eire and six local packs.

Meath Lancer took the unentered doghound class ahead of North Down Whiskey and Louth Racer, but in the unentered couples class Lancer and sibling Landlord could only take third place behind North Down Whiskey and Water, while the South Tyrones recorded their first win of an ultimately very successful day winning this class with Ranger and Rambler.

The South Tyrones won the entered doghound class with Captain16 and

took third place with Hardy 16 these hounds being separated by Meath Banker15 in second place.

Four packs showed Old English doghounds in that open class with Killultagh Old Rock and Chichester Casper16 winning over Louth Palmer16 while the local Tynan and Armagh Monument15 took third place.

In the couple of entered doghounds class South Tyrone Saunter and Sandstone16 prevailed over Meath Winter15 and Banker15, with West Wicklow Gunshot11 and Biggles16 in third place.

The South Tyrones continued their first and third placings in the Stallion hound class with Grappler 15 taking the rosette and West Wicklow Gunshot 11 between Grappler and his kennelmate Raider 12.

The morning was rounded off by the

Doghound Championship where South Tyrone Captain16 was declared Champion with his kennelmate Grappler15 as Reserve Champion.

After lunch, the South Tyrones put down another marker by taking the unentered bitch class with Rascal, who won over Louth Racket in second place and Meath Package in third.

In the unentered couples class Louth Racket and Ration took the rosette with South Tyrone taking both second and third places with, respectively, Ransom and Rainbow and Radish and Rascal.

South Tyrone success continued in the entered bitch class which saw Pansy15 prevail over kennelmate Candy16 with East Down Pigtail16 in third place.

In the Old English bitch class, the local Tynan and Armagh Foxhounds took first place with Language16 and

Jim Stevenson (MFH (Ballymacad) receives the Winning Bitch Trophy from the Irish National Hound Show Chairman David Lalor MFH. Winning bitch Mantra 16 shown by Huntsman Kevin Donohue.



third place with Locket15, these hounds being separated by Louth Ticket13 in second place.

Sisters Pansy and Pastry15 gave the South Tyrone the entered bitch couples class with Meath Passion12 and Mabel13 in second place and the Ballymacads in third place with Basket16 and Mantra16.

The prestigious two couples class saw some good bitches being shown with the judges awarding the rosette to South Tyrone Pansy, Pastry, Padlock15 and Crayon15. Meath Passion14, Passive14, River15 and Mabel13 took second place with the East Downs taking third place with sisters Pigtail, Piglet, Pillow and Pippin16.

In the brood bitch class Meath Mable13 won over South Tyrone Poppy14 with East Down Risky14 in third place.

The day concluded with the Bitch Championship where South Tyrone Pansy15 was declared Champion Bitch with Meath Mabel13 as Reserve Champion.

Entries secretary Brian Dougan and his organising team deserve great credit for the smooth running of this show

which has become a popular feature at this Agricultural Show.

Around the puppy shows

My first puppy show of the season was that of the Ballymacad Foxhounds at Grennan, Co Meath.

Huntsman Kevin Donohue produced 5 couple of doghounds and 9 ½ couple of bitches for appraisal by the judges, Mark Casserly huntsman to the Kilkenny Foxhounds and Chris Francis, former huntsman of the Kildare Foxhounds.

A number of other packs were represented by masters, staff and members while John Bonham acted as MC and announced the following placings:

Doghounds

1. Rio Cottessmore Hamish 11 Ribbon14
2. Ringo Sibling of Rio
3. Barman Kildare Baliff 09 Quorn Botany 09

Bitches

1. Shadow North Tipperary Imlic10 Daylight 13
2. Darkness North Tipperary Imlic 10 Danish 13

3. Diary Daly 13 Kildare Piggot 10

The doghound Rio was then declared Champion puppy and the bitch Shadow Reserve Champion.

It was heartening to see how young the winning puppy walkers were which bodes well for the future as does the fact that their former charges all showed very well, reflecting the hard work which had been put into them.

Heard it on the grapevine

Huntsman Mark Ollard has retired at the Scarteen Foxhounds and has been succeeded by Scarteen native Raymond O'Halloran who was formerly kennel huntsman to the South Notts Foxhounds.

The Island Foxhounds, in Co Wexford, have appointed Paul Scallan as huntsman in succession to Conor Dwyer.

Ballymacad Huntsman, Kevin Donohue, showing the winning Dog and Bitch hounds at the Hunt Puppy Show.



Catch & Release & Game Angling Etiquette

Lately, I was asked to give some input to a local authority about fly fishing and I highlighted important elements of our sport, which are catch & release and fishing etiquette. I thought that this would be useful for all anglers to read, as those elements are there to help us all enjoy our terrific pastime, while looking after our countryside and our quarry. It is also common sense to follow the 'rules' and I hope these guidelines help you.

Advice on Catch & Release

Tackle: Use a barbless hook (or flatten the barbs with pliers)

Playing the fish:

- Bring the fish in firmly and quickly to reduce the likelihood of severe exhaustion.
- Use a heavy breaking strain of line or cast that will permit this.
- Move the fish out of fast currents if possible.
- If a landing net is used, it must be knotless. Avoid abrasion of the scales — NEVER beach the fish. You must wet your hands before touching the fish.
- Be gentle, do not grip the fish tightly and take extra care with fish during warm weather, when they are most vulnerable.

Handling the fish:

- Handle the fish as little as may be absolutely necessary.
- Keep the fish in the water if possible; fish should not be brought out of the water on to the bank if at all possible.



Always be aware of good angling manners whether or not other anglers are nearby



Remember to take great care when handling and returning fish.

- Remove the hook gently forceps can help (always take a pair of long nosed forceps with you when you go salmon or trout fishing)
- If the fish is deep hooked, cut the line as close to the hook as possible and leave it in the fish, better to lose a fly than a fish.
- Never hold up by the tail or hold up by the wrist, I see this often on big fish when anglers are trying to get it out of a landing net.

Reviving and releasing the fish

Do not weigh the fish, estimate the weight. The weight of a fish can be calculated from an estimate of the length of the fish, tip of nose to centre of tail. Details of length/weight relationships are available from a variety of websites on the Internet.

For photography

Stand in the water if not too deep and

gently cradle the fish using both hands and just lift the fish above the water surface for a few seconds. Support the fish gently and steadily in a current, facing upstream. Do not hold the fish too firmly. Be patient, and wait for the fish to recover. Let it swim away on its own when it is ready.

Will the fish live? Radio tracking of fish in parts of the world of released fish has shown that over 90% of salmon and trout, if carefully handled, survive to spawn successfully, and 10% could have been taken by the fish natural predators. So, if handled properly the fish have a great chance.

Angling Etiquette

This is something that we all need to be aware of. Etiquette that is at the root of fishing basics is respecting the environment and being courteous to others. Thus, you will find most other anglers to be a great source of

information and friendship. This adds up to a more enjoyable day on the water.

The purpose of observing fishing etiquette when fishing comes from the accepted rules of behaviour when accessing and fishing waters. These are based on consideration for other anglers and for the land owners who permit access through or to their land. Observing these rules will also ensure you stay within the law, avoid conflict, and help maintain the good reputation of anglers generally. It is especially important that you are aware of good angling manners when fishing heavily fished rivers, such as the Six Mile Water.

Most rivers cross private land and the rights of the land-owner must be respected. If possible, ask the owner permission before crossing their land or the fishing club's (and use this opportunity to check if there are any dangers to be aware of). Very rarely is

permission denied when asked for. Respect the landowner's property, this can be farmer's land or even a home owner's garden. Leave everything as you found it. If a gate is open leave it that way. Likewise, if it is closed. Our ability to continue to have access to cross land is dependent on farmers and other landowners being able to trust that we, as anglers and guests on their land, will behave responsibly.

A fisherman on a river will not appreciate the trout being scared off by a disturbance. Especially on a small stream, give other anglers room of undisturbed river. It may be better to find another part. If you need to approach someone who is fishing, do so quietly, keeping well back from the water so not to scare fish, and signal your intentions. Even your reflection on the water may spook the trout.

It is really quite simple to have good manners on river and streams if you remember these simple rules.

- Respect other anglers already on the water.
- Enquire politely about their plans.
- If fishing downstream for Dollaghan or Salmon, join a line of anglers at the end unless there is a very large gap.
- Ask if it's in order to join an already occupied pool.
- If a pool is full, wait on the bank or move somewhere else.
- If you join others fishing a pool, don't fish the water someone is just about to fish.

- Do not monopolise a stretch of water, even if you're catching fish there.
- Move upstream or downstream with every few casts unless you are alone.
- When sharing a pool for Dollaghan or Salmon, accepted practice is to take a step every time you make a few casts.
- Leave plenty of room for your neighbour to cast, and to play and reel in a hooked fish.
- Do not fill a gap left by an angler landing a fish — let them return.
- If other anglers offend through inexperience, have a gentle word with them.

Upstream and downstream fishing:

- Always enter a pool behind any angler already there.
- If a pool is being fished downstream by wet fly anglers, start upstream of them.
- If a pool is being fished upstream by nymph anglers or dry fly anglers, start downstream of them.
- Start your angling in the opposite direction if possible.
- Don't start fishing a river downstream when someone else is fishing it upstream
- Don't start fishing a river upstream when someone else is fishing it downstream
- If in doubt, ask where to fish so as not to cause a disturbance.

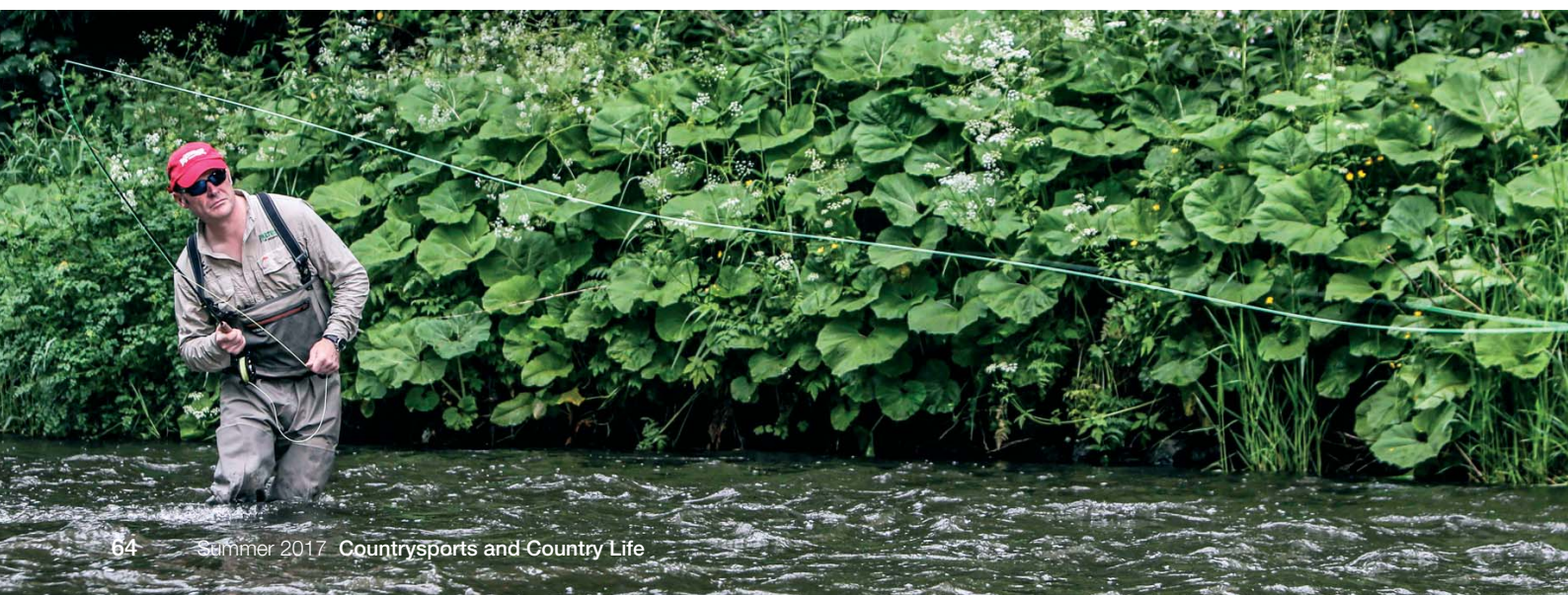
Access etiquette:

- These rules apply to accessing fishing waters via private land.

- No dogs.
- No camping without permission.
- Request permission to cross private land.
- Offer thanks on leaving.
- Leave gates as you find them (open or shut)
- Stay within the river margins.
- Do not litter.
- Respect private property.
- Avoid disturbing stock or damaging crops.
- Do not park vehicles in gate ways.
- Be courteous to local landowners and others.
- Please take all litter away with you. No matter what it is.

*Fishing Matters PRO-Staff,
Partridge Pro Team and Marryat Fly Rods Pro Team, Game Angling Consultant, Stevie Munn is a fully insured and qualified fishing guide, writer and qualified game angling instructor in fly casting and fly tying. He has appeared in many angling books, magazines and DVDs and gives casting demonstrations at angling events all over the world. He has grown up fishing on rivers and loughs of Ireland where he often guides. He runs teaching courses in Ireland and hosts groups to fish in Norway, Argentina and other countries. Email anglingclassics@aol.com or visit www.anglingclassics.co.uk for more information.*

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Obituary

TED (E. J.) MALONE, 1917-2017

Ted Malone, who would have reached the grand age of 100 had he lived until November 2017, was a fanatical angler from 1930 when, aged thirteen, he hooked a salmon while worm-fishing for trout. He served with the RAF Coastal Command during World War 2 and after this he became one of Ireland's leading

fly-dressers and one of its great fly fishing writers, walking in the foot steps of the of the legendary T.J. (Tommy) Hanna and Sam Anderson, both of whom he knew. Indeed, for those who enjoy reading of the history of flies and fly fishing, Ted's second book includes a short collection of letters from the legendary G.E.M. Skues to Tommy Hanna. Enthralling!

Ted summarised his work in two important books, *Irish Trout and Salmon Flies* and *Fly-Tying in the Irish Style*. Both are essential works for those who fish or plan to fish Irish rivers.

Personally, I had of course heard of him long before I met him, as he was a legend in Irish fly fishing circles. I had his book entitled *Irish Trout and Salmon Flies* and I was proud to have him sign it for me many years ago. One of my old angling pals also now in his 90s and still fishing, Tony Cooper, often talked about fishing exploits with Ted, he was Tony's best man when he got married and they had fished together often. Tony claims it was him that started Ted fly dressing when they were very young men.

I remember the first time I met him; at the time I was writing regularly for magazines and each month I would normally write about some old fly pattern and its history. Ted approached me at an angling event and said in his



The late Ted Malone tying at the first Killyleagh Fly Fair/Irish International Fly Fair.

kind considerate way, 'Hello Stevie very nice to meet you. I have been reading your articles and heard a lot about you — keep up the good work.' I was amazed that he was talking to me, I was a nobody, to me he was angling royalty. Ted would have been in his late 70s or 80s then and there he was saying it was nice to meet me. I was totally humbled by this. Later, I met Ted often and dressed flies beside him sometimes at angling shows. He was a gentleman with a wealth of knowledge, kind, humble, smart, funny, sharp witted and always thinking about fly dressing and fishing. From time to time he would post me something, maybe a fly pattern which he thought I should try, or some interesting new fly material he was using. He was still thinking about evolving fly patterns into his 90s. What an amazing man.

But Ted Malone was more than a keen fly dresser and fly fisher, for he was a man who cared for those less fortunate members of society, his working life being spent in the Social

Services helping many disabled people. Even when he retired he spent two years as Director and adviser to a government survey into the needs of the disabled, and was for five years part-time Chairman of the Supplementary Benefit Appeals Tribunal. It is therefore not surprising all that met Ed were struck by his kindness and generosity, enhanced by a lovely sense of humour.

Ted passed on after a short illness and at his funeral Peter Kealy, a good friend and also one of Ireland top fly dressers, scattered some of Ted's Daddy-long-legs flies down onto his coffin. Peter tells me that they all landed the right way up, perhaps in salute to a great fly dresser, fly fisherman and human being.

Our sympathies go to his wife Judy, who fished with him and accompanied him to the shows where we all enjoyed watching him tie.

Ted helped not only me but many with fly dressing and I am very proud to have known him.

Stevie Munn

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The Dance of the Mayfly



Spent Gnat flyfishing is an exciting time for anglers.

The glowing embers of the birch wood spark and crackle as juices from Cavan's finest sirloin fizzle through the griddle, sending little plumes of smoke up through the leafy glade.

Wines of a certain vintage are produced to complement the fine fare and this trip has an air of celebration about it. We are gathered on the shore of Lough Sheelin to celebrate the return of the Mayfly once again. There are tall stories and great banter, a meeting of old friends and some new acquaintances. The mood is good, for this is a special time, anticipated through the long dark days of winter. Anglers have come from far and wide to gather on the shores of Ireland's great loughs to ply their craft on the water and enjoy this unique occasion.

As we sit around the fire our spirits are raised even higher because peering through eyes stinging from the wood smoke there are clouds of Mayfly above us in the clearing, their wings glittering in the shafts of sunlight breaking through the branches, as they rise and fall in their nuptial dancing ritual, a sight to gladden the heart of any angler.

The morning had dawned damp and breezy, a south westerly pushing banks of cloud across the lough, good

conditions for the wet fly and we didn't linger over breakfast in Innyside Lodge in Finea. In these conditions it pays to be out on the water to make the best of it as the weather can change so quickly.

There was much hustle and bustle on the little wooden pier and soon the boats were chugging up the river to the huge expanse of the lough, passing the nesting pair of swans, patient herons and colourful kingfishers. As we break through the veil of rushes at the head of the river we can see a nice rolling wave across the lough, grand conditions for a wet fly.

The Mayfly hatch starts up the lough's northern end, so it's full throttle past Watty's Rock and through Kelly's Bay, eyes scouring the water for signs of hatching Mayfly. In the distance I spot the gulls and swallows working the shore just off a reed bed. They've already found the fly and we make our way over but cut the engine well short of the activity and pull closer on the oars to see what's happening.

Pulling up quietly against lee of the

reed bed, we scan the water below us. One final check on the tackle, knots tested — no tangles — we set off on a drift to take us over the shallows and out along the ledge that drops off into deeper water, a contour where past experience tells me that trout often patrol.

A wild commotion in front of the boat

As we near the area there are signs of feeding trout, a little splash, a bulge or flat in the trough of a wave, a golden glint in the side of a wave or the glimpse of a tail or fin cutting through the water. It never ceases to amaze me how quietly a trout can intercept a fly from the surface in a wave, especially the larger specimens and that's exactly how the first fish came. My boat partner's retrieve had almost finished and, as he lifted the flies from the water to recast, a bulge appeared in the water in front of the boat and his line stopped solid. Then there was a wild commotion in front of the boat as a lovely trout



Mayfly time provides opportunities to catch quality trout.

thrashed about before throwing the hook and disappearing into the depths. There had been no chance to strike or set the hook and we just had to watch as the thick dark back and spotted tail cruised away.

We pulled back up to the top of the drift to regroup and check the casts again and then set off, this time drifting slightly further out and the duns (green fly or emergent Mayfly) were coming off in numbers now, struggling on the water, sailing past us on the breeze. We picked up some lovely Irish brown trout by pulling our traditional wet flies through that rolling wave. There were slashing rises, quiet takes, abortive pulls and even some of those lovely moments when a beautiful golden flank, sprinkled with dark spots appears in the side of a wave to take the golden olive bumble on the dropper, twisting and turning on feeling the hook, slashing on the surface then diving for the bottom, before being subdued by pressure from the bent rod. This went on for several hours but the time passed too quickly and suddenly we became aware of a warm front coming, the cloud lifted, the sun appeared, our rolling wave gradually faded and the trout went down, sure it was time for a rest anyway and we had agreed to meet for tea in sheltered bay over a mile away, so the outboard was

fired up and the boat cuts across the calm surface.

Each year Irish anglers assemble on the shores of Ireland's great limestone loughs for the Mayfly festival. Anglers follow the hatch of fly because the emergence is staggered, for example Carra and Derg would be earlier than Conn or Sheelin. Many an acquaintance is made and old friends reunited on the lough and in the pub as surrounding towns and villages fill with visiting anglers and there's a fantastic festival atmosphere. All the talk is of hatches and wet and dry flies; 'secret' patterns change hands and information whispered in hushed tones, the bush

telegraph is buzzing now as 'the fly is up' message goes out and anglers rush to the Erne, Ree, Arrow, Mask the mighty Corrib and so on. Guest houses, hotels, restaurants, pubs, boat hire, etc., get a massive boost at this time of year and angling has certainly helped these establishments through the recession.

We are gathered in a little bay on Lough Sheelin, steaks on the griddle, glass in hand, toasting yet another season as the smoke from the open fire rises through the leafy glade. The whitethorn blossom is well established, a sure sign that the Mayfly hatch will be underway. All those emerged duns, resting beneath the leaves, transform



There is a huge bounty for the lough's inhabitants.



We gather on the lough shore to celebrate the Mayfly again.

into the spinner stage of their life cycle, the beautiful white bodied stage with clear wings and long black tails. As the sun gets stronger the heat energises the fly and they rise into the air in their ritual mating dance, forming great columns above the trees and when mated, the females, the spinners, can return to the trees and await the perfect conditions to fly out over the loughs surface to lay her eggs and finally falling on the surface to die, the so called Spent Gnat.

A splash from an oar, or a bad cast, will be enough to make fish vanish

Soon, it's time to go afloat once more to see what the evening may bring. The spinners are already streaming out from the shore, it's an amazing sight watching these fragile insects fly out over open water, in the final act of their lives to distribute their eggs and die, thus completing their life cycle.

Angling tactics will change from the morning, dry fly tactics will prevail, this will be a game of skill and precision to try to

outwit the wily trout in calm conditions. A splash from an oar or bad cast will be enough to make the fish vanish into the depths, so extra care must be taken in the approach.

A faint breeze puts a tiny ripple on the surface and in certain areas there are 'slicks,' lanes of calm water on the rippled surface, fly and debris accumulates here providing a natural

larder for the feeding fish. We scan the slicks for signs of feeding trout and try to ambush them, requiring accuracy and skill, both from the boatman and the angler and it's a tense, exciting time.

Soon, we are out in the middle of the lough. The Mayflies are streaming out, their wings reflecting pink in the red haze of the sunset and the lough is beautiful. Dead and dying flies lie all



The Mayfly Duns (Greenfly) shelter under the Hawthorne leaves and moult into the Spinner (Spent Gnat) stage, ready for mating and egg laying.

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Irish Brown Trout caught on a wet fly.

along the slick and suddenly a loud sucking noise betrays a feeding trout cruising up toward us. I steady the boat as my partner gets ready to make the cast, pulling line from the reel in readiness.

The fly line cuts through the surface as the strike sets the hook

There's another suck and a large back and fin break the surface below us. The cast goes out three yards ahead of the trout, two dry flies ride the surface, until a big nose appears and the fly is gone. There's a pause. The fly line cuts through the surface as the strike sets the hook and the fish slashes on the surface, then bores into the depths in the first unstoppable run. Line streams from the reel only regained as the fish turns toward us. This goes on for some minutes before he's ready for the net. Taking great care, we admire his golden flanks and leopard spots with red flecks, as I unhook him, taking a quick photo before releasing him.

So, the evening goes on as the golden red sunset fades into darkness. It's a

truly magical and unique occasion and there's nowhere else on earth I'd rather be. We pause for one last moment to take in the atmosphere, then turn the boat back down the lough to catch last orders at Watty's Rock pub to exchange stories of the fish caught and hear the about 'the one that got away' again over a pint of Guinness.

Mayfly fishing is part of Ireland's angling heritage and culture, it's a

special and unique occasion, and a great reason to protect our natural habitats from pollution, development and exploitation. Our natural heritage is a precious resource, we should do all we can to protect it and to protect fish stocks and spawning habitat so we can carry on our tradition of gathering on the shores of our iconic limestone loughs, so future generations to come may witness 'the Dance of the Mayfly'.



The fly lie dying on the surface.



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Hummel in the Highlands



There's very little that can beat the classic sporting holiday in Scotland, with long days spent on the hill or by a river after feather, fur and fin, with friends and family to celebrate or commiserate depending on the outcome of your outings. Last October, just as the rut was starting, we took a week at Auch & Invermearan Estate, together with a small party of friends. A few attempts at a Macnab were planned, but as any seasoned sportsman will know, you certainly can never plan for success when it comes to the pursuit of wild game.

Of course one of the great factors of a sporting holiday in Scotland is the weather, and with my 18-month old daughter, Ptarmigan, with us, we could hardly plan ahead, nor stray too far from the lodge if bad weather was threatening – a toddler in a baby carrier is hardly well protected should the conditions turn nasty. So, while the rest of the party could spend from dawn 'till dusk on the hill, come rain or shine, I was rather more restricted.

We watched the forecast religiously for the first days of our break, and while the outlook wasn't atrocious, it certainly wasn't good enough for what we had in mind. So, while everyone else spent their days after salmon or grouse or

stags, I was the hunting widow – my days were occupied with Ptarmigan. Apart from several constitutionals a day, I was confined to our headquarters – luckily for me the lodge at Auch is incredibly comfortable.

And then, finally, the forecast looked good. We watched the sun set in a blaze of red, the sounds of the stags roaring around us, and Sandy McKellar, Simon and I hatched our plan for the following morning. Simon would carry Ptarmigan in the carrier on his back, while I would get my chance at a stag. With some 28,000 acres to hunt over, we were, in theory, spoiled for choice, but with young Ptarmigan with us, the reality was that we'd need to be within

retreating distance in case of a change of conditions.

Sandy, together with Chris Foley, the ghillie, discussed our options, talking over where they'd seen stags that were the right age and size to take, and we settled on Tulloch Glen. As Sandy explained, "It's an ideal spot for the deer – very sheltered, and certainly you'll find hinds there in winter. It's also not too far from where we can get a vehicle to and perfectly manageable carrying Ptarmigan." Luckily for us, Sandy is certainly someone who knows the estate – he's worked on Auch all his life, and grew up there, with a father and twin brother who are both keen stalkers. On an estate that has five

munroes, both Simon and I were relieved to hear that we wouldn't be tackling them.

The lack of antlers was no disguise

We set off mid-morning, and indeed, Sandy was right. The terrain was certainly not back-breaking, but the views still stupendous. Ptarmigan chattered away happily on Simon's back, breaking the stalker's code of silence, but just to be out with the whole family was enough in itself. As we climbed the glen, we spotted hinds, and our chances looked good, for we could also hear stags roaring in the area. And then, on the skyline, we spotted a large deer – it took me a moment to recognise what it was, but Sandy knew the second he saw it: "There, it's a hummel, do you see?" The lack of antlers was no disguise, for the beast had a massive body and the thick neck of a stag.



The terrain was not backbreaking but the views were still stupendous.

I may have been out for a Royal, but Sandy hardly had to ask to know that I'd be equally delighted with the hummel, a rarity in the red deer world. So we began our stalk proper. It was a nervous time, for keeping an 18-month-old child quiet is impossible, but the acoustics of the hill worked in our favour, as did the wind, sending the

sound swirling down the glen. It was doubly lucky that this was the case, as the ground wasn't in our favour, with only open territory between us and the hummel, which was on the move, looking for hinds. Sandy worked hard, picking his way up the slopes, stopping when the hummel stopped and hunkering down, watching and waiting.



Sandy and I would have to get closer.



There were the usual gutters to traverse.

Several times we got into position for a shot just as our quarry moved off again. And then, finally, we had our moment, as the hummel stopped and settled in one spot. Sandy and I would have to get closer, so we left Simon and Ptarmigan behind, unslipped the rifle and made our approach.

Too tense to speak, I trained the rifle on the beast

Staying low on the rough ground of the Scottish Highlands isn't always easy, and being three months' pregnant with my second child certainly doesn't help, but we managed to gain enough ground to find a good spot. As I settled behind the rifle, I became aware of Ptarmigan's shouts of "Mummy, Mummy!" and was sure we'd lose the hummel before I could take a shot. However, I continued my preparation, and, adjusting myself behind the rifle, brought the scope to my eye. As I did so, the hummel started to move again, though thankfully not as a result of Ptarmigan's efforts to get my attention. Sandy whispered: "I'll get his attention to stop him, you take the shot." I nodded in agreement, too tense to speak, training the rifle on the beast.

Sandy let out a bellowing roar, bringing the hummel to a dead stop. I squeezed the trigger, and the shot rang out, echoing down the valley. Dead silence, even from Ptarmigan, followed

and almost in slow motion, the hummel sank to his knees, and then keeled over, dead. As a family, we approached the animal and, as Sandy gralloched, Ptarmigan looked on in fascination. As he set about his work on the carcase, Sandy chatted away, clearly as relieved and pleased as we were that our family outing had been successful. "It's a big animal, alright, and not surprising he was that easy to spot. I'd say he's 11 or 12 years old, so certainly ripe for the taking. I'm pretty sure this is the same one I saw a couple of weeks ago, and I saw a hummel two years ago, so it might even be the same as that one."

Ptarmigan's eyes were on stalks as she watched Sandy's quick and efficient gralloch. She soon went back to her happy chattering as we set off down the hill and back to the vehicle. As we met the rest of our party, exchanging our days' adventures, I reflected on what a special occasion it was, not just to take your child out hunting for the first time, but to hunt with your whole family. The week progressed, bringing with it two near misses on Macnabs and an unexpected highlight and first for Simon: a pair of ptarmigan, shot while walking up a high area of moorland.

Hummels

Niall Rowantree, whose company West Highland Hunting manages the Auch & Invermearan Estate, explains a



Not unique to Scotland, the genetic condition leads to an antler-less stag.

little about hummels: "They're certainly not unique to Scotland. The condition comes from a genetic predisposition, which is passed through the female line, not the male. This predisposition will lead to an antler-less stag if the calf is weak when it is first born and has a bad first year in terms of nourishment. The conditions means that the pedicles never fully develop, and so the stag will never produce antlers. Their reproductive organs certainly aren't impaired, and nor do they pass it on: there were several in captivity that bred antlered stags.

For more information, visit www.westhighland-hunting.co.uk.



The ptarmigan were an unexpected highlight for Simon.

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