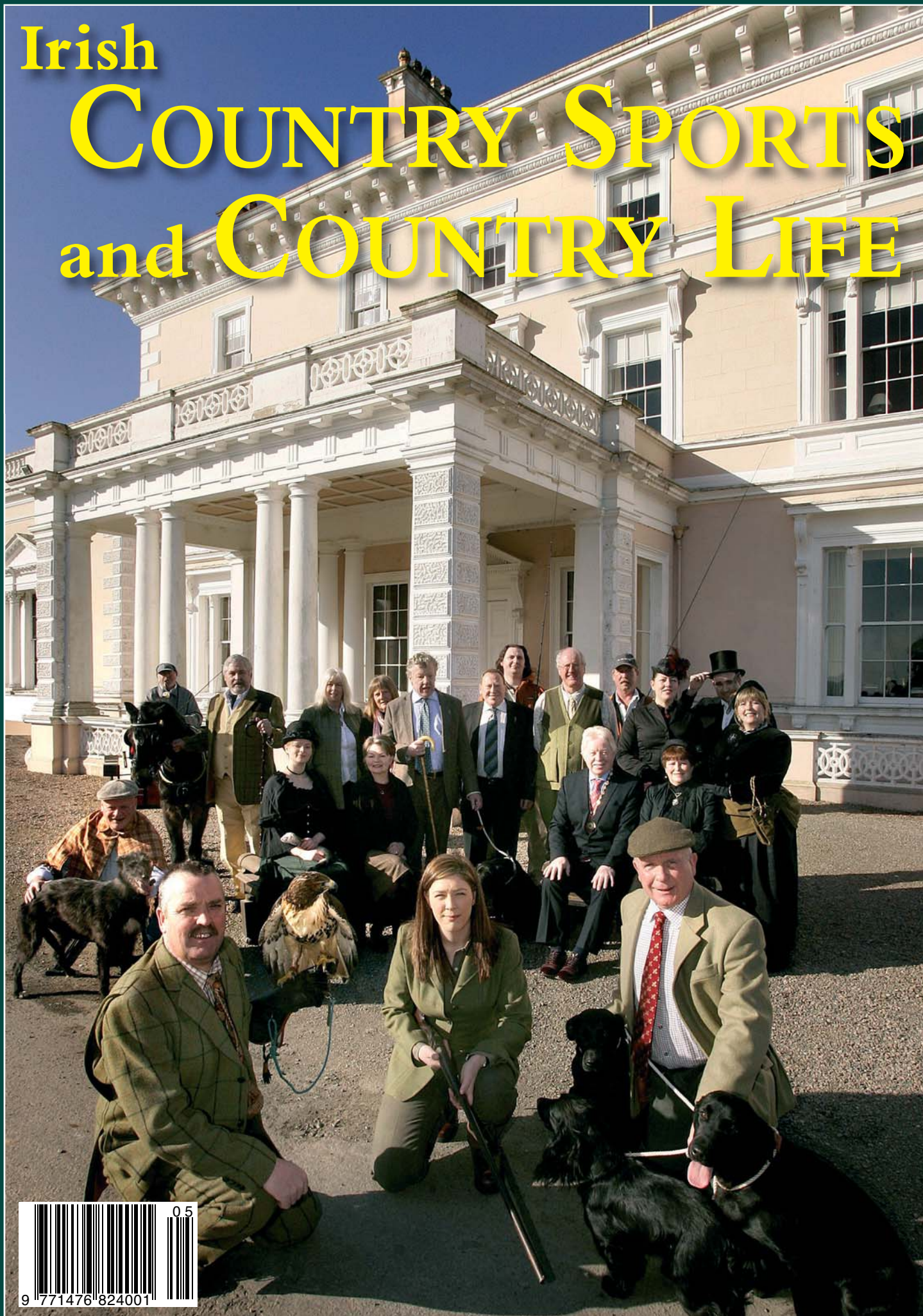


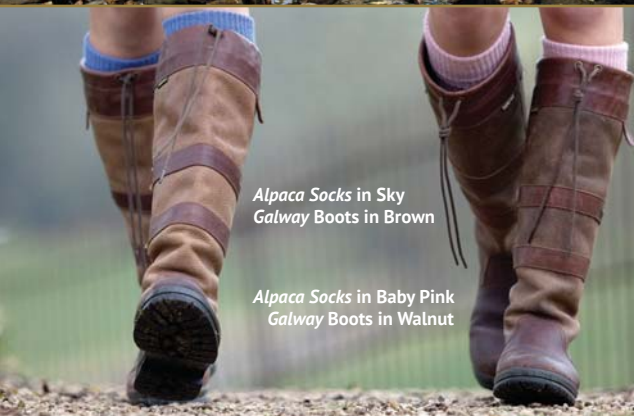
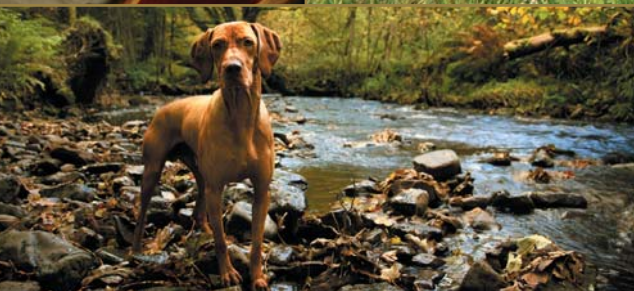
# Irish COUNTRY SPORTS and COUNTRY LIFE



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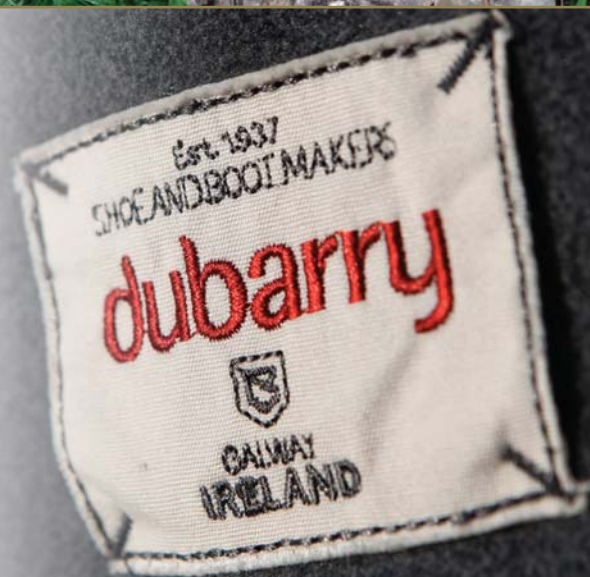
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**Photo Cover:** 'The Start of Summer – the Ballywalter Game & Country Living Fair'  
**Photo:** Peter Houston

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# Country Sports and Country Life

## Rol Comment

### *Seasons end, seasons start*

**A**nother shooting season has passed and in many parts of the country there was little shooting in December due to what was a very 'hard' winter. In the Republic we had the unusual situation where the Minister extended the season for pheasant and woodcock which was welcomed by shooters. In some areas there were few woodcock left by February as they had died from starvation during the snow and freezing weather. Many shooters felt that duck should have been included in the extension as they were as severely affected by the inclement weather.

Predatory species had some easy meals with the fallen and will need serious control in the coming months. It will now be interesting to see what the new government's attitude is to rural life in general and fieldsports in particular. I will be reminding politicians of their various promises regarding the sports we all love.

### *A new start*

It is vital that all fieldsports followers stand together to make it clear to the new batch of politicians in the Republic of Ireland that we view our traditional sports very seriously and are not prepared to suffer further curtailments of our lifestyle. The old saying 'united we stand, divided we fall' remains true and we have seen in recent years that all fieldsports have been under threat in varying degrees. Even if money is short, do try to keep up your membership of the various gun clubs or fieldsports organisations you belong to as they are an important part of securing these activities.

### *Plenty to do*

The seasons move from one to another and game anglers are beginning to enjoy their day by the water again. Hopefully, the improvement in salmon numbers and their size will continue to improve in coming years and we all need to keep to the rules if we want salmon and sea



trout angling to get back to the glories of the years before drift netting.

Another time which is nearly upon us is the Game Fair season and I am looking forward to a busy summer at various fairs around the country. The season kicks off with the Ballywalter Game & Country Living Fair on April 30th and May 1st. It was a very successful one day event last year and due to public demand has been increased to two days this time and promises to be another huge success. June 25th & 26th will see the Irish Game Fair at Shane's Castle which had a record attendance in 2010 and will, no doubt, be a great couple of days of everything that is good in hunting, shooting, fishing and country life. The season is rounded off by the Irish Game &

Country Fair at the beautiful Birr Castle Demesne on August 27th and 28th. Despite the recession, these fairs are an inexpensive day out for all the family and the organisers have recognised the hard times by putting together a special admission package for those attending two or more fairs. I will be again privileged to be involved in all three events as well as the various press launches which some people think are hard work but I have always enjoyed the good companionship of fellow fieldsports fans and the 'buzz' that goes with dogs and horses, fishing and shooting.

### *A little EU Daftness*

Under new EU rules there are grants to remove gorse or whins from agricultural land. There is a direct effect on wildlife as gorse provides useful cover for many species and as it grows on poorer land, there is little if any value in removing it. It also affects domestic farm animals who get some shelter from it in winter and the glorious golden bloom that manages to appear almost all year round is one of the most beautiful sights of the Irish countryside. Just in case you thought that this plan had been thought out, you would be mistaken. When you have grubbed out the gorse you are not allowed to burn it, so the countryside will be blighted by large clumps of dying withered vegetation. Now who thought that one up?

**Philip Lawton**  
ROI Editor



# Country Sports and Country Life

## Comment

**G**ood results have been achieved by BASC and CAI in their hard hitting campaigns to address some of the proposals in a raft of legislation at Stormont. They certainly lobbied hard and with the help of stalwarts such as Jim Shannon, MP and other enlightened MLAs. Many of our readers also made sure that the views of country sports enthusiasts were uppermost in the minds of those who profess to represent the 'will of the people.' This time the MLAs did just that but it was no easy victory and much midnight oil was burned by Tommy Mayne and Lyall Plant and their teams. Well done! But who knows what will be on the political agenda after the elections and for that reason alone we need to follow our sporting bodies' lead and make sure our MLAs really do know where we stand. I thought in particular BASC's email with a handy website address to find out who exactly your MPs or MLAs names and addresses, coupled with a one touch page for your wise comments to go to all of those representatives was a masterstroke. Let's face it who among us has the names of all our councillors, MLAs and MPs - and their contact details - to hand? I used it and - wait for it - yes really - I was telephoned by two MLAs, and written to by another who also enclosed copies of his comments in the Assembly on the topics concerned. So it does work. Give it a try when you need to lobby your representatives on a country sports issue by clicking on [www.writetothem.com](http://www.writetothem.com) As an old soccer anthem might have said: Nice one Tommy!

Continuing the political theme, you will see that we have taken country sports issues to the heart of government again. As the organisation which has contact with more country sports people in Ireland than any other we consider it important that we play our bit in getting our readers viewpoint across at the highest level of government. This time Environment Minister Edwin Poots gets the treatment with some interesting results. See what you think of the comments from the man at the heart of much of the legislation I mentioned above.

Cold weather and freezing conditions marked my shooting season as it did for most of you I know. The ban on shooting wildfowl and some other birds was introduced at exactly the right time. On the shoot where I pick up, woodcock were lifting and flying like moths only to drop in a short distance away. A voluntary ban on snipe and woodcock was in place here as it was on many of the other established shoots and rough shooters whom I know were playing ball too. So well done DOE and again to our organisations who got the news out fast and encouraged us all to shoot sensibly and with restraint.

While I'm not quite ready to hang up the gun belt and retire my dog team gracefully (disgracefully is more applicable in the case of Bee my cocker spaniel), my idea of what constitutes field sports enjoyment has certainly changed. I suppose like some have said before, it's initially about simply bagging something - even one thing - fishy, fowl or game, which in time becomes the most, then the biggest, or the heaviest. Then eventually it's the skill employed to



tempt that old trout under the fallen elm who has escaped all such attempts over the years and is almost legendary in his cunning. It's the high bird that tickles the fancy. Numbers really are not necessary. You have the ability to smile as you recall the day with the rest of the team even though you have been out of it on every drive and the cost per bird has been to you - well let's not go there. Enjoying the day for its own sake, well I do think it takes some time to develop.

Other things too, still shooting connected, gave me a real buzz this season past. I brought on my young Labrador from a bitch who was very shy in company and, while a dead, cold bird was no problem, was not keen on warm ones. She was unnerved by a bird that shook a wing, never mind a runner. Now warm birds are not a problem and runners are retrieved at speed. On the last drive of the last day I was picking up for David Cowan from Armagh, who was shooting very well at a top shoot in County Antrim. A monstrously high, fast bird came from a high stand of trees on the Orchard Drive. Everyone watched and waited. He made it look easy. Then the last bird flew his way and two barrels later, spinning round, I watched it through the trees behind. Had it fallen? I glimpsed what I thought had been an unscheduled touchdown. But had Bracken seen it too? Now on this shoot there are FT dog handlers who tell me while Bracken is no guided missile her marking ability is top class. So I sent her back through the trees and cover a hundred yards or so to the edge of the wood. Four or five minutes later back she came, from the top left hand of the wood about 70 yards from the fall, with one very live cock pheasant. No whistles or commands. The Gun was delighted and you know what, so was I. Big time. As I walked through the gun room's banter and chat to drive home, David called over: "As I sit here, that shot of mine is getting higher and your dog's retrieve even longer by the minute." And isn't that what it's all about.

As I write, the windows are open, sunlight is streaming in and for once the second mortgage - generating oil fired central heating in switched off. Could it be spring? Blue tits are feeding at the feeding stations, two wrens are climbing up the tree by the dog run like mice and my favourite bird, the long tailed tit has decided to grace the fat balls hanging on a wicker archway outside the kitchen window. There are five of them and I marvel at their antics. Chirps complete the picture. Then I go out to replenish the feeders, exercise the dogs and do some of the pile of chores that need to be done on a spring day. Reality dawns as I feel the temperature. Baltic! I realise that a trip to the attic for the trout fishing gear is some way off. I can dream for just a little while longer.

The Great Game Fairs of Ireland series kicks off at Ballywalter on 30 April and 1 May, now a two day event following its rip roaring success last year having being taken over by Albert Titterington's team. Its Victorian/Edwardian theme echoes Ballywalter Park's historic past and what many describe as the Golden Years of shooting as you will find out elsewhere in this edition of the magazine. Too good to miss!

Finally, we have indeed gone truly international in every sense of the word. ICS&CL is now to be found on the Internet at [www.countrysportsandcountrylife.com](http://www.countrysportsandcountrylife.com) and since setting up the website even we have been astounded at its popularity. 38,000 new readers in just six weeks, with little or no publicity, bodes well and is a huge marketing incentive for our advertisers while at the same time bringing all that is best in country sports to a massive audience. And that, as they say, can't be bad!

I do hope that you enjoy your fishing and that many of our readers will join me for a chat on our stand at Ballywalter. Tight lines!

**Paul Pringle**  
Northern Editor



## Escape to the Outdoors with Barbour's new Spring Summer Collection



*The Spey Fishing jacket.*

**B**arbour's Spring Summer collection encourages us to get out and enjoy whatever the weather has to offer. Worn washes and ageing techniques transform clothes into garments with stories.

For ladies, the country theme lights up jackets with feminine rose prints from Liberty, puts Wellington boots into plum and turns a

quilted jacket into a bright summer gilet. Equestrian, a true Barbour heartland, inspires blazers in quilt and tweed, not to mention the bright Sateen Sheen Waistcoat. The Sarah jodphur goes with everything this season; like jeans only more interesting.

For men, fishing takes centre stage with the Spey Fishing jacket, inspired by the 1981 original, the first short jacket specifically designed to be worn with waders. Made from 100% polyester with taped seams to ensure full waterproof protection, it is extremely lightweight for ease of movement in the water. Six pockets to the front allow for plenty of storage.

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Barbour's bags, with a genius blend of classic luggage and modern execution are made in signature Barbour fabrics: wax cotton, Duralinen and leather. Ranging from the hand-size Emily wax cotton handbag for ladies, through to the Canvas Beacon Rucksack and the sensational International Traveller overnight bag, this is a brilliant collection of sophisticated simplicity. For stockists, please call 0044 (0) 191 427 4210 or visit [www.barbour.com](http://www.barbour.com)



*Classic luggage and modern execution made in signature Barbour fabrics.*

## South Down Coastguards' Shoot – Liz Edgar competed

**T**he South Down Coastguards would like to thank everyone who took part and supported the recent charity clay competition at Ballykinlar Army Barracks, on Saturday 12th February. A big thank you goes to the staff of Ballykinlar shooting range for use of their facilities and their excellent organisation skills. Over 100 competitors took part. The day would not have been possible without the help and support of Lyall Plant of Countryside Alliance, who provided a year's insurance for the Coastguards to run the competition and future shooting events.

The shoot was staged to raise funds for the South Down Coastguards to take part in the All Ireland Joint Search and Rescue competition (JSAR) to be held at the Share Village, Lisnaskea, in May. This is an annual competition where Coastguard teams are assessed on their ability to compete in a number of search and rescue based scenarios.



*Richard Newell, Coordinating Manager, Belfast Coastguard, Huw Morgan, receiving the trophy on behalf of NI Fire & Rescue Service and Frank Connolly who presented the trophy on behalf of JF Speirs, Estate Agent/Auctioneer.*

The layout was made up of Skeet, Down the Line and a Pool Trap. You could either enter individually or in five man teams and those competing ranged from novice shooters to classified AA shots, with plenty of help on hand to coach those less experienced shooters who were willing to give it a go.

Considering that the previous day was atrocious with heavy fog and rain the organisers couldn't have asked for a better day with the sun shining and the wind kept to a minimum.

Once my team, aptly named the 'Mudmen' as it was made up of Newtownards wildfowlers who had spent the season lying in mud of Strangford Lough, registered, we entered our cards and grabbed a burger and coffee while we waited to shoot.

When shooting you felt at ease because everyone was very friendly and supportive. Our team did very well in the competition, coming first in Skeet and first in DTL. Philip McKibben came first in the Pool Trap with a straight 10/10. The individual DTL competition was won by Orr Forsythe, William Sweetlove came second with me in third place. The Skeet competition was won by Shay Gormley, an Irish Coastguard, while the Northern Ireland Fire and Rescue Service Team came first in the 'Services' competition.

From a competitor's perspective the day was very enjoyable, well run and I hope it won't be long until they run another great event like this!





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## Survey highlights the reduction of Deer numbers in Ireland

**A** national survey undertaken by the Wild Deer Association of Ireland (WDAI) show that 88% of those surveyed say they have seen a reduction in deer numbers. It is believed the illegal taking of deer (Deer Poaching), which is now at unprecedented levels nationally, is the main contributory factor to the reduction in numbers. This view is reflected in the survey with 83% of Deer Stalkers and 71% of Forest Managers surveyed say they have seen an increase in Deer Poaching. It is understood the increase in Deer Poaching is due to the current economic climate, high venison prices and a lack of resources in policing the Wildlife Acts, under which deer are a protected species. Deer are also under additional pressure following the recent severe weather with many animals in poor condition.



**Wild Deer  
Association  
of Ireland**

A NATIONAL ASSOCIATION FOR DEER MANAGEMENT AND CONSERVATION

allows for the reporting of suspected incidents of deer poaching, through their website [www.wilddeerireland.com](http://www.wilddeerireland.com)



The following initiatives are being explored with the Department of the Environment - Implementation of a National Deer Strategy, formulated and overseen by all relevant stakeholders - providing accurate data on deer numbers locally (ecological survey of the population), appropriate local deer management plans.

Promotion of a dedicated Deer Poaching Helpline resourced by NPWS and supported by all stakeholders

Press Release and Media Campaign highlighting the illegal taking of deer (Deer Poaching) by NPWS and supported by all Stakeholders

Internal message of support from NPWS Management to NPWS staff, to address some of the internal negative opinions of deer.

Review the current process of issuing Section 42 Permits (allows the culling of deer outside the open season where genuine deer damage is being caused) tighten the process of issuing permits to avoid abuse for financial gain - Section 42 permits for female deer with dependent young is withdrawn

Minimum night patrol targets by NPWS working in conjunction with stakeholders, Garda, Deer organisations etc

Promotion of Registered Game Dealers, along with increased regulation and presence by NPWS at Game Dealers premises.

Introduction of a Tagging System based on local deer management plan targets. Individual tags are issued to hunters with deer hunting licence, additional licences available where appropriate. Provides traceability of culled deer.

Minimum Competence Standard for all Deer Stalkers such as the Hunter Competence Assessment Programme (HCAP).

An agreed procedure for enacting the temporary suspension of the Open Season for Deer, following a prolonged period of severe weather conditions.

For further information contact - Damien Hannigan, Secretary, Wild Deer Association of Ireland, PO Box 31 Middleton, Co. Cork. 087 2496987 [www.wilddeerireland.com](http://www.wilddeerireland.com)

While deer are now seen in some areas they have not been seen before it is not clear if this is due to an increase in deer numbers or due to the increased habitat from new forestry plantations, or the increase in poaching which cause deer to flee to new areas.

Since 2005 the number of licences issued to cull deer by the Minister for the Environment have increased from 2,582 to 4,118 which have resulted in an increased number of deer been culled- 18,750 in 2005/06 to 34,683 2009/10. Based on returns made by licensed hunters to the Department of the Environment, 40% of the deer culled nationally were culled in Co. Wicklow. While there is evidence of "hotspots" of overpopulation in some areas it is believed most are in Co. Wicklow.

After concerns were raised by the WDAI about the Red Deer herd in Co. Kerry, NPWS have agreed to amend the process for permits issued under section 42 of the Wildlife Acts, ensuring permits are only issued where genuine deer damage is caused and there is no abuse of permits for financial gain. mWDAI's successful campaign to raise awareness of Deer Poaching launched in 2008 - "Shine a Light on Poaching" with the support of Countryside Alliance Ireland, NPWS, Coillte, British Deer Society and Deer Alliance, is now enhanced by a new campaign "Report a Wildlife Crime" which



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*The Castle Dobbs beaters and pickers-up pictured during the beaters' shoot in January.*

**F**or the second year, beaters, pickers-up and visiting guns have boosted the Cancer Fund for Children and Action Cancer with £1000 going to each, thanks to a series of fund-raising ballots.

Throughout the season, shoot days saw the beating/picking up team and guns dig deep to support the charities with prizes ranging from hand carved sticks and vouchers to dine at Knockagh Lodge to treatments at Bangor

Physiotherapy - generously donated by the ticket buyers themselves. Such was the enthusiasm that the prizes were often supplemented by visiting guns and other well wishers - even a non-shooter from Bangor insisted on giving two carved sticks to support the worthy cause.

So well done again to everyone at Castle Dobbs!



*Alastair Beattie, Keeper (centre) presents the cheque to Gareth Beattie (left) Cancer Fund for Children and Amanda Steele (right) Action Cancer.*

## For Services to Shooting & dish washing



**Not only turning out each week as a valued member of the beating team - Roy washed all the dishes as well. And that's real multitasking in action!**

## Agri-environment to continue in 2011 - BUT NO CLARITY ON THE FUTURE OF THE SCHEME SAYS RSPB

**F**ollowing the release of the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development (DARD) budget, the RSPB issued a statement to say that it is pleased to see the continuation of the Country Management Scheme (CMS), which provides a critical lifeline to some of our most endangered wildlife. However, it has expressed concern that the amount of funding allocated will only sustain the current level of agri-environment scheme agreements, and will not help us meet our Programme for Government target of 50% of land area in agri-environment schemes by 2013.

John Martin, RSPB Land Use Policy Officer, said: "Farmers already in the scheme are carrying out excellent work which has seen Northern Ireland farmers win the prestigious Nature of Farming Award, in the last two consecutive years. It is with some relief that we see the scheme will continue in the immediate future, but we had hoped to see a level of funding that would allow us to increase the area of land in agri-environment schemes, rather than just sustaining us at the current level of coverage."

There are over 12,000 farmers in the CMS making up a sizeable portion of the funding that comes from Europe under the Common Agricultural Policy. It is part of the Rural Development Programme (RDP) and an important source of income in the countryside, injecting just over £97 million into the economy during this RDP which began in 2007. "This money is used to improve the sustainability of the wider countryside by helping farmers to provide habitat for endangered species, improve water quality through managed buffer zones along water courses and help maintain many of our most precious locally and nationally important wildlife sites (ASSIs, SPA, SACs)," continued John. "We need to increase the amount of land managed under agri-environment schemes if we are to improve the quality of life and environment in the wider countryside. There is a lot of support in the farming community for agri-environment schemes, with over 4,800 farmers on the waiting list to enter the scheme. We need to see as many farmers as possible getting access to the CMS in this RDP, to ensure that we have a chance of turning around declines in our farmland wildlife."



## Countryside Alliance Ireland News



**S**pring is nearly upon us again and although we are pleased to see the dark winter evenings drawing to a close it does however mean the shooting season is over and the end of the hunting season draws near. We can only hope that our members and indeed all country sports enthusiasts had as enjoyable a season that they could, under many unfortunate yet unavoidable circumstances.

The Countryside Alliance Ireland (CAI) team have indeed been kept busy. Many threats to our rural way of life came to the fore and these have taken a combined and substantial effort to defeat. We are delighted to report that many of these threats have been kept at bay.

### Political Update

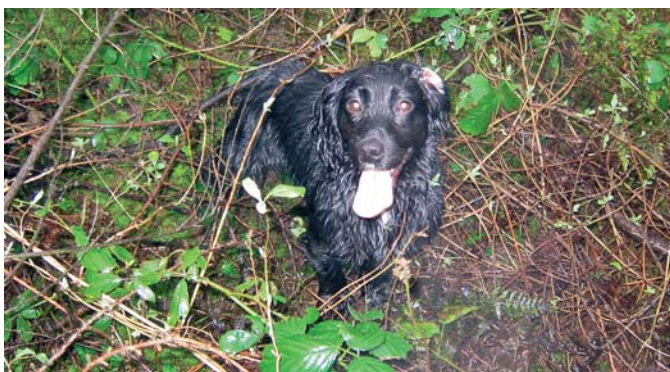
#### Wildlife and Natural Environment Bill

The Alliance party was intent on obtaining full and permanent protection for the Irish hare. This obviously could have led to the demise of the many beagle and harrier packs within Northern Ireland. Our team lobbied hard to defeat this threat and we presented evidence of the great conservation work undertaken by these packs and indeed everyone interested in the management of the species. This particular concern was overcome as recently as Monday 7th February, much to the relief of the hunting community in Northern Ireland.

With the full support of CAI, Francie Molloy MLA tabled an amendment to allow two licensed hare coursing events per year in Northern Ireland. Unfortunately, this amendment was not passed. The Minister for the Environment stated he maintained that hare coursing was not primarily a conservation-related issue.

#### Welfare of Animals Bill

The Welfare of Animals Bill reached its Further Consideration Stage recently. This included the controversial Clause 6, regarding the docking of dogs' tails. After extensive and sustained lobbying, we are pleased to be able to report that the Bill and the future Act, now includes an exemption for the prophylactic docking of working dogs' tails. All evidence that CAI presented demonstrated that without an exemption, this clause would have had a severely detrimental effect on the welfare of working dogs. It would have been preposterous that a Bill that was designed to improve animal welfare would have had the opposite effect. This news will therefore come as a huge relief to all responsible working dog owners and demonstrates that with enough effort legislation can be influenced.



*The Bill would have seriously affected the welfare of many working dogs*  
**Hunting Bill**

November and December brought a piece of legislation which was both illogical and indeed merely an attempt to proscribe human activity regardless of the consequences for the welfare of wild mammals. This, of course, was Brian Wilson's Hunting Bill. To date, this was hunting's biggest threat in Northern Ireland. CAI, the hunts, our members and supporters went into overdrive once again to lobby MLAs to ensure they were left in no doubt as to the strength of feeling and the number of people who opposed this proposed legislation. This concerted effort led to the Hunting Bill being defeated at the Second Stage.

#### Dog Breeding Establishments Bill (R of I)

The Republic of Ireland has its fair share of threats from government too. All parties involved have strived to ensure such legislation as the Dog Breeding Establishments Bill does not inhibit legitimate rural activities such as hunting, greyhound racing and coursing. This concerted lobbying has led to certain concessions being introduced which will ensure hunts and greyhound facilities receive proper consultation to try to minimise the effect this legislation will have on them.

#### Ward Union

The Ward Union Hunt may be battling on and hunting within the law, but their sport has undoubtedly suffered at the hand of the Irish government. CAI will therefore join the many other supportive parties and do our utmost to obtain repeal for this legislation when the new government takes office.

#### Dogs (Amendment) Bill

In Northern Ireland, the Dogs (Amendment) Bill reached its Final Stage. The Bill has introduced compulsory microchipping for dogs and this means that in future, the dog owner (or keeper) will need to provide proof that the animal has been microchipped to obtain a dog licence. Fortunately, we have ensured there will be a year's phasing in period. CAI has concerns that these new measures will only result in an increase of costs for responsible dog owners and not tackle the problem of stray dogs, which is what this edict set out to do.

#### Clean Neighbourhoods and Environment Bill

The Clean Neighbourhoods and Environment Bill holds the power to devolve dog control orders to local councils. We have cited our concerns to the Assembly regarding the unjustly harsh measures that this may invoke and have been reassured that councils will not abuse the power given; but will remain considerate to the needs of responsible dog owners and walkers.

This past year has certainly been eventful and we have been successful in many of our challenges. Unfortunately, not all of our efforts have made it through the web some MLAs weave. However, we can hold our heads up high and be sure in the knowledge that these losses were not from lack of effort. We can take pride that we, as an organisation and our members, have lobbied relentlessly particularly during the past 9 months. However, now is not the time to be complacent as a new era is about to begin.

#### Elections – a new dawn for the Assembly and the Dáil

Everyone involved in country sports knows how important it is to ensure our government and representatives are both sympathetic and understanding of the rural way of life.

Elections to the NI Assembly are imminent and by the time you read this, elections will already have taken place in the Dáil. We, the general public, control who will enter government. It is therefore vital to ensure that you are aware of your local candidates' views on country sports and rural practices.

There are some simple steps that you can take to help protect the future of our rural traditions;

Ask your candidates to pledge that they support hunting and all field sports and that they will vote against legislation that harms or hinders our activities.

When contacting candidates, reiterate the vitally important role that field sports play in society and the economic and environmental contribution they make.

We must ensure that our future political representatives are left in no doubt as to the strength of feeling regarding threats to country sports and rural activities. Politicians deal in the commodity of numbers, therefore we need to stand united and demonstrate that those who support country sports and rural activities are a much bigger group than those who oppose it.

For additional information go to [www.caireland.org](http://www.caireland.org)



## Fisheries Awareness Week 2011

**T**he inaugural Fisheries Awareness Week run by Inland Fisheries Ireland (IFI) in 2010 offered 135 events over a week. Some 4,000 plus people took part in the variety of events. Due to its success and IFI's commitment to getting more people angling, it is planned to run the week again.

The dates of the week for 2011 are: Saturday the 7th May to Sunday 15th of May inclusive.

Fisheries Awareness Week 2011 will be aimed at maximising participant involvement and therefore resources will be targeted on the most popular and best received types of activities run during FAW 2010. A key aim of the week is to encourage newcomers to the sport or invite those who have not fished for a few years to try it again, give it another go. Events will be held on a daily basis across the country. To see what is on offer, what is local to you and where the events will be running, please go to our web site at [www.faw.ie](http://www.faw.ie). The majority of events offered are free and open to all, however some require prior booking (full details are on the web site).

Experienced anglers, angling coaches or IFI staff run the events. As well as organising the events they are there to offer advice, answer questions and show the less experienced how to fish, or improve their skills.

So you just want to go fishing! There's nothing wrong with that, but without good participation levels any sport struggles to attract National and Local Government interest and funding. Without strong membership clubs can lose waters or fold, fisheries close down. If

anglers don't fish local waters they are more likely to be flagged for development or be put 'off limits.' The vast majority of people who participate in well organised introduction to angling events say they had a great time — even if they didn't go fishing again. So it is odds-on that your friends or family will love it too.

First, choose the venue with care. Action is vital, so go somewhere where the fish are reasonably plentiful and easy to catch.

A commercial venue is the obvious choice. You'll find plenty of suitable venues, guides, coaches and even tackle shops on [www.fishinginireland.info](http://www.fishinginireland.info)

Devote your time to making sure your beginner is doing everything correctly, enjoying themselves and not getting into a tangle.

Use simple tackle and have a few rigs in reserve in case of accidents.

Coarse fish can often be caught on baits like bread, luncheon meat and sweet corn, so there is no reason for squeamish beginners to have to endure the ordeal of handling maggots or worms if they choose not to.

Select a nice day when just being outside is a pleasant experience. Emphasise the importance of handling the fish correctly and try to instil a respect for your quarry and for the general environment.

Carry a digital camera to capture the moment when they land their first fish.

For details of venues in your area, angling maps, angling guides and coaches, charter skippers and tackle shops as well as up to date fishing information please go to [www.fishinginireland.info](http://www.fishinginireland.info). For details of Inland Fisheries Ireland please go to [www.fisheriesireland.ie](http://www.fisheriesireland.ie).



## Irish Smokehouse to exhibit at the Great Game Fairs of Ireland

**N**ow our publisher and Game Fair Director, Albert Titterton, is a keen smoker - no not of 'Sir Walt's curse' as he has totally eschewed the 'horrible weed' - but smoking food. The scent of apple wood or oak is often to be smelled wafting over Cranley Hill. However he would be the first to admit that he is a greater eater than actual exponent of the smoking art and for a long time has sought a good Irish source of smoked food. He is delighted to let everyone know that he has at last found one and persuaded them to exhibit their products in the fine food pavilions at Ballywalter, Shanes Castle and Birr Castle.

The Carraig na Breac Smokehouse is based in Drumshanbo, Co Leitrim and is a traditional old style smokehouse employing many of the methods that would have been used many years ago when curing and smoking were the primary methods of preserving food and which most other smokehouses have long since moved on from in favour of more time effective operations.

The smokehouse is a family run business owned and operated by Peter and Niamh Curry who share a passion for good food that is produced with as little human intervention as possible. It is because of these ideals that the smokehouse takes the time to allow the food to mature naturally and in its own time, thus giving it much of its distinctive yet not overpowering flavour.

As Niamh states: "The kiln we use is our pride and joy and the centre stage of our whole business, it is a traditional kiln that is the only one of its kind in Ireland and relies solely on natural airflow; it uses no motors or electricity in its operation. We use only organic wood chips from oak, apple and beech trees and have developed recipes and methods that enhance the natural flavour of the food we produce.

"As a chef by trade, Peter has developed the cures and brines himself that we use and takes personal pride in each and every product that we produce in the smokehouse. He is always searching for new



ideas and developing new products to enhance the Carraig na Breac range.

"While we appreciate that times are difficult for many people here at home, we believe that Irish people still have an appetite for good food that has been lovingly created and so will press ahead with our aims.

"We use only Irish ingredients where possible and are fully HACCP compliant and are registered with Leitrim County Council and the Dept of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food as our governing body. Some of our product range includes: Naturally Smoked Dry Cured Bacon, Hot Smoked Duck Breast, Hot Smoked Chicken, Cold Smoked Venison, Smoked Irish Cheddar, Smoked Garlic, Smoked Sea Salt, Smoked Irish Creamery Butter, Smoked Baby Back Ribs (perfect on the Barbie) and we've even tried smoking cherry tomatoes with great success."

Carraig na Breac Smokehouse Unit 6/7 The Food Hub, Drumshanbo, Co Leitrim Tel/Fax 071 96 40579 Mobile 087 2404289

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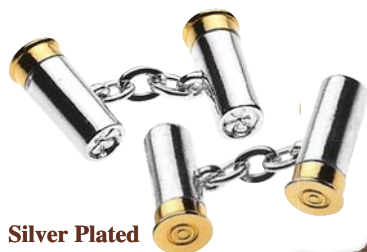
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## ESSNI spaniels at Castle Dobbs

**M**ark Earney has sent a photo from The English Springer Spaniel Club of NI's All Aged Spaniel trial held in Dobbs Castle on Thursday 27th Jan 2011 and sponsored by Feedwell.

Left to right are: Hugh Houston (judge), Willie Megaughin (judge), Willie Edgar 2nd with McGwyn Deallus, Jim Rock 1st with Aysroc Pipit, Dan McKeeman 4th with Kenmar Emma and Jim McConnell 3rd with Cheweky Fruitgum of McMather.



**A** photo from Mark Earney shows Louis Rice with Wyndhill Shona of ASliabh who won The ESSCNI's novice trial at Larchfield Estate on Monday 15th November 2010. In second place was Art McCrory with Hawksbeck Jared of Drumross, 3rd, Dan McKeeman with Kenmar Emma and 4th Gavin McAteer with Pondbrook Oakland Ted. The trial was sponsored by Feedwell.

## Goldens Galore at Shanes Castle ....



**U**p to thirteen teams of golden retrievers from all over the UK will take part in Ireland's largest gathering of gundogs at the Irish Game Fair, Shanes Castle on the 25th & 26th June. The annual inter club golden retriever test sponsored by Chudleys which moves around the UK is being hosted in 2011 by the Ulster Golden Retriever Club.

Along with this rare opportunity to see top golden retrievers in action, gundog enthusiasts can see a real retriever international, sponsored by Feedwell, with teams from NI, Ulster Select, and ROI meeting teams from Holland and Wales. And you can have the opportunity to compete with these dogs in well sponsored open tests. Both Springers and Cockers are well catered for with their own competitions plus there are gun & dog events, a scurry and even a Gundog Group Show plus the final of the All Ireland Game Fair Retriever Handling Championships and a heat for the Barbour Novice Handling Championships. What is certain is that no other event in Ireland will host such prestigious international gundog competitions.

Added to this real canine extravaganza are dog agility tests and displays, a visit by the Kennel Club, the inimitable dog guru Keith Mathews, a long netting with whippet display; terrier and lurcher main arena displays, an HPR demonstration, gundog main arena displays, the All Ireland Terrier & Lurcher Championships; a heat of the Redmills Five Nations International Lurcher Championships and the Final of the 'Master McGrath International Challenge' to find the fastest lurcher in the UK & Ireland plus all manner of trade stands offering the very best of canine equipment and food. All of this canine activity has established the fair as one of the largest canine events in Ireland and certainly the most varied.



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## Morton's exciting new products for gamekeepers

**N**ew from Morton's – Joseph Morton Limited established in Banbridge 1856 has been long associated with the supply of quality seed. Morton's can offer a diversity of seed mixtures' to suit individual sites or locations. Wild bird cover and game-cover along with a variety of conservation mixtures have been used successfully in both northern and southern Ireland delivered door to door using their own fleet or an external courier service when required.



*Simply superb - a cob from last year's Maize crop*

Having recently launched the Envirocover range, Morton's look forward to building on the success of the last 155 years and offering new and exciting products to game-keeping. These include Gamecover Maize - a blend of maize varieties giving a variety of maturing dates with height that can be sown without plastic. Kale is now a universal game cover crop. The dense top growth and bare floor below it provides excellent cover and when allowed to flower provides a valuable source of food for songbirds. Second year kale is very attractive to partridges as the crop begins to lose power. If you are hoping to use kale for partridges in the first year it would be recommended to sow at a lower seeding rate. Another favourite Quinoa provides an abundance of seed and is ideally sown in a mix with kale but can be sown on its own in strips alternating with maize, kale, or mustard to provide cover. It is essential that the pH of the soil is addressed prior to sowing to maximise results. Triticale is useful as winter holding and is more disease resistant than other cereal crops. Sown in strips or used in mixtures it can be used successfully in less favourable pH areas.

For further information contact Teresa Murray at Morton's on 02840662521.

## Right & left at woodcock and a first at Ballywalter Park

Congratulations to Ballywalter Park picker up Jim Martin, who shot a right and left at woodcock at the Three Falls Drive almost at the end of the season.

There were three witnesses to the fine shooting which happened on 29 January and Lord Dunleath advises that they are forwarding his application for membership to the Shooting Times Woodcock Club.

Lord Dunleath added: "I am certain that this is the first time this has been achieved at Ballywalter Park. It certainly has not happened since the shoot was reinstated here and I have scoured the Game Books and there is no previous record."

## Downpatrick Marshes' Italian snipe

**W**e have just heard from Lord Dunleath that Philip McMurray, who noted a ring on a snipe shot at Downpatrick Marshes, forwarded information as requested on the ring to the appropriate authority in Italy. The news received back was amazing: they were able to confirm that the bird was a male in its second year, which had been ringed 238 days previously near PISA in Italy and had flown the staggering distance of 1663 kms. We would be keen to hear if readers have information on any other far-travelled birds turning up in the game bag

## Missing Cup

John Dixon of Ballybay, Co. Monaghan is trying to locate a missing Cup. It is The Moanruad Wag Perpetual Trophy which he presented many years ago for the Best Irish Red Setter at the Breffni/Oriel Field Trials. It is a silver cup and stands approx. 12 inches.

If you can help trace the Trophy please telephone John Dixon on 0(0353)42 9741024 0(0353)42 9748909 or night 0(0353)86 0514377

## Another Fine Painting from David Prescott

**L**iverpool artist David Prescott, whose work includes some of the finest paintings of big game and birds of prey has demonstrated that he is equally adept at painting terriers, lurchers and horses.

David's work which has often graced the pages of this magazine has just complete the portrait of the working terrier which won the final of the Redmills Five Nations International Terrier Championship at the Irish Game & Country Fair at Birr Castle.



*David presenting the portrait to proud owner Danny Sykes*

David has also painted the winners of the Sunday Life/Great Game Fairs of Ireland Pet Idol competition for the past two years – very attractive pony and a grand looking lurcher.

David will be exhibiting at all three Great Game Fairs of Ireland at Ballywalter, Shanes Castle and Birr Castle and will take commissions for any country subject or animal. davidprescottwildlifeart@yahoo.co.uk



*The 2009 Pup Idol winning lurcher*





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# READERS' SHOOTING SEASON PHOTOGRAPHS

## Roy's Season at Castle Dobbs



## Paul O'Casey's season at Drumbanagher





## Obituary

# William James Nelson

30th October 1936 – 20th October 2010

**W**illiam James Nelson, Bill or Billy as he was known to many, was a man of many facets. In typical fashion, he fought cancer in a very private, dignified and courageous way for seven years. Many will be proud to have known him and to have been counted as among his friends.

He was born in Belfast where, at primary school, he was introduced to music via Gilbert and Sullivan operettas. He then progressed to a lifelong love of Italian Grand Opera, enjoying performances at La Scala Milan and Statsoper in Vienna, as well as locally at Castleward Opera where a seat bears his name in acknowledgment of his support.

On leaving Grosvenor High School, he trained as a draughtsman at Smith Mills Ltd., then left the drawing office to attend Belfast Marine Radio School. On gaining his 'tickets' at Jarrow, Newcastle on Tyne, he departed on several voyages on both cargo and passenger vessels sailing as far afield as Japan, Australia and India. Billy's love of the sea was apparent when he sailed a variety of craft, from yachts to motor cruisers, mostly around Strangford Lough. One notable boat was a Grand Banks Cruiser that he discovered lying at Donaghadee, which he fully restored and sailed from Sketrick Island. An enthusiastic fisherman he fished the Lough and also for game fish.

When his father formed his own business, Billy returned home to support him, many years later forming his own Hydraulic Engineering Company with offices in Lisburn, Dublin and Cork.

He was always interested in the natural world developing a speciality interest in Koi Carp. A large swimming pool at the rear of his Cherryvalley house was developed into a magnificent indoor environment with underwater caves, tropical plants and rain forest surroundings. A state of the art management system designed by Billy was contained in a separate building, both buildings exteriors mimicking Victorian conservatories. His depth of interest was rewarded with significant Awards at National Level.



Billy's greatest interests however were in field sports, particularly in shooting and gundog work especially Field Trials. A most generous Field Trial host when running the pheasant shoots at Saintfield Demesne and Rademon Estates, he took a genuine interest in each and every handler and followed the careers of the top dogs and handlers. Each trial was provided entirely free of cost to both spaniel and retriever clubs to the point of taking all involved to the local restaurant for dinner afterwards. Notably, for many years, he also sent a cheque in February each year to the English Springer Spaniel Club of Ireland, which was sufficient to cover the cost of

inviting two cross channel judges to officiate at the Club's November Novice and Open Championship Qualifying stakes.

He was fortunate to have the opportunity to shoot in some very prestigious places, enjoying driven grouse, partridge and pheasant in their seasons, yet was happy to shoot walked-up game over spaniels and retrievers, enjoying the banter of the handlers.

Billy was a passionate man, very logical and very knowledgeable on many diverse subjects. He was one who always looked meticulously at detail, striving for excellence in business and in his hobbies, which among other things included a taste for good food and fine wines. This demand for quality expressed itself in the quality of his guns, his equipment and his shoot organisation. A strong character in many ways, he was never afraid to voice his opinion when he felt the occasion warranted it.

As a friend and on behalf of those who knew him in our world of field sports, I offer our deepest sympathy to his closest friends and the Nelson family circle. He will be sadly missed.

Home is the sailor, home from the sea. And the hunter home from the hill. (Robert Louis Stevenson)

**Victor McDevitt**



# Ballywalter Park Estate

**B**allywalter House, a classic example of an early Victorian country house, set in the picturesque surroundings of Ballywalter Park Estate, is home to Lord and Lady Dunleath of the Mulholland family who have resided there for over 150 years. The Estate was originally purchased by Andrew Mulholland, the Great, Great, Great, Grandfather of the current Lord Dunleath back in 1846, for the then lavish sum of £23,000. With architecture in the Palazzo style, the house is set in exquisite grounds and has been improved over generations since its Victorian and Edwardian heyday. A time when butlers 'buddled,' maids were in service and a host of gardeners lavished their skills on the flora. Halcyon days, and a time that will be the central theme of this year's Ballywalter Game and Country Living Fair on 30 April and 1 May 2011. Ballywalter Park hosted some fine shooting parties that numbered among its guests the Duke and Duchess of York in 1924, later King George and Queen Elizabeth while in 1935 the Duke and Duchess of Gloucester shot the estate marshes at Downpatrick.

The family had worked hard and made their money by the mid 1800s. Andrew's father Thomas started out by buying a cotton mill, at the time its production was a booming trade. Both sons followed suit, buying another



By Liz Edgar

mill but disaster struck when it was burnt down. Devastating, yet it proved to be positive in the long term, as the two brothers went into business with another partner setting up a flax mill, a new concept. Over the years they developed the business, finally owning one of the largest linen mills in the world.

Their masterstroke was the use of flax, more easily manufactured than cotton and better quality too and soon dominated the market. One fellow mill owner commented that the 'House of Mulholland' was able to make enormous profits above their "dreamiest imaginings!" Their future was assured. By now great businessmen, landlords and later ennobled in 1892, the Mulholland family had come a remarkably long way. Besides huge business successes, one son became a JP in County Down and High Sheriff for County Louth, and generously donated money for the new wing at the Royal Victoria Hospital. Meanwhile, Andrew became Mayor of Belfast and it was he who bought Ballywalter Estate.

## *The transformation begins*

The house you see today is not as it was first built back in the 1730s. Many changes and improvements have been made, even the name changed from the original 'Springvale' when it was owned by the Matthews Family. Many major building works were carried out between 1805 and 1812, the original house enlarged or built from scratch - records are unclear. But



*The magnificent Ballywalter Park.*





*(l-r) Andrew (Teddy) Mulholland (killed at Ypres with the Irish Guards); The Hon Charles Mulholland (later 3rd Lord Dunleath); The Hon. Henry Mulholland (later became a Baronet) who was MP for Ards and Speaker in the House at Stormont; and The Hon Jack Mulholland (died 1948).*

when Andrew Mulholland purchased the estate in 1846, it consisted of around 250 acres with a two storey Georgian house and he quickly commissioned the great architect Charles Lanyon to completely transform the house. An additional storey, two extra wings on the north and south elevations were added, with a new entrance and later a stunning conservatory. Andrew also planted over 93,000 trees and shrubs to protect the demesne from the strong easterly winds gusting in from

the Irish Sea. Many of these wonderful examples provide an ideal Victorian backdrop to the hustle and bustle of the Fair. The estate in its heyday comprised 11,000 acres but succeeding Land Acts saw this decrease and today the area is 1500 acres at Ballywalter, along with 300 more at Downpatrick together with some other smaller holdings.

### ***The Great War leaves its mark***

Each generation left its mark on the Estate, planting more woodland, altering the gardens, adding a new Gentleman's Wing, a Billiards Room and Smoking Room. The Inner Hall, is a magnificent room, 60' long, with a magnificent stained glass cupola above the grand staircase. A Cricket Wing followed in 1903 to house visiting cricket teams. Unfortunately the wing couldn't be heated and, with the outbreak of The Great War

the house was used as a military hospital. See if you can spot some of the outstanding Victorian features when you visit the Fair!

During World War Two, the estate was turned into an RAF Bomber Repair Base, with the Royal Berkshire Regiment and the Royal Ulster Rifles stationed in the stable block and outbuildings. To this day you can still see their graffiti on the walls. Aircraft landed on the sand field near the shore and this is one of the pheasant drives

*Estate Staff at the Albany.*







*The Annual Cricket Club Ball.*

along with 'Bomber Wood,' named after the aircraft hidden under its cover, awaiting repair.

### ***The Game Fair connection***

The current Lord Dunleath (6th Baron) avidly continues the house's restoration programme and is determined to ensure that the Estate is not only well managed and maintained but even further improved under his guidance. Country sports enthusiasts will note that it was he who decided to restore the shoot at Ballywalter, and indeed to hold a Game Fair on his land. Lord Dunleath explains: "Originally the Game Fair was relocated from Shanes Castle to Ballywalter Park and resulted in changes to the ground. One example is the lake dug out in front of the house, which is used for the

Fair's angling activities and during the rest of the year is a mecca for wildlife including swans and duck.

A wonderful example of both fine building and exquisite decor, the House comprises many rooms of interest. The Inner Hall reaches to the full height of the house, and the Drawing Room which can accommodate up to 100 people is a light, bright room reaching to the full height of the south bow wing, with windows facing south and west. French windows lead out onto a sunny terrace, with level raised lawns. The Dining Room, with the original dining table being able to seat up to 24 people, is another warm and bright room, with large windows facing west. The Library's sumptuous, luxurious surroundings make it an extremely comfortable place to relax and unwind for after-dinner coffee and drinks. There is a Billiard Room and a Smoking Room, once, but now no longer a male preserve, while The Conservatory is another special place set amidst the tropical splendour of exotic plants growing in Lanyon's spectacular domed construction, with an opportunity to wander through double doors out into the landscaped and extensive pleasure grounds

Now here's something I bet many readers did not know - Ballywalter Park has been used periodically for film making and television programme production. Lord Dunleath added: "Films such as *Divorcing Jack* and *Puckoon* were made here along with TV's *Peer in the Park* and *Give My Head Peace* when the house was supposed to be Graceland. It can also be made available by arrangement for corporate and incentive events, and conferences. And you may also be surprised to learn that such notables as



*The Duke of York (later George VI) playing tennis at Ballywalter 1924.*



Jeremy Irons, his wife Sinead Cusack and Foreign Secretary William Hague have stayed at Ballywalter Park, while Archbishop Desmond Tutu has been a guest on two occasions."

## Invitations for fine shooting

Before the war, the Dunleath family shot the Estate about four times a year, with Royalty joining the guest list on occasion. But they had little reason to shoot then at Ballywalter, as the family had the renowned Downpatrick Marshes wildfowl shoot, and they also took Kinrara Estate, in Inverness-shire, and such in-hand shooting brought many invitations to other fine shoots around the British Isles.

The Downpatrick Marshes then yielded big bags, and 'fair' numbers were considered to be over 500 birds. At the time the shooting party would have come to the author's 'ancestral home' at the Quoile Bridge, Downpatrick to get changed and prepare for shooting. When the shoot finished all the birds would have been laid out in front of Denvir's Hotel or the train station where they were tallied up before the party returned home. Breakfast after the dawn flight was taken in a nearby Nissen hut - and the present Lord Dunleath has fond boyhood memories of the smell of bacon frying. Game records show show bags such as that in January 1935 when they shot 271, including 148 teal and later that month a bag of



*The Duke of Gloucester shooting at Downpatrick Marshes 1935.*

356 including 184 teal, 56 wigeon and 54 snipe. The present Lord Dunleath's father was among the guns then, in his early twenties.

Each summer, Kinrara Estate offered two months of what they called 'serious grouse shooting.' It was like an annual pilgrimage run akin to military operation. Train wagons were sent filled with household goods, including the house cow and goats to provide them with milk! The servants were strategically sent at intervals to prepare for their arrival and were booked either second or third class depending on their downstairs status. The butler may have even travelled first class on the boat to Glasgow and second class on the train to Kingussie or Aviemore, something which was still quite common in the 1950s. Now if you

have been watching the recent Downton Abbey or Upstairs Downstairs on TV you will identify with Lord Dunleath's description: "Great chunks of the year were devoted to shooting: no interruptions for the Guns's sport would have occurred during the shooting season, as business affairs would have been attended to by staff. No syndicates then of course, as shooting was for the estate owners and their guests only. Mobiles ringing at a peg would not have been allowed, even if they had been invented. The Keeper was paid at the princely sum of £100 per annum and there was no need to balance the shoot's books, unlike today. A nice touch was the

inclusion of the Butler Packham after lunch, when he joined the guns in the shooting line."

And the public will be delighted to know that the Ballywalter Game & Country Living Fair on the 30th April & 1st May will recreate stylishly the themed Victorian/Edwardian ambience of a great estate of the period, and a golden era for country sports.



*Five star shooting is always enjoyed by the syndicate at Ballywalter.*



## Today's five star shoot

Now fast forward to today's fine shooting at Ballywalter. Does it echo the golden years of a bygone era? Well, for me it is everything a modern shoot requires. Fun, congenial company, excellent birds - Stuart Mackintosh's breeding - in number and a relaxed organisation that matches or surpasses anything that I have experienced here or in the UK. I was there in mid January to see for myself and the day began at The Albany, a dedicated gun room, where guns gathered over a cup of coffee. The nine guns and guests for the day included Derek (Shoot Captain) and Jamie White, Bryan Muskett, Richard Meredith, Paul Hollinger, John Jennings, Bill Taylor, Aiden Lonerger and Lord Dunleath. Lady Dunleath and Vivienne White who came along too with their Labradors that excelled at picking up.

Gamekeeper Gordon Wooldridge, under keeper Debbie and the beaters and pickers up met us after Lord Dunleath's briefing and safety talk and, aptly dressed in our traditional tweeds, we set off for the first drive 'Holland's Hill.' The drive was set on a mature woodland hill, with the guns well spaced apart. I think I must have chosen the best position because where I stood I could see high birds taken by the two guns either side. Joking at the end of the drive that they'd hardly hit a thing', the truth was revealed with the picker ups struggling to carry back all their birds.

I chatted later with the picker up from Banbridge, Martin Kelly, who had shot clays for Ireland and was a field trialer - I had shot at one of his events. After this drive alone I think his dog had definitely got enough training for the day!

For the next drive we moved on to 'Three Falls,' Mervyn Savage placing the guns in a dense wood where fast snap shooting was the order of the day, while others were out on a stubble field waiting for pheasants to curl over. Woodcock usually oblige on this drive and I saw

one managing to escape unscathed. Later, the husband and wife team showed how it should be done, Lord Dunleath pulling down a number of archangel pheasants, which Lady Dunleath's dog Jess speedily retrieved.

Moving to the next drive 'School Master's,' I chatted with Lady Dunleath. From speaking to her I learned how much care and maintenance goes into managing the agricultural side of the estate and the large team working for them. "The farm team look after the dairy, grassland and arable land, while gardeners are responsible for 30 acres of pleasure grounds and the walled garden." At 'School Master's,' named after a teacher's house once located just beyond the wood, pegs were along a pathway, Greyabbey Avenue, surrounding the wood on top of a hill. Driving the wood forward to the guns, birds broke high overhead, as the beating line appeared next the skyline. Here, Paul Hollinger was in top form and I remarked at the ease and flow in his shooting; he watched the birds intently then, in no apparent, hurry stood up from his shooting stick, eased safety forward, shot and brought down birds stone dead. But this was a practised ease so typical of the experienced team that day.

## Woodcock

After that drive, some soup to warm us up, before moving onto 'Bells Hill,' located just behind the house. Some guns were positioned facing a wood to the side, while a walking gun followed the beaters through the wood - plenty of opportunities to shoot if they were fast enough! As in the other drives, everyone had more than their fair share of shooting, while shoot captain Derek White and Richard Meredith were both very lucky to account for a woodcock each.

The drive before lunch was 'Cemetery Walk,' positioned just in front of the house between the pond and a wood to the right. The drive is so named as it is the final resting place of a number of family ancestors. The guns' pegs bordered the wood and, as in every drive that I had seen, everyone had ample opportunity. My favourite peg here is always the top corner which sees many birds flying forward and it was here I got to watch Jamie shoot some screamers from his vantage point.

After an excellent lunch of fine beef, followed by the best stilton and



*Lord and Lady Dunleath during the shooting day which I attended in January.*



port, topped by Lady Dunleath's home baked fruitcake, came 'Bomber Wood,' just in front of the house facing the pond with the wood beyond. All the guns stand around the pond and if you're lucky you can get a shot at teal and mallard as well as the pheasants. Everyone moved to their pegs quickly, hoping for a shot at the teal, but this time the ducks did not oblige. But, typical for Ballywalter, over came the pheasants, some too good even for the most experienced shot.

For the final drive, 'Boyd's,' named after the last butler who lived in the gatehouse, retiring in the 1980s, most of the guns were positioned in another stubble field surrounding a wood in front, with some guns up an avenue to the far right covering any birds breaking off. With the wood driven forwards, you get some great opportunities to shoot well driven birds in style. In this drive, Brian Musket gave me his gun to shoot, as he said it gave him an opportunity to work his dog - and who was I to turn it down! I was pleased to see Lord Dunleath shoot a very high pigeon here, as he had commented earlier that it makes his day if he can shoot at least one high pigeon - as well as his fair share of game of course.

## **Shooting's Golden Age at Ballywalter Game & Country Living Fair 2011**

After watching the shoot today, I couldn't help but compare how this shoot must have differed to shoots on the estate 100 years or more ago, in Victorian times. The traditional tweed dress was likely the same or very similar but shooting at Ballywalter then would have been by invitation only, for members of the extended family and close friends and it wouldn't have been a commercial enterprise. The beaters would have been those who worked on the estate day-to-day, in the stables or on the farm, or in the house itself, and they definitely wouldn't have had things like our modern walkie talkies to communicate. They would have transported birds and other necessities by horse and cart and stored them in specially designed larders, as our modern fridges were unheard of then. These larders are still in use in some estates today as they were well designed and work so effectively!

Ballywalter Park has a wonderfully unique history, interwoven with a tradition of country sports. While that tradition is now bang up to date (no pun intended), what better way to celebrate this heritage than by the Victorian shooting theme of this year's Game Fair. Ballywalter Estate has been home to Game Fairs for numerous years, in various guises and last year returned as a success story to the stable of

the Great Game Fairs of Ireland. This year's very special Victorian theme runs right through Ballywalter Game and Country Living Fair on 30 April and 1 May 2011 when a special spotlight falls on the sights and sounds of that glorious era. You will be able to catch a glimpse of period dress and taste the best in game cookery along with a selection of fine food that typified the era, watch muzzle loading demonstrations and see for yourself the patience and skill needed to shoot them, all set against the backdrop of a grand Victorian home. Don't miss out - it will be taking place Saturday 30th April and Sunday 1st May, with lots to interest all the family.

For more information on Ballywalter Park you can visit [www.ballywalterpark.com](http://www.ballywalterpark.com)

or [www.ballywaltergamefair.com](http://www.ballywaltergamefair.com) for news of the developing programme for the 2011 Fair.

*Game Keeper Gordon Woolridge with beating stalwart Denis Stephenson at The Albany.*





# The Ballywalter Game & Country Living Fair -

*now double the enjoyment for 2011 - two days of style, spectacle and top class game fair attractions, competitions and family entertainment.*



**This exciting new event has a unique historical and international flavour and will be held in the scenic setting of Ballywalter Park Estate on Saturday 30th April and Sunday 1st May 2011**

Such was its success last year - cancelled by its then organisers and rescued from oblivion by the Great Game Fairs of Ireland team - the result was a very traditional and atmospheric one-day event, bathed in sunshine, and reminiscent of the great County Down fairs staged at Clondeboy Estate.

The Great Game Fairs of Ireland stable includes the Irish Game Fair at Shanes Castle (which broke all records for attendance for an Irish game or country fair ever, firmly establishing it as Ireland's premier game or country fair) and the Irish Game & Country Fair (the ROI's largest game or country fair). So the big question for the organisers was where to go with the Ballywalter event to make it even bigger and better?

And with their usual creative marketing flair, they have come up with a concept to create a unique and highly successful event, that will be second only to the





*Game Fair Directors Albert Titterton and with Ingrid Houwers and Liz Edgar demonstrate a little bit of the style that will be on display at Ballywalter.*

Shanes Castle fair in Northern Ireland.

They will utilise the huge natural advantages synonymous with the Great Game Fairs - the traditional venue of a large well maintained house, exquisite lawns, stable yard, woodland, parkland and a lake will deliver an entertaining, uniquely stylish country sports and living experience for anyone who lives, works or plays in the Irish countryside.

And in line with their commitment to quality - delivering the best country sports and living competitions and entertainment in the country as a value for money experience - everyone who purchases a ticket for the Ballywalter Fair will receive a free ticket for the Shanes Castle event - giving our patrons arguably the two best country sports events in Northern Ireland for the price of one.

The Great Game Fairs of Ireland commitment to excellence also gives competitors Ireland's most prestigious top shooting, fishing, gundog and terrier & lurcher events - with the top prize funds rarely bettered anywhere the UK. And this year, there will be new innovative competitions to give Ballywalter in its first year as a two day event an international profile, only matched in Northern Ireland by the Irish Game Fair at Shanes Castle which takes place on the 25th & 26th June.

Ballywalter will host qualifiers for the All Ireland All Comers Game Fair Championships in clay shooting fly casting and gundog handling. The winners will go

forward to the finals at Shanes Castle to compete for these prestigious titles and a serious prize fund.

Not only that, the Ballywalter Fair will also host heats for the Barbour All Ireland Novice Game Fair Championships with the 2011 finals at Birr Castle on the 27th & 28th August.

### ***Angling at Ballywalter staged on the lawns of the house***



The Game Angling Instructors Association (GAIA) will be running the angling related events at this year's Ballywalter Game and Country Fair. APGAI Ireland will also be in attendance.

GAIA is the largest instructors' association in the UK and Ireland with over 400 members in England, Scotland, Wales and Ireland as well as having members throughout Europe and our qualifications are recognised world wide. GAIA is committed to providing excellence of instruction and coaching in fly casting, game angling and fly tying in all areas of the sport, from river to lake to stream and sea. All GAIA instructors/coaches are qualified and undergo continuous professional development to ensure their skills are developed and maintained to the highest of standards.

Unique demonstrations of angling expertise will be





*Philip Lawton Arena Director and Director of the Great Game Fairs of Ireland passes his eye over the angling arrangements for the fair with sponsor Gordon Nesbitt (Atkins Angling) and Angling Director Mark Patterson.*

carried out by Charles Jardine, Leslie Holmes and Gary Bell, who hold GAIA's highest qualification of Advanced Professional Game Angling Instructor (APGAI). This will be coordinated by Mark Patterson, APGAI, who is GAIA's regional representative in Ireland.

Charles Jardine, one of the most recognisable names in the angling world, will be fully into the spirit of the fair's Victorian theme and perform his casting demonstrations in Victorian garb using vintage tackle. There will be a dedicated area set aside where GAIA instructors will be giving demonstrations in single handed casting, double handed casting and fly tying.

There will also be a trout fly casting competition with separate sections for female and novice casters, as well as an open section for the more experienced casters. The top 4 competitors in the open and novice section will qualify for the all Ireland Championships at the Birr Castle Country Fair in August. The prizes for the casting competition have been generously donated by Atkins Angling, Loop Tackle and Shimano/G.Loomis. You will find Atkins Angling on fishermen's row and they will have a full range of Loop tackle on show.

Experienced instructors will also be offering instruction throughout the fair. They will be able to offer instruction to complete beginners all the way through to experienced anglers who want to brush up their casting as well as being able to offer mentoring to anyone aspiring to become an instructor.

Glenda Powell, no stranger to the Great Game Fairs of Ireland, will also be entering into the spirit of the Victorian theme in appropriate period dress and gracing the main arena with the eye catching casting demonstrations for which she is renowned.

## **Gundogs at Ballywalter**

In just one year under 'new management' real international gundog competition will return to Ballywalter. Gundog Directors Johnny Rea and Ken Lindsay have produced an imaginative programme which includes novice and open spaniel tests sponsored

by Redmills and a North /South team competition plus a Novice Retriever Test on the Saturday. Sunday will see a triangular international test sponsored by Feedwell featuring teams from Denmark and ROI against the Ulster Select plus an Open Test where the top four dogs qualify for the All Ireland Game Fair Retriever Handling Championship final at Shanes Castle.

The finale on Sunday will be a Spaniel v Retriever Challenge sponsored by DT Dog Boxes.

And for those with a good arm Comber Wildfowlers are again running their Game Fair Dummy Throwing Challenge.

Eddie Moore will be running a scurry both days with the top two dogs each day qualifying for a grand 'fastest gundog in Ireland' final at Shanes Castle.

## **Speaking of Fast Dogs – The Master McGrath International Challenge**

When the organisers were thinking of a new Irish lurcher racing challenge it was felt most appropriate to call it the 'Master McGrath Challenge.' The objective is simple - to find the fastest dog in the UK and Ireland and to set a British & Irish record for a distance of 150 yards. Where else but at Ballywalter!

The first heats for this will take place at John Dicker's Show in Kilkenny and the Ballywalter Game & Country Living Fair both on the 1st May, Des Macken's Show on the 7th May, followed by the Mourne Show on the 15th May, the Neilston Working Dog association Show, Scotland also on the 15th May and then Florencourt.

Two dogs to qualify from each show over the normal distance of the qualifying event - this may vary from show to show. The Grand Final will take place at Ireland's largest Game Fair at Shanes Castle on Saturday 25th June 2011. The top dog at each qualifying event will receive a year's subscription to the Irish Countrysports and Country Life magazine, a 25th Anniversary Irish Countrysports and Country Life Tankard and 4 tickets to

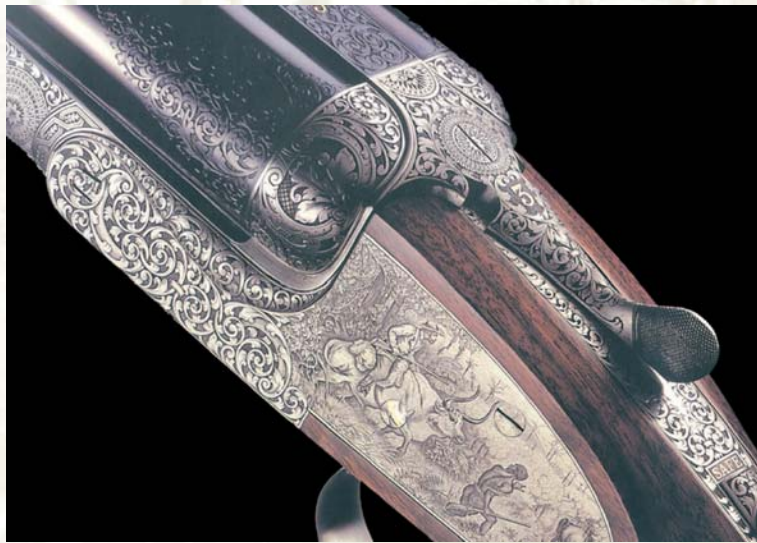


*Terriers and lurchers will play a big part in all three fairs.*



# GREAT GAME FAIRS of IRELAND

In 2010 the Great Game Fairs of Ireland further consolidated their position as indisputably Ireland's premier country sports events and in 2011 they will be even better!



**30th April and 1st May 2011**

**In the tradition of the best County Down Fairs...**

**The Ballywalter Game & Country Living Fair,  
Ballywalter Estate, Co. Down**

[www.ballywaltergamefair.com](http://www.ballywaltergamefair.com)

**25th and 26th June 2011**

**Ireland's largest Game Fair.....**

**The Irish Game Fair, Shanes Castle, Co Antrim**

[www.irishgamefair.com](http://www.irishgamefair.com)

**27th and 28th August 2011**

**The ROI's premier Game or Country Fair....**

**The Irish Game and Country Fair, Birr Castle,  
Birr, Co. Offaly**

[www.irishgameandcountryfair.com](http://www.irishgameandcountryfair.com)

**See the 2010 Great Game Fairs of Ireland on  
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**For Further details of the Fairs :**

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**[www.irishgamefair.com](http://www.irishgamefair.com)**

**[www.irishgameandcountryfair.com](http://www.irishgameandcountryfair.com)**

**Ireland's REAL Game Fairs**



the Shanes Castle Event plus there will be specially commissioned Master Mc Grath commemorative scrolls for the top two qualifying dogs at each event.

The Master McGrath final will see dogs competing for a prize fund of over €1,000. Apart from the qualifying events mentioned we have qualifiers in place North & South of England and Wales but would like applications from some more shows in the UK and possibly one or two more in the ROI to host qualifiers. Please contact Albert Titterington on [irishgamefair@btinternet.com](mailto:irishgamefair@btinternet.com). The main sponsor for the event is Redmills Dog food with additional prizes for the final from Barbour (coat) Countryside Alliance Ireland (£100). Full details posted soon on the fairs' websites.

### ***Five Nations International Lurcher Championship***

The GREAT GAME FAIRS of IRELAND objective of giving Ireland's terrier & lurcher enthusiasts the opportunity of competing with the best on Irish soil will be achieved at Ballywalter, with the Five Nations International Terrier Championship - a Five Nations International Lurcher Championship with its final at Birr Castle on Sunday 28th August 2011. This will have a prize fund in excess of €1,000 and all qualifiers will receive a donation towards their expenses. All qualifiers will also receive a year's subscription to the Irish Countrysports and Country Life magazine, a 25th Anniversary Irish Countrysports and Country Life Tankard and 4 tickets to the Birr Castle Event. Please contact me on [irishgamefair@btinternet.com](mailto:irishgamefair@btinternet.com) if you would like your show (from anywhere in the UK or Ireland to be a qualifier. We have ten qualifiers in place including the six mentioned for the Master Mc Grath and Shanes Castle, so first come first served. Once again Redmills are the main sponsor with support for the final from Countryside Alliance Ireland ( £100) and Barbour (coat). Support from other sponsors for heats or the final is welcome and Premier Event Caterers -have 'kicked the ball off' with £50 each for the winner of the Ballywalter heats of the two competitions.



### ***Clay Shooting at Ballywalter***

Clays are in the capable hands of the Ballycranmore club supported by BASC. The top four guns will qualify for the final of the All Ireland Game Fair Championships at Shanes Castle and the top four novice guns for the final of the Barbour Novice Championships at Birr.

The extensive prize fund for the shooting at Ballywalter is still being added to but prizes for include a Bettinsoli Shotgun sponsored by Donal Mc Cloy, two quality watches sponsored by Gardiner Brothers of Belfast and cash prizes donated by Irish Countrysports and Country Life magazine plus the John McClelland Memorial Perpetual Trophy.

### ***The Tented Village***

We anticipate an extensive tented village which will be the largest seen at Ballywalter for several years. Building on last year's soaraway success ,the fair will feature the Sportsman's Village in the atmospheric setting of the Old Courtyard beside the house. This will feature an excellent display of both vintage and modern guns, a taxidermy display by the great Belfast Victorian taxidermist James Sheals plus a very stylish more modern one by Ingrid Houwers.and a number of attractions hosted by BASC.

There will be an excellent fisherman's row; a row of canine products and foods; a large and fantastically varied food hall; a tourism and craft marquee ; an 'Ards and County Down Past & Present Pavilion' featuring all manner of historical and traditional crafts and displays including the history of the lough and peninsula including a wildfowling exhibit co-ordinated by BASC, a display by the Linen Museum, traditional spinning, weaving and dyeing displays, quilting, shipping & commercial fishing etc; a massive range of clothing stands; 4 x 4 vehicles; Game Keeper's area sponsored by Stuart McIntosh and many other trade stands and displays.

### ***And Living History ..***

Visitors to the fair may think that they have walked on to the set of Downton Abbey or Upstairs Downstairs as the fair will create the atmosphere of a traditional estate in the Victorian/Edwardian era which was of course a golden era for field sports and rural pastimes through the patronage of the Royal Family, particularly Prince Albert.

Of course there is no finer setting to creating such an atmosphere than the stylish and well kept lawns and parkland and the backdrop and centre piece of a fine Victorian house.

The theme of the house and family's Victorian/Edwardian past will permeate all aspects of the fair with carriages and vintage vehicles displayed in front of the





For further information on what to see and do and where to stay in the Ards Borough, make our Tourist Information Centres your first point of call.

[WWW.ARDS-COUNCIL.GOV.UK](http://www.ards-council.gov.uk)

# ARDS

## TOURIST INFORMATION CENTRE

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☎ 028 9182 6846  
✉ [tourism@ards-council.gov.uk](mailto:tourism@ards-council.gov.uk)  
🕒 Mon-Fri 9.15-5pm,  
Sat 9.30-5pm

# PORTAFERRY

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☎ 028 4272 9882  
✉ [tourism.portaferry@ards-council.gov.uk](mailto:tourism.portaferry@ards-council.gov.uk)  
Seasonal office open Easter – end of August  
🕒 Mon-Sat 10-5pm, Sun 2-6pm

LOCAL  
INFORMATION  
OFFICE

Visitor information is also available from

Pier 36, 36 The Parade,  
Donaghadee BT21 0HE

☎ 028 9188 4466  
🕒 Mon –Sun 11-11pm



house, Sherlock Holmes and other period plays being staged at the house and traditional falconry, period angling and Victorian archery displays all taking place on the manicured lawns. There will be several other historical cameos as Master McGrath was of course presented at court to Queen Victoria and the Queen was reported to have broken a dinner plate at 100 yards with a Whitworth rifle. Both historical events will be re-enacted.

## Main Arena

In the main arena several historical displays will

include the Victorian Poacher plying his long netting trade, the ever popular muzzle loaders who will also shoot clay pigeons with their period pieces, cavalcades of horse drawn vehicles and of course Victorian theatre. These will combine with gundog, horse and hound, terrier & lurcher and falconry displays, plus the Cochise Horses and the inimitable Keith Mathews Dog Guru training class – this time making a Guinness Book of Records attempt at a WORLD Record for the largest ever dog training class – so bring your dog along to be part of canine history. And it is rumoured there might be a very special gundog display by a certain kilted handler!



*Some of the crowd watching Keith at the 2010 fair.*

And while all this will be happening at Ballywalter on the 30th April and 1st May you don't have to wait 'til then to see what's in store. Simply come along to Ards Square at 12 noon on Wednesday 20th April when you will be treated to a feast of entertainment in a sneak preview featuring just some of the acts from the Fair.

These acts will be showing just why they are among the very best to be found at any game fair anywhere in the UK. They have chosen to showcase their talent at Ballywalter and you will see for yourself just why the two day event at Ballywalter is simply unmissable. **Ards Square on 20th April make it a date for your diary.**



*Planning for success : Ingrid Houwers and Liz Edgar add a touch of glamour to the photocall to announce Ards Council sponsorship of the 2011 Fair. Pictured with Directors Philip Lawton, Edwin Dash and Albert Titterington; Lord Dunleath; Jim Shannon, MP; Deputy Mayor Mervyn Oswald and Chairman of Economic Development Committee Councillor Angus Carson.*





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# Edwin Poots, Environment Minister, MLA

*The second in our series of hard hitting interviews as Paul Pringle puts the questions you want answered to Stormont Environment Minister Edwin Poots.*

**ICS&CL:** How would you assess the impact of hunting, shooting and fishing on NI's environment?

**Minister:** A very large number are engaged in this area and the impact they have on the environment is generally positive for example anglers are looking for water quality

conducive to the fish population being stable. They are constantly looking out for sources of pollution, so obviously they play a very significant role in ensuring the water quality is good in

Northern Ireland. In terms of others a lot of people in the shooting fraternity have done a lot of breeding of wildfowl and as a result those birds have got into the wider environment therefore the biodiversity has been increased as a result of that. On our own land at home we get a number of pheasants as a result of other people's breeding and we see that elsewhere as well. In essence, I see the people who are engaged in country sports are people who want to enhance the number of animals in the country and enhance the number that would deplete quite quickly. So I see the contribution they make as a positive one.

We have been having a discussion in the Wildlife Bill about the Irish hare whose numbers are not low as result of hunting - in fact it's frowned upon by most good hunters. The species has stabilised because of agricultural management practices, like the Countryside Management scheme where people are leaving buffers, where silage has been cut early - that will have a far greater influence on the population that introducing any bans.

**ICS&CL:** You mentioned pollution, there is only one fish farm in NI waters - many around the Republic's coastline - are our natural salmon and sea trout safe given the collapse of the seatrout and salmon runs in Scotland?

**Minister:** Unfortunately in a lot of our key rivers, the

population has been falling, and DCAL has looked at this but getting to the nub of the problem has always been difficult to identify but I suspect that one of the greatest threats to our river population is netting, whether at sea or at Lough Neagh I do not think that should be happening. It is one of the more damaging things. There is a suggestion that climate change is playing some role in it - neither proven or otherwise. But we have some wonderful rivers that have been rich in

both salmon and trout over the years and I think it would be hugely negligent if we allowed ourselves to lose rivers rich in those population.

**ICS&CL:** Would it not be negligent to ignore the well documented effects of

the fish farms, of the sea lice, of the effects of the feedstuff used that have an environmental impact?

**Minister:** We only have one fish farm so the threat to our native species is not as pronounced as it would be perhaps in areas such as the west of Ireland.

**ICS&CL:** Not as pronounced perhaps, but there were nevertheless, escapees some two years ago and more before that.

**Minister:** At this point they are licensed by DARD and I am not in a position to act in that particular area, but we do need to recognise that they exist and the licence would be revoked if it (the fish farm) was mismanaged. We should always seek to encourage anyone engaged in these activities to do so to the best of their ability, and make sure that it is properly managed.

**ICS&CL:** Do you not have a watching brief?

**Minister:** No, the licensing, management and safety systems is that department's responsibility.

**ICS&CL:** It is widely recognised that NI is one of the better areas in this regard, but we are still concerned about the impact of the Scottish and west of Ireland fish farms on NI's wild stocks.

**ICS&CL:** NI Water is a major polluter in NI - is enough being done to ensure that this situation ceases?

**Minister:** I think it a good thing that Crown Immunity has been removed it should encourage them to up their game otherwise, if they were always to get away with it

**Edwin Poots MLA was appointed Minister for the Environment in the Northern Ireland Executive on 30 June 2009.**

**Educated at Wallace High School, Lisburn and Greenmount Agricultural College, he was a member of Lisburn City Council from 1997 to 2010 and was elected as member for Lagan Valley to the Northern Ireland Assembly in 1998. He is also currently director of Lisburn City Centre Management.**





there would be no incentive to improve. It has been an organisation that has been underfunded historically and we are trying to fix that underinvestment in a short period of time and we have had a number of new installations which should make a difference in terms of water quality. Whether they are all being as well managed as they should, some of the new installations, remains to be seen. And if they are not, and as a consequence there are fish-kills due to bad management practice as opposed to having outdated equipment waiting for investment, where people are doing their best, then I think that that should be looked upon quite harshly.

**ICS&CL:** Some countries' legislation against corporate polluters sees CEOs fined as well as their company - would such legislation not hit polluters where it hurts in Northern Ireland?

**Minister:** People here can be held responsible for criminal negligence - something that is very significant - but I don't think it has been used for pollution of waterways incidents but for some others engaged in crime. I do think however there is a personal onus on individuals making bad decisions then questions have to be asked of individuals as well as the wider public.

**ICS&CL:** There are reports that NI Water is to sell off so-called surplus reservoirs - are you aware of the impact on local anglers and the detrimental effect on wildlife of such a move?

**Minister:** There is an issue of biodiversity because

lands around the reservoirs haven't had nutrients applied for many years, so they have developed their own flora for example but there is also an opportunity if they are sold off, perhaps there are organisations that will step in, buy the reservoir and actually increase the population. There are opportunities to enhance the environment, some NGOs may be interested in getting involved. They will be offered to other public bodies and if no takers then offered on the open market.

**ICS&CL:** What if a developer wished to use the reservoir for, say, speed boat racing?

**Minister:** That could happen but they will be offered to other public bodies in the first instance.

**ICS&CL:** No environmental impact assessment?

**Minister:** If you wished to completely change the use, then that would more than likely require planning approval, in which case it would have to be identified if that usage was suitable.

**ICS&CL:** We had a cold weather ban on shooting and the shooting fraternity also observed a voluntary ban on woodcock and snipe shooting - were any measures put in place to allow shooting of reared duck? (Certain exemptions were made in the ROI)

**Minister:** No. There are a number of problems arising from that, the key one being identifying which duck are the reared ones. The ban was put in place firstly for the birds' welfare; the ban was there for good reason, but it was not introduced lightly - we had a particularly severe winter for a period in December and a ban for three



weeks which we lifted slightly ahead of schedule to allow people to get out there, as the thaw came quite quickly at that point. But my advice at this time is that it would be too difficult to identify the difference between reared duck and wild duck.

**ICS&CL:** You are aware that a full month's extension of the shooting season has been agreed in the Republic - was thought given to similar action here?

**Minister:** We have looked at that but I don't think it's within our powers to do that, therefore it would be ultra vires if I permitted that to happen.

**ICS&CL:** Will you look at this in the future?

**Minister:** I have no issues looking at it if it's legal and not in contravention of various EC Directives.

**ICS&CL:** Yet there is the issue for reared duck shoots of feeding costs and there might be a temptation simply not to feed. On a reared duck shoot any duck feeding there would be in good order. But for wild duck if these winters are to be hard then a ban such as was introduced this year which was both judicious and timely would be supported.

**Minister:** In terms of an extension, we are, in the Wildlife Bill, extending the season for shooting female deer by an additional month - the move is practicable and reasonable.

**ICS&CL:** On the Wildlife and Natural Environment Bill, the perception with this is that small groups are using this to gain political publicity such as the greens on the anti hunting bill and two of your own party colleagues on the ASSI issue and that proposed changes are more anti country sports than pro environment and animal welfare. Regarding the ASSI issue the DUP as a party took a lot of flak over this - can we establish if the ASSI amendment was part of DUP party policy or a 'solo run' by Messrs Wells and Weir?

**Minister:** It was not DUP policy and those particular amendments are not going anywhere. In terms of the Bill I would have to refute that it is 'anti hunting' in any shape or form. I have just indicated the extension of the season, the single species we removed was the curlew, a species that is under threat; most hunters do not shoot them anyway. We had a voluntary suggestion put in by all hunting organisations bar one and had that body joined the voluntary lobby I would have resisted moves to put curlew on the list, but they left us little choice. In other areas, we have resisted pressure to ban snares - an unquantifiable benefit for people engaged in rearing for shoots etc and it was vital for that to remain. We are going to tighten up on licensing of those - a good thing for good gamekeepers who will have no problem with it, but it will deal with those who set snares and do not look after them.

In general I think it is a very fair Bill which will enable people to hunt in Northern Ireland for generations to

come. We had the Green Bill coming through on hunting with dogs, again rejected by the Assembly, and in terms of the proposed issue on the ASSIs it was really about what people were doing on their own land, not proposing that it would be introduced on all land within ASSIs, not my party's policy at all and something that we would have resisted.

**ICS&CL:** It is ironic that as we speak the largest coursing festival in the British Isles is taking place in Clonmel - bearing in mind that scientific evidence as well as sightings on the ground would indicate that hare numbers are on the increase and recognises that the decline was mainly due to agricultural practices - so why is the NI government taking a totally different approach to the protection of the hare to the ROI one? We are also perturbed about the potential impact a ban would have on beagling, which kills few hares but is good sport.

**Minister:** That is probably why I made the decisions that I did. First science would indicate that hunting was not an issue in terms of the hare, nor would it stop the population's growth in the future. Beagling almost always ends with the hare escaping, they are not harming the population and therefore legislation was unnecessary. However, Park Coursing was a different matter - I do not see it as part of the hunting fraternity it is more associated with dog racing and training greyhounds.

**ICS&CL:** We are working with [fieldsportschannel.tv](http://fieldsportschannel.tv) to make a programme on beagling and there could be an opportunity to see it first hand. Would you like to see beagling at first hand?

**Minister:** I have no particular issue with that; it was William Irwin who drew my attention to how the ban could impact on beagling and indicated there was a great deal of support for it particularly in Down & Armagh - something I was not acutely aware of at the time. Anyway, it sounds better than golf!

**ICS&CL:** There are two opposing approaches to global warming: Put very simply the first that global warming is part of a cyclical pattern of the earth warming up and cooling down and man can do very little to influence this - the second is that it is man's activity that is the cause of this and through recycling etc and reducing our carbon footprint overall we can make a real difference. What is your own position?

**Minister:** I think it is irrefutable that climate moves in cyclical patterns, however while the earth previously has warmed it has not done so at the speed it has done so now. There is every possibility that man has made a contribution if we look at where we were at hundreds of years ago we had much afforestation, rivers teemed with good quality salmon and trout etc we produced linen mills by the riversides and many rivers became polluted as a result; we landfilled our waste producing



methane, all of which we do not take pride in. But in the future we do need to leave the earth in better shape than we got it. Would I want to produce green energy instead of using fossil fuels? Yes. Do I see Northern Ireland moving to a place where it could almost supply all its energy from a green resource? Yes. That will of course provide its own challenges; you'll have wind farms going up, tidal energy in places like the Rathlin Sound which will bring its challenges, whether it pleases people aesthetically or not, but we can actually reach a point when we produce all our energy from green sources - plug in our cars and charge them at night when there is plenty of energy being produced, which is then used during the day for other purposes. In 20 or 30 years time we will not recognise where we stood previously; a revolution will have taken place. Just as combustibles were seen as the great answer in the 20th century, I think they will become less and less a solution as we reach the end of the 21st century - a relic of the past. What we do then will be consistent with good environmental practice. Many refer to the price of oil, but there must be many other solutions to a world oil shortage of producing energy from other sources. But with wheat price rises twice that of oil that will be the biggest challenge and the biggest crisis; in Asia for example there will be increased demand with greater problems than any caused by oil.

**ICS&CL:** On recycling, are councils meeting their targets on recycling and landfill?

**Minister:** We are ahead of target. We are heading towards 50% diversion from landfill by 2020 - recycling plus composting - and already South Antrim, Banbridge and Magherafelt are just short of that target. Worst are Strabane and Belfast, which as the largest drags back the NI average slightly, but last year I think we were 36.5% so NI is progressively moving towards the 50% target - but even at that I would not be satisfied and I would want to see the target at 60%. It's achievable; it's a better target economically as the cost of landfill will be around £100 per ton by 2013. I want to see us hit that target of 60% then the target of 30% plus for energy recovery. Some people have difficulties with incineration, but my difficulty is that we in Northern Ireland may not have enough to feed an incinerator. We might use steam to take the nasties out, then it would be burnt in a conventional power station, perhaps with wood chips to produce green energy. There are a series of opportunities there; I think we will not just achieve what is required of us but we will exceed that.

**ICS&CL:** On a particular issue, what would you say regarding the proposed incineration of chicken waste?

**Minister:** From the country sports point of view, it's absolutely critical that we deal with that completely

differently. We have huge problems in for example Lough Neagh, eutrophication; river biodiversity is damaged and it's essential we with this deal with this paying attention to what the Chief Scientific Officer has to say. I am satisfied that moving forward to actually producing energy from this we could produce enough energy for a town of 16,000 people, the equivalent of around four large wind farms, was the right decision.

Good work has been done in the past number of years, more to be done, but whoever is in this position my advice would be try to have a balanced view, if you go to the extremes on any side the environment will suffer. One of the greatest problems currently for biodiversity is in Scotland, where people for years complained of farmers destroying the countryside. But now, where the crofters have taken their sheep off the land as it didn't pay them any more they are finding that these uplands are becoming entirely overgrown and the biodiversity is being damaged as a result of not having that grazing any longer. So let's in all these things seek to be balanced about it and we probably need to get in earlier with the EU Directives. I often find that one Directive is actually conflicting with another and it creates problems of constraint when you want to do something.

**ICS&CL:** What is your department's relationship with the country sports fraternity?

**Minister:** I believe a good one; it's essential to hear people's views and try to respond to them. I would also like to think that there was a good relationship with others such as RSPB, Friends of the Earth and other NGOs. Very often the work done by country sports people would be of major benefit to other environmental issues; sometimes I bridge build and see people at a meeting who wouldn't previously have dreamt of that situation; understandings are often reached that one side may be of benefit to the other.

**ICS&CL:** Finally, Minister, Irish Country Sports & Country Life's penetration is immense throughout Ireland and now world-wide on the Internet. Could your department make use of just such an outlet?

**Minister:** The more information is dispensed on such issues, the better understanding others will have and as you have a particular audience it would be useful for my department to reach, then that would make sense.

**Conclusion:** With this endorsement, the meeting concluded. We had received an open and honest response to all the questions raised and we were left with the feeling that Environment Minister Poots was a 'listener,' who drew on diverse experiences and evidence and weighed arguments carefully before taking decisions that would affect the environment - and in turn country sports.



# Hunting Roundup



*Huntsman Tom Dempsey and Whipper In Jason O'Donnell with the 'Galway Blazers' Foxhounds at Tumnaholla.*

## **Galway Blazers find foxes galore**

**A** birthday trip to Mayo, just over the county border from Galway, provided an excellent opportunity to see the County Galway (The Blazers) Foxhounds in action.

Huntsman Tom Dempsey, now in his thirteenth season hunting these hounds, had on a fit, active eighteen and a half couple pack of mainly doghounds at their meet at Peggy's Tavern, Aulcloggen. He was assisted by professional whipper-in Jason O'Donnell while Mr David McCarthy MFH was also mounted and in charge for the day. A small hardy field of some of some eighteen riders under field master Willie Leahy included two English visitors, Mrs Lavinia Alpin MFH, York & Ainsty South Foxhounds and Mr

Charles Dent former chairman of the York & Ainsty North Foxhounds as well as a Blazers member Sheila Selznick, who had travelled over from Pennsylvania in the USA to ride to these hounds.

A bright but cool Thursday morning saw hounds first draw the Tumnaholla townland and almost immediately put their first fox afoot. This customer, with a very distinctive black underside to his brush, broke cover in front of your correspondent and hunt secretary Janet Coveney on cattle farmer Stephen Cummins's land.

Our pilot left Cummins's and ran along Tumnaholla Road for about one hundred yards bringing hounds crashing after him in good voice. He left the road and passed a herd of some 25 Connemara ponies belonging to PJ Costello before returning to Cummins' to give a

fast, circular hunt in patchy scenting conditions which ended when he went to ground in some rocks and was given best.

Hounds then drew towards New Line and, again, quickly put their second fox afoot just outside Mellett's. He was hunted across Stewart's, then Skerritt's, towards Costello's and at Burke's hounds split with nine and a half couple staying on this fox and the remainder hunting another fox.

Once staff got to hounds' heads they were stopped and reunited allowing Tom Dempsey to move onto John Curry's where a fourth fox rose and ran straight across Curry's, then Canavan's and finally onto Gerry Morrison's where he, too, went to ground and was given best.

While hounds were hunting this fox your correspondent and his driver, Peter Hayden, saw another fox leave cover and run in the opposite direction to hounds, away from the Shrews Road area of Curndullagh townland but hounds stuck with their hunted fox only to lose him in worsening scenting conditions.

As light was now beginning to fade Tom Dempsey blew for home to presage a hack along Aulcloggen Road and back to the meet where licensee Kieran McDonagh had some very welcome refreshments waiting in Peggy's Tavern.

## **The Blazers' meet at Craughwell**

By contrast the Blazers' meet on the Saturday was on



an extremely cold day with some lasting frost and ice which did not seem to improve on the Thursday's patchy scent.

Cheever's pub in Main Street, Craughwell, saw some three dozen riders, again under field master Willie Leahy, move off behind Tom Dempsey, an eighteen and a half couple mixed pack, whipper-in Jason O'Donnell and two joint masters, Liam Clancy and Mike McDonagh, to the first draw. It was great to see Liam Clancy's daughter Ellie (8) on a lead rein for her first hunt with her proud father looking on.



*Proud father Liam Clancy MFH watches his daughter Ellie at her first hunt with the 'Galway Blazers' at Craughwell*



*Mike McDonagh MFH with his daughter Katie with the 'Galway Blazers' at Craughwell*

Tom Dempsey drew Greenage townland putting a fox afoot beyond the Gaelic Athletic Association grounds to some good hound music. This fox ran, at speed, away from Craughwell, moving parallel to Greenage Road and was hollered by your correspondent as hounds temporarily lost him in the prevailing patchy scenting conditions. He continued to run towards Shanbally before going to ground from where hounds bolted him

themselves but they could make nothing of it. Hounds then drew towards The Turlough putting their second fox afoot on Kelly's Boreen. They were still working very hard in continuing patchy scenting conditions, despite the frost, but they lost this fox near a large dump.

One of the numerous lulls in proceedings gave me a chance to have a look at some of the people who were out. Solicitor Brian Lynch was immaculately turned out in top hat and red tails giving the day a timeless element of class. Joint master Mike McDonagh's three children Katie, Paddy and Timmy were showing that the lessons learned from their successful showing jumping exploits were now paying dividends in the hunting field.

A continued draw towards Shanbally saw another fox afoot which hounds pushed hard as far as Shanbally before having a circular hunt on the other side of The Turlough. This fox crossed Shanbally Boreen back into Greenage townland to give another circular hunt before being lost. Home was blown in mid afternoon as there had been no thaw at all so the roads had remained very difficult and some people had a long drive home. Those of us who could availed of an excellent reception back at the meet before making our way home at an unusually early hour.

These two days had shown that no matter how many foxes are afoot or how good a pack of hounds are hunting the most important element remains scent which was patchy throughout my visit. The mounted fields on the other hand, had had some great fun jumping in this stone wall country and even in the more open country on the Saturday. The light, athletic hounds on view have a lot more Old English blood than I had expected and seem ideally suited to coping with the stone walls which abound right across the country. I left Galway lamenting the weather and its adverse effect on our sport but thinking that these hounds would be hell to stay with when the elements were in their favour.

## **North Down Foxhounds**

The North Down Foxhounds' traditional New Year's Day meet at the Old Inn, Crawfordsbum, opened in cool weather with threatened rain. Host Mr Danny Rice, and his General Manager Brendan McCann, had laid on an excellent hunt breakfast to get things going then, after a stirrup cup in front of the Inn, huntsman Tom Haddock took a twelve and half couple mixed pack through the village assisted by his three amateur whippers-in Charlie McPoland, Ann Magill and Barry Jones.

As hounds moved off the joint masters, Mr Raymond Mitchell and Miss Lesley Webb, had some forty riders under their charge as they hacked across the main Belfast to Bangor road with excellent police assistance. Unfortunately the threatened rain did then start, initially as a drizzle.





*Huntsman Tom Haddock gets a stirrup cup from Brendan McCann, general manager of the Old Inn at Crawfordsburn at the North Down Foxhounds New Year's Day Meet.*

Tom Haddock drew Clandeboye and then Brian Milligan's without success so he tried Roland Johnson's and then McCann's, still with nothing to show for hounds' hard work. Increasing rain saw the weather also become colder especially for those of us who were viewing from the various high vantage points. Apparently poor scenting conditions were not helping matters and a series of draws across Henderson's and Ian McFarland's reflected this fact. However, the huntsman persevered and got his reward on Hughes's land.

As hounds drew behind the house they put a fox afoot and we could almost hear relief in their voices as they pushed him across Hughes's and back towards McFarland's.

This fox gave two short, sharp hunts in persistent heavy rain to test the stamina and determination of everyone only to end as scent petered out in late afternoon.

Tom Haddock then blew for home and we made the reverse journey across the main Belfast to Bangor road back to the meet where the Old Inn staff had laid on another excellent reception. 2011 had arrived and, while the weather may not have been snowy, we must certainly hope for considerable improvement in what is now the second half of the season.

## ***The Mid Antrim Hunt's***

The Mid Antrim Hunt's meet, on the first Wednesday in January, took place at the Slemish Tavern in the picturesque village of Broughshane on a cold, wet, miserable day.

Prominent in the small, hardy field was ten year old Josh Mark, grandson of the senior master Mr Tommy



*Huntsman Hugh Cochrane with the Mid Antrim Hunt at Broughshane*

Caves, on his grey pony "George" and the pair were there at the end of the day. It was not a day for standing around so, after a 'warmer' in the bar, huntsman Hugh Cochrane, assisted by amateur whipper-in Mr Gary



*Senior Master Mr TS Caves and his grandson Josh Mark ( 10) at Broughshane with the Mid Antrim Hunt.*

Clugston, took a ten and a half couple mixed pack to the first draw followed by two joint masters Mr Caves and Mr Gordon Cunningham with the small field close behind. Hugh put hounds into J a m e s K i s s o c k's



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land and, after some persistence, hounds put a fox afoot. He ran to the rear of the covert back towards Broughshane before returning to the covert only to re-emerge into the open where he gave a sharp hunt which ended when he was lost in sheep foil.

This hunt had been a hectic run across some very wet country with everyone managing to stay on board and where hounds steadfastly ignored the many sheep on view. A series of draws in the open country around Careen failed to dislodge anyone despite the best efforts of huntsman and hounds so Hugh Cochrane moved on to Whitehall.

Here, there is an abundance of open country and coverts but both areas were blank though at one point one bitch, Rumba 07, opened in good voice but could not make anything of it. Hounds were then faced with a large area of newly re-sown land and, as light would soon begin to fade, it was decided not to hack to any other covert, especially as scent now seemed to be nonexistent. Home was then blown to bring this short, sharp day to a close.

Hugh Cochrane was pleased to tell me that he has taken a litter out of Rumba 07 and that they appear to have their mother's sharpness where foxes are concerned.

The biggest grin at the end of the day remained that of Josh Mark who very much enjoyed keeping up with his grandfather on the last day before retuning to school.

### ***The Killultagh Old Rock and Chichester Hunt***

The Killultagh Old Rock and Chichester Hunt's meet at Wit's End, Stoneyford, Co Antrim, the home of Mrs Marie Corr, was held on a bright but cold day. As everyone was handing over empty glasses and plates to Mrs Corr's helpers and huntsman Tim Taylor was just unloading his hounds the rain started. Wit's End very suddenly became Wet End!

Some dozen hardy riders, under Mrs Frank Boyd MFH, followed Tim, who was assisted by amateur whippers -in Christopher Berry and Sinead Boyd, to the first draw at Geddesses. The bad weather was soon forgotten as the fifteen and a half couple mixed pack put their first fox of the day afoot. A fast hunt ensued with hounds and horses quickly into their stride on this good fox which took them onto Scott's. Hounds were in good voice as they pushed their fox across Scott's and then went right across Wright's as far as Sheepwalk Road where this fox was lost.

Hounds were lifted and taken onto Michael Millar's stud farm where the owner himself mounted his quad to ensure that some loose mares were alright and that gates were open for the Hunt. As he did so your correspondent and his driver, hunt secretary Geraldine

Handley, saw a second fox leave covert and run through some mares, which hounds totally ignored as they did with several hares. Our pilot moved off Millar's crossing onto Johnston's, running quickly over Lowtown Road and on to the Lisburn to Glenavy Road past Williamson's. After another fast hunt this fox, too, was lost after going on Jack Ballance's land. Tim Taylor then hacked back towards the meet in steadily worsening conditions and drew Marie Corr's bog. After some persistence hounds put their third fox afoot and he ran, initially in a small circle, toward Bertie Mair's and then on to Moss Road near Abbott's. After a short hunt in fading light this fox was given best and Tim Taylor blew for home.

### ***The County Down Hunt***

The County Down Hunt staged their children's meet at the Shanrod home of joint master Mr Eric McClelland on a bright, but coolish, October Saturday. Some sixty riders, many of them on lead-reins, but with a leavening of more mature mentors enjoyed an excellent reception, courtesy of Mrs McClelland and her team, then moved off behind huntsman Steve Collins and his ten couple mixed pack for a busy day over some very wet country. Those parents and older siblings on lead-rein duties were hard pressed to keep their charges happy and many and loud were the demands for those lead-reins to be discarded. A fast pace, the youth of so many of the field notwithstanding, was maintained throughout the day and some of the youngsters outshone their more experienced counterparts in their jumping.

Steve Collins also had some new entry on view and they, too, played their part showing drive, tenacity and good voices to indicate that they similarly bode well for the future. Hounds pushed on hard throughout the day and Steve Collins eventually blew for home in mid afternoon, whereupon everyone returned to the McClelland's barn and a second excellent reception was summarily dispatched. With the number and ability of the youngsters on show the County Down Hunt is in good heart for the future.



*Mr Wilson Dennison, Senior Master with the County Down Hounds and some of the young field at the children's meet at Shanrod.*





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# Feedwell and Irish Countrysports and Country Life sponsor The Gundog of the Year Competition

**T**he annual Northern Ireland Gundog Field & Show Society 'Gundog of the Year' Competition took place at the Sixmile Leisure Centre in Ballyclare and as usual was sponsored by Feedwell & the Irish Countrysports and Country Life magazine.

The judge was the well known UK HPR specialist Mr Geoff Hargreaves. Mr Hargreaves selected his Veteran, Puppy and Gundog of the year from a very large entry of dogs who had qualified for the competition by winning at the highest level throughout Ireland.

The very worthy winners were:

## **GUNDOG VETERAN OF THE YEAR**

Ir Sh Ch Gunhills Venus in Blue Jeans over Abinvale SH CH DOB 8.8.02

Owned by Frank Bette and Emma Archibald and bred by Philip and Rachel Rains Derbyshire. JODIE gained her title in 2007 and finished that year top winning Golden Retriever Bitch in Ireland. She now has 13 Green Stars and 9 Reserve Green Stars. In 2010 she won a Challenge Certificate at Border Union Championship Show under breed specialist Mrs Eileen Caisley.

Runner Up was Cummings Welsh Springer Spaniel Sh Ch/Ir Sh Ch Ferndel Maverick.

## **GUNDOG PUPPY OF THE YEAR**

Kerryjoy The Black Panther (Cocker Spaniel) DOB 29.5.09 AKA Bagheera has had a great year in the show ring winning Green Stars and group places, finishing off the year by winning the title of NI Gundog Puppy of the Year. Owned and bred by Kerry Brennan.

Runner Up was McKinley's English Springer Spaniel Caldale Ex Factor.

## **GUNDOG OF THE YEAR**

Ir Sh Ch Hookwood Dark Raven in Glenariff Jun Ch.SD.CJW10CW10 DOB 25.9.08 Bred by Sue Welch and owned by Wendy Fleming. Basil, otherwise known as Irish Show Champion Hookwood Dark Raven in Glenariff is two and a half years old.

He has consistently won since he started his show career with a 2nd place in the group at Irish Ladies Kennel Club Championship show in July 2009 at just 10 months old. He continued to do well to finish 2009 as the Top Pointer dog in Ireland.

During the year he also gained his Junior Diploma and Junior Champion title and finished 4th overall in the Junior Champion of Champions contest. Basil started 2010 by winning NI Gundog Puppy of the Year and was 4th in the NI



*NI Gundog Field & Show Gundog Veteran of the Year.*



*NI Gundog Field & Show Gundog Puppy of the Year.*



*NI Gundog Field & Show Gundog of the Year.*

Puppy of the Year. He continued his winning ways and gained his Irish Show Champion title in February at 17 months old. During the year he had several group placings and was the group winner at Dun Laoghaire Championship show in August.

Basil ended 2010 as the Top Pointer in Ireland and Annual Champion and has started 2011 by being crowned NI Gundog of the Year and expect his winning ways to continue.

Runner Up was Mc Gookin's American Cocker Spaniel Ch/Int Ch Fielgar Black Magic at Franrovic.



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

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**Nigel Carville**



**Tim Crothers**



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



**John Wilson**



# The 2010 Irish Retriever Championship



*The competing dogs at the start of the 2010 IKC Retriever Championship.*

**T**he 43rd Irish Retriever Championship was held on 28 and 29 December 2010 at Dromoland Castle, Co. Clare by kind permission of Mr Don Walshe and Dromoland Game Sports Ltd. Dromoland Castle has an extraordinary history which dates back to the 5th century but today, including the shoot grounds, is now in private hands and has been converted for use as a luxury 5 star hotel. The remaining lands of the estate are owned by the Clan O'Brien who are descendents of the High King of Ireland, Brian Boru. This was the sixth occasion that Don Walshe and Dromoland hosted the championship, on undoubtedly what must be one of the finest driven shoots in Ireland. The excellent condition of the birds was evident and the drives offered the highest flying pheasants which proved a real challenge for the awaiting guns.

For me, it was a hugely exciting yet nerve-wrecking time. My FTCh bitch was qualified but had a litter of pups and I was unable to take up my run. So my role this year was changed from competitor to film director as I was part of the camera crew filming the two day event to be produced on DVD.

The Clare Inn, Dromoland was the Headquarters for the event and on arrival we were immediately greeted with the warmest welcome by the management and staff and sampled the finest full Irish carvery breakfast. Afterwards we headed to Dromoland Castle to film the opening shots and noted the sheer magnificence and beauty of the Castle which you will see from the DVD. We returned to the hotel shortly after 3:30pm to find that most of the competitors had started to arrive for a meeting where Chairman Jim Perry addressed competitors, judges, stewards, markers and spectators and outlined the arrangements for the event. Marie Malone gave each competitor their armband and programme produced once again in style by John Malone.

The weather was mild on Tuesday morning as the handlers assembled at the front of the Inn at 8am. 30 dogs were scheduled to compete but only 26 actually ran. Out of the 26 dogs that ran 24 were black and 2 yellow, 20 were male and six female. Three were International Field Trial Champions and 10 were Field Trial Champions. The four judges were Tom Counihan (senior judge), Nigel Carville, Damian Newman and Mick Redmond. After the photocall, Jim Perry Chairman addressed the crowd and a minutes silence was held in memory of Mr Sam Jennett of Raughlin Kennels who passed away in April before setting off to Dromoland.

## **First Drive – The Burial Ground**

There was a real buzz and sense of excitement as Tom Counihan and Nigel Carville took the odd numbers on the left hand side and Mick Redmond and Damian Newman took the even numbers on the right hand side. The first shot was fired before the dogs and handlers were in line, but everyone moved quickly into place as the drive got underway. The first drive produced some very challenging shots for the awaiting guns as the two lines of competitors



*L / R – Back row - Nigel Carvill, Damian Newman, Jim Perry, David Boyce, Tom Counihan, Lady Waterford & Tom Nolan Front row – Tony O'Donnell, Pat Hearne, Michael Redmond & John T. Malone (Judges, Judges Stewards and Championship Committee Officers).*





**Mr Jimmy Black and FTCh Copperbitch Solo**  
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**"The Choice of Champions"**





*Tommy Murphy with the excellent marking team for the 2010 Championship at Dromoland. The men from Mohill provide great support to this team.*



*Game carrier Mr. Billy Lundy and Mr. Ivan Lee soak up the atmosphere at Dromoland Castle Estate during the 2010 Championship.*



*Vice Chairman Mr. John T. Malone with his wife Marie at the early morning meet for the Championship.*

faced the wood from where the birds were driven and between them lay undulating grounds of grass, tuft and fir bushes. The shot birds dropped immediately in front of and to the sides of waiting lines of dogs and handlers approximately 70/80 yards from where they were seated. After about 20 minutes the horn was blown, the drive had finished and the 2010 Irish Retriever Championship got underway.

Dog no 1 Hazel of Redbog handled by John O'Connor was to make the first retrieve of the championship under judges Tom and Nigel. Sent for a bird behind tufts of grass which lay approximately 80 yards away, Hazel took a good line for John to the area, but took a little bit of handling to make the find. Next to be sent under Tom and Nigel was no 3 Astraglen Fergie handled by Roy Rankin. Roy's

dog cast with style went straight to the area, made a quick find and returned the bird tenderly to hand. No 5 Newcam Gunner a black dog handled by Declan Boyle required a little bit of handling but did everything the handler asked and got his bird. No 7 Noel Cahill's bitch FTCh Astraglen Meg of Highwalk was sent for a bird just under 100 yards away she cast well but hunted out of the area and Noel had difficulty getting her back so was asked to call her up by the two judges.

Paul Toal's young yellow dog Altiquin Ripple who was running at no 9 was sent for the same bird. Ripple seemed to be on the right side of the wind and drew on the bird quite quickly made a good retrieve eliminating dog and handler no 7. Thomas Brady, Keith McNamara, Joe McGivern, Harry Gillanders and Gerard Murdock all made good retrieves with their dogs.

On the opposite side of the line Mick Redmond and Damian Newman had many birds to pick which involved sending the even numbered dogs into rushes approximately 70 yards away to pick the game.

Dog no 2 FTCh Copperbirch Solo owned and handled by Jimmy Black was the first to go and picked his bird with little fuss. Alan Rountree with his FTCh Waterford Edward of Tasco also picked his bird as did no 8 Matthew Lambden and no 10 Lorenzo Hynes whose young dog FTCh Trumpetaker Ash cast with real drive and style. No 12 owned by Mr Jim Perry unfortunately was unable to compete as she had come into season the day before. No 14 Willie Higginson and Int FTCh Ferncott Quester made an effortless retrieve approximately 100 yards away through the rushes and on to a clearing.

The remaining retrieves proved more difficult for the even numbered dogs, requiring each of the handlers to cast their dogs through the rushes to a clearing up a hill approximately 120 yards away.

Alan Rountree with his 2½ year old dog FTCh Waterford Galahad of Tasco showed the spectating gallery how the retrieve should be done. Galahad cast to the area and picked the bird with ease.

Next was Marty Rush with no 20 FTCh Rumbelton Quicksilver, a fantastic looking yellow dog. Judging by the amount of work Marty had, it appeared to the watching crowd, that the judges and handler were unsure of the mark as Marty seemed to be hunting his dog in several different areas; the bird was picked after a bit of effort. With no more birds to retrieve, Mick and Damian moved their remaining dogs to another area to pick retrieves. No 24 John Behan's black dog Quarrypool Rough Diamond was sent for a retrieve over the tufts of grass





*Vice Chairman Mr. John T. Malone, Assistant Secretary, Mr. Tom Nolan, Secretary Mr. Patrick J. Hearne, Main Sponsor from Massbrook Petfoods Mr. Jon Binley, Treasurer Lady Waterford & Chairman Mr. Jim Perry.*

approximately 80 yards away. Although the dog cast well he pulled to the right and the handler could not get him back to the area, so John was asked to call his dog up by the judges. Apache Joe no 26, handled by Thomas Hughes, was sent for the same bird and made a good retrieve although was not credited with an eyewipe as no 24 failed to make the area. With all the birds of the first drive picked the judges and the 24 remaining dogs headed to the second drive.

## **Second Drive - Fourteen Acres**

In the aptly named green field, the two lines were placed back from the adjacent wood which was surrounded by a 5ft high dry stone wall. The drive commenced at 11:30am with dogs in line approximately 150 yards behind the guns. This was a very heavy drive which lasted over half an hour and produced some spectacular high flying birds. Tom Counihan and Nigel Carville were on the left hand side and had some of the odd numbered dogs in line that had not got a retrieve on the first drive as well as the even numbered dogs that were ready for their second retrieve. No 21 Vicky Stanley with FTCh Geordieland Blizzard and no 23 Paul O'Brien were sent during the drive both dogs making successful retrieves. The drive was well and truly underway at this stage a cock bird fell beside the

line but proved to much for no 25 Declan McCarthy's Sallyfort Tempest who ran in. No 27 Quarrypool Ainey also made a good retrieve from the line handled by Danny Behan.

The horn signalled the end of the drive. Judges then sent no 29 Rainbow in the Dark handled by David Kelly to pick a bird which had fallen behind the 5ft stone wall to the left. Rainbow made the retrieve look effortless and jumped the wall like a stag, retrieved the bird and brought it cleanly to hand. No's 2, 6, 8 and 10 were all given 150 yard retrieves across the green field each of them made good work of the task in hand. No 14 Willie Higginson's Int FTCh Ferncott Quester was required to retrieve a bird approximately 150 yards away, both dog and handler make it look easy, no handling was required. Willie cast his dog straight to the bird. No 16, 18, 20, 28 all had similar retrieves 150 yards away which they all did with minimal handling.

On the right hand side, Mick Redmond and Damian Newman had placed their line of dogs on a mound giving the handlers an excellent vantage point to observe and mark the fall of birds. None of the dogs under Mick and Damian were sent for birds during the drive, which proved very heavy and got a little bit too much for no 5 Declan Boyle's Newcam Gunner who appeared to be getting very hot in line and Declan decided to withdraw his dog from the trial.

The horn was blown and Damian and Mick conferred with the markers and prepared to send their line of dogs for the retrieves. First dog to go was no 30 Michael Shannon's Glenloch Rackateer the last of the first round dogs. Michael was sent for a bird over 200 yards away in the corner of the field. With one command Glenloch Rackateer cast with immense drive, ran straight to the area and picked his bird perfectly. No 1 John O'Connor Hazel of Redbog and no 3 Astraglen Fergie handled by Roy Rankin were both sent over 200 yards picking their birds well. Next was no 9 Paul Toal and Altiquin Ripple, although Ripple cast well he hunted into the wrong area and unfortunately wrong birded and was therefore eliminated from the trial. No 11 FTCh Copperbirch Zeus of Glenanne was sent for a bird over 200 yards away Zeus made the area with a single cast and picked his bird with no further



*Judges Tom Counihan and Nigell Carvell lead the way to the first drive of the championship.*





*Judges confer and mark their books!*

handling. No 13 Keith McNamara was then brought into line and sent for a retrieve in the same area. Keith's black bitch cast well with speed and style picked her bird but unfortunately switched with another bird close by. Keith and Clare Rose of Lurriga were immediately eliminated from the trial and Judge Damian Newman made the long walk to collect the bird which Keith's dog had swapped.

The remaining dogs under Judges Mick and Damian appeared to pick their retrieves well. These were championship retrieves and the majority of the dogs and handlers showed the spectating gallery that each of them was capable of the task in hand with most dogs being sent over 200 yards. Credit must be given to no 19 Gerard Murdock and his dog INT FTCh Rosenallis Bramble of Dunamoira who made fantastic work on a bird which was moving along the wall close to the wood.

After the round both sets of judges came together revised their books and 18 dogs remained.

Tom and Nigel moved to the centre of the field and lengthened the retrieves. The marks were fantastic but good handling was essential. No 1 John O'Connor and no 3 Roy Rankin both had good retrieves. No 11 Thomas Brady and FTCh Copperbirch Zeus of Glenanne had difficulty holding his dog and picked a wrong bird out of the area. No 15 Joe McGivern had difficulty getting to the area and was called up by the judges. No 17 Harry Gillanders and FTCh Drumorgan Thumper made a very good retrieve and Thumper appeared to draw on the bird a considerable distance away. I am sure credit was given for this retrieve but neither no 11 nor 15 made the area so an eye wipe was probably not given.

On the right hand side Judges Damian and Mick after conferring with the markers moved their dogs to a new field just over the dry stone wall. Several birds lay on the green grass just on the edge of the wood. Although the retrieves appeared to be visible, several of the dogs made hard work of them and quite a number of the handlers had difficulty keeping their dogs under control. No 16 Willie Forde,

no 20 Marty Rush and no 28 Thomas Hughes were all dropped by the judges here for failing to pick their birds. No 2 Jimmy Black, no 6 Alan Rountree, no 10 Lorenzo Hynes, no 14 Willie Higginson and no 30 Michael Shannon all had good retrieves here. The judges once more collaborated and decided to move to the next drive calling back 9 dogs.

### **Drive 3 - The Duck Bank**

The drive had got under way before the remaining dogs and handlers had arrived, but the expert team of markers had been sent ahead by the judges and were in place behind the guns. The judges decided to keep the dogs out of line until the drive was over. The relief on handlers' faces was evident. The atmosphere was a little bit more relaxed and while the drive was going on in the background, my camera crew and I used the opportunity to conduct a few interviews. The drive consisted of a steep bank adjacent to a large open green field which ran into a wood. A river flowed through the centre of the wood resulting in a lot of birds being shot and falling on the far bank. Harry Gillanders was sent 150 yards and made a good retrieve down the embankment. Gerard Murdock unfortunately was next to go but was dropped. Vicky Stanley also made a good retrieve here that finished the round, each of the 8 remaining dogs having four retrieves each.

The judges took the eight remaining dogs no 2, 3, 6, 10, 14, 17, 21 & 30 into the centre of the wood about 40 yards back from the river. Many birds lay on the opposite bank. Jimmy Black was first to go. His dog appeared to have difficulty seeing him but he picked his bird. Next, no 3 Roy Rankin's dog crossed the river with enthusiasm, got his retrieve quickly but appeared to lose his way on the far bank before returning back the way he came. The remaining six dogs all made effortless retrieves across the river concluding the end of another round and ending day one of the championship.

### **The Second Day**

Next morning we gathered as arranged at 8:15am in front of the Inn and I took the opportunity to interview some of the remaining handlers and judges and I must say it was 'mega craic.' We were joined by a large number of new spectators including guests from the Netherlands. The weather was mild and very similar to the day before. Led by the 'Pied Piper'



*The remaining eight dogs at the start of the second day of the Retriever Championship accompanied by the judges.*





Mr Alan Rountree was awarded a Diploma of Honour with Int. F.T. Ch. Waterford Edward of Tasco in the 2010 IKC Championship.



Mr. Lorenzo Hynes was awarded a Diploma of Honour at the Championship with F.T. Ch. Trumpetaker Ash. This partnership was also awarded the 'Guns Choice' prize.



Mr. Harry Gillanders with F.T. Ch. Drumorgan Thumper. This duo ran a magnificent trial and were awarded a Diploma of Honour.



Mr. Jimmy Black casts F.T. Ch. Copperbirch Solo on a retrieve. He was awarded 2nd place in the Championship.



Mr. Roy Rankin sends Astraglen Fergie on a retrieve at the Championship. He was awarded a Diploma of Honour.

himself Paul O'Brien, former assistant keeper at Dromoland, Paul's knowledge of the ground was an asset over the two days, to the organising championship committee and also for my filming

Damian Newman headed into the wood so they could watch the dogs, leaving Mick Redmond and Tom Counihan to organise the retrieves and send the dogs.

Many birds had been shot into the wood just over the low

Only one drive was required on the second day. The eight handlers remaining were placed on top of a hill 150 yards from the adjacent wood which was surrounded by a 2ft wall. The drive was very heavy and lasted over 35 minutes and produced quality birds. It proved too much for no 30 Glenloch Racketeer and Michael Shannon and they were dropped. Jimmy Black and FTCh Copperbirch Solo was sent for a running hen during the drive which they picked with ease, as was no 3 Roy Rankin whose dog made a first class job on a running cock which jumped over the wall into the wood.



Mr. William Higginson casts Int. F.T. Ch. Ferncott Quester for his last retrieve of the Championship. He successfully retained his title by winning the Championship again this year.





*Mrs. Victoria Stanley casts G.B. F.T. Ch. Geordieland Blizzard on a retrieve. They were awarded 3rd place in the Championship*

lying stone wall. Alan Rountree's was the next dog to be sent down the hill approximately 150 yards into the wood. Int FTCh Waterford Edward of Tasco picked his bird with ease. Next, Lorenzo Hynes' FTCh Trumpetaker Ash was cast down the field with the speed of a greyhound, straight over the wall and appeared back in seconds loaded with a pheasant. No 14 Willie Higginson, no 17 Harry Gillanders and no 21 Vicky Stanley also made successful retrieves from the same area.

There were still birds left in the wood and the judges decided to use them for the next round. First was Jimmy

Black's FTCh Copperbirch Solo, which appeared quickly with the bird. Roy Rankin's dog Astraglen Fergie cast well to the area but seemed to dwell on the scent of the first birds picked. Fergie hunted well but had the misfortune of not going further back into the wood and was called up by the judges. Alan Rountree came in behind and cast his dog to the same area, pushed his dog Edward deeper into the wood and successfully retrieved the bird.

The judges once more conferred with the markers and decided to take the remaining dogs into the wood for retrieves. Lorenzo Hynes was the first handler to be sent. His FTCh dog picked a bird from the dense cover about 60 yards away with ease. Willie Higginson was next to be sent for a bird in cover and after a little bit of handling Int FTCh Ferncott Quester produced the retrieve. Harry Gillanders was next to send his black lab dog. FTCh Drumorgan Thumper was sent for a bird about 70 yards down into the dense woodland. Harry's dog cast well but appeared to be on the wrong side of the wind, he hunted out of the area which made it difficult for the handler to see him. Harry was eventually called up and no 21 Vicky Stanley's FTCh Geordieland was successful in picking the bird.

The judges then called three dogs back for a run off. The atmosphere was intense and the pressure on the remaining handlers was evident. Those called back were Alan Rountree, Lorenzo Hynes and Vicky Stanley. Were they playing for top positions or minor placings? Speculation was rife.

The dogs were taken to the top of the hill and sent down into light rushes to pick their birds about 120 yards away. All three handlers and dogs had a little bit of work but were successful in picking their retrieves. The judges conferred again for several minutes then announced that the championship was over. Five dogs had finished: Willie Higginson with Int FTCh Ferncott Quester; Jimmy Black with FTCh Copperbirch Solo; Vicky Stanley with FTCh Geardieland Blizzard; Lorenzo Hynes with FTCh Trumpetaker Ash; and Alan Rountree with Int FTCh Waterford Edward of Tasco.



*Mr. Jim Perry  
Chairman of the  
Championship  
Committee  
addresses the  
large gathering at  
the Presentation  
Ceremony of the  
2010 Retriever  
Championship.*

## **The Presentation and Results**

The chairman of the championship committee, Jim Perry, addressed the large gathering back at the hotel paying tribute to Don Walshe the host, his keeper, the beaters and the guns who provided a superb setting for the championship. Thanks were also

given to Jon Binley of Massbrook Pet Food for their continued support and sponsorship of the championship. A special thanks was paid the hard working committee, the judges who did a fantastic job as well as the excellent team of markers and everyone else who assisted with the running of the championship.



## Results:

1st No 14 Int FTCh Ferncott Quester owned and handled by Willie Higginson

2nd No 2 FTCh Copperbirch Solo owned and handled by Jimmy Black

3rd No 21 FTCh Geordieland Blizzard owned and handled by Vicky Stanley

4th No 10 FTCh Trumpetaker Ash owned and handled by Lorenzo Hynes

**Diplomas of Merit:** Alan Rountree and Int FTCh Waterford Edward of Tasco; Harry Gillanders and FTCh Drumorgan Thumper; and Roy Rankin and Astraglen Fergie.

Guns Choice: No 10 Lorenzo Hynes.

As a mark of respect to the late Sam Jennett, his wife Lillian gave a beautiful eulogy and presented a new trophy the 'Raughlin Sam Jennett Memorial Trophy' to the breeder of the winner which in this case was Willie Higginson. Tom Counihan senior judge spoke on behalf of his co-judges saying they had been unanimous in their deliberation. Jim Perry concluded the proceedings and wished everyone a safe journey home.

It had been an excellent championship, blest with mild weather and an outstanding ground. On a personal note I would like to thank host Don Walshe, and the members of the championship committee for giving permission to film the event. A very special thanks to Pat Hearne and Tommy Murphy who provided the notes which assisted me in writing this report. The crew from Dog and Country TV and I would like to thank the judges, competitors and everyone who assisted and participated in the filming and gave interviews, not least Paul O'Brien and the team at Dromoland who ensured that we were able to drive our vehicle through the estate with our equipment.

Irish Countrysports and Country Life magazine provided the Perpetual Trophy for the Gun's Choice, a Crystal Decanter for the winner and annual subscriptions to the magazine for the judges and the top four handlers.

The footage we filmed was fantastic and allowed us to produce a high quality programme which is available for only £24.99 including P&P on DVD now online at [www.dogandcountry.tv](http://www.dogandcountry.tv) or call 028 38 841509 from UK or 048 38 841509 from ROI.



Lady Waterford presents Roy Rankin with his Diploma of Honour Certificate for Astraglen Fergie.



Lady Waterford presents Alan Rountree with his Diploma of Honour Certificate for Int. Waterford Edward of Tasco.



Lady Waterford presents Harry Gillanders with his Diploma of Honour Certificate for F.T. Ch. Drumorgan Thumper.



Lady Waterford presents Victoria Stanley with her 3rd Place Award in the 2010 Championship for GB F.T. Ch. Geordieland Blizzard.



Mrs. Lillian Jennett presents the new "Raughlin Sam Jennett Memorial Trophy" to Mr. William Higginson as the breeder of the winning dog of the 2010 Championship. A beautiful 14" Silver Salver.



Mr. Don Walsh presents the "Barra Flynn Memorial Trophy" to Lorenzo Hynes for 4th Place in the Championship.



Main sponsor Mr. John Binley of Massbrook Petfoods congratulates Mr. Jimmy Black on 2nd Place in the Championship.



(Above) Mr. William Higginson 1st, Mr. Lorenzo Hynes 4th, Mrs. Victoria Stanley 3rd and Mr. Jimmy Black 2nd in the 2010 Retriever Championship.

(Left) Mr. William Higginson with Int. F.T. Ch. Ferncott Quester won the 2010 IKC Retriever Championship thereby retaining his 2009 title.



# Ulster Golden Retriever Club Trial at Moyola

*Shanua McGroarty captures the atmosphere of a very cold but magical day*

This year's Ulster Golden Retriever Club Open One Day Trial was held at the beautiful grounds of Moyola in Castledawson on Saturday 4th December. The meeting time was 8.30am in what was a bitterly cold morning, with below zero temperatures and early morning snow blizzards, which made travelling conditions difficult for those who had to travel. At 9.00am the trial was still short of 6 runners, however

those coming from far and beyond tackled the icy roads and eventually arrived at the meeting point in Castledawson safe and sound.

When all were gathered, the trial proceeded to the grounds of Moyola where the blue skies, snow on the ground and the morning mist rising from all avenues made enduring the poor travel conditions and below zero temperatures worthwhile.

It was a testing trial for the dogs, many of which had to brave the freezing cold water. At times due to the conditions scenting was quite bad and as a result a number of dogs were lost early on in the trial. At the 2nd last drive there were four dogs left, however Thomas Brady and Paul Toal, whose dog's had been running well, ran into a bit of bad luck with a first dog down scenario and a wrong bird. Marty Rush and David Kelly finished the trial with a 1st and 2nd place with Marty Rush making his dog up to Field Trial Champion.



*Watching a labrador work the river bank.*



*On to the next drive.*



*Happy so far- Marty Rush heads to the other side.*



*Suspicious footprints.*



*A successful retrieve after braving the icy water.*



*Three contestants are left.*



*The Winner Marty Rush receiving his trophy.*



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# The Irish Retriever Championship 2010



The 2010 Irish Retriever Championship was held on the 28th and 29th of December at Dromoland Castle, County Clare, Ireland. Dromoland Castle hosts one of the finest shoots in Europe.

Thirty of Ireland's Top Retrievers competed for the title of Champion of Champions.

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The dogs and handlers were put through their paces under the watchful eyes of four of Ireland's Top Judges.

The challenges were many and varied and on the final day eight dogs went head to head for the honour of becoming Supreme Champion.

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# Making History at Sandringham - the 2010 IGL Retriever Championship

**H**eld at Sandringham on 7th, 8th and 9th December by gracious permission of Her Majesty the Queen, and thanks to the generous sponsorship of Roger Skinner Ltd., the International Gundog League's Retriever Championship 2010 proved in every way remarkable. Not least for happening at all. Sugar beet, laid low by successive bitter nights and covered with frosted snow, was never likely to hold birds. And yet the flow of game, augmented by many hares, was even with dogs never encountering multiple flushes whilst hunting. Against all odds Head Keeper David Clark and his team made a heroic keeping effort and a splendid team of guns did full justice to it.

Over the years, Sandringham has consistently produced historically significant results – John Halstead's third successive win with FTCh Breeze of Drakeshead was there, as was his fourth win in 1992 with FTCh Raughlin Pete of Drakeshead for instance – and in 2010 the estate sustained its remarkable record. The 2010 Retriever Champion is David Latham's two and a half year old Yellow Labrador dog FTCh Delfleet Neon of Fendawood. His name should give anyone with a sense of history reason to pause, for when the Championship was last held at Sandringham in 2003 he won with FTCh Drakeshead Deana who had been the Championship's youngest

ever competitor when she ran in Scotland in 2000.

That is a record David Latham consolidated spectacularly, because the new Champion was not only the youngest amongst a card of 58, he is also the third youngest winner in the competition's hundred year history: indeed, the youngest since 1950. Within just one incredible season he has won a Novice stake, gained his FTCh title and gone on to achieve the ultimate distinction. Showing a barely credible maturity he worked without fuss and, over eleven retrieves, never allowed a blemish to intrude on what became an unassailable run of straight 'A's.

*David Latham with the 2010 Retriever Champion FTCh Delfleet Neon of Fendawood and the Glen Kidston Challenge Trophy.*







*Doing the books, Judges Roger Tozer, Darren Hales, Tess Lawrence and Ian Openshaw.*



*Eddie Robinson at work with FTCh Willowmount Hazel watched by Judge Ian Openshaw.*

*(Below) David Latham with FTCh Delfleet Neon of Fendawood and John Halsted with FTCh Sherwood Ace of Spades share a joke with Judge Roger Tozer as the line prepares to move off.*



## **Already FTChs.**

Others came close though. For this was a Championship in which runners were taken and the nine awards – ten at Holkham in 2004 excepted – were the most over the last decade: testament to much good work in exacting conditions. Arctic weather and injury reduced the largest ever card to 54 runners. Those who made it to an icy Sandringham included 31 dogs who were already FTChs. Four Golden Retrievers ran and, of the 50 Labradors, eleven were Yellow with dogs outnumbering bitches by 38 to 20 on the card.

It was a card which showed that four dogs had qualified by the demanding B route. Multiple qualifiers kept the field below the 60 threshold. Sandra Halstead's FTCh Levenghyl Silvercloud of Drakeshead, third and fourth in 2008 and 2009, had double qualified, as had Alan Rountree's FTCh Waterford Galahad of Tasco. That young dog's dam, FTCh Waterford Easter had been qualified by Nicola Rudgard and Jayne Coley's Waterford breeding was also represented by her own FTCh Waterford Fergus who had, remarkably, won three 2 Day stakes. John Halsted, meanwhile, had the distinction of handling four dogs: the Duchess of Devonshire's 2009 Retriever Champion and her young yellow FTCh Emmanyan Ramble; another young yellow Emmanyan Rocket of Chatsworth for Lady Celina Carter and Cherry Finlan's FTCh Cherwood Ace of Spades who had finished second at Blankney in 2009.

The Judges were Roger Tozer and Darren Hales, who were paired on the right, Ian Openshaw and Tess Lawrence - her 2007 Champion FTCh Willowyck Ruff was the most significant sire with seven of his progeny running. Of prominent dams, FTCh Glenpatrick Eve again had four of her progeny by two different sires running.

Scent was always critical to the first day's work around Lyng House Farm. It was some time before a strong sun in the clearest of skies warmed the air and when, early on, Ian Openshaw picked a cock in the flanking wood that four dogs had failed on prospects looked challenging. Later in the morning scent improved however and dogs were able to turn onto birds which were, in any case, often plainly visible as they flapped in the flattened beet. Shortly after lunch the air temperature plummeted and the best struggled. Eddie Robinson's FTCh Willowmount Hazel was eyewiped on a hare by Nicola Rudgard's FTCh Waterford Easter. Then, taken to the other end of the line, Jenny Hankey completed a third dog down eyewipe on a hare with FTCh Ardmuir Lady's Smock only to fail behind Alan Rountree and FTCh Waterford Galahad of Tasco on another shot at the same time. The Judges picked with ease.





Alan Rountree and FTCh Waterford Galahad of Tasco watch work on a cross line hare.

## Startling speed

Then, as the line approached a pit that held many birds, John Halsted slowed FTCh Emmanygan Ramble to walking pace to secure an eyewipe on a bird which the dog finally saw rather than scenting it. Later he repeated the process with Emmanygan Rocket of Chatsworth after Paul Owens Jagdens Evie had been all over a bird which it could not pick. All the more remarkable, then, that shortly after the line turned to walk back into the slight breeze Jim Swindlehurst's FTCh Adoraden Quinn took a cock runner for eighty yards straight ahead at startling speed. It was a powerful marker on a day which closed with four dogs failing on a woodcock which eluded the Judges as well. FTCh Emmanygan Ramble, the first to be sent, was gone on a day which saw the card halved. The Judges called 29 for the following day at (Below) Tagabea Flame of Ribblesdale retrieves to Ricky Moloney watched by Jim Swindlehurst and FTCh Adoreaden Quinn.



Kirsty Cousins picked two tremendous runners with Gortons Red Ruby Rascal.

Anmer, with 9 still to complete their second round.

Snow heralded the opening retrieves on another bitter morning. Billy Higginson sent Int FTCh Ferncot Quester without being bidden but Kirsty Cousins with her golden Gortons Red Ruby Rascal opened her third round retrieve confidently with a live hen to the left. Her second retrieve was a fine collection of a cock which ran through the boundary hedgerow on the right before doubling back and then 150 yards up the field in the deep headland snow. Work in the next round attracted attention too. Shortly after Alan Schofield had garnered applause with Eastdale Harry, working the line some 200 yards to pick a cock runner, Kirsty Cousin's golden bitch again owned the line of another strong cock runner and took it to the end of the field. Dick Sorley secured an eyewipe with FTCh Anson Anne of Denbank, third at Windsor in 2007, and after lunch the Champion worked well on a rabbit shot at five times: two whistles enough to resolve its final location.

## The weather deteriorates

With weather worsening a halt to shooting was called at 2.15 after the completion of two further rounds. The field halved yet again and, of the thirteen handlers still required, no fewer than five were previous winners of the Retriever Championship. Very different challenges were in prospect in the long white grass and drainage ditches of Wolferton where a keen north-easterly made it, if anything, colder.

Skins of geese wheeled overhead as John Halsted



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*The guns who shot superbly, l to r Alexander George, Simon Hickling, Marcus O'Lone, Peter Ord, David Clark and Paul Burch.*

made a tidy collection of hen beyond a fence on the right. But when another was shot there Richard Ashdown's golden Mistybrook Bracken failed to make the distance and David Latham's FTCh Delfleet Neon of Fendawood picked it effortlessly. A little later, as a partridge ahead was shot by Sandringham Agent Marcus O'Lone standing forward, a cock was dropped into the lichen covered alders on the far right of the line. Sent for the pheasant, Kirsty Cousins could make nothing of it. Neither could three others, nor the Judges: but deemed a first dog failure she was gone.

## Searching questions

After the line turned the Judges began to ask very searching questions. Behind Dick Sorley, the Champion was to the fall area 200 yards distant in one cast. But despite being all over it he could not find and judge Ian Openshaw eyewiped the two of them. With guns well forward finding game in the long grass with indifferent scent was never going to be straightforward. A further round with the seven surviving dogs saw consistently tidy work with David Latham's young dog very assured on a cock in the middle of the line. Alan Schofield's challenge faltered, however, when he was sent immediately for a running cock shot going away by Simon Hickling standing very far forward. Eastdale Harry was soon to the fall, but could make nothing of it. As he was the lowest number the Judges looked without sending another dog and only the drive at the drainage ditch remained.

Both Kirsty Cousins and Alan Schofield were included in the drive which presented an extreme test of steadiness as a hare ran between Sandra Halstead and David Latham, bouncing off the future Champion, as they sat

waiting for birds to come over. The large and strongly international gallery had seen much quality work in exacting conditions. The new Champion's maturity was exceptional for a dog not yet three years of age and his gamefinding was always uncluttered. Indeed, as so often happens with winners there was little need for handling. The Judges might, as Tess Lawrence put it, have had "an awful job to find a winner." But in FTCh Delfleet Neon of Fendawood they had the only dog that had been clean in everything he did and in David Latham they had an accomplished handler who now joins the very select ranks of those who have won the Glen Kidston Challenge Cup twice or

more.

## Results:

1. David Latham's lab.d. FTCh Delfleet Neon of Fendawood
2. Roger Ketley's lab.b. Highroost Brooke
3. Sandra Halstead's lab.b. FTCh Levenghyl Silvercloud of Drakeshead
4. Cherry Finlan's lab.d. FTCh Cherwood Ace of Spades handled by John Halsted

## Diplomas of Merit:

Lady Celina Carter's lab.d. Emmanygan Rocket of Chatsworth handled by John Halstead  
 Jim Swindlehurst's lab.d. Ardoraden Quinn  
 Alan Schofield's lab.d. Eastdale Harry  
 Linda Partridge's lab.d. FTCh Braidenvale Spinnaker  
 Kirsty Cousins' golden retriever b. Gortons Red Ruby Rascal

*(Below) Graham Slater's FTCh Shadowbrae Druid of Oakshot retrieves a lively cock pheasant watched by Dick Sorley with FTCh Anson Anne of Denbank.*





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# 2011 Retriever Working Tests

These dates are accurate at the time of goint to press

Date	Venue	Organisers	Contact	Telephone
12 March	Shanes Castle	Ulster Select – selection test	Johnny Rea	028 2589 8428
19 March	Larchfield Estate	BASC	Tommy Mayne	028 9260 5050
26 Mar	TBC	Ulster Select v Tay Valley	Johnny Rea	028 2589 8428
2 April	Drumbanagher	NIGF&SS	Philip Turner	028 9261 1845
<b>9 Apr</b>	<b>Shanes Castle, Antrim - Selection Test for Irish Game Fair &amp; Country Lifestyle Festival</b>	<b>UGRC Novice &amp; Open Tests</b>	<b>Joe Johnston</b>	<b>028 8673 6432</b>
16 Apr	Delamont, Killyleagh	Killyleagh W/S	John Wilson	028 4482 8697
23 Apr	Craigavon Lakes	Craigavon	Noel Doran	028 3832 5272
25 April	Killadeas Shoot – Specials for Minor breeds from IWS Club	Fermanagh	Bertie Law Robbie Cranston	07966644478 07894987652
<b>30 April</b>	<b>Ballywalter Game and Country Living Fair</b>	<b>North v South plus Novice &amp; Open Spaniel Tests plus Scurry &amp; Novice Retriever Test</b>	<b>Ken Lindsay Johnny Rea</b>	<b>028 2589 8428</b>
<b>1 May</b>	<b>Ballywalter Game and Country Living Fair</b>	<b>International Team plus Open Retriever Tests plus Scurry</b>	<b>Johnny Rea</b>	<b>028 2589 8428</b>
7 May	TBA	Comber W/S Lab Club	William Harpur	028 9187 3534
14 May	Dobbs Estate	Lab Club	Joe Morrison	07739 515200
21 May	Rademon	UGL	E. McIlwaine	02837552549 07799718963
29 May	Moirra	NCF Retrievers	Noel Doran	028 3832 5272
4 June	New Ferry , Bellaghy	Moyola	R Kane	028 7946 8585
11 June	Drumcairne	Mid Ulster Gundog	R. McGregor	028 77729690
18 June	Ballywalter	Meningitis Charity Also Spaniel Tests	Eddie Moore Eric Savage	028 9062 7664
<b>25 June</b>	<b>Irish Game Fair, Shanes Castle Dog &amp; Gun event</b>	<b>UK Inter Club Golden Retriever Tests Novice Test</b>	<b>URGC Joe Johnston</b>	<b>028 8673 6432</b>
<b>26 June</b>	<b>Irish Game Fair Shanes Castle</b>	<b>International and Open Retriever Tests</b>	<b>R. McGregor Mid Ulster</b>	<b>028 77729690</b>
2 July	Clandeboyne Estate	Labrador Retriever Club Of NI	Joe Morrison	07739 515200
24 July	John Agnew's Saintfield	Flat Coat Society	Simon Parke Bert Carlisle	07786435421 07860622426
6 August	Gosford Castle	Inter Club Test	Noel Doran	028 3832 5272
13 August	Warrenpoint	Ulster Retriever Club	Danny Nelson Gerard Murdock	90612301 417552026
<b>27 Aug</b>	<b>Irish Game &amp; Country Fair Birr Castle</b>	<b>Prelim/Novice Retriever Tests</b>	<b>Albert Titterington</b>	<b>028 44839167 0772 0971181</b>
<b>28 Aug</b>	<b>Irish Game &amp; Country Fair Birr Castle</b>	<b>Open Retriever Tests</b>	<b>Albert Titterington</b>	<b>028 44839167 0772 0971181</b>



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# The Irish Kennel Club's 35th Championship for A.V. Spaniels

**T**he 35th Championship was held at Ballynatray Estate, Youghal, Co. Cork on 30/31 December 2010 by kind permission of the estate owner, Mr. Henry Gwyn-Jones.

The Ballynatray Estate, an exceptional 18th century Georgian House overlooking the Munster Blackwater River, offer many different types of country entertainment and you can look at their website [www.ballynatray.com](http://www.ballynatray.com) for full details. RED MILLS, makers of premier animal feeds and superior dog food were the proud sponsors of the championship and their representative Johnny Geoghegan was present over the days to enjoy the spectacle.

The Judges were Mr William Megaughin from Northern Ireland and Mr Mark Clifford from England, both are experienced spaniel judges and handlers and the referee for the event was the very well known gundog personality and 'A' spaniel judge, Mr. Dermot Cahill. The estate game keeper, Mr. Martin O'Riordan, acted as steward of the beat and guided the championship successfully throughout the two days of competition.

There were 33 English Springer spaniels competing in the Championship, bitches comprised 25 of that number leaving a small field of eight spaniel dogs.

The ground which was selected for the championship was a continuous flowing sea of low green brambles set in mature woodland. The ground was the same for each competitor and it made for a level playing field for all the dogs and handlers. Each and every spaniel had to hunt fresh green briars to find game and those spaniels that bounced over the brambles instead of getting down under paid the price and did not get into the awards.

The first two dogs in line, Robin Young with Cheweky Hedgecutter of Cowarnecourt and Richie Power with Molly Malone Two were directly into game, and a number of birds were flushed at this point. Molly Malone Two was sent on a runner which she did not retrieve but there appeared to be a time delay before she was sent and she appeared not to be penalised.

## *Sea of brambles*

As the trial progressed though the woodland, dogs had to work very hard to locate game and this took its toll on hard hunting dogs. Dogs that faced the sea of green bramble showed great courage but came away exhausted and bloodied by the experience. The brambles were green and fresh as they did not appear to suffer



*The winner - Paul Carragher with FTCh Clonduff Delilah.*

from the serious ice and snow of the previous weeks. A considerable number of spaniels, close on 30% of the entry found difficulty in facing the bramble and while they may have looked pacey and stylish they did not want to face the cover with any drive and of course paid the penalty for their indiscretions. Several of the spaniels indicated their challenge after the first day for the title of Irish Championship and they included Des Donnelly with FTCh Skronedale Romulus who gave a fine display of hunting but could have been seen to hunt under the bramble more often. George Wilson handling FTCh Helmsway Hawk of Witchwillows, who has come all the way from England on his yearly trip to the Irish Spaniel Championship, this spaniel is an excellent hunting dog with plenty of fire and again gave a display of hunting in very difficult cover. Robin Young handling the ESS bitch Cheweky Hedgecutter of Cowarnecourt had a difficult run at the very start of the event but her stamina and pace gave a worthy run to allow her to be a contender.





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*Runner up George Wilson and FTCh Helmsway Hawk of Witchwillows.*



*Third place went to FTCh Skronedale Romulus ESSD owned and handled by Mr Des Donnelly.*



*Judges Mark Clifford and William Megaughin compare notes.*

*(Left) Robin Young with Cheweky Hedgecutter of Cowancourt took fourth.*

Willie Edgar with McGwyn Deallus again appeared to have a run worthy of note and her handler was very much upbeat after his first run. Paul Carragher with last year's winner FTCh Clonduff Delilah had a very smart first run, finding game with ease and showing no fear of the cover. Ronan Gorman, well known spaniel handler from Derry, handling two spaniels both with the potential to be in the final shake up, his spaniels hunted with drive and style despite the hard going and Gardenrath Jasmine of Commonshell and Blueberry Sherbert of Commonshell would have the opportunity



on the second day as both spaniels progressed to their second runs. FTCh Butlerstown Buddy, a very hard hunting little spaniel and probably one of the highest award winning spaniels in Ireland if not the British Isles did not have a second run as he decided to hunting when sent for a retrieve in his first run.

After the judges examined their books at the conclusion of the first day of the championship, 18 spaniels were called to run on day two. A number of spaniels would only get their first run on day two due to the time constraints on the ground.

### ***The analysis and awards***

Again as on the previous day, green bramble was the ground of choice and many of the first day successes were to falter with 6 more spaniels failing to finish the course. Game came quickly on day two and game is what separates the boys from the men in a spaniel trial, although not all had finds in their second runs which allow the judges use the benefit of their experience to separate the spaniels in the final analysis. A number of handlers were very confident at the conclusion of their second runs but the final results would indicate that the judge's assessment of those spaniels did not agree with the handlers. Such is trialling. When the books were closed 12 spaniels were



called to water, each spaniel completed the water test without difficulty and the emphasis then changed to the results.

The presentation of awards took place at the Midleton Park Hotel in Midleton and the awards were presented by Johnny Geoghegan as the representative of REDMILLS who are the sponsors of the IKC Spaniel Championship.

### ***The results:***

- 1st. FTCh Clonduff Delilah ESSB owned and handled by Mr Paul Carragher.
- 2nd. FTCh Helmsway Hawk of Witchwillows ESSD owned and handled by Mr George Wilson
- 3rd. FTCh Skronedale Romulus ESSD owned and handled by Mr Des Donnelly.
- 4th. Cheweky Hedgecutter of Cowarnecourt ESSB owned and handled by Mr Robin Young

### **DIPLOMA'S OF HONOUR:**

Mr W Edgar's ESSB McGwyn Deallus; Mr.N Price's ESSB FTCh Rosebay Crystal; Mr A Jones ESSB FTCh Flexdale Hallie; Mr M Walshe's ESSD FTCH Sprucehill Teuez; Mr T Crothers' ESSD FTCh Kidnias Saxon of Birdrowe; Mr Ronan Gorman's ESSD Blueberry Sherbert of Commonshell; Mr Ronan Gorman's ESSB Gardenrath Jasmine of Commonshell; and Mr Larry Taafe's ESSB Wanderer of Tobyhill.

*Referee Dermot Cahill with the Guns.*





# THE KENNEL CLUB'S ENGLISH SPRINGER SPANIEL CHAMPIONSHIPS 2011

**T**he 2011 English Springer Spaniel Championship - its 81st - was held at Ford and Etal Estates, Northumberland by kind permission of Mr Wilson Young and Eskdale Shooting Services on the 13th 14th & 15th of January. I think special thanks should go to Mr Wilson Young who stepped in at the last minute to offer the Estate as the original ground became unavailable. Thanks should also go to Mr Bob Clark and Les Hanwell (Head Keeper) and all their team who had to fight against the adverse weather conditions of up to two feet of snow which had lasted for three weeks prior to the Championships.

The Steward of the Beat was Mr Bob Clark (Shoot Manager) and Chief Steward was Mr Steve Russell and the Judges were Mr Dave Anderson, Mr John Dickson, Mr Peter Jones and our own local Judge, Mr Victor McDevitt.

I had the honour of being asked to shoot at these Championships so I had the privilege of being up close to see the best handlers and best dogs in the UK and Ireland.

Fifty-seven Spaniels were qualified to compete. Seven

were withdrawn due to being in season or injured. One was a non-runner qualified by Judge Victor McDevitt and two were qualified but not entered by D. J. A. Openshaw. Forty seven dogs were therefore on the ground, ready to compete when Chief Steward Steve Russell announced the trial had started and we moved away from the meet in the marquee to white grass and into the pine woodland.

## *The First Day*

The first day was hard going for many of the dogs, some of them having long runs before contacting game. It was obvious that the weeks of snow had flattened the cover and birds were running in front and flushing, sometimes out of range of the guns.

The first to run on our side was Tim Crothers. The ground didn't seem to suit his dog FTCh Kidnas Saxon of Birdrowe and he never really got going. Tim was not called for the second day. Next in was another local lad, Mick Walsh. His dog INT FTCh Butlerstown Buddy started off quite well quartering his ground with enthusiasm, but a hen pheasant hiding in the cover proved too much temptation and Buddy decided to peg, so ending Mick's championship. Malcolm Taylor's dog

FTCh Clangregor

Albammach of Biteabout was the first dog to make his stamp on the championships with a nice stylish run, a good find and retrieve on a pheasant, finishing with a retrieve on a hare. Aidan Patterson followed with FtCh Buccleuch Dawn by Freecrow. Aidan's bitch hunted her ground naturally, with very little whistle, checking every hiding place where game might be lurking. A lose pheasant was shot, marked, and retrieved with ease. Aidan had a long hard run after this, before finishing with a find and retrieve on a hare. Our next local lad to come under the



*Flaxdale Hallie with another fine retrieve for handler Robin Young.*



*Waiting for the Run Off: (L/R) FTCh Morfudd Mungo Owner/Handler Mr G Meehan; Mr. A Ladyman's FtCh Rosebay Camille; FTCh Buccleuch Dawn by Freecrow Owner/Handler Mr A Patterson; FTCh Clangregor Albammach of Biteabout Owner/Handler Mr M Taylor; and FTCh Flaxdale Hallie Owner Mr A Jones, Handler Mr R Young.*



Judge's eye was Des Donnelly, with Irish FtCh Buccleuch Pepper. Pepper started off with lots of pace, making a good job of a blind retrieve, followed by a find under a fallen tree and again retrieved to hand. The first day was now drawing to an end and light was beginning to fail. Pat Brennan's FTCh Deniro Dream started his run hunting the cover with power and style. This little bitch really got under the cover and it was apparent she knew what she was looking for. A find soon followed and was shot dropping into a river. Deniro Dream ended Pat's dream by making hard work of the retrieve and she wasn't called for the second day.

It had become quite obvious, from early on in the Championships, that the Judges were mindful of the difficult conditions on the open ground and the number of competitors needing finds and retrieves, so they were looking for dogs which hunted naturally, taking the cover on their beat with minimal encouragement from the handler. Dogs were not called for a second run if they

had to be handled on marked retrieves, over handled in hunting, or displayed poor ground treatment.

## **The Second Day**

The second day started with twenty-six dogs still in contention being called for a second run, plus ten that had still to get their first run. We moved in convoy to different ground a conifer strip alongside a road, then uphill to pines with better cover of laid bracken and branches. Straight away we were into game and this proved to be the best day of the Championships.

The familiar face of Paul Carragher with FTCh Clonduff Delilah fresh from her Irish Championship win for the second year running, took her place in line. Delilah was hunting with her usual vigour and was soon into game and, when a shot bird fell only a few feet from her nose, it was a great testament to her steadiness. The Judge walked out and lifted this bird as the retrieve would have been pointless. A few finds and retrieves later and Paul's run was over. Robin Young's bitch FTCh Flaxdale Hallie was now about to make her mark on the Championships. Hallie's hunting was awesome. Her style, drive, pace and her pure natural enjoyment of hunting was apparent from the moment Robin clicked her off. Nose and tail to the ground she was a joy to watch. With five faultless retrieves, of which three were blind, she finally had a very positive find to complete her second run. Hallie from then on had made a name for herself and was now the talk of the Championships with the entire Gallery.

## **The Third Day**

Again on the third day we moved in convoy. Mr G. Meehan's dog FTCh Morfudd Mungo started just off the



*The Guns (L/R) Terry Frost, Richard Beckerleg, Brett Clifford and Willie Megaughin.*





(L/R) John Dickson, Peter Jones, Victor McDevitt and Dave Anderson.

lead with two blind retrieves which were promptly delivered to hand. Mungo was a joy to watch with style and pace to spare. He had a couple of finds, followed by a marked left and right retrieve. He went exactly where pointed making both retrieves look simple. You could

see this really impressed the Judges.

Five dogs were then called to the Run Off for the top four Awards three bitches and two dogs. Aubrey Ladyman's bitch Ft Ch Rosebay Camille was impressive in the body of the stake, both in hunting and retrieving, but unfortunately was not placed after the run offs, receiving a Diploma of Merit.

It has been a long time since two dogs ended in the higher awards as bitches seemed to dominate in past Championships.

## Results

1st FTCh Flaxdale Hallie Owner Mr A Jones, Handler Mr R Young, also Guns Choice and Best Bitch, 2nd FTCh Morfudd Mungo Owner/Handler Mr G Meehan, 3rd FTCh Clangregor Albammach of Biteabout Owner/Handler Mr M Taylor, 4th FTCh Buccleuch Dawn by Freecrow Owner/Handler Mr A Patterson .

## Diplomas were awarded to:

Mr. D Rocket's Gorzone Grafter, Mr. E Scott's FtCh Broomfield Rosetta, Mr. Paul Carragher's FtCh Clonduff Delilah, Mr. A Ladyman's FtCh Rosebay Fantasy, Mr. A Whitehouse's Doncaster Star, Mr. D Donnelly Irish FtCh Skronedale Romulus also Best Newcomer, Mrs. M Cox's FtCh Scotsbury Scarlet, Mr. R Shepherd's FtCh Merebrook Echo, The Duke of Buccleuch's FtCh Buccleuch Onyx Handler Mr. D Lisset, Mr. S Pearson's Maesyronen Steeple Jack of Lisburne Handler Mr. J Bailey, Mr. A Ladyman's FtCh Rosebay Camille, Mr. T Frost's Churchview Abs Handler J Bailey, Mr. G Veasey's FtCh Twylight Mist, Mr. R Loomes's FtCh Melchbourne Melle, Mr. S Jones's FtCh Skersmoor Kaos.



Taking the title - Robin Young (L) and Owner Aled Jones with FTCh Flaxdale Hallie.



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# Firearms licensing Situation

**F**irearms licences first made their appearance in Ireland when the 1903 Pistols Act was introduced by the Westminster government. This was followed by the introduction of a serious bill in 1920, the Firearms Act, which was the forerunner of pretty well all firearms legislation today in these islands. In the Republic a 1924 Firearms Act was rushed through which paved the way for the 1925 Firearms Act that most of us are familiar with. In 1964 a further Firearms Act was introduced as was a minor amendments since then until the 2009 Amendments to the Firearms acts via the Criminal Justice Bill made their appearance. I had reason to research the subject just prior to last Christmas on foot of a request received from a US University professor in California who specialises in Criminal Law and Justice. The mission was to discover if British Firearms law applicable in Britain differed in any way throughout England, Ireland, Scotland and Wales before 1922.

Surprisingly, it turned out that firearms legislation per se had not made an appearance until the 1903 Pistols Act which required registration of all firearms with a barrel length of less than nine inches – handguns! Another form of minor registration was included covering owners who wished to carry their firearms outside of their own land. As the majority of the population did not own guns or have access to them, it appears that there was little necessity for firearms legislation in the first place. This all changed in the aftermath of both the 1917 Winter Revolution in Tsarist Russia and World War One. Vast numbers of citizens who had received military training and arms turned on the ruling classes in Russia and the rest is history. A repeat performance in Britain was always a possibility after 1918 with literally millions of working class men back from the trenches and fully competent in handling firearms. The government feared that these men might turn on them as had the Russians and a committee was set up to formulate proposals for restrictions on the ownership of firearms. Hence the introduction of the 1920 Firearms Act.

This new legislation allowed the Police to control who could legally hold firearms and to refuse licences to anyone whom they considered to be unfit. Thus was introduced the forerunner of the further draconian measures that have since been imposed on citizens in all corners of these islands. While it's highly unlikely that much notice was taken of the 1920 act in Ireland at that time, following the signing of the treaty the Irish Government produced its own 1924 Firearms Act which

was intended to shore up the new State's position until the introduction of the 1925 Act. Most firearms licence applications since then have been dealt with in accordance with this Act, apart from Ministerial sanctioned permits that no one is supposed to know about! A 1964 Act brought air-guns into the licensing system and it was at this point that I became aware of the 'wink and nod' method frequently used in the issue of firearms certificates. Following the implementation of the 1964 Act I disposed of my two air-guns which included the Diana rifle bought by my father for my seventh birthday. In 1965, just out of my teens, I applied for a .22 pistol certificate. The application disappeared into the standard black hole for over six months. Sound familiar? An irate telephone call to the Garda Superintendent concerned brought startling results. Initially he said he was refusing the licence because he didn't think I was a suitable person to have a pistol, despite the fact that I already held a .22 rifle licence. Then when he realised that he and my father had been at school together he changed his mind and the licence was delivered to the house the following morning. There isn't a section in any act that covers this type of situation, yet that was the yardstick used. That licence should only have been issued if I qualified under the terms laid down in the Act. If I had not made the cheeky telephone call its unlikely that the application would ever have been heard of again.

## *Eliminate abuses of the law*

Processing licence applications was all too frequently carried out nationwide in parallel fashion right up to 2009. Geographic location, Superintendent's personal whims, Garda policy, who had a headache, Department of Justice interference and sometimes whether the local Garda liked an individual or not accounted for an inestimable number of licence applications not being processed according to the law of the land. Far too many went 'missing.' When the latest amendments to the firearms acts were introduced in 2009 we were led to believe that all this was a thing of the past. This and other agreed procedures to eliminate abuses of the system were to be implemented and the law would now apply equally nationwide. The shooting community actually believed that this would happen. Unfortunately it was not to be the case. Within weeks of its introduction the new licensing system descended into sheer chaos. The people tasked with implementing it had difficulty understanding the complicated 10 page application form, as did many applicants. Chief Superintendents, now involved in issuing licences for the first time, brought the handling of applications to a new low. Once again applications went 'missing.' Despite the Garda Commissioner's press statement that applications had not gone astray, a large file of complaints on NARGC Chief, Des Crofton's desk says otherwise. I know five individuals who were asked to fill out the 10 page application a second time because the originals had been lost within the Garda System.



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This involved securing further photographs, copies of club membership cards, shooting permissions etc.

Of more serious concern is the number of licence renewals that were refused by Chief Superintendents. An extraordinarily large number of these refusals are now before the High Court and it is inappropriate for me to comment any further. Suffice it to say that the trust placed by the shooting community in the new system is long since gone, probably never to return. All eyes are now on the High Court and also on the new Garda Commissioner Martin Callinan to see if he is prepared to grasp the nettle and bang a few senior heads together. I had a brief conversation with Mr. Callinan last year and despite not

knowing that he was going to be appointed to the top job, I made it clear that we were very unhappy with the licensing situation. His response was to the effect that it will all work out OK in the end. That could be interpreted in either direction. We have to assume that he is smart enough to realise that if the current trend being followed by over half of the nation's Chief Superintendents continues, High Court appeals will be lodged ad infinitum to the detriment of his annual budget.

### ***He was dealing with someone who knew the answers!***

Last October, I had an in-depth conversation with Justice Minister Dermot Ahern about the overall situation. Just as I had not known that Mr. Callinan was on the way in, I also did not know that Mr. Ahern was on the way out, he having decided to quit politics when his present term of office expired. The Minister repeated the usual clichés he had used in the Dail about firearms licensing. On this occasion however, he was dealing with someone who knew the answers and named the Judges who had overturned umpteen licence refusals in the High Court while Mr. Ahern had only ever referred to a statement by Judge Charlton. I explained the injustice of banning Practical Pistol Shooting and to honest I believe that he now understands that it was a bad decision. In what was quite a cordial conversation it became apparent that he was not quite as bullish in his opinions as had been the case with his Dail speeches. Perhaps the astronomical number of High Court appeals had softened his attitude. After all, his new Law has the dubious honour of being the most challenged piece of legislation in Irish legal history. One of his final comments put



*The author with one of his fine safari trophies. Interestingly, the book's title is 'Worst Case.'*

a smirk on both of our faces. He said that he had brought the new legislation through all the stages and into law, leaving it to those who were best qualified to decide what firearms should be licensed – the Gardai. How could anyone resist laughing at that!

All of which brings me to a final thought. Having been in almost constant dispute with the Gardai since 1965 and occasionally so with the clerks in the Department of Justice over licence issues, I am of the opinion that firearms licensing should be entrusted to a new body driven solely by the provisions laid down by the law of the land. In my opinion neither the Gardai nor the DOJ can be trusted to deal with the subject impartially so the task should be moved elsewhere. For example, the Gun Safes issue which went all the way to the Supreme Court in 2003. There, the Garda Commissioner who had appealed a High Court loss, lost again - and it was stated by the Judges that Garda Policy has no legal standing. The Supreme Court clearly stated that only the Legislators can make policy. In 2009 a new Garda Firearms Licensing Policy Unit was established in Headquarters in the Phoenix Park. Why on earth would they need a Firearms Licensing Policy Unit if Garda Policy has no legal standing? Am I missing something somewhere? Will the new government resurrect former Justice Minister Michael McDowell's proposals to establish a central firearms licensing Registry? It would go a long way to sorting the present mess and probably save the State a fortune in legal costs in the future. Time will tell.





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# A Year in the life



Over! High birds at Drumbanagher.

*We followed 'keeper Brian Byrne through the spring and summer seasons on Drumbanagher Estate near Poyntzpass in Co. Armagh one of Ireland's premier driven game shoots. Now, summer has faded and autumn is upon the shoot again, with winter and the height of the shooting season just around the corner.*

Arriving at Drumbanagher, it is clear to the casual onlooker that the shoot has been completely transformed since our last visit. The steeply inclined avenue, the main thoroughfare into the demesne, provides an ideal vantage point from which to take in the vista of wooded hills and valleys, which are synonymous with Drumbanagher. A mosaic of fully established game crops now covers the landscape. Many of the trees on the estate are assuming their autumnal hues and there is a distinct scent of the maturing season in the air. Looking out across the estate, pheasants in stages of advanced development are very evident everywhere and flocks of mallard can be seen in the far distance flying high above the horizon of trees and between the numerous ponds dotted around the estate. The whole area is enveloped in game bird sounds, with cock pheasants crowing and whirring wings at all points of the compass and the chatter of mallard seemingly amplified by the valley as they alight on the pond below. Amongst the clamour of this game shooters' paradise, the

distant sound of a quad bike engine is vaguely distinguishable, indicating that Brian is at large somewhere on the estate attending to his gamekeeping duties. A short phone call later and arrangements are made for him to break briefly from his routine and meet up in the neat stone-built courtyard at the estate's shooting lodge.

From a lengthy discussion of developments on the estate since our last visit it is clear that Brian is at the height of his busy period. It is also clear that hours required of a full-time 'keeper far exceed those many other professions. Brian said: "Since the birds arrived on the estate I'm pretty much on site from before dawn each morning until after dark. Proper gamekeeping stockman-ship requires that you must be present as the birds come down from the roost and until they're safely back up again. The benefit of putting in such long hours is that the birds get the attention they need; during the longer days of summer through to this time of the year before the days become really shortened and shooting is in full swing, I have plenty of time on the estate to complete all the necessary tasks that surround the numbers of birds I release." Brian added that his strict feeding regime, continuing habitat management, vermin



control and of course dogging-in all figure in the mix of work, as well as some of the less obvious, behind the scenes organisation involved in producing a convivial setting for all involved in the actual shoot days that lie ahead.

Clearly an estate of this size and the large numbers of birds released results in a heavy workload for one man. In discussing this, Brian paid tribute to the small group of individuals who provide casual assistance on this front: "I have an excellent team of gundog handlers who regularly provide assistance with the dogging-in and a number of others who assist with the other tasks around the estate throughout the year and particularly in the run up to shooting and this certainly lightens the burden; many even fulfil a kind of dual role in these respects. My association with many of these folk goes back some way, even to the previous estates where I've been the 'keeper. They are a select few who understand the needs of a sporting estate and are in tune with my own shoot management techniques and they show a degree of enthusiasm that perhaps is particular to the shooting fraternity. I feel very lucky to have the support of such a group and count them as close friends."

### ***The large team of working cockers***

Dogging-in is a very important task amongst the seasonal activities on the estate. Brian holds the firm opinion that it helps encourage the pheasants into the required areas once they leave the pens and avoids birds frequenting the margins of the estate where they sometimes draw undesired attention or simply become wayward. He maintains his own extensive kennel of cocker spaniels under the prefix of 'Drumnascamp' with some very fine breeding indeed. The lineage of his dogs is a veritable 'who's who' of the cocker world and many of the dogging-in team are also dedicated cocker men. "I



prefer cockers," said Brian. "My own selective breeding has produced an energetic line of dogs with great stamina and game-finding abilities. I also feel that cockers are more easily handled than some of the other spaniel breeds and this is a benefit to me as I use a fairly large team in relay so they must work well together as I ferry them all from location to location around the shoot in the Landrover."

Dogging-in takes place daily at key times of the day and even though this largely finds that birds are where they need to be, it maintains a presence on the ground and allows for useful surveillance of the birds' habits.

Brian also expends a significant effort in attracting birds into those areas of the shoot where they will be of most benefit to the driven sport that they will eventually provide. He uses a significant amount of straw along his feeding rides and routinely extends and refreshes existing straw rides to retain the attention of the birds in key areas. "The birds particularly favour freshly strawed rides and will spend significant periods scratching amongst them. With straw present the birds are generally very content in the area and spending longer periods where I need them reduces the time that they could spend in reaching less beneficial areas."

At this time of year vermin control activities are again increasing and foxes remain a primary focus. As mentioned previously in an earlier article, Brian prefers lamping as his main control method, although cage trapping also accounts for a number of individuals each year. "We begin lamping around July and continue right through to the following spring. Right now can prove one of the most successful periods as we deal with this year's foxes that venture into the area having been displaced by the vixen. The hours of darkness are beginning to grow a little longer at this time of year as

*The birds here favour strawed rides.*



*Vermin control is just one of the ongoing tasks.*



well, which is a benefit and we generally account for a good many due to these combined factors. We're lamping four nights a week at present and we normally shoot multiple foxes on each outing."

Attention on the estate is also now turning to the driven sport that Drumbanagher provides.

As a prelude to shooting tasks now include pegging the numerous named drives. Having had the shooting in hand at Drumbanagher for a number of years, pegs are now a set arrangement, although in the early days Brian admits that location would be subject to revision on an ongoing basis, until the optimum positions were determined. Now pegs are simply removed at the end of the shooting season for repainting and renumbering and to avoid them receiving the unwanted attentions of livestock or getting in the way of the forage harvester as much of Drumbanagher's pasture land is let for these purposes annually. Sewelling and rising wires are also removed from flushing points at the end of the season and during the closed season are renewed and replaced as appropriate. These are also moved back into the drives for the start of the season and Brian reveals that it can be a surprisingly time consuming exercise to re-erect them.

## ***Hospitality and the social aspect***

Another key to the shooting at Drumbanagher is the hospitality and social aspect of the sport and this applies to both the Guns and the many Beaters and Pickers-up who attend the shoots here. Brian added: "We have a modest shooting lodge here at Drumbanagher. It makes a cosy retreat during the worst of our winter weather and apart from keeping a well used lodge clean throughout the year, we like spruce it up with a fresh coat of paint annually. The numerous large tables at which we serve our shoot meals are cleared away at the end of the season and we have to rearrange these before

the first shoot each year. Catering is subcontracted and the Caterer we use produces everything from light refreshments for early and late season days to delicious hot lunches and deserts for our midseason more formal days."

"Our let days are normally arranged quite far in advance of the season and we have many repeat visits by teams of guns and individuals and this familiarity means that we're aware of our Guns' requirements and can cater to these accordingly," said Brian.

"It's important also that the Beaters and Pickers-Up, who are pivotal to providing driven shooting, are provided with hearty fare in good quantity after their hard work in the coverts and behind the Guns.

Brian runs his shoot days with military precision. "The majority of beaters and pickers-up have been coming to the shoots for many seasons now and all are familiar with how each drive at Drumbanagher works and what's expected during and after each of them. I also have key people who organise the teams of dogs, and everyone from the Game Cart Driver through to the those who act as host to the Guns during the shooting and back at the lodge have their individual 'jobs' on the day. I control the driving of each beat personally and accept that I have a reputation of a hard task master at times, but my priority must be to provide the best possible shooting for the Guns and this means presenting a steady stream of birds across the length of the shooting line and avoiding, where possible, large numbers of birds taking to the air at once; it can be a difficult balance to achieve."

At the time of our visit some duck days had already been shot at Drumbanagher and these again proved to be typical of the high quality of sport on offer at the estate with many more such days to come. With the start of the pheasant shooting just around the corner Brian is clearly well prepared for the season ahead and having

witnessed the superlative driven pheasant on offer at the end of last season, one can't help feeling a little envious of those Gun's who've managed to secure some days on the estate thereby reaping the benefits of the efforts made during another year in the life of this dedicated 'keeper.

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# The '47 Winter - now that was snow!

**I** am writing this article just after Christmas and I can say categorically that bad and all as this winter has been it has still some way to go until it can compare to 1947. I was working in London during the 62-63 winters and I know that it was a difficult trek to and from the train for what looked like an eternity, but city life is not the same as life in the country. In 1947 I was at home on the farm near Cushendall in the Glens of Antrim. I was waiting to go to the veterinary college in Edinburgh but the men returning from the war were given precedence over youngsters and I got fed up waiting and joined a Belfast newspaper. But that is another story. I was talking to a very fit middle aged man the other evening and he was telling me about having to walk through the snow for three miles the previous week and he wondered how it would compare with 1947.

Well, this is how it would compare. That year there was just my late parents and brother Archie at home on the farm which is on a plateau nearly three miles from Cushendall. On several occasions Archie and I, along with our two neighbours, Dan and John McKay, had to dig a way through five-foot snowdrifts to get the horses and carts to the village. There were three big falls that year between February and March, with snow piling on frozen snow until it filled the roadway and banked up as high as the thorn hedges. The story is told that men working at Parkmore were able to hang their coats on the telegraph poles! I can scarcely remember a day when there wasn't a bitterly cold east wind blowing which caused the snow to gather into drifts where there was a hedge or ditch to stop it. There was a massive loss of sheep on Slievenorra, Parkmore and other mountains in the neighbourhood. On Carrivemurphy an air drop of hay was organised but whether it did much good or not was open to question.

A typical day for Archie and me would begin in the wee small hours of the morning. The cows had to be milked and fed and countless gallons of water carried from a spring well about 250 yards from the house and the milk churn delivered, sometimes by wheelbarrow, to a spot about a mile away where the milk lorry would take it to Rathkenny creamery.

The driver, Denis McKeegan, was a decent soul but he sometimes had to voice his displeasure about being kept waiting for us to arrive with the milk by 7.40 am. Just try wheeling a barrow with seven, eight or nine gallons of milk in it up a fairly steep loaning on days when the snow had made it impossible to get the horse and cart out. And woe betide anyone foolish enough to neglect the horses or sheep. Deep snow was lying right down to the sea rocks about half a mile from our house and it was there that many of the ewes would have their lambs, presumably because it was warmer there and that was where the first green shoots would appear. It was a right steep climb back up to the top after ensuring that the lambs were all right.

## *Months before a thaw*

Now that I have set the scene I can tell you about a day that marked the men from the boys. On a Sunday morning the late Jaimie McDonnell and his brother Neil asked me to call over to their house a mere two miles away where there was a fox hunt in prospect. I would say it was into March by this time and the snow now had begun to thaw which makes walking uphill a lot more difficult.

After milking the cows and seeing to the sheep next day I gulped down breakfast and set off on foot over the mountain to the McDonnell home with the side-by-side under my arm. When I got there Jamie broke the daunting news that the object of our interest was probably in an earth several miles away within a beagle's howl of Trostan, the highest mountain in Antrim. Off we trudged through still deep, melting snow. Now I have to tell you that the McDonnell brothers were two of the hardest men in the country, both teak tough individuals who wouldn't be worried about a wee dander over the mountain even through the snow.

On our way up the steep hills we rose a fair few grouse and golden plover but we were not interested in them. The fox wasn't at home when we got to the spot where the two lads had seen telltale tracks a few days earlier. I had started in the morning on the milking round at about 6am and had had nothing to eat or drink since my breakfast when the chores were all done. I had no sandwiches or no flask with me – real men didn't bother with such niceties in those times.

From where we turned back I could see the top of Layde where our farm was and I can tell you it seemed a



long way away. When we got back to the McDonnell home Jaimie asked me in for tea - he was most insistent about it - but, foolishly I declined the offer. The 5.15pm bus was passing as I headed up over the mountain to home. I hadn't gone far before I knew I had made a mistake in not accepting the McDonnell hospitality.

### **Home safe but little sympathy**

With home still more than a mile away I started to eat snow for the thirst was getting to me. After an eternity I came to the head ditch and I remember leaving the gun down as I looked for an easy place to get over with snowdrifts on both sides of the ditch which was topped by a four feet fence. I don't know what happened next but I distinctly remember coming up with a start, realising that I was going the wrong way. I could see Red Bay in the distance straight in front of me when it should have been well to my right. I retraced my steps, found the gun and headed down McClarty's mountain to the road below. I got very little sympathy when I got home. I was hungry but was past eating. All I could do was drink glasses of water. That lasted for a while before I was told to get out and get the cows milked, for Archie was busy doing something else. I never told any member of the family how close I had come to being history as darkness descended and the frost began to bite. My parents were both kindness and consideration

personified but I know what they would have thought of anyone who had gone off a 10 miles walk, mostly uphill without anything to eat or drink for nine hours.

I can tell you the gun begins to feel mighty heavy after the first couple of miles. Is it any wonder that I prefer the stick to the gun on any walks I now embark on, long or short? And filling the flask (with tea) is the first thing I do before setting out. With hindsight I would say that physical fitness saved me that day in '47 but it requires a bit of luck, too.



*A farmer grits his lane near Cushendun during the recent snow.*

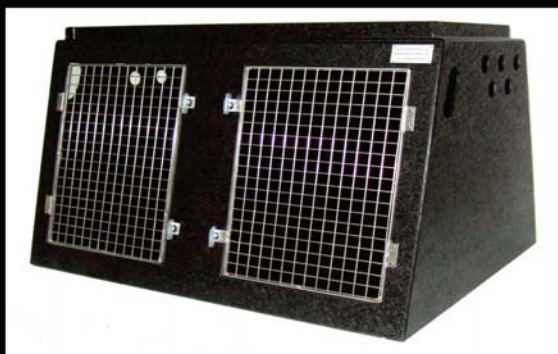
*Picture by Cathal McNaughton*

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# North Holland's goose and hare hunt

**T**he temperature was hovering around zero when we walked through the darkness onto the Dutch polder. The mud clung to my boots in great clods. I was sorry that the big freeze had ended, and the ground was now a quagmire. Ahead of me, my companions Niels and Frans seemed to be negotiating the conditions with ease. We approached the location where we would construct our goose hide and Niels started pushing poles into the ground and hanging netting up. Back in the summer, I had met Frans during a wild boar hunt in Holland's Veluwe region. He had been more than happily to extend an invitation for me to join him on a winter goose shoot. In Tasmania, I had bagged the odd black duck before, but I had never experienced a European goose hunt, or any other goose hunt for that matter. As the light slowly became stronger, Niels and I squatted behind the camouflage netting. Already swarms of geese had flown over us, but because of the darkness, the species could not be identified and shot safely.

On this hunt, we had been granted permission from local farmers to keep the geese off their paddocks. The geese droppings put cattle and sheep off from feeding on the pasture, and that costs the landowner dearly. Here, we were targeting several species, including the introduced Nile goose from Africa, mallard duck and grey and spotted belly goose.

Frans had taken up his position with his black Labrador Ed, a few hundred meters away from our position. Niels was armed with his Hungarian made under and over 12 gauge, loaded up with 2 3/4 inch shells packed with number four steel shot. Because of the toxic nature of lead shot, wildfowlers may only use steel in the Netherlands, which means a trade-off regarding killing power however, so when using steel shot it's best to keep the shooting range as short as possible. I hadn't had time to arrange a licence to hunt the geese so on this occasion I was armed only with my camera. Back in Australia, I usually went after wildfowl with my trusty old Remington 870 pump gun.

As the grey light saturated the sky, we spotted hundreds of geese flying over in formations. Most, however, were too high to guarantee a successful shot. Niels took out his binoculars and spotted a flight of geese,



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in ambush was that they might only shoot at angles facing away from the drivers. I knew it was going to be a busy morning when on the horizon of a distant field, I could see four hares already hopping about. When hunting hares, their habits can be considered fairly predictable. Back in my homeland, I had come across them a few times, but usually when they spotted me, they would squat down and hide.

If the 'predator' gets too close, they usually leg it and can reach some pretty phenomenal speeds. However, this predictability makes it more easy to shape a drive around them and the area we were in was predominantly long paddocks cut off by irrigation canals and with usually only one exit for escape to a neighbouring paddock.

We had been walking for about five minutes when on our right a hare broke from cover about 30 meters away. Now, I'd never been on a hare drive before, so I thought, because the animal was within shooting distance of Richard, he would drop it, but to my surprise, he held his fire. A few moments later, two shots broke the peace. In the distance, I saw Jan and Niels stand up from behind a fence they were using for cover. The first hare was in the bag.

The next paddock was filled with a lush cauliflower crop; it made for both good food and cover for our quarry. I trod carefully through plants in line with the row of vegetables. Not two meters away, a hare burst from cover in front of me. Frans was in front of me at the head of the paddock leaning against a gate. When I signalled the animal was heading his way he raised his Winchester Super Grade. The hare was now in full stride and cut straight past France heading towards the neighbouring field. A shot sounded and the hare came to a tumbling halt, hit through the head at 25 meters. It had been a fine display of field shooting.

While we waited for Niels and Jan to join us, Richard went into a plowed field thick with mud to drive any remaining hares towards France and myself. After fifteen



*A hare in hiding.*

minutes, no animal had been flushed but Richard looked knackered after almost losing his boots to the mud on several occasions. We walked towards the next field just as a small flight of mallards swerved in low towards us. Niels was taken by surprise but managed to lift his gun but by the time he had got aligned, the lucky birds were already out

of range.

Once again when it came to driving the next paddock, I was nominated for the middle position and we set off on a very boggy course. Richard and Frans were in ambush positions at the end of the strip, with Jan on my left and Niels on my right. Almost immediately a hare broke and ran away from us towards the waiting barrels of Frans and Richard. Niels raised his hand to indicate the animal was on its way. The clap of a shot rang out and the hare lay still roughly 150 meters ahead of us. Two more met a similar fate soon after.

As we approached the end of the strip, another hare burst out under some cauliflower leaves not ten meters in front of Jan. He raised his Berreta Silver Medal and the clap of a three-inch magnum cartridge blasted out while a quick second shot finished the job and by the time we reached the end of the paddock, five hares had been bagged for the pot.

We soon called it a day, we had bagged a good number of the crop raiders and the mud was becoming tedious. After a short drive to the farmhouse, we retired to a caravan Frans and Richard own on the property and divided up the spoils of the day.

Although I hadn't bagged a bird or hare personally, the lads were more than happy for me to take home a hare and a grey goose and they they were going to go down a real treat with my family for Christmas dinner. Soon we sat down to some lunch prepared by my hosts and a celebratory shot of Dutch gin - Jenever - to toast a very successful day's hunting on the polders of North Holland.



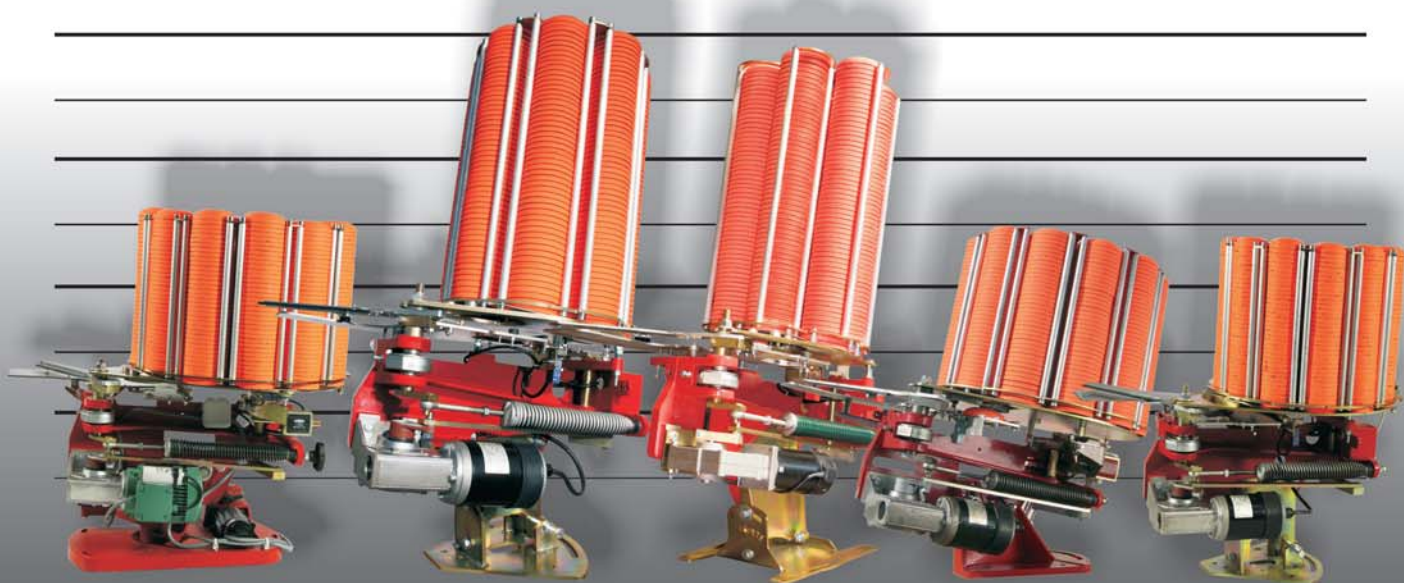
*Richard and Frans talk tactics.*



*A little field preparation and dinner will soon be ready.*



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# Country Chat

*Working as a team.*

*Rogue birds, forensic suits - and thinking like a dog or a person?*

**A**s I scribble this piece on Boxing Day, snow and packed ice covers the ground for the fourth week. The text message that I received from Countryside Alliance, informed me that the temporary suspension of wildfowling was to continue. The day before, I'd been out and about with the dogs on the club ground, checking the food hoppers. Hands in pockets mind you, for this was the third such suspension that I had received, such was the severity of the weather. Clambering over the snow-covered style at the far end of the poplars, I saw several little teal sitting on the stream which runs alongside the trees, with a few of them on the bank. Even though I was no more than twenty paces away and despite being aware of the five dogs and myself, unbelievably they remained motionless. The poor things were starving and almost tame, there I left them as I called the dogs up and walked away. Not on your Nelly would you normally get that close to wild teal!

Back in the 70s, gun in hand, I was walking alongside a marsh, when I was startled by a common snipe that landed practically at my feet. There it remained, as it tried to get meagre pickings from the hard packed surface. Conditions then were similar to what we received back in December. That said, I had no such reservations with the fox that came sneaking out of the same marsh a little further on, stopping no more than a

few feet away from me to look back at my dogs. In those days my dogs would have worked a marsh or any cover, without me having to tramp after them or 'hold their paw' if you know what I mean.

One week into the suspension, at the tail end of November, on a delightful walk in the snow at Knockmany Forest Park, I came across a snipe sitting in the drain alongside the track where I was walking. I whistled up the team and sent Heidi to the spot to see if she could get a point on it, but the little bitch hadn't the slightest inkling that it was there, eventually stumbling upon it and flushing it only a short distance where it dropped close by. With the ground surface completely covered in snow, freezing over and then covered with more of the wretched stuff, pretty as it may be, it's nigh impossible for these little ground probing birds to feed. Our club ground is surrounded by many 'unsympathetic newcomers' to the area, so our shoot captain places a ban on all shooting when a wildfowl suspension is in force. Even though our game birds are catered for even in the severest of weather, he believes that it doesn't help the club's image to be tramping through the snow blasting and banging away.

During the bad spell, I had every rogue imaginable feeding at the garden fowls' food trough. Rooks, greys, magpies, jackdaws and starlings, they were all there. At £7.50 a bag of Layers pellets, I wasn't feeling charitable enough to play Santa Claus. Now that I have splashed out on a few Sussex hens to accompany the ducks, there are many more mouths to feed. During the bad spell I had to increase the amount of food I was feeding to the



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ducks and hens, as they too were not able to forage about to supplement their daily feed. So, I toyed with the notion of kitting myself out in a forensic suit that I had obtained for the purpose of power washing. The idea being that I would blend into the snowy background like a Russian sniper and cull a few of the offenders. But I didn't take such drastic measures and decided to play crafty instead. I discovered that if I varied the times I fed the garden fowl and only gave them enough that they emptied the trough in the morning and again in the evening, there would be no more free meals for the rogues. It worked a treat, and when the snow disappeared so too did my voluntarily ceasefire!

### **Learning 'bucket loads'**

"Find a job that you love and you will never have to work for a living." After twenty-two years, I have given up dog training as a means of employment, but how I enjoyed it. When working with any animals, especially those that are confined for long periods, their welfare can be very demanding and very much a 24/7 job, especially as it entails looking after other people's pets. Although I didn't run boarding kennels, I did keep dogs in kennels for six weeks or more, a boarding school if you like, with the sole purpose to helping the dog and, more importantly its owner, to establish a more compatible relationship, at least that was the theory. I learnt bucket loads over the years about people and their dogs, none more than the fact that quite many them credited their dogs with human attributes. Not a dog that thinks like a person, did I yearn for, but a person who thinks like a dog. I still earn a living working with dogs, but part time and less demanding.

### **Keen to earn her keep**

Some time back, you may recall me mentioning, I was given a Hungarian Vizsla with a request to re-home her. But, I shot myself in the foot, so to speak. I told her previous owners that if someone was kind enough to come forward and give her a home, then it would be only right and proper that they got her for 'nought.' On the other hand, if they wanted to breed from her, they would have to buy all the relevant documentation. I then discovered that she is much keener to earn her keep than I am. Back in March, I took her to Scotland to pair count grouse. Every time Ceara and Heidi the two German pointers found and pointed, Tia the Vizsla would go running past them; not only did she 'bump the birds,' she would tear after them, putting up more as she went. At least she showed drive and enthusiasm for hunting, which was a good start.

She went back to Scotland in September, but this time she was working under 'battle' conditions. After a summer of training, she was there to earn her place

alongside the two Germans. Ceara, the oldest, was in heat and was therefore absent; Heidi was only there as a back up just in case the Vizsla went haywire.

Tia performed a treat, two days of finding, holding, flushing and retrieving grouse like she had been doing it all her life. Sometimes she was pointing birds and holding them for long periods, until I got up beside her and commanded her to get on. From October to the end of January all of the team usually hunt pheasant and partridge. The Vizsla loves hunting and like the other two would hunt all day and as you can see from the picture, she is now very much part of the team.

Finally, in gundog trials, it is always refreshing to see new entries, handlers as well as dogs. It is moral boosting to see the fresh and enthusiastic approach of youngsters and yet satisfying to watch the old hands making it all look so easy. So if I may be forgiven on this one and only occasion, I would like to ask any HPR enthusiasts out there who may be interested in training their dog up to competition level - bearing in mind that it is a well-trained gundog and not some sort of a super duper animal - to log on to the GSP Club of Ireland's [www.gpci.ie](http://www.gpci.ie) and find out more. On the other hand if you are thinking of getting a HPR gundog and would like a helping hand or a few training tips, (for nought obviously) gave me a wee buzz on 07801431441 I would be more than happy to oblige or send you off in the general direction to your nearest 'HPR stockist.'



*The author and his dogs.*





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# Art and Antiques



*GIRL WITH  
TOBOGGAN by  
William  
Percy French sold  
for €6,000 at  
Whyte's*

According to Managing Director James O'Halloran last year was a good one at Dublin based ADAMS sales house. "The word 'good' is entirely relative because the two years that preceded it were wicked and were two years during which we saw the art and antiques market in Ireland fall off a cliff," he tells me while outlining his annual review of the scene. Notwithstanding the massive collapse in the Irish economy and the ongoing difficulties caused by the lack of liquidity in the banking sector we found that the demand for high quality art works was actually very strong. Many purchasers were encouraged back into buying by the apparent good value and the increasing supply of quality, well provenanced and new to the market pieces. Adams have been at the forefront of the Irish art and antiques market for a very long time and this position has been copper-fastened in this period of downturn. "We took the view, early on, that it is vital for vendors to forget the bloated excesses of the height of the market and accept the new realities of life in 2010/2011. Those that did accept this advice were well rewarded as pieces with conservative estimates generally exceeded expectations.

This phenomenon was confirmed by the very high sales rates which on average were 82% which is significantly higher than any other auction house. Significantly the demand for 'Blue Chip' artists' work is increasing while the demand for more contemporary artists' work is definitely softening."

The highlight of the year had to be the sale of artworks from the Bank of Ireland Collection: "This select sale of some one hundred and forty five works was controversial in some quarters but nonetheless or perhaps because of it, it was a huge success with over five thousand people viewing the sale in the days leading up to it and over six hundred people attending the actual auction which had to be moved from our own premises to the Ballroom at The Shelbourne Hotel. On the night all but one lot sold, and even this work sold immediately after the sale. The sale totalled over €1.3 million against a pre-sale estimate of €800,000. All the proceeds are going to arts related charities in Ireland."

Highest price of the year was €140,000 was paid for Jack B.Yeats' Lingerin' Sun, O'Connell Bridge which was offered in the pre Christmas sale. Also sold in that sale were two Louis le Brocquy Aubusson tapestries, Adam & Eve making €100,000 and Allegory fetching €80,000. Both tapestries dated to the late 1950s. Northern Irish artists continued to be in demand and strong prices were paid for Dillon's Mending the Nets, Aran (€80,000);





ILLUSTRATION TO JOHN KEAT'S POEM, *THE EVE OF ST. AGNES* by Harry Clarke RHA (1889-1931) sold at Whyte's for €15,500

Paul Henry's *The Bog Road* (€72,000); Colin Middleton's *Opus 1, Esmerelda* (€62,000) and Dan O'Neill's *Figures on a Beach, Newcastle* (€60,000).

Antique furniture and collector's effects continue to play an important part in the sale calendar at Adams and in 2010 the sales house's second annual sale at Slane Castle brought together some eclectic attic material from Rahinstown House in Co. Meath including included Empress Sisi's riding crop, decorated with the arms of the Hapsburgs. "This delightful curiosity fetched €36,000 on the day while many high quality pieces of furniture were also well competed for, generating a total more than €1.5 million."

The year saw two specialist sales - Independence, where the top price went to Kevin Barry's last letter at €87,000 and The Cartography Collection of the Late Barry Hewson where the top price of €9,000 was paid for Ortelius/Boazio Map of *Irlandiae*. "Our Ava Gallery at Clondeboy held a number of significant exhibitions including Ulster Artists in April/May; The French Connection in Late summer, followed by Seóda, a sculpture exhibition and Martin Mooney, Recent Work as well as previews of the Bank Of Ireland Art Sale and our other Important Irish Art sales. Visitor numbers have been increasing steadily and we look forward to another exciting year in Northern Ireland where we have been made so welcome."

## WHYTES REVIEW

"Works of quality and rarity will continue to sell well in 2011, but run of the mill material will be difficult to sell at all." That is the message from Ian Whyte in Dublin whose sales house has in the past two years, returned to promoting Irish Art auctions in North America, the UK and other export markets. This we will continue to do as we have had some good overseas sales in recent times," he adds.

"While these sales mainly comprised traditional Irish landscapes and figurative works by artists such as James Humbert Craig, Frank McKelvey, Maurice Wilks and William Conor, we are now selling more modern works to the growing numbers of Irish born professionals working abroad. We see both of these markets as targets for growth."

### Highest selling works of art at WHYTE'S in 2010:

Sir John Lavery *Sunbathers* €240,000 (€310,000 gross) (in Whyte's New York sale, in association with Bloomsbury Auctions, 23 March)

Paul Henry *Fisherman in a Currach*, €145,000, (€174,000 gross) the highest price of the year in Irish salerooms, 29 November

Paul Henry's *Turn of the Road*, €80,000 (€96,000 gross), 31 May

Jack Yeats *Sketchbook 1899*, broken up into lots totalling €58,000, (€69,500 gross) 4 October

Paul Henry *The Bog Road*, €44,000 (€52,800 gross), 29 November

William Crozier *The Dark Barn*, €38,000, (€45,600 gross) 31 May.

Tony O'Malley *Spectral Gardens*, €38,000, (€45,600 gross) 31 May.

John Shinnors *White Kite, Scarecrow and Cattle* €28,000, (€33,600 gross) 31 May

Gerard Dillon's *Magic in the Sky* €28,000, (€33,600 gross) 31 May

Colin Middleton MBE RHA *Coastal Landscape with Trees and Cottage*, €27,000 (€32,400 gross) 4 October

The year 2010 saw a slight improvement in Whyte's turnover compared to 2009, with total gross sales up 10% at around €4 million, but still only 30% of total sales recorded in 2007. "The dearth of consignments of high worth paintings continues, as owners prefer to hold on to what is proving to be one of the safest havens for money in the world today," says Ian. "The few really good works coming under the hammer are mainly from estates and are well competed for. Knowledgeable collectors make up the majority of buyers." WHYTES Irish art sale, featuring the 'Place and Time Collection' late last November brought in €850,000 euro including premium and 70% of the lots sold. The top selling lot was Paul Henry *Fisherman in a Currach* which realised





*FISHERMAN IN A CURRACH, RHA sold by Whyte's.*

€145,000 euro (174,000 gross including premium) estimated at €100,000-150,000.

Other winners on the night were Percy French, who got the auction started with some fierce bidding in the room for the first 12 lots by the artist – all but one Percy French from the sale sold, many exceeding their high end estimates. An earlier little Harry Clarke soared to €15,500 (estimated at €8,000-10,000) with similarly strong bidding on two Bahamian works by Tony O'Malley one of which was estimated at €3,000-5,000 at realised €7,100. Northern artists, William Conor (€21,000) and John Luke (€70,000) both strongly represented with several works in the single owner 'Place and Time' Collection) triumphed in the sale proving that their desirability down south is unwavering in spite of the current economic condition.

The main attraction from the October sale was an 1899 sketch book of Jack Butler Yeats which had been broken up and framed individually, with tempting estimates of €200 to €1,000. The 40 lots were expected to bring a total of €18,000 to €24,000. With spirited bidding from the room, the telephone, the auctioneer's book of absentee bidders and buyers on the internet from such diverse locations as Barbados, Saudi Arabia and Lisnagry, the total was driven to €58,000 gross including buyer's commission and VAT. The highest price paid was €2,760 for a sketch of the artist's dog Hooligan in a boat.

Other important results from the sale: (prices include buyers' commission and VAT – pre-sale estimates are in brackets) Colin Middleton MBE RHA (1910-1983) Coastal Landscape with Trees and Cottage, 1937 €32,400 (€15,000-€20,000) Robert Gregory (1881-1918) Coastal Landscape at Ballyvelehan, Galway Bay €8,400 (€6,000-€8,000) Walter Frederick Osborne RHA ROI (1859-1903) Village Street Scene €6,960 (€4,000-€6,000) About 40% of lots sold went at or above the top estimates and 72% went at or above the lower estimate.

The May sale grossing over 1 million euro was the most successful art sale in Ireland last year. It presented an exceptional selection of outstanding works from the collection of the late Jim O'Driscoll SC. Among the top sellers from the O'Driscoll collection were several works by William Crozier, Tony O'Malley and John Shinnors many of which exceeded and even doubled their pre-sale estimates. William Crozier's *The Dark Barn* fetched €38,000, while John Shinnors' striking *White Kite*, *Scarecrow* and *Cattle* made €28,000. Work by both Tony and Jane O'Malley produced very strong bidding and all but one of their 13 works sold on the night. Among the most sought after O'Malley lots was his Bahamian painting, *Spectral Gardens*, which soared to an impressive €38,000 three thousand more than the high end of the pre-sale estimate. Gerard Dillon's *Magic in the Sky* a striking work which graced the front cover of the catalogue sold for €28,000. The single highest price paid for a work at this auction was €80,000 for Paul Henry's *Turn of the Road*, 1941, (lot 130), estimated at €60,000-€80,000. This oil was previously "untraced or unidentified" by Henry expert Dr. S.B. Kennedy and was seen publicly only once before Whyte's auction at the Combridge Gallery in autumn 1941, when Henry's works were received with acclaim.

## ROSS'S SAY GROWTH ANTICIPATED

Daniel Clarke at ROSS'S in Belfast which continues with its weekly general sales and specialist Irish art sales says, "I think there has been a realignment particularly in the art market during the past year. Prices now reflect the new economic environment we are in and while people are having difficulty in knowing where to invest their money some buyers have found art a fitting place in which to 'park' their money. We have witnessed many people returning to the market particularly those who did not consider art good value five years ago. Furniture has held up quite well in recent months but because of the state of the housing market there is a different volume coming into the sales room."

He says it is nevertheless a time of opportunity, particularly for new buyers now that the heady days have passed, to get into the market. There are opportunities I believe for both buyers and sellers in the present climate and you must remember that unique lots whether they be paintings, Georgian furniture, silver etc will always attract buyers who are prepared to pay reasonable prices. During the present year we expect growth but it will also be a year of innovation for many sales houses."

## BONHAMS VIEWS

BONHAMS view the past year as an extraordinary one for the art market. While the western world



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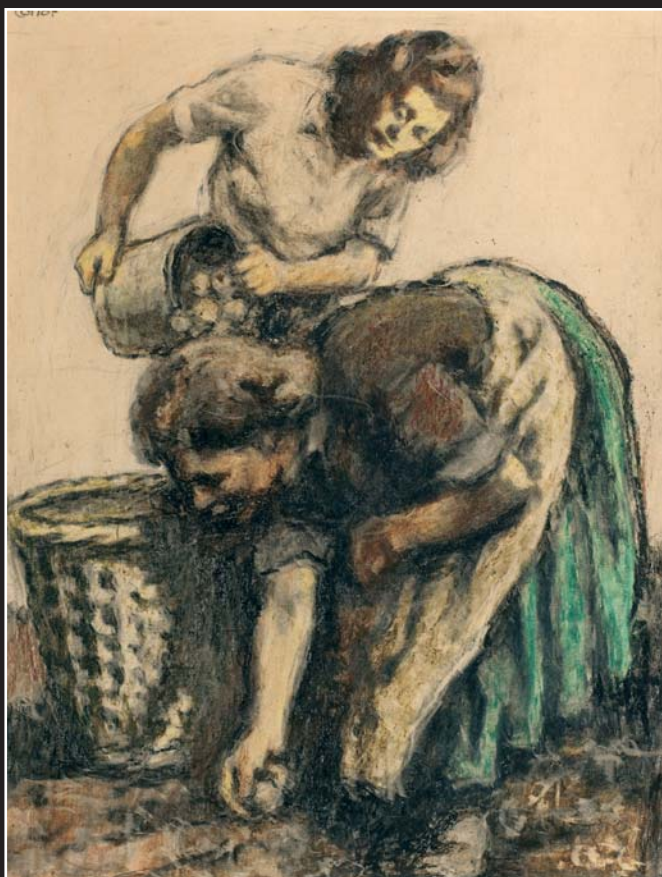


continues to wrestle with huge burdens of debt and economies struggle to achieve growth, the auction art market has delivered buoyant results and healthy selling rates. "This was the year that saw the world record for a piece of art at auction broken not once but twice – clear evidence that the world's richest collectors will continue to spend at the top end of the art market if they can get the right piece," their spokesman Julian Loup told me. "In the last quarter alone, Bonhams has achieved world record prices for the most expensive Russian piece of furniture ever sold at £936,000 and the most expensive Japanese at £166,000. The past year was a record one for Bonhams in literally every specialist department and it will be remembered as the year when the eastern hemisphere started to match the western for spending power. The stratospheric, hitherto unknown, prices achieved for some Chinese ceramics and jades – most famously the £53 million vase found in a loft in Ruislip – suggest that the Chinese buying phenomenon of recent years has not run out of steam."

Where Chinese interest will fall next is the question being studied closely by

auction houses and dealers across the world. The answer might lie in fine wines. Château Mouton Rothschild seems to be a strong contender but another surprise name has drawn away from the pack – Château Beychevelle which has a distinctive illustration of a ship on its label, said to resemble a dragon boat. Japanese art too has also shown a burst of activity, in what has been a depressed market since the early 1990s. The repatriation of art to Russia, China, South Africa and Greece has certainly motivated sales in recent months and the market for Old Master paintings continues to benefit from collectors' faith in a field that has now been traded at auction for over three hundred years. In contrast to the lower end of the furniture market, which has shown a negligible increase in value over the last decade, the demand for fine and important English furniture has always been strong. The past year appears to have been a very good one as indicated by the world auction record price for English Furniture of £3.35m for a Chippendale commode, set in December. This exceeded the previous record of £2.4m paid for another

Chippendale cabinet only two years ago. Bonhams has certainly had one of its strongest years for Fine English furniture culminating in our Provenance Sale in November.



(Right) *THE ROOK* by Tony O'Malley HRHA sold for €7,100 at Whyte's.

(Left) *THE POTATO PICKERS* By William Conor OBE RHA RUA ROI sold for €21,000 at Whyte's.







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# Plus Twos To School – In More Ways Than One!

**T**hat summer seemed to pass all too quickly with worries about the right of way across the top meadow and gathering a never ending collection of school ‘necessities’ – well enough to fill the old shooting brake and the trailer at any rate. Dixon found two magnificent travelling trunks circa The Boer War (first rather than second) and a stencil kit to emblazon them with the legends of I.V.A.N. and S.A.P. – it didn’t seem to dawn on him that a trunk marked IVAN at the bottom of a bed in the junior girl’s dorm and another marked SAP in the boys’ would be likely to cause problems even in a modern boarding school. Allowing them to paint them in psychedelic colours did help their street cred (as they call it) and avoided what I could see as a disastrous start to any school career. They’re biggest concern was that they would miss the November 1st opening day at Woodless, where we normally had our first bang at the pheasants with a collection of friends, which always brings a bit of harmless amusement and, occasionally, a few birds.

Ivan and Sap had just got to the stage of being pretty useful as beaters and were enjoying the shooting life even with the limited resources of Woodless. They also were itching to have an occasional shot preferably with Esso’s twenty bore, which Purdey had been letting them have a practice shot or two with down in the sand pit – far enough away from any road not to attract the wrong sort of attention, such as Sgt. Clancy. The relief when I explained that as the First fell on a Sunday that year and we wouldn’t be shooting lest we embarrass the Rector and the Bishop by calling them out on the Sabbath and they would be home for the Halloween break anyway. Esso was worried that they would be

homesick and Mrs. Reilly feared they would starve so had plied them with enough tuck to make them very popular. All seemed well when we left the School (you see it now has a capital letter) but I still feared that it wouldn’t be long before I had a distress call from some rather agitated teacher who had discovered what the twins were really like.

## *Plus Twos can be dim at times*

The next problem was a meeting with not only Mr. Quirk, but the delightful lady barrister, Áine O’Cleáraigh, who had been researching her way through Keane-Handy’s papers, the Law Library and the Brehon Law. As well Esso knows, Plus Twos can be rather dim at times and my suggestion that Áine might prefer not to drive back to Dublin after the meeting was ‘without guile’ never mind malice aforethought. I had just thought that she might like a look around to see if there was a house with the loose boxes and the couple of acres to suit her needs but Esso seemed to think she was a bit smitten with Plus Twos and the vast acres of Woodless Upper and Lower. She had some smart ideas to fight the case or so I thought until she suggested I should actually learn to speak the native tongue. Even in my better days at school I was despaired of by every teacher trying to teach me any language – Latin, French, Spanish and most definitely Geailge! Áine seemed to think it would dispel any sense of my being an upper crust Anglo-Irish type riding roughshod over the locals – I didn’t even know the locals concerned which wasn’t really surprising as I discovered. Purdey had told Dillon that he had never heard of them so Dillon had made ‘certain enquiries’ including from his niece in the estate agents. It turned out that the ‘injured parties’ at the



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other end of this rather expensive court case were what Dillon called ruddy blow-ins and worse than that weren't they some sort of bunny hugging environmentalists that wanted to ride mountain bikes around the place at weekends and save whales – pity there were no whales in Woodless, as Purdey said. They had bought a rather run down cottage and turned it into an environmental nightmare as far as the locals could see. Between solar panels and double glazing, recycling bins and wind chimes as well as their constant preaching on the virtues of their version of 'environmentally friendly'- they certainly didn't fit in with either the staff of Woodless or any locals that Plus Twos had ever met. It was just as well I had stopped Purdey from setting up the punt gun – could you imagine how that would have gone down? It looked jolly good, what with Áine the horsey lady, Delacey the fisherman and most of the 'real' locals on the side of Plus Twos for a change – what could go wrong?

I know that's a dangerous thought in Woodless but it did creep through my mind and for once Plus Twos was actually right. The opposition decided to bring down a few supporters from Dublin to support them at the next appearance in Delacey's little empire –and they duly appeared!

### ***A bag of 'herbs' beside the wood burner***

The second Tuesday of the appropriate month duly arrived but the environmentalists from Dublin had arrived the night before and had a little party including a midnight walk along the disputed right of way only to meet Supt. Farlow and a large force as they returned. They also met the local fire brigade who were hosing down the infamous environmentally friendly cottage or rather the smouldering embers. Some idiot had left his bag of 'herbs' beside the wood burner and the smell was 'significant' as the Superintendent said in evidence. He managed to 'rescue' enough of the 'herbs' to use in evidence and got the whole lot fined for possession. It was quite amusing when the Court Clerk called the right of way dispute as the next case and we might have even managed to win it without doing it 'os Geailge.'

Plus twos had actually won a court case for a change and the enemy were suitably routed and there was even a 'For Sale' sign on the smouldering ruins of the cottage. We would have to be careful who bought it next time round to avoid any further incursions from the newly enlightened country livers.

We were just settling down after the excitement of all that legal stuff when the dreaded call from the School came through on the phone. It was the dear Headmaster



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asking if we had some sort of difficulties in Woodless as neither Ivan nor Sap were pushed about going home on the approaching weekend break which for first year pupils was unknown! Esso assured him that all was well in Woodless and said she would have a word with them but wasn't it a good sign that they were so fond of the School! Esso can be a little innocent at times about boarding school life not having had the advantage of such an upbringing and I suspected that this might be one of those moments. After a bit of ferreting about with some of the few masters left in the old Alma Mater who remembered me, I discovered that their godfather, the mischievous Derek Whittle had taken to dropping by to cheer them on at occasional hockey or rugger matches and then handed over large supplies of tuck which they certainly didn't refuse. This had led Ivan, who obviously has her mother's gift for business, was just about putting the School's tuck shop out of business. I asked what Sap was up to with some trepidation only to discover that he had taken to rugger with a vengeance which was freely dished out to all opposing players. He hadn't actually put any of them in hospital yet but it was probably a matter of time. This still didn't explain why they weren't keen on heading home for a weekend so there was nothing for it but to ask them out straight – and I hate that sort of thing. Sap and Ivan had certainly been conspiring together as their stories matched far too perfectly. It was all because they were planning a right good root around the School when there were fewer other pupils about to get in their way – and what they were planning was too odd to bare the light of day. I could see that they had to be got home and kept out of harm's way or at least away from finding too many places to disappear around the beloved old pile that is such a fine educational establishment. It looked like Plus Twos was going back to school, as well as the twins, as he was going to have to learn fast to have any hope of keeping them from expulsion or worse!

### ***An occasional bang from an airgun was hardly major terrorism***

Dixon didn't seem the least perturbed by all this intrigue but good old Purdey was a little more sympathetic and managed to assuage some of my fears. Purdey suggested that the weekend could be filled with some firearms drill and a bit of rabbiting to keep them busy and get them well into the humour for the start of the season. Now Purdey was always a wily old bird with more than the usual issue of good sense so I was quite happy to give him his head. In no time at all he

had liberated several rather dusty air rifles which I had never even seen before and now with our new Superintendent, the reliable Farlow, we could have a few bangs without fear of a sudden raid from the constabulary. When Sgt. Clancy was in full flight we wouldn't have dared let off an airgun without spending weeks filling forms and grovelling to Clancy's ego. Now Plus Twos would never suggest breaking the law but an occasional bang from a rather weak air rifle could hardly be described as major terrorism – or so I thought!

Fortunately Purdey 'got wind of the word' in time and the pop guns found their way back to wherever they had appeared from and the FitzGerald Bourke blushes were spared. I don't know how Dixon managed it but he produced the famous model shotguns which Whittle had presented to the twins several Christmases before and, when the shiny buttoned crew arrived, Purdey was demonstrating 'a bit of safety' as he put it. Farlow turned up muttering apologies as he had taken his eye off that blighter, Clancy, while he inspected the new high speed police car which had arrived from Dublin. Clancy being Clancy had taken the opportunity to see what he could discover at Woodless as he hadn't forgiven us for the many past insults. Now why we needed such a vehicle in the quiet roads and boreens of Westmeath was beyond me! As long as Clancy wasn't let loose at the wheel we might be safe enough and Farlow had requested that a driver be specially trained but for what?

We soon found out exactly why as Farlow, complete with new driver, turned up at the opening meet of the Woodless harriers which kept the antis away if nothing else. Evidently, he had persuaded the powers that be in Headquarters that there was a risk of speeding on the new motorway which thankfully passed well away from Woodless.

Now it looked safe enough to send the terrible twins back to School until the first shoot at the Halloween break but I suppose that was a rather forlorn hope?

As always seems to be the lot of the FitzGerald Bourkes in general and Plus Twos in particular it soon became a very forlorn hope and the phone lines between the School and Woodless House were buzzing like a nest of angry hornets. That will take several pages to explain and it nearly did for several of the old retainers as well as Plus Twos.

**Plus Twos,  
Woodless House,  
Woodless Bog,  
Co. Westmeath.**



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# Federation of Irish Salmon & Sea Trout Anglers

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

**Secretary/PRO:** NOEL CARR, Teelin Road, Carrick, Co. Donegal. Tel/Fax 074 9730300. email: [dgl1@indigo.ie](mailto:dgl1@indigo.ie)

**O**n behalf of the National Executive Council of FISSTA may we wish all readers a very successful 2011 season. At our AGM in November our Chairman, John Carroll, reported a much improved outlook for the wild Atlantic salmon and sea trout but stocks were still under threat as far too many rivers still remain closed.

## **OPEN CLOSED RIVERS ASAP**

We will continue to lobby hard for more rivers to open as we believe that anglers on rivers are the best deterrent to the poaching which many clubs have to tackle on their own.

## **NEW AUTHORITY – FISSTA ON THE NEW BOARD OF INLAND FISHERIES IRELAND**

After 6 years of intense lobbying we eventually succeeded in getting a new Inland Fisheries Ireland bill passed into law last July. This new legislation will serve the salmon stocks and angling more favourably despite some opposition from others who do not have to pay a rod license. We are delighted to have our Chairman John Carroll serving on the IFI Board as one of the three members who was selected by the Joint Oireachtas Committee from over eighty applicants. No longer does netting interests outnumber angling as was the case on the now defunct central and RF boards. Overall, the passing of the bill (with all party support) and with the special help of opposition spokespersons Simon Coveney, FG, Liz McManus Labour and Government Ministers Eamon Ryan TD and Conor Lenihan TD. They should be all be mentioned to their party colleagues when they come looking for your votes in the coming weeks. The approval by Minister Conor Lenihan of pilot schemes for drift netting in both Castlemaine and Waterford bays was the lowest point of last season. We will take it up with a new Minister later in the spring.

## **SCIENTIFIC REPORT ON YOUR RIVER**

It is very important that your views are presented and relayed to our National Executive Council to ensure we assist



*Christmas salmon pool on the Glen River, Donegal.*

your efforts to resolve the general challenges your club faces every season. We found it difficult to obtain information on each fishery as the Standing Scientific Committee no longer communicates in the detail that we were used to in 2005-2009 period.

## **STOCKS - NASF BUYOUTS TO BE FUNDED IN 2011 - NO AUGUST DRAFTNETTING**

We continue to oppose the introduction of August netting and while we have already lobbied hard against it, we have been unsuccessful to date. We are campaigning by all legal means open to us to reverse this decision as we need to stop our late fish being commercially netted making our work meaningless and wasting our time and money.

## **BETTER INSURANCE COVER**

Once again there is no increase for improved cover that further protects you. So, registering your club is the most important task to undertake in the year and it is better to do it as early as possible for cover is initiated for the benefit of all.

## **STRONGER DEMANDS FROM CLUBS**

As our clubs request more assistance to ensure local angling is provided for the club members at a reasonable rate,



we must offer more so that every river has a club to foster the sport and conserve the stocks. To give such service we must therefore try to increase our income and participation in various ways during 2011 to continue to provide a more professional service. We thank those clubs who contributed generously and while some of our less funded clubs were unable to do so at the time many clubs made good efforts to support our annual draw. We will depend, as always, on the established clubs to carry the weak as our stocks still face serious threats. We must maintain a strong professional presence at national and international level if we are to keep making legislative progress with the issues especially at NASCO and EU level. It is through the support of our clubs that will determine our success on issues such as sealice, stocks and scientific advice for 2011 onwards.

### **GENERAL ELECTION - FISSTA LOBBY ALL THE POLITICAL PARTIES**

The people will have their say on February 25th and only then will we know how the level of anger will translate into lost seats for the last government. No matter who gets into power in the next Dail it will be safe to say that we will not see any worthwhile investment in fisheries until our economy improves which will take at least three years and maybe more. When one looks back at the achievements of the last Dail, the main one for salmon and seatrout has been the new framework for conservation under the Inland Fisheries Ireland Bill 2009 which was passed last July into law. At a recent angling seminar some international colleagues congratulated FISSTA in managing to convince the opposition parties not to oppose a government bill for the greater good. This was the first time ever that our lobbying paid off and as a result the bill was passed without any of the usual delays which other pieces of legislation experienced. As the general election campaigns get into full swing FISSTA got down to business with all the political parties who were glad to pledge support for the wild Atlantic salmon, seatrout and anglers (60,000 votes) in particular.

Thankfully, our reputation for effective lobbying is very well established with the main political parties by now as we have campaigned to them for nearly twenty years on various issues particularly on driftnetting.

From 1994 to 1997 FISSTA made good progress with the then Minister for the Marine Eamon Gilmore, now leader of the Labour Party but after the Salmon Management Task Force recommended the legalising of monofilament nets, we realised the netting lobby were still too strong to get an outright ban. There are still some very heated, but funny letters in the FISSTA archives that show how Gilmore gave as good as he got when responding to our former Chairman Jim Maxwell RIP. Sadly, Eamon Gilmore missed the opportunity to end driftnetting in 1997 and it would be another ten years before another brave Minister in the form of Noel Dempsey came



*FISSTA Youth Training teaching how to catch and release properly.*

along to end the drift netting at a cost of €30m. Some scientific commentators say it may be too late to save the salmon now as the numbers have decreased below a scale which is beyond recovery. Others, like anglers, adopt the optimistic, hopeful and positive view that we must never give up on the wild Atlantic salmon. I am sure Mr Gilmore regrets not grasping the nettle at the time when stocks were at a much healthier level to recover.

According to the polls, the incoming Taoiseach will be Enda Kenny TD and he is on the record for promising to reverse the Green Party's stag hunting legislation. We can expect salmon angling and tourism to be given a welcome boost as Ballina is in Mr Kenny's constituency, but sadly there is a depressing paragraph supporting an unbridled development of fish farming which will damage the wild salmon once again.

Extract from FG Manifesto titled Funding for Fisheries: Fianna Fáil and Green Party infighting has limited Ireland's ability to draw down EU funds for seafood development. We will resolve difficulties blocking the drawdown of available funds. Aquaculture Licensing: An additional 42 million tonnes





*FISSTA Youth Officer and Master Flycaster Robert Gillespie with the Youth Team at Birr Fair.*

of farmed seafood will be required to keep pace with demand each year by 2030, just 20 years away. We must increase our raw material supply and expand our aquaculture sector. We will remove administrative obstacles and clear the backlog of aquaculture licences currently preventing the creation of thousands of jobs in the aquaculture sector.

The consequences for awarding new licenses in salmon habitat areas means their plans for developing the tourism industry will collapse. So, some joined up thinking is required by Fine Gael before they commit to wiping out the very salmon that keeps many of his constituents in a livelihood. There may be alternative compositions of Sinn Féin and an alliance of elected Independents hoping to get into power but the odds are against them as the polls suggest. This is not just a good opportunity, but may be the only opportunity to let them know that we in the angling tourism business, health, environmental and safe food sectors will fight them now and after they get elected.

### **STATE LICENCES FOR MINK AND FARMED FISH CAUSES MILLIONS OF DAMAGE**

Big Blow to Wild Salmon as Escapees (Mink and Farmed Salmon) Plunder their Habitat.

The salmon angling season is now well and truly up and running again and our angling clubs have been out and about to count the redds and ascertain what level of damage the escaped mink has done to Donegal rivers. Sadly, the news is awful as many spawning salmon were wiped out in many of the pools where nature prevailed until now.

### **The FISSTA Campaign for Fish Safe Hydro Power**

Every month we see new planning applications for new hydro and wind power proposals that will take over the rivers and mountains completely to the detriment of all who use and enjoy these resources. The new application on the Mill River at Buncrana in County Donegal is the latest to come to our notice

which will, if given the approval of the authorities, will wipe out any recovery of salmon and sea trout in that river forever. So Buncrana has a choice to sacrifice another piece of our environment to private industry or fight to preserve the very reason tourists are attracted to this seaside town where textiles and employment collapsed a decade ago. Nearby, like the Mill River, the Crana River runs into the Lough Swilly where their migrating smolts and sea trout are infested with sealice before they get a chance to clear Malin Head out into the Atlantic. The Crana is very well managed and protected by Buncrana Anglers Association who have led by example. However, they are fighting a battle that only the politicians can win for us all over the country and EU. They must

decide whether to permit and encourage a clean protected environment for our wildlife and fish or sacrifice the very thing that will attract tourism revenue in the future. FISSTA and the EAA (European Anglers Alliance) campaign to protect the wilderness from killing our goose that has laid the golden egg for generations.

FISSTA are unhappy with many of Ireland's existing hydro power stations, because they prevent salmon and sea trout migrating to and from their spawning grounds upriver. Hydro Power owners have resisted or ignored our attempts to discuss new means to resolve this problem as many plants urgently need modification to reduce the fish mortality problem. FISSTA are also extremely worried that soon there will be a greater increase in investment in what all political parties term 'green energy.' The FISSTA experience is that the turbine whether it is driven by water or wind to generate electricity continues to have a very serious affect the salmon and sea trout populations. Why? Because of the barriers put in their habitat to prevent them spawning, more European hydropower stations as (this might seem at a first glance) a sensible way for the EU to meet its increasing energy demands while complying with comprehensive environmental commitments. However these environmental commitments must include the necessary fish passes and guidance systems to protect and enhance the fish stocks.

### **What We Want**

The Joint South North Ministerial Body should develop a consistent and harmonised policy on hydropower stations, taking into account all EU and national legislation regarding water management and the conservation of (migratory) fish species. FISSTA notes in this respect that the EU has agreed on eel emergency measures and a long term eel management plan, which will have consequences for about 125 European river basins. Both plans take precedence over other EU



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policies, like energy policies. So an energy development plan cannot be forced through while sacrificing objectives or measures of the EU plans regarding the eel. So we hope the same will apply to the salmon.

Having regard to (and respecting) the implementation of the Water Framework Directive and the Liability Directive, we foresee that some hydropower stations may have to be closed. In Ireland. That is why we ask state agencies for a comprehensive environmental and economic impact assessment be conducted on all proposed hydro power plants. Such an assessment should be required as a consequence of the above mentioned directives but also the Commission Resource Strategy of December 2005.

All existing hydro power plants should be provided immediately with a proven effective fish guidance system (for downstream migration) and a fish passage (for upstream migration). The functioning of both systems should be evaluated. If they do not function, adjustment of the system, compensation of the damage, or closure of the plant should be considered.

No new hydro power plants should be built, unless it can be proven that the new to be built hydro power plants have no negative effects on the sustainable management of the fish

stocks in the system. Because of their low energy production, their low cost-efficiency in relation to the enormous damage they cause to fish stocks and the virtual impossibility to equip them with effective fish guidance systems, small hydropower stations should have extra attention of all parties involved. In principle, no new small hydropower stations (< 10 MW) should be built in rivers that (could) have runs of migratory fish.

All planned new hydro power stations (on the above mentioned terms) should be provided with a proven effective fish guidance system (for downstream migration) and a fish passage (for upstream migration). Consequently, national and European subsidies should only be awarded for the construction of hydro power stations if these conditions are met.

*River Crana in Buncrana.*







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Design & layout: Caroline McNeill Photography



# Going Fishing - some of the many fishing opportunities to be had in Ireland

## *The Great Fishing Houses of Ireland*

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The Great Fishing Houses of Ireland is a group of seventeen of the finest Game Fishing establishments in Ireland. To be a member of this group means that fishing has been and continues to be an intrinsic part of one's business, the quality of the angler's experience is paramount. The fishing, the staff and the facilities offer a truly complete angler's holiday.

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## *Delphi Lodge*

For top-quality salmon fishing in the most beautiful surroundings, Delphi has few equals in Ireland. Offering fishermen a wide variety of fly fishing on an exceptionally attractive river and on several spectacular lakes, Delphi is one of the hidden gems of Connemara.

And there's a beautiful lodge that is famous for its glorious setting, great food and wine, lovely rooms and delightful atmosphere. Or there are five charming rental cottages on the Delphi estate for those who prefer to look after themselves.

Surrounded by the highest mountains in the west of Ireland and with over a hundred inches of rain a year, Delphi is wild, often wet, wonderfully secluded and completely unspoilt. Crystal clear streams feed the magnificent lakes that are all linked to the sea by the pretty Bundorragha River.



The river has over twenty productive pools and, because of the settling effect of the lakes, it almost never colours up, making it ideal for fly-fishing even after very heavy rain.

The two main salmon lakes, Finlough and Doolough, could not be more different. Finlough, which the Lodge overlooks, is small, mostly quite shallow and very beautiful. In contrast Doolough is big, deep and awesomely impressive. Both can produce good numbers of salmon at any time in the season. Some fish are also taken from the Glencullin Lough.

And Delphi has an unusually long season - from February 1st to September 30th. Given reasonable conditions, salmon may be taken at any time in that period.

Due to a major programme of stocking with young salmon, which involves releasing over 50,000 smolts each year, Delphi's catches have been going from strength to strength. The average catch is now about 500 salmon a year.

Most fishing guests stay for a week, from Saturday to Saturday, and all-inclusive packages are the norm. Shorter stays are sometimes possible, though priority is always given to those that stay for the week.

Day permits may be available without accommodation.

**MICHAEL WADE**

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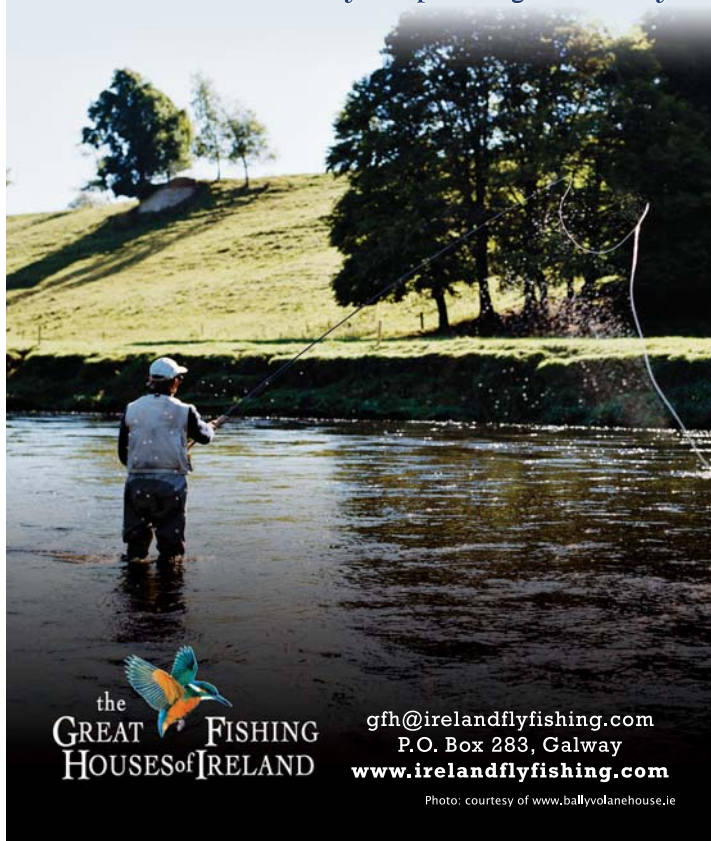
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Photo: courtesy of www.ballyvolanehouse.ie

## Delphi Lodge & Fishery Country House Accommodation



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Fishing at Delphi is for wild salmon and sea trout and is fly only. Our season begins on 1st February and runs until 30th September, with excellent runs of both spring and summer salmon.

Beats are rotated on a half day basis so that anglers may enjoy a great variety of scenery and opportunity. Gillies and fly fishing tuition are available if required.

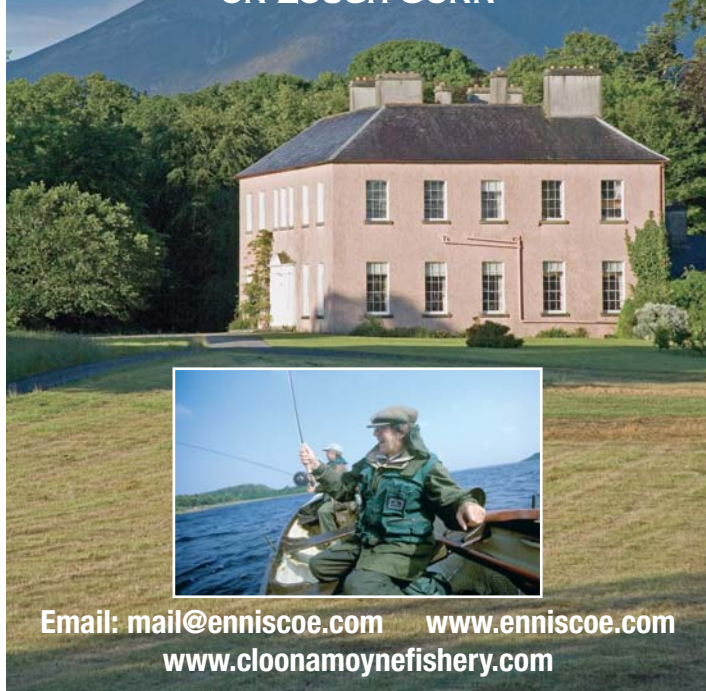
The lodge itself has 12 bedrooms and offers country house accommodation. Delphi has a unique style and ambiance, which along with our excellent cuisine, prepared by our highly qualified chefs, ensures that our guests have a very memorable experience.

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River (fly fishing only) with 8 miles of river (both banks) and Lough Beltra West - 3 miles by 1 mile. The fishery holds a healthy stock of Spring Salmon, Grilse and still some Seatrout and all of our fish are wild. We do not stock or ranch the system leaving it to nature to restock and catches are consistent with a wild fishery. It is one of the few fisheries in Ireland where Spring Salmon can be fished from a boat. The spring fishing opens on the 20th of March and continues through June when the Grilse (Summer Salmon) begin to show. There is often a run of bigger fish at the end of the season in September.



The river has 24 named pools with well maintained stiles, bridges and crossings making it easy to negotiate. It is fished from the bank so there is no need for wading. The number of rods is strictly controlled to ensure fishing privacy. A river Ghillie is usually available on request. A detailed map of the system is available from the fishery manager.

The lough is situated 180 feet above sea level and is fished from a boat with a Ghillie (guide) with up to two rods per boat. Fishing is from 10am to 6pm and again is fly fishing only.

Usually a 10/11' salmon fly rod (weight 7/8) is used (there are a limited number of rods for rent) with floating/sinking/sink tip lines depending on the conditions. Flies tied by Peter O'Reilly are available at the House. The classical range of flies are used including the Beltra Badger, Silver Doctor, Hairy Mary, Lemon and Grey, various Shrimps among others.

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Set in woods and parkland on the shores of Lough Conn Enniscoe has been described as 'the last Great House of North Mayo'. The elegant classical dates from Georgian times and has been home to the same family since the 1660's.

The current generation, Susan Kellett, and her son Dj enjoy welcoming guests to share the house and grounds.



The family portraits, antique furniture, good food and wine all contribute to the pleasant and relaxed atmosphere.

The fishery manager, Gary Crossley, arranges fishing from the house's own harbour on Lough Conn or on nearby rivers. He has a great fund of knowledge about both and work' to provide the most enjoyable fishing experience for visitors.

**For further details:**

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## ***Ballyvolane House and Blackwater Salmon Fishery***

The Blackwater is almost entirely privately owned and Justin and Jenny Green from Ballyvolane are fortunate to be able to offer some of the best beats on the river, spread over a 40 kilometre stretch from Killavullen and Ballyhooly down to Ballyduff.



They have 10 beats available that can offer a wide variety of spring, summer and early autumn fishing. Some beats are restricted to fly and spinning only. While some pools can be fished from the bank, as a general rule wading (depending on water conditions) is necessary, and chest waders are required. Maps are supplied of the various beats.

Ballyvolane House is now offering a fantastic opportunity to either learn or to hone your skills in the craft



of fly fishing for salmon or trout on the renowned river Blackwater with one its most experienced and talented fishing guides, Norman Gillett.

The course range from 1 day refresher or beginner's course to a superb two day course for up to four participants.

### **The 2-Day Course**

Based at Ballyvolane House and Blackwater Salmon Fishery, the course is designed for up to 4 participants under the tuition of Norman Gillett, who is both a qualified instructor holding the Salmon & Trout Association National Instructors Certificate (STANIC), and a member of the Game Angling Instructors' Association (GAIA). All aspects of modern fly-fishing and spinning techniques are covered but emphasis is placed on as much practical fishing as possible. Courses are held throughout the season, subject to beat availability. All tackle is provided.

The course is spread over 2 days and 3 nights starting with dinner at Ballyvolane on the first night and finishing up after breakfast 2 days later.

Price: €855 per person includes : All fishing tuition with Norman, State salmon license, All necessary tackle and waders, 3 nights accommodation with breakfast, 3 dinners and 2 picnic lunches.

The course is designed to be completely flexible and thoroughly enjoyable. Each of the modules may be varied according to the ability and experience of those participating. It is suitable for ladies and gentlemen of all ages who are either complete beginners or would like to progress.

**For further details on fishing or courses:**

**T: +353 25 36349 F: +353 25 36781**

**info@ballyvolanehouse.ie**

**www.ballyvolanehouse.ie**

## **Fairhill House Hotel**

This is really a little gem which has been in the Lynch family for three generations. Situated right smack between Lough Mask and Lough Corrib, it is a heavenly spot for all and not just for fishermen. The scenery is powerful and magnificent and draws people back again and again. There is something about the place that revitalises the soul.

The West of Ireland where Clonbur is situated offers some of the best fishing in Europe for wild brown trout, atlantic salmon and sea trout in rivers and loughs. The great Western loughs Corrib, Mask and Conn are unique as venues for wild brown trout fishing in Europe. Numerous other rivers and loughs abound in the area, offering the visiting angler a wide choice of fishing, depending on weather and water conditions and his/her preferences.

There is a great cosy bar which is the scene of many a great night. This is the real Ireland where you will enjoy live Irish music late into the night – unless you have a date early in the morning with a salmon or brown trout in Lough



Corrib. Your entire fishing trip can be happily arranged by Eddie Lynch

## **Lough Corrib**

Lough Corrib is 42,000 acres in size and stretches in length from within 4 miles of Galway City to within 2 miles of Maam Bridge , a distance of 33 miles. The Lough is renowned for its wild brown trout and salmon fishing. Brown trout fishing is usually good from the first day of the season and the salmon fishing for grilse is best from around the end of May. Trout can be caught on wet fly from opening day, Feb. 15th. Each season, a number of specimen brown trout are caught on the lough, and the record stands at around 21.5lb, caught in September 2002. There are boats for hire at several locations around the lough, and boatmen are also available at most boat stations. Angling on Lough Corrib is free.

## **Lough Mask**

A Limestone lake of 22,000 acres connected by an underground channel with Lough Corrib, holding large ferox trout, pike, eels, perch and a few char. Angling is free. Trout up to 15lb are taken by trolling and on dap. Mayfly are best from mid-May to mid-June; daddy-long legs and grasshoppers are most common from late June to September; and wet fly between March and April and July and September. Dry fly fishing can be successful from May to September. Clonbur and Cong are good centres. River fishing on Finney and canal joining Mask and Corrib and mountain lake fishing in Dirk Lakes, mainly for brown trout.

As Eddie says: "At Fairhill House Hotel we offer a wide range of services and experiences including The Western Lake's Angling School run by Frank & Robert O' Reilly renowned anglers in their own right also on the Irish team, Irish masters at an international level. www.WesternLakesAnglingSchool.ie they offer a very large range of services."

## **And what about some sea fishing ...**



## Carrigaholt Sea Angling

Carrigaholt Sea Angling is looking forward to getting the new season kicked off in early April. Following a successful year in 2010 with some great catches the new season is being looked forward to with some optimism. The Mackerel turn up on the Clare coast during April and their arrival signals a feeding frenzy and attracts a large selection of whitefish to anglers. May and June is a good time to catch a range of fish including Ling, Cod and hard fighting Pollack.



As June goes on into July, expect Tope to follow the shoals of bait fish up the estuary and to provide some larger species angling. Then as the water gets warmer, the Blue Shark season gets underway from late July till October. All the while, as the summer feeding binge goes on the whitefish are getting heavier and you never know when a huge Six Gill Shark might turn up. Carrigaholt Sea Angling has had them to over 1000lbs over the last 3 years.

**Check out [www.fishandstay.com](http://www.fishandstay.com) or call Luke Direct on 00353 87 6367544**

### And a superb Syndicate offer from Blackwater Lodge..

To help salmon anglers to continue to enjoy their sport during these recessionary times, the Lodge is offering very attractive syndicate rods on the entire fishery for the 2011 season.

The Lodge fishery has numerous beats extending from 2 miles below Ballyduff to just a mile below Mallow.

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## Syndication Rules:

There will be a maximum of 40 full season members and 20 Spring (February-May) members. Acceptance will be on a first-come first-served basis (priority for existing members) and at discretion of the management.

### Membership Fees (Payment is due on joining):

Full Season: €1,500 : Spring Season: € 500 (for the 4 months from February to May).

**For full details see: [www.ireland-salmon-fishing.net/Fishing/syndicate2011.htm](http://www.ireland-salmon-fishing.net/Fishing/syndicate2011.htm)**

## Moving North....if more fine fishing is required - read on!

Mystical waters and silvery fish, tea from a 'Kelly' on an island shoreline; moonlight escapades for sea trout; wild brown trout from enchanting streams and tumbling salmon falls; old rowboats in reed and rocky shores ... idyllic! But where exactly is this Holy Grail?

Ah now, here's the thing of it ... these places and promises do exist but are hard to pin down unless you have been coming to Northern Ireland for many years or know a man who knows a man, so to speak!



Damian McElholm has the answer: "Our fishing portfolio brings you that bit closer to the idyllic Irish angling holiday and all within a few hours of the Belfast airports and ferry terminals. Glennoo Fisheries can offer you salmon, sea trout, brown trout and rainbow game angling plus pike angling. We cater for the short break visitor, the fishing specialist and right through to the safari individualist. Our beats are private and exclusive. You will not be standing in a queue when the salmon and sea trout run, nor will the lough you are fishing resemble the Henley regatta.

"We can offer day, week and season tickets plus a world class guiding service. If you are travelling light or if angling is only a part of your visit we can provide hire tackle from Hardy/Grey's and we will sort out your licenses and permits in advance of your visit."

And Damian adds that the real benefit of a guide is to help you find fish: "Glennoo Fisheries understands that even the very best beats have off days so we always have a 'plan B' and this should be advised to you in advance by the guide when you both are finalising your itinerary."

To tailor your trip to suit exactly what you are looking for, please take the time to visit [www.glennoo.com](http://www.glennoo.com). Or just Email [info@glennoo.com](mailto:info@glennoo.com).



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# Irish Countrysports and Country Life at the Irish Angling Show

**The Irish Angling Show, organised by Mara Media was staged at the National Show Centre in Swords Dublin on Saturday 12th & Sunday 13th February.**

Visitors were treated to an exciting, action-packed couple of days including lots of exciting new features, such as the, Central Casting Pool & Outdoor Casting with prizes sponsored by Hardy & Greys, a Theatre, Fly-tying Gallery, Fishing Simulators, Lure Pool, Workshops and the huge crowd puller the Family Zone, run by Des Chew of the Dublin Angling Initiative. .

There was a purpose built platform for attendees to view how to tie and present their flies like a pro by World Champion Fly Tyers such as Peter Kealey, Peter Dunne, Ryan Houston and Declan Tuffy and oversea visitors such as Riny Sluiter Netherlands, Stack Scoville USA, Mikko Stenberg, Finland and many more.

Over the weekend, other angling experts joined the team, such as Hardy & Greys Stevie Munn ,Cathal Hughes, Tom Sullivan, Hywel Morgan and Brian Cooke. The popular casting pool gave spectators a perfect vantage point to see Glenda Powell, Charles Jardine, Paddy Mc Donnell and APGAI- IRE demonstrating their skills and offering tuition and instructions to the audience.

The team from ICS&CL were there to promote the Great Game Fairs of Ireland and of course Ireland's leading hunting, shooting and fishing magazine. They were also there to make a number of presentations including the annual Pat Burns Memorial Trophy and a cheque for £500 to the All Ireland Game Fair Flycasting Champion Thomas Armstrong, who also won a fine Barbour Coat as winner of the Barbour All Ireland Game Fair Novice Championship at Shanes Castle. Game Fair Director and ROI Editor of the magazine paid a very handsome tribute to the late Pat Burns the founder of the Angling Show.



*Rhona Burns presents the trophy and cheque to Thomas Armstrong, Event Director Hugh Bonar and Philip Lawton in attendance.*

Irene Titterington and Philip presented Johnny Woodlock with a bottle of Cooley Whiskey for his many contributions to the magazine photographic pages,

The next presentation was a bit of a surprise as it was made to Philip by Irene Titterington for his sterling (or should it be euro) work as Arena Director at the two Northern Fairs . He was presented with a limited edition copy of The Irish Riflemen in America.



*Irene presents Philip with the rare book for his extensive collection.*

The final presentation made by ICS&CL was to FISSTA, and accepted on their behalf by Noel Carr, the very hard working secretary . It was the cover painting of the Spring magazine in 2010 by Mick Loates which FISSTA have used to raise over €4,000 for their work with young people.

Organizer Grace McDermott, Mara Media, said: "The show has been a huge success. We held our numbers at 9,000 visitors and added new attractions and celebrities from all disciplines within angling to make it a real day out for the family with bargains galore"







# The Smartwave XL490

The Smartwave XL490 runabout has been designed with a "Robson Series" hull which results in one of the most stable, safe and smoothest riding boats of today. The XL490 is constructed from twin skinned Polyethylene and foam filled using the B.I.F.F foam system so you can be assured it's virtually un-sinkable. A long development program has achieved a strong and extremely robust boat suitable for even the most demanding user. With ample seating and storage for four the XL490 makes an ideal fishing, water sports or family boat.

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# Upside down and back to front

**I** have a friend who is a fitter by trade and who helps me out fixing my Landrover when things go wrong. To watch him working is an education, as is watching any skilled person accomplished at their craft. Mechanics is so far from my own natural inclinations that to watch him make it seem so effortless is as amazing as it is frustrating - why can't I do that? He has an affinity with metal, as I think of it. My friend has a five year old son, Ozzie. Ozzie has been encouraged to play alongside his Dad, fixing motors, since he was able to take himself out into the yard. He has a toy Landrover the size of a house-brick and he sits behind his Dad while he works on the truck, watching him, picking up spanners and making the same shapes as him, getting used to the feel of them, making them his own. Ozzie it would seem, is going to have that same affinity with metal. My friend is a good father - he encourages his son never to fear to fail. I often wonder, if I had been Ozzie, would I now have that same affinity too? I taught myself to tie fishing flies. I learned a few basic techniques from books then I took to the internet and copied the flies I found photographed there. It was a frustrating process, and it took a trip to a local country show to learn why.

There was a guy on a stall from a local fly fishing club giving a tying demonstration. I watched him tie a Gold Ribbed Hare's Ear. When he had finished, the four of us who were watching stood back and smiled and nodded appreciatively at the fly. But I knew it was rubbish. The tail was far too long, the ribbing lost in a wad of dubbing and there was no space within the fly, no prospect of life, no elegance to it at all. I'm not saying it would never catch a fish, but let's not forget that trout can be pretty stupid. I said it was great and that I was just starting. But it struck me at that moment, that attempting to copy the work of the fly tyers on the internet, as I was, meant I was setting myself up against some of the best fly tyers in the

world. It was an impossible brief - there was little wonder that I was finding the experience frustrating! He was a pleasant enough guy, giving the demonstration at the show. Once he knew I was a beginner, he was keen to offer me tips. He talked to me for some time, and what he wanted to most impress on me, was the importance of sticking to the traditional designs. This wasn't dogma, it was said with a tone that would accompany the fatherly hand on the shoulder of an initiate. Don't mess around with the traditional patterns, was the message. These patterns are as they are for a reason, so don't be tempted to play. I couldn't agree with this, though I didn't say so on the day. I can't agree with it as an





*At the surface the emerger takes a break, rests and will escape in a second or two.*

approach to life, let alone the small crevice of it that is tying fishing flies and catching trout with them. I looked again at his Gold Ribbed Hare's Ear which was still in the vice. A pleasant enough guy maybe, but he had no affinity with the materials of his trade. He had done the fly tying equivalent of learning by rote.

## ***Don't freeze time***

Fly fishing is rich in history and tradition. It is important to keep these traditions alive, but we mustn't become a slave to them. To not deviate from a pattern as it was first described in a book is to freeze time at the point those words were first written. So what had been no doubt a dynamic design, constantly refined by generations of anglers is now stopped for some, because somebody else once wrote it down. Like Ozzie wielding his tools in the shadow of his Father, there is much to be learned through play. The first fly I ever tied as a direct result of studying the natural was the result of playing at the vice. It was simply a furnace genetic hen hackle, wrapped around a brown ostrich herl body, then the lot palmered in fairly open turns along the hook-shank. I had tried to suggest something of the visual 'noise' of the fly, and to my delight it caught fish.

The good fishing fly is neither moving nor still. It is not a static copy, an imitation, because even if an insect is still on the water, it is moving on or in the water in relation to the fish. It is seen through a filter of light, of shadow, of refraction, and of fish eyeballs. It is a

suggestion, an impression, of our interpretation of what we think that living fly looks like to the fish.

That can take us some way from the 'real' thing as it might sit coldly before us in the palm of our hand. But if we permit ourselves to play, what a wonderful journey it can be. I am Ozzie, tying my flies with spanners in comparison to someone who I consider to be one of the great 'players' in the fly tying community today - Irish fly designer Roy Christie. It is difficult to do something original on what often amounts to little more than a centimetre of hook-shank, but Roy manages it. He makes most of us look like we are just producing variations on a theme. At first glance his

designs may look outlandish, curiosities, for decorative purposes only. But don't be fooled - these are fish catching flies. His Reversed Parachute Emerger has replaced the Klinkhamer in my fly box as first 'go to' emerger pattern, simply because the design sinks the tippet, and fish are less likely to be startled by a sunken tippet.

## ***Catskill traditions***

The Irish influence on Roy's designs is clear, betraying itself in his use of colour, the bold profiles and the dubbing blends. They are almost a surrealists take on the Irish tradition. His other main influences are the books of Skues, and the Catskill fly tying tradition of the USA. Roy says that he has learned much from the Catskill school, because despite the



*The third stage, wriggling to escape the surface.*





*Making it to the air, now it's mating time.*

beauty and apparent fragility of these exquisite designs, there is an underlying solidity about the construction of them and of the materials used. They will stand up to a good day's fishing and a good few fish, unlike the English dry school, of which Mr Christie is no fan. Roy's language can be as colourful as his flies at times and his views on Halford's dries are largely unprintable.

So how does Roy's approach to fly design differ? "All you have to do," he says, "is look at the fly, and then build it on the hook-shank. Most people look at the hook, and then try to build on that." There you go - simple.

Many of Roy's flies are given their first breath of life on paper, as schematic drawings, before he moves over to the vice. Much of his time is spent just playing at the vice, dreaming up and mastering his tying techniques. If we think of these techniques as a grammar, a language of tying, then this enables him to look at the naturals on and in the water, and use that lexicon to describe what he sees. "Most people are happy for their flies to just 'be'," says the enigmatic Mr Christie, "I want mine to 'do' something."

Hey, this is getting deep - we are talking about trying to capture something of the essence of life here, and strap it on a hook-shank. That's a long way from trying to imitate, or copy, an insect as it might look spark out in the

palm of your hand. But the distinction Roy draws between 'being' and 'doing' does capture something of the feeling I get when I look at his work. I don't quite know why, can't quite put my finger on it, but they do look to have that quality of life about them. They do 'do.' They look like if we turned our backs for too long, they might just get up and crawl away.

We are not all going to be able to innovate to this standard, unfortunately, but there are a few things we can do to improve our tying. First, learn how to tie - and fish - the traditional patterns. They

have been around for so long for a good reason - they work. Try to figure out what the triggers are. Maybe tweak them a bit and see what happens - but don't tell anybody I said that. As Roy says, it is as important to learn what doesn't work as what does. Second, practice and master as many tying techniques as you can. This is the language and grammar that will enable you ultimately to examine the insects that the fish are taking, find your own voice and describe what it is that you think they see. Lastly, be like Ozzie: emulate the techniques of those who are where you yourself one day would like to be. And most importantly of all, never be afraid to learn through play.

*The leading fly is the Avon Special Emerger. All flies shown are tied by the master fly tyer, Roy Christie*



*Flat Spent Spinner viewed from below.*



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From Richard Humphry



# The Kenmore Salmon Opening 2011

**T**he 15<sup>th</sup> January is the annual opening day of the Salmon Season on the River Tay and sees several hundred anglers each year pit their angling prowess against nature in pursuit of the King of Fish. Whilst many of the rivers beats play host to gatherings and celebrations to welcome in the start of a new season, in angling terms none is more prestigious in UK angling calendar than the traditional salmon opening on the River Tay at Kenmore in Perthshire. Surrounded by heather covered hills and nestling between the foot of Loch Tay and at the head of the river, the picturesque Georgian village of Kenmore, Perthshire, has hosted the river's traditional Salmon opening celebration. What started as a gathering of enthusiastic local anglers now draws anglers and spectators from all over the Europe.

Saturday 15<sup>th</sup> January started cold and wet, heavy rain and snow melt adding to the height and speed of the river. Despite this, as dawn broke on the first day of the new season anglers quietly started to gather in the village square, enjoying a complimentary dram of Dewar's Whisky, and awaiting the opportunity to

participate in the UK's oldest angling celebrations. This year's opening saw anglers and supporters from Austria, Malta, Norway, and all four UK countries joining the procession of rods, led by the Vale of Atholl Pipe Band, to view the blessing of the boat and the 'first cast' on the river.

This event is not just about celebrating the start of a new salmon season, it is also a time when the anglers from all walks of life come together to celebrate their previous successes and to share their hopes and concerns for the future of the fish that they seek and the future of their sport. In its own way, the Kenmore Opening encompasses individual and community aspirations and interests, and reaffirms the social and economic importance that angling has within modern day society.

A number of the anglers attending were young people from Angling For Youth Development (AFYD) projects from around Scotland, for many it was their first time at the event and their first opportunity to go salmon fishing. Ian Williams AFYD Trustee, and Project Leader for Paisley and Renfrew offered his opinion of the events importance to his charity: "The Kenmore Salmon Opening is a great place to bring the youngsters involved in our project. It gives them an opportunity to





*The CHAS cheque presentation /I/ Jennifer Tinney, Norma Hume both Kenmore Hotel with John Heggie from CHAS.*

try fishing for salmon but equally as importantly, it gives them a chance to meet with young people from other AFYD groups who have a shared passion about what they are doing. It's a great experience for them."

The AFYD groups were there as guests of the Kenmore Hotel who, before the traditional piped procession of rods, presented them with a cheque for £27,900 and made further presentations of £79,050 each to the Children's Hospice Association Scotland (CHAS) based in Kinross, and the Nicola Murray Foundation, a Charity undertaking research into a cure for ovarian cancer. These large amounts of money had been raised at the annual closing dinner and charity auction that had been held at the hotel on the 15th October 2010.

John Heggie, senior fund raiser for CHAS, following the cheque presentation said: "The money raised at these events is colossal and helps greatly in assisting all three charities in their work. The kindness and generosity of those people who attend the opening and closing celebrations makes a big difference to a lot of people in less fortunate circumstances. On behalf of all the charities involved I can only thank everyone who is involved in these celebrations, and especially the Kenmore Hotel, for their continued support. I have many friends and family who are keen anglers and most of them have commented, almost with reverence, how lucky I am to be involved in the Kenmore Salmon Opening. It is without doubt a very special event and encompasses the very best things about the sport."

With the river running fast and high anglers' expectations of catching fish were low, and just before 10 a.m., led by the skirl of the pipes and drums, of the Vale of Atholl Pipe Band, the procession of anglers made its way from the

village square to the river bank, where BBC Radio presenter, Mark Stephen, and well known Salmon aficionado, Ali Gowans blessed the boat with Whisky, and the first cast of the season was performed by local ghillie, Bob McIntyre.

On the river bank a further presentation, this time of angling equipment, was made to AFYD's latest project team, Wigtonshire AFYD, who had representatives attending the event. Inspector David McCallum of Dumfries and Galloway Constabulary, the project leader for the Wigtonshire AFYD, said: "On behalf of Wigtonshire AFYD we are delighted to be officially recognised as the latest AFYD project in Scotland. We would like to thank the AFYD Trust and their supporters for the equipment which they have donated to us. We have a strong group working together here in south west Scotland and this will make a positive impact on a number of young people's lives."

Contrary to many anglers fears, five of those anglers present, who decided to tempt providence on the Taymouth Castle Estate waters, were rewarded with each bringing a fish to the bank. The first and largest of the salmon to be landed that day was caught within 30 minutes of the opening by Glasgow angler Lee Conway. Surrounded by fellow anglers and well wishers Lee returned the hen fish, weighing over 18lb, and described as a bar of silver, to the river. Not only did Lee receive the MacTaggart Trophy for the largest clean fish caught and returned on the opening day, but also a gallon of Dewar's Whisky, in recognition of his success.

Away from the bank, many anglers, after suffering in the downpour of rain, resorted to the hotel's bar



*AFYD cheque presentation to representatives of AFYD Trust comprising of youngsters from Perthshire, West Lothian and North Lanarkshire with Jennifer Tinney, Norma Hume both Kenmore Hotel.*





*Presentation to Wigtonshire AFYD on behalf of the trust by Chief Superintendent Craig Suttie, Tayside Police, Perth (right) to Inspector David McCallum Dumfries and Galloway Constabulary, Stranraer, (left) project leader of Wigtonshire AFYD.*

where hot drinks, drams, and bacon roles were devoured aplenty and tales of large fish and the various methods used to catch them were told with gusto. As one regular attending angler commented: "Today's not so much about catching, but about catching up" and how right he was, by the end of the day more fish had been caught in the bar than could be

caught in a season on the river!" Norma Lindsay, General Manager of the Kenmore Hotel, who has the responsibility for co-ordinating the opening festivities said: "The Kenmore Hotel has always been involved with the river's Salmon fishing and has supported the Salmon Opening celebrations since they first started. We are delighted to see its popularity with anglers and supporters growing year after year and everyone is welcome to attend. When the opening celebrations first took place, salmon were still abundant in the rivers of Scotland, but sadly over the last 60 years their numbers have declined and in that respect the day celebrates the fact that they are still here. Nowadays I, along with every other person who attends the opening, not only celebrate the salmon's presence in our river but also the hope that they will be

with us for many generations to come."

Perhaps the final word should be said by one rather wet young man from the North Lanarkshire AFYD programme, who having spent all day in search of the king of fish was asked by another angler whether he'd caught anything on the opening day and he replied: "Na, but there's always next year."



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By Simon Everett

# PIKE OPENING DAY AT RUTLAND



*A fine fish on the fly for the Author.*

**T**he big trout reservoirs have always been known to hold a good head of pike that feed well and grow quickly in these food rich waters. Some of the more forward looking fisheries actually promote the pike fishing on these waters, providing a pike sporting ticket to be used in conjunction with certain lure size limits and obviously, a no take policy. The restricted pike angling gives the fisheries management a useful bit of feedback as to the health of the fish stocks generally and a bit of extra revenue to help pay for the running of the facility and they go some way towards paying for the few trout that might get taken. Unfortunately there are still some game anglers who see pike only as vermin and who refuse to see the balance and benefit to the water that pike provide. That aside, Rutland Water is the jewel in the crown of Anglian Water and they allow a couple of months of pike fishing from the

beginning of October to the end of November where lures of greater than 18cm are permitted, or of course, fly fishing for the pike with suitable tackle and flies.

I was fortunate enough to be invited to join a few friends for the opening couple of days and so I made certain that I was available for this opportunity. Rupert was our host and he had booked a brace of boats for the four of us, so we could fish in pairs and share the experience. The other three had opted to fish lures, Sam

*This time a lure is cast a long way.*







*Lure selection*

one of the party, is the owner of Baxter Angling and he supplies some very special lures at prices that are as realistic as the creations he sells. I had chosen to fish purely with my fly outfit, which is an Orvis Zero Gravity saltwater #10 and perfectly capable of subduing any pike that swims as it is built to tackle 100lb tarpon and other feisty fish. I prefer the extra casting ability that the heavier line class rod provides to make casting the big, bushy flies much easier.

We met at the fishing lodge early on the morning of the opening day. It was a bit bright, but there was a good breeze blowing, throwing up a decent wave so we felt

confident that the pike would be active. I am not a fan of overly bright conditions for most fishing even if it does make things more comfortable. A bit of cloud cover and breeze is always better. Or is it? We loaded the boats and set off for one of the bays that are known to hold a good head of pike due to the depth of water and the coarse fish that congregate there. Pike don't trouble trout much, the trout are far too fast and agile, if healthy, for a pike to expend energy trying to catch them in any numbers.

We set ourselves up on parallel drifts across the bay, starting in about 6 feet of water where there was plenty of weed cover with large open tracts of water between the weed growth, perfect for pike to lie in ambush. Within ten minutes of the first cast Rupert was into a fish, an average pike of about 6lbs, but it threw the hook before he could bring it to the boat. Never mind, it gave us all hope and we fished with eager anticipation of that sudden stop followed by the powerful surge as the pike heads for cover. We had a few follows but no more takes and the wind had died completely. Instead of a nice wave we now had flat calm and bright sun, hardly ideal, so we set off for deeper water. The next area we fished is more open water with a depth between 15 and 20 feet, which I have often found to be a good starting point for a pike foray on a new water. I was fishing an orange fly with a fair bit of black in it to give it a good silhouette. Pike lurking deep will often come up to take their prey and so a good silhouette is important for the fly, which doesn't have the vibration capacity of good lures. Sure enough with the move came good fortune, Sam landed a



*A fine Rutland  
22 pounder.*



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pike of around 6lbs to start us off, taken on one of his BBZ lures. We had a couple of drifts with no more takes and it was getting on towards lunchtime with only the one fish and a couple of lost ones to show for our efforts. Then, as we drifted out into the middle of the bay I decided I would try a chartreuse fly, a smaller one than I had been using. This chartreuse pattern is one I tied up using plenty of schlappen and marabou to give it a big presence in the water and loads of pulsating movement within the materials. It is only about 5 inches long but it moves a huge amount of water for its size and is easy to cast a long way as the materials reduce to nothing once out of the water.

### ***The fish was having none of it***

I hadn't had more than a dozen casts with my change of fly when, having counted the fly down to about 10 feet deep, I felt everything go solid on the retrieve. I thought I had got stuck in a log, then the log began to shake and then, as I pulled it pulled back harder and took a good length of line through my fingers. This wasn't just a pike, this was a good pike. I woke up to what was happening and fought the fish hard. Four times I got the leader to the surface, but each time the pike was having none of it and just bore straight back to the bottom, at one point taking a good 20 yards of line off me despite me pointing the rod down the line and pulling as hard as I dare to try and turn it. You cannot put more pressure on a fish than when you are straight through to it, but you have to be careful doing this as there is no shock absorbing action from the rod and it is easy to either break the leader or pull the hook out. I got the fish back to the surface and we saw her properly for the first time. Wow, what a fish!

Ken got the net under her and we boated her gently. On the surface drawing her to the net and as she came aboard we both thought she must be 20lbs, but the scales put us right, she was a bit short of that mark at 18lbs. Even so, she was a beautiful fish for all that and worth the trip alone. It was very pleasing to see her power away from my hands when she was ready too, having taken a couple of photographs, weighed her quickly in the sling and removed the barbless Ad Swier pike hook, which just fell out of her jaw in the net. I was ecstatic and was grinning like a clown. Whilst we had been dealing with this fish the other boat had also had a decent pike, it would seem we had found where they were hiding

and someone had rung the lunch bell.

### ***Talking tactics***

We motored very quietly back, in a wide arc, to do more or less the same drift again, 20 yards over to cover a new lane of water. The fly tactics were working as well as the lures. After my success with the chartreuse fly I changed it for a white and red one. This one also produced a fish for me on the next drift, not as big at about 7lbs and on the next drift I got a third on an all orange, smaller fly, just a jack, but it puts a bend in the rod and keeps your hopes alive. On that opening day we had caught eight pike between us, three on our boat and five on the other one. We went to the pub excited and happy to talk about tactics for the second day.

The following day there wasn't a breath of wind nor a cloud in the sky but we still felt we could catch some pike given yesterday's success. We swapped boat partners and went straight back to the big bay where we had found the fish yesterday. Well, things just got better and better. Everyone caught pike on the second day with Sam, in the other boat, catching the biggest of the trip on one of his special lures, it was his personal best at 22lbs 2ozs. Rupert caught just the one, when he borrowed my fly outfit for half an hour! Ken got two, like peas in a pod they were at 12lbs each and I got another four on the fly, two around 12lbs, one around 7lbs and a smaller one.

The two days produced seventeen pike for our party, including two very decent pike and several others that were good double figure fish. There has been talk that piking on Rutland hasn't been as good recently as it has in the past. Well, maybe it is coming back into form, all the fish were in excellent condition and fought strongly. I can't wait to go back again and maybe lift one that does reach the 20lb mark, on fly!



*All the pike were safely released.*





## The Suir - where wise men fish

**T**he River Suir (or if you prefer in Irish, Abhainn na Siúire) finally enters the sea near Waterford, after flowing for 114 miles and draining a catchment of 1,394 square miles. The Suir's present spelling with the 'u' and 'i' reversed is thought to be a mistake. Writings from as far back as the Elizabethan era refer to the 'gentle Shure', probably an accurate spelling and the most phonetically correct. The river's source is on the slopes of Devil's Bit Mountain, just north of Templemore in County Tipperary. From here it flows south through Loughmore, Thurles, Holycross, Golden and Knockgraffon, merging with the River Aherlow at Kilmoyler and further on with the Tar. At the Comeragh Mountains it turns east, forming the border between County Waterford and Tipperary. It then passes through Cahir, Clonmel and Carrick-on-Suir before reaching Waterford. Here before entering the sea, it joins with Rivers Barrow and Nore to form a wide navigable estuary that can accommodate seagoing vessels. With the Nore and Barrow, the river is one of the trio known as 'The Three Sisters.'

Geologically, apart from a short section in its head waters the Suir flows almost entirely over limestone. Its tributaries also flow over limestone, with the exception of the Nire, the Clodiagh and the upper reaches of the Multeen, which comes in from the West near Cashel.

Due to this, the upper river has been likened in both nature and character, to the famous English chalk stream, the River Test. The river and surrounding countryside have an affluent, gentle feel. The rolling hills with rich arable farmland are reminiscent of the Scottish River Tay. It is a prime example of the sort of area that gives rise to the saying 'fat cattle, fat trout.' Limestone produces alkaline water, providing high levels of nutrients leading to good weed growth, which in turn supports large numbers of invertebrates. As invertebrates are a trout's preferred diet, the combination of plentiful invertebrates with the large areas of relatively shallow glides makes the Suir ideal for the production of Brown trout. These positive abiotic factors and plentiful food supply combined with low level predation give massive recruitment of young trout from the extensive system of tributaries. Only a handful of rivers can compare with it for numbers of trout produced per square metre. The trout survive and grow in what can be seen as a near-perfect environment.

As the river is a trout producing system it has led to the Suir being one of, if not Ireland's premier brown trout river fishery. The trout range on average from  $\frac{3}{4}$  to 2 lb. However, very much larger specimens are regularly seen and just occasionally caught. The Suir has prolific fly hatches throughout the season (1st March to 30th September). Importantly from the dry fly fisherman's point of view the trout respond well to these hatches, being 'free rising' in nature. The first key hatches of the season are from March to late April, those of the large dark olives. April to mid-May sees the appearance of





*Angling writer  
Michael Shortt  
ghillied by Phillip  
Maher with a nice  
8lb salmon*

medium olives, iron blues and stoneflies. However warming conditions from mid-May to mid-June give hatches of alders, medium olives, reed smuts and midges, mayfly, pale wateries, blue-winged olives, caenis, hawthorn, black gnat, yellow stoneflies and various sedges, (including murrroughs and grey flag). These prolific hatches produce the cream of the trout fishing during the day.

June to the end of July sees hatches of blue-winged olives, pale wateries and pale evening duns, small dark olives and sedges (including murrroughs, cinnamon, red and silverhorns). These hatches can give exceptional evening rises that can continue into September. Also in September the blue-winged olive can be important in the evening; Sedges with both black and green midges by day.

### ***Great reputation for quantity and quality***

In times past, the Suir had a great reputation for salmon both in number and size. The river still boasts the Irish rod record, a 57 lb salmon caught on fly in 1874. Michael Maher, a well known Suir ghillie was fishing on the 'Longfield water' when he saw the huge salmon in a well known lie. He felt his best chance to catch the fish would be on fly. Not having his flies with him he went to a

nearby cottage and borrowed materials he required to fashion a fly. With his freshly tied yellow creation he returned to the river and caught the huge fish. Michaels 'ad hoc fly' was named 'The Mystery' and it subsequently gained a reputation as an effective large fish taker (the capture of this fish is fully written up in Fred Buller's book 'The Doomsday book of Giant Salmon').

For a couple of seasons I had been told that if I wanted to catch a large salmon my best bet was either the Nore or Suir toward the end of the season. During the 2009 season I tried the Nore. It proved to be an impressive river in its own right. I saw large fish caught, but did not

*Salmon being returned to the Suir.*





connect with any myself. So in 2010 I thought it time to give the Suir a throw. It is said that the best of the salmon fishing on the Suir extends downstream from Ardfinnan to Carrick-on-Suir. The fishing is controlled mainly by angling clubs and syndicates. The river produces the occasional 'springer' and gets a solid run of grilse from June onwards. It also has an autumn run that includes fish in the 12 - 18 lb bracket. It is believed that larger fish still run the river. And due to the improving runs over the past few years this season anglers will be able to take a limited number of salmon once in the possession of a brown tag. Up until August the 14th the river will remain 'catch and release.' But from August the 15th those in possession of a brown tag will be able to take a salmon if they so wish. The Brown Gill Tags (available from IFI Clonmel) are required in addition to the blue gill tags.

My first cast on the Suir was early last September. I had planned three days salmon fishing on the Kilsheelin beat. As the fishing had been booked months ahead, I was like all anglers at the mercy of the conditions. When



I turned up to fish on the Kilsheelin beat (below Clonmel) Philip told me the river was at the lowest level anyone could remember. However being a limestone river it still had a reasonable flow. With the prevailing low water conditions Philip told me that 'the fly' was not worth using.

So, for the first time in a few seasons, I reacquainted myself with other methods. First cast, a 5 lb grilse welcomed me to the river. Though trying the fly at both first and last light, the only salmon I caught were on alternative methods. Surprisingly even though the river was low, the fish were all fresh. As the river was 'catch & release' all were quickly released.

The rain started on my last days fishing. Philip tried to persuade me to stay on, as the coming spate looked as though it might offer the best fishing of the year. Unfortunately work called and it was to be another two weeks before I could get back. Of course the fishing was excellent during the intermittent time. On my first visit, the Suir had been generous with its fish though none had come to the fly. But within half an hour of starting my

*Last September's clean run fish.*





second visit, fishing a fly down the 'Castle run' I felt a very gentle draw and lifted into a fish. Any size? Just a wee one I responded! The fish quietly swam up river. This turned out to be the calm before the storm, as after some initial wallowing around the fish decided to change gear. Turning downriver it ran about 90 metres. During the run, a huge 'spade sized' tail broke the water surface and I significantly upped my estimate of its size.

Single, barbless flies were a requirement on the Suir last season. The fact such a fly was my sole attachment to a very large salmon screamed at me in my head. With no barb, I was concerned the longer I played the fish the more likely it was to come off.

### **First salmon over 20 lbs**

The fight turned dogged. The fish moved mid channel and refused to be bullied. Clearly a large fish it put me through an emotional roller coaster, before after 20 minutes finally and very grudgingly coming to the net. Ironically even though I had been concerned about the hook hold, I had to use forceps to get the size 10 fly out. Quickly weighed and photographed it was then released. In the net, the scales stopped at 25 lbs. An hour later, as the adrenalin pumping around my body came down to normal levels, I remembered to take the weight of the net off the total. It slightly shrank to 23 ½ lbs. A solid, very red, cock fish for me a fishing milestone, my first salmon over 20 lbs. I fished on for the rest of the day

but in a half hearted manner. During the afternoon an even larger fish than that I had caught was pointed out to me further down the beat. Though I threw a variety of flies at this fish, it sensibly kept its head down.

The following day three of us fished down the lower part of the beat below the 'Castle run.' It was a perfect fishing day, warm and overcast with fresh fish around. Some salmon were moving, as well as some very large brown trout (5 lb +). They were rising to a hatch of Olives. If I had my trout tackle I would have been tempted to drift a fly over them.

Both of my companions took sea-liced fish. I also got another salmon, nowhere near the proportions of the previous day's fish and again it was coloured. The Suir has proven to be a generous river to me, at present giving me more than a fish a day. This season I have already booked to fish the river again for salmon. But before that, I think I will try for one of the big brownies. What a river!

### **Guides**

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Philip Maher, Fishhunt, Touraneena, Ballinamult

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# A new airgun - but what's the legal quarry?



*A 'sitty' tree is an ideal spot for airgunners to target quarry.*

**S**ome time ago, I wrote about the challenges and sport which a friend and I got out of hunting grey squirrels with airguns and we were looking forward again to this autumn as the squirrel numbers were increasing again, and we also shoot woodpigeon in the woods. I know plenty will think it 'downright unsporting' to shoot pigeons as they settle in to roost. My simple reply is - try it! Maybe then you'll change your mind. To achieve a clean kill, the objective of any person who claims to be a sportsman, requires accuracy and stealth. Anyone who has ever shot woodpigeon knows how wary they can be. In preparation for this season I even bought myself a new air rifle, switching from the single shot spring gun to a pre-charged pneumatic which not only is more powerful, but has a ten shot magazine. The ability to reload without taking your eyes from a running squirrel is a great advantage for they

can disappear in an instant. First, I was amazed at the prices you can pay for an airgun these days but as they say 'you get what you pay for.' The whole rigmarole of transferring the licence was a nightmare but it got sorted out eventually. I bought a few English airgun magazines and read the reviews before settling on an AirArms S410 extra FAC. This is a lovely gun with a side lever cocking mechanism and adjustable power. When I got the gun and was ready to zero I decided to use it at about three quarters power, as this means I would get more shots before having to top up the air reservoir. Even at this setting it is more powerful than my last gun and very accurate at the ranges I intend to use it. An early lesson for me was the amount of effort needed to refill the gun using a stirrup pump, and I quickly decided not to let it get empty so I would only have to top it up after each trip. It was not long before it had claimed its first rabbit.

Next, I decided to find out exactly what other quarry



*Crop damaged by pigeon.*



species I could target. A few hours on the Internet proved very interesting. In the UK the legal quarry species for an airgun are clearly stated. But we know the rules regarding airguns are very different to those in the Republic of Ireland. In Ireland any airgun must be licensed as a rifle, regardless of power. As I wanted a list of legal quarry species, I approached a number of individuals who I thought would have the answer, but to my surprise their replies differed widely, as no list was available. I particularly wanted to know about woodpigeon. Someone had suggested that they couldn't be shot with an airgun. I discovered that the woodpigeon has an open season from the 1st of November until the 31st January. They also come under the EU Birds Directive, no surprise there as under that legislation all wild birds are protected. I was told that every four months the Minister of the Environment signs a declaration, as required by the EU Commission, which allows various species to be killed, including woodpigeon if they pose a serious threat to crops or livestock. This same derogation allows various other species such as grey crows to be shot under certain conditions. There has been some controversy over the question of where exactly a pigeon can be considered to be posing a threat to crops, however I am told that the legal opinion of the EU law is that it must be in the immediate vicinity of the growing crop. Other sources had said that the season ends at the end of February but this is clearly incorrect. I know most gun clubs organise vermin shoots to reduce pest numbers and a lot of these target woodies as they return to their roosts. It would seem that technically this is illegal, as they are not going to damage the trees.

### ***Many tactics are employed***

In my own area I have seen the damage these birds can do to crops of cauliflowers, cabbages and sprouts. On occasion, farmers have claimed that their fields are

blue with pigeons, not green with crops. Bangers, flashers and kites are tried but the birds get used to them all. During some months it is not unusual to see thousands of birds rise off a crop which can be destroyed in hours. As all farmers know the buyers only want perfect heads of cabbage so losses can be huge. I have even heard of farmers so frustrated by these pests that they will try anything to stop them attacking their crops. One tactic, which has been used is very damaging to the whole environment, this is to simply remove all trees and high hedges from around their fields. No responsible shooter or anyone interested in the environment wants that, but it works. I know some shooters are getting bags of over one hundred pigeons a day shooting over decoys in crop fields.

However if we as shooters request that an open season, (see how confusing it gets), be put on woodpigeons we could be accused of just wanting to kill more birds. We cannot give the Antis any fuel. I believe the shooting organisations should work with the Irish Farmers Association to have a pest species list drawn up. If a farmer's crops are being damaged by a flock of birds the farmer should be able to call on shooters to shoot them, as pests. Sometimes only a small number of birds need to be shot to discourage others from feeding in that field. There is massive confusion out there. Any bird designated a pest species should be shot whenever it is possible (and legal) to shoot them, such as over stubble or at roost. To even source this information meant chasing links all over the National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) website.

As shooters we know that pigeons feed in the morning then digest the food in a sitty tree before filling up again before roosting. Sometimes they fill up more than twice a day. These sitty trees provide perfect spots for an air-gunner to target them. As always when you shoot something, eat it. A pigeon requires little time to prepare, and in seconds you can have two lovely fillets of lean breast meat ready to cook. Don't leave dead birds behind. If you don't eat them I'm sure you can find someone who will. I consider it reasonable to request the NPWS as the responsible body to provide a clear list of legal quarry species, together with any conditions attached. As far as shooting any quarry is concerned, ignorance is no excuse for breaking the law. Farmers also need to be able to control this, at times, serious agricultural pest.



*(left) The crop content of just three pigeon.*



# Declan's Winning Day at Woodcock



**T**he winner of the first prize in the National Woodcock Association of Ireland's raffle Mr. Declan Manley had a wonderful and enjoyable day at woodcock on the 30th November 2010 by kind invitation of Charles and Mary Cooper of Markree Castle in county Sligo.

The evening prior to the shooting day, we arrived in time for dinner at eight o'clock in the ornate dining room in Markree Castle Hotel, this of course was all part of the super prize for the winner offered by the Cooper family to the Woodcock Association for their raffle.

Conversation at the table centred on woodcock and the long history of their association with the Markree estate. Records of woodcock breeding there were just one of the topics discussed and the manicuring of the woodlands to accommodate the birds both in winter as migrants and in summer to assist the breeding population was regarded as a major factor in the year on year increase in numbers both in spring and winter.

On the morning of the shoot day, the guns assembled at ten o'clock for their instructions on safety and also for the format of the drives. There were 10 enthusiastic woodcock hunters and a handful of beaters lead by Charles and Mary Cooper with their spaniels. In the course of the shooting day there were eight or nine different drives, each piece of woodland produced woodcock with the exception of one wood. There were no concentrations of woodcock but a good sprinkling in each drive and Declan by pure luck appeared to draw the best position each time. The total bag for the day was



*Declan with his woodcock.*

13 woodcock and Declan accounted for six of them. Each woodcock was weighed and aged and the average weight was 335grams and the age ratio was seven adult and six juveniles.

## ***More flushed than shot***

The number of woodcock flushed was far in excess of the number which was shot and those woods which were hunted on this shoot day will be used again in four weeks time which will allow the woodcock time to return to their normal activities in that area.

Declan would like to thank the Cooper family and the remainder of the shooting syndicate for making him so welcome in their company and for giving him the opportunity to have such an enjoyable day.

As the weather continued to deteriorate over the next days and weeks, the Department of the Environment through the National Parks & Wildlife Service (NPWS)



*Lunchtime craic for the gathering.*



imposed a ban on hunting from the 7th December which was to last until the 30th December.

Weather condition and sub zero temperatures over this period, created major problems for the survival of many birds and in particular woodcock and snipe and it was acceptable to all sportsmen and only fitting that the season was closed during this period.

Unfortunately there were some who did not cease the pursuit of woodcock; we received reports of unscrupulous tourist shoot operators continuing to bring their foreign shooters to Ireland to shoot woodcock and in one instance to actually flight woodcock during the period of the ban. These so called sportsmen men are a blight on all honest hunting folk and can only be regarded as opportunists acting only for the amount of EURO that ends up in their pockets, they have absolutely no regard for our countryside and its wildlife. The NPWS have been informed of the reports we have received on those activities.

As the New Year has just begun and hunting has recommenced, we would like to wish you all a successful and enjoyable and safe New Year.

(Right) Charles Cooper was the host for the day.



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# Foods that may cause friction

**H**ere in the foothills of the Pyrénées, as I packed up a significant amount of highest quality Foie Gras destined for the tables of some gastronomic friends in Ireland, I mused on how, since coming to live here in spring 2003, I have adopted, in many ways, a French attitude to food. Looking at the substantial quantity of this gourmet's dream piled on a sideboard in the cool hallway of our rustic old house, I pondered on the fact that here we have a product considered so luxurious, so deluxe, by people in other countries, that they look upon it with reverence and consider it to be completely exotic; a bit on the expensive side maybe, but a fabulous, once a year treat.

It all began when friends who spend part of each year over in the glorious olive and lavender growing Provence were keen to see our totally different – but equally stunning – wild scenery. On arrival, they realised how close they were to Spain; only the Pyrénées separate us. After their marathon drive, we enjoyed a very special evening here in the hills, where at dinner they first tasted the locally produced Foie Gras. So impressed were they that the following morning they rushed off to buy a piece to take back to Ireland. Their friends tasted it at the Christmas and New Year revels and, voila, the orders started and continued to grow each year.

Being such a common product here, I had taken it for granted. It is something quite extraordinary, with origins

going back thousands of years. When I first came here, I remember being astonished at the vast amount of Foie Gras that this area of France produces. Here in the Grand Sud, which is certainly not a wealthy area of France, Foie Gras is everywhere. People look on it as a perfectly normal food. It is part of all the great occasions of course, but equally it can and frequently does make an appearance at an ordinary lunch. As I made friends with the French, shopped and cooked using local produce, I fell into the French way of thinking about Foie Gras. Like the mountains, it's always there.

## *Life without Foie Gras - unimaginable!*

Nationally, it is considered a very important product indeed and like so many foodstuffs - the French take these things very seriously - it is protected by law. Legislation designated Foie Gras as part of the officially protected, cultural and gastronomic patrimony of the country. France produces 83% of the world's Foie Gras and apparently eats more than 90% of it. In most of the farmhouses around me and in small village houses too, it is made for family use and life without Foie Gras would be unimaginable. Rich, buttery and delicate, unlike regular duck or goose liver, it is such a luxurious product, packed with calories, that a relatively small piece is a feast. On a bed of salad leaves, with red winter berries, or in summer, tiny cherry tomatoes, it makes an opulent looking plate.

Some countries strongly object to the very idea of Foie Gras and several of the American states went so far as to







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*Taste of Heaven.*

put pressure on people to stop eating it. We had the astonishing tale of Foie Gras actually being banned in 2006 by the city of Chicago, a place that enjoyed much covert action when the city fathers decided to ban alcohol. The 2006 ban seemed to give Foie Gras a ritzy glamour, a new appeal, the product now had a kind of allure. Demand became high and the scarcely believable stories of Chicago 'Foie Gras speakeasies' followed. In May 2008, the City Council repealed the controversial ban and restaurants that wished to offer it to clients put it back on the menus and those who chose to eat it did so, in public. All cheered the common sense decision and life went on.

Yes, the arguments continue and stories of birds in distress, because of the practice of force feeding, are always quoted by those in opposition. Breeders will tell you that the birds simply get used to the process and are not in any great distress, adding that people have been practising the 'gavage' as far back as 2500 BC, when the ancient Egyptians began keeping birds for food and deliberately fattened them through force feeding. Not all agree with the breeders and the whole subject can and does inflame passions. Like many objectors to country ways and practices, many of the campaigners tend to be city people, quite emotional and often with little knowledge of the ways of the countryside.

Here in the hills, a sizeable number of people still live largely from the produce of a smallholding, where they keep ducks and geese as well as their other animals. They are kind and extremely generous, but there is little

sentimentality about rearing stock for eating. Memories are long and these people and their ancestors saw very hard times indeed during two world wars.

### ***Found in top restaurants***

With Foie Gras all around me, maybe it's not unusual that I haven't investigated it in any great detail, until now. A first class producer lives and makes this top of the range delicacy literally down the road from me. David Lemasson, a true artisan, is the owner of a special enterprise. For fifteen years he has been producing the highest quality duck produce, both fresh and preserved. The ducks are sourced from the neighbouring Gers department, from three farms who maintain the highest standards of animal welfare. It is here in Ariège Pyrénées that David and his team create the superb range of products, from whole Foie Gras to confit de canard, conserves and pâtés. These are hand-crafted, natural products, without any conservatives or dyes. They can be found in top restaurants, butchers and discerning supermarkets. A perfect jewel of a shop, which curiously appears to be doing business, is where the public can buy the products. David believes that because he and his team produce such a wide range of foodstuffs, from the expensive whole Foie Gras to a small jar of luscious pâté, there is something for all pockets, as it were.

It seems that even during a downturn, with less money around, this does not seem to affect the luxury food sector. I can confirm that people here really will spend on food, as opposed to house decoration, for instance. Anyone who has ever travelled through rural France will surely agree. There may be peeling shutters and an old car outside, but rest assured, inside, the table will be full and the feast magnificent.

Monsieur Lemasson, when he is not at base in the Couseran hills, criss-crosses the Southwest, from Antibes on the Mediterranean to Biarritz on the Atlantic coast, bringing his splendid Foie Gras to a larger territory. Nothing is left to chance. From the magnificent products, to the very labels used on jars and tins, every detail indicates top quality merchandise, a taste of luxury. And it never disappoints.



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# Where Eagles Dare



*Golden Eagle*

*(Photograph by Mark Hamblin)*

**F**or two centuries, like many of our birds of prey, the golden eagle was persecuted to extinction. Absent from Ireland for over 100 years, it was only reintroduced in 2001 in Co Donegal, and has since fared well in the Glenveagh National Park. Over the last two years, they have successfully bred and there is every chance that they may start spreading further south, possibly colonising parts of Northern Ireland. However, there is a fly in the ointment. Last November, a golden eagle was found poisoned near Omagh, Co Tyrone. Beside it was the carcass of a raven. Tests confirmed that both birds had indeed ingested the poison carbofuran, probably from a poisoned bait. As in Ireland, carbofuran is banned in the UK after being banned Europe-wide in 2008. To many who heard about the demise of this wonderful bird, the killing was an abomination that was both senseless and thoughtless.

Lorcan O'Toole of the Golden Eagle Trust, the wildlife charity responsible for the reintroduction of the birds, was aghast: "The bird that we found was released only the year before and it was possibly looking for new territory, spreading out from the stronghold in Glenveagh. "Golden eagles are long-lived, but take a while to reach maturity. The death of one bird means the

loss of a breeding pair. In the death of this one bird we see reflected the loss of successive generations. It is utterly heart-breaking."

The golden eagle is one of the largest birds of prey in the UK and Ireland, only the white-tailed sea eagle is larger. They are found across the northern hemisphere and are naturally occurring right across Europe, the Americas and Asia. Their iconic status is seen by their inclusion in several coats of arms, as well as being the national bird of no less than five countries. Golden eagles nest in high mountainous areas and a breeding pair mates for life. They will establish several nests within their territory which can cover up to 60 square miles, and use these sites alternatively through the years. Female golden eagles lay a clutch of eggs that can vary from one to four and in most cases only the older chick survives, while the younger one dies without leaving the nest. This is due to the older chick having a few days' advantage in growth and consequently winning most squabbles for food. This strategy is useful for the species because it makes the parents' workload manageable even when food is scarce, while providing a reserve chick in case the first-born dies soon after hatching. Golden eagles invest much time and effort in bringing up their young; once able to hunt on their own, most golden eagles survive many years, but mortality even among first-born nestlings is much higher, in particular in the first weeks after hatching.



The diet of golden eagles consists mostly of small mammals such as rabbits, mice, foxes and young deer. When food is scarce, they will take birds – anything from a jay to swan is fair game. They will also scavenge carrion during the winter months and may steal food from other birds. Golden eagles have exceptional eyesight and can spot prey from great distances. The huge talons are used for crushing, killing and carrying the prey, whilst the beak is used for tearing and eating. A pair often has a division of labour while hunting: one bird may drive the prey towards its waiting partner.

### ***On a wing and a prayer***

Over the past 200 years, raptors were hunted to extinction, without regard or any attention paid to the real or perceived threat they posed to those who persecuted them. Even scavengers such as the buzzard and red kite, were shot, trapped or poisoned. In the 60s, the use of DDT was the final straw, and many of these beleaguered raptors became extinct as their efforts to breed were seriously compromised. However, wildlife charities, such as the RSPB and BirdWatch Ireland, have worked hard with landowners over the past thirty years to change legislation, and to modernise the law and justice system. Sentences for wildlife crime have been increased and now raptor persecution can incur jail sentences. In addition to this, they have also worked with landowners and farmers, to raise awareness and improve communication around



*The result of poisoning*

*(Photograph by Birdwatch Ireland)*

these magnificent birds of prey.

Where birds have either not returned or disappeared altogether, reintroductions have taken place and these have, by and large, been highly successful. An outstanding example is the red kite reintroduction in Northern Ireland, Co Down. Here a very public campaign, coupled with good communications with the farming community, has seen the birds received warmly by the local community. The red kite is also part of the Ulster Farmers' Union brand, its unmistakable silhouette adorning the logo. In 2010, red kite chicks hatched and fledged in Northern Ireland for the first time in 200 years.

But what of the golden eagle? They have had some breeding success in Glenveagh and are occasionally seen above the forests of the Sperrins and the slopes of Binevenagh. However, the news has not been good. Not only have they failed to establish any territory over what should be ideal habitat in Northern Ireland, but the poisoning case in Co Tyrone points to more sinister elements working against their reestablishment. While numbers of raptor persecution are admittedly small compared to Scotland and England, unsurprisingly these conservation charities regard even one case as one case too many.

Of increasing worry is the indiscriminate use of poisoned meat baits which may be targeted at foxes and other perceived pests such as hooded crows, but also end up being eaten by birds such as the golden eagle. Claire Ferry, RSPB Senior Conservation Officer, said: "We know that farmers are trying to protect their livestock, but scavenging birds of prey such as eagles, kites and buzzards also eat these baits, often with catastrophic consequences. Over 20 protected



*A magnificent bird*

*(Photo by Michael McGregor)*



birds of prey have tested positive for exposure to poisons in Ireland over the last three years. This however represents only the tip of the iceberg as many birds are not as intensively monitored and their carcasses go undetected. The extrapolation of these poisoning events indicates that other species are also vulnerable and likely to be exposed to poisoned bait.

“Other birds of prey such as peregrine falcon, as well as scavenging species like the raven are also likely to be negatively impacted. The populations of what should be common birds in our countryside have been and are being severely restricted by current criminal practices.” John Lusby, Birdwatch Ireland, added: “We fully appreciate the need to control pest species in certain situations. The majority of farmers do so in a safe and responsible way, it is unfortunately the small number of landowners who continue to misuse poisoned meat baits that are responsible for bringing farming into disrepute, damaging wildlife and as a result ultimately threatening tourism and farm incomes.”

### **Legal eagles**

Over the past three years, the RSPB and Birdwatch Ireland have held campaigns to call attention to the plight of raptors. They have also worked closely with local government and other organisations. For example, in Northern Ireland both the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) NI and local council environmental health officers have responsibilities for checking compliance with safe use and storage on different properties. Northern Ireland’s Wildlife Order prohibits killing using pesticides, and the RSPB hopes the new Wildlife and Natural Environment Bill will bring forward an offence to possess pesticides for which the

owner has no lawful use. Further enforcement is available through DARD Quality Assurance Branch, which carries out farm checks. There are requirements on the storage of pesticides, and breaches can result in loss of single farm payment. Finally, a recent meeting between the PSNI and enforcement agencies such as DARD and HSE has highlighted how these organisations can work together to investigate and enforce poisoning offences.

### **What can you do?**

The future of these birds now stands at a crossroads. While some are well on the way to recovery, like the buzzard and peregrine falcon, others like the golden eagle still remain uncertain. Key to their reestablishment will be the vigilance of the general public to alert law enforcement agencies to any suspicious activities which they may notice. Claire Ferry, RSPB, once again: “If someone finds a dead bird in suspicious circumstance they should call the local police station or report it anonymously through Crimestoppers on 0800 555 111. Do not touch the bird – this is important as some pesticides are extremely toxic to human health, and can even cause death. The PSNI will collect the bird and take it for testing. If you are reporting in the south, the Garda or National Parks and Wildlife Service should be contacted. It is also important to remember that laying meat baits in the open is illegal and should not be done for any reason unless a licence has been obtained from NIEA or NPWS.” In Celtic mythology, the golden eagle symbolised the soul, signifying the power of life over death. Hopefully this association bodes well for the fortunes of this charismatic and beautiful bird.



*Feeding time and vulnerable.*  
(Photograph by Michael McGregor)



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### ***Plaudits this issue***

Paul Pringle has very rightly praised CAI and BASC for their efforts in lobbying and having their members lobby MLAs to defeat some proposed threats to our sports. I know that there were also other people lobbying on behalf of country sports interests and they and the MLAs who voted to throw out potentially restrictive legislation must also share the credit.

On the docking issue I must pay a personal tribute to Barry Wade, the Vice Chairman of the National Working Terrier Federation of the UK for an excellent pro docking paper which he had prepared on behalf of the working terrier. He was concerned that the lobbying that was taking place was mainly if not exclusively on behalf of gundogs and he thought the case should also be made for working terriers. I was only too happy to round robin his paper to the members of the committee making the appropriate recommendations. I must commend Francie Molloy, MLA for his very positive response and for the arguments he put on behalf of working dogs throughout the process.

### ***A Plaudit to Minister of the Environment Edwin Poots, MLA***

I was delighted to accompany our editor Paul Pringle on his visit to interview Minister Poots. I have to say I was impressed with the Minister's grasp of a wide range of environmental issues and his very positive view of how country sports fit into the conservation of the countryside and the preservation of the rural way of life.

We tried him on the coursing issue without success but he was very much more positive on the beagling issue and we were delighted to come away with the news that beagling was not threatened.

### ***And to whom should go the main plaudit for removing this threat?***

Well, obviously Minister Poots for taking a principled and objective stand but he claimed he was very well briefed on the issue by William Irwin. To my shame I had to admit I didn't know who William Irwin was – I thought he might be some super efficient political lobbyist employed by CAI, BASC or some other sporting interests. But in fact the case for the continuance of beagling was primarily put by William Irwin, DUP MLA for Newry & Mourne! A large plaudit must go to Mr Irwin!

# **AJ's Angst**

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### ***A gundog and game shoot plaudit***

I was delighted to take a number of guns to the Drumbanagher Charity Gundog Trial day run annually on the Newry based shoot. Each year Brian Byrne, Rodney Watson and the team at Drumbanagher host a charity field trial with all proceeds going to charity.

This year the Mid Ulster Gundog Association started the fund raising with a £500 donation, a ballot and auction masterfully carried out by Ivor Cowan from Field & Stream in Moy quickly pushed the total to over £3,000.

It was also a delight to have Jim Shannon, MP take a day out of his very busy political schedule to join us as a gun. Although Jim is no longer an MLA he still works hard behind the scenes to influence MLAs on country sports issues and it is no secret that on the Hunting Bill he wrote personally to all the MLAs asking them to reject it. We are very fortunate to have such an able and dedicated politician committed to promoting country sports in whatever forum he can.



*With Jim Shannon, MP (left) are Raymond Rocks, Ivor Cowan, Brian Byrne presenting the cheque for MacMillan Cancer Support.*

### ***Another Plaudit***

In case this looks like being party political with giving plaudits to Sinn Féin and DUP politicians, I must also give a plaudit to one of my own MLAs John McAllister, deputy leader of the UUP, who always responds very promptly, courteously and above all positively to my own lobbying on country sports issues and of course to SDLP MLA, Patsy McGlone and all the other MLAs who helped defeat legislation that would have curtailed our traditional sporting pursuits.

And no I haven't gone soft completely...

### ***A brickbat for apparent delusional fantasies***

To probably the only person in Ireland who thinks that the fair at Moira is 'Northern Ireland's largest and best attended country sports occasion.' This was claimed recently in a newspaper column. Does the author really think that claims such as this do anything for the Moria event? **He certainly must not have been at the Irish Game Fair at Shanes in 2010 which was indisputably IRELAND'S largest and best attended country sports occasion**



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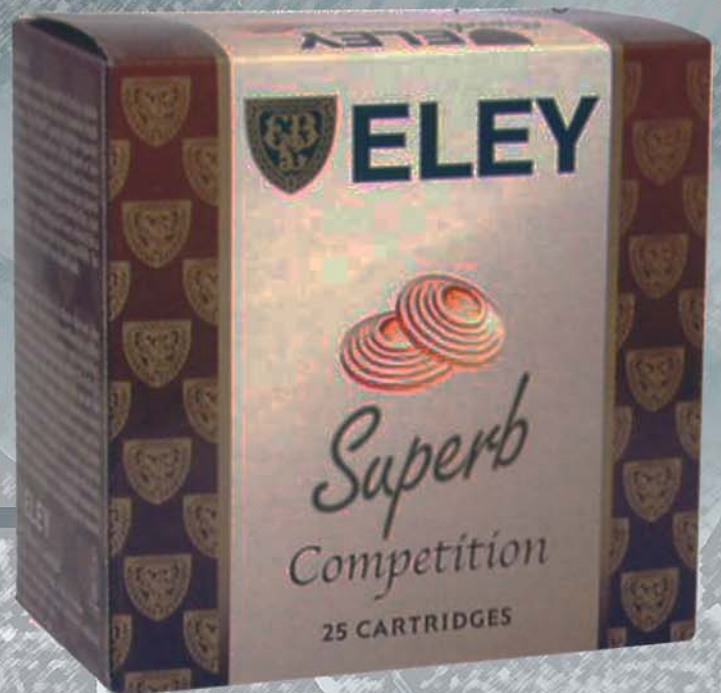
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