

Irish COUNTRY SPORTS and COUNTRY LIFE

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Country Sports and Country Life Rol Comment

As I write this Comment, the last day of the shooting season has just taken place and there's only a few weeks left in the hound season. For many shooters there will be no more hunting until the beginning of September. Unfortunately, I didn't get out at all for any rough shooting this year but I have been out many times on foot, hunting with hounds; and it's been an excellent few months, with the scent being outstanding during January as the colder weather seemed to be beneficial for scent and the hounds latched onto travelling dog foxes.



On several Saturdays during the season I joined a foot harrier pack in Kilkenny and on a number of Sundays drove to Westmeath for days with a beagle pack. These were very enjoyable, social days, which contained the positives of exercise, pleasant scenery and watching hounds work. It would be fair to say that during November and December the scent was patchy and the hunting so-so, but in January things took off and the packs flew. At the end of long days, dogs and humans returned home tired and happy.

On the first day of the season, Saturday the 1st of November, I joined the Rockview Foot Harriers in the lovely countryside of County Kilkenny. We met at 10am and prior to setting off, a whiskey bottle was produced and we drank to the memory of a local hunting man who had passed away aged 91. His son was present and was visibly touched by the gesture. From the meet we walked into an attractive, long glen surrounded by a region of small hills and valleys. The glen was filled with deciduous trees, beautiful in their autumn raiment, and there were several fox dens here. I was told that the area is also hunted by two mounted packs, the Mullinavat Harriers and the Kilkenny Foxhounds. The weather was calm for a few hours but at two o'clock a very bad weather system moved in bringing with it strong winds and heavy rain for several hours. Some of us sheltered behind a stone wall, but after fifteen minutes of this I became chilled and needed warming up. I therefore started following the huntsman, who hadn't taken cover and was still hunting. We pursued the hounds, who were on a scent despite the terrible weather, down to the bottom of the wooded valley, across a stream, and steeply up the opposing slope. This was challenging terrain underfoot and soon I was warmed up and breathing heavily. After quarter of an hour we reached the hounds who, for the second time of the day, were marking at a den. We drew the hounds away, dropped down a steep slope, edging down on the sides of our boots so we wouldn't slip, crossed the stream once more and soon after the pack was on again. After a few minutes the fox went to ground once more, in a den which was concealed by a great tangle of briars. The Foot Harrier pack had performed impressively

despite the difficult conditions.

The next day, I joined the Balgarrett Beagles at Halston House near the village of Loughnavalley in Westmeath. Halston is a pleasant Georgian house with fine land around, which is lovely for hunting. For the first half-hour we enjoyed marvellous scent with the hounds bursting with energy and enthusiasm, and then the scent suddenly disappeared, followed by a blank for the next two and a half hours. The Balgarrett Beagles are an excellent pack and I have often enjoyed fine days with them which

included long periods of unbroken hunting on the one quarry, but this was one of those days which was disappointing.

Scent is of course a much debated subject among hunting folk, whether hound followers or game bird shooters, and some will tell you categorically what makes a good scenting day. But when you investigate a bit further you will discover that there is an awful lot of confusion about the subject. A number of books have been written on the matter. 'Hunting by Scent' by Hubert Budgett and 'The Mystery of Scent' by Hugh Pollard are both very good but inconclusive because they had limited scientific technology available to them when they were writing. More recent books have been written on the subject but their findings haven't percolated through to the thinking of the contemporary hunting enthusiast in Ireland and most of us would agree with John Jorrocks, who exclaimed in 'Handley Cross': "Oh, that weary scent, that weary, incomprehensible, uncontrollable phenomenon! Constant only in its inconstancy!"

There is one matter which most hunting people are agreed upon though, and that is the three o'clock fox. Often when out mounted hunting, I saw people turn homewards if it had been a quiet couple of hours, but they then missed the three o'clock fox and a really good chase. Time and again I've witnessed scent suddenly improve at 3pm when the temperature drops.

Some people say the scenting is good when the ground is wet. One huntsman I read said the scent for his particular pack was bad in pine woods, but time and again I've witnessed exceptional hound-hunting in pine woodland, with the pack being so intent on their quarry that it's a very difficult task to call them off.

What can be said with certainty is what scent is. It is comprised of micro particles of disturbed vegetable matter and / or released dead body cells drifting from the quarry. It's also generally acknowledged that scent doesn't last very long if the weather is warm or windy and the ground is dry. Many say that scent survives much longer in cool, moist conditions in grassy areas where there is little or no wind. The bottom line with this subject is that we in fact know a considerable amount about it, but there is still a good deal of scientific work to be done.

**Derek Fanning,
ROI Editor**

Country Sports and Country Life Northern Comment

Well, it's been a good shooting season although I am aware that there have not been so many woodcock in parts of the country. Even on my local patch and from the talk elsewhere they appear have been more scarce than normal. Not surprising then that conversation around many shoot tables and in the beaters' transport centred at times on the disgusting sale of woodcock in certain parts of the country. Some 'fine souls' have seen fit to get as many as possible to sell on in the pubs, not being content to simply take a bird for the table.



What saddens any true sportsman and woman is that while others such as the The Woodcock Association Of Ireland (WAOI) are unstinting in working for the benefit of these birds, is that their selfish actions are simply unsustainable.

What they do is to take, take, take from a totally wild species and one which faces enough hardship simply to survive. I make no apologies for condemning them out of hand.

On the other hand, I want to applaud the NWAOI which was founded to act as a focal point for woodcock enthusiasts. Their main aim is to develop an understanding among enthusiasts and other interested parties, the need for conservation of woodcock and their habitat, under the following headings. We in Irish Countrysports and Country Life magazine have been proud and privileged to have helped hard working secretary Larry Taaffe with NWAOI fundraising, as part of the magazine's commitment to the sponsorship of Irish country sports clubs and organisations.

The NWAOI develops and take part in research, in order to advance our knowledge of wintering woodcock and will advance our knowledge of native woodcock. They hope to develop a strategy that will manage our attitude to woodcock into the future, develop educational programmes and work in co-operation with National and European organisations.

Vitaly, they act as a lobby group, to maintain woodcock as a sporting game bird in Ireland.

But as they say on their website, NWAOI is not a hunting organisation, but what it does will benefit hunters in the long term. Their prime objectives are based on research and accumulation of data on woodcock which are resident in Ireland and on woodcock which visit Ireland in the Autumn/Winter from their breeding grounds in Northern Europe.

I have no hesitation in helping to promote what they do and I understand the WAOI would welcome more people becoming involved as there are many surveys and programmes that require co-operation on a national scale. Why not visit their website at www.woodcockireland.com and see what you can do to help.

As a member of the Wildlife and Wetlands Trust I acknowledge the fine work which they do to improve and protect wetlands and their wildlife inhabitants. One only has to visit one of their areas at Martin Mere, Llanelli or locally at Castle Espie just outside Comber, County Down to see that they have done much for the wetland areas mentioned. Indeed, work over the past year or two at Castle Espie is certainly inspirational as can be seen by the many visitors throughout the year, including many children and young people

I was interested in the article by Bill Oddie in the October/December issue of *Waterline*, the WWT's members magazine, which spoke glowingly about Peter Scott, about getting a call from the man himself and, if I remember correctly,

meeting him at Slimbridge, the reserve which Scott created for in 1946 when he set up the Wildfowl & Wetlands Trust there, as a centre for science and conservation. Uniquely at the time, he opened it to the public so that anyone could enjoy getting close to nature.

As their website says 'Peter Scott particularly loved the wild open marshes of Britain and the mysterious geese that visited from unknown shores. He started as a wildfowler but learned to protect first the birds, and then their wetland habitats.' Yes, as most wildfowlers know Peter

Scott enjoyed wildfowling; one only has to leaf through a book such as *Wild Chorus* to see that. A chapter I love entitled *Twelve Hours Afloat* describes wonderfully a punt gunning sortie with his friend John and another couple of hardy folk in another punt 'on a cold grey morning when the wind had freshened again...'. He writes 'It was blowing hard when the four of us pushed off from the quay, two in each punt. We rowed across to the weather shore and then drifted down under the lee of the high marsh... After a mile we were below the marsh, but on our side of it sat a spring of teal.' But the gun could not be brought to bear so they settled instead for 'our four hand guns' presumably the shotguns, and soon they had seven teal aboard before continuing their journey in the punt. Read the book for yourself and you'll almost smell the salt spray and hold your breath as you come to bear on the quarry.

And this was the Peter Scott that Oddie waxes lyrical about. Did Oddie speak of Peter Scott's early love of wildfowling? Err... strangely not for some reason.

In the current edition of *Waterline*, Martin Spray's the WWT's Chief Executive writes of past memories by HRH The Duke of Edinburgh who was involved in the early years of WWT and was its President for six years. Spray says that the Duke of Edinburgh recalled how first visit to Slimbridge with James Robertson Justice (an actor whom older readers may remember) and to the Duke's amusement the meal which they were served with Peter Scott and his wife was roast duck.

And what does this prove? Not a lot really except that perhaps so-called celebrity conservationists such as Oddie, Packham and others might usefully take a leaf out of Spray's book for once. They might acknowledge the next time they look at something like stone plover conservation, that the actual ground on which the birds are thriving is (whisper it) a shooting estate, where much excellent practical conservation work is carried out. And by whom? Gamekeepers no less! WWT says its ethos starts with the simple act of feeding a duck. A bit like most wild fowling clubs then and, come to that, many shooters, gamekeepers and other countrysports enthusiasts.

You know, if The Society for the Preservation of Subscription Earning Mammals and Birds was a bit more even-handed and acknowledged the excellent work done by shooting organisations and countrysports folk and their practical work to help keep a balance of predators and prey - if they admitted more openly to the occasions when even they had to give nature the help that keepers do routinely - then the only thing they might lose could be the donations they get from so-called 'urban bunny huggers.'

Oh - hold on a minute

Paul Pringle
Northern Editor

Put a Spring in your step with Barbour



Sutton Rugby polo shirt in 100% cotton

The Casual Gamefair jacket & Funnel Neck Sweat.

British springtime is the perfect season to leave behind the log fires and start braving the outdoors once again - and who better to trust with your country attire than British Heritage brand Barbour.

For Spring/Summer 15, Barbour offers a brand new range of Countrywear, consisting of casual jackets, jerseys, shirts and tees for men and women that are both practical and stylish, and perfect for those who love the outdoor life.

The new Barbour Country collection for men provides a selection of relaxed country attire in neutral colours such as Olives and Stones, whilst

the odd injection of Red and Amber gives the traditional collection a contemporary twist.

Lightweight jackets such as the Casual Gamefair are the perfect cover up in milder months but, with storm-fly front and throat tabs for extra protection, they remain versatile enough to fend off the cold should the weather turn. The Sutton Rugby polo shirt in 100% cotton is also ideal for outdoor excursions - easy to throw on for a dog walk, and perfect as part of a layered-look.

As part of Barbour's long-standing connection with all things equestrian, this season introduces a new Equestrian Collection for Women. Traditional Tattersall checks and

horse print linings are perfect for horse enthusiasts, whilst elasticated panels and breathable fabrics make the collection ideal for recreational riders.

The Dressage Jacket is a stand out piece, with a detachable hood providing versatility for all weathers and reflective tape binding ensuring riders are visible and safe at all times, whilst the Saddle Polo is a light layer perfect for summer hacks, with stretch pique fabric allowing for maximum comfort in the saddle.

The new Spring Summer 15 Countrywear collection from Barbour is perfect for those who live, work or play in the countryside, whatever the weather!



Equestrian Collection - the Dressage WB Jacket & Saddle Polo



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NI Gundog Field & Show Society Gundog of the Year Competition sponsored by **Feedwell** and Irish Countrysports & Country Life magazine.

The 25th Annual Gundog Puppy, Veteran Gundog and Gundog of The Year Show was held at Oakfield Community Development Centre in Carrickfergus on the 31st January 2015. Judge for the day was Mr Tom Mathers.



NI Gundog of the Year Winner and the Society's Committee.



NI Gundog Pup of the Year: Caroline Reynold's Clumber Spaniel, Wyclydo's Fast as the Wind at Glenariff.



Res NI Gundog Pup of the Year: Huston & Arrell's Cocker Spaniel Hustoia Adonis.



Judge Mr Tom Mathers cutting the society's 25th Anniversary Year Celebration Cake during the lunch break.



NI Gundog Veteran of the Year, for the second year: with handler Mr Stewart Cummings, Karen McKelvey's Irish Setter, IR SH CH Edenavey's Holly's Pride.



Res NI Gundog Veteran of the Year: Lisa Graham's Cocker Spaniel IR SH CH Stiloga Hop The Wag.



NI Gundog of the Year: Tom & Anne-Marie Mervn's German Short Haired Pointer GB, IR & INT SH CH Karlivar Dusky Rose at Tomanipoint



Res NI Gundog of the Year: Alison McClure's Irish Setter, handled by Mr Stewart Cummings Edenavey's Pure Magic.



Madeline Rainy club secretary makes a presentation to judge Mr Tom Mathers.

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

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BUMPER RESULTS FOR ADDISONS' SPORTING SALE

Priced fishing rods and reels, together with high-quality shotguns and air weapons were just two areas to see top results in Addisons of Barnard Castle's specialist Sporting Sale held on 5 February. With over 550 lots, the sale comprised a huge variety of sporting items covering angling, shooting, hunting and other traditional country pursuits.

Central to the sale was a large collection of fishing rods and reels, which attracted a great number of bids in person, online and over the telephone, with many exceeding or selling at the high end of their price ranges.



A 9ft Hardy Ultralite Plus three-piece fly rod reached £160



A Hardy's Marquis Salmon No. 1 reel sold for £150

Many of the leading makers were represented in the fishing lots but Hardy fishing equipment continues to dominate across the board. Notable sales included a Hardy's Marquis Salmon No. 1 reel, which sold at the top end of its price range (£100-£150) for £150. A Sage 509 by Hardy alloy trout fly reel exceeded its estimate of £50-£70 and was knocked down for £90. A 9ft Hardy Ultralite Plus three-piece fly rod also sold for £160, above its guide range of £100-£150. A couple of two-piece split cane fly rods, handmade by John Gibson of Hardy's also sold for £80 each.



A Browning 325 12 gauge shotgun sold for £1,500

Also included in the sale were a large number of firearms that achieved some of the sale's highest results. A beautifully engraved Browning 325 12 gauge shotgun sold for £1,500 and another shotgun (number 456227) reached £1,050.



A Number 456227 shotgun was knocked down for £1,050

A Theoben Rapid Seven air weapon smashed its price estimate of £200-£300 when it was knocked down for £620 and a AWR Pape 12 gauge shotgun doubled its price estimate of £200-£300 when it sold for £480.

Auctioneer William McNab said: "We were delighted with the results from this auction which demonstrates the high level of interest in sporting goods and memorabilia. Bidding is always very competitive, especially for the more unusual or valuable items, and people enter items in the sale from across the UK because they know that we consistently achieve competitive prices."

Addisons introduced dedicated sporting sales five years ago to meet demand for items like fishing rods, guns, sporting prints and hunting memorabilia, and such is their popularity that there are now three of these events a year.

The next specialist sporting sale will be held on Thursday 28 May. For further details, or to find out how to include items in the sale, please contact Addisons on 01833 690545 or email enquiries@addisons-auctioneers.co.uk

GARY WILSON'S VALENTINE'S DAY PIKE



Young Gary Wilson is no stranger to either angling or shooting and watching him at work alongside his Dad at Glennoo last season we could see that the future of countrysports was in good hands.

On Valentines he had a great couple of hours spent fishing a local lake for pike with his Dad.

Gary was over the moon with the outing: "We went at about 9.30 and stayed until about 2.00 when we decided to make for home.

"It certainly was great fun and we started very well just after we arrived as around 9.45 I had my first bite. The fish put up a good fight and afterwards I weighed it carefully before slipping it back safely. We couldn't believe that it weighted in at 14lbs.

"I then changed bait and cast out using two rods and about tens minutes later both of them had fish on. Dad took one and I picked up the other and we both landed fish. One was 14lb and the other 13 lb. Then it went quiet for about an hour but we had done really well with three pike, all caught on mackerel."



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HUNTING INTERGROUP BACKED BY EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

The Parliament's Intergroup on Biodiversity, Hunting and Countryside – the so called Hunting Intergroup – has officially been re-established for the 2014- 2019 legislature. The final approval was taken last week by the European Parliament's Conference of Presidents of the political groups. MEP Karl-Heinz Florenz (EPP, DE) played a key role in the reconstitution of the Intergroup, coordinating the work which led to this positive result.

This vote sends a strong signal that MEPs consider hunters and the countryside an important voice to tune into, and that hunters and land managers are key stakeholders in the debate on biodiversity. This is indeed THE biodiversity intergroup." MEP Renata Briano (S&D, IT), Member of the Intergroup on Biodiversity, Hunting and Countryside.

Intergroups are formed by Members from any political group, with a view of holding informal exchanges of views on particular subjects and promoting contact between decision makers and civil society. Since the beginning of the new legislature MEPs actively sought to perpetuate the Hunting Intergroup, which exists since 1985 and is one of largest and most active, contributing to debates on wildlife conservation and management, firearms legislation, public and animal health policies and rural issues. The Hunting Intergroup was backed by over one hundred Members of the European Parliament from all political groups and is one of twenty nine such groups being approved out of over seventy proposals.

The ample support received by the Hunting Intergroup demonstrates the relevance of the values advocated by hunters and rural actors. A modern society must never forget its own roots and hunting remains a profound part of our common European heritage. The re-establishment of this historical Intergroup is also owed to the Members of FACE, the national hunting organisations in the 28 EU Member States. They represent real people – millions of hunters who share a deep passion for nature and who on a daily basis do real change on the ground to achieve EU's ambitious biodiversity targets. These are quite naturally the people decision makers should want to talk to." Gilbert de Turckheim, FACE President.

The Hunting Intergroup offers an important platform for dialogue between decision makers and hunters on how the role and contribution of hunting can be fully integrated into effective nature conservation policies. The Hunting Intergroup is, however, something more than that; it is an open window in the heart of EU decision making to some of the finest and richest traditions and cultures of our European continent, stretching from gastronomy and high quality game meat to poetry and music passed on over generations." MEP Boris Zala (S&D, SK), Member of the Intergroup on Biodiversity, Hunting and Countryside.

One of the core values of the Hunting Intergroup is the respect for the subsidiarity principle, national and regional competences and that decisions should be taken as close to the EU citizens as possible. The one-size-fits-all solution rarely fits hunting. The re-establishment of the Hunting Intergroup for the 2014-2019 legislature represents the re-birth of an active and alert hunting watchdog and thought leader in the corridors of the European Parliament for the coming five years.

The Secretariat of the Hunting Intergroup is provided by the European Federation of Associations for Hunting and Conservation (FACE), as has been the case since the creation of the intergroup in 1985. The European Landowners' Organization (ELO) joined the support of the intergroup's work in 2004 and is acting as its Co-Secretariat, bringing its expertise on countryside-related topics.

WDAI / Garda Partnership in Poaching Awareness Campaign



SHINE A LIGHT ON POACHING

Poaching of Deer is illegal and dangerous!

- The illegal or unauthorised hunting of deer (poaching), is undertaken in a variety of ways including - shooting at night under spotlight, or outside the designated hunting season (Sept. 1st - Feb. 28th), snaring, trapping or coursing of deer with dogs. This often causes injury and unnecessary suffering to the animals and it puts people and livestock at risk of injury or death.
- It inhibits the successful management and conservation of Ireland's deer species.

What should you do if you suspect poaching is in progress?

- Never approach. Take note of all relevant details (time, location, vehicle description - make - colour - reg, number of persons etc)
- Immediately report the incident to An Garda Síochána and the local National Parks and Wildlife Service

Wild Deer Association of Ireland
E-mail: wilddeerireland@gmail.com
Web: www.wilddeerireland.com

THIS MESSAGE IS SUPPORTED BY:

National Parks & Wildlife Service, coillte, COUNTRYSIDE ALLIANCE IRELAND

The Wild Deer Association of Ireland has announced that Garda Commissioner, Nóirín O'Sullivan confirmed that An Garda Síochána will become a partner in their public awareness campaign 'Shine a Light on Poaching.'

The confirmation is recognition of the lead role the association plays in highlighting this crime and An Garda Síochána's commitment to tackling deer poaching, in partnership with WDAI members and other state agencies.

The initiative promotes awareness and best practice advice as to what one should do if they suspect a deer poaching incident. The campaign is supported by all the key stakeholders, including Coillte Teoranta, the National Parks & Wildlife Service and Countryside Alliance Ireland.

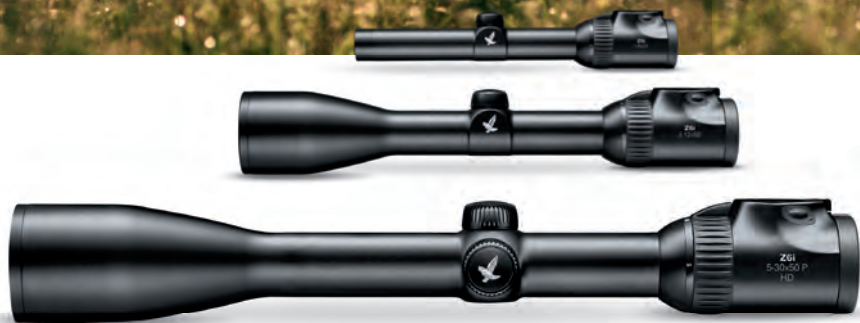
The campaign tag line and poster headline is 'The unauthorised taking of deer (poaching) is illegal & dangerous!' and is a call to action to take note of all relevant details (vehicle registration, colour, location etc) and contact your local Garda station immediately.



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CHATSWORTH INTERNATIONAL RETRIEVER TEAM EVENT 2014

Chatsworth International Retriever Event was held at Chatsworth Estate Derbyshire by kind permission of the Duke and Duchess of Devonshire. The event itself was held on the 29th & 30th May 2014 over two days with a Gala reception for all teams on the Thursday Evening.

The event was run by the The Kennel Club and Ann Heading, Chairperson of the Gundog Working Group was in charge. The judges were Alan Rountree, Bill Rostron, Linda Partridge and Roger Tozer

The retrieves during the event were challenging at all times with some more difficult than others. The first day consisted of a drive in the morning for five teams and the other five went up on the moor for a walk up with the teams changing over in the afternoon. The second day was run on green fields and woodlands, with some retrieves into and across water.

The International teams consisted of Great Britain, Ireland, Denmark, Switzerland, Germany, Norway, Italy, Netherlands, France and Finland. Netherlands were the overall winners while Nigel Probert from Wales came out on top overall.

The team would like to thank the main sponsor NUTTS ABOUT PETS who supplied the team with very nice clothing. Also many thanks to Loughshore Shooting Supplies and Irish



The Irish Team of Gary McGutcheon, Tony O'Hare, Declan Boyle (Captain) and Sean Nolan came sixth overall

Country Sports & Country Life Magazine, all of whom made the participation of the Irish Gundog Team at Chatsworth International

Retriever Event possible. (Unfortunately we were unable to include this short report by Declan Boyle in an earlier edition: Editor)

First Irishman To Win U.S. Cocker National Championship

Richard Whelan from Rathgormack, County Waterford won the 2014 Cocker National Championship with his 4½ year old dog named Troy and is the first Irish person to win this event.

Last November, 75 of the top dogs from the U.S. and Canada competed in Western Pennsylvania for the title of National Champion. Over the four day event, with five land series and one water series, Troy came out the winner. Richard Whelan's previous 25 years of field trialing have been with Springer Spaniels in which he has made up several champions and Troy being his first field trial cocker makes the win even more special.

Richard who lives with his family in northeastern Pennsylvania travels back to Ireland every year and is a member of the Rathgormack Gun Club and Clonea Gun Club in Waterford. Richard says that he got his love of dogs and hunting from his dad, the late Willie Whelan who was a founding member of the Rathgormack Gun Club.



Richard Whelan pictured with his US National Champion Cocker 'Troy'

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Lindsay presenting a stick to top gundog handler Ian Openshaw

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PIES MADE OF THIGHS TO CELEBRATE A NATIONAL FAVOURITE

With new research showing that 75% of Brits enjoy a pie at least once a month, British Pie Week celebrates the humble pie in all its glory and continues to grow in popularity with pie-eaters.

CHICKEN THIGH BALTI PIE

Originating at Midlands football grounds in the late 1990s, the balti pie is now synonymous with British Football culture and has become an adopted classic. That said, most people's experience of a balti pie is generally ready-made shop bought, but that need not be the case, as they're much

easier to make than you'd expect.

We've used chicken thighs rather than breast, as we think the mixture of white and dark meat on chicken thigh makes an ideal pie mixture, but if you prefer only breast meat use 500g diced chicken breast or 2 x chicken breast fillets instead

Serves 4 - (Makes 1 Large Pie or 4 individual Pies)

- 4 x Chicken Thighs (roasted in the oven)
- Packed ready made pastry
- 50g butter
- 1 shallot, diced
- 1 leek, shredded
- 2 cloves garlic
- 2 tablespoons plain flour

- 2 tablespoons medium curry powder
- 1 tablespoon fresh grated ginger
- 1 tablespoon ground cumin
- 1 teaspoon garam masala
- 500ml chicken stock
- 1 tablespoon fresh coriander, chopped
- 1 egg, beaten, for pastry wash
- salt and pepper

Preparation

Pre-heat the oven to 180°C/gas mark 5.

Cook the chicken thighs, ideally roasting, until fully cooked for about 20 minutes. When cooked, set aside and allow to cool.

Melt the butter in a pan and fry the shallot, then add the leek and garlic, and fry for about 5 minutes until everything is softened.

Stir in the flour and all the spices and then gradually add the stock, mixing and stirring over a low heat until the flour is cooked out.

Turn the heat off, then strip and dice the chicken meat from the thigh. You don't want the skin so have that as a cook's bonus treat, and stir in the chicken and coriander into the balti mix. Put the mixture aside and allow it to cool a little.

Roll or cut the pastry to give a third of the pastry for the pie top and use the larger piece to line a pie dish, and fill with the chicken mixture. Cover with the remaining piece of pastry and then pinch and crimp around the edges to seal it all together.

Brush the top of the pie with the egg wash and put it into the

oven. After about 15 minutes, take it out of the oven and brush with the egg wash again, then pop it back in the oven and cook for another 10 minutes or so.

Allow to cool down slightly before serving, either on its own, with chips, crisps, but almost certainly eaten in front of the footy.



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Price shown is for the XV 2.0i SE Manual, manufacturer's on the road price £21,995.00. On the road price includes VAT, delivery, number plates, 12 months road fund licence and first registration fee. Finance available subject to status to persons aged 18 and over. Indemnities may be required. The final payment is payable one month after the final monthly payment. Excludes motability, fleet and BASC Members Affinity Scheme sales. Available at participating dealers only. Not available in conjunction with any other offers. Offers may be varied or withdrawn at any time. Subaru Finance is a trading style of International Motors Finance Limited, registered office at Charterhall House, Charterhall Drive, Chester, Cheshire, CH88 3AN. We may receive commission or other benefits for introducing you to Subaru Finance. All models shown are for illustrative purposes only. Offer ends 30th September 2014. †For built-in peace of mind, every vehicle marketed by Subaru (UK) Ltd, excluding WRX STI, is covered by a 5 Year/100,000 mile (whichever comes sooner) Limited Warranty. www.subaru.co.uk



Sports Coalition Lodges Formal Complaint with GSOC Over Alleged Misleading Garda Figures

The Sports Coalition which represents most of the sports shooters in the ROI in the matter of firearms licensing, has lodged a formal complaint with the Garda Síochána Ombudsman Commission (GSOC) over what the Coalition says are misleading and inflammatory statistical data published by An Garda Síochána.

In the complaint the Sports Coalition said: "We have vigorously challenged the figures and we have established that they are grossly incorrect and overstated e.g. some firearms included are taken from members of the security forces (including Gardai), some are blank firing, some are de-activated, many are taken from firearms dealers premises etc. In other words, a great many which have been attributed to licence holders were in fact stolen from people and premises other than licence holders, thereby giving a distorted impression to both the general public and to members of the Oireachtas who have been charged through the Joint Oireachtas Committee on Justice to examine the proposals and make recommendations to the Minister."

The Sports Coalition added that on 24/2/15 the Garda Commissioner caused to be published further and inflated statistical data purporting

to be firearms stolen from licence holders.

The Sports Coalition said that this now forms the centre of our formal complaint to GSOC. We complain that the Garda Commissioner has knowingly caused to be published, timed to coincide with the forthcoming Prime Time programme, false and misleading data on the numbers of firearms stolen from licence holders for the purpose of:

- a. Misleading the general public.
- b. Misleading politicians generally but particularly members of the Joint Oireachtas Committee on Justice, thereby constituting an undue interference in their duties as legislators.

The complaint also cites the use of deceptive photographic imagery depicting firearms that are not permitted for licensing in Ireland. The Coalition has forwarded a copy of the complaint to the Minister for Justice and Equality, Frances Fitzgerald TD.

It was noted by the Sports Coalition noted that the Minister has had to issue a further clarification on the figures on 25/2/15, which clearly indicates that a very significant number of firearms were in fact unlicensed and therefore did not come from licensed firearms holders.

CASTLE DOBBS SHOOTERS RAISE £2000 FOR LOCAL CHARITIES

Over 90 intrepid shooters and friends attended the Castle Dobbs Clay Pigeon Shoot, held in the estate grounds at the end of February.

And the excellent turnout raised around £2000 for two local charities - the Michelle Peacock Foundation and the Cancer Fund for Children.

It really was almost a carnival atmosphere that greeted the competitors as they made their way to two superb clay layouts - one sporting and the other pool trap. One reason for this could well be that the competitors included beaters, pickers up and a selection of Guns who had enjoyed some excellent sport on the estate during the season. Just who would have the X Factor?

I shall draw a veil over the results as, suffice to say, some shot superbly while others 'sportingly' chose to shoot 'only for the fun' in support of the charities concerned! Well it beats 'there was sun in my eyes' I suppose.

Lunch served to the multitude was cooked by Head Keeper Alastair Beattie and enthusiastic beater Glen McClelland, ably helped by a bevy of young ladies who ensured that dishes arrived piping hot! Top marks for the food - from seafood chowder (the best EVER: Editor), chicken and vegetable soup, along with choices of venison, lamb, steak and fish all cooked to



Prizes were donated by Beattie's Gun Shop, Sunnylands Butchers, P&O Ferries, U.I.E., Carrickfergus Golf Club, Bushmills Game Club, Alastair Beattie, along with various individuals Ronnie Creighton and Bill Creighton whose hand crafted rocking horse can be seen in the photo and Irish Country Sports & Country Life magazine.

individual choice followed by a superb selection of deserts.

Special thanks must go as well to Nigel and Matthew Dobbs who sponsored the clays and refreshments, and to Larne Wildfowlers for providing the clay shooting layout.



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BALLYDUFF BRIDGE FISHERY LOOKS FORWARD TO NEW SEASON

The BALLYDUFF BRIDGE Salmon Fishery, set in the heart of the Blackwater valley, 7 miles from Fermoy and 30 miles north east of Cork, has a prime beat, mostly single bank running from below the bridge downstream to almost three quarters of a mile upstream. The beat has numerous named pools and is ideally suited to fly fishing which the management always encourages when conditions allow. Other methods, excluding shrimp, are permitted at certain times of the year depending on season and water conditions. The Fishery also has other beats up river.

Fishery River conditions have been perfect throughout the closed season, not many floods and very mild - so everyone's looking forward to the new season and hoping that the river stays in good order. The last few seasons have shown an increase in the Spring runs and we hope this will continue. Fishing with large flies with sinking lines can be very successful in the right conditions; if the river at Ballyduff Bridge is too high our upstream beats can be very successful. The number of rods per beat is strictly limited and advance booking is recommended. Rates are very competitive and discounts are available. The Fishery operates a Membership Club with very attractive terms and conditions. For more information please contact either Len or Liz Tomlinson on 058 60897 or Lentomlinson@me.com or Connie Corcoran on 058 60146 or 0876918230. Visit our website at www.blackwatersalmon.ie/ or Facebook @ BALLYDUFF Bridge Salmon caption:



A fine Ballyduff salmon.

Fish Farming Company Fined for Damage to Salmonid River

At a sitting of Clifden District Court on Thursday, 26th of February, Judge Mary Fahy convicted a fish farm company under Section 173 of the Fisheries Act, 1959, for damage caused to the bed of a river in Co. Galway.

Mannin Bay Salmon Company was before the court, arising from an incident which occurred in July 2014. The court heard that Fisheries Officers had found the company had constructed a dam across the Bunowen River, which flows into Killary Harbour, in order to pump freshwater to a fish farm cage located offshore. Significant damage was caused to the bed of the river, which is a spawning and

nursery habitat, and the dam was impeding the passage of fish.

The company pleaded guilty to the charge, and the solicitor for the defence, Mr Thomas Mannion, pleaded that the company had experienced an emergency situation whereby an outbreak of Amoebic Gill Disease threatened the stock of fish on the fish farm. Amoebic Gill Disease can be treated by bathing fish in freshwater for a number of hours. The defence acknowledged that the company knew it should not have dammed the river, but did so in order to avoid significant financial losses.

Convicting the company, Judge Fahy

commented that protection of fish habitat was very important, but acknowledged that the company had been co-operative and had removed the dam and rectified the situation immediately once Fisheries Officers became aware of it. She fined the company €500, with €500 costs.

Inland Fisheries Ireland (IFI) has a confidential hotline number to enable members of the general public to report incidents - 1890 34 74 24 or 1890 FISH 24. This phone line is designed to encourage the reporting of incidents of illegal fishing, water pollution and invasive species.

For more information visit www.fisheriesireland.ie/

STOP PRESS:

Great Game Fairs of Ireland Chef Emmett McCourt wins yet another award

As we go to press we received the following message from Emmett McCourt:

Dear Albert and Irene

I am delighted to tell you that the Publication "**Feast or Famine, A Cultural Food Journey of the North West of Ireland**" has won!! for Northern Ireland in the Gourmand World Cookbook Awards in the Categories **Best Local book** and **Best Culinary Travel Book** and is now shortlisted for **The Best In The World** in the same categories. The Gourmand Awards Celebrate and recognise those who cook with words, and promote peace.

The Gourmand World Cookbook Awards 2014 will take place in Yantai China in June 9th 2015. www.cookbookfair.com

I cannot thank you and your team enough for all of your kind help and support throughout the years and for giving me the opportunity to work with the Great Game Fairs of Ireland. You have done so much to help me and I really appreciate it. This is a massive achievement for everybody involved, who contributed and for food tourism.. I'm looking forward to working with you again this year.

Thanks so much again

Talk soon

Emmett"

The Book Feast or Famine is available from <http://www.feastorfamine.ie>



Gourmand World Cookbook Award Winner Emmett McCourt (centre) with Mayor Brenda Stevenson and Calum Morrison.



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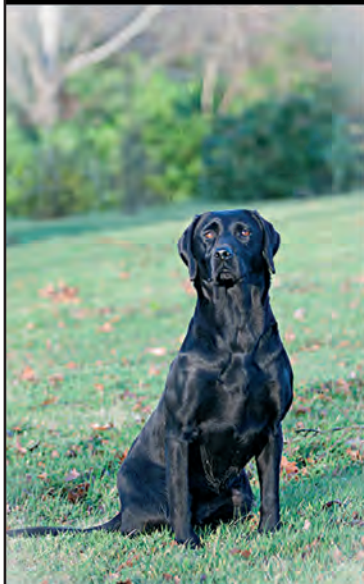
to see – ALLROUNDER, GAME SHOOTER, FIFE FIELD Coats.... HOODED SMOCKS, HOODED QUADRIDERS, HILL ZIP SMOCKS, PLUS 2, 3 & 4, TROUSERS, SALOPETTES, SHOOTING VESTS, GILETS, HOODS, ADJUSTABLE COUNTRY CAPS - also full range of peached microfiber. We also look after BIG and TALL men, Ladies and offer a custom tailor made service too!!

Check out for list of events and Game Fairs for 2015.

For further information call 07736 255100

Photo shows GRAMPIAN Game Shooting Coat and Salopettes in minus 30 degree conditions and icy wind Greenland

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John Immortalises Colt



John Humphreys probably best known for the performances of his racing lurchers has turned his hand to art. With some very fine working dog portraits 'under his belt' he has painted a very fine portrait of arguably his most famous dog - 'Colt'.

Recount Colt's career John said " He is the only dog in the UK to have won major events in N.I., ROI, Wales, Scotland and England...in 4 of those countries at least twice. He's won around greyhound tracks in Highgate Yorks and Westhoughton in Lancs too.

He has also won Supreme Show champion at various Game Fairs as well as racing titles. A well travelled dog who enjoyed camping on our travels but much prefers the comfort of the motorhome these days !

I retired him after various injuries though he still takes off up the beach like a young un..bless him.

His offspring are out and about the UK too who have all also won at major venues and one of my current dogs, Rebel is his son."

John is happy to take commission for head studies of your dogs at very reasonable prices : contact him at Stornydogg@gmail.com and 07843603828

The photograph features Colt after winning puppy racing at the Midland Game Fair and Pride of the Peaks in Derbyshire the following day.

Craghoppers New Kiwi Trek Trousers Offer Casual Outdoor Performance

A new addition to the Craghoppers best-selling Kiwi family for spring/summer 2015, the Kiwi Trek Trousers offer casual styling coupled with all the 'outdoor performance' you would expect from Craghoppers to take you from street to hill side with ease.

Made from a soft cotton blend, the Kiwi Treks are comfortable and practical with a simpler more contemporary fit that creates a more casual look than the classic Kiwis - ideal for those who want to transition effortlessly from a walk in the hills to a quick pint in the pub.

Retailing at £45, the Kiwi Trek Trousers feature: SmartDry water repellent fabric; Solarshield UPF 40+ sun protection; Mobile phone pocket; Heel tape; Belt included; 8 pockets (5 zipped); Flexible waist and Knee darts. They are available in sizes R30"-42" in Black Pepper, Bark and Dirty Olive.

Publishers note: I have had a lot of Craghopper products in the past and found them to be well designed and 'engineered' to be truly functional in the outdoors. I decided to try these and the expression of 'fitted like a glove' immediately came to mind. Thanks to the flexible system at the waist they really are comfortable and lovely to wear light weight trousers with the bonus that they look smart. I am going to get a pair in another colour as well!

Stockists: <http://www.craghoppers.com/> or tel. 0161 749 1300.



Good Springers from the Drowes

We have had reports of some good springers from the Drowes and here are two photographs to show what's been happening.



Here we have Marty King, Portadown with his 10lbs fish from the Money Hole on 17th February.



This one shows Sean McNeice, Portadown with his 14lbs 9oz fish from Rooney's.

For details of fishing on the Drowse visit: www.drowessalmonfishery.com



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SKINNERS NEW Maintenance Plus diet

Skinner's have added a new Maintenance Plus diet to their highly successful Field & Trial range of complete dry dog food for working and active dogs.

It has been specially formulated to include joint aid for dogs which can help maintain healthy joints and flexibility of movement throughout the life of your dog and enables owners to provide this high quality branded supplement in one complete feed at a daily maintenance level.

It follows on from their successful launch of Field & Trial Turkey & Rice in 2011 and offers an alternative for dogs that have no known allergies or sensitivities and therefore do not need to be fed a hypoallergenic food.

This new food is suitable for all breeds of adult dogs and is particularly recommended to benefit older working dogs. Made with British chicken meat meal with no artificial additives, flavourings or preservatives it contains high levels of essential fats and oils to help maintain a healthy, glossy coat.

According to the latest market data, Skinner's are continuing to perform extremely well in what has been an interesting few years with the market fragmenting and many more choices of products and suppliers available. William Delamore, Sales & Marketing Director says: "It is important for Skinner's to continue to build on this success by adding further diets to our core range that compliment the excellent choice and value we currently provide to our customers."

The suggested retail prices for new Field & Trial Maintenance Plus are £27.50 for 15kg and £6.99 for 2.5kg pack sizes (VAT free).

For more information: Contact: Elizabeth Fox, Marketing Manager Roger Skinner Ltd, The Mills, Stradbroke, Eye, Suffolk IP21 5HL. Tel: 01379 384247 Fax: 01379 388143 Email: elizabeth@skinnerpetfoods.co.uk www.skinnerpetfoods.co.uk

WILDFIRE DEMONSTRATION

On Thursday 12th March 2015
At: Skerry Inn, 12 Old Cushendun Road,
Newtowncrommelin, BT43 6RJ

Hosted by: Beltrim Charitable Trust
Supported by: NGO Challenge Fund 2015

Wildfire Demonstration hosted by Beltrim Charitable Trust and is supported by the NGO Challenge Fund 2015.

This demonstration will incorporate open discussion on the use of controlled fire for upland management as well as the dangers and risks associated with uncontrolled wildfires.

AGENDA

9.00AM – 9.30AM Meet and Greet (Tea / Coffee on arrival)

9.30am – 11.30am - Welcome & Introduction by

Mr Richard Blakiston Houston

Presentations

- Northern Ireland Fire & Rescue Service
- Mr Mathew Bushby, Mourne Heritage Trust
- Northern Ireland Environment Agency
- DARD
- Dr Ruth Kelly, Queens University Belfast
- Mr Brian Malcomson, Scottish Woodlands Ltd
- 11.30am – 12.45 Guest Speaker - Mr Simon Thorpe, Heather Trust
- 12.45pm – 1.45pm Lunch (This will be provided)
- 1.45pm – Depart for Sheans Horse Farm
- 2.15pm – Arrive at Sheans Horse Farm for the first demonstration of the afternoon
- 3.15pm – Depart Sheans Horse Farm for Altarichard Forest
- 3.30pm – Arrive at Altarichard Forest Controlled burn
- 4.30pm – 5.00pm – Closing Remarks & Home.

Participants are welcome to return to the Skerry Inn, Newtowncrommelin afterwards.

Further Details; ballymena.office@scottishwoodlands.co.uk
Tel. 02827638026

Labrador Retriever AV Novice Stake at Ballywalter Estate

Simon Parke writes that The Labrador Retriever Club of Northern Ireland held a 12 dog AV Novice Retriever Stake on Saturday 6th December at Ballywalter Estate by kind invitation of Lord and Lady Dunleath, guns, and head keeper Mr Trolls Klokker.

Judges for the stake were Richard Johnston, Joe Morrison, Eric Haydon and Timmy Woods. Stewards were H McCarroll and Chief Steward Mr Eddie Moore. Many thanks as always to Feedwell for their continued support and sponsorship of The LRCNI.

This was The Labrador Retriever Club of Northern Ireland's third stake of the trialing season. The club is deeply indebted to all the helpers, members and non members, whom have given up their time to make these trials happen.

The dogs were well tested on this excellent shoot with a mixture of retrieves from water, green field, cover crops and from woods. As the dogs were stretched in the latter stages of the trial, two dogs came through to take top honours and it was nice to see Joe McGivern come out on top with his Golden Retriever dog after his lengthy lay off over the summer.



Pictured with host Lord Dunleath (L/R) are Trolls Klokker (Gamekeeper), Joe McGivern (Winner), Gary Wilson (2nd), Eric Hayden, Richard Johnston and Timmy Woods.

Results:

1st Mr Joe McGivern with Jespergold of Drumalig Golden Retriever dog.

2nd Mr Gary Wilson with Camgart of Snowhill Labrador bitch
No other awards.

Obituary

Jimmy Crookshanks

It was a sombre and respectful congregation which gathered in Shore Street Presbyterian Church in Donaghadee, on Wednesday 8th October 2014, to pay tribute to the life of Jimmy Crookshanks, who had passed away on 4th October after a short illness. As he would have wished, Jimmy was surrounded by his loving family to the end.

In his chosen sport of Field Trialling, Jimmy had few equals and was well respected and liked wherever he went. He started trialling English Springer Spaniels in the sixties and adopted the affix Brackentwist, now contained in the quality pedigrees of top spaniels throughout Europe. His first competitive dog he acquired in 1967, Scamp of Ardoon, with echoes of the breeding of the mighty Will Sloan. From Scamp he bred Brackentwist Spark and Scamp, and then his most successful dog FTCh Barney's Blunder. Others he handled included Inler's Squire and Evansaura Squire of Brackentwist, and he competed right up until January 2014, his last trials being run with Evansaura Star of Brackentwist.

He first ran in the British Spaniel Championship with Barney's Blunder in January 1974 and in 1976 achieved a very creditable fourth place. Blunder went on to a second in the inaugural Irish Championship in 1977, and also sired Int FTCh Inler's Harryslin who won the British and Irish when handled by John Orr.

Jimmy was assiduous in his training of a young dog, knew exactly what he wanted and had the patience and expertise to produce the finished, highly polished article. It was often said 'he carried a whistle, but rarely needed it.'

In the seventies, Jimmy was a founder member of a committee which established the Irish Championship, and



he served for fifteen years, building up the event to the highly prestigious levels we enjoy today. Jimmy also represented Gundogs on the Ulster Game and Wildfowl Society for a number of years, as well as taking an active role on many Spaniel Club Committees throughout Ireland. He was an "A" Panel Judge under English and Irish Kennel Club rules for more than thirty years, and earned a deserved reputation for being scrupulously fair, irrespective of the status of the competitors he judged. He judged both the British and Irish Championships, a rare honour reflecting his unbounded knowledge and ability.

Outside of trialling Jimmy enjoyed ballroom dancing, travel and sunny climates, which in retirement he enjoyed through his passion for holidays. It was often said in tribute 'he would do anyone a favour,' and there are many recipients of his generosity to bear testimony to this aspect of his character. He would bear no person ill will. Above all he had great wisdom,

and there are many who benefitted from his advice. When he gave an opinion people listened, it was always honest and constructive. Only a fool would have ignored his advice, once proffered.

James 'Jimmy' Crookshanks was born in Belfast on 10th September 1929. He commenced work as an apprentice with Charles Hurst Limited, and stayed with the Company for over forty years, eventually becoming a Director. On retirement he moved to Donaghadee, where he enjoyed a long and happy retirement. He was married to his devoted wife Eileen for over sixty years and is survived by his wife, five children and many grandchildren. He was the epitome of the loving, caring father, as was obvious to all who knew him. In all aspects of life, be it with family, or his beloved Fieldsports, Jimmy Crookshanks is irreplaceable. He will be sorely and widely missed.

The author, Peter Smith, is deeply grateful to Dan McKeeman who supplied much of the detail concerning his great friend.

The Marquis of Waterford

It is with deep regret that we acknowledge the death of our R of I President, The Marquis of Waterford.

Lord Waterford, otherwise known as John Hubert de la Poer Beresford, was born on 14th July 1933 in Curraghmore, Portlaoise and succeeded to the marquessate in 1934. He was later educated in Eton and served as a Lieutenant in the Royal Horse Guards' Supplementary Reserve. Lord Waterford was a passionate country sports enthusiast and a great friend and ambassador for Countryside Alliance Ireland. He came from a family tradition steeped in country pursuits and culture, with his forefathers being both founder and master of the Curraghmore hunt.

The current de la Poer Beresfords still take an active interest in farming, hunting, breeding hounds and horses. Game shooting is still undertaken in Curraghmore throughout the hunting season and polo played during the summer months.

Lord Waterford has been a respected figurehead for Countryside Alliance Ireland for more than a decade and will be sadly missed. The Chairman, Board, Chief Executive and Staff of Countryside Alliance Ireland extend our sincere condolences to Lady Waterford, their children and the family circle.

National Coursing Finals at Clonmel

Another spectacular National Coursing Meeting was completed at Powerstown Park, Clonmel, Co Tipperary on Sunday 8th February. The finals attracted huge crowds, exceeding all expectation for a last day that had been postponed from the previous week due to adverse weather conditions.

There's something magical about the National Coursing Finals and a jubilant Dan Brassil from Abbeydorney, Co Kerry said: "This is a tribute to John O'Connor of Abbeyfeale for all his work," after his *Feel My Pulse* lifted the Boylesports Derby Trophy. "He was my wingman for 35 years, my friend and my vet, and he was looking down and minding me today," he added of the very popular veterinary surgeon John, who passed away in January.

The Derby victory completes Dan's 'big three' haul, having won the Oaks with *Lincon's Rose* and the Irish Cup with *I'm Only Saying* and *Ashmore View*.

The victory of *Feel My Pulse* gave the



Feel My Pulse won the coveted Boylesports Derby Trophy.

bookmakers a major boost as he beat the red-hot favourite *Timber House* in a thrilling semi-final and was then declared the winner when the Michael O'Donovan-trained *Portane All In* was unable to take his place in the final.

Vienna Calling ran out a truly outstanding winner of the Greyhound and Pet World Oaks. She was well supported by connections in the betting market at an opening price of 40/1. She will now retire, according to John Troy from The Curragh, Co Kildare who owns her with his brother, Alan, and Michael Murphy from Sallins, Co Kildare. "She won't run again. She was bought to start our own line," said a very happy

John, "and we are over the moon."

Jim 'Maxi' Collins from Drogheda, Co Louth had to wait 39 years for his second Champion Stakes victory but *Blueview Charlie* pulled it off for him by beating *Vale View Flyer* in the final. "New South won it in 1976 and the prize was £400 or £500," he said – a good bit less than the €15,000 he netted for winning the 2015 Kevin Smith Champion Stakes. Maxi's daughter, photographer Suzanne, added happily: "We are delighted. He did my Dad proud."

Needham Marie was bred, reared and trained in the Matthews kennel in Newry, Co Down and owner-trainer Brendan's son, Damien, said the Grace Bruton Champion Bitch Stakes winner will now retire. "We were lucky she was able to go up and win the final. You breed them for here and when they win here, it's a dream," he said.

The officials for the 90th National Coursing Meeting were Liam Kelly and Brendan Purcell (Judges) and Martin Murphy and Brian Doyle (Slippers). Brendan and Brian were making their first appearance at Powerstown Park and can be very proud of their performances.

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Vienna Calling was an outstanding winner.

discounted tickets for the Tattersalls International Horse Trials and Country Fair.

Tattersalls International Horse Trials and Country Fair will run from the 27th to 31st May 2015. In celebration of the 10th Anniversary, Tattersalls and Countryside Alliance Ireland are delighted to offer two tickets for the price of one for all CAI members.

Located in Ratoath, Co. Meath, this event attracts the top names in the sport. Spanning five days, it combines world class eventing (dressage, cross country and show jumping) with all the bustle of a Country Fair. The thrilling cross country, Country Fair and all the children's entertainment are on the Friday, Saturday and Sunday.

Family entertainment includes a free kids zone, pony rides, a hound parade, carnival stands, bucking bronco, bouncy castles, a pet farm, face painting, dog competitions and much more. The shopping village has over 50 shopping stands selling lifestyle and country brands. Visitors can browse a range of products from clothing to crafts, park up and picnic by the famous water fence or enjoy some of the many artisan producers and food outlets throughout the venue.

Tickets must be pre-booked by either calling +353 (0) 1 886 4300 or online at www.tattshorsetrials.ie. Please use the following Promo Code to avail of this offer - TATTSCAI15. For a full timetable of events, running order, maps etc please visit www.tattshorsetrials.ie or contact info@tattshorsetrials.ie or +353 (0) 1 886 4300.

Firearms Licensing

The debate and proposals for changes to firearms licensing legislation continues in both NI and R of I. Slow progress seems to be the order of the day but Countryside Alliance Ireland continues to fully engage with the relevant Government Departments and personnel and we shall keep you updated with developments via eroute, website and social media. To sign up to our Eroute newsletter – go to www.caireland.org

BDS NI Training Courses 2015 Deer Stalking Certificate Level One

The British Deer Society Northern Ireland Branch will be running two Deer Stalking Certificate Level One Courses in May 2015; one of which is distance learning, designed for home study.

A Deer Stalking Certificate Level One Course will be held over the weekend of Friday 29th to Sunday 31st May 2015 and will be held in Poyntzpass, Newry, Co. Down. The fee for the course is £295, which covers the supply of the BDS course manual, registration with DMQ Ltd, three days instruction and assessment of all five elements of the course.

There is also the option of partaking in the 'distance learning' Deer Stalking Certificate Level One Course. This course is designed for home study. Candidates are supplied with an interactive DVD, which is a complete training

package enabling them to acquire and test their knowledge in preparation for taking DSC1. It details the requirements for all five assessments and provides comprehensive information on a wide range of deer related subjects. The cost of this course is £185, which includes the DVD, registration with DMQ Ltd and five assessments. The assessment day for the distance learning course is Saturday 30th May 2015.

For more information, please visit the 'training' section of the BDS website – www.bds.org.uk or contact Tom Brown on 028 4066 2567 or 07525 070339.

Deer Alliance HCAP Dates for 2015

The Deer Alliance has announced initial Hunter Competence Assessment Programme (HCAP) exam and range dates for 2015.

Multiple Choice Question (MCQ) written examinations will be held on Saturday 21st March 2015 and Saturday 25th April 2015 (at 4.00pm on each day), with a range test for successful MCQ Candidates to be held on Saturday 30th May 2015 (commencing at 10am).

Application and payment for HCAP can be made through the Deer Alliance website and the cost of the course is €100.00. Alternatively, hard copy applications accompanied by a cheque or postal order may be made. To apply online or download an application form – www.deeralliance.ie

The MCQs will be held at the Ionad Dara Community Centre in Goresbridge, Co. Kilkenny. All HCAP Range Tests are held at the Midland National Shooting Centre, Derrymore, Blue Ball, Tullamore, Co. Offaly.

In addition, the Deer Alliance will hold training workshops from 10am to 4pm on Saturday 21st March in conjunction with the MCQ on that day, and again on Saturday 25th April. The add-on cost of participation in workshops will be €50, and places are subject to prior booking.

The Deer Alliance Stalker Training Manual can also be ordered and paid for through the Deer Alliance website. Further information can be obtained by contacting Liam Nolan on +353 (0) 86 1927 845 or by email to deeralliance@gmail.com.



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The 2014 IKC Retriever Championship was held in Coolattin Estate on the 28 & 29th December 2014 by kind permission of the Dowling family. The shoot in Coolattin Estate has been managed by Fiach and Ann Dowling since it began over 17 years ago and is renowned throughout Europe for its quality high birds and beautiful setting.

In his welcome address Mr Dowling expressed great pride in hosting this event again and ensured us that, as with previous years, it was going to be an exciting few days for all involved. The guns on the 28th were members of the Coolattin Estate Syndicate, some of whom have been members since the very beginning and on Monday 29th the guns comprised of friends of the Dowling family. Mr Dowling extended a warm welcome to everyone and promised to provide the competitors, organisers & supporters of the Irish Kennel Club Retriever Championship an exciting & enjoyable few days.

Once again the main sponsor for this annual event was Connolly's Red

Mills ENGAGE premium dog food. We are deeply indebted to them for their generous and continued support. Not only do Connolly's Red Mills sponsor the IKC Retriever Championship but they sponsor many Field Trials and Working Tests for retriever clubs throughout the country.

Red Mills premium dog foods are widely used by successful handlers. The winner of this year's IKC Championship along with the majority of the prize-winners feed Red Mills. Proving beyond doubt that Red Mills is indeed the real deal for dog owners who want success in the field. This is the food to use, if you want to "Stay Ahead of the Game".

The task of finding the "Irish

Retriever Champion 2014" fell to this very experienced team of Judges.

Mr Michael Fleville, who has been involved in trialling for over 30 years and in this time has successfully made up four Field Trial Champions. He has been an IKC A panel judge for many years. He qualified several times for the IKC Retriever Championship and also qualified to run in the UK Retriever Championship with his Labrador bitch Glenbriar Brook. He looked forward, with great pleasure, to judging this year's Championship.

Mr David Boyce, who ran in his first trial in 2004, has made up three Field Trial Champion Bitches, was awarded joint Retriever of the Year in 2012 and was placed second in 2013

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First Day lineup.

Championship. He considered it a great honour to have been chosen to judge this year's Championship and wished all the competitors the very best of luck.

Mr Allan Schofield, who has been trialling since 1990, has made up five Field Trial Champions two of which are still running. He has competed in the UK Retriever Championship more than ten times & was awarded Diplomas on two occasions. He has been an A panel judge since 2006.

Mr Rodger Phillips, has been an A panel Judge for 15 years and judged the IGL Retriever Championships in 2011. He has made up three Field Trial Champions. Rodger was delighted and honoured to be invited to judge this year's IKC Championship and wished all the competitors the very best of luck.

Throughout the year 42 dogs qualified to run in this year's IKC Championship with 35 going to post. The line-up comprised of 33 Labradors and 2 Golden Retrievers, 29 Dogs and only 6 Bitches. The weather was perfect with ground frost, clear blue skies and a slight breeze.

On the first morning competitors made their way in convoy from the headquarters to the beautiful grounds of Coolattin Estate where they gathered at the RED MILLS tent for their official photograph, taken by Jana Scupakova. Armbands and programmes were then distributed by the chief steward Mr Paul Mc Guirk.

In her introduction Lady Waterford welcomed everyone to the estate and thanked the Dowling Family for hosting this event once again. She

wished all the competitors the very best of luck before handing over to Mr Fiach Dowling. Mr Dowling introduced the team of guns for the first day and expressed his delight at being involved with the IKC Retriever Championships. He welcomed everyone back for yet another Championship and hoped they would enjoy the two days. Mr Harry Gillanders, Vice Chairman of the IKC Retriever Championship committee announced the Judges pairings and the



The Judges (left/right Allan Schofield, Rodger Phillips, David Boyce, Michael Fleville).

1st Day



Stalwart Stewards - Mr Paul McGuirk & Derek Harford.

running order of the dogs for the first day. He wished everyone a successful and enjoyable time.

The drives for the IKC Championship had been arranged in advance between the shoot management and members of the committee. The first drive was "Browns," which always produces spectacular birds and today was no exception. As the handlers lined out, either side of a large stubble field, they were treated to a fine display of towering pheasants which were testing the experienced syndicate members. As for the dogs and handlers this was a very demanding test of steadiness and there was an audible sigh of relief from the handlers as the horn sounded for the end of the first drive. The Judges on the right Rodger and David had positioned themselves with a sheep wire fence between the line of dogs and the falling birds which set the scene nicely for some spectacular retrieving over the fence and down into the cover beside the wood. On the

left under judges Michael and Allan the uneven numbers were well and truly tested on some very good long distance retrieves from the stubble. In some cases, on both sides of the line, the temptation to err was strong and some dogs succumbed to small errors but such is the standard expected for this premier event that small errors

can be costly and for them the show was over for another year.

After some delightful work the judges decided to move to the next drive "Levingstones" with 24 dogs making it through to this drive. At this point the picking up team moved in to sweep the area for all remaining birds.

At Levingston's the birds flew magnificently and the guns shot superbly. Both lines, odds and evens, lined up on the same side of the field just inside the edge of the wood. With birds crashing through the canopy of the large trees the degree of temptation was at an even higher level than before and we subsequently lost 5 dogs in this line up.

There was some perfect dog work at both Browns and Levingstones which was befitting the IKC Championships. Last year's winner Mr Sean Nolan with Int FTCh Tweedshot Trimble of Lettergreen was showing just why he came out on top last year in Ballynatray. Stride for stride with him was Mr Leigh Jackson with GB FTCh Eljas Danny who qualified by winning the UK Championship in 2013. Mr Declan Boyle's very young FTCh Miller Mc Duff was keeping pace with the best as was Mr Mattie Lambden with Petiswood Price of Tamrose,

Mr Donal Donohue with Georgias



Jana Scupalova with two of the judges.



Successfully through to the second day.

Holystone Hope, Mr John Behan with FTCh Quarrypool Rough Diamond, Mr Paul O'Brien with FTCh Corrib Warwick. The following were still very much in contention, Mr Nigel Carville with FTCh Apollobay Apocalypse of Astraglen, Mr Gerard Murdock with Dunamoira Gene, Mr Jim Carnegie with Rosenalis Enzo, Mr Tony O'Hare with FTCh Tyrrellison Star Dreamer, Mr Ian Davies with FTCh Glenanne Pi, Mr Paul Toal with FTCh Altiquin Ripple, Mr Willie Higginson with Simply Blue, Mr John Barr (Jnr) with Willowmount Regal Rose and Mr Winston Kelly who was handling Mr Stephen McKelvey's Glenloch Stafford.

The first day finished with some excellent retrieving from high on Levingstons hill down into the wood below. The 16 dogs remaining performed extremely well and all 16 were duly called back to the second day.

2nd Day

Day two began bright and frosty and when the final sixteen competitors had their photos taken, the running order for the second day was announced. Mr Dowling introduced his team of guns for the second day which included some close family friends including Mr Bill Connolly, CEO of Red Mills. At this stage the Chairman reminded the guns that they had "a job to do" in selecting the dog who would receive the Guns Choice Trophy. This trophy "The Irish Country Sports and Country Life Perpetual Trophy" is very kindly

donated by Mr Albert Titterington and is presented to the handler of their chosen dog. Irish Countrysports and Country Life magazine also provide a trophy to be retained by the overall winner.

We moved off to the first drive of the day which is called "Wafers Hill". Mr Dowling had promised that this drive would present some brilliant birds, over some rough grass and ground cover, and should enable the judges to set up some challenging retrieves. This was indeed the case and spectators had a great view of these retrieves. Initially the dogs were sent for birds that had fallen into dense rushes and long grass, followed by some long distance retrieves over a fence and into long grass to retrieve

the birds, the judges being very specific, at all times, as to which bird they wanted.

Following a further 3 rounds of retrieving the number of competitors was reduced from 16 to 6. As usual there was much speculation as to who was ahead, but it was clear at this stage that it was a very close contest between the remaining six dogs.

We moved to the last drive of the IKC Championship which was a duck drive. The six remaining dogs lined up at the edge of a large pond where ducks were driven over in large numbers. This must have been something close to torture for the remaining handlers. It would be heart-breaking at this stage of the competition for any handler to meet



Guns admiring the dogs at work.





The Winner Mr Donal Donohue completing another fine retrieve.

misfortune slip up stumble and crash out. Thankfully there was no such drama and all six performed their retrieves as expected.

At this point the Judges announced the competition was over. With smiles of joy and relief the handlers congratulated each other on having made it to the end.

The presentation took place in the shooting lodge on the estate. While the handlers and spectators were waiting for the prize giving to get underway they were very treated to soup and sandwiches kindly supplied by Una, Ann and Evelyn Dowling.

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the presentation of prizes and congratulated the finishing handlers on their achievement. A presentation was made by Lady Waterford to Mr Fiach Dowling and Mr Dowling addressed the gathering expressing his delight at being involved with this event yet again. He hoped that everyone present had enjoyed the two days and complimented the committee on a job well done.

Lady Waterford also made a presentation to Mr Bill Connolly. Mr Connolly, in his address expressed his sincere thanks to all his customers. He said how much he had enjoyed being present at the IKC Championships this year and getting to view the dogs at work. He was also delighted to be involved in selecting the dog who was to win the Guns Choice Trophy sponsored by Irish Countrysports and Country Life magazine. He praised the keeper and staff at Coolattin and said how much he always enjoys shooting here. At this point the Chairman announced the winner of the guns choice trophy and Mr Connolly presented it to No. 40 Mr Donal Donohue and Georgias Hollystone Hope.

Mr Rodger Phillips (Judge) spoke highly of the competitors and in particular of the prize-winners. He thanked the host, sponsors and all involved in the organising and running of the IKC Championships.

The Chairman paid tribute to all involved with The Coolattin Shoot and thanked them for their help, during the months, leading up to the IKC Championships and for their hospitality over the two days. He expressed sincere thanks to everyone who volunteered and helped out in any way, stewards, markers, number boards, game carriers, photographer, reporters etc. and said how much an event like this depends so much on the backstage help.

He finished by thanking Mr Declan Boyle, Secretary, Lady Waterford, Treasurer and the entire IKC Championship committee for their hard work, support and co-operation throughout the year.

The following are the result of the 2014 Irish Kennel Club Retriever Championship:

1st. Mr Donal Donohue's Lab D
"Georgias Hollystone Hope"

Sire: Broadlaw Buck Dam:
Kindley Express of Cragburn

2nd Mr Leigh Jackson's Lab D
"FTCh Ellijas Danny"

Sire: FTCh Kenmillto Remus
Dam: Hillus Widgeon

3rd Mr Mattie Lambden's Lab D
"Petitswood Prince of Tamrose"

Sire: FTCh Willowmount Ricky
Dam: FTCh Kilmona Jodi

4th Mr Paul O'Brien's Lab D
"Corrib Warwick"

Sire: Lovely Jackson of Corrib
Dam: Rahaline Nightjar of Corrib

C.O.M. Mr Nigel Carvill's Lab D
"Appolobay Apocalypse of Astraglen"

Sire: FTCh Waterford Fergus
Dam: Shimavale Delta

C.O.M. Mr John Behan's Lab D
"FTCh Quarrypool Rough Diamond"

Sire: FTCh Myreton Diablo of Glenloch Dam: Kenmilfore Beca

If you missed the championship and would like to have a fuller impression of it you can purchase a CD of c 415 photographs from official photographer Jana Scupakova. The price is 25 euro

including postage and packaging.

Contact Jana on

janulkascupakova@gmail.com.

And finally a word from the winning handler

"I bought my first dog (Mirstan Diver) from Stan Harvey in England in 1980 and I competed in working tests with him with moderate success. I got married in 1983 and I had other responsibilities that kept me away from the sport. Then in 2009 I was coming through Mullingar with my four daughters and I saw a group of cars in a field and handlers with Labradors. The curiosity got the better of me, and I stopped to see what was going on, Broadmeadows Club was running a working test.. As we watched the dogs in action, there and then I got the bug to work with Labradors again. I have had 3-4 Labradors with some success until I bought Georgia's Holystone Hope "Harris" from Alan Jarvis from Doncaster England at the age of 4 months. I knew straight away there was something special about him as he was very easily trained and very stylish to look at.

I've had great success accumulating 12 green stars but I needed a win, and what a way to get a win in the most prestigious event of the retriever competitions, the Irish Retriever Championship. I am very honoured and humbled to have won this event and it's a dream come true.

I would first of all like to thank my wife and children for putting with me on my long days away training and competing; I would also like to thank the championship committee; the judges; sponsors and all my fellow competitors for the well wishes. I also would like to thank my training buddies for all your help throughout the year. I'm looking forward to 2015."

Donal Donohue



Mr Bill Connolly Red Mills with The Winner Mr Donal Donohue.



Mr Donal Donohue receiving Irish Country Sports and Country Life Perpetual Trophy for Guns Choice presented by Mr Bill Connolly.



Mr Fiach Dowling receiving a gift from Mr Michael Corr, Chairman IKC Retriever Championship.



Mrs Lilian Jennett presenting the Sam Jennett Raughlin Trophy to the breeder of the winner.



Ms Chris McGuirk presenting Fred Mc Guirk Perpetual Cup being accepted by Mr Wayne Carlisle on behalf of Mr Billy Lundy.



Prizewinners with sponsor - L-R Mr Paul O'Brien 4th, Mr Leigh Jackson 2nd, Mr Bill Connolly Redmills, Winner Mr Donal Donohue, 3rd Mattie Lambden.

BEECHVIEW KENNEL RUNS

– kennelling Irish Dogs for over 25 years



Beechview Kennel Runs was the first business of its kind in Northern Ireland and have been producing Hot Dipped galvanised pet housing for over 25 years. Proprietor and founder Brian Lyons runs the business from home, 8 miles outside Ballymoney in Co. Antrim.

Brian has a great personal interest in the Dog Run/ Kennelling business as he and his partner Joan own nearly 20 dogs themselves, ranging from Newfoundlands, through Amwruan Aitas right down to Schipperkes. These are campaigned successfully at dog shows throughout the UK and Ireland and the couple have made up many Irish Champions. It was this love of dogs and their safe keeping which inspired Brian to start this well established and well recommended business.

Beechview Kennel Runs is very much a family run business with Joan, son-in-law Scottie and daughter Katrina in employment. And Brian feels that it is the team's knowledge of all aspects of dogs and their management combined with a real family commitment to quality and good customer service that ensures that customers can be assured of a first class service for their animals.

Beechview's product range

As Brian says: "The majority of our sales and output is for dog kennel runs and dog cages (we have also built quite a few catteries too). These are tailor made to any shape or size and are easily erected, added to, or indeed taken down.

"The panels are all hot dipped galvanised, so both the dog cages and kennel runs are a life time job. We supply all sorts of panels from an outdoor puppy pen, multiple runs and car dog cages all of which are measured and made to suit your requirements. We also manufacture custom made raised dog beds and indestructible kennels."

"We have supplied satisfied customers with kennel runs to all areas both in the North and South of Ireland including kennels for top gundog and show kennels, commercial boarding kennels and animal shelters. Orders of pens from



Merlin one of Brian's Akitas - with having both small and large dogs Brian & Joan can personally recommend the best sort of kennelling for your dog.



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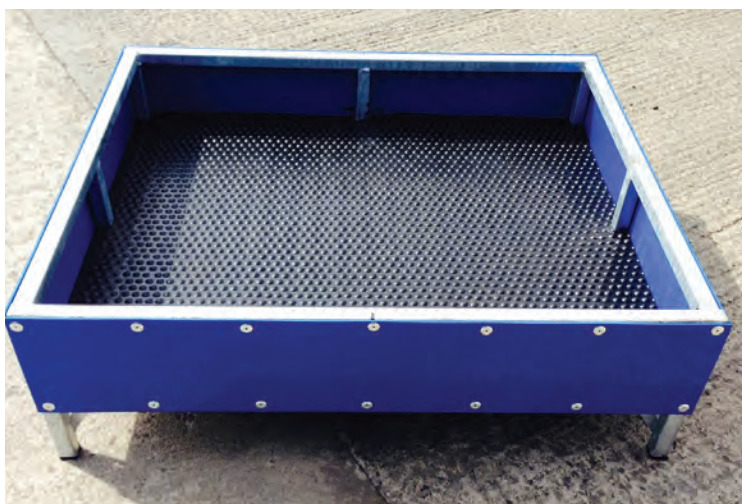
The largest and most unique jobs

When we asked Brian about the largest and most unique jobs he has carried out he stressed that no job is too large or small for the team to deliver a first class service and went on to say: “ We have undertaken and completed a lot of large jobs for various boarding kennels and rescue centres, the largest probably being Mid Antrim Animal Sanctuary and Assisi. The most unique undertaking brings a few to mind, an extremely large Monkey cage for a local business man, multiple aviaries with outdoor flight areas for Macaws and numerous football cages for various Northern Ireland councils.”

And of course we at Irish Countrysports and Country Life can endorse the quality of Brian’s work. He first supplied kennel runs for our publisher over 20 years ago plus various folding cages etc and when Albert was getting a new block of kennelling built which he wanted done with bars rather than mesh, Brian was the obvious choice of supplier. And the original pen sections, now over 30 years old, were still in such excellent condition they are currently in use as a small release pen!



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With Winston Kelly

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SINCE 1908



Winston Kelly is the subject of the Nigel Carville Red Mills Interview.

Q: Winston, you have been successful in the Irish gundog scene for many years can I take you right back to the start and ask you what was your first dog and when and how you acquired it?

A: In 1962 brother in law arrived with an 8 week old black labrador bitch pup and asked if I would keep her for a few days until he could fix up a kennel for it. The kennel didn't materialise and she stayed for the next 12 years.

Q: When did you purchase the first Labrador for training and trialing. What was its breeding and name?

A: In 1972 I purchased a black bitch from the late Sam Jennett. Named Glenloch Teal, she was by Irish championship winner FTCh Wheatrigg Irrepressible out of one of Sam's winning bitches.

Q: Where and when was the first

trial you ran in and how did you get on?

A: It was a snipe trial at Killeshandra and I failed on my second bird.

Q: With which dog did you win your first trail and what ground?

A: It was an open stake at Roslea with a dog called Glenloch Swift.

Q: How many trials have you won?

A: I have not kept count of the number of trails won, but I know I have won either open or novice stakes with 10 different dogs.

Q: How many Champions have you made up? What are their names?

A: I have made up four Irish F.T. Champions: Knockabawn Andrea of Glenloch, Carraigairt Adam of Glenloch, Glenloch Crystal, Glenloch Tyler.

Q: As well as trials you have been extremely successful in working tests. Can you share your most memorable working test performance? And tell us

what you get from competing in working tests?

A: In 1981 Glenloch Jet won the selection test for the N.I Game Fair national team against 40 odd dogs and then won the national test at Clandeboyne on the Saturday and followed by winning the International on the Sunday against very good English, Scottish and Welsh teams. Over the years I have been a member of 10 C.L.A gamefair teams with Ireland winning on a number of occasions. I enjoy tests mainly because of the craic and banter and because they are more relaxed than trials.

Q: Which of your dogs to date would you rate as your best dog and why?

A: IR.FT.CH Glenloch Tyler was my best all round trial/test dog, but as a pure game-finder Glenloch Teal was miles in front of the rest and I suppose this is what really counts.

Q: Through your career you must have met, seen and been influenced by many handlers can I ask you who of these handlers most influenced or impressed you? And why?

A: Apart from John Halstead Snr., I have always considered John Barr to be the most polished handler in trials with a quiet relaxed manner, but the most skilful trainer of most breeds of gundogs plus sheepdogs was the late John McAdam.

Q: Other than your own dogs what Labrador dogs would you rate some of the best you have seen or judged?

A: I was privileged to see FT.Ch Breeze of Drakeshead win his 3 I.G.L Championships but this side of the water Willie Berry's Int. FT.Ch Ulstare Oak and Nigel Carville's Int FT.Ch Astraglen Brooke, both of which won about a dozen open stakes, would be the pick.

Q: You are an A panel judge what do you look for when judging a dog?

A: Like most judges drive and plenty of style is a must. I also like to see a hunting dog that holds its area with the minimum of intervention from the handler.

Q: What changes have you seen over the years in judging and running trials that (a) you think are positive and (b) more negative?

A: I cannot think of any positive changes in judging today. In driven trials many judges seem to set up very long retrieves on open ground and expect a dog to run in straight lines. A true hunting dog also appears to be penalised on some occasions.

Q: How important is nutrition in conditioning your dogs for trials? What food do you use and why?

A: Nutrition is all important. All of my dogs are fed and thrive on Feedwell who are also great supporters of our sport.

Q: As well as a handler you have developed a reputation of good dogs and these dogs are in demand throughout the world. Can you tell us (A) which KC recommended screening tests you use? (B) why you think it is important that breeders

should use the KC recommended Health Screening tests? and (C) What you look for in a dog and bitch that you are going to breed?

A: (A) Before breeding from a dog or bitch they must have satisfactorily completed their Hip/Eye/Elbow tests.

(B) The benefits of the above screening tests are obvious however if the Kennel Club is really serious about eradicating hereditary health issues surely they should refuse to register pups born to a parent/parents with high hip/elbow scores or effected eyes. (C) In selecting a stud dog I look for a successful trial dog with a kind temperament and of good size and shape. I also believe that it is important if he comes from a strong bitch line.

Q: Which would you consider to be the best dogs that you have bred?

A: Over a period of about 50 years I have bred less than a dozen litters of Labradors. Apart from the dogs I have competed with, I bred Michael McGivern's Int.F.TCh Ben Neagh winner of the I.K.C championship and top dog at the CLA gamefair and more recently Ashley Donnan's F.T.CH. Glenloch Trojan the winner of the same two events.

Q: You must have had many highlights as a trainer and handler as well as some disap-pointments can you share with us (A) your highlights? (B) Your biggest disappointments?

A: (A) I won a two day stake in Scotland with a bitch called Glenloch Crystral in which she picked a running pheasant 4th dog down which probably won the trial for her. (B) A big disappointment was in an open stake in Fermanagh under I.K.C rules, when I ran a bitch called Andrea of Glenloch. We were leading the trial by a country mile then went to the water test which is normally just a formality. The judges lined the remaining three dogs up at the edge of a large pond and being first dog to go she duly retrieved her pheasant from the water. When a bird was thrown for the next dog for whatever reason my bitch stood up and took two steps forward and that was that. She never

moved in the line either before or after in a long trial career.

Q: You have been mainly associated with training Labradors what qualities do you look for in your own dogs?

A: I like a hard going, stylish dog with a kind temperament and with plenty of courage.

Q: Do you prefer handling dogs or bitches?

A: No preference at all.

Q: Have you trained any other breeds?

A: I have trained a handful of Springers for rough shooting, plus one cocker

Q: Why do you think Labrador is the breed most suited to (A) your training methods (B) for overall trial/tests success?

A: For many years my main shooting interest was wildfowling on the foreshore therefore a Labrador was the obvious choice of gundog. Competitions just seemed to follow on from that.

Q: On what estates do you pick up and what do you like about them?

A: Ballydugan and Ballywalter Park. The terrain suits me - no steep hills and there is always plenty of work for the dogs.

Q: What is your favourite trial ground and why?

A: Tayto Castle, probably because I have won four trials there, however I consider Ballinacor in Co. Wicklow to be the finest ground in Ireland for trials as a dog can be tested in every aspect of retriever work.

Q: When not picking up, training or breeding what do you like to do?

A: Watching the great Chelsea football team on T.V

Nigel interviews top UK and Irish dog owners - not just gundog owners - but owners of other sporting dogs including hounds, terriers, whippets and lurchers. Suggestions for interviews are welcome.



Rain and fog for HPR Championship 2014

I was fortunate enough to be at the first Hunt, Point and Retrieve Championship held at Lord Joicey's Ford and Etal Estate in 1986 when Tommy Brechney won with his German Shorthaired Pointer Heidi of Strathbock. He went on to win the event another four times before the Kennel Club withdrew Championship status from the HPR breeds in 1997. The Championship was reinstated in 2013 and in 2014 was held on Lord Masham's Swinton Estate in mid-November, with a mixed field consisting of twenty-two runners from seven different breeds. There were 9 German Shorthaired Pointers, five German Wirehaired Pointers, three Hungarian Vizslas, two German Longhaired Pointers and one each of Brittany spaniels, Wirehaired Vizslas and Slovakian Roughhaired Pointers, the bitches outnumbering the dogs by seventeen to five. The judges were Steve Kimberley and Tony Russell, Chief Steward was Malcolm Taylor and the Guns were Paul Nixon, Costas Wilkinson, Phil Pearson and Carl Field.

Swinton Estate Head Grouse Keeper Gary Taylor led the competitors and a sizeable gallery out onto the open hill where the trial was to be run and the first dog was soon off and hunting. The ground looked ideal for pointing dogs: a mixture of heather, bracken, rushes and bog with the promise of grouse, pheasant, snipe, woodcock, rabbit and hare. The only snag was the weather.

Rain had been forecast and rain was what we got, falling steadily throughout almost the entire first day. Grouse are notoriously jumpy when the heather is wet and any sensible pheasant would rather stay in a nice dry wood than venture out onto the open hill with only wet bracken and rushes for shelter. Game was, therefore perhaps a little more scarce than might have been hoped, and what birds there were tended to take to the wing rather too readily making pointing difficult for the dogs. That said, despite the wet, the sometimes contrary winds and scenting conditions that appeared to be rather poor there was

some good work to enjoy with dogs quartering their beat well and the Guns taking some very sharp chances when birds jumped.

According to the Kennel Club's regulations a field trial should be run 'as nearly as possible to an ordinary day's shooting.' It is sometimes difficult, particularly at retriever trials, to equate procedures with 'an ordinary day's shooting,' but Judges Steve Kimberley and Tony Russell ran this Championship just like a shooting day. Each handler was given a beat and then it was up to them to set their dog to working that ground, to organise the Guns and generally treat their turn as if it were just another shooting day.

Birds more likely to fly meant snap shooting for Guns

During the morning conditions were difficult, and not just because the rain made things unpleasant for humans and dogs alike. Ideally, when working pointing dogs you would hope to find

game sitting tightly so that the dogs could firm up onto point, hold steady while the Guns get into position and then go in to flush the quarry on command from the handler. When scent is poor though and the wet bracken and heather means that birds are more likely to fly than tuck into cover, so it is often a case of the Guns having to take snap shots as game rises before the dog has a chance to point it. Provided that the game has not been missed – and this is often very much a value judgment – and that the dog doesn't run in to the shot or fall of game the retrieve phase can go ahead with the hope that the dog will have a chance to demonstrate its pointing ability in a subsequent round.

This Championship has been dominated by German Shorthaired Pointers in the past, with all eight previous winners being GSPs. With seven different breeds running this year, there was a good chance that the GSP monopoly might be broken and watching the various dogs set about their work



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Howard Kirby casting off the winning dog, German Longhaired Pointer Wamilanghaar Tash of Mullenscote.



Chris Gray can still raise a smile despite being eliminated when his German Wirehaired Pointer FTCh Trudvang Balder pegged this rabbit.



Jean Robertson's Vizsla Greenwire Lenci retrieves a pheasant and delivers it to hand.



Andrew McDonald and his Dual Champion Vizsla Bitcoin Gold Coast at Northey completing a retrieve.



In contention - Howard Kirby and runner-up Jane Herbert ready for the fourth round.



Jean Robertson's casts off her Vizsla Greenwire Lenci in the fourth round.



Wamilanghaar Tash of Mullenscote retrieves a pheasant in the fourth round.



The water test - Jane Herbert takes a pheasant from her GSP Peersofdale's Highlander.



The Judges were Steve Kimberley and Tony Russell.



Guns looking cheerful despite the weather - Costas Wilkinson, Phil Pearson, Carl Field and Paul Nixon.

certainly didn't give the impression that any one breed was superior to the others. The longer coated dogs possibly found the cold and wet less unpleasant than those with shorter coats and with twenty-two dogs to be seen it was inevitable that all the competitors would spend a good deal of the day standing in the rain, but I heard no complaints and once a dog was came under the Judges and was given the chance to get out and hunt the rain was quickly forgotten.

The rain did ease from time to time and by early afternoon we had moved onto a part of the moor where some long, dense heather provided better cover for the game. Getting through the heather was hard work for dogs and handlers alike but the grouse sat quite well here and we saw some nice pointing at last. All the dogs had been seen once by now and the Judges called fifteen back for the second round as we turned back towards home. Once out of the long heather scent again seemed to become patchy and we lost several dogs when they failed on what should have been relatively straightforward retrieves. By the time we squelched our way back to the welcome sight of sponsors Skinners' hospitality tent almost half the remaining competitors had been eliminated and there were just eight runners left for the final day.

As we gathered up again the next morning the rain had passed through but been replaced by a blanket of fog that showed no sign of lifting. For a while it looked as if the trial might have to be abandoned, but eventually the decision was taken to make a start and, though visibility was never good, we were able to enjoy some great dog work as the eight remaining runners went through their paces.

Six become three for final round

We were soon down to six survivors after both Liza Brown's Slovakian Roughhaired Pointer Dangvord Dido at Brakabreeze and then Mick Canham's GSP FTCh Jhebron's Nephrite of Stubblemere failed on a difficult blind

retrieve on a woodcock. Howard Kirby's German Longhaired Pointer dog Wamilanghaar Tash of Mullenscote followed up good work in the first two rounds with a steady point on a rabbit in thick cover, then Chris Gray's German Wirehaired Pointer FTCh Trudvang Balder spoiled some impressive groundwork when he pegged a rabbit. Jane Herbert's GSP Peersofdale's Highlander and Jean Robertson's Vizsla Greenwire Lenci both hunted their beat well before the last two runners, Mark Jones's Vizsla Vizellven Ocean Zanta and Andrew McDonald's Dual Ch Bitcoin Gold Coast at Northey were eliminated leaving just three dogs in contention as we started a fourth round.

Jean Robertson's Vizsla hunted well and produced a cock pheasant that fell by a gap in a drystone wall. Howard Kirby was called forward with his German Longhaired Pointer and made a quick, clean retrieve. Jane Herbert's GSP had a good staunch point on a pheasant among the bracken and completed the retrieve in good style and the fourth round was completed with all three runners still in contention for top honours. Just the water test remained: a long retrieve across the river that unfortunately saw Jean Robertson's Vizsla Lenci eliminated when she refused to pick the pheasant from the far bank. . Howard Kirby and Jane Herbert both completed their retrieves with no problems and it was

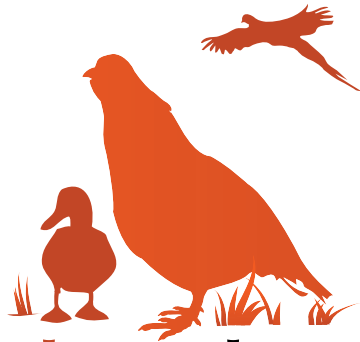
now down to the Judges to pick their winner.

First place went to Howard Kirby's German Longhaired Pointer dog Wamilanghaar Tash of Mullenscote – a popular decision and one that was well deserved for two days work that always impressed despite the rain, the fog and the erratic scenting conditions. Runner-up was Jane Herbert's German Shorthaired Pointer bitch Peersofdale's Highlander and the Guns' Choice was Mick Canham's German Shorthaired Pointer bitch FTCh Jhebron's Nephrite of Stubblemere. The win rounded off a busy week for Howard as Tash had only qualified for the Championship by winning a stake on the previous Friday. Tash had originally been sold as a pet, but when his original owners found him reluctant to settle into a sedentary life Howard saw the potential in him and took him on to train for work and trials.

Despite the weather this was a really enjoyable trial to watch and report. The standard was high throughout both days and fully justified the Kennel Club's decision to reinstate the HPR Championship after a sixteen year gap. Conditions were never easy for competitors or for the Judges but Steve Kimberley and Tony Russell gave every runner the best possible chance to impress and it was always allowed the competitors and the gallery the best possible view of proceedings despite the fog and the rain.



Runner-up Jane Herbert with GSP Peersofdale's Highlander and winner Howard Kirby with Wamilanghaar Tash of Mullenscote.



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English Springer Spaniel Championship 2015

Spectators and officials in the snow.

Three days of top class dog work with a popular result

The Kennel Club's English Springer Spaniel Championship was held on the Thirlestane Castle Estate in the Scottish Borders from the 8th to the 10th of January 2015. Wilson Young of Eskdale Shooting Services was our host for the trial and Headkeeper Gavin Hannam, who was running his first spaniel trial did an excellent job of keeping things moving along with just the right amount of game for the competitors to hunt on his Tullishill beat.

January weather in Scotland can be harsh and unforgiving and in the week before the trial the Met Office was promising gales, rain and snow for all three days. As it turned out we experienced all of those things, but by great good fortune most of the time that the trial was actually in progress was dry, though cold and very windy. The sponsors' marquee was almost blown away overnight on both the Thursday and Friday and was only saved by some sterling work by Duncan Sutherland, who combined tent repairs with picking

up and being the local liaison for the Spaniel Club who organised the trial.

The Judges were Andrew Cunningham, Ben Randall, William Megaughin and Graham West who stood in for Will Clulee after Will suffered a family bereavement. On the first day the Guns were Craig Barnett, Jim Brodie, Colin Adamson and Craig

Dickman, with Gary Shepherd and Ben Hannam replacing Jim Brodie and Craig Barnett on subsequent days. Anne Greeves, Chairman of the Spaniel Club and Secretary Liz Russell welcomed everyone to the trial and made all the necessary introductions and we were soon off, in bright sunshine and a cold wind to get the first round underway.



Andrew Cunningham and Graham West watch closely as Clodahill Nofler of Carnteel delivers a woodcock to Ian Blair.



(Above) Rob Chapple's Bella of Brandon returns with a cock pheasant.



(Right) Buccleuch Imrigh spits feathers after delivering a pheasant to William Drummond.



Andy Bennett's FTCh Rixton Charisma Jessie.



James Adamson's Rothievale Larch makes good her retrieve.



Louis Rice's Int FTCh Sliabh Treasure waiting to run.



Waiting for the run-off: Ian English with FTCh Helmsway Hope and Ian Openshaw with Int FTCh Hollydrive Theo.



The winning dog was Jon Bailey's Rheastmoor Fizzy.



Jim O'Connor's Kilhopemoss Melody during a snow flurry.



The Judges were Ben Randall, William Megaughin, Graham West and Andrew Cunningham.



The Guns on the first day were Colin Adamson, Jim Brodie, Craig Dickman and Craig Barnett.

Steep, bracken covered slopes with gullies

Gavin Hannam had chosen an area with steep, bracken covered slopes and gullies for the first morning. There was ample game, mainly pheasant and rabbit, with the odd hare and woodcock to add variety, and it was soon clear that the pheasants and rabbits were tucked well in under the cover and sitting tightly. Combined with a back wind this meant that it was all too easy for dogs to leave game behind if their hunting pattern was anything less than perfect and we lost several runners early on when game was missed.

The field worked up a steep gully and onto higher and more open ground

and here rabbits proved the downfall of a couple of runners, again because they were sitting so tightly in the bracken. Dropping down the hill slightly for lunch brought us back among the pheasants, both on the open hillside and in a couple of little plantations. As the light began to fade we were working though a wood heavily under-grown with dry rosebay willowherb stalks and retrieving proved difficult for a couple of runners though fortunately for them the Judges were unable to pick the birds either. With most of the first round complete the Judges called a halt and we made our way back to the marquee for hot soup generously provided by sponsors Skinner's.

The second morning was overcast with a gale blowing from the West and rain promised for lunchtime. The early runners had relatively sheltered ground but as we worked our way up a steep gully and onto the open hill we were exposed to the full force of the gale. There was a good supply of pheasants among the rushes and white grass and they really tested the Guns once they were on the wing with the gale under their tails. Some of the birds were blown so far off the beat that Duncan Sutherland and his Labradors Rhuim and Sandy were kept busy until we dropped back down into the relative shelter of another deep, steep gully.

A little cross gully provided extra shelter from the wind and produced a dozen or more pheasants after some hard hunting by the dogs, though we lost another couple of runners when birds were missed despite what looked like really thorough ground treatment. The odd partridge added a bit of variety for the Guns until, right on cue the rain started. By this time the Judges were well through the second round and with only eighteen or so dogs still to be seen they closed their books for the day.

The third morning started badly for me with fallen trees blocking the road and a long detour meaning that I was only just in time for the opening announcements. Snow was falling heavily, driven by another gale as we gathered in the marquee but the weather Gods were kind to us and by the time the trial got under way the sun was shining again. The Judges made steady progress through the remaining runners even though game was a little harder to find, the snow and wind having probably persuaded the rabbits to stay underground and most of the pheasants to stick to the shelter of the woods. With a couple of unlucky exceptions every competitor had game on their beat and the Guns were again on excellent form.

The run-off

By late morning the sun had gone in

and heavy snow was accompanied by some loud, rolling bursts of thunder, but the trial continued as the last half-dozen runners worked through the bracken and found a plentiful supply of pheasants sheltering from the storm. The final two dogs finished their run and the Judges led us back down to lower ground where they were to complete their deliberations. After a long and tense wait for those still in contention they called for a run-off between Ian English with FTCh Helmsway Hope and Ian Openshaw with Int FTCh Hollydrive Theo. Gavin Hannam had picked a little bank covered with bracken for them to run over and it produced two woodcock and two pheasants that both dogs handled with no problems. With the run-off over it was back to the marquee to await results with the snow falling again in earnest soon after we reached its shelter.

Hot drinks provided by sponsors Skinner's were very welcome while we waited to hear the results. Anne Greeves thanked everyone involved for all their hard work with special reference to Duncan Sutherland and Gavin Hannam as well as all the stewards, the stops who had spent long hours out in the wind, snow and rain, the Guns and the Judges and of course the three sponsors: Skinner's, Calor and Adrian Flux Insurance Services. Presentations were made to the Guns, the Judges and to Wilson Young our host for the trial and then Liz Russell took over centre stage to announce the awards.

First there were fourteen Diplomas of Merit presented by Wilson Young to John Howden's FTCh Broomfield Annie, Eric Smith's FTCh Nederscot Eirwen, Ian Openshaw's Int FTCh Hollydrive Kurt, Andy Bennett's FTCh Helmsway Henry, Rob Allum's Wrenmarsh Melody, Barry Foley's Goodspeed Warrior, Louis Rice's Int FTCh Sliabh Treasure, Alec Coutts's FTCh Windhill Brett of Stagsden, Eddie Scott's FTCh Broomfield Dee, Michael Huitson's FTCh Balmuir Skylark, Matt

Armstrong's Vysjkan Joe, Stuart Morgan's Bishwell Beebop, Dave Templar's FTCh Brynfedi Adel of Countryways and Eric Smith's Murrayeden Apollo of Nederscot. Jim Moyes of Calor and Will Delamore of Skinner's then shared task of making the presentations to the top four dogs.

Top class dog work

The winner, and clearly a very popular choice, was Jon Bailey's Rheastmoor Fizzy. Second place went to Ian Openshaw's Int FTCh Hollydrive Theo and third to Ian English's FTCh Helmsway Hope with Ben Watkins's FTCh Simonside Doris of Layson coming fourth. Ben Randall took over the microphone on behalf of his fellow

Judges to sum up the trial. It was, he said, first class and the winning dog showed amazing pace, power and ground treatment. Finally a delighted and emotional Jon Bailey thanked Wilson Young and Eskdale Shooting Services for hosting the event, the sponsors and most of all the Judges for awarding top honours to Rheastmoor Fizzy. Fizzy and Jon then posed for pictures, with Fizzy busily hunting round the tables in case a rabbit was lurking somewhere in the marquee. All that then remained, after a most enjoyable three days of top class dog work was to drive home, making slow progress along roads covered with ice and slush. At least, the fallen trees had been cleared away.



Winner Jon Bailey was presented with his trophy by Will Delamore of sponsors Skinner's.

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Irish Country Sports & Country Life reports on a shoot aiming for greatness

‘Why not come along for a day and see what we’ve done,’ said Glennoo Game Sports Manager Keith Mathews, ‘there’s been a few changes since you were there last time.’ Intriguingly, all Keith would say was that I could forget about the walking as everything was now ‘laid on.’

In November I drove to meet the Syndicate Guns over breakfast at the Valley Hotel in Fivemiletown, Co Tyrone. Breakfast - included the Glennoo experience - was substantial and shortly afterwards we made our way to Glennoo’s moorland, hills and

valleys with pine forest and deciduous trees to be met by Keeper Tom Woods.

The shoot had changed out of all recognition and was now definitely of the driven variety, the whole area being stunningly fit for purpose. There was an excellent Guns’ bus and a purpose-built trailer for beaters and dogs - good to see the dog safety with neat side protection on each side of the trailer, an indication of a shoot that left little to chance.

The first Drive ‘Packie’s,’ ideally took account of the natural terrain. Facing us, low hedges and ditch, with mixed woodland giving way to a stand

of conifers. The horn sounded and the adrenalin rose.

Far in front came the tapping of beaters’ sticks; a pheasant rose above the treeline and aimed straight towards me, the first of the day. I misjudged its speed but watched another Gun taking it in style. Wave after wave of birds screamed towards the Guns - if this was to be the ‘appetiser’ the day was destined to be something special. Birds came mainly over the conifers, others sliding sideways, not easy to read at all. I was very impressed with the quiet, professional beating, little sound apart



Taking on a high bird.



The first partridge to ride the gauntlet.

from tapping. Guns were spoilt for choice in the way the birds flew and had been presented.

Pickers up collected swiftly and next 'Sarah's Drive' with Guns below a steeply rising stand of trees some way from an open area, sparsely fringed with deciduous trees, for perfect flushing. We stood with our backs to a gentle valley, firs all around, almost designed for shooting. Actually, the same could be said of every drive so hats off to Glennoo, top quality shooting in a glorious environment for discerning Guns.

High, fast, birds graced every part of the line, no such thing as a 'bad peg,' everyone fully tested with some coming from the high, tree line, others at angles. Every shot in the book made for really exciting shooting. Unscathed birds carried on across the valley to the woods, to the interestingly named Ghost Drive. Again, exemplary some teamwork produced quality birds in numbers, flag-men, positioned at strategic points proving very effective, keeping the bulk of the birds on the 'correct' flightpath.

Eleven in a quiet clearing of the wood saw us feast on a fine selection of food, with sport on offer and a selection of hot or cold drinks. It was a great time to chat with the rest of the team and I learned that most if not all were Glennoo regulars.

'We held an induction day for the team before the season started, showing them the drives and covering all the things that were expected of them on a shoot day. Everyone knows their tasks which makes for a seamless day and of course we touched on health and safety aspects as well,' said Keeper Tom. 'On the partridge drives the beaters can come into sight of the guns over hills and are equipped accordingly with hi vis vests as safety is vital.'

Certainly, there was a great camaraderie, banter and craic being the order of the day as we relaxed and even the beaters' dogs seemed to get on well, corralled in the safekeeping of the beaters' cart.

Third Drive was the 'Ghost,' so named as legend has it that a deserted house at the back of the drive, was haunted by the Cooneen Ghost, a famous haunting in Ireland and you can read the story on the Internet. An expectant silence descended as this was to be the first time that the Ghost drive had been done.

Birds came from the right, lifting over pines then swinging along the line, some tantalisingly too high even for the best Shot and some teasing us in front. Again, we were fully tested by quality birds and Glennoo had shown birds for everyone, typical of the expertise that day. An 'experiment,' perhaps, but everyone agreed that it would be another signature drive.

For the final drive - partridge - we were over the mountain, with views over the Clogher Valley. As we drove, partridge coveys were spotted gritting at the roadside, others dotted in the

bracken-topped landscape along with occasional cock pheasants.

Moving carefully down the steep slope, Guns were placed beside a stream, a tributary of the Colebrooke River, known for its excellent fishing and yet another reason to visit this part of the world. I was tail Gun and could only see the person below me, but others were along the curving river banks, marking the bottom of the valley. High ground rose on each side, heather and scrubland, and out of sight beyond the hilltops, beaters had begun their trek.

A single partridge flicked over the Gun in front taking him unawares, but its brace mate was not to be so lucky escape. A small covey shot directly over my head and resolved not to miss more chances.

The middle of the line was hot and heavy and I could see birds crumple high overhead. Some Guns certainly

had their eye in! Birds flashed over and I took a single, reloading just in time to snatch a left and right from the next covey. A couple of singles fell to the Gun below, then an amazingly high bird, while other Guns were kept busy. While the centre of the line had been favoured, end Guns had nothing to complain about, maybe less action but quality birds.

Drive over, we headed for a welcome hot lunch and I heard more about the shoot. Keith told me there were 20 Drives over four different locations, the Curragh, Sarah's, McCaffrey's and the Mountain which is principally for partridge: 'We're spoilt for choice and can deal easily with changing weather conditions, making sure that even the syndicate Guns only shoot the one area twice. Think what that means for a visiting Gun for whom variety will literally add spice to a day that could include driven



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Members of the picking up team.



Cody and his dog make a great retrieve.

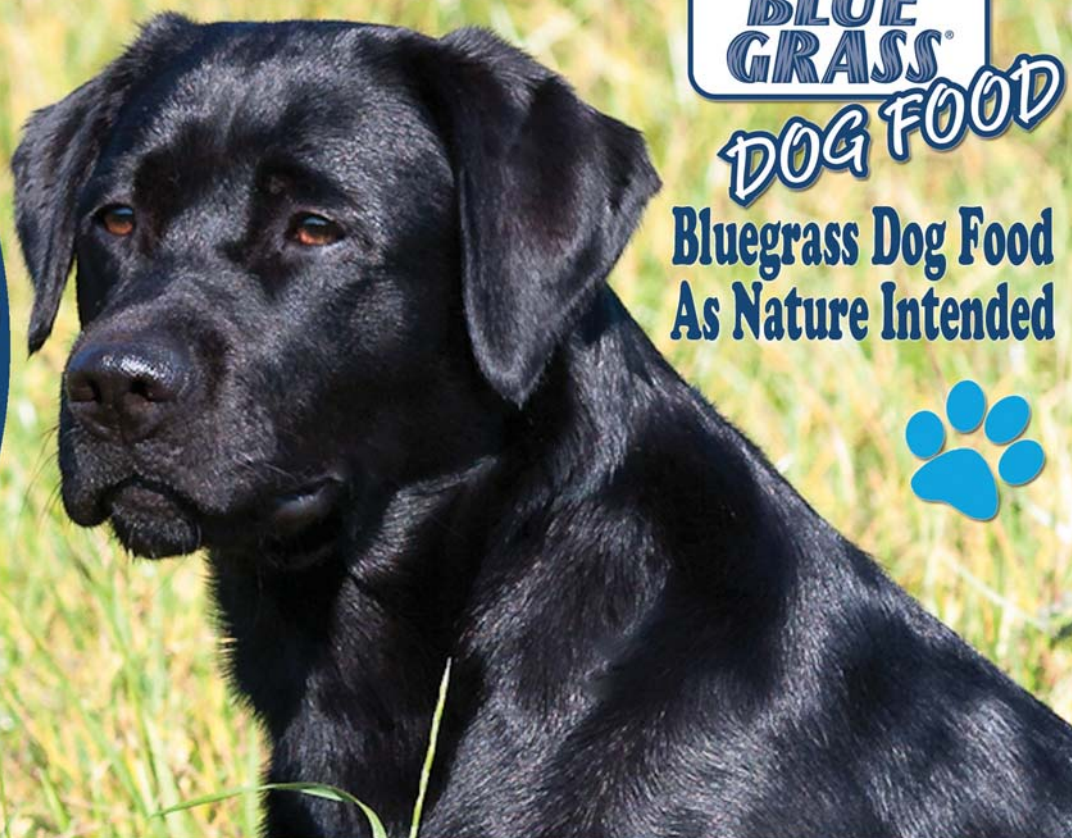


Shoot Manager Keith Mathews keeps an eye on proceedings.

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The Ghost Drive - a bird taken well out in front is seen falling. Tom Woods rallying his troop of beaters.

duck off hilltops, as well as driven partridge and pheasant, depending on their requirements. We do offer small 50 bird days but we're now catering more for driven game shooters requiring the very best quality 125 to 300 bird days.'

I have already mentioned the excellent support team at Glennoo which Keith and Tom have grown organically. 'Since the very first training day in August, we have had a superb group of dedicated beaters and pickers up who know exactly what is expected of them; they're an essential part of Glennoo's successful development. They turn out three days

a week, everyone is fully trained and equipped to do the job and are in radio communication - not that the Guns would be aware of that aspect. We want a steady flow rather than a massive flush and it's down to the beating team under Tom's command and of course we have top handlers in the picking up team too. We have 26,000 acres so we're spoilt for choice of ground which in my opinion is the best shooting topography in Ireland, with its

deciduous and forest, hillsides and valleys,' said Keith.

Driving home, I recalled Keith's parting words outlining the vision both he and Tom have to make Glennoo amongst the best shoots in the UK, if not the world! After seeing what had been achieved already and with the development plans for the future, including a purpose built shooting lodge, there seems little doubt that Glennoo's dream will become a reality.

Glennoo Game Sports is a commercial driven shoot and is offering mixed bag driven days on partridge, duck and pheasant for the 2015/16 season ahead. For further information or to make a booking please contact Keith Mathews, The Shoot Manager, on 0773 928 2066 or visit www.glennoo.com



The end of a perfect day at Glennoo.

2015 Retriever Working Tests

These dates are accurate at the time of going to press

Date	Venue	Organisers	Contact	Telephone
7 March	Shanes Castle	Ulster Select	Johnny Rea	028 2589 8428
21 March	tbc	BASC	tbc	028 9260 5050
4 April	Ballydugan Estate	NIGF&SS	Philip Turner	028 9261 1845
6 April	Aughentaine Estate, Fivemiletown	Fermanagh Gundog	Shauna McGroarty	028 77740104 07526527488
11 April	Delamont, Killyleagh	Killyleagh W/S	John Wilson	028 4482 8697
18 April	tbc	Craigavon	Noel Doran	028 3832 5272
25 April	Shanes Castle. All entrants get a FREE ticket to the Game Fair at Shanes Castle sponsored by FEEDWELL.	Prelim, Novice and Open Tests. UGRG Selection test for Shanes Castle Int. Team	URGCThomas Brady Joe Johnston	07788 927014 028 8673 6432
2 May	Cleggan Lodge	Moyola	R Kane	028 7946 8585 07900180005
9 May	Rademon	UGL	E. McIlwaine	02837552549 07799718963
16 May	Greyabbey Estate, ROSEMOUNT	Comber W/S	William Harpur	028 9187 3534
23 May	Castledillon	NIGF&SS	Philip Turner	028 9261 1845
30 May	Dobbs Estate	Lab Club	Joe Morrison	07739 515200
6 June	Scarva	NICF	Noel Doran	028 3832 5272
7 June	Newtoncrumlin, Co Antrim – Mock Trial format Novice and Open Great prizes.	Lab Club	Joe Morrison	07739 515200
13 June	tbc	Meningitis Charity	Eddie Moore	028 9062 7664
20 June	Clandeboyne - All entrants get a FREE Ticket to the Game Fair at Shanes Castle.	Lab Club	Joe Morrison	07739 515200
27 June	Irish Game Fair Shanes Castle	FEEDWELL Dog & Gun Preliminary & Novice Retriever Tests: RED Mills Spaniel Tests & Spaniel International	Joe Johnston	07788 927014 028 8673 6432
28 June	Irish Game Fair Shanes Castle	Feedwell International Retrievers team event/Open Test and Run Off for the Game Fair Redmills Top Dog between top 2 spaniels and top 2 retrievers	R. McGregor	028 77729690
4 July	Drumcairne	Mid Ulster Gundog Association	R. McGregor	028 77729690
1 August	Gosford Castle	Inter Club Test	Noel Doran	028 3832 5272
8 August	Craigavon lakes	NIGFSS	Philip Turner	028 9261 1845
15 August	tbc	URC	G Murdoch	07768670022
22 August	tbc	Fermanagh Gundog Club	Shauna McGroarty	028 77740104
29 Aug	Irish Game & Country Fair Birr Castle	International Spaniel Team Event/ Spaniel Tests	Albert Titterington	028 44839167
30 Aug	Irish Game & Country Fair Birr Castle	International team event/Open Retriever Tests. Run Off for the Game Fair Top Dog between top two spaniels and top two retrievers	Albert Titterington	028 44839167

Irish Native Breeds Club Field Trials

There are nine native Irish Breeds of dogs recognised by the Irish Kennel Club. These are: The Irish Wolfhound, Glen of Imaal Terrier, Irish Water Spaniel, Kerry Beagle, Irish Soft Coated Wheaten Terrier, Kerry Blue Terrier, Irish Terrier and two setters – the Irish Red and White Setter and the consanguinital Irish Red Setter.

The Irish Native Breeds Club was formed in 1968, but never had hosted a field trial until 2014. On 17th January they hosted an inaugural Open Stake for pointers and setters on the large bogs in the vicinity of Moate, Co. Westmeath with pheasant, partridge and snipe the quarry species. The Club Secretary is Cathy Delmar, while the Field Trial Secretary was Vincie Flannelly, a multitude of a man and a keen environmentalist. This trial was a tremendous success and so they returned on 16th and 17th November 2014 to host both Open and Novice Stakes which were a runaway success. There is a section in the I.K.C.s Judges Card which must be completed before a dog can receive any award. In this the secretary must state that there was adequate game and game abounded here. The great field trials on moor and bog land that were held at Annagh Bog, Cashel, Doon et al are no more. The huge explosion of predators, winged and ground, have virtually wiped out the wild pheasant so that game must be provided by other means. In this case release pens were erected at strategic locations and predators were managed. Pheasant and partridge drifted from the pens onto the bogs and to the feeding stations. These combined with a huge stock of snipe made for excellent trials. The idea is simple, but a lot of work, not hard but constant, is needed.

Field Trials in November are unusual, but not unique. The normal season for pointer and setters trials here closes at the end of October, but dogs are still reasonably fit and a co-operative weather clerk will do the rest.

There was a huge entry of 48 dogs for the Open Stake and with withdrawals and promotions, thirty dogs: 15 Irish Red

Setters 2 Irish Red & White Setters, 7 Pointers and 6 English Setters went to slips. Judges on the day were the said Vincie Flannelly and Kieran Walsh from Wexford and the first brace was down at 10.10 am. The weather was perfect – bright November sunshine and a nice breeze made for ideal conditions and the dogs responded. There were some great runs given by the dogs – still fit, you see. With unlimited ground, there were 28 finds over two rounds. In the second round each dog of the seven brace recalled had the opportunity of game. This was a great and memorable field trial and the standard was extraordinarily high throughout with many of the dogs only missing out of the awards by hair-splitting.

Results:

1st: Mr. James Coyle's Pointer Dog - **KORAM KAISER** – Excellent.

This was a super dog who logged three excellent finds in his run. Drawn second brace he set the standard for the day with quartering, speed and style. He had finds on partridge and two on snipe and was a worthy winner.

2nd: Mr. Eric Lynch's Irish Red Setter Bitch – **GARDENFIELD RENA** – Excellent.

With a great first round, she had an excellent find on a pheasant in the second round. Her ground treatment was first class with silent handling.

3rd: Mr. Jim Crotty's Pointer Dog – **BRACKBAWN FALLING STAR** – Excellent.

Excellent find on a pheasant in the first round with some provocation. Groundwork overall was very good and had another find on a pheasant in the second round.

Res: Mr. Pat Dooley's Pointer Bitch – **WILDFIELD CHERRY** – Excellent.

Again very good groundwork. Had a slight problem with a difficult bird. Gave excellent display in the second round.

On the next day it was the turn of the Novices. Of a card of 14, thirteen dogs – ran under judges Aidan Dunne and the indefatigable Vincie. He does own a very good red setter, but as the dog was residing at that moment in opulent lavishness at the luxurious Ikerrin Kennels, he had idle hands. Overnight frost, as is its wont, shifted most of the snipe to more sheltered spots. Still, when the day brightened up and scenting conditions improved, there were some snipe, but ample pheasant and partridge to test the dogs. Five brace were called for a second round and we had the familiar story of some dogs bettering themselves and others not. Generally this was an excellent trial, also over both days, not even half of the ground available was used.

Results:

1st Mr. Michael Houston's Pointer Dog **ARDCLINIS FRANCIE FRANK** - Excellent.

With excellent groundwork and perfect handling in the first round, but without game, the dog had a super joint find in the second round on a partridge. One to watch.

2nd Mr. Edward Flannelly's **IRWSB FOILDEARG MISTY** - Excellent.

The bitch had a very good first round considering she is just out of heat, but had a great second round with a very smart find on a partridge.

3rd Mr. John Cassin's Pointer Bitch **KILMINFOYLE AMANDA** – Excellent.

Went very well, but not maybe



Winner Michael Houston receiving Trophy from Edward Flannelly

showing the same ground treatment as the dogs above. Involved in joint find with the winner.

These trials plainly demonstrated what can be done with organisation and thought. No game was shot as per rule, but enormous possibilities for other such events were shown. Weather at that time of year is a huge consideration, but, generally, may be favourable in

November. The concept of shooting game as per spaniel, retriever and H.P.R trials might be looked at. This too has precedent and would add a new dimension to the sport.

Well, done to the Native Irish Breed Club, their Field Trial Sub-Committee and the enthusiastic landowners for two memorable days of sport. The trials were extremely well supported – maybe as

novelty events on this occasion, but the game stocks and organisation will ensure full houses from now on. Who knows what can be achieved? Already there are arrangements being made to host a field trial in January for Irish Setters, both Red and Red & White. For those who believe that the breeds should never have been separated, this should be a most interesting spectacle.

Last year, the Irish Hawking Club put on quite a spectacular display, fighting their birds over these same bogs and it was a brilliant spectacle. They presented the same event this year, but next there will be a truly international event in the area when over seventy countries will be represented.

Footnote: In the late 19th Century, an unusual wedding present was given for the marriage of one of the Forbes family in nearby Newtownforbes, Co. Longford, when six American grey squirrels were presented to mark the occasion and to 'improve' diversity.

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Country Chat

Billy settles for a pigeon, takes a 'flyer' in Scotland and wonders about the fate of Big Alec.

Little 'Jamie' has finally had enough of life, having nibbled and munched his way through enough pellets and greens to fill a warehouse. I can only assume that the prospect of facing another day, let alone another year, confined to the same old surroundings had taken its toll, that and a good long number of years on earth. Even a small rabbit can bring laughter and tears in any household where children abound, and there is always a tinge of sadness with the demise of a small pet.

Jamie's arrival as a family pet was completely unintentional as there are enough animals about this place as it is, but anyway it happened this way. A few years ago, the renowned German pointer man Kieran Fox and I schemed up the half-baked notion of obtaining a pet rabbit, placing it in a little cage, throwing a few branches over it and setting it somewhere in a corner of the game fair arena. Then hopefully, all

things being equal, we should be able to dazzle the spectators with our pointers finding and pointing at the little cage, or at least staring in the general direction. I convinced Kieran that our pointers would be tripping over themselves to be pointing at something a little different, hence the rabbit. But someone a lot wiser hinted that we couldn't just borrow some child's pet rabbit and rely on everything going to plan. What if something unforeseen should happen to it and worst still, witnessed not only by its young owner but maybe half the nation. "Aah, good thinking squire," says I, "we'll get one of our own."

Now then, short of walking into a pet shop and forking out a ridiculous sum for a pet rabbit which I didn't want to be lumbered with, I thought I would do the next best thing and pay a little visit to a local animal sanctuary. I could always take it back after we had

finished with it and tell them that it didn't get on with the ducks.

Dressed in my everyday uniform of greens, I turned up at the animal sanctuary office in my usual brash but charming manner. Four young ladies were huddled around a more senior lady (SL), all of them cooing at a frightened little spaniel dog cowering in the corner of the room. "Morning ladies," I said cheerily. "Can we help you?" says SL, looking a mite agitated. "I'm looking for a rabbit" says I. Everyone including the dog looked up at me. After a two minute silence, SL spoke again "Go up the hill to the small animals enclosure and ask for Angela."

One was not going anywhere

Angela, who looked a lot like she was nearing her tenth birthday, took me to the rabbit enclosure and there were rabbits everywhere, but each time I pointed out a rabbit, there was a reason why I couldn't have it. Eventually I asked her to select a rabbit that I could have, she reached down and picked up one that looked like it wasn't going anywhere. As she struggled with it, she asked me would I like to hold it? "Och your all right pet," "I'll just nip down to the jeep and get a bag." "Oh it doesn't work like that," said Angela, looking a lot brighter and no doubt relieved. "Well, how does it work then?" I asked. "Right, we go back down to the office, you fill in an application form and if you are successful someone will then come out to where you live, interview you and take a photo of where you are going to keep the adopted rabbit." "Err pardon?" I gulped. And that is how it came to pass that three days later I left a pet shop with my £15 rabbit.

Now you could be forgiven for thinking, why didn't they just catch up a



Heidi and Sally pointing grouse on a moor in Perthshire.



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A worksite sign on a Scottish moor.

wild one? Well we had thought of that, but no one seemed to be conveniently placed for the task in hand and time was of the essence, besides, a wild one would not only be terrified by the whole ordeal, and as well it wouldn't be very sportsman-like, walking about the fair with it in the cage and trying to heel-walk a German pointer at the same time.

When I got to Kieran's homestead, some forty odd miles away, with Jamie the rabbit happily munching away at a carrot to keep him calm, we discovered to our horror, that neither Kieran's pointers or mine, were the slightest bit interested in pointing at a rabbit in a cage, in fact, Heidi even got down 'puppy fashion' and wanted to play with the rabbit, which oddly enough, wasn't the slightest bit perturbed by the dogs either. Four weeks on, Kieran and myself turned up at the game fair suitably kitted out and, although Mr T. may not have thought so - suitably rehearsed, with a pigeon!

Shot by a wee man in tweeds

Moving swiftly on, but still on the animal theme, do you find it rather annoying, how all wildlife presenters have now got into the habit of attaching names to the animals they are

watching? (Editor: an emphatic YES!) I suppose to be fair to them, it not only endears the viewers to whatever they are watching, but makes it a lot easier to distinguish between the animals they are presenting. Nonetheless, there is something a little vexing about it all, a heap of foxes under your garden shed, referred to as the 'Annett family' or calling a red deer stag 'Herbie' and his rival 'Big Alec' and then covering the whole thing like a ruddy soap opera. Before you know it, thousands of lost souls are tweeting that they were up all night worried sick as to where 'Big Alec' has disappeared to. 'He was shot by a wee man in tweeds, my dear, and he's in the game larder' I'd love to tweet back. Well, make it a bit more 'reality' for them I say.

Mind you, when it comes to favourites on telly, I needn't say too much either. I would be loath to have missed one drama called Monarch of the Glen. About six years ago, a friend was foolish enough to point out the castle in Scotland where the episodes are filmed and would you Adam and Eve it, wasn't it just slap bang on my flight path up north to the moors. So now I stop there to have my lunch, check my tyres, take photos of everything, including the tourists taking

photos of everything, gush with fellow fans, interrogate the locals and sit in the same spots as the cast did, grinning at a camera. Eh...what do you mean Billy's lost it?

Finally, and still in Scotland, you would have thought by now that I would have mastered the art of off-roading, but alas not so. A few years back, I was following Colin the gamekeeper up a run-of-the-mill mountain track to a parking spot high up on the moor. Sitting beside him was his boss, the all important owner of the moor. Now, just before you get to the parking spot, you have to negotiate one very short - but very steep - incline and to do so successfully, you have to 'give it the gutty,' and I mean the full size ten gutty. But, gave it too much and you will overshoot at the top going airborne to a steep drop beyond, unless of course, you have another parked jeep to stop you.

Not once, but twice, I just about got to the top and each time the Discovery cut out, allowing me just enough time to see the parked jeep ahead before rolling back down the track. Very cautiously, I then had to let the jeep roll back far enough back to start it up and try again. At my first attempt, keeper and host were in their jeep. At my second attempt, they decided to get out. On my third attempt I came flying over the top like a cork from a bottle, stopping only two feet short of Colin and his boss who were - they thought - safe from flying Billy at the back of their jeep. Chewing bubble gum, all nonchalant like I knew what I was doing, I eased myself from the driver's seat and went to the rear to start putting my gear on. The only clue that gave away the terror which filled my jeep was Heidi and Tia. Never great friends at the best of times, the pair were to be seen huddled in the corner of the transit box, legs and paws wrapped around each other. And you know something - if the cage had been bigger I think I'd have joined them earlier. Well, I never wanted a career as a rally driver anyway!

Hunting Roundup

Around the Meets

County Down Hunt

The County Down Hunt's traditional Boxing Day meet took place in incessant, penetrating rain but the large crowd of well wishers assembled to see huntsman Steve Collins and his hounds lead some sixty five mounted followers, under joint master Brit Megahey, parade the town seemed not to mind. A huge number of car followers was a central decider in Steve Collins having only seasoned hounds in his mixed pack.

Once out into the country hounds were very quickly into their stride giving the field much to do to keep up and there were some fallers, all of whom were muddled but uninjured so soft was the landing. Having traversed Crossgar Road hounds did a fast, circular tour of Raleagh and Creevyargon with some good music to accompany them. At this stage it was obvious that the rain was not going to abate so home was blown in late afternoon to enable the drying process

to begin!

By contrast the North Down Hunt's meet on New Year's Day at the centuries old Crawfordsburn Inn started off wet but, thankfully, became drier as it proceeded. Barry Jones, in his first season as huntsman, has had something of a baptism of fire from the Hunt Saboteur's Association who have subjected him to some very vituperative and personalised abuse. He has impressed everyone with his hound control and his self control. He now hunts a dog pack and a bitch pack on alternate days and he had on a 12½ couple bitch pack with his brother Philip and Charlie McPoland as his whippers-in.

A crowd of well wishers, in some places standing six deep, saw everyone off after an excellent reception from the Rice family, who own the Crawfordsburn Inn, as Lesley Webb MFH and a thirty strong mounted field followed hounds to the first draw. George Cheatley's farm was blank, as was David Jones's and only the

availability of some hunt jumps, including drop fences, kept the field focused. These hunt jumps continued across Roland and Elizabeth Johnston's where a further series of draws also proved blank.

It was beginning to look like it would be a blank day when hounds suddenly put a fox afoot and opened up with some great hound music to accompany their drive and tenacity. They pushed their fox on towards Henderson's and then towards Hughes's where they hunted him in a very wide circle before losing him in forestry where he was given best after this good hunt. I later learned that many of these trees are scheduled for felling, due to disease, so we will not be able to hear such excellent hound music again for a very long time. Home was blown in late afternoon to secure a recrossing of the main Belfast to Bangor road under the supervision of Bangor police.

As I drove to Cluntagh, outside Crossgar, for the East Down Foxhounds' meet rain was threatening



Huntsman Barry Jones blowing for hounds at the North Down Foxhounds Meet at Clandeboye.

and by the time huntsman Declan Feeney was moving off it was raining and did so fairly constantly for the rest of the day. Declan had his son, Conor (18), whipping-in and he was proudly wearing a swallowed tailed hunting coat of 1938 vintage. Declan's 19½ couple mixed pack looked fit and ready for action.

James Armstrong MFH had a dozen hardy souls in the mounted field and the first draw, at David McClurg's on Ballywillin Road, disappointingly proved blank. The huntsman moved to Armstrong's further down that road but this also proved blank.

A return to McClurg's, however, proved fruitful as one pilot went afoot to give a good, sharp hunt during which hounds were in good voice. However, this customer went through McClurg's and was lost at The Forest despite the best efforts of huntsman and hounds. A further series of draws around McClurg's also proved blank and a move on to Armstrong's land, on Beechview Road, brought no better luck so home was blown in fast fading light to enable everyone to return to the meet in now heavy rain.

Last year the East Down Foxhounds hosted Ireland's newest Foxhound pack at Crossgar, County Down and Chairman of the IMFHA Rupert Macauley MFH brought his West Wicklow Foxhounds back for a return visit, with seven of his members accompanying him. Their long journey had seen some frost and some fog which had abated on their arrival at Crossgar. Rupert was assisted by his own whippers-in, Billy Kelly and Neil Kinsella, while James Armstrong MFH (East Down) had some twenty five riders under his charge in the mounted field.

Rupert drew Robinson's and hounds found a fox almost immediately but heavy slurry greatly hampered them though they worked hard, running strongly through Ferris's and Eames's. He looped back into Robinson's where hounds feathered and were recast, but he went back into Armstrong's and was lost. Hounds then drew four coverts in Anderson's but all were blank so Rupert drew McClurg's Fort which was also blank. A draw on a small island on

McClurg's land saw a fox go afoot to run through Roy Carlisle's and across Gabbies. This hunt, which had been run at pace, ended when our pilot went to ground off the Derryboye to Killyleagh road. Scent did not appear to be holding and so the decision was made to blow for home thus enabling the visitors to begin their long journey home in good light.

Iveagh Foxhounds

Our variable weather saw the Iveagh Foxhounds' meet outside Donaghcloney, Co Down, take place on a very cold day which then proceeded to be sunny and somewhat warm. John Porter MFH was assisted by kennel huntsman and first whipper-in Neil Keery who had brought forward an 11½ couple mixed pack.

The huntsman led the small field off to Kircassock where a series of draws proved blank. As he moved along Lismaine Road towards Drumnabreeze Road hounds briefly had their first pilot afoot but this hunt, with good hound music, quickly came to nothing as this

fox was lost in apparently patchy scent.

A hack to Ballyleny saw hounds draw Raymond Gamble's where they put their second fox afoot. This proved to be an enterprising customer who gave a good hunt right across to Arnold's, near the chicken houses. However, this fox went to ground in a ravine and was given best. The huntsman then led everyone through Gamblestown as far as Lisnasure Road but a series of draws there proved fruitless in deteriorating scenting conditions so home was blown as there didn't seem to be any improvement in the offing.

Mid Antrim Hunt

The cold weather persisted into December and the Mid Antrim Hunt's meet at Castle Hill, outside Ballymena, took place on a bitterly cold day on which the ground was still frozen. Newly appointed huntsman Colin Brown, assisted by no less than four whippers-in Joe Hamilton, Jamie Sloan, James Gillespie and Adam Turtle, took a 12½ couple mixed pack to the first



Mr W. Vance MH in office since 1983 with the permanent Harriers at Castlecoole, Enniskillen
draw behind Castle Hill Equestrian Centre in still slippery conditions.

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Two joint masters, Gordon Cunningham and Roy Colvin had charge of a seventeen strong mounted field while senior joint master Tommy Caves, who is off games due to some badly damaged fingers, was with me in a vehicle driven by Judith Hamilton, widow of the late Andy Hamilton MH, who died in office last year.

As Colin Brown drew the Paddocks, hounds put their first fox afoot and a sharp hunt ensued, with hounds in good voice as they pushed their fox across some testing country only for him to go to ground on Wilfred Ross's land. We were later told that this customer subsequently emerged from safety to run back towards the meet. Hounds drew Wilfred Ross's and Randall Hayes's without success then put a brace afoot from the bales at Carl McCullough's. They hunted both foxes, in seemingly patchy scenting conditions, the first one being lost but, after another good hunt, the second fox was accounted for.

As light was now beginning to fade and the weather was becoming even

colder Colin Brown drew back towards the meet without any further success so home was blown to let everyone return safely.

Fermanagh Harriers

My visit to the Fermanagh Harriers at Castlecoole Estate, Enniskillen, was doubly pleasurable because I was able to see senior joint master Billy Vance (in office since 1963) back in the saddle after suffering a fall with resultant serious head injuries. He spent over a year recuperating before moving to England to live with his son, Andrew, a doctor who has overseen his dramatic recovery. Now, at eighty three (eighty three and a half he says) he is back in the front rank of his own Hunt.

Billy's son, Johnny Vance MH, had on a 12 ½ couple mixed pack with his sister Susan and joint master Michael Bevan as his whippers-in. He led a forty strong mounted field to the first draw in Coneyburrow Wood. Here, a fox went afoot after a series of draws to give a hunt right around the wood

and then into Cecil Cooke's land before going to ground after a sharp hunt with hounds in good voice.

With all five joint masters out, the field enjoyed some excellent leads across country before coming back into the Estate to draw some more coverts. Hounds put a second fox afoot and he gave another sharp hunt around the various woods which abound here before going into Lady Katy Hamilton's where he, too, went to ground and was given best. Despite seemingly patchy scent Johnny Vance's hounds worked hard and their light frames and sharp cry were shown to good effect. They put their third fox afoot from a young plantation and this customer also produced a sharp hunt, through several coverts before also going to ground and being given best. Home was then blown to enable everyone to gather round Billy Vance as if he were a pop star, which attention this unflappable man took in his stride. He is truly back where he belongs!

Tynan and Armagh Hunt

The Tynan and Armagh Hunt's



Arlene Watson with the cheque presented by Tynan and Armagh Hunt to the ECU at Belfast's Royal Victoria Hospital in memory of her late husband Stephen Watson, MH.

annual meet at the home of whipper-in Andy Philips invariably begins with the presentation of a cheque to a hospital or charity and this year it was made to the Intensive Care Unit of Belfast's Royal Victoria Hospital.

On this occasion, however, there was a sad and personal note to the presentation as it was made in memory of the late Stephen Watson, joint master, who died there in December after collapsing in the hunting field. The cheque was presented by Stephen's wife Arlene and was gratefully acknowledged on behalf of the ICU by staff nurse Abby Little.

Huntsman Keith McCall had on a 12½ couple mixed pack of mainly Old English hounds and was assisted by Andy Philips and Philip Sinton while both joint masters, Brian Dougan and Wilson Faloon, were in a mounted field of twenty with Roy McColl as field master.

The host's orchard was the first draw and almost immediately yielded a fox which gave everyone a short, sharp hunt as a pipe opener before he went to ground. A series of draws in Stevenson's Forest and Jenkinson's Bog proved blank but we had better luck at Hamilton's where several foxes were afoot. Hounds settled on one customer and hunted him right around the property before he, too, went to ground. At Carson's another fox left the Christmas trees and ran up to the old railway line at Nichol's then crossed Moffat's and went into Albin's. From here he ran right around the farm then went into McClure's where he was marked to ground. The last draw, at Matchett's, yielded another fox which also gave a short, sharp hunt without leaving the property, before going to ground. Throughout the day scent had been patchy giving hounds much to do to find and hold their foxes, which were there in abundance, but hound music was intermittent to say the least.

Newry Hunt

One of the worst things that a hunting correspondent can hear is: 'you should have been here on Thursday.' And so it was on my arrival at the Newry Hunt's meet at Annaghbane, where Thursday's red letter day at McKane's Cross was

still being talked about.

A fifteen strong mounted field, under field master Brian Johnston, followed huntsman Mark McIlroy and whippers-in Ian Bryson and James Hammond to the first draw, behind the gospel hall. Hounds found immediately and the 11½ couple mixed pack were all on as they pushed their pilot up the hill presaging a short hunt with him going to ground under the road.

A series of draws around Annaghbane proved fruitless until a second fox went afoot from the bog at John Irwin's. This fox ran hard all the way to Creevy and Ian McClelland's land then onto McCambley's before going to ground at Creevy Fort. Mark McIlroy then drew John Little's, at Ouley Road, where a third fox went afoot to give another sharp hunt before he, too, went to ground.

This had been a bright, cool day which was now biting cold so Mark McIlroy blew for home to end a good day which was now being seen as an anticlimax 'after Thursday.'

Route Hunt

The Route Hunt, from County Londonderry, visited their neighbours the Mid Antrim Hunt, at Cullybackey on a biting cold and blustery Saturday, which also combined some bright sunshine with sleet and even occasional, heavy hailstones.

Huntsman Johnny Butler had on an 11½ couple mixed pack with Gerry McCluskey whipping-in and, given the weather, lost no time in heading to Sammy Anderson's for the first draw, which was blank. As hounds drew through Broughdone a fox went afoot and ran through Baston's and Kenneway's.

This fox then ran through Robinson's and Roy Millar's continuing into the old linen mill at Andrew Fraser's then back into Roy Millar's where he went to ground. We had enjoyed some brief hound music during this hunt but it didn't take long to again notice the cold at which time we were wondering how we could "tap into" the electric power now produced at the mill! A further series of draws around Craigstown saw another fox afoot holloaed by your correspondent.

Hounds were there immediately but could make nothing of it as scent now appeared to be non-existent. These hard working hounds were now rewarded with a third fox going afoot off the main Kilrea Road to give a short, sharp hunt before going to ground behind Mount Pleasant. Their fourth and final fox went afoot behind Fir Trees filling station and gave another good hunt before going to ground near Craig's Mission Hall.

Huntsman Johnny Butler certainly impressed his hosts with Mid Antrim honorary treasurer, Patsy McCarthy-Morragh complimenting him on how his hounds were 'all together on their foxes.'

This had been a successful visit with both Hunts enjoying good sport.

Ward Union

The Ward Union Hunt's new meet, at Blakes Cross, saw a good, clear but cool day which drew a mounted field of some forty riders under joint masters John Duffy, Seamus Fitzpatrick and David Baker.

Huntsman Pat Coyle hunts only doghounds and uses one hound at a time in a relay system which requires hounds to have optimum fitness and biddability. A move through Miss Dodd's then David Gargan's, McNally's and Con Gittens's saw everyone have a bit of a pipe opener before they arrived at the home farm of joint master David Baker. Matters progressed through Ennis' at Tobeen and onto John Duffy's Springhill property then onto land belonging to first season member Derek Keating. There had been some testing country crossed and we car followers were having difficulty in keeping in touch as one hound does not make enough noise to help us! After crossing John Rooney's and Con Smith's (who was driving Tony Lockwood ex MFH, of the Croome and West Warwickshire Foxhounds with the car followers) Pat Coyle ended this hard riding day by blowing for home outside Oldtown village.

South Tyrone Foxhounds

At Clougher, County Tyrone, the South Tyrone Foxhounds enjoyed the Boyd family's legendary hospitality on

what turned out to be a poor scenting day.

Huntsman Ryan Carvill had on a 12½ couple mixed pack with Conrad Jones and Paul Kinane whipping-in while joint masters Stephen Hutchinson and Andy Oliver had twenty riders under their charge. Despite the poor scenting conditions hounds put one pilot away in the paddocks at Boyd's but enjoyed only a short hunt before losing him. Hounds drew from Aghindrummin towards Corrick House but all coverts were blank as was Carnall Church. However, matters improved in a bog at Daisyhill where a second customer went afoot to give another short hunt in continuing poor scenting conditions. Hounds pushed their fox through Dum-mer's Bog and into Boyd's at Cavanakirk where he was lost. A third fox went afoot from a glen near the River Blackwater and then ran back into Daisyhill where he, too, was lost. Home was then blown to enable everyone to return to Killyfaddy Manor for more of that hospitality.

Obituary to Mr. Stephen Watson, Joint Master, Tynan and Armagh

The hunting community is mourning the untimely loss of Mr. Stephen Watson, Joint Master of the Tynan and Armagh Hunt. Stephen had taken ill suddenly whilst out on the hunting field on Saturday 13th December 2014. He passed away in hospital with his family at his bedside on 19th December 2014. Stephen was a gentleman both on and

off the hunting field and was particularly supportive and encouraging to the younger members of the hunt. His meticulous planning and organisational skills coupled with a profound passion for hounds and hunting served to progress the hunt.

Under his guidance and watchful eye the Tynan and Armagh Hunt accrued one of the finest packs of hounds in the North and the hunt saw a dramatic revival. Stephen's funeral took place on the 22nd of December 2014 at Aughnacloy Presbyterian Church where the Reverend Ian McKee described Stephen as 'kindness personified.'

Stephen was laid to rest at Ballymagrane as the Tynan and Armagh, Newry, South Tyrone and Fermanagh huntsmen sounded 'gone away.' Our thoughts and prayers are with his family at this difficult time.

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The late Stephen Watson.

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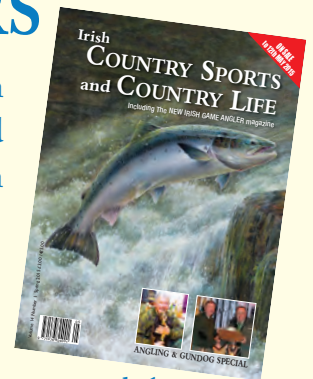
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FACE campaigning for fieldsports at the heart of Europe

FACE Europe (the European Federation of Associations for Hunting & Conservation) is an important pro-hunting lobby group which is at the forefront of the never-ending battle to protect the fieldsports that we enjoy so much.

Many readers will already be aware that NARGC Director, Des Crofton is Director of FACE Ireland and is the Irish representative in the FACE General Assembly. He is currently a member of the European Board and a Vice-President, a position in which he is serving a second term. As he points out: "Most regulation/legislation which affects hunting and the landscape now comes from the EU, not from national governments. It is therefore essential that the interests of Europe's hunters are protected by a professional organisation which is based on the doorstep of the EU. FACE fills that role very successfully."

FACE represents the interests of Europe's hunters at the level of the EU institutions. It hosts, jointly with the European Landowners' Organisation (ELO) one of the very few Intergrups which is recognised by the European Parliament - The Hunting and Conservation Intergroup, or to give it its full title the Parliamentary Intergroup Biodiversity, Hunting, Countryside.

This Intergroup took important steps to facilitate its future work in the fields of biodiversity, hunting, angling, wildlife management, forestry, agriculture and nature conservation, when at its first meeting in Strasbourg on 12 February (where its secretariat is provided by FACE) the MEP Karl-Heinz Florenz (EPP, Germany) was elected the President of the Intergroup, which is celebrating its 30th

anniversary this year. With him, MEP Bendt Bendtsen (EPP, Denmark), MEP Renata Briano (S&D, Italy) and MEP James Nicholson (ECR, UK) were elected as Vice-Presidents. In addition to the Vice-Presidents, MEP Annie Schreijer-Pierik (EPP, Netherlands) was elected as Secretary General of the Intergroup. The Intergroup officially adopted the name "Biodiversity, Hunting, Countryside" and agreed on a draft work programme for 2015, including several meetings on upcoming topics.

Challenges on many fronts

"We are facing a lot of challenges regarding biodiversity, sustainable hunting and wildlife management as well as climate change and rural development in the next few years. This Intergroup will serve as the key stakeholder platform within the European Parliament, enabling open cross-political discussions between

decision-makers and experts, aiming to affirm the significant role of rural actors and the socio-economic importance of countryside activities" said the newly elected President Karl-Heinz Florenz.

Representing the Secretariat of the Intergroup, FACE President Gilbert de Turckheim stressed the enormous importance of the Intergroup for the work of FACE and the interests of the 7 million hunters in Europe. "The 'Hunting Intergroup' has become one of the backbones of our daily work and is now absolutely essential for our mission to promote and defend sustainable hunting across Europe. It enables us to directly engage with decision makers and provide them with relevant, science-based information on the wide range of topics related to hunting, angling and other forms of sustainable use of natural resources."

I met up recently with two FACE members to chat about some of the



IUHH delegation meeting in Brussels with Karl-Heinz Florenz, chairman of the Parliament's Hunting & Conservation Intergroup.

organisation's workings. These members were John Flannery and Philip Donnelly, the former from North Tipperary and the latter from Kildare. I've known Phil for many years and we hunted on innumerable occasions together across the plains of Kildare with the now sadly defunct Curragh Foot Beagles (a pack which once enjoyed vibrant support but gradually the follower numbers declined). I've also hunted with John, on a couple of occasions, with Nenagh Foot Harriers. Both men are decent, affable people with a big knowledge of the vast subject of hunting. They were both elected new office bearers in FACE Ireland in October 2013. John, who is also associated with the Irish Foot Harriers Association and is Chair of the Hunting Association of Ireland, was appointed the new Chairman, and Phil, was appointed Director of Hunting with Hounds.

John lives in Newtown Tipperary and hunts with Nenagh Harriers every Sunday and most Thursdays (he said the pack is enjoying good sport this season and is attracting 20 to 25 followers each meet, which are good numbers for a foot pack. He pointed out that there are 110 registered foot harrier packs in Ireland, some of which use mostly harrier hounds, while many have a mixture of foxhounds and harriers. Some packs hunt the hare, many of them hunt fox.)

John and Phil told me that they are both dedicated to continuing the great hunting traditions we have here in Ireland and are confident they will both be an asset to the organisation. John pointed out that Face is made up of all the fieldsports associations in Ireland. He said FACE is the largest democratically representative body for hunters in the world and is probably one of the largest European civil society organisations. FACE Membership is open to representative national hunters' associations from all Council of Europe Member States. FACE currently counts Member Associations in 36 countries including the EU-28.

Important issues

"When FACE meets in committee," said John, "we discuss many things including how our own individual organisations are getting on, and how we can provide help for one another." Some of the most important issues which the FACE committee is currently concerned with include the policy for firearms; controlled burning of the landscape; the microchipping of dogs; and dog breeding. "If you have five or more bitches then you have to register as a breeding premises," explained John. "Most packs have more than five bitches but they are not breeding. This ruling is impractical and should only apply to commercial breeders, as is the case in Wales."

FACE has no problem with the concept of microchipping dogs, but it is concerned about the cost. "It is €15 to €25 to microchip a dog," said John, "which is costly for people with packs of dogs. We would like to see a situation where ordinary people are trained to insert the microchips themselves, rather than the vets. Ordinary people could do this work but the vets would like to hold onto it as it is money in their pockets."

Some people in government would like to ban the use of semi automatic shotguns in this country, which would cause a lot of problems for duck hunters, many of whom like to use three shell semiautomatic shotguns. FACE is also concerned that new powers will be given to Gardai, which may lead to the situation where someone seeking a gun licence won't be given one if the Gardai feel there are too many firearms in the area. FACE is concerned as well about the inappropriate burning of the landscape, a lot of which is going on. Indiscriminate burning does harm to the habitat and education is needed to show people how to burn the landscape in the correct manner.

Both John and Phil pointed out that there is an enormous number of people who enjoy fieldsports in some shape or form in Ireland, but there is an ideology

pitted against fieldsports and those speaking on behalf of this ideology are likely to become more voluble and vociferous in their calls for bans on the pastimes we cherish so much. They understand only too well the necessity to counter as much as possible the negative stuff thrown against our pursuits, with positive assessments of fieldsports. "We are heavily involved in defending fieldsports on many fronts," remarked John. "This entails spending many hours in government departments fighting for what we believe in." He said the current government is relatively hunting friendly, in that it doesn't have the meddling instincts of other governments, nor of the Fianna Fáil / Green government that preceded it which banned the Ward Union Hunt from chasing deer. "While this government is reasonably hunting friendly," he commented, "Fine Gael still haven't repealed the ban on the Ward Union Hunt, something which was an election promise."

Phil attended a worthwhile FACE event in Brussels last October which went under the banner of the International Union of Hunting with Hounds. He said this hounds-focussed programme included a meeting with an EU MEP who is well disposed towards fieldsports, a day's stag hunting in Compiègne, and a tour of war cemeteries. "It was a very enjoyable and very useful four day programme of events," he said, "during which we met counterparts, shared information and discussed the issues facing hunting." He is the FACE Director of Hunting with Hounds lives in Clane, Kildare and started hunting 15 years ago when he became intrigued with the sport of beagling and began hunting with the Curragh Foot. These days he regularly hunts on foot with the West Wicklow Foxhounds.

"FACE is very important," he said, "because it means we have a lobbying voice in Brussels on behalf of all fieldsports, a lobbying voice which will be on the lookout for any suggestion of anti-hunting legislation, a lobbying

voice which deals with politicians and civil servants, who have a habit of trivialising the pursuits we love and going with whatever is politically correct. FACE is a watchdog and in the world we live in it is a very necessary watchdog. And the future could bring greater challenges. A significant number of left of centre TDs have declared they are against fieldsports. It's fair to say that in the past, fieldsports organisations weren't very good at fighting their corner. They wanted to lead a quiet life and not tackle those movements which were against their pursuits. That has changed and hunting people are very aware now that they need to stand up for their pursuits." He added that FACE Ireland's affiliate members include the NARGC, The Irish Hawking Club, FISSTA, Countryside Alliance Ireland (IGPA), The Wild Deer Association of Ireland, The Irish Coursing Club, The Irish Deer Society, The IMFHA, The IMHA, The IFHA, The IMBA, The IMMA, and WUH.

FACE is an evidence-based organisation

In its publicity material FACE states that it's an evidence-based organisation, which means that technical expertise and the insights they give both hunters and policy makers are at the core of its work. FACE Members meet regularly, through either technical or regional gatherings as well as at the annual Spring FACE Members' Meeting and Autumn General Assembly. 'These meetings,' states the FACE website, 'centre around a fully-packed agenda where Members discuss and agree on actions to be taken regarding the different topics to be addressed – the principles of subsidiarity and solidarity are always present. The FACE Team is based in Brussels and makes up the Secretariat, representing the interests of its Members and 7 million hunters every day and providing a central information point for both hunters and policy makers.'

FACE was established in 1977 by a few national hunting associations from

nine EEC countries - Ireland was one of the founding members - who realised the need to open dialogue and represent their shared expertise and interests in the emerging Birds Directive (1979). Baron Gilbert de Turkheim who is from Alsace in France is the current President. He will retire in September 2015 having served for 12 years - longer than any previous President.

The FACE website also interestingly points out that throughout Europe there exists different hunting methods, traditions and cultures which impart a richness to our common heritage. 'FACE supports the various legal hunting methods, traditions and cultures in Europe. These include the International Union of Hunting with Hounds, the European Bowhunters' Federation, the International Association for Falconry and the Conservation of Birds of Prey and the European Association of Traditional Hunters.'

In a 2003 article Baron De Turkheim wrote that hunters' passion for hunting is, more than anything else, a love of the natural world. "FACE's reputation," he said, 'must continue to grow in order to support this noble art, in harmony with nature, which we all so passionately love.'

One contributor in a FACE booklet wrote that hunting is an occasion for enjoyment and good fellowship. Another contributor in the same booklet

lamented what he called our 'Disney view of the animal kingdom', a view which had increased as our society became more high-tech and urbanised.

Former President of FACE, Pierre Daillant, made the really important point in an article that despite the wide variety of hunting activities across Europe, there are similarities between all hunters of whatever hue. These similarities include 'a shared passion for game and hunting, camaraderie, social events, respect for the quarry and so on. This common background ensured that, although the hunters on the surface appeared to be quite different, they could together successfully establish FACE.'

Pierre Daillant said he understood how some hunters felt that sometimes FACE is not doing enough to support them 'but they should ask themselves what hunting would be like in their countries if FACE had not intervened at a European level.' Despite the many difficulties he was convinced that future generations will still be hunting, thanks to FACE's excellent work.

Indeed, FACE is a very worthwhile organisation which is doing important work; and it is important that Ireland is part of this group, because future challenges are bound to arise, and when that happens we will need the expertise of FACE to defend the pastimes we so greatly love, the pastimes which we have a passion for.



Beagling in Kildare - Philip Donnelly, Director, Hunting with Hounds, FACE Ireland.

A photograph of a man in camouflage hunting gear, including a beanie and gloves, kneeling in a field next to a dead deer. He is holding a rifle. The deer is lying on its side, and the man is looking at it. The background is a grassy field with some trees and bushes.

Ethics of Long-Distance Deer Hunting

Young Fallow male shot at 60 metres.

Ask deer hunters about any long-distance shots they have taken and the replies will be enlightening. While most will acknowledge that the majority of hunting shots are taken at 100 metres or less, there's always the few that will stretch the bounds of credulity. A recent hunt filmed in Eastern Europe showing a deer being shot at a distance of 900 metres has become the object of much critical comment in European hunting circles. Fortunately, similar stories of derring-do from hunters who consider themselves expert long-distance marksmen are the exception rather than the rule.

The film clip of the 900 metre shot was not by any means a one-off event. The individuals involved specialise in this form of shooting/hunting on a regular basis, although only killing shots were shown. The difficulty that ethical hunters have with this form of shooting is that it is simply that – a form of shooting. It is not ethical hunting. Despite using ultra-modern sighting equipment that can calculate distance, decide wind settings, varying light conditions and other scientific aids, too many variables still exist that could result in a miss, or worse, a wounded animal - the hunter's worst nightmare. It wouldn't be unreasonable to describe this activity as sniping or target practice. Hunting, it definitely is not! While all the shots on live animals

depicted showed clean kills – one can but wonder how much footage of complete misses and wounded animals was omitted.

I recall the difficulties in competition shooting, placing shots on a target 1000 yards away with centre-fire match rifles specifically built for long range accuracy and fitted with aperture sights. Wind flags plus a companion with spotting 'scope to call the hits helped enormously in making necessary sight adjustments that finally dropped the bullet on target. The operative word here is "dropped," because at that distance sight settings necessarily sent the round downrange in an upward curve, literally dropping it onto the target. That's assuming a cross-wind, shooter error or another reason

didn't enter the equation to disrupt an accurate shot.

When - and when not - to take a shot

While the latest gadgetry in telescopic sights will eliminate most or all of the guesswork from long shots, the principles of ethical hunting cannot be overlooked. The main objective in hunting is to take the quarry with one clean killing shot. Experienced stalkers know when to take a shot - and more importantly when not to take it. Condition, age, sex etc are herd-management issues to be quickly determined in advance of any shooting. How anyone can decide these and what may or may not be a clean killing shot at a distance of 900



Sika Deer, much too close to each other for a safe shot.



Larry Taaffe, Stephen Dunn and the author at a Fallow cull (the Irish contingent at the Zeiss Seminar in Germany last September).

metres is beyond rationale.

In the days when the Irish Deer Society ran Hunting Courses for deerstalkers, major emphasis was always placed on safety, ethical hunting and marksmanship. A shooting test was included in the course, designed to acquaint hunters with their firearm's capability at varying distances - a distance that never exceeded 200 yards. This was considered to be most likely the longest shot taken in a forest or open hill scenario. In my opinion it still is, although colleagues and I occasionally practice shooting at 300 yards to remain familiar with our firearms' overall performance.

At the Zeiss Long Range Rifle Shooting Seminar in Germany last September, all test-firing was carried out at 100 and 300 metres. Obviously 300 metres is regarded by one of the world's leading telescopic sight manufacturers as the optimum for normal hunting shots. Others will claim that modern bullet design and higher muzzle velocity will deliver a round faster, further and more accurately than heretofore. They are possibly right - if it's a bright, windless day, and all the other permutations involved behave perfectly. Using this latest technically advanced ammunition over long distances on paper targets or metal plates is great fun - but should it be used on live animals? I don't think so. Hunting should be about getting in as close as possible to take the shot and the closer the better.

Important issues

The old Deer Society Course stressed other ethical aspects of hunting e.g. ascertaining nearby branches won't deflect the shot, a satisfactory back-stop exists, a second animal is not behind the target animal or even close enough to be hit by an exiting bullet. The most important issues centred on human movement or habitation in the hinterland, hill-walkers unexpectedly appearing over a horizon or farm animals wandering into view. One of the on-screen visuals depicted three



A safe backdrop prevents shots straying.

deer in the foreground with two bungalows away in the distance, but directly behind those animals. The audience was then asked which deer should be shot first. Having conducted the safety/marksman/ ballistics section of the IDS Course for very many years I'm pleased to be able to report that no-one ever fell for that piece of subterfuge. The collective response was

to loudly point out the dwelling-houses in the background.

The 900 metre shooters may or may not have taken into account the danger to humans or other animal species that could have unexpectedly appeared from the forest area at which they were shooting. The shots were being fired from a hill overlooking a small gap in a forest and electricity pylons plus a

public road were in full view below, as the land swept away towards the trees and that gap. A rifle on a bi-pod which covered the tiny target area was fitted with an expensive electronic 'scope containing all the latest gadgets. In expert hands and barring the unexpected, it probably would do all that was asked of it – but is that ethical hunting?



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Politicians – country sports credentials examined

Irish Country Sports and Country Life is very strictly ‘apolitical.’ We only get ‘political’ when there are threats to our sports or the environment and politicians need to be lobbied. It is reassuring that when this is necessary we can expect a good hearing and some action.



Championing country sports - Jim Shannon MP receives the the inaugural Major William Brownlow Trophy from Eveleigh Brownlow.

Over the years, we have published a number of political interviews usually with Minsters of the Environment from a countrysports perspective. With the election season looming we will be pleased to chat to politicians from all the major parties, but first we spoke to well known local MP Jim Shannon.

Mr Shannon's efforts to speak out on behalf of country sports was recognised by us awarding him the inaugural Major William Brownlow

Trophy for the person who had done most to promote and defend countrysports. Since then, such doughty country sports defenders such as Des Crofton (NARGC), Noel Carr (FISSTA) and the late John Shaw Brown have been recipients.

Some politicians actively enjoy countrysports and they often do a remarkable job on our behalf at Stormont and Westminster or the Dail. Irish Country Sports & County Life has highlighted the impact of political

developments and when necessary has spoken out on our readers' behalf.

We wanted to learn more about their countrysports credentials, so we began by talking to Jim Shannon, MP for Strangford, a keen shooting enthusiast who speaks out in favour of hunting, shooting and fishing.

Away from politics, Jim loves nothing more than a day's shooting, while at Westminster he frequently raises the subject of county sports. Nearer home, he is active in



Pictured at Ballynahinch Harvest and Country Living Festival - Jim Shannon MP alongside Margaret Ritchie MP and Cllr Terry Andrews and Cllr Billy Walker representing Down District Council

supporting local shoots and country sport events throughout the year. He is an active member of the APPG on shooting sports and works in close co-operation with BASC, Countryside Alliance and the Northern Ireland Gun Trade Association. Jim also keeps close contact with local gun clubs around the constituency, such as Carrowdore and Comber.

Jim says: "This helps me stay in touch and keep up to date with any changes that are going on within the sport locally. In turn, this allows me to raise questions in Westminster, often on shooting sports and country sports and the way in which they can be encouraged and improved upon working within the legislation that exists."

He is also a keen conservationist. On his family farm he is always trying to think of new ways to promote and conserve the natural habitat for animals and birds, planting 3000 trees on the land, creating two duck ponds and maintaining the surrounding hedgerows: "Not only does this preserve the habitat that's already there, but it encourages new habitats

as well," he says. In fact, Mr Shannon has spoken of the return of the 'yellow buntings' and birds of prey in recent years and there is no doubt that this is because of his tireless work on the farm. He has also spoken of the large number of rabbits and badgers on his farm, again this number has increased in recent years.

"Each year, I hold a 'mini shoot' on my land and this has proven to be a huge success. I think conservation must go hand in hand with shooting, we must get the balance between the two, this means that people who want to conserve can do so and people who want to shoot can do so. However for me, you simply cannot have one without the other."

Spoken out extensively

Jim Shannon has had the family farm since 1979 but unfortunately, because of his Dad's illness, he was unable to run it and his neighbours now run it for him. This has given him first-hand experience of dairy, sheep and cereal farming and this is another reason why he is passionate about helping farmers. "I constantly want to

ensure that EU legislation doesn't impinge unfairly on farmers, strangling them and preventing them from achieving their full potential. In the past year, he has spoken extensively about the difficulties that fishermen and farmers face, particularly dairy farmers in Northern Ireland: "I'm constantly trying to ensure that Northern Ireland and Strangford is on the map in Westminster and when it comes to farming and fishing, Jim is keen to show the way in which NI differs from the rest of the United Kingdom and the ways in which it is similar in the hope that more can be done to help our farmers and fishermen and the EU red tape doesn't hamper them any further."

Shooting and country sports run in the family with Jim's sons also sharing in their Dad's passion for the various sports. This is something that he says he will continue to work hard for at Westminster with such a large fishing and farming community in Strangford and with Jim's own personal interests, they are subjects often raised and highlighted in London.

Ignite the imagination

Looking inside the covers of field sports books

I've decided for once to spare you my usual ramblings of ferrets, lurchers and longnets. Instead, I thought we would have a look from another angle at field sports which for me is as enjoyable as the sport itself. It has been, for most of my life a serious addiction, both costly and time consuming. My behaviour over the years has become secretive and if I happen to be on holidays or away for a day or two I find somewhere to get my fix, slip it (or them) into a jacket pocket and always quote half the price when my better half enquires! But what exactly am I talking about? You may have guessed — books of course.

Books really have been special to me all my life; I love nothing more than an early morning in the city during the summer, a gallon of coffee and a good book store. I'm not talking about any general bookshop of course, I'm talking about the ones you find down a side street with dirty windows and a man with a long grey beard behind the counter, who doesn't even look up when you go in the door. These special places are a less familiar sight nowadays, some seemingly hanging on by a thread, a sign of the internet's downloading age.

But by the same token, some of these stores have seen a revival due to the internet. Some I visited in London and Edinburgh last summer actually had huge piles of books wrapped and ready for posting after being sold on a website, so with a little hope the days

of locking the door on the last of the bookstores won't come. I would certainly miss spending an hour or two in a musty little side street shop packed to the roof with books on every subject imaginable.

It's not any old books that interest me though. What I search for is not what you can find in the major chains, oh no! The works I hunt down would raise a few too many eyebrows in high street shop. Take for example the classic 19th Century work by L.C.R Cameron, 'Minor Field Sports.' A quick glance through the subjects covered include: hawking insects with jackdaws, beetle fighting, millipede racing, netting sparrows, stoat hunting and hedgehog finding to name but a few. I have read the book endless times and never tire of it such is Cameron's enthusiasm for some subjects that today would be somewhat controversial.

A military man (a common background among sporting writers) his full and correct name was Ludovick Charles Richard Duncombe-Jewell, but perhaps for simplicity he wrote under L.C.R Cameron. Authoring eight works in total, with five being of a countryside or hunting nature, Camerons 'Minor Field Sports' with its descriptions and instructions for badger hunting by moonlight, pike snigging and viper killing has a place among my favourite books of all time. It sings of a time that is long gone with all the joys and freedoms of the countryside gone with

it. Fortunately, unlike the times it was written, Cameron's unique classic is here to stay.

'Memoirs of a Gamekeeper' published in 1954 is so much more than the title suggests. It's the true story of a tough, clever, determined man spanning over 80 years who was the head Keeper on the Earl of Iveagh's Elveden estate during the first World War. But fear not, there are no stories of gin trapping foxes and chasing poachers by moonlight, *Memoirs of a Gamekeeper* is a true, exciting story of an astounding estate headed by an astounding man, during an astounding golden era of shooting. There are no romantic tales here and I loved the genuine honesty and sincerity in the writing. All too often these types of books are heavily expanded versions of the truth with chapters of romantic, poacher chasing nostalgia thrown in for good measure. Chapters such as Great Shots, Shooting Technique and Rabbits at Elveden really struck a chord with me, making me wish I could box up my ferrets and spend a day on the 'Sugar Loaf' with the man himself. Their tally of rabbits shot 'aside' for one season was a humble 86500. You did read that correctly.

A lurcher book, is usually written by a lurcher person. But not so Andrew Simpson, as his fantastic work 'Rebecca the Lurcher' 1973 tells the story of a man and his first dog, a lurcher called Rebecca. Andrew



Hours of pleasure for the country sports enthusiast.

struggles with Rebecca, a lively young assumed Deerhound cross, and Rebecca struggles with Andrew, an overworked, stressed and initially non hunting man. Their strong personalities collide, both working to outdo the other until Rebecca realises she can hunt, and so does Andrew! The story is a magical tale, more so as it is not written by a lurcher person of the typical fashion, but takes us on the journey of becoming one alongside Rebecca who no matter what she does, will always win heart.

Now for a military man, Peter Hawker, who shot 14 snipe out of 15 shots with a flintlock, brought down 20 curlews with one shot, and borrowed a gun on the edge of town to shoot a

mallard he saw drop into a pond! His 'Instructions to young sportsmen in all that relates to guns and shooting' followed up by 'The Diary of Colonel Peter Hawker,' edited by Sir Ralph Payne Galloway, are two works that no sporting enthusiast should be missing from their bookshelves.

Works that no sporting enthusiast should miss

The Colonel's personal diaries make fantastic reading, barely a day passes when he doesn't shoot, and barely anything missed his shot regardless of what it was. Quite obviously there was no quarry list in his day and everything from ducks, swans, herons, cormorants,

fieldfares, sandpipers much more were fair game. Many of the birds he shoots I had never heard of and even now I often have to look up a species to see what it is. I always enjoyed his attitude in the book, nothing was beyond shooting or catching, and no ground was out of bounds! He told of shooting a brace of hares in a Lord's front garden and had to hide in the hedge so as not to be caught; he snared trout while fighting ducks and most of all led a life that any shooting man would be envious of. Colonel Hawker's diaries, and his Instructions to Young Sportsmen are two genuine classics that no sportsman should be without.

Brian Vezey Fitzgerald was a prolific

author on countryside matters, naturalist, broadcaster, journalist and editor of the Field Magazine from 1938 – 1946. His 1948 work, 'It's My Delight' is an account of poaching through the ages, types of poachers and notes on poaching. Further chapters include 'To Hunt the Hare,' 'More Ways than One,' and 'Still More Ways.'

It seems that Vezezy knew a lot about netting partridges, snaring rabbits and catching hares on a full moon. The book is a definite top five for me, a one of a kind classic and a book that would warm the heart of any dog loving, hedge creeping countryman. Packed with poems & illustrated by none other than Denys Watkins-Pitchford, or 'BB' also a phenomenal author of almost 60 books on countryside matters, each and every one of them a classic in its own right. The work of 'BB' would require an article on its own and its one I may well come back to in the future.

Something perhaps for the working dog or lurcher enthusiast?

The books I have mentioned were written before I was even born, so what about something a little more modern, something perhaps for the working dog or lurcher enthusiast? With his ground breaking first book published in 2000, Jonathan Darcy broke the mould and set a standard for working dog publications not seen previously. Prior to Darcy's 'Extreme Lurcher Work' (which has now risen in value ten fold since its publication) working dog publications were of a simple nature. The static, usually black and white photos without much else to excite the reader was as good as it got.

Darcy's book became established as fantastic quality working dog publications, well written, well rounded and always complete with quality photographs of deep digs and high speed lurcher work from genuine working dogs and men when they published their next ground breaker 'The Hare and the swift Hound.' This is nothing short of an absolutely

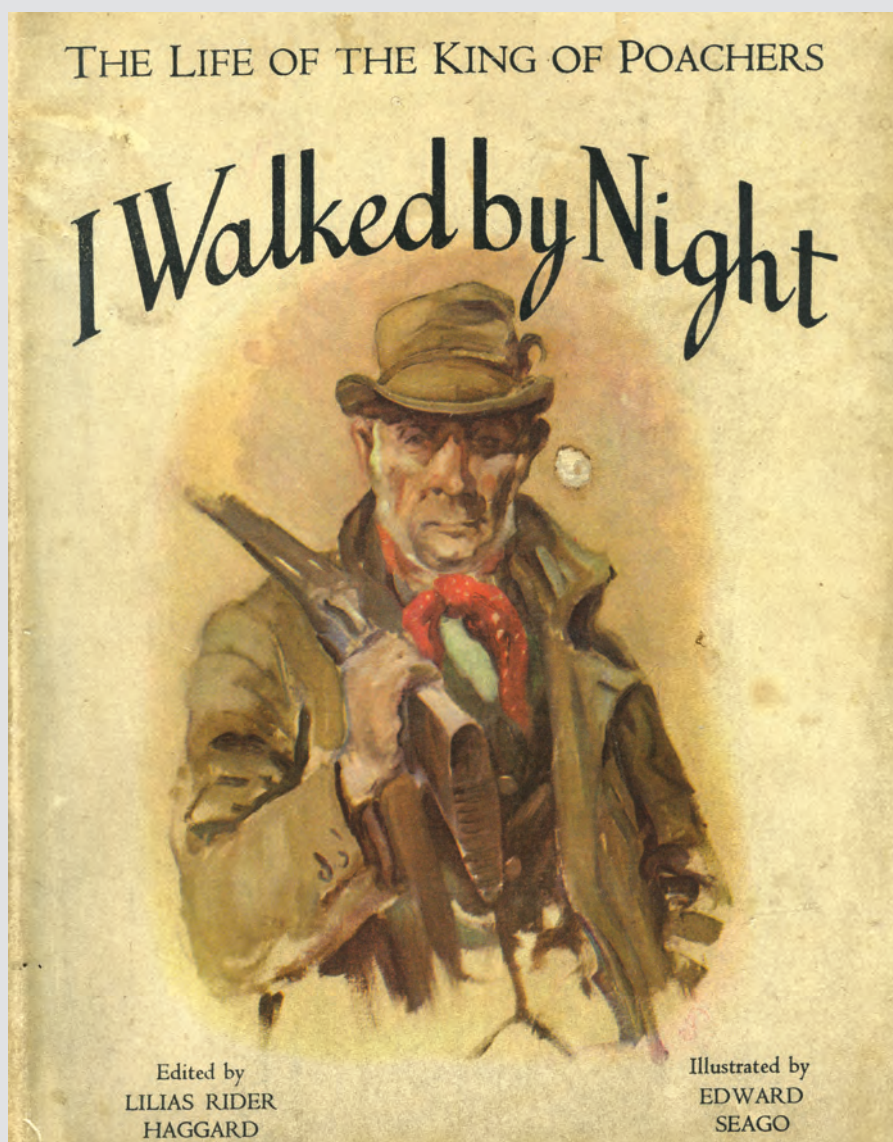
outstanding work. Several years in the making, it's a large coffee table book packed with some of the finest quality and action packed coursing photographs ever taken. Its limited edition print run sold out within days and as soon as I received my own copy I bought another to store away - I knew it was a good'n!

Another lurcher orientated author, and in my opinion one of the best on the subject of lurchers is Phil Lloyd. With a career spanning several decades, Lloyd has forgotten more about working lurchers than most of us will ever know! He wrote a famously popular column for the Shooting News (Countrymans Weekly) during the 80s and produced and starred in several of his own rabbit catching productions known as Coney Catcher. 'A Moucher's Tale' was some of his best and most popular work.

Followed up by 'Coney Catcher,

More Moucher's Tales' published in 2011, it remains one of my favourite works, packed with fantastic anecdotes and brilliant photographs from a writer who has been there and done it all. Lloyd has a unique way with words and it is a shame that he has not published more.

So that's it, a quick look at some of the books that I have really enjoyed. It has not been an easy job, my shelves run long and deep and I have enjoyed every book on it in some way or another. I haven't had much shooting or lurcher work over the last few days as I write as I am pretty much house bound due to a surprise burst of snow. It came, it went and then came back again, so what better opportunity to stoke the fire, let the dogs in, take something down from the bookshelves and ignite the imagination.



A very enjoyable 'classic' read.

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TERRIER, LURCHER AND WHIPPET SHOW ROUNDUP

The Irish Lurcher, Terrier and Whippet Clubs Christmas Dog Show

A great day was had at the Irish Lurcher, Terrier, and Whippet Christmas dog Show, held at the Bannvale House Hotel Gilford, Banbridge, Co Down Saturday 20th December. Some sore heads and sore feet from dancing afterwards, but a great night's fun and frolics was had by all.

Congratulations to Nicky Robinson who won Overall and Best in show with her beautiful Whippet, and a Big Congratulations to all the other worthy winners. The Robinson, Fyffe and McElwaine household took home some

winnings between them. There was a great turnout and Bannvale House Hotel was a superb venue for this wonderful festive treat.

The Club made some presentations by Dessie Mackin on behalf of the club. The first presentation was made to myself for my write-ups, photographs, and general contribution to all shows and of which I am truly honoured, grateful and thankful. The 2nd and 3rd presentations were made to Deirdre McCoy and Billy Harpur for their photographic contributions to dog shows during the year.

As usual each year this show keeps a special award for 'Sports Person of the Year' to Mickey Quinn from Lurgan, Co Armagh. Mickey has country sports in his blood, hunts in the winter and shows in the summer.

The man of the day was Dessie Mackin, who worked tirelessly along with the club chairman and club committee to make the show a roaring success and £250 will be going to the Macmillan Cancer Nurses.

And finally thanks to all our show supporters and I look forward to meeting up with you all again in 2015.

Some of the top dogs



(Left)
Nicky Robinson
with her
Whippet
Barney won
Overall and
Best in Show.



(Right)
Janet Duke
with Oscar won
Best Whippet
Pup and Best in
Show.



Rose McCoy with Diego won the Veteran Class.



Luke Morrow won Best Lurcher and Rose McCoy with Diego Reserve.

Terrier, Lurcher & Whippet Show Calendar for 2015

Date	Organising Club	Venue
Saturday 14th March	The Combined Clubs Canine Race Day and Dog Show	Lawrencetown (on the Banbridge Road).
Sunday 29th March	Tommy Cullen's Show Dog Show and Race Day	Baltinglass
Sunday 12th April	NILRC Show and Race Day	Field Of Dreams, Guladuff, Maghera
Saturday 25th April	Dessie Mackin's Lurcher, Terrier, Whippet and Strong Dog Show,	Laurencetown,
Sunday 26th April	The Sporting Whippet Club of NI,	Dunsilly Kennells, Dunsilly
Sunday 10th May	Tom Barry's Dog Show and Raceday	Feaghbridge Race Track, Coalisland.
Sunday 17th May	Sporting Whippet Club of NI.	Dunsilly Kennells, Dunsilly
Sunday 24th May	Florence Court Dog Show.	Florence Court, Enniskillen
Sunday 31st May	Braid Valley Lurcher Show and Raceday.	
Sunday 31st May	All Ireland Lurcher /Whippet /and Terrier Club Dog Show. (Proceeds will go to Macmillan)	
Saturday 6th June (racing) & Sunday 7th (showing and high jump)	NI Countrysports Fair,	Scarvagh House, Scarva, Banbridge.
Sunday 21st June	Sporting Whippet Club of NI.	Dunsilly Kennells, Dunsilly
Sunday 21st June	Dungarvan Farmers Hunt Dog Show.	
Saturday 27th June	28th ANNUAL ALL IRELAND RACING CHAMPIONSHIPS for Terriers, Whippets & Lurchers Plus the RED MILLS Master McGrath Challenge	The Irish Game Fair, Shanes Castle, Antrim
Sunday 28th June	28th ANNUAL ALL IRELAND SHOW CHAMPIONSHIPS for Terriers, Whippets & Lurchers & the FEEDWELL Five Nations Whippet Championships organized with funds to the IWTF	The Irish Game Fair, Shanes Castle, Antrim
Sunday 19th July	The Sporting Whippet Club of NI, 4th Show at	Dunsilly Kennells, Dunsilly.
Sunday 19th July	The Westmeath Working Terrier & Lurcher Club's annual Working Terrier Dog Show	Moate, Co Westmeath (in aid of IWTF)
Saturday 1st August	Gene Gallagher's Show	Grange, Co Sligo
Saturday 8th August	Tullyish Working Terrier Club	
Sunday 9th August	The Sporting Whippet NI,	Dunsilly Kennells, Dunsilly.
Sunday 16th August	North West Terrier Lurcher and Whippet Club Dog Show 32 Counties Champion of Champions Show and Raceday	Paddy O'Neill's Farm, Killynaght Rd, Artigarvan Strabane Co. Tyrone BT82 0HT
Saturday 22nd August	Sporting Whippet Club of NI Charity Dog Show for Terriers, Lurchers, Whippets and Strong Dogs	Moyallan, Portadown
Saturday 29th August	ROI Terrier, Lurcher & Whippet Racing Championships.	The Irish Game and Country Fair, Birr Castle, Co Offaly
Sunday 30th August	ROI Terrier, Lurcher & Whippet Show Championships/RED MILLS Five Nations Terrier & Lurcher Championships	The Irish Game and Country Fair, Birr Castle, Co Offaly
Sunday 13th September	The Sporting Whippet Club and end of year BBQ.	



International Snipe Hawking

You will hear falconers say 'it's all about the stoop.'

Anyone with a sharp eye on the skies above the midlands of Ireland in the last week of October may have observed more than the usual activity of high flying falcons repeatedly descending at great speeds to fast moving targets. If they looked a little harder they may have noticed the entourage of excited dogs and people beneath. It was indeed, members and guests of the Irish Hawking Club at the International Snipe Hawking Field meet held between the 27th and 31st of October.

Up to 50 guests from all over Europe attended this high flying event that saw over a dozen trained Falcons pit their skills against one of the world's most evasive game birds; the common snipe. The official hotel of the event was the

Moyvalley Hotel in Co. Kildare, where the guests received an incredibly warm Irish welcome. The falcons were flown on the raised bogs of the midlands, where Snipe are plentiful and there is little cover to impede the Falcon's flight. The male peregrine known as a 'tiercel' is the most popular falcon flown and for good reason as there's very few Falcons that can match it for the essential combination of speed and manoeuvrability required to outwit the snipe's renowned jink.

At the close of the 5-day event, with well over 80 spectacular flights, the contents of the week's game bag would have disappointed a brace of shooters at the close of a single day, but it was more than sufficient to provide great sport for the falconers, dog handlers,

cadgers (falconry term for one who carries falcons) and spectators that bog trotted their way through the week for their fix of falcon fever.

As one of the oldest field sports, falconry has enthralled a particular breed of sportsperson for many thousand years. 'It's all about the stoop,' you will hear most falconers say. The 'stoop' is where the falcon accelerates downwards at incredible speeds in pursuit of its prey.

An opportunity to fly and put quarry beneath them

One of the oldest falcons flying during the week made the whole affair seem very easy. At 13 years old, he's the protégé of Martin Brereton, who has provided him with the essential

Falcons on cadge.





Jim Dalton (left) and Robert Hutchinson.

ingredients that allowed him to reach his potential and become the guiding light of this extremely challenging branch of Falconry. There are many classical and well-reviewed books dating from several hundred years to the modern era that prescribe techniques for successful Falconry. Martin however is a practical man and believes that as Falcons haven't yet learned to read, he'll provide them with the two key components he knows will make them successful – the opportunity to fly and to put quarry regularly beneath them. Martin has provided these elements for over a dozen seasons and there's very few trained Falcons in the world that can match this tiercel's prowess.

Grouse are the classic quarry of trained Falcons in many countries with Scotland being a prime example. Although Ireland's moorlands are as good as many of their Scottish counterparts, the management leaves a lot to be desired and this is mainly due to the fragmentation and confusion over ownership. As a result, the two key

factors required to increase the population of grouse; predator control and heather management, are sadly neglected. Falcons need a lot of opportunities on a quarry to get it right and if there's few grouse to begin with

along with the season being so short in Ireland, there is insufficient time to get a falcon confident and fit enough to have any reasonable level of success. This is one of the main reasons that Irish falconers turned towards a more sustainable quarry.

A specialised form of falconry

The season on Snipe runs for five months of the year and although they don't arrive in serious numbers till the end of October, there is ample time to get Falcons in shape after the summer moult to provide good sport for at least three months of the year. Snipe hawking is a specialised form of falconry requiring the whole team including dog, Falcon and Falconer to put in 100% commitment. Snipe must first be located by the pointing dog before the Falcon is unhooded and sent skywards. The falcon will then circle the skies above the team until it reaches the right pitch (height) and position before the dog is sent in to flush. When it goes right, the whole sequence is poetry in motion.

Due to airline restrictions on transporting birds, travelling by ferry is currently the only option for visiting Falconers to come to Ireland. Vincent



Kevin Marron explains the flight.



Poised for flight - Vincent Ducrot (left) and Martin Brereton.

Ducrot, a French falconer travelled 36 hours from the south of France for the opportunity to fly his Falcon on our unique raised bogs and by the end of day one, the memory of his journey had faded into the Sphagnum mosses of the bog. The sport experienced during the week was world class and our overseas guests were suitably impressed by our unique brand of falconry with many promising to return.

In this fast world we live in where ancient crafts and customs fall daily by the wayside being consumed by a virtual world of consumerism and a disengagement from nature, it's comforting to know that the binding relationship between man and bird which is the art of Falconry, passed down and practiced for thousands of years is still alive in Ireland and currently witnessing a minor golden age.



Spectators keeping watch on a falcon's flight.



The gallery crossing the bog.

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or email: walteramcneill@hotmail.com
or ian@woolfengineering.com

Clay Pigeon Shooting Notes



A frosty morning on the line.

With the clay pigeon season just getting started the down the line (DTL) shooters have had a few opportunities before Christmas and many of the senior shooters are fighting out for the top spot. Darren Bell put his stamp on the scoresheet shooting two 100/300s in

the first two outings and another 99/297 on his third shoot gives the rest of the senior team something to chase after.

In December, there were not as many registered shoots going on being a time to relax and have some fun shooting for turkeys and other various prizes. In

some cases funds were raised for local charities - there could be in the excess of £20,000 every year which is great coming from the sport of shooting.

The sporting shooters had a great first Christmas shoot at Hillsborough CPC with a turkey for the winners of



A winning double at Ballyvea.



Geoff Dale shoots in style.



Focused on the clay target to come.

every class. Great shooting was to be expected from the shooters, as the club had set the course up for it to be shot 50 straight but no one did. William Caroon came close shooting a big 48/50 on his first card, so setting the pace for everyone. Then Jim Burns, on top form, dropped in a card with 48 /50 so took them to a shoot off where Jim came out top.

Burren & Warrenpoint Gun Club held their Christmas shoot on 13th December, a great wee day for the DTL men to shoot for more prizes with lots of tea, coffee and food laid on. There were 25 lines shot and only 8 men got straight scores so it came down to a shoot-off where Lenard Graham came out on top. There was a 12 bird pool stand shot alongside the main shoot but no one shot it straight although four shot 11/12 meaning another shoot off and club member Wesley Park came out the winner.

This makes the perfect view.



Pictured at Ballydugan Sporting.

Thatch clay target club, December club shoot was the last of 2014. We had a good turnout of 32 shooters on what was a cool and sometimes damp day. In the DTL, there were five straights from the 20 lines, with Davy Mawhinney taking the honours after the shoot off. The pool stand proved quite tricky, a speedy right to left crosser, with a slow left to right settler on report. At the end only one shooter, Darren Evans, managed 12x12 to take the win here.

Thatch Clay Target Club is set in fantastic area up in Broughshane in the Slemish hills, The club does fantastic work for anyone wanting to learn how to shoot and Raymond Clyde takes a lot of time out to teach old and young shooters proper gun handling and how to improve their shooting skills up to team level. The friendly club is very well set out for DTL / ABT with two good covered layouts, they shoot the first Saturday of the month and make

welcome new faces calling in for a shot or just a cup of tea and a yarn.

On the same day, a sporting 50 bird shoot held at Banbridge Clay Pigeon Club with some great scores though the classes, but yet again it was Jim Burns who came out on top with 49/50 to take high gun for the fourth time in a row. Kyle Dunlop took his first ever class win in class C with a great score of 42/50. It's great to see new faces coming in to the sport and getting a class win for the first time is something to remember.

Thatch Clay Target Club saw an excellent turnout of 60 shooters for its annual Boxing Day Masonic Charities Shoot, with proceeds this year going to Barbour Ward of The Royal Victoria Hospital. The format was 15 DTL re-entry and a 12 target pool stand. After 33 lines of DTL, we had straights from, Davy Jackson, Keith Armour, Darren Evans, Sam Fleck, Hubert Gilmore and

A fine shot at Derryboye.



Gordon Wilson. In the single barrel shoot-off Davy nailed another straight to take the win, very closely followed by Hubert with 14 (he missed his 15th

target), and Darren and Keith with 13 apiece In the pool stand big Darren took the win with the only 12x12, which was excellent shooting, for as one

shooter remarked, 'they weren't that handy.' At the end of play, when shoot, raffle, food and donations were tallied up, £800 was raised, so a massive 'Thank You' to all who supported this event, and as I have said before, shooters really are a generous lot.

Ballyvea Gun Club raised £1820 for Southern Area Hospice, Newry, a great result and thanks to everyone concerned and those who donated prizes and made financial contribution. The result of The Samuel Chambers Memorial Shield, held on 31st December saw top honours go to William Robinson, 2nd Hugh Forsythe, 3rd Gary Laffin. U/C Shield 1st Matthew McBride, 2nd John Haugh, 3rd Billy Johnston in all 35 lines with 14 in the shoot-off.

So with all the Christmas shoots over and done with this is perfect time to come along and get involved with the shooting, and I would advise everyone interested to join a club or and association and get their insurance package, or if you don't want to join a club you should seek insurance anyway with either Countryside Alliance or B.A.S.C or other such organisation. The new year is also the time to join in and start shooting for a team spot with regular shoots on most Saturdays and Sundays, and it won't be long to wait for some of the home internationals with the DTL being shot in Ireland and the ABT at Dungannon CPC, plus anyone interested in shooting OT/OSK Commonwealth Games Qualification Criteria for 2018 would need to start training now for this big event.

For help in finding a club or hearing going on in the sport of clay pigeon shooting, please contact Graham Thompson via his Facebook page Claypigeon Shooting Northern Ireland.



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ART AND ANTIQUES

Moving into spring time we are still asking ourselves what kind of year will it be on the auction scene.

Will it be boom or bust, or will it be something not unlike that which we experienced last year? Notwithstanding it all, one thing is certain: across the country we will still be attending sales, be they private house auctions which are not as frequent now as they once were, and specialised ones in set locations and ordinary auction house venues.

And the reason we will be attending is an age old one, despite the attraction of on-line sales.

We go to auctions because we want to. The sound of the auctioneer's gavel, the applause when a record bid is sealed, the dream of acquiring a 'sleeper' undiscovered by anyone else and the prospect of getting a bargain or selling one for a lucrative price all go to make the visit to an auction a must.

James O'Halloran, Managing Director of Dublin based ADAMS has high hopes for the weeks ahead: "The market for Irish art is continuing to gain momentum and prices are getting better after a torrid few years," he tells me. "It is most unusual though that our top priced lot in the past year was not a



Paul Henry's 'Early Morning in Donegal' went at €160,000 (Adams)

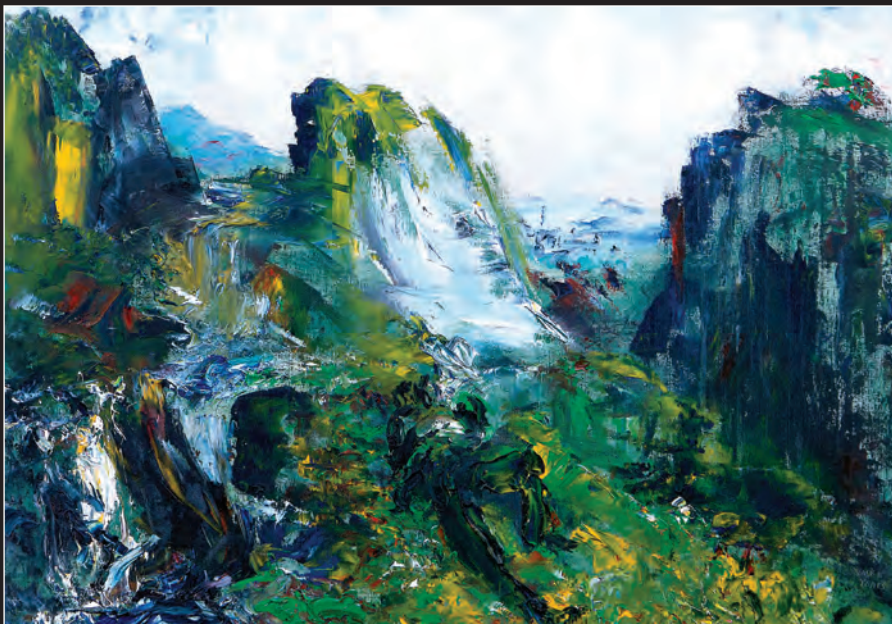
piece of Irish art but an item of Chinese art, a jade ritual vessel." Reflecting on the scene in general he adds:

"Purchasers are still circumspect however and they still look for good value even if they end up paying over the estimate.

"In our top five selling lots last year,

positions two to five were, not surprisingly, works of Irish art and the names are really the ones you would expect to see there, the blue chip artists of the 20th century. What is interesting, however, is that the demand and prices for some of Ireland's contemporary artists is continuing to increase. Works by Colin Watson, Ciaran Lennon, John Boyd, Patrick O'Reilly, Brian Vallely and Hector McDonnell all performed well last year, in contrast to the fortunes of yesteryear favourites such as William Sadler, JA O'Connor, Alexander Williams and the like. All told there is a buoyancy in the market if the performances with us are anything to go by. We recorded our highest sold rate this year when over 92% of the May art sale sold and even more recently in December when 86% sold on the night."

Daniel Clarke, who runs ROSS's, Northern Ireland's premier auction house also agrees last year has seen an improvement on other times: "Yes, I



This Jack B Yeats made €155,000 (Adams)



'Lady in Green' by John Lavery sold for €68,000 (Whyte's) This Joan Miro went for €68,000 (Whyte's)

think we have done better than in other years and we now hold very successful Irish paintings sales online every month. We also hold jewellery and watches sales too and these have proven to be quite popular."

ONLINE

While ROSS's have not staged their quarterly in-house Irish art sales for some time Daniel says they have not abandoned them: "I would not say we will not have them again but our online arts sales have been quite successful. They may have been labour intensive at the beginning, but in time you develop more efficient ways of doing things. Online we are selling around 65% of what we are offering and we are selling to all over Ireland, the United Kingdom and as far away as Russia and the United States. We are still holding our general auctions twice a week and we find the demand is still there as well."

Oliver Gormley of Gormley Fine Art which have galleries in Omagh, Belfast,

and Dublin says: "Prices are all down by about 40% over the past two years, so if you have a few pounds to spent now is a good time to buy. Auctions are doing well on works of art priced between £200 and £700 for first time buyers who are the collectors of the future. In the gallery the market is still good for good quality pieces of art. Artists realise only good work will sell. We also find now that around 70% of our business is internet related."

ADAMS

Their Christmas Irish art sale really showed how us how to end a sales year on a high with 86% of lots sold for a staggering €1.6m.

Paul Henry's 'Early Morning in Donegal' went at €160,000 while three others by this artist made €60,000, €50,000 and €36,000 illustrating once again the public popularity of this fine artist.

A Jack B Yeats made €155,000 while another from the same hand as a young

man, went for €30,000. The surprise of the sale was a watercolour 'Unloading Turf' by William Bartlett which sold for €13,000 against a high estimate of €3,000, while a portrait of Brendan Behan by Harry Kernoff sold for €3,200.

WHYTE'S

Their RDS sale in the Autumn saw a watercolour by the Spanish artist Joan Miro making €68,000 while a portrait 'Lady in Green' by John Lavery went at €30,000.

DE VERE'S

Here, another Lavery sold for €50,000 with a Dan O'Neill realising €32,000 and a Paul Henry €20,000.

CHRISTIES

Internationally renowned auction house CHRISTIES has recorded exceptional results from their Autumn British and Irish modern art sales giving one to believe that the market



Dame Barbara Hepworth's figure, Sunion which achieved £1,106,500.

they are experiencing is going from strength to strength with the Evening and Day sales achieving a combined total of £11,930,350.

The Evening sale was led by Dame Barbara Hepworth's figure, Sunion which achieved £1,106,500.

Modern British sculpture also led the Day sale with Dame Elisabeth Frink's Dog doubling its high estimate at £170,500 alongside strong prices for paintings by William Scott, Sir John Lavery, Frank Auerback and Alan David. These results follow the highest total ever achieved for Modern British and Irish Art sale in June last when the Day and Evening sales achieved £24.6m combined.

Four world records were set during the evening sale for sculptures by Dame Barbara Hepworth, Dame Elisabeth Frink and Ulsterman FE McWilliam. A painting by the artist Eric Ravilious set a record for the artist selling at £242,500.

SOTHEBY'S

Sotheby's sold a Paul Henry 'Fishing fleet, Galway' for £98,500 in their British & Irish Art sale just before Christmas. It was one of a number of strong prices achieved for an Irish

painting including Louis le Brocq's 'Sick tinker child' £266,500 and Wm Orpen's 'Portrait of Vivien St George' at £134,500.

The auction house has decided to re-introduce a stand-alone Irish art sale in London in the autumn which is another indication of confidence in this market. First held by SOTHEBY'S in the early 1990s and for a time this sale became an annual event but was dropped in 2011 due to the economic crisis and the effect it had to picture sales. It is hoped that this event will help introduce a new generation of Irish artists to collectors across a wide spectrum.

SADDENED

The Irish auction scene was saddened recently with the death of Christopher, 'Christy' Sheppard, one of the country's best known auctioneers of fine art and antiques. Mr Sheppard, who was aged 92, started business in Durrow, Co. Laois in the late 1940s and in the intervening years built a sound reputation for period Irish furniture, attracting patrons and dealers from all over Ireland, the United Kingdom and much further afield. He lived to see the auction house open a Dublin office last year.

Dame Elisabeth Frink's Dog doubling its high estimate at £170,500.



The Season

All summer we wait and plan for the new shooting season.

The grouse and deer hunters have the advantage in that they do not have to wait until November for their season to start. The rest of us have to wait. Angling and other field sports can fill in the time, but we are always watching out and marking good spots to visit when the season starts. Rearing pheasants and preparing shoots ensures that all members of Game Associations can at least look forward to a decent bit of shooting once the season opens. But, as someone once said: 'Pheasant is not the only game' or something like that.

I have done the pheasant bit and have found grey squirrels much more challenging to shoot. It's not very difficult to shoot them with a shotgun, but I use an air rifle. Squirrels might seem an easy target, but not only are they hard to kill, you can eat them and you know that they are causing damage to our native species - so win win.

A number of years ago, a friend of mine and I were asked by our local golf club if we could help do something about the squirrels as their numbers had increased and golfers were reporting that they would take chocolate bars out of any unattended golf bag. Also the number of songbirds had declined. We were told that they were brazen and tame - they certainly were not tame! But we soon saw evidence of the damage they did to the songbird population with any nest boxes having had the entrance holes chewed big enough to allow a squirrel in.

Tough creatures

We concentrated our efforts in a particular wood, which were mostly mature Scots pine trees with a few beech trees in it. On our first visits the squirrels were not aware what we were at, so some-times we got a few shots at one before it made good its escape into the ivy. They are tough creatures and even when hit hard will try to make



Grey squirrel numbers have rocketed.

cover. The skin is very tough; I shot one and heard the impact but it made it to the ivy. I waited and watched and after about twenty minutes I heard the thump of a body hitting the ground. On skinning the squirrel I found that the pellet had hit it right in the centre of the chest and was lodged just under the skin at the back of its neck, but it had made the ivy. Now no one wants to injure an animal so we resolved to only fire when we had a clear view of the head as headshots will drop the animal.

At the end of the first year we had accounted for around thirty squirrels. They very quickly learned that if we were around that they should get into cover quick so often we only get a quick glimpse as one races toward the nearest ivy. We have the advantage that the wood is used by woodpigeons to roost in too, so while waiting to spot a squirrel we might get a bonus pigeon for the pot. On occasion, I have been lining up a shot at a pigeon when a movement catches my eye and I have to switch targets to attempt to get a squirrel because that is why we are

there. I don't think we will manage to eliminate the squirrels altogether, but by removing about twenty each year we are managing to keep their numbers under control.

This year my first visit was a bit early but I needed a squirrel to make up the dishes for my annual 'Bush Tucker Night' with the cub pack I run. They always try to be horrified but somehow still devour everything I bring. My cubs know that meat does not come ready wrapped in plastic. I should explain that I start by saying that no one has to eat anything, but I give them the opportunity to try pigeon, rabbit, squirrel, winkles and limpets along with mealworms dipped in chocolate. It's always a great night and the kids love it.

The fun of shooting

I am sure all hunters enjoy that first trip of the year out just as much as I do. Standing in the woods and thinking that my boots are warm and still fit great after nearly a year. Squirrel shooting is very challenging as you are



A smart retrieve and it was in the bag.

watching constantly for the slightest movement in the treetops. A leaf falling draws your eye. The real give-away is a single branch moving as a squirrel leaps to another. If it was wind then more than one branch would move. By now, if a squirrel sees us he will leg it as fast as he can to the nearest cover. Sometimes you can get it to stop by squeaking and it will stop to look, that's your chance to shoot. Many times I have followed a squirrel running from tree to tree through the scope waiting for a clear shot only to see it vanish into a bunch of ivy. Many times we go out and spend an afternoon in the woods, we may return with an empty bag or a few pigeons having seen several squirrels but not had a shot. Anyone who shoots will relate to this. This is the fun of shooting, something I think the anti-gun brigade will never understand.

I have often been sitting quietly against a tree in the half dark and had a large bird buzz my head and land quietly close to me. At first I thought this was a pigeon but on looking through the scope I saw the stance was not right for a pigeon and watching the bird watching me, I realised that it was actually a sparrow hawk checking me out. This has happened several times in this wood. We even had a pair of buzzards check us out. Anyone who has

spent time in a hide or high seat 'still-shooting' knows that you never know what might turn up while you sit there quietly. All your senses are engaged, as squirrels root about in the leaf litter finding caches of food they buried in the autumn. You use your ears, but after several lengthy stalks through the wood looking for the source of the rustling

and finally seeing a blackbird throwing leaves about I now wait to see the squirrels.

An airgun is also a weapon with which you need to take the time to familiarise yourself. Shooting squirrels you need to know that you will hit where you aim. Shooting at steep angles into the treetops effects the trajectory of the pellet, taking your eyes from a running Squirrel means that you will lose it, for this reason we use pre-charged pneumatic air rifles which use a magazine. I did use a break-barrel one but having to look down to reload meant I lost quite a few chances.

Next time you go to your local park or golf club and see the cute grey squirrels running about remember that they are an invasive species, which has displaced much of our own red variety. And don't think that because they look tame that they are. A squirrel has bitten me and it's no joke. I have to admit that there is not a lot of meat on them, but if you invest in a vacuum packer you can freeze the squirrels until you have enough for a decent stew.



All wrapped up for bush tucker night.

All things Fanged and Beautiful

The pale light of a winter's morning washed over the frost rimed countryside.

The boy pedalled the heavy framed Raleigh bicycle along lanes hemmed in by high Hawthorns. Each hedge draped with a thousand sparkling cobwebs, finer than hand spun lace. The bicycle's three speed gearing was not sophisticated, but that mattered little in this land where hills were rare and the

horizon a level line beneath a vast sky.

Tied to the bike's crossbar was an old wooden handled spade, and slung by a leather strap from the boy's shoulder, a box containing three slumbering ferrets. Smartly dressed people passed by on their way to church, doubtless wondering what the

boy was doing at this early hour, and the meaning of the spade on the crossbar.

Turning off the lane and down a trackway shrouded by ancient oaks, the boy steered the bicycle around loose stones and pot holes, the bouncing motion waking the sharp toothed sleepers in the wooden box. The ferrets, woken from their warm straw beds within, scratched at the walls of their temporary plywood home, keen to be out and to sniff the morning air.

The uneven track finally petered out on the edge of a large barley stubble, where the boy dismounted and leant the weight of the bicycle against a weathered fence rail.

Having untied the old spade, he grasped it by its smooth worn ash shaft and, adjusting the strap of the wooden box for comfort, headed out across the field on foot, towards the warren.

Permission to go rabbiting that Sunday had been easily gained for, when asked after milking, the farmer had replied: "Rabbits? They're nowt but a bloody nuisance. Tek as many as tha' wants."

The frosted stubble crackled under foot, as the boy strode out, perspiring under his burden in spite of the chill air. The sound of church bells drifted across the fields and in his mind's eye he could see the congregation sitting on the age-worn oak pews. He knew the church well, but only attended under sufferance at Christmas and Harvest festival. Even the Vicar's best oratory bored him and he had always believed that if God were anywhere at all, it was more likely to be out here among the woods and fields than in a cold stone building that smelled of metal polish and candle wax!



The boy learned his craft well, watching his father at work.

The warren, a large sandy bowl, grown over by yellowed grass and thistles, now lay before him. Already he could see the tracks of rabbits in the frosted vegetation, and his pulse quickened in anticipation of the sport to come. If Sunday morning were for anything, it was rabbiting, and not church!

Gently placing the ferret box on the ground, he walked softly toward the bank of well used rabbit holes and dipping a hand into the pocket of his olive green, army surplus jacket, took out a home made hemp twine purse net. Carefully draping the net over the first hole, he made sure to let the mesh sagged inwards slightly, so that by the time the rabbit had bolted halfway out of the hole, the drawstrings would already be closing around it.

Moving quietly and with speed, the boy laid out another dozen nets, each one secured by a hazel peg, driven into the frigid sand by the heel of a boot. He knew well that any heavy footfall on a morning as still as this would warn his quarry below ground of danger, thus making them reluctant to bolt.

Nets laid, it was time to open the Pandora's Box of mischief, which had since leaving home that morning, housed the sleeping ferrets. Lifting the lid, the boy's nostrils were filled with the rich, sweet, aroma, of warm straw and musk. Three pairs of dark, bead-like eyes blinked in the morning light, each one surrounded by the familiar bandit's mask of the Polecat ferret. Scooping up a small, lithe, jill with his right hand and securing the lid of the box with his left, the youth approached the bank of the warren and kneeling, lifted the corner of the nearest purse net, slipping the wriggling mustelid into the mouth of the well-used burrow.

The church bells had fallen silent, for the Sunday service would now be underway.



The only sound to break the spell of the morning, a faint scratching from the remain-ing occupants of the ferret box, keen to join their comrade in the unfolding game of subterranean hide and seek. A sudden thumping noise from deep underground put the boy on alert and it was only seconds before a rabbit intent on leaving the warren with all speed, bounced about on the frost covered grass, held firm by the enveloping mess of a hemp net.

Darting to the hole, the youth replaced the net with the spare one slung over his shoulder and then gripping the rabbit by the hind legs, swiftly despatched the animal with a single blow to the back of the neck. Shaking the lifeless Coney onto the ground, the net was untangled and slung around the boy's neck, where it might be grasped with practiced ease when needed.

No sooner had he straightened, than a second rabbit bolted from its dark bastion and was again quickly and humanely dispatched. Clearly, the musky odour of the ferret working deep within the warren, had reached the

noses of its occupants, as startled rabbits began to bolt thick and fast.

The youth worked in complete silence, with the air of one who is so familiar with his occupation that it has almost become a reflex. A quick count — eighteen cooling rabbits lay upon the carpet of yellowing grass. As he worked to remove thistle stalks entangled in one of his nets, the boy became aware of the sound of singing, drifting from the grey, stone church, only two fields away. As he listened, he could clearly make out the strains of 'All Things Bright and Beautiful,' being sung with gusto, and imagined the organist bashing the keys of the wheezing pipe organ, so old that he felt sure it had witnessed Cromwell riding by!

Just then a small face with bandit mask, peered out from a nearby rabbit hole. The jill had returned! Stooping, he gathered her up and gently brushing sand from her muzzle, whispered words of approval. She had done good work this morning! The small, dark eyes, blinked again, and the little jill ferret yawned wide, displaying a delicate pink tongue and a set of gleaming, ivory white fangs.

The boy knew that nature was not always 'Bright and Beautiful', but often 'Fanged and Beautiful' as well. Perhaps not quite the title for a genteel hymn, but true all the same.

Taking his newly sharpened pen knife from his pocket, he set about the job of legging the rabbits, sliding each one onto the smooth ash spade shaft, ready for the walk back to his waiting bicycle, and the homeward journey. What looks he wondered would he receive from the congregation this time, as they went past him this time on the road on their way home, and viewed his long-eared bounty, hanging from the crossbar of his heavy framed Raleigh bicycle?

In With The New

I enjoy the start of a new year, out with the old and in with the new, a fresh chapter of life to write and new opportunities to explore, so January is always an upbeat month for me. This year has been special though because I turned fifty on the 16th. I have always had a rather sanguine approach to age and like to view the increasing years as gaining life experience and look forward to many more decades enjoying country sports.

It has been a busy shooting season; many estates reported record grouse numbers thanks to the mild summer and plentiful supply of natural food sources. Wildfowling has also seen good numbers and well fed healthy birds. Murray Glass is a local wildfowler who shoots under permit on the John Muir Country Park in East Lothian and has enjoyed a respectable season.

It was Murray's first year using decoys and he successfully attracted a variety of birds flying in from the sea and the river although the mild weather and the lack of frosts meant the geese stayed in the fields for longer than they usually do. Murray says: "I shot 6 mallard, 20 wigeon, 8 pinks and a very large greylag on Hogmanay." Sam, Murray's 10 year old son, has been on most outings apart from the full moon nights. "It's good for father and son



Sam with Murray - A special time for father and son in the field.

bonding time. It is also a different hobby and both of us enjoy the exercise, fresh air and we get to eat what I shoot" said Murray.

Gamekeepers had less testing conditions to rear birds but the milder weather made for different challenges as the birds had plenty wild food and



Murray Glass in action as the light changes.

were wandering away from drives. Mike Hardy, gamekeeper on Glen Clova, said they have had over 300mm of rain to deal with in addition to the mild temperatures.

It does feel odd going through the shooting season without (so far) having to do battle with the wintry weather. I recall many previous seasons having some hair-raising journeys to country

estates and shooting in very challenging weather conditions, wrapped up to the hilt and struggling to keep warm and dry.

Just before Christmas, I was commissioned to take photographs by a group of guns from Dubai shooting on the Berryhills beat on the Lord Mansfield Estate at Scone Palace in Perthshire. The guns were staying at the Gleneagles Hotel, and this was their first trip to Scotland and also their first pheasant shoot. The day went well, the weather was very mild and the guns got to grips very quickly with shooting and finished their day with a healthy bag of 100 pheasant and two woodcock.

The full country sports experience

As the shooting season draws to a close many of the year's other events start to take shape. Planning my diary and getting important dates listed is a priority as there are many country sport events and game fairs to attend in the year ahead. As a photographer I often get invited to talk about my work. Most of these talks take place at photographic clubs, specialist groups and business events. I use my images of shooting, fishing, deer stalking and also pictures of mouth-watering wild organic food to illustrate my work.

I talk about the importance of country sports, sharing a positive insight into a subject many have never explored. The talks are always very well received; afterwards I am inundated with questions from the



Glen Clova Keeper Mike Hardy



The magnificent Scone Palace Shoot.



Who could resist a dish of venison like this?



Breaking clays for charity.

The weekend event takes place at the Border Union Showground in Kelso and is a must for all deer stalkers and managers. The event is now in its third year and continues to expand and is full of all things stalking related.

Organiser Stevie McGeachie said: "In addition to the stands we have a full weekend of demonstrations and talks, with CIC trophy measuring, cookery, butchery, sausage making demonstrations and outdoor live tracking with scent hounds. Sponsored by Zeiss, the fair is open from 10am to 5pm with free on site parking, admission is only £10 and children under 16 admitted free.



All upwards for the team flush.

audience keen to get involved and wanting to know more. I enjoy being given these opportunities to talk, through my photographic work, about the importance of our country sports, to show people how they can get involved but also to dispel myths and opinions often driven by ill-informed media.

Another way I support our countryside sports is being on the committee for the Black Grouse charity clay shoot. Each year a charity clay shoot is organised, taking place at Auchterhouse Country Sports. Teams of shooters take part in a competition and raise funds for the Black Grouse charity. It is a fun day concluding with a meal and presentations back at the clubhouse.

One of the first events of the year I always look forward to is the Deer Stalking Fair on 28th and 29th March.

Hopes and expectations for angling

One subject on many minds this year is the salmon fishing and the hope it will be an improvement on last season. It was a frustrating season, after many dry months and low water over the summer, we finally had some rain. This gave some of the beats a positive last few weeks of catching fish in an otherwise exasperating season.

Bob White, Ghillie at Stanley is optimistic about the 2015 season and said: "2014 was not a good year anywhere in the Atlantic salmon system but there was another better spring on the Tay after a good one in 2013. There is a high excitement for another good spring in 2015 with amazing advanced bookings so far. Let



Cluny Clays was one of the busy stands at the Deer Stalking Fair.



Ghillie Bob White has high hopes for the coming season.

us hope it lives up to expectation and the rest of the season is far better than last year's disappointments."

The Scottish wild salmon are a huge part of our national heritage both culturally and legally. They bring an awful lot to the Scottish economy

(game and coarse angling brings in £134m annually) and supports approximately 2,800 jobs across the country. I am hopeful we will have a great season but I am sure it will have its challenges. We all study the weather and look for favourable

angling conditions.

As I write the recent rain and snowfall has increased the river levels so we are all keeping our fingers crossed they will recede and allow us to have a great first month on the Tay, my local.

This 50 year old (it still feels odd typing that number, does it really apply to me)? is very optimistic about the 2015 country sports year ahead with a rod, rifle and shotgun. I am enjoying my clay shooting having had a couple of good trap shooting sessions with shotgun coach Iain MacGregor to kick start the New Year. I hope to have an interesting story for you about urban deer next in the next issue and a tale or two from the rivers. If you are coming over for the Deer Stalking Fair in March please find me and say hello, I will be there for the weekend.

It does not matter what the weather is doing, we can wear our wellies, boots and waterproofs to go outdoors and indulge in our passion for our country sports.



Catch and release of a fine Tay fish.

The 2014 IGL Retriever Championship

There's a mix of anticipation and a little trepidation as I head to Windsor for the IGL Championship.

After two very successful events in Scotland, it was with some anticipation and not a little trepidation that I headed to Windsor for the IGL Championship on 1-3 December in The Great Park by gracious permission of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth and the Crown Commissioners.

The fifty-six dogs which had qualified were judged by Ian Openshaw and Jamie Bettinson on the right of the line, with John Stubbs and Keith Bedford on the left. Anyone unfamiliar with Windsor Great Park should be aware that it is mainly flat, of enormous size, has magnificent tree lined avenues, interspersed with arable farms where game holding crop and rough land is abundant.

The Irish representatives were Sean Nolan with Int FTCh Tweedshot Trimble of Lettergreen as the current Irish Champion, with Billy Lundy and Int FTCh The Newcam Boss, Jim Carnegie with Rosenallis Enzo, Tadh Kelly with Carrickview Holly and Nigel Carville's FTCh Waysgreen Apollo handled by Damien Newman. All of these competitors except Sean Nolan had qualified by winning two day Open stakes in this calendar year.

The first action of the trial took place on ground which consisted of bracken, reeds and dead grass with occasional open grassland and thickets of woodland. Retrievers were varied, some shot as the walk up progressed, others produced from small drives where up to a dozen shot birds provided retrieves which allowed the judges to quickly assess all dogs in round one. Good work here was seen from Tadh Kelly who produced two birds in short order and from Andy Latham who easily



Fourth placed FTCh Rimrock Hurricane delivers to Andy Latham in the stubble turnips on the second morning.

produced what could have been a difficult moving woodcock.

Unfortunately in this part of the trial we lost Jim Carnegie whose dog Enzo unexpectedly moved amidst much shooting, and also Sean Nolan who failed on a long blind which was subsequently picked by Billy Lundy's Newcam Boss who looked in fine form and completed the first round unscathed.

We then moved into a field of standing mustard and rape, which in parts was up to a metre in height, and dogs became severely tested. Some good work was seen from Derek Hill and Stauntonvale Fastnet who eyewiped current Champion Leigh Jackson, Phil Highfield and Sarah Gadd and their respective charges. Wife Laura Hill

with FTCh Jobeshill Lotta of Stauntonvale was also making steady progress.

The first day came to an end with a drive which produced duck, pheasant and partridge, and enough game to end the first round. Those safely progressing included Alan Rees with FTCh Jobeshill Ragnar of Flypatch and Damien Newman with Waysgreen Apollo who successfully found a pheasant and a pigeon. T Brain with Flypatch Alpha ended on a high note when eyewiping Phil Parkins with FTCh Maldrake Livie and Mark Bettinson with FTCh Cynhinfa Laban.

Day two on difficult ground

Day two saw an early start at Shaw's Farm with thirty seven of the original



Sean McGrath handling FTCh Waterford Hallmark into second place on the final afternoon.

fifty six starters. The trial progressed on very difficult ground of mustard and rape of varying heights, with partridge being driven over standing guns when appropriate. Scent seemed very difficult and any wounded partridge proved nearly impossible to find. First dog down was not the place to be, for even the most battle hardened competitor. In one spell only one of eight partridge shot was found, and amidst the carnage we saw the the departure of John Halsted Jnr, David Latham, Mike Tallamy, Derek and Laura Hill, and our own Tadh Kelly and Billy Lundy.

At one point the cover was up to two feet high with interleaving stalks up to one inch thick providing perfect cover through which game could quickly disappear. Showing excellent skills at this time were Sean McGrath with FTCh Waterford Hallmark, Sandra Halstead with a young dog, Greenbriar Thunder at Drakeshead, Kirsty Cousins with FTCh Levenghyl Malusi and Richard King with FTCh Saxaphone Brown Ale of Lincswolds. At the end of this very difficult day there were fifteen competitors still with a chance of the title, with much post trial discussion concerning clean or slightly tarnished runs.

Difficult scent

Day three took us back to where we commenced the trial and into initially

some tall mustard. Scent proved difficult and we quickly lost two of our Scottish competitors, George Buchan with Misty Long and Robin Drysdale with FTCh Denbank Khaki. Still making progress was Damien Newman with Waysgreen Apollo. Back into layed bracken and white grass and the judges started to extend the work with cross retrieves, and the slightest slip was severely punished. Here Sandra Halstead, Mrs Robertson and Mr Smallman paid the price.

This Championship ran on well past lunchtime, mainly due to the standard of dog work, with up to ten dogs in

contention and with an impressive tally of nine retrieves. "Trial over" was finally called around three o'clock and an expectant crowd gathered at HQ to hear the indefatigable Phil Wainwright announce the results, and HM Queen Elizabeth to present the prizes.

Results

1. FTCh Saxaphone Brown Ale of Lincswolds
Breeder P Burton Owner/Handler R King
Sire FTCh Garronpoint Rye of Lincswolds
Dam Clovers Girl of Saxaphone
 2. FTCh Waterford Hallmark
Breeder Jane Coley Owner/ Handler S McGrath
Sire FTCh Greenbriar Gettysburg
Dam FTCh Waterford Easter
 3. Flypatch Alfa
Breeder/Owner/Handler T Brain
Sire FTCh Jobeshill Ragnar of Flypatch
Dam Cottared Piccolo
 4. FTCh Rimrock Hurricane
Breeder S Hansell Owner/Handler A Latham
Sire FTCh Skellorn Danty
Dam Ffnonagain Silk of Rimrock
- COMs
D Marx FTCh Lockthorn Tara
A Rees FTCh Jobeshill Ragnar of



Terry Prentice who won a Diploma of Merit with Hightowngreen Diamond Joe of Findpoint receives his certificate from Her Majesty the Queen watched by Chris Wainwright and IGL Deputy President, The Duchess of Devonshire.

Flypatch

T Prentice Hiltowngreen Joe of Findpoint

K Cousins FTCh Levenghill Malusi

W Steel Denbrig Ace of Spades

There are some points worthy of note from this extremely well managed event which was sponsored by Skinners.

H M Queen Elizabeth graced the Championship with her presence on day one, when she walked in line for up to three hours and on the last day when she observed an eventful last hour, as well as presenting the prizes. She was at all times magnificently briefed by the

Duchess of Devonshire.

The ground itself proved very demanding, both in variety of cover and the combination of walked up and driven birds. Luck, as usual played it's part. There were 89 birds shot on day 1, 85 including 72 partridge on day 2, and up to 40 on day 3. Day 2 took a heavy toll with many casualties in the heavy cover.

Damien Newman stayed well in touch until his

ninth retrieve, and may have been the only clean dog at the time of his demise. Predicting the result was impossible as some dogs whilst showing brilliance, at other times had some problems. In his closing speech senior judge Ian Openshaw stated that there was not a completely clean dog in the awards.

So ended a very good "Windsor" Championship and many congratulations go to Richard King and FTCh Saxaphone Brown Ale of Lincswolds who achieved a supreme victory, after several years thereabouts.



Richard King with a smile on his face and a hand on the Glen Kidston Challenge Trophy after winning with FTCh Saxaphone Brown Ale of Linkswolds.

Mighty 'Midge' to the fore - The Irish Kennel Club AV Spaniel Championship a resounding success!

Following its unfortunate cancellation in 2013, the IKC AV Spaniel Championship was back and from the off it was obvious that the organising committee, led by IKC CEO Mr. Pat Kiely and ably assisted by IKC Hon. Secretary, Marion Campbell, committee chairman, Sean Moriarty and assistant secretary, Sean Beausang, had pulled out all the stops to ensure this was what can only be described as a resounding success.

The 22nd & 23rd of December were the dates for this, The Irish Kennel Club / Gain Dog Food, 39th Championship Stake for A.V. Spaniels (Excl. I.W.S.) which was held at Lord Dunluce's Glenarm Estate by kind invitation of Mr. John Cunningham. Even the persistent heavy drizzle which we encountered over the two days, could not dampen the high spirits of all involved.

The judges selected for this year's championship were Mr. Norman Blakeney from Co. Westmeath and Mr. Damian Kelly from Co. Tyrone. Both of

these judges are widely respected amongst spaniel handlers at home and abroad, having both won this event on previous occasions and both having made up several field trial champions. Norman also carries the honour of being the only handler, to date, from the Republic of Ireland to win the British Spaniel Championship. The referee for this year's event was Mr. Jimmy King from Butlerstown Co. Waterford. Chief steward for this year's championship was Mr. Matt FitzGerald from Co. Cork. Paul French and his excellent team were on board again this year, to

film the event and no doubt this production will be of the same high quality we associate with Paul French. The guns selected to shoot at this year's championship were Mr. Peter Cunningham, Mr. Mark Evans, Mr. Adrian Moore, Mr. Gordon Blakeney and Mr. Damian Newman.

In his address to the large crowd, Championship Committee Chairman Sean Moriarty welcomed all to the event and thanked the host Mr. John Cunningham for his very kind invitation to hold the championship at Lord Dunluce's Glenarm Estate. Sean



Winner Mallowdale Midge with her handler Ian Openshaw.



2nd place Barry Caffery and Gortnacor Daffodil.



N. Blakeney (Judge); D. Kelly (Judge); J. King (Referee); and S. Moriarty (Championship Committee Chairman).



(Above left) 3rd place - Clodahill Nofler of Carnteel delivers to Ian Blair.



(Above right) 4th place - Ian Openshaw with Int FTCh Hollydrive Kurt.



(Left) Mark! - Jon Binley with Lisgarvagh Sky.



(Right) Tim Crothers & Scroggwood Cobber.

also thanked Gain Dog Foods for their very generous sponsorship and support and then went on to introduce the officials, guns and stewards to the competitors and spectators.

Dog No. 5 Dave Templer's Brynfedi Adel of Countryways and dog No. 38 Robin Young's Barcudwen Belladonna had been withdrawn, which meant a total of 38 dogs would compete for the title of Irish Spaniel Championship winner 2014. The competing 38 dogs consisted of the following:

- 23 English Springer Spaniel bitches
- 11 English Springer Spaniel dogs
- 3 Cocker Spaniel bitches
- 1 Cocker Spaniel dog

Statistics

Top sire at this year's championship was Int. FTCh Skronedale Romulous with 4 of his offspring competing.

FTCh Clodahill Annie and Hollydrive Kylie shared the honours of top dam, both having 3 of their offspring competing.

16 dogs were eliminated on day one with 22 being called back for day two. Of the 22 called back, 11 received awards.

From the time we entered the estate, it was very evident that organisation and preparation were the priority of Mr. John Cunningham and his team, along with the Championship Committee. Clear signage and car parking facilities, along with traffic and safety stewards was evidence of the detailed preparation that had gone into this event. Throughout the championship, shuttle trailers were used to transport everyone involved to the section of the estate where the championship was taking place. The terrain throughout the championship was mainly brambles intertwined with white grass amongst hazel. All dogs' hunting and retrieving abilities were challenged to the highest degree and indeed a number of dogs did not cope well with the ground and were eliminated due to passing game or failing on retrieves.

The Championship gets underway

Once everyone had assembled at the start point, judges, Norman Blakeney and Damian Kelly, called into line, dogs numbered one and two and the 2014 IKC AV Spaniel Championship was under way. First in line under judge, Norman Blakeney, was Dog No.1.Fintan (Capt) Kelly's E.S.S.B. Bramble Lady. A competent performance in her first run with plenty of action was enough to see her called back for a second run. Unfortunately, a retrieving error in her second run under Damian Kelly, eliminated her from her first championship.

No 2 Brian O'Hara's E.S.S.B. Ftch Windarra Tess was first to run under judge Damian Kelly. However, the championship came to a sudden end for "Tess" when she was reluctant to leave the cover when asked to retrieve.

No 3 Ivan Wilson's. E.S.S.D. Goodspeed Raptor, in his first run, had multiple finds but when asked to retrieve a bird that had been shot, required too many casts, for judge Norman Blakeney's liking and was eliminated.

No. 4 Barcudwen Bounty E.S.S.B. handled by Aled Jones hunted the cover well, however, during the course of her run, she moved to the flush of a bird and was also eliminated.

No.6 Ian Openshaw's E.S.S.D. Int. Ftch Hollydrive Theo, was hunting well under judge Damien Kelly, however, when dog No. 9 Patsy McCarthy's. E.S.S.B. Owenwee Conifer, failed on a retrieve, "Theo" was given the opportunity of the "eyewipe" but also failed to locate the bird. The judges then picked the bird by hand and the 2014 championship was over for both Hollydrive Theo and Owenwee Conifer.

No. 7 Louis Rice's E.S.S.B. Int.Ftch Sliabh Treasure (runner up in the 2012 Championship, held at Glenarm). Unfortunately, Louis' time in this year's championship was very brief, as "Treasure", early in her run, encountered a number of birds and could not resist the temptation.

No. 8 Tim Crothers. E.S.S.D. Scroggwood Cobber had a nice steady run treating his ground well with an even pattern. Two finds and a clean retrieve had "Cobber" safely back on the lead and through to round two. This dog demonstrated good pace in its second run. A find and two retrieves with minimal handler input saw Tim's dog finishing with two clean runs.

No. 11 Willie Edgar's E.S.S.B. Int. Ftch McGwyn Deallus. This excellent servant of Willie's, competing in her fifth Irish championship, hunted with style and pace, found three birds and with two clean retrieves completed her first run. Regretfully, failing to retrieve a woodcock in her second run brought an end to her championship and her very successful career.

No.12 Eamon Taaffe's E.S.S.D. Hollydrive Bert was next dog in on the right hand side. This dog came to the championship on the back of a bumper season having won two open stakes on the lead up to the event. At times this dog seemed to lose his pattern in the obvious, unfamiliar, deep tufty grass. However, plenty of heart and a never give up attitude kept him going and masked any inexperience he may have had. A find and clean retrieve on a bird early in his run helped to settle Eamon's first time nerves.

Unfortunately, he then passed a tight sitting hen bird and Eamon's first championship came to an abrupt end.

No. 13 Ian Blair's E.S.S.D. Clodahill Nofler of Carnteel hunted with style, pace and with very quiet handling. It was evident that man and dog were working as a very effective unit. Three finds and two clean retrieves complimented this dog's hunting performance and saw him through to the next round. With a similar hunting performance in his second run, and what was probably one of the best finds of the championship, this dog put his stamp on one of the top spots and made Ian's first championship a very enjoyable one indeed!

No. 14 Mick Walsh's E.S.S.B. Ftch Hollydrive Sally, having just started her

run, was asked to retrieve a loose bird that had been shot. However, "Sally" failed to locate this bird.

No. 17 Pat Brennan's E.S.S.B. Clodahill Layla, was then given the opportunity of the eyewipe on dog No.14. Pat, who opted to send "Layla" from where she was, also failed and when the judges walked out, the ever sharp Mr. Kelly held the fall area, picked the bird and eliminated a disappointed Pat and Mick.

No. 15 Barry Caffery's E.S.S.B. Ffch Annzinn Thunderbolt put on a nice display of hunting in briar. Two birds which she had flushed were shot and having picked the first bird, she was then sent for the second. Unfortunately, she failed to locate this bird. No.10 Ivan McAlister's E.S.S.D Ffynonlas Griff was then called over from the other side to attempt to pick the bird Barry had failed on. Ivan and "Griff" also failed. The judges then picked the bird by hand and both dogs were eliminated.

No. 16 Jodi McGuinness' C.S.D. Kenmar Hal of Drumadarragh was the first of the four cockers to run in this year's championship. He was also the only male cocker to compete in this year's championship. "Hal", a character with a great attitude, always shows up for work and today was no different. Unfortunately, "Hals" first championship came to an end when he passed a tight lying hen pheasant.

No.18 Adrian Doris' E.S.S.B. Nederscot Spirit showed plenty of drive and quickly found a hen. She then succeeded to make a retrieve on a bird when called over to the other line, but unfortunately, failed on a retrieve later in her run and was duly eliminated.

No. 19 Ian Openshaw's E.S.S.D. Int. Ffch Hollydrive Kurt although, hunting and finding well in white grass, on the second of two retrieves he required quite a bit of handling. Picking the bird in the end secured him a slot in day two. A competent hunting performance, in his second run, combined with good finds and a clean retrieve brought a successful conclusion to his

championship. Kurt was back on home soil, but had he done enough to secure a top spot???

No. 20 Wendy Openshaw's C.S.B. Tiptop Jack Sixpence showed plenty of drive and pace and did not shy away from the heavy cover. She flushed a hen bird, which when shot, fell very close to the dog and succumbing to the temptation, she ran in.

No. 21 Fintan Kelly's E.S.S.B. Bramley's Girl was unsteady to a bird she had flushed and so ended her championship.

No 22. Barry Caffery's E.S.S.B. Gortnacor Daffodil in her first run hunted with style and pace. A find on a hen bird, which she retrieved without issue, completed this very solid performance and Barry was through to the next round. This bitch showed she meant business, in her second run, hunting with top pace and drive and finding game at ease. Making very quick work of what should have been a very difficult retrieve, across a deep gully and a stream in full flood, had everyone present looking on in admiration. This retrieve would later earn Barry and "Daffodil" retrieve of the championship. A very happy and proud Barry, left the line having completed his first championship in style.

No. 23 Roddy Culleton's E.S.S.D. Drumreenagh de Vitry handled by Paul Carragher was next in under Norman Blakeney. This dog hunted with drive and pace but also failed on a retrieve and was eliminated.

No. 24 Eddie Scott's E.S.S.B. Ffch Broomfield Rosetta was next to enter the arena on the right hand side. This bitch was winner of the British Spaniel Championship in 2013 and her performance in this run didn't disappoint. She hunted with pace, drive and stamina in briar, hazel and birch. Her pace never dropped and after a long, run she had two finds, both of which could not be retrieved as they were hung up in the hazel trees. She left the line having completed probably the best hunting performance on the right

hand side on day one. She went through to day two needing a retrieve as she did not have a retrieve in her first run. In her second run she was not as impressive and seemed to lack the top drive she displayed on the previous day. She did get that much needed retrieve but that lack of sparkle in her second run would prevent her challenging for the higher places this year.

No. 25 John Healey's C.S. B. Ffch Mallowdale Midge handled by Ian Openshaw, hunted with drive, pace and style. She had an excellent find on a cock bird which was tucked in tightly at the base of a tree. This bird when shot, jumped across a stream and ran up through the wood about 50 yards and tucked in. Midge, when sent, got to the fall instantly, crossed the stream and taking a perfect line located the bird and had it back to Ian in a flash. A short hunt and another quick find completed this very impressive first run and had judge Norman Blakeney back in love with cockers! Although her second run was not as action packed as her first, she did put in a very thorough hunting performance with a good find and an easy one cast retrieve. "Midge" was here to show us all, that cockers are not the lesser of the spaniel breeds!

No. 26 Mark Stewart's E.S.S.B. Broomfield Bayamo covered her ground well and maintained a good pattern at a steady pace. A sharp find on a hen bird and a smart retrieve had her back on the lead and through to next round. In her second run, she was asked to try as second dog down on a bird that had run. While she did make a very good effort to take the line of the bird, she did not locate it. The judges were also unsuccessful in locating this bird and so "Bayamo" hunted on, found a bird, completed the retrieve and successfully finished her championship.

No. 27 Eric Smith's E.S.S.B. Ffch Nederscot Eirwen put in a competent hunting performance and with three finds and three retrieves she made it through to round two. Following a similar performance in her second run,

she was back on the lead with two clean runs under her belt.

No 28 Aled Jones' E.S.S.B. Ftch Flaxdale Hallie in her first run, quickly found a cock bird and made easy work of the retrieve. Unfortunately, this seasoned campaigner failed on a retrieve in her second run and was eliminated.

No. 29. Jim Adamson's E.S.S.D. Rothievale Larch maintained a very tidy pattern and was well with his handler. When sent to retrieve a strong running bird which he had found he failed to locate this bird. The dog from the opposite side was then tried on this bird but also failed. The judges likewise failed to locate the bird and both dogs were kept in. Another find and successful retrieve completed "Rothievale's" first run. In his second run, this dog showed nice pace and style but lacked the top drive which some of the other dogs had shown. Two good finds and a retrieve from a small pond saw "Larch" finish with two clean runs.

No. 30 Paul Carragher's E.S.S.B. Ftch Lisgarvagh Verde was first in line under judge Damian Kelly on the morning of day two, and what a way to start the day! "Verde" hunted hard with good style and pace and with excellent ground treatment. She quickly found and flushed a hen and made a perfect retrieve. Shortly afterwards, an eye wipe on Des Donnelly's Hollydrive Abbey completed a very tidy run for Paul and "Verde".

Unfortunately, the temptation of numerous birds running ahead in her second run became too much and "Verde" ran in. A very disappointed Paul left the line, with some homework to do prior to his run in the upcoming British championship in January.

No. 31 Stuart Morgan's E.S.S.B. Biswell Beebop hunted with nice pace and style in both of her runs. With finds and retrieves in each run, she successfully completed her championship.

No.33 Eddie Scott's E.S.S.B. Ftch Broomfield Annie was last to perform

on day one under Norman. "Annie" hunted with pace, drive and style at the started but seem to tire a little towards the end of a very long run. As she had not completed her run when Head Keeper, Barry Kelly, called a halt to day one's proceedings, she would have to finish her run on the morning of day two. First thing, on day two and a refreshed "Annie" was back at her usual level of drive and pace. She found two birds which were shot, however, "Annie" required help and input from her handler to complete both retrieves. In her second run her hunting performance under judge Damian Kelly was even better than in her first run. A multiple flush with one bird shot created some confusion and with considerable handler assistance "Annie" took some time to complete this retrieve. This was not to be "Annie's" year!

No. 32 Jon Binley's E.S.S.B. Lisgarvagh Sky hunted with pace and drive and maintaining a nice low hunting pattern, this bitch was having a very nice first run indeed. Working with minimal handler input throughout her run and finding and retrieving without issue, she secured a well-deserved place in round two. Very early in her second run, "Sky" was called across the line for the opportunity of an eye wipe on a woodcock. However "Sky" failed to pick this bird and when senior judge Norman Blakeney, walked to the fall area and picked the bird by hand, Jon and "Sky's" championship hopes were over for this year.

No. 34 Ivan Wilson's C.S.B. Ftch Ribbleshead Alex hunted her beat with pace and style, found a cock bird and finished with a fine retrieve to complete her first run. Although going very well in her second run, she chased a bird that she had flushed and was duly eliminated.

No. 35 Dessie Donnelly's E.S.S.B. Hollydrive Abbey quickly found a bird but failed to retrieve this bird. Paul Carragher's Lisgarvagh Verde completing the eyewipe eliminated Dessie and "Abbey".

No. 36 Kevin Murphy's E.S.S.B. Aughacasla Tern started well, but ignoring Kevin's recall whistle she pulled forward, flushed birds and ended her involvement in the championship for this year.

No.37 Eric Smith's E.S.S.D. Murrayeden Apollo of Nederscot. This nice stylish dog, went off the whistle while out on a retrieve and was eliminated.

No. 39 Jamie Cahill's E.S.S.B. Clodahill Nell hunted with top pace and drive. A loose bird was shot and fell amongst numerous live birds. Nell when sent to retrieve the bird was distracted by all this live game and did not locate the retrieve instantly. She flushed a number of birds in the vicinity of the fall before eventually picking the bird and unfortunately, Jamie and "Nell" were eliminated from their first championship.

No. 40 Kevin Murphy's E.S.S.B. Aughacasla Soda during a long first run, found a hen which was shot well out and ran. "Soda", when sent to retrieve this bird, got to the fall but made no headway on the line whatsoever and her time in this year's championship was over.

Once the judges had made up their books they called the following dogs for a run off.

The Run Off

No 22. Barry Caffery's E.S.S.B. Gortnacor Daffodil and No. 25 John Healey's C.S.B. Ftch Mallowdale Midge handled by Ian Openshaw.

Was this for first? Was it the first time a Springer and a Cocker had run off in the I.K.C A.V. Spaniel Championship? These were the "hot" topics being discussed by the gallery. One thing was for certain, Barry Caffery in his first ever championship had managed to secure a place in a run off for some of the higher places, if not the highest honour of all. What an achievement!

The run off was eventful. Once cast off it appeared the springer was winning, however, both dogs then

pulled slightly forward and didn't maintain a proper pattern. A re-start was required and having been re-started, the cocker immediately settled into a perfect pattern and with exceptional ground and wind treatment, it appeared Barry and "Daffodil" had been bitten by a "Midge" and pipped at the post on this occasion. Following the run off and the compulsory water test, the trial was declared over and all made their way back to the gun room for soup, sausages and rolls along with tea, coffee and soft drinks courtesy once again of the host, John Cunningham.

Closing Ceremony

The Chairman of the Championship Committee, Sean Moriarty, led the closing ceremony and he began by thanking the following: the host Mr. John Cunningham for the outstanding hospitality and generosity extended to all involved in this Championship. Sean added that John Cunningham had really gone above and beyond the call of duty to ensure our premium event for spaniels was a huge success. The facilities and hospitality that were provided for all to avail of during the two days were second to none and John's presence in the field for the duration of the championship was testament of his interest and enthusiasm for spaniels.

Thanks to: Gain Dog Food, for their very generous sponsorship of the championship;

Jim Treacy, Gain Dog Food representative, for giving up his time to attend the championship;

Barry Kelly (Head keeper) and his team for their hard work and courtesy towards all;

Paul French Video;

The organising committee;

Eddie Kirk and Vinnie Cauldwell for their press notes and photography;

Spectators, handlers and anyone who played a part in this hugely successful event;

He also thanked Pat Kiely (CEO IKC) and Marion Campbell (Hon. Sec. IKC) for the leadership and support

they extended to the organising committee.

Presentation of Prizes

Marion Campbell (Hon. Sec. IKC) then announced the awards as follows:

Diplomas Of Honour

- No. 8. Tim Crothers' E.S.S.D. Scroggwood Cobber.
- No. 24 Eddie Scott's E.S.S.B Broomfield Rosetta
- No. 26 Mark Stewart's E.S.S.B. Broomfield Bayamo.
- No. 27 Eric Smith's E.S.S.B. Nederscot Eitwen.
- No. 29 John Adamson's E.S.S.D. Rothievale Larch.
- No. 31 Stuart Morgan's E.S.S.B. Bishwell Beebop.
- No. 33 Eddie Scott's E.S.S.B. Broomfield Annie

1st place - No. 25 John Healey's C.S.B. Mallowdale Midge Handled by Ian Openshaw.

2nd place - Top Irish dog & Best Retrieve of the championship - No. 22 Barry Caffery's E.S.S.B Gortnacor Daffodil.

3rd place - No. 13 Ian Blair's E.S.S.D Clodahill Nofler of Carnteel.

4th place & Gun's Award - No. 19 Ian Openshaw's E.S.S.D Int. FTCH Hollydrive Kurt.

Mr. Trevis Crothers received The Eastern Region Army Game Club Perpetual cup as breeder of the highest placed Irish dog at the championship.

Mr. Peter Cunningham received The Dermot Cahill perpetual trophy as the gun the handlers most enjoyed shooting over their dogs.

Pat Brennan's Clodahill Layla took the honours of "Spaniel of the Year" for 2014. Gaining a total of 48 points in I.K.C field trial events throughout the year and was presented with the Duisk perpetual cup.

Following the presentation the judges in their summing up said that the dogs in the run off both had very strong A runs and that the 3rd and 4th placed dogs both had two A runs. They went on to say that the course, although

tough, was an excellent test of hunting ability and those dogs with the better game finding and marking skills earned their place in the awards. Both judges then thanked all concerned with the event and in particular the host Mr. John Cunningham for the welcome and hospitality he extended towards the championship and all involved. They paid tribute to head keeper Barry Kelly and his team for the outstanding preparation and effort they had put into ensuring the success of the event. They thanked the stops (as many as 15) and describe them as the unsung heroes of the championship, as without them the event could not have been such a success. They extended a special thanks to the guns for the sporting manner in which they shot, shooting for the dogs at all times throughout the two days.

Ian Openshaw, in his winner's speech, thanked the host and the organising committee for their efforts in running an event of such a high standard. He then paid tribute to the judges, commenting on the level of experience they both have and the positive manner in which they judged all of dogs. He concluded by thanking the owner of the winning dog Mr. John Healy for his support over the years.

The host, John Cunningham addressing the crowd, said, it was a pleasure to host such an excellent event and that he looked forward to welcoming The IKC Spaniel Championship back to Glenarm in the future.

It was very encouraging to see a number of new handlers, seven in total, competing for their first time in the championship this year and with two of those first time competitors finishing in the top 3, Barry Caffery 2nd and Ian Blair 3rd, the future of our sport looks very bright indeed. For the first time ever the IKC AV Spaniel Championship had been won by a cocker. Mighty "Midge" had made history!! Without doubt, this was an excellent championship and all involved should take a bow!



The Top four - Barry Caffery 2nd; Ian Openshaw 4th & handler of winner; John Healy winning owner, Ian Blair 3rd.



Ian Openshaw handler of winning dog with owner John Healy.



Barry Caffery receiving the 2nd place trophy from Mr. John Cunningham.



Pat Kiely IKC CEO and Tim Crothers with Committee Chairman Sean Moriarty in the background.



Pat Brennan collects the Spaniel of the Year award from host Mr. John Cunningham.



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DCAL – Reaching Out To Anglers 2015

As a continuation of its Community Outreach programme, launched in 2014, DCAL Inland Fisheries Group will continue to try to attract new anglers during the forthcoming angling season.

This DCAL initiative, based on the belief that angling is for everyone, saw new engagement with hundreds of first time anglers last year and secured particular success with younger people and those from areas of social deprivation, attracted by the Department's enthusiastic approach to broadening the appeal of angling.

The DCAL Community Outreach Team worked last year with groups including YMCA, Neighbourhood Renewal Partnerships, The Simon Community and schools. The schemes assisted by DCAL across Northern Ireland will, it is hoped, help increase participation in angling and promote the sport as a healthy, enjoyable and good value for money outdoor activity. It is hoped that the continuation of this project in 2015 will ensure joint ventures with local councils, regional angling promotional events and schemes for young people who are unemployed or outside mainstream education.

DCAL will also continue its partnership arrangements in 2015 with the established angling customer base and ***the Department has just announced its intention to be a main exhibitor again at the NI Angling Show at the Irish Game Fair, Shanes Castle 27th & 28th June 2015.*** DCAL more than doubled its exhibition space at the show in 2014 which enabled



Many young people tried angling for the first time at the Game Fair.

increased interaction with the thousands of visitors to the event. It is expected that, as in 2014, DCAL fisheries staff will exhibit and distribute information on the Department's Public Angling Estate as well as the opportunities which exist for those wishing to become involved in the Outreach Programme. DCAL staff have reported that a number of contacts were established at the show last year which brought new groups onboard to try angling for the first time.

Michelle McRoberts, from the DCAL Angling Promotion and Outreach Team, told Irish Country Sports and Country Life: "Participation at Shanes is regarded as very important by the Department. There is obviously the vital link with the existing customer base and attendance at Shanes gives us a chance to discuss new waters for the

Public Angling Estate, issues of importance to anglers and matters surrounding fisheries conservation and protection as well as environmental issues.

She added: "Our presence at Shanes, with its many thousands of visitors, also presents a valuable opportunity to meet potential new customers. We are very much looking forward to another successful year there."

DCAL angling licence holders benefited from entrance fee discount vouchers for the Shanes Castle Show in 2014 and the Department, together with show planners and organisers, are delighted to announce that this offer will be available in 2015 also from DCAL, through licence outlets and from Country Lifestyle Exhibitions Ltd (contact irishgamefair@btinternet.com).

Angling clubs, community groups and individuals interested in pursuing a scheme for new anglers can contact the Inland Fisheries Group Outreach Team by telephoning Michael McAnallen on 02890 515112 or e-mail dcalangling@dcalni.gov.uk



Another enthusiastic crowd of young anglers at Altmore Fisheries.

Full information on all the waters offered in the DCAL Public Angling Estate can be found on the angling website at www.nidirect.gov.uk/angling

Obituary

Brian (Breen) Keoghan

A great sadness befell the local communities of Carrickmacross and the angling world when news spread of the sudden death of APGAI-Ireland's Brian (Breen) Keoghan. The news of his passing brought sadness to the hearts of all who knew him and his popularity was without question. He was a very jovial character and it was always a pleasure to be in his company. The regard in which he was held was evident during his wake and funeral, with huge numbers calling to pay their respects from all parts of Ireland and overseas.

After Brian left school, he went to work with a local butcher in the town of Carrickmacross in County Monaghan where he learned his trade. A few years later, Brian emigrated to New York where he worked as a butcher for many years. Before returning back home, he also worked for a short time in London and Germany, expanding his knowledge of his trade before returning home to start up his very successful and respected butchery business on the Main Street of Carrickmacross, where he worked until he retired in the mid 1990s.

From a very early age Brian developed a love for the outdoors, with shooting and fishing playing a major part of his daily life. He spent many

years rough shooting around the Carrickmacross area and was a regular gun on driven pheasant shoots at Shelton Abbey in County Wicklow with his friends.

Brian's love for fishing was endless; he spent many happy days fishing the famous Loughs Sheelin, Corrib and Conn for the big wild brown trout and he was a lifelong member of many of the angling clubs in the Carrickmacross and Inniskeen area. It would be fair to say there is not a river in Ireland where he did not fish for salmon or trout and, just as in his business life, he was very successful at the sport, with many of his neighbours testifying that he supplied them regularly with fresh fish.

Brian was hugely gifted in his ability to cast a fly rod and this knowledge was something he loved to share with anglers from all parts of the country. This led him into the world of Angling Instruction and on 13th March 2010 Brian was assessed by APGAI – Ireland (the Association of Professional Game Angling Instructors of Ireland). He was successful and became certified as an Advanced Single Handed Casting Instructor. It did not stop there for him, as on the 28th April 2012 he underwent another Assessment with APGAI - Ireland and qualified as an Advanced Double Handed Casting Instructor also.

Brian was very well known for travelling the length and breadth of the country attending fishing shows, game

fairs and angling club open day events, where he loved nothing better than to pass on some of his huge wealth of knowledge to beginners and improvers in the sport. It was always a joy to collect him from his home in the early hours of the morning and spend the time travelling to these events in his company; Brian loved his cup of tea known to him as 'spludge' and a Woodbine cigarette and along the journeys as we passed he made many a playful comment on his dislike of cyclists on the road and how other road users had to navigate their way around them.

Brian had a unique way of teaching the art of fly-casting at every level, which made it so easy to understand and unforgettable to those who took instruction from him. He always made the time spent in his company very enjoyable, whether this might be telling one of his awful jokes, spinning a tall tale about the one that got away, or a full-blown lesson on any and every aspect of angling. Or perhaps a discourse on Irish or world history, of which he also had an outstanding knowledge. Indeed, Brian could talk (and often did!) with authority on any given subject and your conversations with Brian were always unforgettable. We can all imagine him giving St Peter casting lessons on the big rivers up above and tying those 'Long tailed Sooty Olives' he always boasted about tying.

Brian Keoghan will be a major loss to APGAI – Ireland and indeed to everyone in the game angling and shooting fraternity in Ireland. A fitting tribute was paid with a guard of honour at his funeral mass by his APGAI Ireland colleagues and Brian had also been laid out in his APGAI-Ireland uniform by his family.

"In every cast we make and every loop of line we form you will always be a part of it, you will always be missed but never will be forgotten."

May you Rest in Peace, Brian.

**By Paddy Keenan.
A.P.G.A.I. Ireland.**



Inland Fisheries Ireland Launch Public Consultation on National Angling Development Plan



Inland Fisheries Ireland (IFI) has launched a public consultation in preparation for the development of a National Angling Development Plan (NADP). It is envisaged that the NADP will provide criteria, support and proposals to ensure the sustainability of Ireland's angling resource and the continuing sustainable development of that resource to maximise the benefits (social and economic) to Ireland on a prioritised basis.

Anglers, angling clubs, angling federations, fishery owners, community groups, angling service providers, state agencies and members of the public are being invited to make submissions which may include: strategies for the development of angling, physical development projects, novice angler initiatives, evaluation criteria of fisheries status by species/discipline type (i.e. what makes a good fishery) and angling/fishery support service requirements; submissions can be formulated on a national, regional or local basis as necessary.

An essential part of IFI's consideration will be how a development plan can be implemented, the resource requirements and how the support of fishery owners, anglers, state bodies and other stakeholders can be garnered so that the sector prospers.

Minister of State Joe Mc Hugh TD, who has responsibility for the Inland Fisheries sector, said: "IFI have been tasked to formulate a comprehensive development plan on a National basis, the need for which clearly arises from the most complete study of the sector ever undertaken". "I want to encourage

a consultation process which is inclusive and which embraces Angling Federations, Local Authorities and other interested bodies but which also permeates right through to local club and community level. This is an opportunity to be heard and to contribute to strategy and policy for a sector than can further underpin development and employment in rural, coastal and peripheral communities," he added.

A recent study of the recreational angling sector in Ireland, carried out by the international consultancy company, Tourism Development International (TDI), commissioned by IFI estimated that recreational angling in Ireland contributes €755 million to the Irish economy annually. The study showed that direct spending on angling in Ireland amounted to €555 million in 2012, with indirect and induced spending worth an additional €310 million. Following adjustments for imports and displacement, the overall economic impact of recreational angling in Ireland was estimated to be €755 million. Recreational angling was also found to directly support 10,000 existing Irish jobs, many of which are located in the most peripheral and rural parts of the Irish countryside and along our coastline.

The study found that 406,000 people were involved in recreational angling in Ireland during 2012, with over 150,000 of these travelling from Northern Ireland and overseas. Over a quarter of a million Irish adults (252,000) held a fishing rod in 2012 with sea angling along with salmon and brown trout angling seen as the most popular

categories where domestic anglers are concerned. The quality of the Irish angling product, the friendliness and hospitality of the Irish people and our outstanding scenery were cited amongst the principal attractions of Ireland as an international destination for recreational angling. Tourism angling spend is estimated at approximately €280 million on an annual basis.

The study highlights the need to continue to protect and nurture the inland fisheries resource and grow its potential contribution to the tourism sector in Ireland. To that end IFI is now progressing a development plan for the sector.

Further information on the consultation is available at www.fisheriesireland.ie. A template for making submissions is also available on the website or alternatively one may be requested from local IFI offices.

Submissions must be made in writing, marked 'NADP – public consultation' and addressed to Suzanne Campion, Head of Business Development, Inland Fisheries Ireland, 3044 Lake Drive, Citywest, Dublin 24 or by email to nadp.publicconsult@fisheriesireland.ie.

The deadline for receipt of submissions is 3pm on Tuesday 31st March 2015.

Further Information:
Suzanne Campion, Head of Business Development, Inland Fisheries Ireland, 3044 Lake Drive, Citywest, Dublin.
Tel: 01 8842600
Email: suzanne.campion@fisheriesireland.ie
Website: www.fisheriesireland.ie

**Irish Angling Worth €755 million -
Inland Fisheries Ireland Launch Consultation on
National Development Plan**



Walking on Ripples'

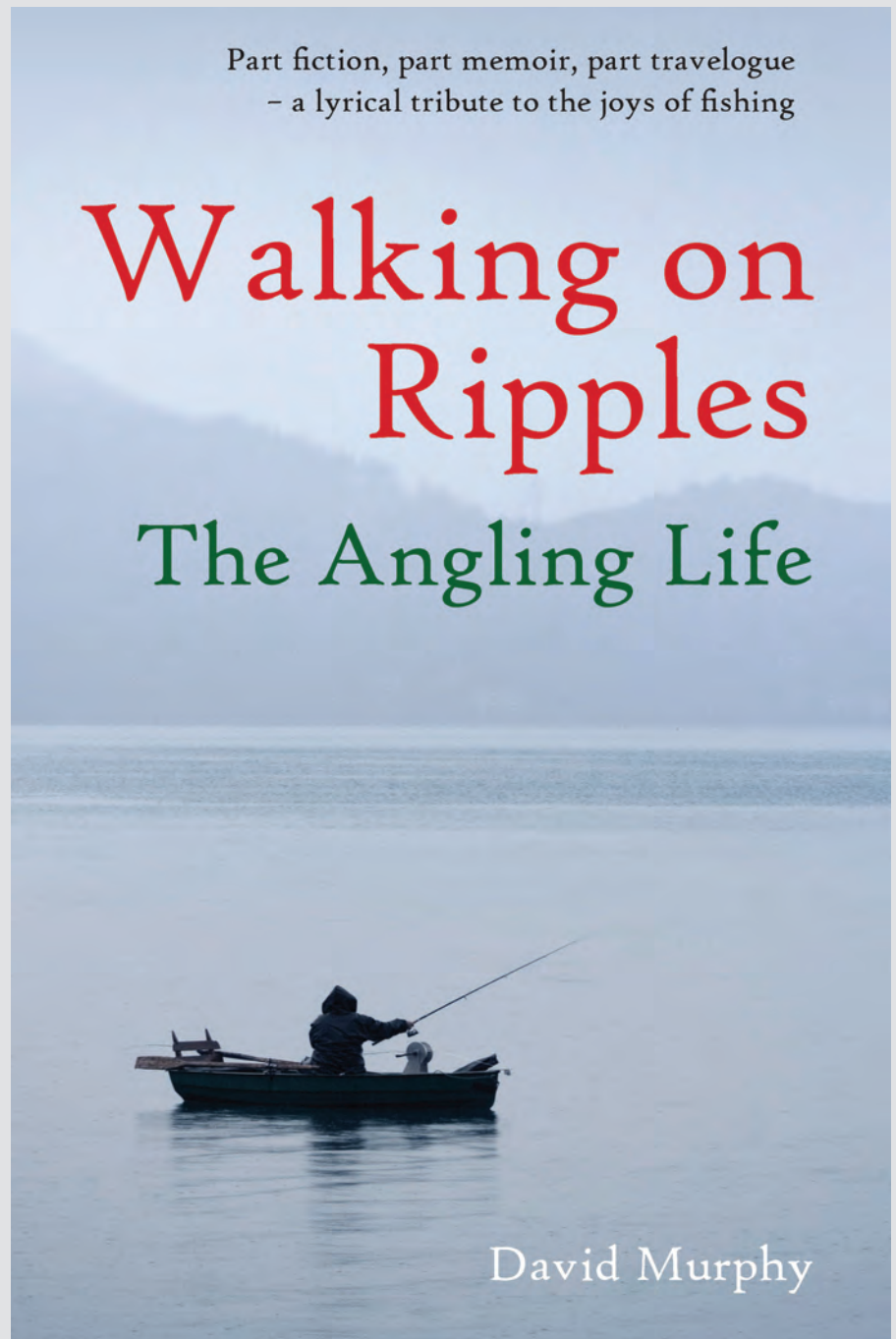
by David Murphy

*Walking on Ripples is NOT your average angling book -
dip into it and you're caught like a fly in a spider's web.*

David Murphy began writing *Walking on Ripples* by compiling an article on fish caught abroad – in Spain, Portugal, Canary Islands and further afield in Florida and Mauritius. He enjoyed writing this so much he began another article about angling in his favourite Irish location: Donegal, dividing this chapter into three sections: sea, rivers, and – the jewel in the crown of Donegal – secret mountain loughs where trout are small and taste of salmon. This last segment led seamlessly into short fiction, based on fishing a Donegal lough, which won the Maurice Walsh Award for short stories.

Suddenly, the author had more than ten thousand words – a quarter of a book. The rest of the text suggested itself with ease: stories of fish caught elsewhere in Ireland (Cork, Fermanagh, Dublin, Wicklow, Carlow, Kilkenny, Waterford and other parts of the country – Waterford features heavily because the author has a holiday home there, so does Cork as it's where he's from).

Let me say at once that *Walking on Ripples* is NOT your average angling book. Five of the eleven chapters are totally invented, but based on fishing or other water-related subjects. The other six are factual and true: and about angling. General readers will enjoy this evocative and sometimes dark sideways look at the world down the length of a fishing rod, with a frequent touch of humour thrown in. In true fishing tradition, one of the six factual chapters contains a tall tale: an exaggerated catch. But all other fish reported on in its pages (over forty



species!) were well and truly caught.

Walking on Ripples is the latest entry in the well-stocked category of fishing books in the great literary or 'romantic fishing' tradition. In other words, it's not a 'how-to' manual

about angling, it's a fishing book in a well established line – reflective, speculative, full of allegory, memory and metaphor. Many writers have produced works like this, including Chris Yates, Thomas McGuane and

John Gierach, to name a few. The best known is Norman Maclean's *A River Runs Through It*.

In *Walking on Ripples* we glide between fact and fiction and cannot help but wonder, where if anywhere is there a crossover point. Yes, this chapter is fiction, we know that. But what a tale is woven; we are wrapped like a spider's fly. Only an angling thread reminds us that this is an angling book; we use that thread to move from what might be an uncomfortable world into the light again. An allegory for angling itself?

What makes *Walking on Ripples* different, however, is the fact that five of the eleven chapters are entirely fictional. There are stories about a kayaker who is a child murderer; an angler who fishes not for fish, but for souls of those who have taken their own lives; the story of a fisherman whose sad and tragic disintegration becomes evident through his fishing diary. There's also a story about a Stone Age tribe discovering ocean tides for the first time, resulting in the birth of a whole new religion. For good measure there's a story about a sentient goldfish, a fish with genuine human feelings – what more could you want? There's also a ghost story so it's quite a blend, in places not a particularly light read, but the darkness adds to the mix, making it all part of that literary angling tradition. Overall, what makes the book work is that all chapters – fiction and non-fiction – are unified by this great watery theme running throughout. Everything is linked, the real and the imagined, making for a smooth read.

The Author says: "Some fishermen thrive on numbers. Good luck to them. That's what floats their boat. Give me an hour, or two or even three, with nothing. Then one little fish to save the day. Give this to me any time, more fun than the relentless reeling in of bucket loads of suicidal fish. Grant me time to take a break from casting, to sit on flat rocks and contemplate the land, the water, the

birds that fly and cartwheel in overhead sky. Watch gulls and other birds dive – now they know how to fish. Allow my eyes time to examine what floats as flotsam in the ripples at my feet. Let me jettison the jetsam of my life, and get on with taking in the great world that surrounds. The inhaling of things that matter, like smell of salt spray; tang of it in my nostrils of a windy day when I stand thirty feet up to be truly safe from breakers smashing into the rocks beneath, a day when my eyes witness but refuse to believe what happens next."

The tale of a trip to the West follows on quite naturally from this sentiment.

A great asset in fishing's favour is that it's not weather dependent, a boon when you're in a location prone to wind and rain of Atlantic weather systems – typical Donegal summer weather. Years of cycling and golfing had proved frustrating in the extreme. It always seemed to rain. Wet wheel rims and sopping golf clubs. Fishing felt like a Godsend. If too wet to go out on a bike or play a round of golf, don cap and jacket and head to where rain is a blessing. The rivers were waiting, brimming with the promise of a feeding frenzy after spate-time. Under Tawnawully Bridge on the Lowrymore, near the new road bridge on the Abbey River, just upstream of Aghadullagh Bridge on the Ballintra, under the road over the Bridgetown – all these rivers yielded small brown trout on various flies: Greenwell's Glory, Willie Gunn, silver-black salmon flies. On the Abbey, a little brownie on the second cast of a fly. Then nothing for the rest of the day. The Murvagh River surrendered, of all things, an eel on ledgered worm just upstream of the bridge. The larger and more famous waters – River Eske and Eany More – proved equally productive.

We paid visits to a secret spot high on the Eany, above Drumboarty Bridge. Local brown trout could not

resist Butcher, Blue Dun and Greenwell's flies dangled in front of their inquisitive noses. We drove there two days in a row and discovered a tiddler caught on a fly we had abandoned in brambles overnight. Levels had gone down enough the following day to make wading feasible, so I made my way carefully to the bushes where I could see the line glisten in sunshine. Something in the way the line moved had alerted me – a tiny brown trout, freshly hooked. The day had only started, yielding two small wildies for Claire. The Eske also gave us plenty of wild ones, fingerlings mainly, in super locations such as Miss Jenny's Bridge, the Mill Hole and Gorrell's Bridge. Barry took two small brownies on floating worm near the dam, and another one on the fly near the bypass bridge. Black Pennell, Cow Dung and Willie Gunn flies seemed to work best there, along with the usual fly assortment from other Donegal rivers.

The choice was simple: a strenuous hillwalk to the cairn on top of Maulin or a gentle few hours on the Glencree River. No contest. The rest of them gathered in Crone carpark, basecamp for a tough hillwalk to celebrate a fiftieth birthday. I left them to their walk, chuckling to myself with vindictive satisfaction, and sauntered down to a promising pool on a bend in the river where I found peaceful solitude. A light drizzle began to fall, prompting me to move. A sheltered, tree-covered pool lies upstream of the Wicklow Way footbridge. Drizzle, now turned to rain, seeped in through the overhanging branches. Wet, slippery, lichen-covered rocks. Rain oozing down mossy trunks and boughs. A wonderful, if tight, spot for casting. More like dangling your fly in the water at your feet and letting it glide down on the current. Not a place to slide sideways and feel cool water seep into a wellington boot and drench a trouser leg. It was worth it though: a small brownie on a Black Pennell on the last cast of a two and a

half hour stint. He fought hard and swam for cover, diving and snagging the line on a bunch of underwater roots. I had to wade in and feel my upper legs get wet before I could retrieve enough line to bring him in.

Twenty minutes later, at the reception desk of a local hostel booked for the night as part of the birthday celebrations, I put on my best doleful look, explained my wet trousers, and asked for the room key.

"The rooms won't be ready for hours," said the hostel warden, "However, in your case," her eyes took in my hangdog expression and sopping trouser legs, "I'll make an exception."

Half an hour later, I stood perfumed and coiffured in brand new party clothes, watching the rest of them arrive from the summit of Maulin. They sat around in sweaty, stinking, hiking gear, and asked for their room keys only to be told, "The rooms won't be ready for two hours. The only person I've allowed into his room is the man who fell into the river."

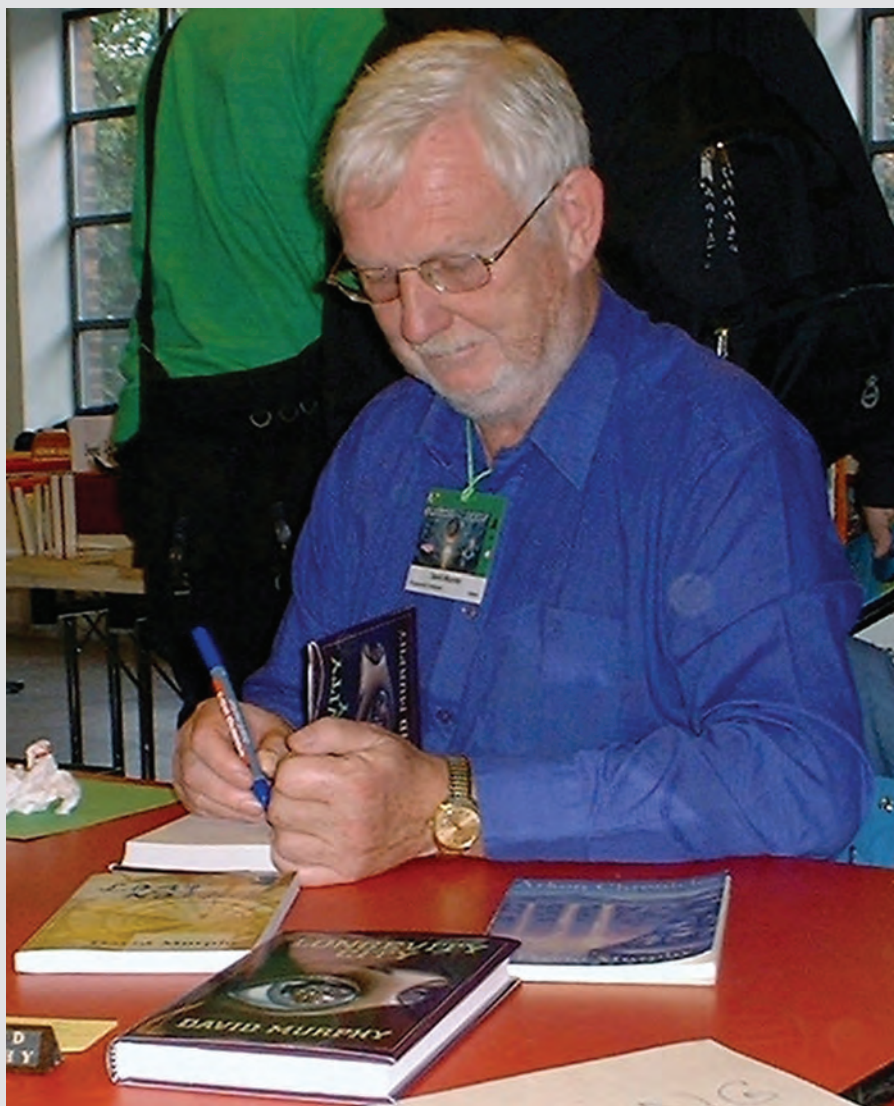
When I heard that, I began to chuckle mischievously again.

Fishing 1 Hillwalking 0.

In a chapter entitled 'Locations Exotic & Not Exotic' we learn something of the psyche of brother anglers in Florida many miles - if not light years - away from rural Ireland.

A blond dude wore white chinos, dark blue shirt and cool, chino-matching, sun hat. He sat fishing two rods from a deckchair on the wharf at Merry Pier in Pass-a-Grille. His pair of thirteen-footers hovered over fish-rich waters, bending frequently under the pull of another successful cast. His transistor radio rested on the wooden planks of the pier, tuned to a baseball match. We watched him listen to the game, catch monsters, and knock back cans of beer.

Thirty feet away at the other end of the wooden planks, Barry and I took turns with the lightweight five-footer we had brought with us on our



The Author signing books in Copenhagen.

holidays. Irish spinning lures yielded nothing. Pelicans perched on the bulwarks of the wharf eyed us stoically. I believe they were laughing. The baseball fan took pity on a pair of tourists who clearly had no clue how to fish his patch. He walked over and handed us some mackerel bait. We copied his ledgering technique and reeled in three mangrove snappers from around the wharf, including one for Barry.

Somewhere in among watching distant lightning strikes roll around like drunks brawling along the horizon to Tampa, and listening to baseball chatter waft on warm evening breeze, there came a break in the sports coverage. The word 'Ireland' leaped like a giant marlin across the pier at me. That is, I thought I had heard mention of Ireland. I looked at Barry. We

shrugged our shoulders and fished on. At the end of our session I asked the friendly dude to photograph one of our snappers. He strolled over with that look on his face – it was written in his eyes: 'Are you serious? A trophy-photograph of you holding a sprat?' He obliged. It was our first American fish. Welcome to Florida.

After a while I forgot to separate the fact from the fiction; I didn't care as the writing is addictive and, like a well taken fly, I was hooked.

Walking on Water is available in all good bookshops, retailing at €14.95. It's also available from the Liffey Press website at www.theliffeypress.com at an online price of €11.95 and can also be obtained online from Amazon, etc.

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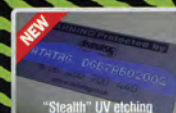
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DAPPING NATURALS AND ARTIFICIALS

There is a lot more to dapping than meets the eye

Dapping to most anglers is only practiced at Mayfly time or in August, when the Daddy long legs and the grasshoppers hatch, but there is a lot more to dapping than meets the eye.

Lets start with the set up we need to have a comfortable day's dapping. It has to be light and easy to handle, so 14 1/2 ft is all you need. Any longer and it would not be balanced correctly.

You don't need floss, as in a squally wind the fly will blow all over the place. You're better to use 5/6 lb nylon attached to 10/12 lb nylon on your fly reel. The best hook I found to be a Kamasan B983 size 10/12 tied to sit upside down so that the two Mayflies sit on the shank of the hook and not slide down to the bend. If you are new to dapping, putting the flies on can be tricky, but you will soon get used to it.

The best place to insert the hook is the brown spot at the natural's thorax. Hold the fly's wings between finger and thumb and push the hook through the brown part and gently push the fly up the shank, repeat the process with the other fly and make sure both of them are sitting upright and across the shank with feet sitting on the water not lying to the side or flat on the surface. If you use too big a hook it takes a lot more

work to keep the flies up on the surface.

While dapping with the Daddy long legs is much the same as using a Mayfly, you have to handle the Daddys more gently because the wings and legs come off easily. The best time to collect Daddies is first thing in the morning, especially if there is a heavy dew. You can collect them in the rushes and long grass - they won't move very much until the sun warms them up and then you will need a small children's beach net to catch them. I use a plastic sweet jar to hold them, with a top wide enough to put your hand in. Take the lid off and get an old piece of rubber wide enough to cover the top - an old car tube will do - cut it open and place the lid onto the rubber and mark roughly two inches wider than the top. Fasten it with a cable tie or just tape it up, then take a sharp knife and make a cross shape on the rubber that covers the top opening, so it will fold around your wrist and stay in shape when you reach in to take a fly out. You don't have a lid to open and the flies can't get out, just



The newly emerged greenfly can be collected from the underside of loughside bushes and trees

put a couple of air holes in the jar and Bob's your uncle. Put them on the hook in the same way as for the Mayfly.

Dapping the cricket is much the same. They are more easily found than grasshoppers in some parts of the country and work equally well. They are very effective even when the Mayfly is on and better still when



A pretty Lough Mask trout caught on the dap.



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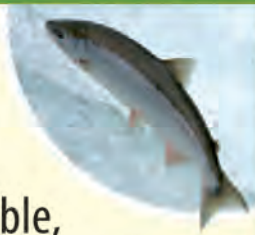
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Several mating Mayfly on the surface create a disturbance irresistible to trout. The canny dapper replicates this by placing two flies on the hook.

sedges are about. If the breeze is not too strong and you have the right dapping rod you can work the cricket with a little movement of the rod top and, with some help from the breeze, make the it skit across the water like a sedge.

A splashy type of rise

In 2009, I was fishing on Lough

Arrow for a few days. I had a couple of trout on the dap, hard fished for in an East wind with a harsh light. On the last day, the fly was hatching and blowing down from Bog Bay. I could see trout taking fly downwind in front of me, with a splashy type of rise, far out over the deep water. The rise form was not that of fish confidently taking Mayfly. I put on the dries and several trout

showed in front of the boat.

I had no problem seeing what direction they were going, covered them well in front putting it on their noses but I could not get an offer. The flies were sitting thick on the water, yet they were not interested. Not one Mayfly was touched. I saw a sedge scurry across the surface and he didn't get ten yards before a trout rose.

On went the cricket and I started a drift. I hadn't gone very far with the cricket tracking the water nicely when a big trout's head and shoulders appeared. Down went the rod to the top of the water. I waited a few seconds then lifted; everything went solid and after a cracking fight I netted the trout between three or 5lb hooked in roof of its mouth. I spooned him right away expecting him to be full of sedges, but there were Mayfly nymphs, mostly with wings just opened. The fish on that particular day wanted the fly half in, half out of the surface, which had been indicated by the splashy rise. Before the rise finished I had four trout for almost 12 lb yet if I hadn't had a cricket I don't think I would have got a fish all day. So don't always think when you see a rise they are taking files off the top.



Dapping can often rise the biggest, wariest fish as no leader touches the surface when the fly dances tantalisingly across the surface.

Timing the strike when dapping this is the fun part and do not take your eyes off the fly. The takes come if the fly is presented correctly, in a leisurely fashion. Apart from spent gnat fishing there is nothing more satisfying when drifting down a shore dapping to see a fish taking a fly of the top. A pull on the oar brings you in line with the fish, the dap is sitting perfectly, the heart picks up a beat in anticipation, it seems a long time but it's merely seconds, then a swirl and the fly is gone. For a moment the world stands still. You raise the rod. There's still a slight doubt - did I do everything right? All you have to do is drop the rod as soon as you see the rise to the top of the water, let it sit a second or two and lift it back up. If the fish feels any resistance it will spit the fly out. If the hook is tied in the way I suggested, the trout will be hooked in the top of the mouth.

With the dap you can sweep the fly from side to side

You can dap any kind of fly you like provided it is 'bumbly' enough to skip over the waves. If you take wet fly fishing for example, nine times out of

ten the best fly on the cast is your top dropper for attracting fish so you try to keep it bobbing on the water for as long as you can. With the right dapping rod you can work the dapping fly, be it be a size 12 bumble or a large sedgehog all day long. When you are sitting in a boat drifting down a shore you are casting your flies down in front of you and retrieving them back more or less in a straight line, but with the dap you can sweep the fly from side to side covering half the length of the boat you are showing the fly over a far wider area and covering far more water with less effort. Now comes the hard part the takes come in a couple of different ways as I said before do not take your eyes off the fly. Sometimes when the fly is tracking across the waves the fish will follow till it reaches the end of its journey, then just as the fly stops momentarily and before it starts to sweep back, the trout takes it. You have to treat this take as you would one to a dry fly and let the fish turn down.

When you are skating the fly over the waves and the trout head and tails you have to give him time to turn

down. Just drop the rod to the water and lift it straight up again. On the other hand, if the fish makes a splashy rise, strike as you would when fishing a wet fly.

The other great thing about the dapping technique is you can lift it and set it at three different angles in front of you, as you would with dry fly rod and just strike the fish the same way as well. You seem to get better fish with this method, maybe it's something to do with no fly line or cast lying on the water and there's nothing to spook the fish. Sometimes when you are dapping at Mayfly time if the trout are slow at coming to the dap, put a Wolf on and skate it across the water to bring them up.

Dapping is good fun and there so much more you can do to experiment. It took me a long time to get a dapping rod with the right action and weight, and now I have it. It is just as I described at the very beginning. Like a wand, I can feel a fish of a pound on it, yet it's capable of handling fish of 5 or 6lb. So why not give dapping a try, I'm sure that you will enjoy it just as much as I do.



A worthy opponent slipped back to his domain, ensuring sport for years to come.

THE MADNESS AND THE CURE

These three flies can almost be guaranteed to help anglers over get their Mojo back again.

I almost feel mentally well again - and I can hear many of you saying 'Munn has lost the plot.' Yes, hearing voices may be a sign of madness, as I was once told this by a good friend of mine who also happened to be a psychiatric nurse. And no, I am not her patient, well not yet that is. What I am trying to say is that one of my lifelong passions has been fly fishing, it is also my job, it is part of who I am and I have been denied that pleasure for a while through the closed season but my mind is never too far away from our marvellous sport.

Over the winter months I always seem to get the blues and at times I must say I can feel darn right miserable (if not going slightly mad). I know many of you that know me will think the opposite, but sadly it is true that during many of the cold dark days of winter when my fishing is almost non-existent and I have not been lucky enough to get to work in some part of the world that I can fish, my mood seems at times to match the season. That's the way I feel, in fact there is actually a term for this phenomenon - 'Seasonal Affective Disorder' (SAD) - which is very appropriate don't you think as far as my fishing's concerned.

Anyway, I am starting to feel that the clouds are once again lifting as I can see my fishing season starting to appear on the not too distant horizon. I am even starting to look at my rods, reels and fly boxes that have been lying untouched for months, apart from a few trips to a rainbow trout fishery during the long winter months when my sanity could not take it any more and I had to cast a

line onto water, and I would thank them for that little 'fix.' But now I feel practically alive again and I am almost cheerful, as I type this because finally at long last I am settling down to write for the Spring issue of Irish Country Sports & Country Life, as March is normally the time of year I start my fishing in earnest. So blissful days are not too far away, wonderful days when I can cast a fly on a shinning stream or a majestic lough, with or even without my fly fishing brothers and sisters, in search of wild trout or salmon, which to me and many other fly anglers is heaven on earth.

So, before I started writing, I had a look in one of my fly boxes and I decided to show you three of my favourite trout flies which have given me and other anglers much success over the years. Of course, like many angling addicts I have masses of fly patterns that give me confidence, but these three are flies that constantly catch fish right though the season.

For one thing they are splendid on stillwaters, loughs and rivers and, as a fly angler who will fish for anything that swims at many different venues, I like versatile patterns. But we must remember the successful fly fisher, whether angling on lough or river, will need to adapt his fishing tactics and at times fly pattern to suit the seasons.

As for the introduction to this article, I know I may be exaggerating just a little bit, I know many now fish in the winter for rainbow trout at stocked fisheries and some off the salmon rivers which opened in Ireland in January and February and

perhaps some of us may have also been out in search of pike, which is becoming ever popular over the winter months with the fly rod. I know some of us may have even been fortunate enough to have even done some angling in a far-off land and all these elements of our sport can be great but, as local anglers, we now have many more options as rivers and lakes open for the first time this season and winter starts to loosen its cold grip and spring pushes in. We will even feel like going fishing once more.

So here are three flies that will do very well in the coming months, I hope you will dress a few and I hope you have a great season in 2015.



Butcher Fly

The Butcher

Hook: Partridge Wet Fly 8 - 14

Thread: Black or red

Tail: Red ibis or swan dyed red (duck)

Body: Flat silver tinsel

Rib: Oval silver tinsel

Wing: Blue mallard, crow wing or magpie tail feather

Hackle: Black cock

The Butcher, which was originally named 'Moon's fly,' was invented over 170 years ago. It was

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Spool

Code	Price
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created by two gentlemen from Tunbridge Wells in England, Messrs. Moon and Jewhurst. As Moon was a butcher, the colours of the Butcher are supposed to represent the hallmarks of his trade, red blood and a blue apron.

The Butcher still catches fish on still waters and on rivers to this day.

There are a few flies in the Butcher series, including the great, Bloody Butcher, the Irish Butcher and another personal favourite of mine the Kingfisher Butcher. All these attractor patterns work well for seatrout and browns, and the Butcher and the Bloody Butcher are fantastic flies to use when fish are feeding on fry; with their silver bodies and dark wing they look very fishy. As for the Irish and the Kingfisher Butchers, I have found these great river flies when fishing for migratory fish, like seatrout or lough run browns like Dollaghan, though I know quite a few anglers that tell me the Kingfish Butcher is also great in peaty lakes for brown trout and takes rainbow trout on still waters in early spring.



Photo Peter Ross Fly

The Peter Ross

Hook: Partridge Wet Fly 8-14

Thread: black or red

Tail: G.P. tippets

Body: rear 1/3 medium flat silver tinsel, front 2/3 red seals fur or sub.
Rib: fine silver wire full length of body

Hackle: black hen or cock.

Wing: Teal breast, folded

Peter Ross was a storekeeper and keen angler from Perthshire in Scotland and he first developed his namesake fly in the 1890s as a variant of the old dressing the Teal and Red. His creation has become, over the years, one of the best known flies in Europe.

It is fished on stillwaters or loughs for trout and seatrout, normally as a point fly, and it's a very useful pattern to try around duck fly time in the spring. It also works later in the year when trout are feeding on pin fry. In rivers it is also a very successful pattern, which not only works for river trout but also takes migratory species such as dollaghan, seatrout and even salmon.

I know it is an extremely useful pattern for catching grilse for many anglers, but saying that the Peter Ross is a bit of a perplexing pattern as many anglers I have spoken to over the years don't seem to do well with it, while others (including myself) have done well with it. My advice is to 'give it a go.'



Photo Munn's May

Munn's May or SM May

Hook: 8-10 Partridge wet fly or dry fly for top dropper.

Tail: a few Strands of pheasant tail,

Rib: fine silver Wire

Body: Yellow Flashabou or Lite

Brite dubbing

Body Hackle: light /med blue dun, cock

Wing: chartreuse deer hair (not the bleached ones)

Collar Hackles: orange, one or two turns with a yellow/olive English Partridge hackle in front.

This is a fly with its origins in the old gosling style of Irish lough flies and one that works well on the Irish, Scottish and English Loughs and rivers at Mayfly time. It has taken many fish consistently for anglers over the years in the British isles, but should work well on all trout. It is a fly that has evolved from other flies and ideas. Many years ago Roy Graham from Belfast started adding Lite Brite to his flies, mixing it with his seal fur dubbing (he used to dress a fly similar to this one but much darker and with no wing). The addition of deer hair helps this pattern, especially in a wave. It works well on Lough Erne on the top dropper, pulled and then dabbled at the boat. It also works when fish are feeding on daphnia mostly due to the addition of the orange hackle, which should be dressed long. This fly has been a number one wet fly for me and many others at Mayfly time. Interestingly my friend Frankie Haddock did well with it ginked up and used as a dry fly when he came across early May fly feeders taking the natural dry.

Stevie works full time in the angling sector as a guide, writer and qualified game angling fly casting instructor; he has appeared in many angling books, DVDs and angling shows all over the world. He grew up fishing on rivers and loughs of Ireland where he often guides. He runs teaching classes in fly fishing and hosts groups fishing in Canada, Norway, Argentina, Ireland etc.. He is a member of the elite Hardy Pro Team and The Partridge Fly Tying Pro Team. You can contact him via email anglingclassics@aol.com or get more info at www.anglingclassics.co.uk



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

IRISH ANGLING FEDERATIONS UNITE WITH FISSTA TO OPPOSE MINISTER COVENEY'S TEN MEGA FISH FARMING PLAN

The campaign against the ten mega fish farm plan of Minister Coveney TD took another giant step forward this month when all the major angling federations met and finally signed up to a document that declared war on the government policy of open net cages in Galway Bay and nine other locations along the west coast.

FISSTA are delighted to announce an inter federations agreement between fellow anglers to unite and campaign on like-minded issues as signed recently on February 13th in Hilton Hotel Kilmainham. The document outlined a number of issues in which all the signatories agreed to pursue to improve the anglers lot. FISSTA succeeded in obtaining agreement to oppose the salmon farming policy of Minister Coveney and especially his ten mega farms plan which we all fear will wipe out our wild Atlantic salmon.

This is a major development that proves our lobby is gaining huge momentum since our first public awareness meeting in May 2012 in Galway. FISSTA were at that time the first federation to oppose this issue and bring it to the attention of the public.

The formation of Galway Bay Against Salmon Cages in January 2013 gave the campaign a further impetus and opposition to the local application in Galway Bay lodged by BIM in the Autumn of 2012. Following a very successful protest rally in March 2013 in which Goldman Environmental Winner Mr Orri Vigfusson from Iceland attended, Minister Coveney delayed his decision until after his EU Presidency. Many pictures of the large numbers on that Galway march made international news around the world at it is evident now that our sustained campaign in the press has succeeded in to date in delaying further the decision to approve or reject the application to Minister Coveney himself as judge, jury and executioner of the state application.



Clean white water in our rivers as Spring approaches.

FISSTA ARE FOUNDING MEMBERS OF THE IRISH SPORTS COALITION

The following Angling Federations signed the historic document on 13th February 2015.
FISSTA - Federation of Irish Salmon and Sea-Trout Anglers
TAFI - Trout Angling Federation of Ireland
IFPAC - Irish Federation of Pike Angling Clubs
EFSA - European Federation of Sea Anglers
IADA - Irish Angling Development Alliance
NCCFI - National Coarse Fishing Federation of Ireland
SSTRAI - Salmon and Sea Trout Recreational Anglers of Ireland
NARA - National Anglers Representation Association

The priority for angling is to end the ill-conceived BIM plan to locate ten massive 15,000 ton monster fish farms off the west coast of Ireland. Other issues for FISSTA include development of an agreed all island angling plan that will capitalise and build on the €750m. value that our volunteers in many angling clubs deliver to the Irish economy every season.

FISSTA object to our state bodies interfering further in our sport of Angling and oppose all recent attempts to impose without consultation The following: The recent fishery card as per the new regulations on January 1st. A compulsory angling charge A register of anglers. A national identity card for anglers.

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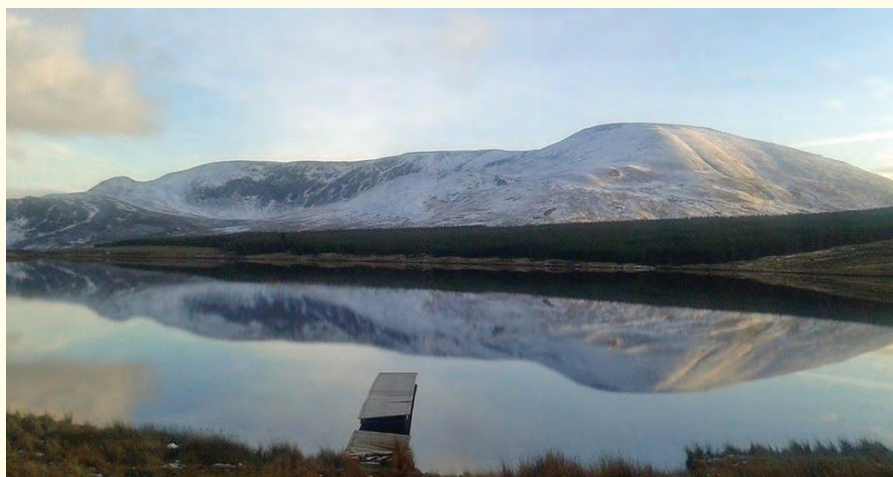
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Co. Donegal,
Ireland

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The stunning Loch Aubha near Slieve League, Co Donegal

The introduction of penalty points. Failure to grant clubs secure tenure on state owned fisheries

At the signing event in Kilmainham, FISSTA Chairman Paul Lawton stated: "We will all be lobbying our respective politicians to listen and act promptly to our views and proposals. FISSTA call on all our colleagues to engage intensely with the Government so that a favourable outcome for all is achieved."

NEW FISSTA TEAM UP AND RUNNING FOR 2015 SEASON - NATIONAL EXECUTIVE COUNCIL

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On behalf of the new National Executive Council elected at our AGM on November 30th in Athlone, may we wish all our readers and club members a very prosperous and successful 2015 season. The work of every club starts now and while most of our rivers do not open until later, it is important all your membership is registered and all insurance cover is in place for this month for the protection of your members. It was a very positive and productive AGM and thank the floor for having confidence in me and the

other officers by re-electing us for one more season.

Sadly, there are now 87 rivers closed to taking a fish, with 62 rivers completely closed and that is far too many especially for the clubs working hard to get their waters back to normality. Our Chairman, Paul Lawton thanked the AGM for expressing their confidence once again in his National Executive Council members (list copied below) and vowed that FISSTA will increase the pressure further and lobby even harder to get our rivers open as soon as possible. We ask each club to assist us in this most vital task.

OPEN ALL OUR RIVERS & CLOSE COMMERCIAL NETTING NOW

We continue to lobby hard against all commercial netting including draft in the estuaries and drift in Castlemaine and Feale and other estuaries. Thankfully, the mixed stock nets off the North Coast of Antrim under DCAL remain on a 'stood down temporarily' status, as are the Foyle nets under the Loughs Agency authority, but we will continue to keep the pressure on our three state authorities until the political will ends the nets once and for all. We share the frustrations of all anglers who desperately wish to see progress on reopening of our closed rivers which IFI seem to accept with no urgent action in their plan of work. There is immediate need for all scientists to communicate more efficiently as partners with FISSTA to reduce the closed river list in the coming season. We appeal to all clubs to liaise with us to halt this present stagnation in such developmental work."

FISSTA STEP UP CAMPAIGN AGAINST TEN NEW FISH FARMS

After the AGM Chairman Paul Lawton issued a press statement thanking all clubs for their attendance and full support. He stated that "Every day that Minister Coveney TD fails to announce his approval for his mega farms is a victory for us but we are not celebrating so long as the project is on the Minister's desk and not in his wastepaper basket. To date Minister Coveney has failed to announce the sanction or the scrapping of the BIM ten mega fish farms plan first announced in 2011.

Our campaign titled "IRELAND AGAINST SALMON CAGES" continues to gain momentum while the FISSTA founded local pressure group called Galway Bay Against Salmon Cages continue their Trojan work winning the hearts and minds of both politicians and the general public. The intense pace of our sustained campaign over the past three and a half years consisting of five major protest marches in Carrigaline, (Minister Coveney's office), Castlebar (Taoiseach's office), Dublin (BIM Aviva Conference), Shelbourne Hotel (Good Food Irl awards). By far the most successful with over 2,500 turning out on the day took place in Galway city

where our true and loyal friend to the wild salmon, Orri Vigfusson was the keynote speaker who sent out a very strong message which headlined in the international press. He has made several visits since to review progress and on his last trip here in January, he expressed concern that the fish farm axe was still hanging over the neck of our wild salmon and angling. Last July, a new ministerial duo was appointed but to date we see no change of policy or attitude as the Inland Fisheries Ireland are still very slow to vigorously oppose this EIS application and BIM seem to continue to steal a march on the state vs state debate. We are concerned that this new reshuffle will only neutralise IFI further from opposing fish farm licenses so that is why we must increase our lobbying and campaigning at this crucial stage. We have held meetings with An Taoiseach, Minister Simon Coveney TD, ministers and several key civil servants in our campaign to stop sealiced fish farms infesting our migrating smolts but under Freedom of Information answers we now know so too are Marine Harvest who we are certain are very active seeking new licenses starting with a mega 15,000 ton one with over 70 cages near Inis Oirr in Galway Bay. Help us with our Plan A, B, and C to save our wild Atlantic salmon and seatrout by registering your membership and donating now.

BETTER INSURANCE COVER

Once again there is no increase on our improved insurance cover that further protects you and your club. There is an optional extra to extend the cover of nominated officers which some clubs have asked us to offer for 2015. 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 to avail of cover that commenced from January onwards (See details on quality of cover on website www.fissta.com). Please be wary of any body that will refuse to provide evidence and quality of cover until after the premium is paid.

STRONGER DEMANDS FROM CLUBS

When we register as members of FISSTA, we are joining a vast network of clubs on waters that demand a massive voluntary effort to maintain the high standards already set by generations of anglers who laid the groundwork for what should be a thriving angling tourism industry. As volunteers, we are only as good as our members allow us to be and as usual, we depend on the more established clubs to lead by carrying the neighbouring weaker members as our stocks still face serious threats.

It is your support as always that will determine our success on issues such as sealice and stocks for 2015 onwards.

FISSTA ANNUAL DRAW WINNERS 2014

FIRST PRIZE: ONE WEEK IN LANZAROTE

WINNER: LUKE O'BRIEN SHOES TUAM CO. GALWAY
 SECOND PRIZE: PONTOON BRIDGE HOTEL ANGLING BREAK
 WINNER: JOE MC CANNON KILLARNEY CO KERRY
 THIRD PRIZE: BLACKWATER LODGE ANGLING BREAK
 WINNER: BERNICE O'REGAN LEE SALMON ANGLERS CORK
 FOURTH PRIZE: BLACKWATER LODGE FLYCASTING TUITION
 WINNER: JOE PILKINGTON ENNIS CO CLARE
 FIFTH PRIZE: BALLINA SALMON ANGLERS VOUCHER €300
 WINNER: PAUL QUIRKE LEE SALMON ANGLERS CORK
 SIXTH PRIZE: SLIEVE LEAGUE ANGLING - VOUCHER €200
 WINNER: NATHAN KAHLE SLIGO

LEADING SALMON CONSERVATIONIST ORRI VIGFUSSON VISITS LOUGHS AGENCY AND DONEGAL FISHERIES TO PROMOTE WILD SALMON PROJECTS

The leading environmentalist, who was awarded the Goldman Prize for his work in salmon conservation has visited the Foyle and Gweebarra rivers to encourage anglers to continue implementing their salmon enhancement plans. While much needs to be done in Ireland, he reserved his main criticism for our eastern neighbours when he complained that the Scottish government is failing to protect the country's wild salmon and needs to curb the practice of netting the fish at the mouths of rivers. Orri Vigfusson, the founder of the North Atlantic Salmon Fund, said that there should be a ban on killing salmon in Scotland after claiming that stocks have declined by more than 90 per cent since the late 1960s. FISSTA agree that the

exploitation levels must be reduced by rod but only after a complete cessation of the commercial netmen is put in place, otherwise they are wasting precious time and valuable fish.

Mr. Vigfusson also met with Pettigo & District Angling Association during his visit and said he was very impressed by the unique way in which the club had gone about trying to improve degraded habitat, restore free passage for migrating fish and overcome potentially detrimental land use changes which had affected the Derg system.

He was equally enthusiastic about what he described as: "the very worthwhile partnerships which the Association has developed with Loughs Agency, Queen's University Belfast, Coillte, Forest Service, Strabane District Council, NPWS and NIEA, amongst others, to try to gather evidence and bring about meaningful sustainable growth, both to their own sport and the potential for tourist angling in the area." Mr. Vigfusson's visit to Pettigo was co-ordinated by the Association's secretary, Davy Stinson, from Boa Island.

EU QUESTIONS THE VALUE FOR MONEY OF FISH FARMING

Many anglers will be familiar with top civil servant Kevin Cardiff formerly from the Department of Finance. Well, Kevin has moved on to a top job in Brussels, and recently he announced: "Environmental and health risks were not considered sufficiently in funding decisions for aquaculture". Kevin Cardiff who is now member of the Court of Auditors responsible for the report made many recommendations, which included the following one which we hope Minister Simon Coveney and Minister Michelle O'Neill will heed now: The European Commission should establish guidelines for the consideration of relevant environmental facts when determining public funding.



Orri Vigfusson is pictured with Fermanagh anglers Davey Stinson, Willie Mills and Michael Stinson.

SALMON EXTINCTION ON THE CARDS IF LICENSES ARE GRANTED

Minister for salmon farming and real farming Mr. Simon Coveney TD stated on an RTE radio programme in early February that he was cautious about this (salmon farming) industry and may make a decision on the Galway Bay licence application before the summer and was seeking 'very detailed scientific and environmental advice' on the matter. It is good to know that he is consulting and hope he examines what is happening with salmon farming in Norway, Scotland, Chile and Canada. But every location is different and most farms in Ireland are experiencing huge losses due to sea lice infestations, storms, algal blooms, Amoebic Gill Disease, stinger jelly fish and Pancreas disease. (Source: according to Marine Harvest Stock market reports for 4th quarter 2014). Compare that blight on production with the huge success that Minister Coveney announced when USA Department of Agriculture reopened markets for Irish prime beef which may pave the way for the lucrative Chinese market later in the year. So, why jeopardise a hard won market with inferior farmed salmon when we can underpin the high clean green reputation and future of Irish farmers by establishing a great trade in beef and other food related products.

FISSTA have been attempting to debate this with the real farmers of Ireland, ever since the Irish Farmers' Association issued a report claiming that they wanted the 600 fish farm licence applications that were on the Minister's desk for five years granted now as aquaculture could create up to 2,000 additional jobs in coastal areas leading to up to €100 million in further exports. Sadly, the creation of these new jobs will be at the expense of 15,000 jobs already created in angling tourism that delivers over €755million to the state.

Since Bord Iascaigh Mhara (BIM), submitted an application in August 2012 for a 15,000 tonne salmon fish farm, quite a lot has transpired to sink the initiative, which a number of international aquaculture operators expressed interest in operating on behalf of the State agency. BIM are also seeking an aquaculture licence for a 5,000 tonne farm between Inishbofin island and Inishturk in Co Mayo, which it applied for last year but as yet no EIS appears to have been lodged.

The Ireland Against Salmon Cages group led by FISSTA has opposed the applications on environmental grounds, claiming they pose significant risk to the Inis Oirr area citing such disasters as the 230,000 salmon escaping from adverse weather conditions in Bantry Bay last February which impacts negatively on all wild salmon and sea trout habitat in the south west. The marine report on this, the largest farmed salmon escape in the world was refused by Minister Coveney TD claiming it was confidential. Since then, anglers are reported to be catching farmed salmon in the Laune system which are damaging our angling



At the Birr Game Fair Angling Demonstration were: (LIR) Mike O' Keefe, FISSTA National Youth Director, along with Fly fishing maestro Robert Gillespie with Kerry Schools Angling Winners Trevor Cremin and brothers Ciaran and Sean Daly from the Oweyneecree Angling Club in County Kerry.

tourism product and diluting the native strain of our wild Atlantic salmon. Our National Executive Council member and Chairman of Galway Bay Against Salmon Cages repeatedly highlights many scientific reports and one from Norwegian scientists in particular which states that sea lice in the North Atlantic have developed a mutation which makes them immune to a number of pesticide treatments, another scientific report from BC Canada found that certain pesticides used on salmon farms can kill lobsters and other species up to 10km from salmon farms. One of these pesticides, Cypermethrin is licenced for use on Irish salmon farms and is mentioned in the EIS as one of three that may be used in Galway Bay

Minister Simon Coveney TD in reply to a Dail question, pointed out to Independent Kerry TD Tom Fleming, that the European Court of Justice found that Ireland had failed to fulfil its obligations under the Habitats Directive. The Minister said a process was agreed with the European commission which would lead to full compliance. Just in case there was any decline in his enthusiasm for outdated technology of the open salmon cages, he promised that "significant progress will be made" this year in licensing around the Irish coast and that more than 200 licences had been issued in the past three years for bays, including Inner Bantry Bay, Roaringwater Bay, Killary Harbour and Castlemaine Harbour.

The ten mega salmon farm idea for over 150,000 tons per annum by the Minister seems very much alive as he clarified that a decision on the first of ten controversial applications, for a fish farm near Inis Orr in Galway Bay will be made "as soon as possible", the Minister said. In response to his Dail answer, journalist Fergal Keane on RTE Drivetime (January 20th 2015), did the nation a great service by exposing part of the fishy salmon

farming story against our wild fish habitat. Every scientific report has highlighted the sealice impact but fish farm interests ignore the level of damage and our wild fish continue to die despite the scientific debate having been won long ago. We all know more than enough to avoid farming salmon or sea trout in Irish waters that cause Amoebic Gill Disease and massive sealice infestation as the past figures prove in Donegal. It is time to leave this open cage fish farming industry to Scotland and Norway with productions of 200,000 tons and 1.2m tons respectively. Ireland can never compete at that level as our miniscule 10,000 tons of production makes the political decision not to grant anymore licenses at present a much easier one. It is time to avoid any further gamble to our wild fish which supports 15,000 jobs and generates an economic impact of €755m to our west coast of Ireland communities.

The entire process which seems to involve him having a conversation with himself is a flawed one as the Minister is conflicted when he admits "there is always a strict separation between my ministerial role as decision maker in respect of aquaculture licence applications and my ministerial duty to promote the sustainable development of the industry. This separation of duties is strictly observed."

But we anglers, know better and with such potential damage to our marine environment, tourism and economy it must not be his decision alone. The implications are so catastrophic that this decision must be a collective cabinet one as the time has come for Ministers Coveney, White, Kelly and Noonan to convene an inter - departmental sealice summit and do the right thing by rejecting the application to grant the license for the first of and for the entire ten fish farms off our coast.

In this case the message is simple for our politicians. - do nothing and leave our wild Atlantic salmon alone!

GWEEBARRA FISHING ALLEGATIONS BACK BEFORE DUNGLOE DISTRICT COURT

This magazine has highlighted the fight by the Donegal Game Anglers Federation against the attempted state takeover of the Gweebarra salmon and sea trout river since the story broke in 2006. The case continues to wind its way slowly through the courts as one hundred and eighty two charges of illegal fishing against 44 men and one woman were called at Dungloe District Court in mid February and as the protest continues Judge Paul Kelly was told nine of the charges against three men were new. He adjourned them for mention to March 10th. The judge was also told that many of the other one hundred and seventy three charges against 44 defendants had been before the courts, ranging from the District to the Supreme, over the past six years. It was hoped three Supreme Court judges would deliver a decision within a month. Judge Kelly adjourned the charges to May 12th. All cases involve allegations by Inland Fisheries of illegal fishing on the Gweebarra system in the Doochary area. Some of the summonses date back to 2008.

NEW ANGLING REGULATIONS FOR 2015

The Minister has signed into law and effective from the first of January a new regulation that suggests an angler take even more pens and paper to the river and fill out fish capture cards as well as our log book accounting for the tags allocated. The Department have written to clarify and assure us we misunderstand the new fish capture card rationale, but the legislation is clear and despite the clear objections of FISSTA under the 30 day consultation, our concerns were once again ignored. The following is the extract from the new 2015 regulations.

Fish capture cards

25 14. (1) The CEO may require distributors to issue a fish capture card (in such form as he or she decides) together with each gill tag issued to the holder of a salmon rod ordinary licence.

(2) Where the holder of a salmon rod licence captures any fish at any time, the holder shall enter details of -

- (a) the river or lake where the fish was captured,
- (b) the date of capture of the fish,
- (c) the number of fish captured and killed, and
- (d) his or her rod licence number, on a fish capture card and post or deliver the card to IFI at one of its offices mentioned in Schedule 6.

(3) The CEO may require a holder of a salmon rod ordinary licence fishing in a fishery district to give details of the number of fish captured by the holder, date of capture, and the river from which they were captured

together with his or her licence number by means of a telephone number, an electronic mail or a facsimile address provided by or on behalf of the CEO to the holder.

(4) The holder of a salmon rod or primary licence shall comply with a requirement made of him or her under paragraph (3).

(5) A telephone number, an electronic mail or a facsimile address under paragraph (3) may be provided by publishing the number or address and the details to be given in a notice to the licence holder, prominently displayed in the fishery district concerned or published in a newspaper published in and circulating in the fishery district concerned.

(6) In this Regulation "fish capture card" means a card issued by IFI under paragraph (1).

Logbooks

15. (1) IFI shall issue a salmon and sea trout commercial fishing logbook to the holder of a commercial fishing licence.

(2) A salmon and sea trout angler's logbook shall be issued by IFI or an authorised agent to the holder of a salmon rod ordinary licence.

(3) A logbook shall relate to one fishing licence only.

(4) The holder of a logbook shall have the logbook in his or her possession when fishing for wild salmon or sea trout under the fishing licence to which the logbook relates.

(5) Logbooks shall be in the form set out in Schedule 5.

RED BAY AND GLENARM FISH FARMS DISPUTE CONTINUES

Thank to all who contacted FISSTA regarding the new applications for salmon farms in Glenarm County Antrim which has met with serious community opposition in which a new application in Red Bay is being considered. As in most areas, opinion has divided the community in which both sides sharpen their scripts on the jobs versus pollution debate.

FISSTA will always be indebted to our angling correspondents who help highlight our issues but one who deserves special mention is none other than that seasoned angling writer Dan Kinney from the Belfast Newsletter. Dan has been a champion of our angling and country sports ever since he returned from many years ago. Like Peter Carvosso, RIP (Independent Newspapers) he sacrificed the fame of Fleet Street for the solitude of these waters for the fishing, and thankfully decided to write about it in a weekly column in the farming supplement every Saturday for some time now.

The headline ran "We don't want more Glenarm (organic) dirt on our beaches" in which Dan Kinney went on to report on a highly charged three hour meeting in Cushendall in the Glens of Antrim. Needless to say, the Minister must decide and as yet the public must have their say as residents

will seriously suffer the impact of the new licenses if granted.

'SLOW FOOD' CELEBRITIES BREAK LINK TO FARMED SALMON BOYCOTT

The statement by two of Ireland's leading food celebrities - Sally McKenna and Darina Allen - to 'Inshore Ireland' that they do not support the boycott of farmed salmon came as a complete surprise to the Boycott Farmed Salmon campaign. This has in the last two years grown into an international campaign supported by an increasing number of retail food outlets, including those of Slow Food members here in Ireland.

Perhaps the individuals involved are not familiar with Slow Food's policy on farmed salmon - or the meaning of the word 'boycott'. The Slow Food policy was made crystal clear last year by Piero Sardo, President of the Slow Food Foundation for Biodiversity, when this issue arose over the proposed Galway Bay mega-salmon farm and the implication taken by some from the Environmental Impact Statement contents that Slow Food supported the project. He wrote: "Open net pen aquaculture is not a solution to the problem of overfishing: It damages natural ecosystems on a local and a global level, including wild stocks, habitats and water quality. Feeding carnivorous salmon in farms means other wild species must also be harvested, resulting in a larger carbon footprint - since the fish feed must be fished, processed and transported".

Slow Food devotes a specific listing to farmed salmon in its 'Not On My Plate' section of its website which makes it clear that 'salmon is anything but a sustainable fish' (including wild Atlantic salmon) and that those who claim to be following the sustainable principles of Slow Foods will 'voluntarily abstain from using, buying, or dealing with' farmed salmon.

It is not up to Slow Food's Irish celebrities to determine which of that organisation's policies they will adhere to and which they will not. We have accordingly written to Piero Sardo of Slow Food seeking a ruling on the membership of Sally McKenna and Darina Allen.

DAMNING FILM LIFTS LID ON RIVER LEE 'TRAGEDY'

A thought-provoking new documentary, narrated by two Corkmen Alan Nolan and Kevin Corcoran, is set to highlight some of the murkier events that have had a profoundly disturbing effect on the river over recent decades. At the core of 'River Runner' lies the sad plight of the River Lee's Wild Atlantic Salmon, which is used to convey what Alan Nolan described as the "disturbing truth" of what has happened to the river over the past six decades. To find out more about 'River Run' visits www.mp2films.com

THE JOYS OF SPRING TROUTING

It's worth braving the elements to be out there casting dry flies over speckled trout in the first days of Spring.



A Spring trout on the nymph.

By the time this article goes to press many readers will have finished their shooting season, Christmas will be just memory and the days will be lengthening considerably bringing thoughts of sport in the season to come. The first few spring salmon will probably have been caught, possibly on the 'Drowes, but closer to home there is good sport to be had especially if the days are mild and the skies overcast.

My fishing instincts seem to kick in almost as soon as the last pheasant folds in the air on beaters day at Shanes Castle, my last shoot of the season and I look forward to my birthday on St. Patricks Day when I make my first foray to the river in the hope of finding a rising trout. Many anglers baulk at the thought of marching out so early in the season. Often there will be frost on the ground or wind and rain but this does not necessarily mean that trout are not feeding. In fact I have seen trout rising strongly even when snow covered the ground and hatches of large dark olives can occur through the winter.

The first time I noticed this was memorable, not only for the great rise

of trout but, as it was mid winter and a heavy fall of snow covered the fields, we were out with the ferrets and lurcher to try to catch a few rabbits along the Six Mile Water at Doagh. As I trudged along the river bank I stepped on an area which had been eroded underneath and gave way as soon as I put my weight on it. Next thing I knew I was falling headfirst into the icy water. When I came back up to the surface my first thought was for the poor ferrets which had been in a box on my back and was now smashed, but luckily as I swam across the pool there were two little heads bobbing along as the two hardy little creatures swam to the bank. Our lift wasn't due back for several hours so we shook ourselves down, emptied the boots and when my brother and his mate eventually stopped laughing we carried on. In fact we had a good day's hunting, keeping moving to stay warm and even catching a few bunnies which gave the lurcher some cracking races through the snow. On that occasion, despite the snow, about midday the sun peaked through, conditions became a little more pleasant

and the olives hatched in numbers and we witnessed a great rise of trout, months before the fishing season was due to start.

Our River Trust does Angling Monitoring Initiative kick sampling throughout the year and it often surprises us to see good numbers of aquatic invertebrates building up through December, January and February when the water temperature is at its lowest ebb. There will be the odd heptagenid (stone clingers), some stoneflies and cased caddis but the bulk of the samples will be made up of freshwater shrimp and olive nymphs. The nymphs will be at various stages of development but the most mature will be those of the large dark olive (*baetis rhodani*) which provide the early season sport. The development of the nymphs of our upwing flies is temperature dependant, you may have noticed early mayfly hatches after mild winters, and if the winter has not been a cold one then hatches of dark olives can be expected from March onwards. My December sample has shown good numbers of mature nymphs, so barring any unusually cold spells in February, we are looking forward to some sport early this season.



Large Dark Olive.



The Honourable The Irish Society

Lower Bann Fishing: still going strong

The Honourable The Irish Society is a charity that owns and manages the game and coarse fishing in the 38 miles of the Lower Bann and neighbouring rivers. We offer premium salmon and trout fishing on private and non-private beats, together with competition-standard coarse fishing, all at a variety of prices to suit every taste.



Our team of private water bailiffs patrols the river daily for the good of everyone, and all our angling income is reinvested into protecting and managing the fisheries.

Carnroe saw 227 salmon taken and safely released alive in 2014, despite difficult weather conditions.

Lower Bann private salmon angling beats with availability for season and day rods are:

Carnroe (pictured), Culiff Rock, Movanager and Portna. Register your interest with us NOW before syndicates are fully formed for the season.

Game and Coarse permits from as little as £10 per day are available for other

parts of the Lower Bann, including the beautiful Estuary.

Day rods are also available on the following rivers: Agivey, Macosquin, Ballymoney, Clady, Moyola, Roe, Faughan, Ballinderry, Dennett, Derg.

Salmon angling on the Lower Bann opens from 4th May, and will be 'Catch & Release' only, in order to help preserve fish stocks. Fly, Spinning (no trebles, and barbless hooks only), prawn and shrimp methods all permitted. Prices remain unchanged from last season.

Book online at

www.fishpal.com/Ireland/Bann

Follow us on Facebook:

www.facebook.com/bannfisheries

Visit our live river camera: www.farsondigitalwatercams.com/live-webcams/ireland/Lower-Bann/Coleraine/

For more information contact: theirishsociety@btconnect.com or on 028 7034 4796

By post: 54 Castleroe Road, Coleraine, Co Londonderry BT51 3RL

Or visit our comprehensive website at: www.honourableirishsociety.org.uk



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Olives provide the bulk of early season sport on rivers.

Last year, we were involved in a work party on the first day of the season and about midday the odd olive began emerging, floating down the stream like little sailboats on the current. Within twenty minutes there was a flotilla of flies and the trout began to take notice. Initially the nymphs seemed to be the target as the rises were bulging just beneath the surface but as the afternoon wore on the rises became more energetic and splashy, the work party finished and there was a scramble to get back to the cars to hastily assemble fishing rods which hadn't seen work since the previous season. Fortunately last March was blessed with plenty of mild, overcast days but it was noticeable how much the weather affected the rise of fish and bright days with a cold breeze saw little activity from flies or trout. Nothing gladdens the heart of an angler better than the sight of a trout feeding steadily on the surface and the large dark olives had been absent from the middle reaches of our river for many years. It was fantastic to see their return, especially in such good numbers, perhaps the habitat improvement and better water quality has helped initiate this and we plan to plant river water crowfoot (*ranunculus*

fluitans) in suitable areas this year to provide cover, shade and oxygen for both trout and the aquatic invertebrates. Several years ago there were so many nutrients entering the river from sewage plants, slurry etc that in periods of hot weather algae and blanket weed suffocated all the beneficial plants, but now we have conditions which are more suitable for the water crowfoot and thus hopefully for the invertebrates and trout, thanks to the hard work of the River Trust and Antrim Angling Club. To see what you can do to improve your river have a look at the Wild Trout Trust Website <http://www.wildtrout.org> which is a fantastic source of information.

Menu for the river

As mentioned earlier, the fly to kick off the season will be the Large Dark Olive which has a slim mobile nymph that falls into a group called 'agile darters' and that perfectly describes their movement. Colour varies depending on their stage of development and, as they have to moult regularly, the newly moulted flies are lighter coloured – yellow green as opposed to the usual darker brown green colouration. The nymphs tend to hatch in the broken water at the heads

of the pools and the trout will be waiting below as the flies take a little while to emerge from their nymphal shuck and are very vulnerable. The nymphs can be represented by small pheasant tail or slim hares ear nymphs and the adults by Greenwells Glory, Kites Imperial or an olive Comparadun type fly.

Early in the season, the hatch tends to be concentrated to an hour or two around midday, but as the days wear on it extends longer into the afternoon. It pays to take time to study the rising trout for while before making the first cast so you can determine whether it's taking nymphs just subsurface, or newly hatched flies or emergers from the surface. As there will be little bankside cover this early in the season and the water will likely be very clear it's essential to keep off the skyline because the trout will see you immediately and a clumsy walk along the edge of the stream will scare every trout in the vicinity. Stealth is the key, creep slowly into position and wait for a wee flurry of activity, the olives tend to hatch in little batches, nothing then several at once. Try to determine the rhythm of the trout's feeding pattern, then drop your dry fly quietly amongst the flotilla and hope that it disappears in a quiet dimple!

On some streams there are good numbers of 'stone clinger' nymphs, flat in shape and obviously designed for life



Olive nymphs are eagerly sought by trout.

amongst the boulders. These nymphs belong to species such as the March Brown, Olive Upright and Large Brook Dun and the March Brown is another early season emerger which can stimulate a good rise. Freshwater shrimp and cased caddis are also present though it's too early for any of the sedges, except in April some rivers have the Grannom which unfortunately is rare. Stoneflies are present, but few rivers now are clean enough to have significant populations as they are very vulnerable to pollution. As we move into April then Medium Olives, Dung fly, Black Gnat and Hawthorne fly will appear.

On some rivers there's the Iron Blue which is a little upwing fly, dark inky grey in colour and much favoured by trout. Some of the 'old timers' on the Six Mile tell how anglers would become exasperated by great rises of trout which ignored their carefully presented olive imitations but the angler just upstream would be catching fish after fish. The secret was that the trout were actually taking the Iron Blues which were hatching amongst the Medium Olives and although smaller and less numerous, they'd always be the favoured fly. I long for the return of the Iron Blue to the river - it's long since disappeared from most streams now because it's so vulnerable to pollution. Something also to look out for in the river are Midges or Chironomids. Most people associate these with lake fishing, but they also occur in rivers and, though they tend to



Caddis larvae are frequently eaten by trout, cases and all!

be very small, they are certainly an important food for trout and are present year round. It always pays to check what's on the surface of the stream before being dogmatic and just tying on a Greenwell's Glory just because it worked yesterday. For midge feeding fish a tiny Griffiths Gnat or Shuttlecock pattern can be effective, fish feeding on midge tend to rise frequently although there appears to be nothing on the surface but the problem is that the little midges are too small to be seen unless you take a very close look in the surface film.

Menu for the Lake

Most lakes in the early season have midge or Chironomids which are active

all year round and most anglers are familiar with their pupa, from patterns such as the Epoxy buzzer or hatching pupa (emergers) which are imitated by Shuttlecock patterns or Shipman's Buzzer. On the big Irish Limestone lakes chironomids are known as Duckfly and can provide great early season sport when conditions are right. On these lakes the hatches are quite localised depending on the nature of the bottom of the lake, the favoured areas are known as 'Duckfly holes' and the ghillie's knowledge is essential to guide the angler to right location to find feeding fish. Other invertebrates which feature in the menu are freshwater shrimp, hoglouse, beetles, corixa and the very common but not well known alder fly larva which are active predators about 2cm long and well imitated by a roughly tied gold head hares ear nymph. There will also be cased caddis though they will not be hatching into sedges until summer arrives. but trout eat the caddis larva, case and all.

As we move into April then Lake and Pond Olives arrive and their nymphs become active some time before the actual hatching period, catching the attention of the trout which lock on to these invertebrates.



The Black Gnat arrives in April and is a favoured trout food.



When trout lock on to pond & lake olives nothing else will tempt them.

Sometimes at the start of the Mayfly hatch the trout will actually be rising to Lake Olives which are less visible and the angler can waste valuable time presenting mayfly patterns which will be studiously ignored by trout that are feeding on the smaller, less visible species. Later, April will see falls of terrestrial insects and that will be the

Black Gnat and Hawthorne Fly which can provide the angler with great dry fly fishing.

Chasing the hatches

The knowledgeable angler will be able to predict the feeding patterns of the trout and prepare to pursue his quarry through the seasons. Spring time

can be a little bit hit or miss and a lot of the sport will depend on weather conditions which are conducive to invertebrate activity which in turn stimulates the fish to begin feeding. To arrive by the river in Springtime and see the little olives floating down on the current and watch the rings spreading from a rise under the bank or a quiet dimple in the tail of a pool signalling the disappearance of another fly provides a thrill to any angler. It's worth braving the elements to be out there casting dry flies over speckled trout in the first days of Spring, an experience to savour, even more so when you know that the whole fishing season stretches out before you. Good Luck and Tight Lines for the new season!



Freshwater shrimps are available all year round.

Talking Tackle

salmologic.....the new breed

There has never been so much fly fishing tackle available as there is today. Rods, reels, lines and new lures to tempt even the most wary of fish. But what is the customer actually buying, do they know what that product will do when they get it on the water, should they have gone for the heavier line instead of having a stab in the dark at which one will work best with their rocket fuel injected super rods?

We all hear the buzz words used by marketing gurus like ‘nano resins’ and ‘super fast actions’ but why does this make the tackle better?

We talked to AM Angling Consultancy, in Newtownards about an exciting new range of rods from *salmologic* to find out more.

salmologic is a new tackle company from Denmark, founded by world famous salmon fisherman and flycaster Henrik Mortensen. Henrik introduced many industry standards and was the first tackle designer to start publishing an actual weight (grams & grains) on the rods and lines. He has worked for many different tackle companies but now has decided to set up his own company with the help of his team.

Henrik’s philosophy is that a good fly rod is never designed in an office. They should be created in the environment in which they are to be used... on the water, in the wind and near the fish. The idea behind his latest series of rods has been evolving for the past three years and is based on more than 32 years of his fly casting, instruction and fly fishing experience.

AM Angling said: “The first thing you will notice when you pick up a *salmologic* rod is the unusual shape of the bottom handle. This offset handle is not only different from everything else on the market, but helps you keep their rod blank absolutely straight at all times. When held correctly you will get the full benefit of the ‘backbone’ in the blank.



salmologic - an exciting new range for anglers

Innovative

“However as many anglers still prefer the traditional straight handle he offers an optional straight handle which can simply be locked in to the reel seat. This allows everyone to enjoy his innovative rods regardless of whether you prefer the bent or straight handle.

“Many seasoned anglers will tell you that the most important piece of any fly rod set up is the line. Matching the correct line to your rod used to be a matter of trial and error and many anglers learn the hard way after spending a small fortune on lines that simply were not right for their rod. If we take four number seven lines from four leading line manufacturers today I can assure you that you will have four completely different weights. But *salmologic* has provided the answer by introducing the G&G system (grams &

grains).

“Rather than printing a number on the rods such as #7-8, all *salmologic* products will come with a specific weight in grams as well as grains. So instead of having the traditional 10’ #7 we would now look for a rod that is 10’ 16 grams. This makes choosing a line so much easier as we now know that the precise casting weight for that rod is 16 grams. The lines are also all labelled with a weight in grams and grains, making line choice easier than ever. Spin fishermen have been using the weight system for many years and it lets them match up which lures will give that spinning rod the best performance - now *salmologic* does the same for flycasters.”

Performance & durability

AM Angling added: “*salmologic*

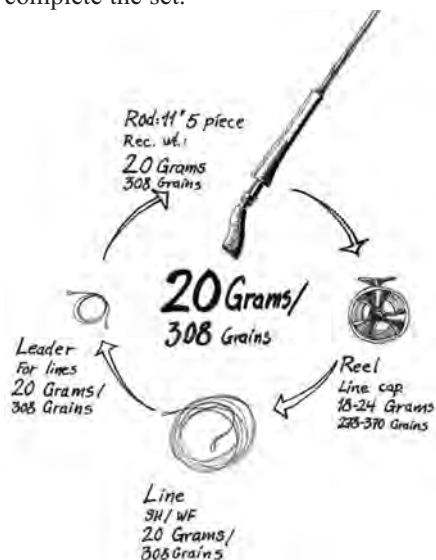


Nine rods make up the skyborn range.

flylines are also at the forefront when it comes to performance and durability. They offer lines that enable the modern fly fisherman to fish his fly on any spot, at any depth, where the fish might be hiding. The lines are so easy to cast that it gives the fly fisherman the ability to fish his fly more effectively than ever.

"Now, for fishing the spate rivers of Ireland, we finally have the perfect tool for the job. Anglers have been frustrated for years with tackle that just wasn't suited for our market, fishing with these long rods and long lines was like trying to drive a nail into the wall with a screwdriver. The rods and line system that *salmologic* provide is like finally getting our hands on that hammer to hit the nail home!"

salmologic offer nine rods in their skyborn range, each rod is unique with its own serial number, making the one you own an exclusive item. You can also match the rods serial number to a reel serial number you would like to complete the set.



salmologic products will come with a specific weight in grams and grains.

Switch Rods and more

Switch rods have gained a huge following recently, especially here in Ireland. They cover the majority of our rivers and these small rods are ideal for throwing the sizes of flies we tend to fish with. Henrik has come up with four switch rods all of which have a removable lower handle. Two 10' rods one casting a weight of 16 grams and another casting 18 grams will prove popular with a lot of loch fisherman as you now have the added benefit of being able to add a straight handled fighting butt, something that sadly disappeared from most rods.

There are also two 11' switch rods one casting a weight of 16 grams and the other a heavier 18 grams. The 11' 18 gram switch rod will prove the nemesis of many summer grilse in the coming months as it is such a popular size.

The skyborn range

AM Angling said: "For double handed rods *salmologic* offer five different models in the skyborn range. It starts at 11' 20 grams, this is the world's lightest two handed rod and one which I am looking forward to use. The 12'6" 24 gram is ideal for the summer fishing and is very capable of handling fast sinking lines. 13'3" casts 28 grams perfectly. This rod is perhaps Henrik's most famous design, a size he has previously made in the past and the perfect tool for fishing a delicate line on a big river when the water is low. The workhorse of the series is the 13'1" casting 31 grams.

Along with the skyborn series



Short-cut heads from the new range.

salmologic offer a series called Nordic SW. These rods have been designed by Henrik and his team for fishing along the Scandinavian coastline for sea trout. They are ideal for putting out long casts into difficult winds. There is even a specific series of lines to match these rods for coastal fishing. However the rods should not be relegated only to saltwater flyfishing, they are tremendous tools for fishing on stillwaters and lakes.

salmologic offers many other products, two ranges of precision engineered reels, a multitude of sinking polyleaders that are made to match each line class. Tapered monofilament leaders that have been manufactured with specific fly sizes in mind and a collection of practical fly boxes that fit neatly into your pockets. *salmologic* provides anglers with a solution, setting up gear can now be precise, and you know exactly what you are getting before you purchase the item. All you need to do is add water.

For more information on all the *salmologic* products visit www.amangling.com Email: salarsupplies@gmail.com Tel: 07544308098

A.M Angling will be at numerous angling shows over the coming year and will also be running another series of Henrik Mortensen's Fishing Seminars. They would like to extend their 'try before you buy' service to all customers and have a good range of *salmologic* products for you to get some hands on experience.

AJ's Angst

Frank opinion on the issues facing the Irish country sports scene

Thirty Years of publishing and going stronger than ever



Dublin Angling Show

Congratulations to the Mara Media team on their delivery of another good Ireland Angling Expo in Dublin. There were a number of great demonstrations, some real tackle bargains to be had and a good range of exhibitors. As Ireland's most read hunting, shooting and fishing magazine, Irish Countrysports and Country Life/Irish Game Angler magazine had a prominent stand and Irene and Albert Titterton met literally thousands of our readers and customers. It was interesting that no other UK or Irish angling or shooting publication was exhibiting. Perhaps that's why we ARE the most read country sports magazine circulating in Ireland and the real 'Voice of the Irish countryside.'

Thirty years of publishing

And of course we are the longest continuously published Irish hunting, shooting and fishing magazine as we celebrate our 30th publishing anniversary in April 2015 of publishing the magazine under its previous title Irish Hunting, Shooting and Fishing and now ICS&CL.



A special May edition is planned but we thought we would remind readers of our first cover.

The 2015 Irish Game Fair at Shanes Castle to be the biggest ever Irish Game or Country Fair

In 2014 the GREAT GAME FAIRS of IRELAND events were clearly 'streets ahead' of any other country side or country sports based events. This year with the initial uncertainty about tourism funding we took the decision to postpone the next fair at Ballynahinch until 2016 and put all





Launch of Show last year

of our efforts into making Shanes (and Birr) really spectacular events. At this stage the Irish Game Fair planned for the 27th & 28th June is running well ahead of schedule for stands, sponsorship and new attractions and we intend to continue this momentum.

The NI Angling Show / and a new angling section at Birr

As readers know in 2014 we launched a NI ANGLING SHOW as a 'show within a show' at the Irish Game Fair at Shanes Castle. We are delighted to announce that this will be 'ratcheted up another gear' this year and we have just confirmed that DCAL will again support the Fair at Shanes, and Inland Fisheries Ireland will attend the Angling Show at Shanes and support us in launching a major Angling Section at Birr. As part of our arrangements with DCAL and IFI all anglers holding fishing licences and permits will qualify for discounted admission vouchers for both shows. These will be available in tackle shops and available through our web sites www.irishgamefair.com and www.irishgameandcountryfair.com from the 14th March.

New Terrier & Lurcher arrangements for Shanes Castle

We are delighted to announce that the Irish Working Terrier Federation's Vice Chairman and NI Representative Tom Barry has become Terrier, Whippet & Lurcher Director of the events at Shanes Castle for the 28th Annual All Ireland Terrier, Whippet and Lurcher Championships to be staged at Shanes Castle, Antrim on the 27th & 28th June. Proceeds from the show will go to the IWTF. Clubs seeking qualifiers for the Master McGrath Challenge and the Five Nations Terrier, Lurcher and Whippet Championships should mail me at irishgamefair@btinternet.com.

New Clay Pigeon Championship Qualifier for Shanes Game Fair 27th & 28th June

Through the initiative of our new Clay Pigeon correspondent, Graham Thompson, who thought Ireland should host a qualifier we are delighted to announce that we have acquired the first Irish qualifiers for the WHITE GOLD CHALLENGE. We will be holding these championships on each day to send up to four Irish qualifiers and in



addition to the normal recommended prizes we shall also be looking at making a contribution towards travel for the qualifiers.

New Gundog Competitions

In addition to the real international gundog competitions that we host there are a number of new competitions currently being planned. Full details on the www.irishgamefair.com web site mid March.

ICS&CL are starting a campaign to stop dog theft

We were pleased that our efforts in 'topping up' the rewards being offered by owners for the return of a stolen dogs and our, and other dog lovers' publicity on Facebook and in the press got a number of dogs safely returned to their owners. What was critical in these cases was that the dogs were micro chipped. As readers know this was something we strongly advocated for, as the most sensible form of dog control. We have been proved right!

We have decided to put together a small fund to top up the reward that owners are offering for the return of stolen dogs. And we would ask our readers to join with us in publicising dogs that are stolen in order to make them literally 'too hot to handle.' This, dogs being microchipped and people refusing to purchase a dog unless it is microchipped could help make dog theft a thing of the past.

The battle for lead

There has been a flurry of sporting media interest in the long awaited report of the Lead Advisory Group since some emails were acquired by the sporting press under a FOI request. The chance for debate has been somewhat stifled in that no one has admitted sending or receiving these emails. It is also unclear who is representing shooting interests within the group. I think most of us thought the Chairman John Swift (ex chief executive of BASC) was representing BASC and Barney White – Spinner was representing CA. However BASC in the wake of the publication of the emails appeared to move swiftly to distance the organisation from its former CE stating that John Swift was not employed by BASC nor is he a member. However this raises the very obvious questions 'Why does BASC NOT have a representative on the group?' AND has John Swift changed his views on lead shot after he left BASC or did he always hold the views he holds now?'



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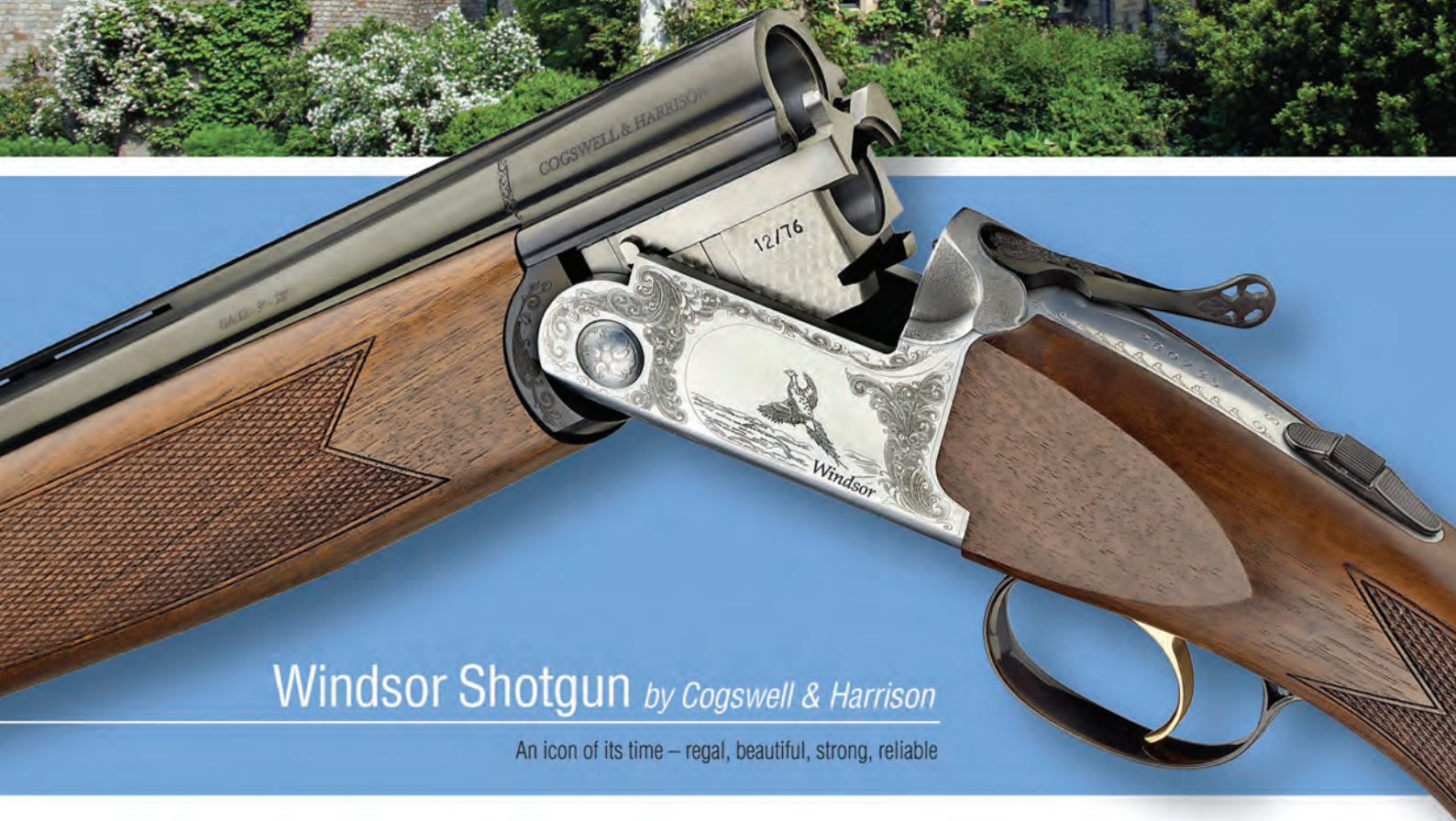
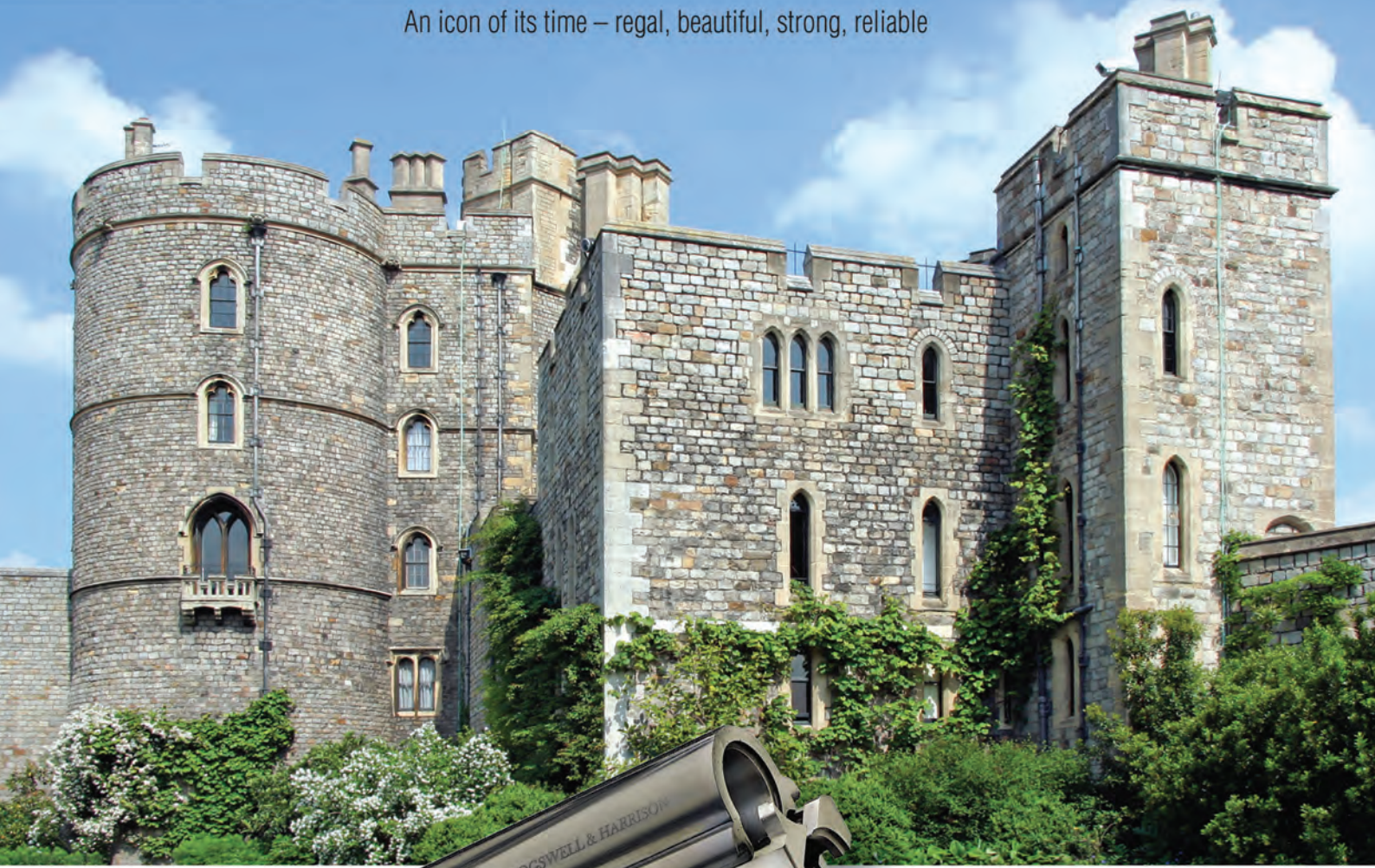


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