

Irish COUNTRY SPORTS and COUNTRY LIFE

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Angling & Gundog Edition

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Front Cover:

Our Angling Correspondent Stevie Munn 'Fishing The Pool' by Davy Telford plus winners of the IKC Cocker, Retriever & Spaniel Championships

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Country Sports and Country Life Rol Comment

For many years, in the face of anti-hunting sentiment, lovers of fieldsports have been divided among themselves as to what is the best way to proceed. Some people feel that political correctness and Groupthink is now so dominant amongst the general populace that the best thing is to be cautious and keep one's pastime as underground as much as possible. It's fashionable to be anti-hunting, therefore it's best, they surmise, to acknowledge this fact and don't do anything to bring undue heat or pressure on yourself.

In some ways political correctness is a bit like the dominance of Catholicism in our lives in the Republic during much of the 20th Century. There were many taboo subjects, much of them associated with sex, and people in conversation liked to virtue-signal. The purpose was to appear to be virtuous, to be seen to be virtuous, even if in reality you weren't. It's the same mode of interaction nowadays, though the topics are different. Sometimes I agree with some of the fashionable opinions being expressed in the Groupthink bubble, but sometimes I don't; and it sometimes takes a pretty brave man to express his disagreement. Most of us choose to remain silent because we want a life of peace and calm and we don't want to have aspersions thrown at our character, aspersions which are usually wholly untrue and which can pain one. In the Groupthink bubble it can be difficult to have a logical, balanced conversation. Experience has been reduced to virtue-signalling, which is a travesty.

But while many in the fieldsports community decide it's best to remain as underground as possible and not draw undue attention to themselves, there are others who feel we are not criminals and therefore we shouldn't behave as if there is anything wrong with what we do. They feel that, within reason, they should publicise their activities because there is an awful lot of positive stuff in what we do. We have been bombarded in society for decades with the negatives. As a result people have an imbalanced, skewed view of fieldsports, a view which should be countered with a more balanced, positive approach.

The recently formed Lakeland Beagles falls into the latter category, into the category of being willing to publicise its activities. The pack is kennelled near Castlepollard in Westmeath and the huntsman Richard Bonham strongly believes that Beagling is a wonderful tradition and a day tramping across the countryside following 20 or 30 hounds is an excellent and very enjoyable day out for all the family. In November, RTE Radio 1's Countrywide programme spent an afternoon with the Lakeland and produced a very decent and favourable report which was largely devoid of the usual prejudices and misconceptions. "Hunting with dogs", stated presenter Damien O'Reilly at the beginning of the programme, "has been practised for thousands of years in Ireland and today it is still widely practised with over 90 registered packs of hounds, bloodhounds and beagles. Beagling gets less attention."

The reporter Suzanne Campbell explained "A beagle is a small dog, a sort of mini hound, which has a very good nose. A day hunting with them usually entails taking out 20 to 30 beagles across the countryside. A day will typically last three to four hours and when they pick up the scent of a hare the pack will erupt in full voice, which is called music. There are 16 beagling packs in Ireland. It's quite strong in Munster." She explained that the Balgarrett Beagles had hunted in Westmeath until it ceased three years ago. A



huntsman's job is a busy one. "You have to look after them all year round. It's quite a lot of work."

She followed the pack at a meet at Ballinlough Castle near Delvin, which was very well attended and a beautiful estate. "We watched the huntsman cast the hounds for scent," explained Suzanne. "It took us two and a half hours before we found scent, and when we did we didn't catch the hare. In fact, hares are very rarely caught. The enjoyment is walking after the hounds, watching them work and all the people you meet."

There was a huge foot follower contingent out and we were given sausages, sandwiches and hot port before setting off." Richard told Suzanne that he had to build the pack completely from scratch and got drafts from other packs in England, the North and Cork. "The Balgarrett used to hunt the territory which the Lakeland now hunts. When the Balgarrett disbanded three years ago I was still in college and therefore couldn't commit to taking it over. The supporters stayed in the area since and there is a lot of good will." He said the hunt is "about the thrill of the chase and being out on a nice Sunday afternoon." Explaining his own interest in hunting he said, "Mum and Dad have both hunted all their lives and I didn't get on with horses. I also love the individuality of each beagle; that's part of the pleasure of being a huntsman."

At this point in the programme Damien O'Reilly pointed out that a lot of people "are abhorred by animals chasing a defenceless hare." He cited the anti coursing sentiment in society. "People are abhorred by the thought of an animal's fear being chased by a pack of crying dogs." Suzanne pointed out that as society has become more urbanised, people's incorrect attitude towards the traditions and culture of the countryside has increased. She said many people are labouring under misconceptions about fieldsports.

They briefly discussed the introduction of the brown hare in the north, which has led to the decrease in numbers of the Irish hare. Suzanne pointed out that according to the National Parks and Wildlife Service, hunting has no bearing on the decline of hare numbers in Ireland. It is in fact farming practices which have had the biggest effect. A lot of farmers are not cutting hay anymore, which means that summer grass is not being allowed to grow. This has led to a major loss in habitat. She pointed out that fieldsport practitioners are often custodians of their landscape and its creatures and they have an intimate knowledge of their environment.

One of the foot followers she chatted to during the Ballinlough meet was a member of the Westmeath Foxhounds. He said mounted and foot packs are now seeing an increase in followers. "We hit the bottom in terms of numbers," he said, "and now our numbers are on the up again. There are four or five packs in most counties." Richard told her that when they are hunted the hares have a very defined territory and they usually run in a sort of circle. This means that if you are not feeling energetic you can usually view some of the action by remaining stationary on one raised bit of ground.

Overall then, it was great to listen to a programme on our national airwaves which was being positive about fieldsports. One of the important messages which came across in the programme is that fieldsports are a part of our nation's heritage and culture and for that reason alone should be continued on. They are also a fantastic way to spend a day.

Derek Fanning, ROI Editor

Country Sports and Country Life Northern Comment

Game Fair Food Festivals, artisan producers: what's all that about then?

From cheesemakers to goat farmers and pie producers to chocolatiers, these are the people at the coalface of local, artisan food and drink production. We are talking about showcasing the finest food and drink from artisan producers in the country to consumers, delicatessens, farm shops, restaurants, chefs and more.

The School of Artisan Food says: 'Artisan' is a term used to describe food produced by non-industrialised methods, often handed down through generations but now in danger of being lost. Tastes and processes, such as fermentation, are allowed to develop slowly and naturally, rather than curtailed for mass-production.

There is no single definition of artisan food. Artisan producers understand and respect the raw materials with which they work, they know where these materials come from and what is particularly good about them. They have mastered the craft of their particular production and have a historical, experiential, intuitive and scientific understanding of what makes the process that they are engaged in successful.

And the best bit — they know what tastes good and are sensitive to the impact of their production on people and the environment.

Understanding and mastering artisan processes, such as bread making, cheese making, brewing and charcuterie and confectionery, produces a great sense of achievement and wonderful new skills. And that is what our Game Fair's Fine Food Festival is all about. Here you'll find something to eat or drink that is simply so much better than the mass produced stuff. Stopping and sampling, tasting and trying is the name of the game while chatting to the very folk that make the food or drink. See what makes them tick and what makes their produce so wonderful.

Great Game Fair Fine Food Festivals see new products launched every year. Where else have you got a footfall over two days that compares to the thousands trying and buying in the Fine Food Pavilion of a Great Game Fairs of Ireland event?

Shanes Castle was the backdrop to two episodes of the national TV programme *The Farmers' Country Showdown*, featuring four of Northern Ireland's unique local food producers.

'Chorizo & Sausages' featured Corndale Farm, Limavady who have developed their own air dried Spanish style Chorizo. It was the first of its kind in Northern Ireland and received massive demand and overwhelming feedback. And Forthill Farm, Tandragee was also featured, where Kenny and Jennifer Gracey produce the best quality free range pork and free range beef from traditional breeds. They believe "food from the farm" to be the new way to reclaim traditional standards.

'Rapeseed Oil & Buffalo' saw Harnett's Oils, Waringstown who grow oilseed rape and hemp, then coldpress them and bottle them all on site, golden-hued bottles of healthy loveliness! And Ballyriff Buffalo, Magherafelt the first and only water buffalo farm in Northern Ireland are a family run, quality assured farm specialising in high quality buffalo meat, lending themselves truly to the statement 'From Field to Fork.'

Two national TV programmes was a great result. When your product has an extra special something that makes it really stand out, it's often very difficult to get national recognition. Our Game Fairs have always attracted massive publicity, and more of our local exhibitors are getting the national recognition and exposure they richly deserve.

Last year, Shanes Castle Game Fair generated huge interest through coverage by BBC NI's Home Ground, while our partnership forged with the national *Delicious* magazine reinforced the developing 'foodie' element of the Fair, giving Northern Irish artisan exhibitors an important new showcase.



The Great Game Fairs huge impact nationally saw the Shanes Castle event listed in the *Daily Telegraph's* prestigious 'Top 20 Food Festivals in the UK', while Trip Advisor (which boasts 3 million unique users) listed the Irish Game Fair amongst the top 10 UK visitor attractions for June 2018.

The very positive PR coverage, via broadcast media exposure and across regional, weekly press, daily newspapers and in magazines/journals including a prestigious German 'Guide to Ireland,' was estimated to have a value of over £800,000 and a reach

of over 11 million. Vitally, in a difficult economic climate, there was a real economic boost for our exhibitors and to the local economy generally. And of course the foodie public were the winners too! Plus great positive publicity for Irish country sports and the rural way of life.

And why are we highlighting all this? Well, farm incomes have taken quite a pasting in some quarters with many reckoning that diversification being one way to survive. Analyse what you are good at and tell the world! You may only have a handful of helpers (if you are lucky), but someone somewhere is waiting to hear about your product, try it and buy it.

The Department of Agriculture recently published some figures for farm incomes in 2018, showing that the total income from farming in Northern Ireland fell by 23% — an unpleasant 24% in real terms — from £467million in 2017 to £360million in 2018. This total income from farming represents the return on own labour, management input and own capital invested for all those with an entrepreneurial involvement in farming.

On the one hand, output for agriculture here was 1% higher at £2.13billion in 2018: there was a 2% increase in the value of output from the livestock sector, while field crops rose by 3% and horticulture was 5% lower. Dairying remained the largest contributor to the total value of gross output at £680million, a rise of 3%. The output value of cattle was 1% higher at £467million, but increases in meat volumes and prices were mostly offset by a downward movement in stocks. The poultry sector improved by 5% to £281million and the egg sector growing by 3% to £107million, while the value of pig output reduced by 5% to £159 million. The value of output recorded in the horticulture sector was lower at £107million. Feedstuff costs rose by 13% to £867million. On top of this, total machinery expenses increased by 5% to £156million, as a result of a 10% increase in the cost of fuel and oils in line with the global commodity price. Even the estimated value of direct subsidies saw a decrease of 0.6%, when compared with the previous year.

And the prospects? Well, farm business income measured across all farm types is expected to decrease from an average £33,870 in 2017/18 to £26,030 in 2018/19, i.e. a decrease of £7,840 or 23% per farm.

And what does this mean for us all? Well, for some it might be the time to diversify, producing artisan products. Some have already done so. We already have heard from producers, relatively new to the market, who feel strongly that while things are economically tight there has never been a better time to tell the world about their products.

They have started off slowly, continuously improved what they do and taking advantage of the marketing opportunities we provided by the Fine Food Festival at the Great Game Fairs of Ireland events

For the rest of us that means the very best fine food and drink to sample on a beautiful Summer's day at 'the Game Fair' at Shanes Castle 29/30 June and Galway Racecourse 15/16 June. Who knows, you will probably be tucking in to the next world-beating NI artisan produce before some folk have even heard of it - never mind seen it on TV.

Paul Pringle, Northern Editor

New fisheries protection vessel to mark the launch of International Year of the Salmon

It is estimated that 240,000 Atlantic salmon returned to Irish shores last year, according to Inland Fisheries Ireland. The enduring Atlantic salmon populations in Irish waters were being highlighted at the launch of the International Year of the Salmon (IYS), which takes place in 2019.

Minister Sean Canney TD marked the launch by unveiling one of a new fleet of 12 RIBs (Rigid Inflatable Boats) to highlight the importance of fisheries protection especially during migration along the coasts.

Atlantic salmon populations are widely distributed throughout Irish freshwaters with over 140 such systems designated as salmon rivers. While 240,000 Atlantic salmon returned to Ireland from the sea as part of the natural migration last year, representing the healthy condition of Irish river stocks, the numbers returning to Irish shores has decreased by over 70 per cent in recent decades. In the 1970s, the number of Atlantic salmon returning peaked at 1,800,000.

Minister Canney said: "It is vital that we protect our valuable fisheries resource as environmental change and human impacts are placing salmon and other species at risk. The International Year of the Salmon is a global initiative which aims to bring people together to share knowledge, raise awareness and take action on how we can ensure the resilience of salmon in Ireland and in the Northern Hemisphere. Ireland is recognised as an international exemplar in terms of placing the conservation imperative at the very heart of our salmon management and I am committed to leading our participation in this initiative on behalf of



The new fisheries protection RIB being officially introduced to the protection fleet in Greystones, Co. Wick to mark the start of International Year of the Salmon by Minister Sean Canney TD

the Government, the Department and Inland Fisheries Ireland."

International Year of the Salmon is a joint world-wide initiative of the North Atlantic Salmon Conservation Organisation (NASCO) and the North Pacific Anadromous Fish Commission (NPAFC) alongside other partners across the globe, creating an international framework for collaborative outreach and research. It is hoped that IYS will raise awareness of what humans can do to ensure salmon and their habitats are conserved and restored against a backdrop of several environmental factors.

Dr Ciaran Byrne, CEO of Inland Fisheries Ireland said: "International Year of the Salmon offers us an opportunity to start an important conversation around how we

can protect, conserve and restore salmon populations in Irish and international waters and more importantly, how we can inspire action. Inland Fisheries Ireland looks forward to continuing this conversation over 2019 and beyond."

During International Year of the Salmon, Inland Fisheries Ireland will introduce a commemorative salmon licence which will include updated information for anglers on catch & release angling. Carcass tags will also be rebranded to read: 'Do you need me? Think twice before killing.' A number of other awareness and outreach initiatives will also be introduced in the New Year, these will be publicised both on www.yearofthesalmon.org and Inland Fisheries Ireland's dedicated webpage www.fisheriesireland.ie/iys.

Kahles K318i New Models Available

Ultrashort masterpiece – the K318i is noticeable perfection packed into an ultrashort housing. To reach the highest performance standards despite its short-build design, many years of development work and the use of state-of-the-art technology were required. The optical system with its large field of view and the extraordinary high-contrast image is setting new standards for ultrashort riflescopes.

From April 2019, this true masterpiece in engineering will also be available with the unique TWIST GUARD windage on the left-hand side, which is the ergonomically ideal position for right-handed shooters. The patented, KAHLES exclusive central positioning of the parallax wheel, integrated in the elevation turret, combined with optional windage positioning left or right; allows operating elements to be conveniently operated with the intuitively preferred hand without having to reach over the scope when in shooting position. This allows the shooter to fully concentrate on what really matters in competitions.



In addition to the established and popular MSR/Ki and SKMR3 illuminated reticles in first focal plane, the K318i will also be available with highly precise 1/4 MOA click adjustment and with MOAK reticle.

All new models will be available in stores starting April 2019 for a retail price of GBP 2,660.

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Historic low in fish kills welcomed but water quality remains a concern

Inland Fisheries Ireland has noted with caution the findings from Water Quality in 2017 : an indicators report from the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). While it welcomes the fact that the number of fish kills in Irish waters were at a historic low last year, Inland Fisheries Ireland is calling for continued awareness of water quality issues in light of the EPA's conclusion that water quality is once again in decline.

According to this latest report, there was 14 fish kills in 2017, affecting 7.8km of river with 2,123 dead fish recovered. This is significantly lower than the worst years of 1987 and 1989 when there were more than 100 fish kills reported. Inland Fisheries Ireland's Environmental Officers carried out 26,000 environmental inspections last year across agricultural sites, habitats, industrial sites, wastewater and water treatment plants, civil engineering sites and forestry sites.

Despite the positive drop in serious pollution events causing fish mortalities, Inland Fisheries Ireland remains concerned about the reduction of water quality with the EPA reporting a 3% drop in river water quality since 2016 and a 0.6% loss in high quality river sites. The inland fisheries and sea angling resource contributes €836 million to the Irish economy every year and supports 11,000 jobs in rural communities.

There is 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.

Fishing Futures - Funding Awarded

Fishing Futures, a project targeting local community groups in Wicklow, has been awarded €1,630 funding to help support its work. The project, which is organised by the Wicklow Travellers Group, allows young people to experience fishing in a safe and supervised environment.

The award was made through the National Strategy for Angling Development, which aims to ensure that Ireland's fish stocks and angling infrastructure are protected and enhanced with a view to ensuring a sustainable habitat and the delivery of the economic, health and recreational benefits which they offer to communities across Ireland.

Minister Canney said: "This investment will support the purchase of new fishing equipment enabling larger groups to engage in angling trips and increase participation across the community. Over the coming year, local volunteer anglers and an outreach worker working with Wicklow Travellers Group will provide access to young people to organised angling activities as an enjoyable and rewarding component of healthy outdoor pursuits" he added.

Participants in the project will learn about water safety, bait collection and preservation, healthy lifestyle as well as practical angling skills. The project ultimately aims to provide novice anglers with the necessary skills to engage in mainstream angling with local clubs. Since the inception of the project over 11 years ago, the project has engaged with many groups from the community. Some of the volunteer anglers who support the project today took part in the initiative themselves over a decade ago.

Inland Fisheries Ireland is aiming to grow the angling sector's socio-economic contribution of €836 million per year by an additional €60 million annually through the strategy. This will be achieved by driving angling participation among domestic and overseas visitors, which in turn is supported by improving access to fishing and developing angling infrastructure.

Barbour Spring/Summer '19 Countrywear

Since Barbour's formation in 1894, Countrywear has always played a fundamental part in their iconic aesthetic. This Spring/Summer, the collection maintains a clear focus on practicality and functionality, presenting a collection which blends performance with an exciting contemporary edge.

Remaining classically timeless, the Countrywear collection includes large scale pockets on jackets, a choice of outerwear from wax cotton, quilts and waterproof breathables and an innovative range of performance shirts designed for movement and durability.

A must-have for country go-getters, Barbour's latest countrywear curation is an expertly styled collection, presenting outdoor living enthusiasts with traditionally inspired Barbour options enthused with a modernist finish.



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Barbour
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First salmon of 2019 caught in Donegal

Michael McCann of Templeard, landed the first salmon in the Garden Pool on the Lackagh River at 9.25am on Tuesday 1st of January. The salmon, which weighed approximately five pounds and was caught on a single barbless hook before being released into the water, was also the first salmon caught and released during International Year of the Salmon which takes place in 2019.

Michael McCann was one of 22 anglers who were fishing on the Lackagh River at the time of the catch. The river is not known for producing the first salmon of the angling season - in 2018, the first salmon was recorded on the River Drowes in Leitrim on the 30th of January while in 2017 it was caught on the Munster Blackwater, Cork on the 1st of February.

Dr Ciaran Byrne, IFI, said: "I would like to congratulate Michael McCann, on his catch which is highly coveted by anglers across the country. We are particularly delighted that the first salmon of 2019 was caught and released in a sustainable manner in Donegal in compliance with the 2019 regulations. I would urge anglers to step up their conservation efforts and engage in catch & release angling in 2019. The New Year coincides with International Year of the Salmon which aims to raise awareness of some of the challenges facing salmon stocks across the Northern hemisphere. Salmon populations have plummeted in recent years with the number of salmon returning to Irish shores decreasing by over 70 per cent, which is very concerning. We look forward to promoting this global initiative in Ireland which aims to bring people together to share



Angler Michael McCann lands the first salmon the season on the Lackagh River on New Year's Day.

knowledge, raise awareness and take action on how we can ensure the resilience of salmon in Ireland and across the Northern hemisphere."

International Year of the Salmon is a joint world-wide initiative of the North Atlantic Salmon Conservation Organisation (NASCO) and the North Pacific Anadromous Fish Commission (NPAFC) alongside other partners across the globe, creating an international framework for collaborative outreach and research. It is hoped that this initiative will raise awareness of what humans can do to ensure salmon and their habitats are conserved and restored against a backdrop of several environmental factors which have contributed to their decline.

Irish Specimen Fish Committee Report - Four New Irish Records

The Irish Specimen Fish Committee (ISFC) has announced that new records were set for four marine species - Golden Grey Mullet, Thin Lipped Mullet, Black Bream and Tope. The mullet

species were taken in Cork while the Tope was caught off Greystones, Co. Wicklow. Kilmore in Co. Wexford was the venue for the Black Bream.



Angler Stephen Hanway from Dublin caught the tope weighing 34.02 kg at Greystones, Co. Wicklow on 3rd October.



Noel Lane from Cork took this thin lipped mullet weighing 2.95kg from Cork Harbour on 15th July.

A black sea bream of 1.45kg was also caught by Welsh angler Gordon Thornes at Kilmore Quay on 17th September.

Further details of these record fish are in the Irish Specimen Fish Committee Report 2018, which has just been released. There is also information included on 393 specimen fish taken by anglers from venues throughout Ireland in 2018 is also given in the report. All fish were caught, weighed, measured and released.

The Irish Specimen Fish Committee report is available website www.irish-trophy-fish.com and from the Inland Fisheries Ireland website <http://www.fisheriesireland.ie>. Hard copies of the report are available from Inland Fisheries Ireland offices nationally.



(Below)
A golden grey mullet of 1.52kg was caught in Cork by Stephen O'Neill on 15th August.

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the UK and abroad - and it is easy to see why. With almost 30 years in the trade they know exactly what customers want to see.

For the shooters Glasgow Field Sports store located inside GAC, with hunting and shooting equipment and country clothing from top brands like Harkila, Seeland, Jack Pyke, Swarovski and many more, plus a well-stocked gunroom with over 500 new and used Airguns, Shotguns and Rifles for all your hunting and shooting needs.

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a salmon fly rod - by far the best way to make sure you have chosen the best tool for your needs, be it from Greys, Orvis, Guideline, Wychwood, Scott, Hardy, Mackenzie, Winston, Loop, Sage or any one of the dozens of top brands in stock. The UK's biggest range of angling apparel and waders line the walls of the clothing section from floor to ceiling, with a selection from Simms, Patagonia, Hodgman, Sierra, Airflo, Vass and many more. A huge selection of fishing flies like no other, from top manufacturers like Fulling Mill, Fario Fly, Atlantic Flies, Craig Barr, Dragon and Caledonian Flies, gives you the perfect opportunity to restock those depleted fly boxes with patterns

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for the coming months. A massive range of fly tying gear takes up a big area instore and comprehensive Sea and Coarse fishing departments are bulging with goodies from all the best known brands. GAC has more fishing lures in stock and on display than any tackle shop in Europe and has become a mecca for keen predator anglers in recent years for this very reason, with all the latest and greatest from Savage Gear, Westin, Rapala, Salmo and more. The Glasgow store is also home to Just Fish and Shoot, a fantastic range of fishing and shooting themed gifts, novelties and homewares designed to fill that gap in the market for the man or

woman that has everything – check out their unique range at www.justfish.co.uk or check it out instore.

With a second store recently opened through on the east coast the business is going from strength to strength whilst offering it's services further afield. Edinburgh Angling Centre mirrors the Glasgow store and this too includes a fully stocked gun room and comprehensive range of clothing and equipment for the discerning shooter or angler.

Both stores play host to a variety of events at various times throughout the year. In particular the Open Weekends are well worth a visit. Why not pop along and see for yourself.



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Glasgow Angling Centre produces several comprehensive catalogues throughout the year dedicated to Game, Sea and Predator Fishing, as well as two compendium versions which include a Hunting section and a bespoke Fly Tying section. Giving you tens of thousands of products at your finger tips. To receive any or all of these catalogues contact the mail order department today or request yours through the website.

Low cost delivery to Ireland

Glasgow Angling Centre operates a bustling, multi award winning mail-order department, sending out hundreds of parcels every day to customers all over the world, and giving valuable advice to anglers who aren't within striking distance of the stores. The company takes pride on

realistic delivery costs. This includes **FREE DELIVERY** to Northern Ireland and the ROI on all orders over £150, with low cost options on smaller items. This busy service is backed up by two huge warehouses, which are both stuffed to the rafters with stock to keep both shop and mail-order customers constantly supplied. GAC really is a one-stop-shop for shooters and anglers! Seen a better price elsewhere? Our **Price Match Promise** makes sure you don't have to go anywhere else!



NARGC NEWS ROUNDUP

Hello to sports people in Ireland and further afield.

Since I last reported to you through this magazine, we in the NARGC have been busy in implementing the various proposals and policies adopted at our AGM. This work is carried out on a daily basis by our Chairman, Dan Curley and Vice Chairman, Michael Fenlon ably assisted by the National Fund Administrator, Chris Gavan.

The projects and programmes are overseen by the various specialist Sub-Committees and the National Executive. They range from; Predator Control, Game Management, Safety Tuition, Youth Development, Training and Education, Government lobbying, Dept. of Justice and Garda liaison, Communications, Clay shooting and, as required, certain Task Forces to tackle major issues as they occur.

The Annual Clay Shoot has been announced for the same venue as last year, so we are all off to Ballinasloe in Galway again this coming July.

A heads up to all our Regions is that this year's AGM will be held in County Cork so we can look forward to the hospitality of the rebel county once again.

Europe, the EU Commission and developments in legislation on Firearms, Bio security, Lead shot restrictions and the migratory birds loom large. The latest phase of the CAP (common agricultural policy) has serious implications for preservation of small game, biodiversity and the future shape of our landscape, all issues that impact on our sport. The alarming spread of African Swine Fever across the continent is a major cause for concern to us too.

Although we have no wild boar here in Ireland, the dangers of the disease being carried to our shores by visiting or returning hunters, cannot be ignored. Unlike bird flu, which was carried on the wing to us, African Swine fever is held in check by our surrounding seas. This disease has no cure nor is there a vaccine to protect our pig population. Given that pork is the world's largest selling meat and that our disease-free status gives our industry a distinct exporting advantage, it is incumbent on us to protect our farmers by co-operating with all biosecurity measures required by the Department of Agriculture, Food and the

Marine.

If any one doubts the dangers just look at the effect of invasive species to our rivers (zebra mussels for instance) and consider the horror of pathogens on our farming industry.

Europe and the EU then take up a considerable degree of our focus. We do this through our membership of FACE, the European Hunting Federation. We have a Vice President (John Flannery) on the Board of FACE and we also have active Delegates on FACE Committees and Working Groups. This participation keeps us at the heart of European hunting lobbying and at the coalface of activity along with our allies from the other hunting federations.

Speaking of which, I have Just returned from a meeting of the FACE communications working group hosted by the Estonian Hunting Federation.

It was remarkable to see a Minister from the Estonian Government address us as partners in Estonia's Game Development plan.

Interacting with delegates from the Czech Republic, Austria, Malta, Belgium, Estonia, Italy, the UK and Romania, it was informative to hear of good and bad issues from these partners. This broader understanding and cross-national perspective builds friendships and alliances that will stand us in good stead for the future. Of pleasing note was the continued and continuing support and commitment from the UK Delegate.

We formulated a questionnaire for European parliament and prospective Candidates in this year's elections. I will be distributing this throughout our organisation so we can ascertain the views and stance of those wishing to represent us in the European Parliament.

Youth Development

Youth development is a major focus for the NARGC. John Butler our National Youth Development Officer has been extraordinarily active along with his team in progressing the national policy. Last year we introduced (to wide acclaim) the Secondary Schools Transition-Year NARGC Proficiency Course. There is massive interest by schools in this course



with last year's participants seeking a return event this year.

Not resting on this success, John and his team have now developed our Junior Hunters Course aimed at Primary School and pre-Junior-Cert aged students. This is a LANTRA approved course and represents the first step on the ladder for our next generation of NARGC members.

We held a meeting in Mullingar in February of our Youth Development Officers with most if not all of our RGC's represented. This was primarily an information and bonding exercise that covered topics including Child/Young adult protection, Garda Vetting, GDPR (data protection) Youth structures in the NARGC and networking for Youth Development Officers.

As always there is much more I could report upon. Club activities, Charity works, Community involvement such as the provision of defibrillators by clubs to the community, Fundraisers, Licencing issues and of course upcoming events.

Keep tuned in to our website and Facebook page and E-newsletter for all the latest news and gossip.

I will slide back into a little nostalgia as I close for now. My earliest hunting memory stretches back into my childhood. Five years old in wellingtons, walking at my uncle Peter's side behind a great big field spaniel. "Mind you stay behind the gun," the gun being a BSA single barrel shotgun, carried broken, with a paper cased Eley cartridge in the chamber.

The memory of the gun being unloaded and set aside as I, with arms wrapped tightly around Peter's neck, was carried across the stone ditches typical of the foothills of the Mourns.

Youth development: Uncle Peter knew all about that !

John Toal.
NARGC PRO



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Countryside Alliance



Sustained Popularity of Hunting

Countryside Alliance Ireland is an expert and informed rural campaigning organisation. As our members and supporters know, we promote the countryside, country sports and the rural way of life.

One of our main interests is hunting and we are delighted that hunts have sustained their popularity over the past few years. This year the hunts, their members and supporters turned out on Boxing day and after the excesses of Christmas it was great to get out in the fresh air and to share some camaraderie as well as exercise with like minded enthusiasts.

As our membership continues to grow, we are heartened at the responsible attitude of those who avail of the country sports insurance that CAI membership provides; which enables them to take part in their chosen activities with peace of mind.

The Countryside Alliance Ireland membership insurance package is a first rate product and membership benefits include:

- Personal Accident Insurance – cover for a range of benefits including accidental death at £15,000 (£7,500 if under 19 years of age) and permanent total disablement at £35,000
- Employers' Liability – Limit of indemnity £10,000,000 (groups only)
- Public/Products Liability – Limit of indemnity £10,000,000
- Group Liability – Limit of indemnity £10,000,000

The current list of recognised activities as approved by the Countryside Alliance Ireland Board is as follows:-

Taking part legally including officiating, assisting or spectating in riding, horse drawn carriage driving, hunter trials, exercising hounds, lurcher work, whippet racing, terrier work, dog shows, hound trailing, hunting, team chasing, hunt following, shooting including sporting shooting, clay pigeon shooting, rifle shooting, target shooting, angling (including sea, coarse and game angling) deer stalking, falconry, ferreting, vermin control, voluntary unpaid duties at shows and events, field trials, conservation work, archery and coursing.

In addition to the membership insurance provision, CAI also campaign for all country sports throughout Ireland and liaise with all political parties; offer assistance to members with firearms certificate applications or queries; send out regular eroute (Email) updates, keep members up to date with the latest news and issues of interest; have a text messaging/alert system, keeping members up to date with vital information; offer discounted tickets to selected game and country fairs.

For more information – www.countrysideallianceireland.org or contact the office on 028 9263 9911.

Deal or No Deal

Over the past two years members of Countryside Alliance Ireland have been wondering what it going to happen on the 29th March 2019, the date on which we are due to leave the European Union (Brexit).

Rural organisations have been wondering what a future in Northern Ireland would look like depending upon whether there will be a border or no border. Many of us will remember when there was a border in place and we had to form an orderly line on approaching Newry coming North and just past the money changing shop coming south on the old Belfast to Dublin A1. The border did not really hold up proceedings for the ordinary person

crossing except for those with a passion for smuggling with most of the haulage firms either stopping on the A1 outside Newry and at Dundalk to carry out customs clearance (other crossing points were also used).

We are no clearer following the recent events in Westminster as to whether we will leave the EU in an orderly fashion with a firm deal or will the EU stand firm and blatantly refuse to look at the backstop and work towards a technological solution. We obviously have number plate recognition for vehicles crossing the border and for payment of tolls throughout the island.

There is always a solution to a problem and those that say otherwise should not be able to negotiate; for as we all know negotiation includes give and take and for all to engage to reach a workable solution that is beneficial to both parties.

No one wishes to see the UK leave the EU without first agreeing a deal with them. But we must be prepared to start to trade under World Trade Organisation rules should the EU be irresponsible and dig their heels in on the backstop in Ireland. GB and Northern Ireland would have the opportunity to trade with the rest of world without the shackles of EU and as indicated by many a professional, we have the products that the world wants, and we know they will pay for quality and traceability of these products.

We must observe the will of the people and strive to fulfil their mandate which was to leave the European Union. It is a 'must' that will ensure that democracy remains the pillar of our society.

Firearm Certificate - Check the Date!

Countryside Alliance Ireland have been made aware of a number of people who have unintentionally let their firearm certificate (FAC) expire and have had their firearms seized by police.

While the police send out reminders approximately 12 weeks in advance of the renewal date, it is ultimately the responsibility of the certificate holder to ensure that they are in possession of a valid FAC and the excuse: "I did not get a reminder," will not be accepted.

We are therefore reminding members to check the expiry date of their firearm certificate and to set a reminder notice in their phone or diary.

In cases where the FAC has expired you are no longer legally permitted to hold any firearms. The police will call at your home and seize any firearms or ammunition in your possession; this may be unannounced and in a marked police car.

The police should give you a receipt for all items taken and will not return the firearms until a valid firearms certificate has been attained.

In addition to checking the date, members are respectfully reminded to be aware of the legislation that encompasses the use of their firearm/s. Many of our members travel between NI and R of I and the laws of each vary in respect of the legal use of firearms. Ignorance is no defence and firearm certificate holders must adhere to the conditions to which their firearm certificate was granted.

Forestry Service NI — Shooting Leases 2019

CAI's Chief Executive, Lyall Plant, together with Gary McCartney, Development Officer, met with representatives of Forest Service NI just before Christmas. A number of items were discussed including shooting leases for Forest Service NI land; the information for which will be coming available towards the end of January / start of February 2019.

CAI is aware that this will be by auction where approximately 40 plots will be available for interested parties to consider and the leases will be for a five year period.

Interested parties will be required to provide a management plan before they can bid on any plot of land. They will also be required to meet with a Forest Service NI ranger and submit a bag return of quarry shot annually.

Where the plot permits, vehicle access will be granted by way of a licence and all permitted roads will be clearly marked on the lease.

CAI will forward more information on the auction process, management plan and areas as soon as it becomes available.

If any CAI members need any assistance or further information please do not hesitate to contact us.

Countryside Alliance Ireland and The Great Game Fairs of Ireland

Countryside Alliance Ireland recently met with Great Game Fairs of Ireland (GGFI) Director Albert Titterington to discuss our presence at this year's Fairs.

As the GGFI preferred country sports organisation, we look forward to exhibiting at the new venue in Galway on 15 & 16 June and once again at Shanes Castle on 29 & 30 June. More details in respect of CAI's presence at the Fairs will follow in due course.



Great Game Fairs Director Albert Titterington (left) & CAI's Chief Executive, Lyall Plant.

Mink. Enemy of the people?

Simon Cooper is the Founder and Managing Director of Fishing Breaks the UK's leading chalkstream letting agency. In this extract from his blog he considers MinkFreeGB's proposals.

There was a small hope that when fur farming was finally abolished in the UK in the 2000s that mink, without recruitment from farm escapees, would go into terminal decline. However, after over half a century they were firmly established across most of the mainland. Like otters mink have few predators...they remain a pest, efficient predators of water voles, fish, water fowl and just about anything else that moves and makes for a tasty snack. In return they add very little to the natural order of life by the river. They are takers not givers. With all that in mind a proposal has surfaced for the total eradication of mink in the British Isles.

I have to congratulate the group behind MinkFreeGB; they have the idea but they also seem genuinely interested in exploring the pros and cons before firing the starting gun. They pose four very valid questions: Is it feasible? Is it affordable? Is it

justifiable? Is it socially acceptable?

The answers to the first two questions sort of run together. One of the great issues with mink eradication is that it is time consuming and labour intensive. There are now smart traps that alert you by text when triggered. Likewise the emergence of eDNA testing quickly tells you if you have mink in your neighbourhood, water analysis revealing their presence anything up to 21 days later.

It is easy to capture the first 95% of the mink in any given area. It is that last 5% that takes the time and effort. There is no doubt that any eradication programme will be expensive, but technology might make it both feasible and affordable.

My gut feeling that the weakest part of the MinkFreeGB argument revolves around the justifiable question, what harm do mink really do? Yes, they do kill things, water voles in particular, but they are not solely responsible for the precipitous decline in the water vole population...

Finally, would a mink cull be socially acceptable? There are plenty of animal absolutists who take a very different view: all animals have a right to life regardless of

the harm they may or may not do. It is going to take some deft PR.

Maybe we'll have to take a leaf out of the RSPB playbook who have won the case for eradicating mice from Gough Island, one of the most isolated places on the planet out in the South Atlantic 1,750 miles from the nearest mainland, a breeding colony for many rare seabirds including the Tristan albatross. Here the non-native mice predate on the chick populations, eating through the body wall near the rump of the bird while they are still alive. It can take up to four days for the chicks to die. The time delay video makes for unpleasant viewing as a 30 gram mouse slowly eats to death a 1 kilogram albatross

If you would like to register your view on mink eradication email minkfreegb@gmail.com

Simon Cooper is also the author of Life of a Chalkstream, The Otters' Tale and to be published in June 2019 Frankel: the greatest racehorse to ever live. To subscribe to his fortnightly blog click here <https://fishingbreaks.co.uk/subscribe.htm>

Bert Carlisle's Birthday Dinner

A wonderful lunch had already been held at The Ulster Reform Cub plus a family celebration in January. Nonetheless, the members of his shooting syndicate decided to recognise the momentous occasion of Bert's 80th Birthday on Friday, 15th of February, with a surprise dinner. The venue was The Banqueting Hall at the Denvir Hotel, Downpatrick. Twelve members and friends enjoyed a scrumptious, gourmet six course meal with a fantastic Birthday Cake created by the Head Chef from the Whig Restaurant Belfast.

Bert, a well respected field sportsman and President of Countryside Alliance Ireland, was taken completely by surprise and was rendered completely speechless—until later in the evening!

The evening ended with music and stories by Jerome, plus many complimentary tributes from the members, which completed a memorable evening which was thoroughly enjoyed by all.

Best wishes Bert for the next decade.

Many thanks go to Chris Dagen's the staff of the Horatio Group for their skill and input to the occasion



Victor McDervitt Bert Carlisle enjoying his 80th birthday celebrations

EDINBURGH OUTDOORWEAR



Percussion Ladies Normandie Jacket Marron £100.00

Percussions Normandie jacket comes completely waterproof and breathable, designed for any type of weather! Available in a 3 part set that matches up with the Normandie vest and trousers.

Sizes: Small, Medium, Large, XL & XXL



Percussion Ladies Normandie Trousers Marron £45.00

Percussions Normandie trousers comes fully waterproof and breathable, its lightweight and durable material makes it great for all types of activities whatever the weather!

Sizes: Waist 28 – 38



Percussion Rambouillet Zipped Wellington Brown £89.00

Percussions neoprene wellington designed for all weathers – wet or cold! its 4mm neoprene lining gives increased comfort and extra warmth.

Colour: Brown Sizes: 39 – 47



Percussion Tradition Warm Trousers Brown Khaki £38.00

Percussion's newest Tradition trouser comes in a 2-tone brown rather than previous years Green. Designed for colder weather these DWR treated trousers to give protection against light showers and will keep you warm on colder days due to its microfleece lining.

Leg Length: 31" Sizes Waist 30 – 44



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EDINBURGH OUTDOORWEAR

Percussion Grand-Nord Jacket Dark Khaki £130.00

Percussions Grand-Nord jacket is arguably their best winter coat! it comes completely waterproof and breathable. has a micro fleece lining and extra layer of padding to help battle the cold, an absolute must for winter shooters!

Colour: Dark Khaki Size: Medium



Percussion Grand-Nord Trousers Dark Khaki £80.00

Percussions Grand-Nord trousers are arguably their best winter trousers! it comes completely waterproof and breathable. has a micro fleece lining and extra layer of padding to help battle the cold, an absolute must for winter shooters!

Leg Length: 31" Colour: Dark Khaki Waist Sizes 30 – 44



Percussion Marly Jacket Khaki £90.00

Percussions Marly jacket comes fully waterproof and breathable, lightweight – perfect for this summer's shooting season.

Colour: Khaki Sizes: Small to XXXL



Percussion Marly Trousers Dark Khaki £45.00

Percussions Marly trousers come fully waterproof and breathable.

Features 6 pockets and 1 knife pocket.

Leg Length: 31" Colour: Dark Khaki

Waist Sizes 30 – 44



Percussion Savane Trousers Khaki £30.00

Percussions Savane trousers come lightweight and offer effective moisture transfer so particularly good on warm and dry days, its elasticated waistband ensures a very comfortable fit.

Leg Length: 32" Colour: Khaki Waist Sizes 30 - 47



Verney-Carron Rapace Trousers Khaki Noir £60.00

Verney-Carron Rapace trousers come ultra-resistant for all types of shooting/hunting. Fully waterproof and breathable, great for all types of "rough" activities.

Colour: Khaki Noir Waist Sizes 30 – 44



Verney-Carron Perdrix Jacket Khaki Was £110 NOW £99.00

Verney-Carrons Perdrix jacket comes lightweight and flexible, its fully waterproof and breathable membrane makes it great for warm and cold days whatever the weather!

Colour: Khaki Sizes: Small – 4XL



Verney-Carron Perdrix Trousers Khaki £60.00

Verney-Carrons Perdrix trousers come lightweight and flexible, its membrane is also waterproof and breathable.

Leg Length: 32" Colour: Khaki Waist Size : 30 - 46



Verney-Carron Ladies Perdrix Jacket Khaki Was £110 NOW £99.00

Verney-Carrons Perdrix jacket comes lightweight and flexible, its fully waterproof and breathable membrane makes it great for warm and cold days whatever the weather!

Colour: Khaki Sizes : XS – XXL



Verney-Carron Ladies Perdrix Trousers Khaki £60.00

Verney-Carrons Perdrix trousers come lightweight and flexible, its membrane is also waterproof and breathable.

Colour: Khaki Sizes 28 -38



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Pheasant release pens: the long-term effects of pheasants on the plant community

Advisors from GWCT are urging shoots to pay more attention to release pen locations and limit pheasant releasing density to reduce negative impacts on woodland flora.

The advice follows a new study carried out by GWCT scientists that looked at the long-term effects of pheasants on the plant community.

Andrew Hoodless, Rufus Sage and Lucy Capstick studied sites which had previously been used as release pens for between 10 and 20 years but had not been used in the past three years.

Sixty-five of these sites were identified in woodland across Berkshire, Dorset, Hampshire, Sussex and Wiltshire.

For each of the disused pens, a reference, or "control" site, was identified in the same piece of woodland but away from the pen itself and from areas where pheasants tend to gather.

At each pen and its control pair, the plants were surveyed at points within the site. These vegetation surveys were carried out between April and July of 2006, 2008 and 2011, where they recorded the amount of bare ground, percentage of

ground covered by each plant species and the vegetation cover between ground level and up to 2m in height. Soil samples were also taken at each site visited.

All these measurements were examined to identify any differences between the disused pens and their control sites, considering how long it had been since the pen was used, as well as the typical stocking density when birds were in the pens.

Interestingly, results showed that the changes in soil chemistry and plant species that are known to occur in pheasant release pens, such as an increase in ruderal plants and a decline in woodland specialist plants, continue to affect the area after pheasant release is no longer carried out.

Where the density of released birds was low, woodland plants can recover after around ten years, but for those which stocked with higher densities, the changes persisted even in pens which had not been used for over fifteen years.

Knowing that the woodland takes many years to recover sheds new light on the



practice of moving pheasant release pens.

Dr Capstick, lead author of *Ground flora recovery in disused pheasant pens is limited and affected by pheasant release density*, just published in the journal Biological Conservation, explained: "Moving pheasant release pens around to different locations within the same woodland will result in more of the woodland being affected."

"To reduce the impact of pheasants on woodland ground flora and soils, we recommend that game managers follow GWCT science-based guidelines on stocking densities and only move release pens where necessary."

Applications re-open for Dick Potts Legacy Fund

THE Dick Potts Legacy Fund, formed in memory of the late internationally-recognised British ecologist, is open to new applications.

Early-career scientists and land managers looking for funds to cover the cost of scientific projects can apply now.

Applications from projects on farmland wildlife, flora and associated habitats to cover general costs for research supplies and equipment, travel and software will be considered.

"The fund provides a great chance for researchers just starting out on their careers or who are returning to ecology, where a financial boost could make a world of difference," said Dr Julie Ewald, an advisor to the legacy fund. Projects that are agro-ecological, and that Dick would have found exciting, are looked upon favourably.

Last year, two early-career scientists - Susan Hammond and Manuel Püttmans - benefited from the fund.

Susan was awarded a grant to research beetles in Sussex and

collect samples for a final third year of surveying as part of her MSc in entomology at Harper Adams University.

If you would like to follow in the footsteps of Dr Potts, and apply for funding, follow the guidelines below:

Those researchers wanting to use the fund for 2019 field season projects should apply by March 31st. All others, with projects starting later, should apply by June 30th.

To apply, visit <https://www.gwct.org.uk/dickpotts>



Ireland's Sea Anglers Win Silver Medals at 2019 CIPS World Games Championships

The Angling Council Ireland is delighted to announce that the Irish Federation of Sea Anglers men's Senior Shore Angling Championship Team have won World silver medals in South Africa. It is a fantastic result and just highlights the efforts and successes of the Irish Federation of Sea Anglers. They really are

a credit to Sport in Ireland and are one of the most consistent world medal winners in our country. IFSA ladies have also had a very good championship but were unfortunately not in the medal positions on this occasion.

The support received from Sport Ireland,

Coaching Ireland, Inland Fisheries Ireland and Sport Capital Grants helps the ACI to work with our affiliated federations. It has energised our voluntary members to work even harder to encourage more angling participation by all with a focus on youth. We want to ensure everyone can enjoy all the benefits of angling, an outdoor activity with a difference.

Obituary

Eugene McGregor

We were deeply saddened to learn the news of the sudden and unexpected passing of Eugene McGregor on Tuesday 11th September.

It was testament to the regard and respect in which he was held that the gundog fraternity turned out in such large numbers to pay their respects at his funeral service.

Eugene was a founder member of the Mid Ulster Gundog Association in 1994 and from this time served as treasurer, a role which he fulfilled with distinction and absolute integrity. He also served on the committee of the Ulster Golden Retriever Club, as vice-chairman, he was a great supporter of all their working tests and field trials.

Working with the MUGDA Chairman Joe Johnston, his brother in law, Vice-Chairman Hugh Gates, his cousin, his son Robert McGregor Secretary, and many close friends they had a very active and respected club.

He has been described as a 'Gentleman of Gundogs,' his love of all things game, shooting and gundogs were immense.

He was a very active and helpful member of both clubs always in attendance and totally reliable – he would do any job asked of him and more often than not he saw a gap and just filled it. Reserved, modest, organised and totally reliable, he was always the first man at the events and certainly the last to leave.

He was passionately involved with all club events; training classes, working tests, cold game tests, charity tests and field trials etc. He never missed a Thursday training night at the canoe steps, Coagh.

He loved to see new people getting involved and to many he offered support, encouragement and guidance

in his own personable and quiet manner. In fact, by selflessly putting himself forward to help newcomers or fill gaps this was often at the expense of not running his own dogs. He always selflessly put himself forward to help at any events – usually at the cost of him running his own dogs.

That said, he was a very competent trainer and it's fitting that he and his dog received an award at the Irish Game Fair at Shanes 2018, a short time before his death. However, more often than not, he simply loved being out with his dogs either picking up at Moyola, Caledon and

Corrard Shoots, or using them in his great passion for shooting and keeping. If not at field trials or picking up he would be at his beloved Ruskey Shoot, Coagh. Nothing brought him more pleasure than walking with his dog along the outskirts and hitting a few birds – he spent many days during the week keeping and preparing the birds for others on a Saturday.

I worked closely with him as my Vice Chair of the UGRC, where he was a very good attender and always made a very positive contribution at meetings. He also played a central role in the MUGDA/UGRC involvement at the Irish Game Fair at Shanes Castle, Co Antrim very competently overseeing that everything went to plan. Always immaculately dressed in tweeds he was a great ambassador for the gundog events with both local and international



competitors. He was adamant that everything would be: "Done right and in the correct sporting manner." The Game Fair Directors recognised his work at the fair and for gundogs in general by presenting him with an Irish Country Sports and Country Life Lifetime Commitment Award.

As genuinely one of the sports "true gentlemen" whose philosophy was to enjoy the sport first, have fun and make friends, he will be a huge loss to the gundog fraternity. He leaves a lasting legacy by way of his work with MUGDA and the UGRC.

Our thoughts are with his wife Margaret, son Robert, Daughter Alison and his grandchildren.

Albert J Titterington

NI Gundog Field & Show Society Celebrate the 30th anniversary

The inaugural meeting of the society was held in Belfast in July 1987 by 46 gundog enthusiasts. They applied for KC recognition and in 1988 the Society was recognised firstly for the FT section and in 1991 for both Field and Show. The Club hosts Field Trial events, Show events and has also donated to various charities over the years.

Saturday, 2nd February 2019 saw the club celebrating 30 years with the Gundog of the Year (2018) events at the Dunsilly Hotel, Antrim. The events were sponsored by Dr Clauders/Evolution Pet Products; Junes Pet Bedding; and this year a special prize of £50.00 which was awarded to the overall winner the Gundog of the Year presented by our Patrons, Albert and Irene Titterington.

Judges Report by Julien Barney

I hadn't realised that this was the 30th anniversary of the Northern Ireland Gundog Field and Show Society, so it was a great privilege to be part of celebrating an important milestone in the clubs history as the judge elect for the day.

After lunch, a glass of wine and a slice of delicious cake taken along with Diane Stewart-Ritchie, led to us toasting the club and its officers, committee and far sighted founders. It was then up to myself, Alexa and Ronnie Brown to cut the cake to celebrate this milestone for the club!



Julien Barney, Alexa and Ronnie Brown cutting the Cake.

The day started with the puppies and it was great to see so many taking part. Overall, I felt the quality was super, which to me is a healthy sign for the future! My overall winner was a lovely Clumber Spaniel bitch owned by Caroline Reynolds called Richley Morning Snow Over Glenariff, who in my opinion has the most super feminine head and expression. Shown in such good condition and what a mover. She really just wanted to own the



ring with her presence. I subsequently found out that she has already had big-time, being Best Minor Puppy in Show at the World Show in Amsterdam!

Then onto the oldies. A super line up of those dogs that have been great ambassadors for their respective breeds

NIG Puppy Overall Winner 'Richley Morning Snow Over Glenariff' owned by Caroline Reynolds.

over the years. My overall winner was the Cocker Spaniel Kerrijoy Valentino owned by Mr & Mrs Brennan. He really was there to impress and was so well presented and his tail never stopped wagging in a way a Cocker's should!

After lunch it was the turn of the big boys and girls. There really was some depth in quality amongst the exhibits and some hard decisions were made along the way to the final four. Different day maybe a different result!

In reserve order, my winners were 4th the English Setter Niroke Never Say Never At Bushbane owned by Aidan McKiernan. Third place was the Pointer Irish Sh Ch/UK Sh Ch/Int Sh Ch/GerCh Kanix Kroner At Sevenhills owned by Stewart Cummings. Reserve Best In Show was the German Short Haired Pointer Ir Sh Ch/Int Sh Ch/ Lux Ch/NL Sh Ch Tomanipoint Celtic Knight, owned by Tom and Ann-Marie Melvyn. A lovely example of the breed at full maturity and such an excellent mover, well made with substance without any coarseness. A pleasure to watch move.



N.I.G Best in Show Irish Setter Sh Ch/Ir Sh Ch 'Gwendariff Nuts About Glenavna' owned by Christine McClaron.

Best In Show went to an exquisite Irish Setter Sh Ch/Ir Sh Ch Gwendariff Nuts About Glenavna owned by Christine McClaron. In full bloom and looking the part, so well presented. No doubt a full blooded male but with nothing overdone. Moved so well and just had that quality of a dog who wants to win. I believe he also made a little bit of history on the day as it was his 3rd successive win of this completion. I can fully understand why he has won the event previously.

It was lovely to be able to spend a little time after the event relaxing with the exhibitors and organisers in the bar talking about dogs and old times. Northern Ireland has many happy memories for me, as it was the second place I judged many years ago and the Belfast Championship show was the first time I awarded CC's back in the early 90's.

Here's to another 30 years plus, of the society and a big well done to everyone who was involved in organising the event and to those taking part as you made it another memorable and enjoyable experience in the North of Ireland for me!

SHANES CASTLE MAY DAY STEAM RALLY

SUNDAY 5th MAY & MONDAY 6th MAY 2019

NOTICE TO EXHIBITORS

The organisers can only accept exhibitors who have completed and returned an Entry Form before the closing date of

TUESDAY 9th APRIL 2019

Unfortunately we will not be able to accept any exhibitors who turn up on the day without having entered and received the relevant Entry Pass.

Entry forms can be downloaded from:

www.shanescastlesteamrally.co.uk

or email walteramcneill@hotmail.com or ian@travanprecision.com

The Great Game Fairs of Ireland 2019



We are delighted that in 2019 there will be two Great Game Fairs of Ireland – the Irish Country Lifestyle Festival, Galway Racecourse, Ballybrit on the 15/16 June and the Irish Game Fair & Fine Food Festival at Shanes Castle on the 29/30 June.

Both will have unrivalled action packed entertainment programmes for the whole family including huge trade stand villages and superb international class country sports attractions, displays and competitions for field sports enthusiasts of all ages.

In fact, virtually all facets of both events have been extended and expanded including:

Trade Stands: The largest ever trade stand village with many new stands, including major Home & Garden displays at Galway.

Fine Food Festivals: Following on from the success of our Food Festival in 2018, when we were the

only Irish Food festival to be listed in the Daily Telegraph's top 20 UK food festivals, both Game Fair Food festivals have already attracted several new exciting exhibitors.

Living History Festivals: Almost an 'event within an event' our Living History Festivals including encampments, re-enactments, combat arena and medieval jousting provide an educational experience - as well as a highly colourful and entertaining spectacle.

Country Sports: Country sports are at the heart of the fair and this year we have new trade stands, new attractions and displays, both in the Main Arena & Country Sports Arena and the best prize fund ever! Our fairs are renowned for having the best clay pigeon, gundog, terrier & lurcher prizes, and this year these are all enhanced with the addition of magnificent cash prizes. The Angling areas - as part of the International Year of the Salmon - will also

feature several new attractions and displays both in the Main Arena & Country Sports Arena and the best prize fund ever. Our fairs are renowned for having the best clay pigeon, gundog, terrier & lurcher prizes and this year these are all enhanced with the addition of magnificent cash prizes. The Angling areas as part of the International Year of the Salmon will also feature several new attractions and our 'Shoot or Gundog Club' of the Year' competition in association (for some reason in proof two commas have been added) with Gundog Rescue & Re Homing will bring a bit of country style and elegance to the fairs. - watch out for more details!

A full programme of events will be posted on our web sites and published in the Summer edition of Irish Country Sports and Country Life, but in the meantime sit back for 20 minutes and enjoy our 2019 Great Game Fairs of Ireland video.

<https://player.vimeo.com/video/312929724>

THE GREAT GAME FAIRS
OF IRELAND 2019

Galway

Shanes Castle

15th and 16th June 2019

29th and 30th June 2019

Ireland's Largest Game Fair & Premier Country Sports Event



The **Irish Game Fair & Fine Food Festival** WHERE TOWN & COUNTRY MEET

Shanes Castle, Antrim **Saturday 29th & Sunday 30th June 2019**

The Irish Game Fair & Fine Food Festival celebrates its 41st anniversary as the event of choice for those who enjoy the Irish Countryside and the Country Lifestyle. Families can enjoy:

- ✿ An action packed Game Fair programme of international country sports competitions and displays with lots of 'have a go' activities and fantastic prizes
- ✿ The International Year of the Salmon fishing attractions
- ✿ A huge Living History Village with Encampment & Displays including Medieval Jousting
- ✿ A superb Fine Food & Craft Festival including game & fish cookery demos
- ✿ Stylish country living displays including clothing, homes, gardens and cars
- ✿ Lots of entertainment & educational activities for children
- ✿ With our new Irish Country Lifestyle Festival, Galway Racecourse, Ballybrit (15 & 16 June) The perfect platforms for businesses with country lifestyle products or services



Keep up to date with Fair news on www.irishgamefair.com or in the Irish Countrysports & Country Life magazine www.countrysportsandcountrylife.com

The Fair is supported by  discover northern ireland &  Antrim and Newtownabbey Borough Council

E: irishgamefair@btinternet.com

For info:
call
**028
44839167**



Iascach Intíre Éireann
Inland Fisheries Ireland

Protecting and developing Ireland's fisheries resource.

Two fisheries officers share their story

Inland Fisheries Ireland recently held a recruitment campaign for seasonal fisheries officers nationwide. The seasonal positions offer an opportunity to protect and develop Ireland's rivers, lakes and waterways during the summer months. While the deadline has now passed for this year's recruitment, anyone interested in applying for positions in Inland Fisheries Ireland should keep an eye on www.fisheriesireland.ie/careers for job postings.

Fisheries Officers play a vital role in protecting, conserving, managing and developing Ireland's precious natural fisheries resource. They help enforce Fisheries Legislation which protects against illegal fishing activity and support the development of the resource through the maintenance of angling infrastructure.

Fisheries Officers Darren Halpin and Ronan Cusack tell their story of what it's really like to work in fisheries.

Q. Darren, how did you become a Fisheries Officer?

I was always fishing as a young fella. My uncle was in fisheries for over 30 years so I was always intrigued about what he did. He was a good influence in my life and I followed his footsteps right into my career.



Fisheries Officer, Darren Halpin from Listowel, Co. Kerry Shannon River Basin District.

Q. What does an average day look like?

I go into the office in the morning, meet the Assistant Inspector and go through any emails that have come through. Then we plan out our day and what we're going to do - it might be a spawning patrol, estuary patrol or coastal patrol.

Q. What is your favourite part of the job?

There's a lot to be said about

getting up in the morning and wanting to go into work. You're outdoors, out walking, you're allowed work on your own initiative a lot of the time too which is great.

I'm interested in nature and wildlife. I love walking the banks of the rivers just to see the fish, wildlife along the river. There is such variety in the job - you could be doing boat patrols, estuary patrols, jet ski or kayak patrols. There is always something different.

Q. What is the most challenging thing about the job?

Sometimes dealing with the public can be challenging. You could be dealing with a pollution incident on a farm - one farmer might be very accommodating and there is no issue and then another farmer could be argumentative or confrontational. You have to be able to handle that.

You do a lot of unsocial hours too. But you get used to it.

Q. What do you think are the most important skills needed for the job?

Communication skills are important. You are dealing with the public all the time. Every situation can be different - there are different ways in how you communicate and react to situations.

Team work is also a big thing,

you are working as a team all the time so you need to be comfortable with that.

Q. What would you say to someone considering a job in fisheries?

If you're really into the outdoors and fishing, then it's definitely the job for you. You will get as much out of it as you put in.

Q. Ronan, how did you become a Fisheries Officer?



Fisheries Officer, Ronan Cusack from Ballinrobe, County Mayo Western River Basin District (based on Lough Mask and Lough Carra)

For as long as I can remember, I had an ambition to work in the fishery service. I live on the shores of Lough Mask and have been a fanatical angler since a very young age. My grandfather worked in the old fisheries trust back in the 1950's, he was followed by my father who also worked as a Fisheries Officer and retired ten years ago after 46 years' service.

I got the opportunity to take up a 12 month contract with the Western Regional Fisheries Board in 2006 and I was lucky enough to secure a

full time job within a short period after joining.

Q. What is your favourite part of the job?

My favourite part of the job is working outside. I have always enjoyed the outdoor life and the idea of being cooped up in an office is not something I could do long term.

A fishery officer's job offers a huge amount of variety. You never know from one day to the next what lies before you and you also get the opportunity to meet some amazing characters.

Q. What is the most challenging thing about the job?

The most challenging element of the job is the ongoing resource challenge. There is so much that we want to be able to do to maintain and develop our rivers and lakes.

Q. What do you think are the most important skills needed for the job?

In my opinion, people skills are very important because you are dealing with stakeholders and members of the public all the time. There are times when anglers or landowners do not agree with some fishery policies but by having a good relationship and ensuring clear communication, there is usually a positive outcome.

Q. What does an average day as a Fisheries Officer look like?

Our year goes in cycles. For instance, this time of year we are carrying out management work on the lakes and rivers.

Late spring / early summer usually brings fine weather which can cause water levels in some small rivers and streams to drop considerably leaving both adult and juvenile fish very vulnerable. This means we need to carry out what is known as salvage work and involves the removal of fish using electro-fishing equipment and relocating

them in a deeper safer part of the system.

Maintenance of all foot-bridges, fishing stands and stiles can take up a good part of the summer months too.

Late summer also involves the removal of excessive vegetation in some of the rivers and streams allowing a safer and easier passage for spawning trout. This includes the replacement of spawning gravel which may have been lost in winter floods.

The autumn and winter months are spent on equipment maintenance and river patrols which are also carried out at night. During the spawning season trout congregate in rivers and streams in large numbers and are very exposed to predation.

Throughout the year, we communicate with anglers. This is crucial as we rely on them for information in order to compile up to date weekly angling reports.

Q. What would you say to someone considering applying for a role as a Fisheries Officer?

Working as a fishery officer is a fantastic career which keeps you in touch with the outside world. Every day is different and extremely rewarding. There are times when you are expected to work long hours in cold harsh conditions, which admittedly can be tough. Fishery officers are a tight-knit bunch, they're great people to work with.



**Iascach Intíre Éireann
Inland Fisheries Ireland**

Retriever Working Tests Calendar 2019

Details Correct at the time of going to press

Date	Venue	Organisers	Contact	Telephone
9 March	Glenarm	Selection Test – Ulster Select	Jim Buchanan	0774 5088266
16 March	Shanes Castle	NAGC	Peter Grant	07785281437
30 March	Glenarm	Ulster Select Final	Jim Buchanan	0774 5088266
6 April	Ballydugan Estate	NIGF&SS	Philip Turner	028 9261 1845
13 April	TBC	Lab Club of NI	Daniel McKelvey	07714720055
20 April	Shanes Castle. All entrants get a half price ticket voucher to the Game Fair at Shanes Castle	Prelim, Novice and Open Tests. UGRC	Geoff Peoples Joe Johnston	02893342604 07886377306 07788 927014 028 8673 6432
22 April	Murley Mountain Wind Farm BT78 2HD	Fermanagh Gundog	Sara Neogard Blakeney	00353877833698
4 May	TBC	Mid Ulster Gundog Association	Joe Johnston	07789 927014/ 028 8673 6432
11 May	Rademon	UGL	Timmy woods	07860241617
18 May	Scarva House	NIGF&SS	Philip Turner	028 9261 1845
26 May	Scarva House Test	Nat Country Fair	Noel Doran	028 3832 5272
1 June	TBC	Meningitis Charity	Timmy Woods	07860241617
8 June	Gilford	Craigavon Gundog Club	Noel Doran	028 3832 5272
15 June	TBC	Lab Club of NI	Daniel McKelvey	07714720055
29 June	Irish Game Fair Shanes Castle	RED Mills Spaniel Tests & Cocker Tests top prizes for Top Dog & Runner Up.	Ken Lindsay	
30 June	Irish Game Fair Shanes Castle	Feedwell Prelim, Novice & Open Retriever Tests Top dog £500, Runner up £250 plus excellent supporting prize fund	Lab Retriever Club NI Daniel Mc Kelvey	07714720055
6th July	Glenarm	Ulster Select	Jim Buchanan	07745088266
20 July	Shanes Castle	NAGC	Peter Grant	07785281437
27 July	Scarva	NIGFSS	Philip Turner	028 9261 1845
10 August	TBC	URC	G Murdoch	07768670022
17 August	Murley Mountain Wind Farm BT78 2HD	Fermanagh Gundog Club	Sara Neogard Blakeney	00353877833698

Please note that in previous years FREE GAME FAIR TICKETS were given to entrants at the UGRC Test and the Lab Club of NI Clandeboye test this has been discontinued in 2019 and replaced with TWO FREE TICKETS for each handler entering the Retriever Tests at Shanes Castle. To qualify for the free tickets entries must be made in advance and can be taken at the Lab Club test on the 15th June.



Dalradian - Part of an economic miracle for Mid Ulster or a potential environmental disaster?

A number of readers contacted us to express concern about the potential environmental impact of the Dalradian mining operation near Geencastle in an area of outstanding beauty – the Sperrins. Our team have many very special memories of shooting and fishing in this area, so we took up our readers' and our own concerns about what has become a controversial issue.

We posed the following to Dalradian: could you please address the following extreme concerns of our readers:

Q1: You will be aware of the immense opposition from anglers, environmentalists and local people to your operations in view of the likely impact of waterways, the environment and on ecological systems which will be wiped out, yet apparently remain minded to proceed without relevant reassurances being given. Can you let us know what relevant environmental impact studies have been carried out which could allay these concerns?

Q2: Your use of cyanide is likely to become banned by the EU – can you state how you would intend to use this

and what safeguards do you propose?

Q 3: It is claimed that the impact of much of the above on this Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty will have serious immediate and long term consequences for the area and its inhabitants. Is what many have described as 'environmental rape' really worth it in terms of any benefits that might accrue to the area? What plans have you in place to prevent this occurring?

Q 4: Any other relevant comments you might wish to make. "

Dalradian (through their public relations company) have provided the following response:

A spokesperson on behalf of Dalradian said:

"Although mining is new to Co. Tyrone, it is not new to Ireland. Communities in Co. Tipperary and Co. Meath have had a positive experience with mining over many decades and we want to replicate that in Co. Tyrone.

"Tara Mines, for instance, is located beside and under the river Blackwater, a

tributary of the river Boyne. The area enjoys some of Ireland's best wild brown trout fisheries, as well as offering excellent pike and coarse fishing. The mine, Europe's largest lead and zinc mine has co-existed happily with the local angling community for over 40 years and even has its own staff angling club."

Re Q: "Dalradian's proposals for an underground gold and silver mine have received over 2,700 letters of support, an unprecedented number for any planning application. We also work locally on environmental projects such as the conservation of the Owenkillew's freshwater pearl mussel population. This has benefitted from £45,000 of funding, enabled by Dalradian, to protect river banks and maintain water quality. We don't accept the view that if you love the environment you can't support this project.

"Environmental standards for the mining industry are incredibly strict, much more so than other sectors such as agriculture. There's no scientific reason why mining can't operate in environmentally sensitive areas – in

Great Britain, for example, there are mines in the 'North York Moors National Park' and the 'Loch Lomond and The Trossachs National Park'.

"Environmental considerations are integral to all of Dalradian's proposals and every aspect of the mine has been designed to meet or exceed demanding regulatory standards, be that water management through the development of a bespoke water treatment plant, or supporting local ecology. Indeed, given our proposals to proactively enhance local habitats, we expect that the level of biodiversity across the wider area will be enhanced.

"Our Environmental Statement includes a Surface Water Impact Assessment and a shadow Habitats Regulations Assessment. These address water discharge criteria and detail our proposed water storage and treatment facilities which reflect the relevant guidance and legislation.

"Our studies have determined that there will be no significant environmental effect associated with the proposed discharge from the mine site. The discharge point will be monitored independently by the Northern Ireland Environment Agency and the data will be made publicly available, as well as to a further monitoring regime.

"The water treatment process will use reverse osmosis water purification technology and, with the exception of pre-existing and naturally occurring levels of iron and manganese, the water discharged will meet drinking water standards as applicable.

"We will also capture and recycle water from within the site rather than competing for any existing supplies.

Re Q2: "Again, there is no basis to the suggestion that the EU is going to ban the use of cyanide in mining – the actual position is quite the contrary. The processes we are proposing are in line with best practice and subject to rigorous scrutiny.

"The truth about the EU's position is that it reviewed the use of cyanide recently in 2017, four months before Dalradian submitted its planning

application. The EU Commission (see link) found that the use of cyanide-based technology in gold extraction represents the Best Available Technique (BAT) at present.

"Cyanide is currently used by six other gold mines in Europe and Dalradian's proposals go beyond legislative requirements. We have volunteered to join the International Cyanide Management Code to allow additional site assessments and third party independent reporting that would be made publicly available. A Draft Cyanide Management Plan has also been submitted as part of the planning application detailing the range of safeguards proposed."

Re Q3: "People should be assured that one of the reasons why Northern Ireland has such a rigorous planning process, including Public Inquiries, is to protect Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). As such, we have spent considerable time developing a Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment, and associated Restoration Plans to ensure that the proposal will not undermine the area's AONB status.

"The first point is that this is an underground mine - all mineral extraction, plus a range of other operations, will take place underground out of sight. The processing plant, which is similar in size to a large agricultural barn, will be located in a natural hollow, facing away from the centre of the Sperrins AONB. It will also sit below a ridge line and benefit from mature tree screening.

"We will also ensure that almost 80% of non-economic rock excavated will be retained underground. The remainder will be crushed and stored in a Dry Stack Facility (DSF) which will have an average thickness of 17m. The DSF will be progressively rehabilitated and planted to blend into the surrounding landscape. This avoids the usual need for a tailings dam which would have a larger footprint."

Re Q4: "Our proposed underground gold and silver mine at Curraghinalt is a once-in-a-generation opportunity that

will create 1,000 direct, indirect and induced jobs.

"Some people will understandably have questions about what Dalradian is proposing, and we're more than happy to talk and address factually incorrect assumptions.

"We are proposing a safe project that follows best practice and will be subject to rigorous, ongoing scrutiny by multiple regulatory authorities. All of this detail is publicly available in our 10,000-page planning application. Dalradian is also supporting calls for a Public Inquiry to allow a further level of public scrutiny.

"Mining has a long track record of success in Ireland, delivering economic and social benefits without a detrimental environmental impact on angling, as demonstrated by the experience of County Meath. We encourage anglers to join the over 1,400 who have already taken part in one of our 'tunnel tours' to find out first-hand what exactly is proposed."

Publisher's Note:

This is obviously a very controversial issue with Dalradian claiming they have over 2,700 letters in support of the operation while the various protest groups claim there have been over 10,000 letters lodged objecting to the scheme. We have given Dalradian the opportunity to address our readers' concerns – in the next issue of the magazine or possibly because this is a fast evolving situation in a special online supplement) we will give some of the protest groups the opportunity to respond to Dalradian's response to our questions. The responding groups will include the Greencastle People's Office, Save our Sperrins and Communities Against Mining in Omagh.

Federation of Irish Salmon & Sea Trout Anglers

Conaidhm na Slat Iascairí Bradáin agus Breac Geal

VISIT US AT www.fissta.com



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

Some Questions for State paid Fish Scientists

The FISSTA AGM elected a new team of 22 members from each of the River Basin Districts on to the NEC or National Executive Council for 2019. The new council heard angling delegates from the four corners of the island advocating a north/south joint policy to manage Ireland's wild Atlantic salmon resource, as stocks plummet even further according to the draft salmon regulations which were unveiled by the state Department of Natural Resources. Many at the meeting pleaded with Minister Canney to seize the initiative and get his staff to do the work to explore further the alarmingly high sea mortality of salmon stocks in this the **(IYS) International Year of the Salmon** that is now underway in 2019.

Much of the angling concern centred around the predation and overgrazing of the very high mackerel stock as outlined in the hypothesis put forward by Norwegian scientist Dr Jens Christian Holst in this column first, and in last Summer edition of *Inshore Ireland*. The AGM delegates were very happy to acknowledge Dr Holst's work on his hypothesis to date, and the NEC were commended for assisting, promoting and publishing the hypothesis at NASCO in Portland USA last June where FISSTA succeeded in getting good support from a number of members of our NASCO NGO group including some very prominent international voices. FISSTA were the first wild salmon NGO to explore and advocate the testing of this hypothesis

and succeeded in getting the late Orri Vigfusson to renew contact with Dr Holst a few weeks before he died in July 2017.

We all know that a 30 cm mackerel can eat a 12 cm one; this has always been the case, but Dr Holst asks why mackerel populations have moved to the smolt feeding locations more recently. The suggestion that smolts are in grave danger of being wiped out in the feeding grounds is being debated everywhere and has got a good airing in Ireland despite a reluctance by some scientists to advocate a testing of the Holst hypothesis.

Anglers are not scientists, but the AGM wanted urgent action and unanimously agreed to lobby all concerned - nationally and internationally (including NASCO) - to put a plan into action to have the Holst hypothesis tested without further delay.

Many at the AGM wondered why such an opportunity was apparently missed during the filming of 'Lost at Sea' when scientists searched for salmon post-smolt among large numbers of trawled mackerel....but unfortunately, it appears nobody was tasked to look inside the stomachs of the captured mackerel for salmon post-smolt. Another case of 'doctors differing, while salmon die.'

Michael Viney in the Irish Times put it well when he said: "Holst combines data from existing marine research with the wider experiences of professional fishermen. In the current *Inshore Ireland* journal he urges a start to tests of his hypothesis. He proposes catching 50

tonnes of mackerel this May on known salmon migration routes west of Scotland, and inspecting the 150,000 stomachs for smolt. He also proposes an international "thinning out" of mackerel stocks. In this, the International Year of the Salmon, a five-pound fish was caught (and released) on a Donegal River on New Year's Day. This was one, at least, to have dodged the wall of hungry *Scomber Scombrus* (Atlantic mackerel) – a predator, says Dr Holst, scarcely met by Irish salmon north of Ireland 20 years ago." Yet Dr Paul Connolly from Foras na Mara or Marine Institute states there is no hard evidence as yet to support this hypothesis and so the debate rundles on while state paid scientists fail the salmon once again.

The new draft regulations published by the Minister for Natural Resources make very sad reading and serve as the annual embarrassment for a failed IFI policy. Anger is evident as salmon numbers continue to fall on many rivers such as the Feale with a zero surplus and therefore closed to taking fish for the first time ever.

This decision closes the draft net fishery in the Cashen estuary as well; it is also likely that the thirty-day public consultation process to December 12 will see many submissions registered to convince the Minister to overturn his decision and open up the fishery for at least another year.

This decision to close good rivers showing high redd counts makes no sense and while we acknowledge the data such as the salmon redd counts is

there to guide managers and the Standing Scientific Committee on how to mark up or down a river. Once again, however, we wonder if they are making it up as they go along.

The Tullaghobegley River in Donegal, with a quota of 59 salmon, is open while neighbouring rivers in the Letterkenny district remain closed despite having superior data. For example, the River Lennon redd counts for 2016/2017 were the highest of all the Letterkenny fisheries, yet it is closed until May 12 next.

The Lackagh River, now with fish counter data since last April, showed a

surplus of 246 salmon. Despite this, IFI introduced a new bylaw to stop trolling and further restrict angling. At a state function in Falcarragh recently, a work-plan for Tullaghobegley River was proposed and anglers lost no opportunity to highlight the problems facing this and other rivers on the island of Ireland.

While we welcome the promotion of former Ministers (with responsibility for wild salmon) Joe Mc Hugh TD and now Sean Kyne TD we are faced with having to brief Sean Canney TD, who is the third minister in eighteen months to the Department of Natural

Resources.

The frustration of our Federation in having to wait yet again for action, while a Minister familiarises himself with a new and very import new job; we are facing a crucial time in salmon management, and one where a person like Minister Canney will have to play the pivotal role as leader of a new policy. The old failed policy from IFI certainly needs a remould and FISSTA left their AGM in Athlone with renewed hope of 2019. FISSTA plan a very big IYS programme of events in 2019 in which the highlight will be at the Galway Game Fair in June 2019.

Gweebarra River campaign nearing its conclusion

The picture was taken on his visit in 2016 to show his support for our campaign to oppose the state board Inland Fisheries Ireland from evicting local anglers from fishing. Sadly, Orri passed away in July 2017 but we remember the determination and encouragement he gave us to continue the fight for our angling rights in this case which we hope will be concluded before Easter. We acknowledge the Trojan efforts to date of our legal team led by Sean Boner. We will keep you posted through this column as always.



Gweebarra Rver campaigners Seán Boner Solicitor (extreme left) Peadar O' Baoill from Fintown (2nd left) the late Orri Vigfusson Chairman of North Atlantic Salmon Fund (3rd left) and John Boyle from Rosses Anglers (extreme right)

Cyanide to be used in gold mining in Tyrone - what could possibly go wrong?

FISSTA are planning to take up the invitation from our local pressure group to stand beside fellow anglers in opposition to the published plans for the £750 million gold mine in Co Tyrone, which could promise over 1,000 jobs west of the Bann. The Canadian firm Dalradian Resources promises to create "hundreds" of permanent jobs.

Plans to develop the mine near Greencastle have previously been met with opposition from local residents and very few, including politicians, have the will to allow the use of cyanide, described by the EU as the 'best available technology' to remove the precious metal from the ore.

This is despite Dalradian chief executive Patrick Anderson insisting in the Irish News in 2017 that the process is safe. "Everything that we have done to date has been to plan a project that is safe, that is environmentally safe, that is safe for the people that will be working there. As part of the process for the planning application we fully expect and encourage a public inquiry, where we can talk openly about what we propose to do and hear the concerns that will be aired. We're building a safe project. Everything that leaves the plant will be safe, there's no cyanide that will be outside the confines of the plant," Mr Anderson said.

Since acquiring the exploration rights in 2009, Dalradian has spent over £100 million, drilling over 170km of core and creating 2 km of underground tunnels at the site, which currently employs 40 people plus contractors but which has employed up to 130 people locally. The company estimates there is over six million ounces of high-grade gold at the site, describing the mine as one of the best of its kind in the world.

"There's only a handful of deposits of this high-grade nature on the planet right now. This is one of the best gold deposits on the planet right now," Mr Anderson said. In addition to roughly

300 posts created through the 18-month £150 million construction phase Dalradian estimate that 350 permanent direct jobs will be created along with around 650 more as a result of the development.

The planning application to permit the building of a mine at Curraghinalt is supported by an environmental statement, including contributions from local agencies and independent experts but FISSTA and angling colleagues will argue for a public inquiry citing the potential damage to water sources and quality which could devastate the potential for angling tourism on the Denet and other brilliant river systems such as the Mourne and Foyle catchments. Severe flooding last year left the Mourne system ruined with rainbow trout escaping from an upriver fish farm. (For its part, Dalradian claim to have designed a water treatment plant and associated water storage ponds that will contain a 1-in-a-1000 year, 24-hr storm event. They claim that the system is also designed so that all of the water that comes out of the mine or falls on the infrastructure site during operations will be captured,

treated and tested before discharge.

Given the scale of the project, it is expected that a public inquiry will be held prior to a final decision being taken, which takes approximately one year.

Latest News

FISSTA Anglers To Support Tyrone Community's Campaign Against Dalradian Gold Mining Plan - FISSTA Join Protest At The Mining Site In Greencastle Mountain

The angling federations of Ireland were represented in Greencastle on Saturday 23rd February and our Federation of Irish Salmon and Seatrout Anglers (FISSTA) joined this information meeting to learn more about the planned mining application lodged with the Department of Infrastructure and which is awaiting a decision in the coming months.

FISSTA, who have the support of over 90 clubs on the island including in the Donegal IFI area, Lochs Agency and Foyle areas attended to learn about the protest and if thought appropriate to assist in the campaign already underway.

Members representing other Irish Angling Federations included FASTA-FOYLE ASSOCIATION OF SALMON & TROUT ANGLERS, TAFI- TROUT ANGLERS FEDERATION OF IRELAND and the UAF-ULSTER ANGLING FEDERATION, were also invited to the information day in Greencastle County Tyrone where the mining of gold using Cyanide is being challenged by the local community. A most informative day long presentation and site visit to the mine was conducted by a number of campaign volunteers who explained clearly how the mining proposal could impact on their community and our waterways. FISSTA have monitored the progress to date through their many registered clubs and have debated and pledged their support in line with existing policy to local anglers and campaigners who are opposing this mining project.

"FISSTA see this new mining application as a potentially major threat to angling and water quality based on the possible dangers of cyanide contamination." said Noel Carr Secretary of FISSTA.



Angling Federation representatives meet with representatives of protest groups.

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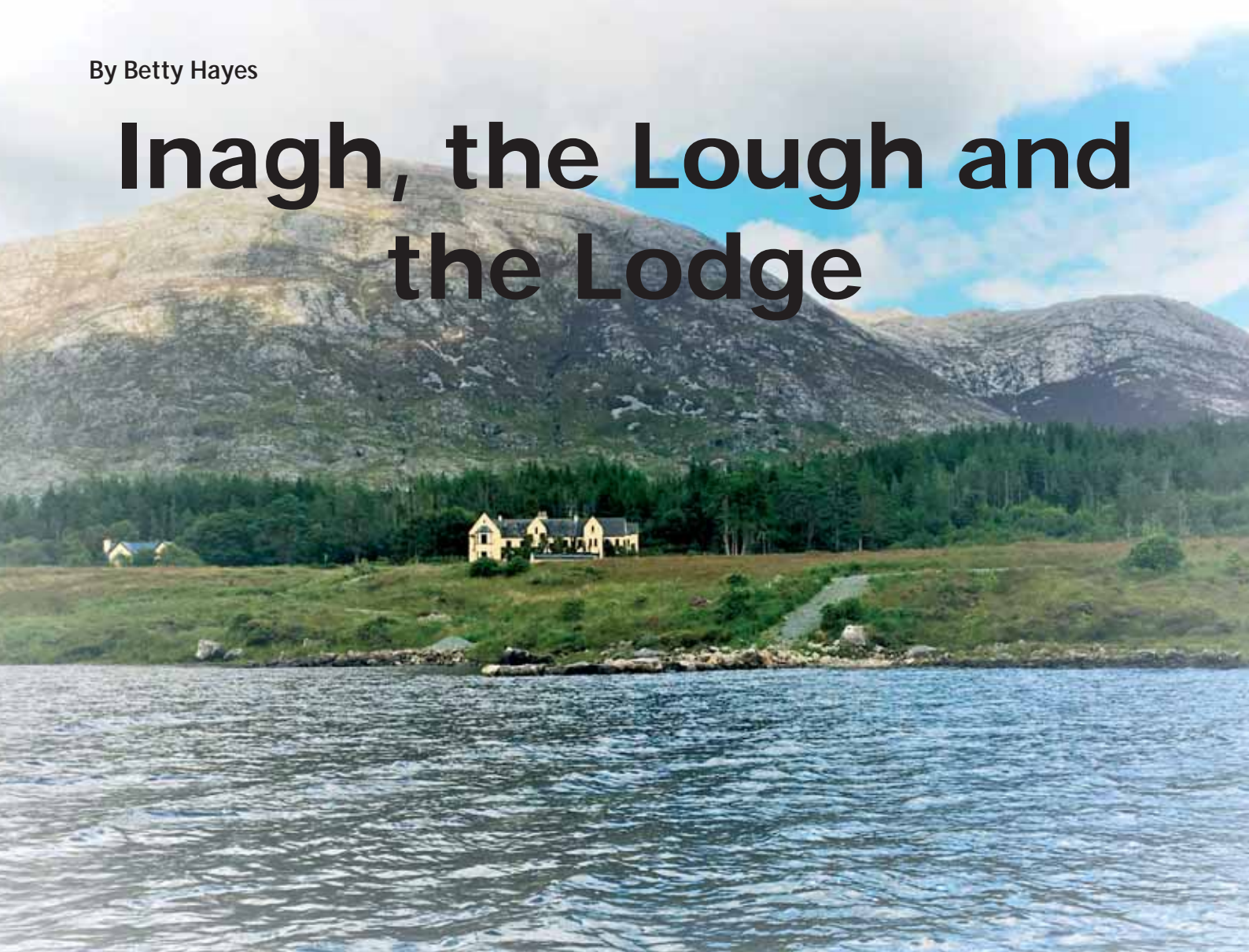
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Lest anyone be in doubt about his fishy tales, here is some proof that Harry McKee from County Down has been fishing the rivers of Ireland for nearly three centuries. Here is one fine grilse he caught at Ceim an Easa, near the Salmon Leap on the Glen River Donegal - around the 1930s judging by his new car!



Harvey McKee with a nice grilse and a very interesting car.

Inagh, the Lough and the Lodge



The view from the lough.

The opportunity to fish the great lakes of Ireland is a privilege which should never be taken for granted. I have met so many anglers who can only dream because the chance of this happening in their lifetime is remote. For me to spend time in a drifting boat on Loughs Inagh, Mask or Corrib in a warm breeze with good company is what it's all about.

Although I've not had many opportunities to fish Lough Inagh I can understand how it is such a favourite for so many local and overseas anglers. Sadly, my visits are always far too brief and two days fishing only whets the appetite.

While Lough Inagh is neat and of manageable proportions Lough Mask is mighty and can be a frightening place. I find it a difficult water on which to find or remember my bearings. The scenery is spectacular, the views change with every passing cloud and every

directional change of the drift.

One special memory for me on the Mask will always be fishing with my very good friend the late Dick Warner during the filming of his 'Great Irish Fishing Odyssey.' While the object of the exercise was to catch trout, we were drawn into looking at and analysing the scenery, the shore life, the flora, fauna and aquatic life. During his lifetime Dick Warner, writer and broadcaster was Ireland's most comprehensively knowledgeable and best loved wildlife expert. As a gardening enthusiast I hope he is growing tomatoes in God's greenhouse, or talking about waterways with the friends who have gone to heaven before him.

People will say that retired folk have all the time in the world, but I believe time flies much faster and the days seem much shorter when responsibilities are fewer. This year was no exception and, with summer holidays coming to a

close, Michael and I needed to grab a few days in the West before returning to our home in Andalucía. The venue was undecided, we both needed a bit of relaxation as well as unpressurised time on friendly water. However, with the option to fish for sea trout or even a salmon and, having previously stayed at Lough Inagh Lodge we made our reservations with Máire O'Connor, packed the gear and headed for Recess in County Galway.

The jetty at Lough Inagh is about five minutes from the Lodge where the hotel's six boats are safely moored. There is also a Boathouse/Fishing hut with engines, wet gear, lifejackets etc securely stored. The boats are always clean and kept in very good condition and the Fishery say their list of 'on call' ghillies and boatmen includes Connemara's finest. Arriving at the jetty was almost as if we had never been away. To see the welcoming smiles and



Caught by Baet Suez from Switzerland, captured on camera then carefully released.

hear the good-humoured camaraderie always make me glad to have so many friends who are also dedicated followers of Izaak Walton and Prioress Dame Juliana Berners.

The ghillie's running commentary very often leads to 'Fish on!'

As it was late August and the tail end of the game angling season I harboured no fantasies regarding huge catches or many screaming reels. However, on our last (also short) visit two years ago, I caught a bright silver sea trout of about two and three-quarter lbs. and became hooked. We had excellent sport on that trip with friend and boatman, Joe Crane. Most Irish ghillies and boatmen are professional, helpful and very anxious to please, but Joe goes the extra mile. Never short of something to say, his running commentary very often leads to 'Fish on!'

This year as usual the first day on the water began full of anticipation and expectation, but sadly my catch rate could have been measured on an old-fashioned school ruler. I caught many fish but none measured more than eight inches, or weighed more than eight

ounces. However, I had plenty fun with a couple of double headers, sea trout and brownies on the same cast! Daddy Long Legs fished just below the surface seemed to be the big attraction for these very lively small fish. Thankfully I have done enough catching in my angling lifetime to be able to appreciate and enjoy even the 'you should have been here yesterday' days.

Although another good friend, Padraig Fahy, our boatman this year, took us over the very best drifts and offered us flies from his vast arsenal of 'this one did the business yesterday' flies. Only a dedicated competition

angler, which Padraig is, could have such a well organised and meticulously arranged travelling showcase of every size and colour of fishing flies. However, although we thoroughly enjoyed trying as anglers do, it was not to be my fishing day to remember.

Michael was much more successful. He boated several fish, both sea trout and brownies, his best being a lovely sea trout to two pounds which took his Teal Blue and Silver. We were surprised to see a brown trout of over five plus pounds on the slab in the Lodge the previous evening, apparently it was destined for the taxidermist. Now



A fine room for relaxation.

fishing will never be an exact science as we all know but it can sometimes be frustrating. In the same place where we were rounding up so many small fish, and on the same morning, a visitor from Switzerland fishing for half a day, caught and released a fine brown trout of about eight pounds caught on a Blue Butcher.

To me these fish did not look like ferox trout, also they were caught on the fly which would be somewhat unusual. As part of my research I spoke with Kevin Crowley, Fisheries Inspector with IFI. He confirmed that big brown trout are an occasional if not a regular feature of Lough Inagh. He says some people believe that these fish: "Are sea trout which came in previous years and stayed in fresh water, having become large enough to be piscivorous and also feed on the charr, therefore not needing to return to sea to get enough food for spawning. Certainly, an interesting phenomenon in a nutrient poor lake."

Each passing cloud which makes the scenery even more impressive

About four and a half miles long and just over a half mile wide, Lough Inagh is small by west of Ireland standards. A shining jewel of a lake of manageable proportions it is set in the valley created by the magnificent Twelve Bens of Connemara and the Maumturk Mountains ranges. The aspect changes with each passing cloud which makes the scenery even more impressive, almost like being inside a painting by a great landscape artist... magnificence in miniature. I haven't yet had the opportunity to wander the heather clad shores or admire close-up the colourful shrubs of the mountainside but on the little pathway which leads from the private quay to Lough Inagh lodge I saw more varieties of beautiful wildflowers than on any other lakeshore.

The Derryclare and Inagh Lakes are connected by two small, fast flowing rivers at the top of the Ballinahinch system. The beats include The Trout



The open door and view beyond.



The rod room.



Popping up for lunch take no time at all.

Pool, Pine Island and Green Point not forgetting the Glendalough and famous Derryclare Butts so favoured by salmon anglers. Corloo is situated at the outflow from the lake. There are five groins on the stretch, so it can easily be fished from the bank and has produced some very large sea trout.

There is so much more about the geography of the lake than an infrequent visitor like me could possibly take on board so, even on such a small water, the guidance of a knowledgeable local boatman is an advantage. As my title suggests Lough Inagh has its very own Lodge. Viewed from a drifting boat the house refuses to be overshadowed by the mighty peak under which it rests but appears like a bright chateau in miniature nestling in its shelter. Lough Inagh Lodge is, understandably, one of the truly Great Fishing Houses of Ireland.

The Lodge was built on the shores of Lough Inagh in the nineteenth century. It was originally part of the estate of Richard “Humanity Dick” Martin of Ballynahinch Castle who died in 1834. It was later purchased by Richard Berridge, a London brewer who used the building as a fishing lodge in the 1880s. It passed through the hands of the Tennent family, and then to Carroll Industries until 1989.

About that time, John O’Conner had

for sixteen years been General Manager of Ballinahinch Castle and had turned that establishment into what it is today, one of the most prestigious Hotels in Ireland. With his wife Máire he began the restoration of what was the old Berridge family fishing lodge and turned it into the stately Manor House known as Lough Inagh Lodge. Sadly, John O’Connor passed away in 1999. His memory is kept alive by the warm welcome, the homely atmosphere and the continuous stoking of the blazing log fires in the hearths of the drawing rooms of the Lodge.

As a first class, boutique style hotel it is superior and yet unpretentious

Máire O’Connor who owns the hotel and her brother Dominic Moran are outstandingly, yet unobtrusively, professional. As a first class, boutique style hotel it is superior and yet unpretentious, with a good mixture of vintage bordering on modern in its décor. The bedrooms are charming and comfortable, and the non-angling visitor would have no problem finding an attractive armchair in either of the two lovely drawing rooms in which to curl up with a good book and a silver-service tea tray.

The lodge is one of Ireland and the West’s genuine angling hostelrys. A

welcome break in the fishing day comes around lunchtime. Boats are moored at a little Quay from where a narrow path leads up to the hotel. Fishermen are special guests here, where else are we welcome to come in through the hall door onto the lovely old-world style rugs and walk in waders down the corridor to the cosy Anglers Bar? A real fisherman’s retreat with oak panelled walls, polished timber bar with gleaming brass beer pumps, country sports paintings and prints, ‘fishy’ ornaments and mounted fish etc.

A welcome pint of Guinness, served in the old-fashioned way (i.e. not too cold), followed by a lunch of salmon sandwiches on freshly baked Irish soda bread with a bowl of aromatic seafood chowder, I almost wished I didn’t have to go back on the lake. However, after a steaming cup of coffee, the fish are calling, its time to select flies and head out on the water again with optimism.

In the corridor adjoining the bar is Fishery Manager Colin Folan’s office where it’s possible to purchase flies and the mandatory state licences to fish for salmon and sea trout. Colin will organise boats and boatmen, is always willing to advise and makes sure that daily catches are recorded in the Fishery Log Books.

The evening meals taken in the polished-timber floored dining-room where the tables are arranged to ensure the privacy of guests. The freshest of local seafood, home grown produce and Connemara lamb are presented so artistically as to excite the palate and are delicious. While Michael particularly enjoyed the mussels from Killary Harbour my memory strays to the dessert menu. “Carrageen Panna Cotta with Fresh Fig & Port Sauce,” as recommended by Dara O’Connor, our waiter for the evening, was a treat.

When you visit Lough Inagh and The Lodge, make time to stop and smell the roses, stroll through the heather and the showy bog cotton, find some of those whopping grasshoppers, then drift over rising fish, you also will not want to leave.

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Obituary

PETER O'REILLY

On 6th December 2018 Peter O'Reilly passed away in a Dublin hospital following a lengthy illness.

Peter was perhaps one of the best-known anglers in Ireland. He had written many books, which have become essential in the libraries of Irish fly-fishermen. As part of his work with the Inland Fisheries Trust (latterly Central Fisheries Board and then Inland Fisheries Ireland) Peter compiled for publication fishing reports from all of the major Irish salmon, trout and sea trout fisheries. He used his intimate knowledge of visiting and fishing these venues to compile two books – 'Rivers of Ireland' and 'Loughs of Ireland' which provided valuable information on fishery access, successful patterns and permits.

Also a superb fly-dresser, Peter wrote 'Flies of Ireland' which can be found on the bookshelves of thousands of Irish fly-dressers. Detailed pattern descriptions and photographs of both wet and dry flies as well as salmon patterns led to the book becoming a best seller and demand for the volume led to several re-print runs.

Peter O'Reilly was a superb caster with a fly rod. His speciality was with a double-handed salmon rod, but he was also a master of the trout rod as well. Wishing to share his passion for casting, in the 1980s Peter ventured to the UK to become a Qualified Casting Instructor with the Association of Game Angling Instructors (APGAI). He often said that there's a right way and a wrong way to cast a fly and he was determined that Irish anglers should know the right way! Peter encouraged others to follow this path and soon several of us became Qualified Instructors in double-handed and single-handed casting, as well as the age-old art of fly dressing.

Peter discovered that, at that time, APGAI's UK Public Liability Insurance did not cover Irish Instructors. In 2002, he convened a meeting of those of us, North and South, who had qualified in the UK and the outcome of that meeting was the formation of the group now known as the Association of Professional Game Angling Instructors (Ireland), which went from strength to strength under his guiding hand.

Never one to rest on his laurels, Peter became a member of several other Instructors groups including the Fly Fishers' Federation in America and the UK based Association of Advanced Professional Game Angling Instructors. It is a measure of the man that he continually strove to better his professional qualifications in order to provide the highest level of tuition to his pupils.

Peter encouraged Instructors to attend Game and Country Fairs both here in Ireland and abroad to promote and market our sport. He loved Shane's Castle and Birr and always attended on a voluntary basis, as do all of us - it was his vision to pass on the accumulated knowledge of experienced anglers to those beginning in the sport and saw Shows and Fairs as our showcase. APGAI Ireland intends to continue his legacy into the future.

We send our deepest condolences to his wife Rose, his son Patrick and to his extended family.

Arthur Greenwood
Secretary, APGAI Ireland

Publishers Note

The Great Game Fairs of Ireland team was greatly saddened by the death of Peter O'Reilly who had a long association with our fairs going back to Clondeboy Estate.

Through our fairs and APGAI



The late Peter O'Reilly.

Ireland Peter's legacy is that he passed on his great angling enthusiasm, knowledge and expertise to several generations of Irish anglers and his work and influence continue through his colleagues in APGAI Ireland.

I personally will miss seeing his tall upright figure approaching me at various events with his warm smile and vice like handshake.

Albert Titterington

A GLIMPSE OF THE PAST TO GUIDE US FORWARD

A sight to gladden the heart of any flyfisher.

Picture the scene: a solitary figure stalks the banks of a pristine trout stream, the Six Mile Water, though it could be any number of streams at the time. The stream consists of a series of runs and pools ending with a smooth glide at the tail of each pool. Cress beds and water crowfoot grow in the shallower reaches, it's little white flowers show above the surface, trailing stalks glowing green below. The clean golden gravel is littered with boulders, meandering bends are deeply undercut and the odd old willow tree overhangs the bank. The river bank consists of water meadows, rough grazing and barley fields in the higher, drier ground.

Our angler is resplendent in his Donegal tweed jacket, cap, shirt and tie. The new Dunlop thigh waders are rolled down neatly and he puffs on his pipe as he stares earnestly at the water surface for signs of a feeding trout. His Brady bag conceals a plastic Macintosh,

thermos and a 'piece' wrapped up in grease proof paper. A draughtsman from the 'yard' (Harland and Wolff), this angler has an eye for design and engineering. In his hand he carries a beautiful rod bearing the Sharpes of Aberdeen logo, palakona impregnated cane, adorned with a Hardy reel designed to last a lifetime. The old gentleman enjoys his bowls and golf, but angling brings together nature and sport, a heady mixture which is unpredictable and exacting, requiring skill and instinct, success of course provides fresh food in a time before freezers or supermarkets. On his bus journey from Belfast, all the conversation is about the upcoming football world cup final, it's July 1966 and the competition starts at the end of the month.

The Blue Dun was always a great fly on the Six Mile Water, an essential fly at this time of year, a copy of the Blue

Winged Olive, Ephemerella Ignita, an iconic upwing fly which hatches during the day and in the warm summer evenings. Also hatching are little Spurrings, Pale Wateries, the beautifully named Little Sky Blue. Our angler knows well the seasons and patterns: early spring brings Large Dark Olives and Iron Blues, the hatch is centred around the warmest part of the day and the sport is over well before teatime but, as the days lengthen, the hatches extend later and as we get to mid May the terrestrials appear, clouds of Black Gnat and Hawthorne Flies. Now in July, it's the time of Blue Winged Olive, Pale Watery and Sedge.

This angler is content to mostly fish his local river, though Northern Ireland has a plethora of great trout rivers, the Maine, Braid, Blackwater, Bann, Colebrook, Erne, too many to mention. He fishes here rather than travel further afield, because the rich diversity of



Once clouds of Olives hatched from our streams and rivers providing food for trout and the summer bird population.

insects sustains a healthy population of lovely wild brown trout, where a fish of less than a pound is not worthy of comment and only fish of twice that size deserves one. The downside of this is that they won't bother to feed unless

substantial hatches make it worth their while. The angler is well read in the writings of Skues, Sawyer and the father of the dry fly, Halford; his Wheatley fly box contains little clipped compartments brimming with dun,

spinner and sedge imitations, the classic split wing, up-eyed Greenwells Glory, Rough Olive, Tups Indispensable, Red Spinner, Blue Dun, Little Brown Sedge, etc., all immaculately tied from Kenneth Rankins and Joseph Braddells of Belfast. Another box contains wet flies, Mallard and Claret, Butcher, Teal Blue and Silver, Connemara Black, useful for the end of the season when the Dollaghan trout emerge from Lough Neagh to run the river.

Back on the river bank evening is drawing in, swallows and martins swoop along the water surface through clouds of flies, wings glittering in the red summer glow. Wagtails pick off the olives emerging from the surface on their maiden flight and the stream are bubbling with the rises of small trout and salmon parr. The air is heavy with the scent of cress, flag iris and marsh marigold. A Corncrake sounds in the meadow and Chiff Chaffs, Yellowhammers, Siskins, Redpols, Reed Buntings, Sedge Warblers twitter and sing all around the river valley.

In the angler's wicker creel lie three



Habitat improvement - a fast current at the neck scours the pool clean and provides oxygen.



Angling clubs should be working closely with NIEA pollution staff.

butter belly brown trout, taken on the Blue Winged Olive and now our man is absorbed in watching the new hatch as the duns shed their dowdy skin to become the perfect fly, the spinner. With clear wings and orange-red body they perform their courtship dance in clouds above the river, finally mating and descending to lay their eggs on the surface and die, floating down trapped in the watery film. This latest fall of fly will tempt the river's larger residents to the surface and as the sun sets our angler ties on a Sherry Spinner and hunts for the quiet dimpling whorls in the smooth glides and eddies that may betray the presence of the two pounder. Each pool will have such a fish or three, thanks to the abundant aquatic life. Crouching low in the lush bank side vegetation he stalks his quarry, the trout is sucking down the spent flies with gusto, but is easily spooked in the smooth water. Our angler watches the rhythm of the rises and the silk Kingfisher line swishes in the summer evening sky, landing like feather-down several feet above the rise, the Sherry Spinner drifting slowly down is sucked under in a small dimple. A moment later the cane rod arches into a graceful curve and the tranquility of the river is interrupted by a trout jumping and thrashing, finally succumbing and being lead into the waiting net. The end of the evening will see our man call in to the

Dunadry Inn with a full creel (six fish limit) for quick bottle of stout before catching the last bus home at the stop beside the old bridge.

THE REALITY CHECK

Unfortunately those heady days of yesteryear were to change shortly after the time when our angler plied his craft on the river. The great hatches of fly have disappeared, those who are less tolerant of pollution are gone altogether, the sight of an Iron Blue is a talking point. The birds have mostly gone, the wheat and barley stubbles which sustained them during the winter are now ploughed as soon as the grain has been cut, the trees, copses and hedges which homed them were ruthlessly cut out and the summer feast of river flies no longer exists. A good river trout is not a common sight now, the two and three pounders of yesteryear are long gone and now we have to look at the causes.

The river catchments have suffered death by a thousand cuts, but we can identify the main problems. Our angler of yesteryear caught the end of the really good fishing, for shortly after his time came an ongoing government drainage programme which removed the lovely gravel and stones from the river bed, straightened the river taking out all the undercut bends and trailing roots of the willow trees. In one quick sweep the spawning gravel and habitats

for the trout were gone, the silty bottom useless for game fish and aquatic invertebrates. The marshes and water meadows which attained and gradually filtered the rain water into the river were drained for grazing increasingly intensive numbers of cattle and their waste spread over open fields with no buffer zones to stop the slurry reaching the river. Pesticides were developed which proved lethal. Half a cup of modern pesticide would destroy aquatic life for many miles of river. Industry was sprawling ever closer into the countryside with its threats of pollution. As the population expanded the waste water treatment plants became increasingly overwhelmed and storm drains and treated waste systems were linked meaning every storm brought more filth and sewage into the river. Many little burns and streams were dredged and culverted, spawning and nursery areas destroyed. Nutrient loading from slurry, fertiliser and inefficient waste treatment works caused algal growths which suffocated any remaining water crowfoot and beneficial plants and in hot weather the filamentous algae, blanket weed coated the whole river, sucking up the oxygen and when stormy weather came the flood water lifted the blanket weed, trapping all the aquatic invertebrates in the tiny filaments as the mats of this weed rolled downstream, killing them by the thousand. Any trout that managed to survive all this also had to run the gauntlet of an increasingly numerous cormorant population.

TIME TO TAKE STOCK

As you can imagine, a river could never recover naturally from this wholesale destruction. It's up to us anglers to address the problems and the information is out there; it's all been done before and there are proven solutions to some of the problems facing our waterways. Every stream has its own individual issues, but often the two main ones are pollution and damage caused by drainage works. The pollution issues can be identified by constant monitoring and problem areas



A good river trout is rare enough these days.

addressed. Every club should be working with NIEA Pollution team to tackle point source issues, such as dirty drains and culverts, illegal dumping and problems associated with industrial premises and landfill leaching. For some strange reason the farming community in Northern Ireland aren't required to adhere to a fenced buffer zone though there are incentives to do so. This means pesticides, fertilisers and slurry easily find their way into the river, so angling clubs would do well to offer to erect buffer zone fencing along vulnerable areas, perhaps low areas of a bank where water naturally flows down into the river. The Woodland Trust can provide free tree packs to plant these areas and natural vegetation quickly generates to provide a natural filter to absorb run off from the pasture. Perhaps the best way to identify problem areas in a river catchment is kick sampling for aquatic invertebrates, done monthly this will give an indication of areas which might require investigation. Training may be obtained for the Anglers Monitoring Initiative (AMI) via its Riverfly Sampling scheme, a national initiative which anglers will find very interesting as they learn to identify the various aquatic invertebrates.

Although some areas of river are gradually starting to naturalise, most of

our rivers have been irreversibly damaged by misguided drainage schemes which, rather than flood water meadows far up the catchment letting the flood water filter gradually down the catchment, now flush dirty flood water quickly to cause mayhem in towns and villages downstream. Now, EEC recommendations are to let water courses naturalise and wooded areas and meadows flood to hold back surges in storm water. The canalised stretches of river can be restored to the natural sequence of the narrow run at the neck, deep pool and shallow tail. This provides a strong current to flush silt from the pool, habitat in the deeper water for fish to hide and a steady glide over gravel at the tail for spawning and small fish. Boulders, undercut banks and tree debris provide lies for fish as do overhanging branches and tree roots. The Wild Trout Trust booklet, *The Wild Trout Survival Guide* (the best £10 you'll ever spend) gives all the information on the issues affecting your river and they'll come and do a walk over survey for a nominal sum to advise on how to improve your fishery. DAERA Fisheries own staff also have some excellent and very skilled professionals in this field and will be willing to provide advice and perhaps practical help if required.

TIME TO ACT

Now is the time to get organised and decide what type of fishery you would like. Help is out there, if you know what you need to do. You could even ask local business to help out, explaining that your club is performing a habitat enhancement and conservation project. My local quarry donated hundreds of tonnes of stone and when Lagan Constain Ferruvial were building the A8 road I blagged two diggers, a huge tipper truck and three drivers for the week and they used the project for an Environmental Accreditation that helped secure a lucrative deal for another building project.

If every angling club in Ireland did a little bit of work then gradually we could restore our streams, a great natural resource, wildlife habitat, recreational asset, tourist feature, focal point in the village, something to be proud of and believe me although there's some hassle involved, the rewards are immense and to see your river start to recover, the clean gravels, the bank side flowers appearing, cress beds and water crowfoot glowing in the stream, flag iris, weeping willows and finally the hatches of flies, the trout, ducks, kingfishers, swallows, wagtails, dippers, otters etc, we can never hope to go back to the heyday of angling in Ireland, time has moved on and with it farming practices, industry, housing and population but we can hope for clean water and habitat for animals that live in it.

Now is the time to act, we're already losing too much of our best natural habitats and if it's not being protected chances are it'll be bought by a developer and built over. Too much has been spoilt or lost already, we can't depend on government agencies to protect our rivers, they don't have the resources or will, so it's up to us now, form a river trust or club, time to roll the sleeves up and dream of the sport enjoyed by that angler of yesteryear with his tweed jacket, cane rod, puffing his pipe as he earnestly studies the water for that two pound trout!



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Grayling fishing in Norway

A wonderful backdrop to amazing fishing.

I have fly fished in many places in the world and every year I normally host a few fishing trips to a stunning destination as part of my wonderful job. For the past seven seasons I have hosted Grayling fishing trips to Norway.

Norway was once frequented by Victorian gentlemen in pursuit of big scenery, wild places and wild fish. In fact there is a beat on the river still called 'England,' where two brothers used to spend the summer and if you ever go, you will see why they went — it's a simply breathtaking spot.

It is a big country with big rivers and one of the biggest is Norway's River Trysil, where we are based. The Trysil lies a comfortable three hour drive north east from Norway's capitol Oslo, close to the Swedish border in a vast wilderness area, with plenty of opportunities for keen, novice and expert anglers alike.

I adore this region having fished it many times with one of the best guides, Espen Eilertsen. I met Espen many years ago at the Dutch fly fair and he's a regular to our Irish Fly Fair in Galway in November. He is not only a talented fly angler, but also a great fly dresser, caster and cook and a true outdoors

Here's another nice one - the smile says it all.



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It's a river not a lake and this part is called 'England'.

Stevie about to net a nice grayling.



man. On top of all that, he is really good company and speaks perfect English and next year we will be hosting a holiday again in September.

On the last trip, we were met on arrival by Espen, before driving north through spectacular scenery. Our base was a beautiful comfortable wooden cabin, set on the banks of the awesome river and you could sit and watch fish rising from the door or dining room; a fabulous setting looking out onto the wide, crystal clear river with the majestic mountains rising above.

Sleek stunning fish designed to live in big fast rivers

This is somewhere that makes me feel good about the world; it is a place not only to fish but also to just sit and relax and take in where you are, and enjoy the magnificent setting. As anglers, we can sometimes forget how lucky we are, just being where we are. Fly fishing should be much more than catching fish. A wise angler once wrote: "I fish for trout because they live in beautiful places," and with this Norwegian setting trout really do live in exceptional places along with their wonderful cousins, the grayling.

Normally my job on a hosted trip is to help the team if they need casting lessons, read the river, fly choice or tactics, but on the last trip they were all pretty experienced anglers and I only had to help with some casting, just a little help with distance casting and some Spey casting. So with Espen and I sharing the work, I also get a chance to fish a bit. I love fishing new places, with different tactics and with grayling not being native to Ireland, it is wonderful to catch these magical fish. I have always adored grayling from the very first time I caught one many years ago in Scotland on the River Tummel, when I worked with Dave Havers for Mitchells of Pitlochry.

The Trysil River has some lovely wild brown trout with fantastic markings, but Grayling are the main quarry. The fish we got were all sleek stunning fish, designed to live in big

fast rivers, with beautiful markings, not massive but a nice average size, with an occasional big one. Sometimes, heavy nymphs with short line Czech and Polish nymphing techniques were used, but mostly caught them on dry flies with caddis, small olives and wood ants being the best patterns. I was amazed at the size of the wood ants nests - massive like huge buildings in the forest, some were many feet high.

This part of Norway is a joy, rarely do you see many other cars, in fact Marc joked when we got held up by a small herd of wild Reindeer, that this was a Norwegian traffic jam. Apart from the Trysil, we also fish some other big rivers, including Glomma and the Rena.

What You Will Need

I normally bring two rods. A Guideline rod for dry fly fishing of around 9 feet that casts a 4 or 5 line and a longer 10 ft nymph rod for a 4 or 5 line, both matched with floating lines. You will also need sunglasses, for bright days and when wading stony rivers, to help see the obstacles. Apart from good waders and jacket, I would also bring a wading staff and a range of flies, mostly caddis pupa patterns for Czech Nymph style and a selection of dries for rising fish, such as small mayflies, caddis and ants.

Nymphing Techniques

The basic method of fishing with Czech nymph is the so-called short nymph, or rolled nymph. When using this method, we are catching fish practically under the tip of the flyrod and commonly without making use of the flyline, the end of which does not touch the water surface. After casting upstream, we let the flies sink to the bottom gradually and follow their movements downstream with the tip of the rod. We keep the rod in the hand, with the arm stretched in front of us all the time. When the flies reach the area just below us, we lift the flies from the bottom, moving the rod upwards and then cast again.



Grayling in the clear water.



Just wonderful on the dry fly.

Casting a nice line in idyllic conditions.





Big wild and wonderful - that's Norway.

To be successful, keep in permanent contact with the flies. A bite of a fish shows up as a movement of the leader/fly line upstream or to the sides, or just like a short stop of the whole system as the flies travel through the water. When we are not able to keep our contact with the flies, our chances to observe a take is markedly reduced,

Several things can help us to keep our contact with the flies: proper leading of the flies and "copying" their movements in the water by rod and line, while trying to keep the leader stretched all the time and also the length of the leader. Using a short one, keeping good contact with the flies is easier than with a long one. Keeping contact with heavier flies is much easier than with lighter ones (lighter flies, however, behave more naturally in the water).

Czech nymphs can also be used in the "long" way, when we cast flies farther and lay the line on the water. Then we identify the takes by movements or stop of the line tip. In this way we can fish upstream, across the stream and downstream as well.

Dry Fly Fishing Techniques

Traditional dry fly fishing works as normal, casting upstream, you are in the trout's blind spot, right behind it. You are less likely to have 'cross-flow' drag to contend with and you can pick the fly

off the water without disturbing the trout. A disadvantage of upstream fishing is that if you don't fish your way up to your target, you can easily line and spook unseen fish when you cast.

On these big Norwegian rivers, casting dry flies across and downstream is a normal tactic and downstream presentation works well if some slack line is given on the water between you and your target fish, by mending or making 'parachute' casts.

When it is done properly to a confident feeder you will rise more fish than you might expect, as the first thing the fish sees is the fly. You can also stop the rod at the vertical on your forward stroke and the line and leader will fall short of your target. Let the flow take the fly and leader as they straighten out down to the feeding fish, while you lower the rod to feed the remaining slack onto the water. If you get your range right during false casting, the fly should float down to the trout's or grayling's nose, before the taut line checks its journey.

Fishing this part of the world is wonderful, with wild fishing on big wild rivers. The River Trysil flows through a typical Norwegian forest — long still flowing sections, ideal for classic dry fly fishing and faster riffles that are quintessential nymph stretches. The river enjoys an extremely rich insect life

and we often fish 'The Fish Spot' where there has been some excellent work done in researching the fish in that area. The River Glomma has also got excellent dry fly and small nymph sport throughout the year for grayling and trout. If you are interested in fishing there just email me.



Guideline Power Team member and Game Angling Consultant, Stevie Munn works full time as a fishing guide, writer and qualified game angling instructor in fly casting and fly tying. He has also appeared in many angling books, magazines and DVDs and gives casting demonstrations at angling events all over the world. He has fished many places worldwide and grew up fishing on rivers and loughs of Ireland where he often guides. He runs teaching courses in Ireland and host groups to fish in Iceland, Norway, Argentina and other countries. Email anglingclassics@aol.com and for more information visit www.anglingclassics.co.uk



The Blue Marlin World Cup

In the 'fighting chair'.

Every year, for the last 24 years, on the 4th July, big game anglers the world over have fished for the Blue Marlin World Cup. An extravagant outing for the well heeled worldwide, this time I got to sample the delights and disappointments of this annual event.

The format of the event is a set time to fish your location, and the biggest blue marlin caught anywhere in the world on that day wins. It is organised by Roberto 'Fly' Navarro from Palm Beach in Florida. The great and the good of the big game world battle it out to take the honours, and the substantial prize money. It has a very singular purpose, on one day, for one species and there can only be one winner. There is no second prize in this competition, it is an 'all in' affair.

The fishing can be done from a private boat, or a charter outfit and the worlds best are soon secured as soon as the registrations open. This isn't for the faint hearted, this is for serious anglers and big hitters. The numbers involved are seriously impressive, superlatives

are the norm. For instance, the entry fee this year was \$5000 with a further \$8000 to be part of The Big Blue, a sort of pool entry where the winner takes all. IGFA 130lb class rods and reels are the standard tackle, with price tags of approaching £1200 each, and most boats will have an armoury of 8 of them.

The rods used are of similar quality and price and then there are the lures, exquisite works of art made from Paua shell in specially constructed heads that act as prisms as well as having differing actions and water squirting properties and balanced to run true even at faster trolling speeds up to 10 knots. For mere mortals the figures involved are mind



Watching for any sign of a fish in the spread.

blowing, but then so is that thrill when you get hooked up!

Anglers hit 'big fish' destinations

The competition rules dictate that lines go in at 08.30 and lines out at 16.30 in each time zone, so like New Year's Eve, the Australians get the ball rolling and the day rolls out around the globe with Hawaii bringing the day to a conclusion. The regulations for the tackle are the same as those stipulated by the IGFA for world record claims, with a maximum of 30 feet for the wind on leader and trace and the doubled line section can be a maximum of 10 feet long. Only blue marlin over 500lbs are eligible for entry into the World Cup and each capture is notified with an accurate estimate as to weight, so as to avoid smaller fish being kept without good cause. Fish are verified by appointed recorders in the various ports where boats are taking part and the weight plus measurements are required to be officially recorded to be



Hooks required for these big fish.

considered. Again, standard IGFA procedures are followed.

In order to be in with a chance of winning, competing anglers hit the known 'big fish' destinations, since the inception of the World Cup, the winning fish has come from Kona in Hawaii no fewer than 10 times, Bermuda 9 times and Madeira 5 times

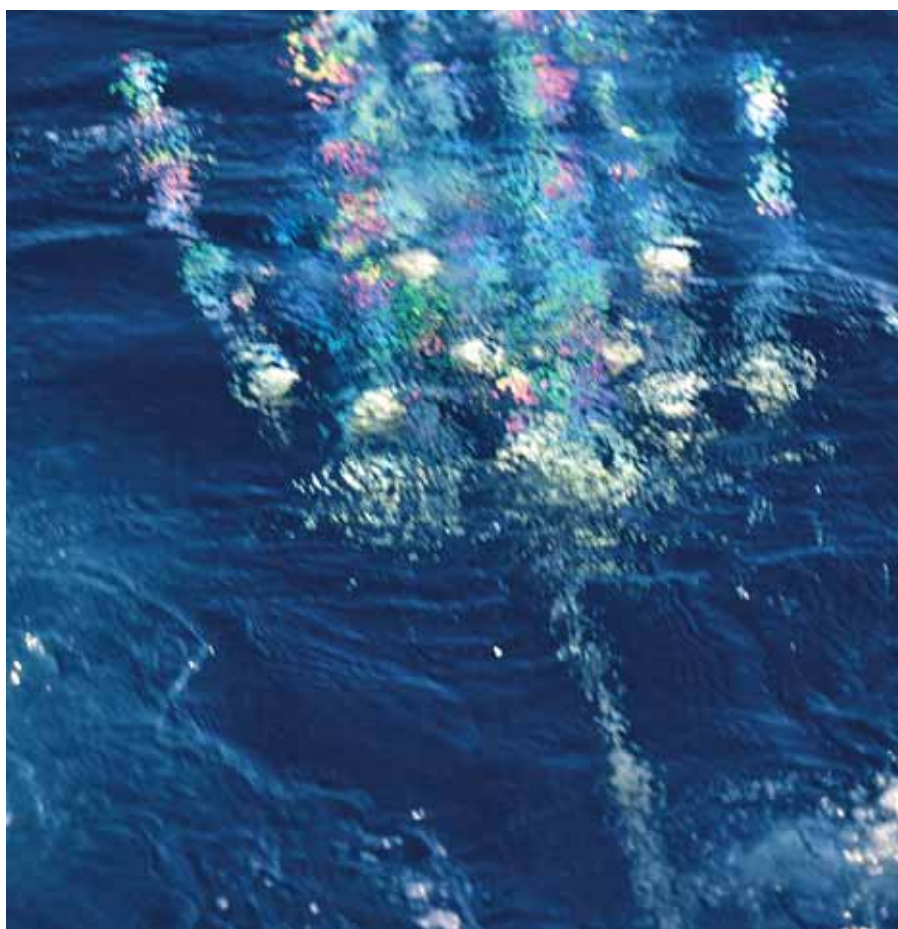
so these are well known venues for throwing up big fish and are the hot spots. One competitor arranged for his charter boat to be moved from the Canary Isles to Madeira prior to the day, then he flew his Gulfstream jet in to Funchal from America so as to fish off the island for the day of the competition. Madeira has an excellent



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The lures don't half make some noise.



Towing a 'dredge' as an attractor.

reputation and in recent years has thrown up a string of Granders, so offers a good opportunity of capturing the fish of a lifetime with a great many 700lb plus fish caught and released each season.

From Calheta the drop off starts within 400 yards of the harbour entrance, so normally, as soon as the boats are clear of the harbour walls, the first lines are being let out; not on competition day, though. Several boats were steaming away from their normal grounds and needed an early start, they were leaving harbour well before lines in, so there was plenty of time for lure selection and decide where in the spread they would be positioned. The early morning sun was just coming over the top of the mountains as we sped away from the harbour towards the south east. Each skipper had differing ideas of where to go, hopefully to find a qualifying fish.

On the day there were 18 boats plying the grounds, all trying a different

area, but similar, proven tactics. The boat I was on, 'Sorted of Milford Haven' is skippered by the owner and founder of Pirate Boats, Howard Williams and she is one of the more successful boats operating out there with more than her fair share of marlin. In the week before the competition they

had three marlin to the boat, two whites and a blue of 650lbs.

Only one blue marlin and it won the boat just over \$1,000,000

We tried trolling at differing speeds from 7.5 knots up to 8.2 knots and

using a spread of 5 lures, staggered each side, but consisting of a short line, a long line and an ultra long line down the centre, known as the 'shotgun'. The variety of Black Bart lures were making plenty of noise on the surface and smoking for 3 seconds as they dived on the face of each wave of the boat's wash, leaving a long trail of bubbles. It was all looking good. I asked Howard if there was a correlation to any particular time of day when they got hook-ups, he said: "Yes, around 13.00, just as we break out the lunch!" Well, lunchtime came and went and still there was no news of any hook-ups, let alone captures from anywhere in the world.

All the boats working off Madeira had worked hard all day, without let up, to cover and raise a fish, but to no avail. Just as we were bringing the lines in at 16.30 news came through the internet of a hook-up in the Gulf of Mexico, the first of the day. It turned out to be a tuna though, so didn't count.

Then, as we were having a beer back at the marina notification of a marlin from Kona, Hawaii came through, weighing in at 760.5lbs after a 2 ½ hour fight. It was the only blue marlin over the 500lbs qualifying weight caught anywhere in the world on the day and earned the boat 'Trouble Maker' just over \$1,000,000 in the 'winner takes all' prize money.

The Blue Marlin World Cup team are already working on next years tournament, making it bigger, better and even more exciting. Are you going to get your name down? I hope I can go again.



Anne snootering a blue marlin alongside.

Countrysports and 'Dark O'Clock' Camping

You don't want to miss the best part of the day.

If you are an angler or a serious shooter, there comes a time when you consider camping out to get an early start. Maybe it's because you need to get a boat early in the morning, or even to be on the hill before dawn. Some of us don't like travelling at 'Dark O'Clock' in the night, arriving in the dark and not being able to see exactly where we are. Of course, you can stay in a hotel or in a B&B which is fine, adds to local economy and is comfortable - but if you camp you will be ready at dawn. Well, I have had plenty of experiences, good and bad, while camping. But camping has changed so much in recent years it's hardly an inconvenience nowadays that it once might have been.

My own first experience was in a two-man ridge tent which I won in a competition and my brother and I camped out in a farmer's field to try it out. You could not touch the inside of

the tent if it rained (which it did) or it would leak (which it did). No attached groundsheet meant we lay on plastic sheeting for the night. It was a great experience to hear, for the first time, foxes screaming in the middle of the dark night but we both survived. Scouting meant organised camps which were great fun too. I then spent years B&B'ing to fishing places, because if you ask they will call you in time and have breakfast ready before you go.

But back to scouting and camping. Tents have changed: double wall tents mean no condensation, help keep you warm, and they all have attached groundsheets. I don't mind admitting that I got sick of trying to get dressed lying down so bought myself a tent I could stand up in. I also don't like sleeping on the hard ground, so a bed chair was my next purchase. Of course carp anglers have used 'bivvies' and bed chairs for years as night time and dawn



An early morning tench from right beside the 'back door'



Twaite Shad taken when camping at St. Mullins.

can be their most productive times for catching.

These days, you can get pop-up tents and even ones with blow-up frames. My tent is a popup I can stand up in. I have learned the hard way that you must put any popup up and down several times at home before venturing out and, yes, I have travelled home with the back of the car taken up by a popup tent squeezed in unfolded.

There is a knack to folding these back into a disk but there is lots of information on YouTube. However, it can be embarrassing if you have raved about putting it up so easily and then cannot fold it up after. I have had many a cub scout mock me when they see my tent with a bed in it, saying I'm 'glamping' not camping.

Back to angling, and on many occasions a friend and I have travelled to distant waters in the evening to arrive shortly before dark. The two man popups are great for a quick overnight. It throws up in second and you can be gone in the morning at daybreak, the only sign you have been there being a small circle of flattened grass. Angling bivvies take a bit more work, but are more comfortable. With any tent you can have your gear neatly packed beside the tent or under a flysheet and know it will be safe. If you choose your site well you can, as we have done, go angling for a few hours before slipping into the sleeping bag. Away from organised campsites, public toilets seem to be getting rare these days (for some financial reason I suppose). Anyway, in

the middle of the night, answering nature's call can sometimes be challenging to say the least.

As can be seen in photo, some species of fish are best targeted in the early morning. Tench are a good example of a fish that feeds at first light. Bream feed all through the night and being on the bank is a definite advantage. In some situations, you need to be up and fishing before the bank is full of anglers if you want a place to fish. St. Mullins during the Shad run is a good example of what is as close to "combat fishing" as we get in Ireland.

On a particular scout jamboree there were hundreds of scouts camping in a large park. We had about 10 tents with youngsters of varying ages. I had my big pop up with me and in the middle of the night a storm blew up with high winds and rain. I donned a poncho and a pair of wellies to visit a latrine, but as I checked out our area a complete empty tent flew over my head from one of the other groups downwind. Most modern tents are fully erected before you peg them down, but at the time I decided to get a mallet and give the pegs on our tents an extra whack, and try to reassure the young people inside. It was freezing and very wet. I returned to my tent which by now had almost been turned inside out by the wind, but at least my sleeping bag was warm and dry. The whole jamboree was called off the following day due to flooding. I would always advise to invest in a good sleeping bag, suitable for the conditions you are likely to face, having spent a night shivering in a tent in snow in Wales listening to the snores of a

friend who had a decent bag with him.

Another must-have is a pair of waterproof shoes. On one occasion, a friend and I went to the south coast to try for Bass and set up our tents above the high tide mark on a piece of short grass. In the middle of the night I got up to check on something I'd heard outside in the dark and although I did have a decent headlight (another necessity), as it was a beautiful night turned it out as I walked along looking at the stars. Returning to the tent I realised that I had - really this time - put my foot in it! Literally! Up to the ankle in a large cowpat I had not seen. It squeezed through my toes, but the worst thing was that it was absolutely freezing. I could not go back to my sleeping bag with my foot like it was, so had a long walk to the sea to wash my foot before getting back to sleep for a few hours and getting up to start fishing. We were up before first light and had everything put back in the car leaving only two flattened areas of grass and a large cowpat with a footprint in it, which is fairly close to leaving no trace.

These are just some cautionary tales but never be afraid to camp out, you will see things you cannot experience in a B&B or hotel. I say all this having invested in a small camper van recently which is great, but I retain my bivvy and tents for occasional use. You could go to the other extreme, which is a bivvy bag (just a waterproof bag you put your sleeping bag in), but I'm far too old for that now. Remember - it is not compulsory to be uncomfortable while sleeping out.



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Teckel International

My wife took the lid from a wash basket in a spare bedroom and set it on the floor. A small Teckel puppy bounded through the door, launched herself onto the lid and stood stock still only for the wag of her tail. Joanne left the room and expected the Teckel to follow, but she didn't. In fact she stayed on the lid for another 10 minutes until Joanne returned and the puppy stared hard at her. Joanne came down to ask me why the Teckel would not remove itself from the wash basket lid and when I went to investigate she was still there, waiting for a command! Cider Vom Nonnenkloster, or Cider as she is known, had only arrived from Germany the night before, yet it appeared she had been here all her life.

I felt I knew her very well. I had received photos and videos of her almost daily since she was born from my good friend Julia Szeremeta, who

had taken Cider under her wing at 8 weeks old. By the time I arrived some 16 weeks later she was trained a like a field trial Spaniel, something I must admit I thought was not at all possible with Teckels. How wrong would this theory prove to be over the next three most enjoyable days I have had in a long time. She had been doing place board training, hence her washing basket lid incident which now happens anytime anything is set on the floor!

Three days before this, I took a flight, transfer, another flight and then a train which broke down halfway, leaving me to work with the little amount of German I remembered from school. How I wished I had paid more attention! I eventually found Julia, Cider and her father Milo awaiting me at Mannheim train station. Cider, named as she was a C Litter and got a name from a random list of C names seemed as pleased to see me as I was to see her

as was Milo!

Our intention was to fit in some hunting, attend a driven hunt on Saturday and leave the touristy bits to Sunday, but we rearranged the schedule and took Friday afternoon to do some sightseeing and visit the fantastic town of Heidelberg on the banks of the Neckar River in Baden-Württemberg, South West Germany. Heidelberg or 'Goat Mountain' is home to Germany's oldest and one of Europe's most renowned universities. Our first stop was Heidelberg Castle, dating back to the 1200s which looked like it had grown from the hillside watching over the two bridges of Heidelberg, which cross the Neckar as it flows through Baden Württemberg and becomes a right tributary to the Rhine. Among many fantastic exhibits is the world's largest wine barrel at 220,000 litres! As the light fell, we walked across the cobbled paths leading back down into the town. I must admit I felt very at home, perhaps a calling from my recently discovered German ancestry.

Brauhaus Vetter was our last stop before heading home, a sort of restaurant inside a brewery, or a brewery in a restaurant! Reputed to be the finest beer in Baden-Württemberg, we picked up some of the traditional swing-top bottles to take home for sampling.

Friday disappeared in a flurry of sightseeing, snow, German Beer and discussing Teckels. What became very apparent to me was that Julia Szeremeta is a very passionate huntress and an outstanding dog trainer. Her Teckels, Milo and Cookie, are trained impeccably, as was Cider for her tender age and I felt almost embarrassed as they sat, stayed, retrieved and dead barked with little more than a hand signal. The walls in Julia's house are adorned with many trophies from Africa, where she spent some time hunting everything Elands and so much



Anna Maria Krampe and Michael Sprenger prepare the dogs.



Anna Maria leading the way.



Milo

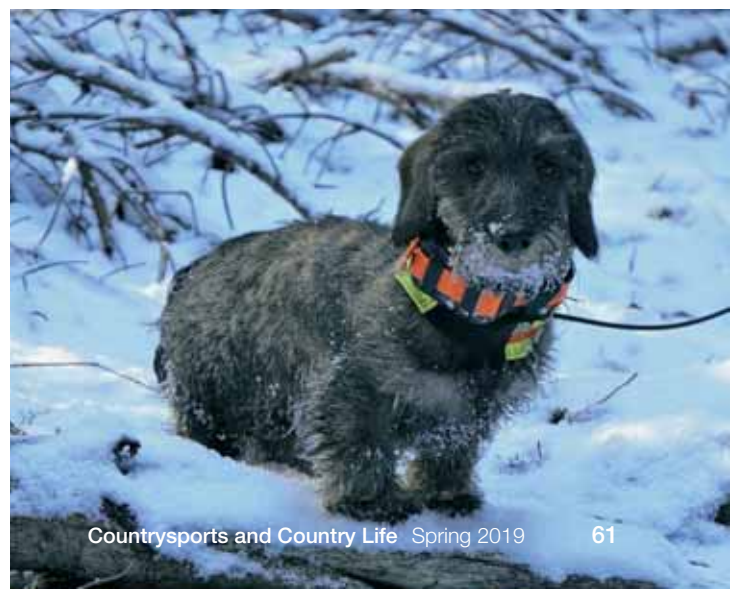
more, and every trophy had a fantastic story! Alongside the trophies are the many certificates, tests, trials and awards won by her Teckels including the most recent by Milo, The Memorial Rudolph Kristla, the Master certificate for any Dachshund in Czechoslovakia, not to mention the best score ever attained in the LV Hesse.

Saturday 19th January and I awoke at 5.50am taking a few seconds to realise where I was and what was going on! After a quick breakfast, we loaded up the Teckels including Cider and made the one hour trip north of Heidelberg to the concluding driven Boar hunt of the season. There was much anticipation and Teckel discussion en route and Julia and I discussed the many contrasts between hunting at home in Ireland and here in Germany. As our altitude increased, so did the snow and by the time we arrived the mercury was at -10 c. I could feel every bit of it but, unlike home, a little snow or even a lot of snow does not gridlock the entire country.

As we rounded a bend I spotted, in a lay-by, two dozen or more Tyrolean Hats and jackets emblazoned with orange and realised we were here. Julia was obviously well known and respected within the local hunting community and shook many hands and received many smiles as we arrived, while I received a handshake and "Morgen, Waidmannsheil" from arriving hunters, 'Good morning' and 'Good hunting.'

To my left and right were what I would call Alpine slopes! Almost

Cider



vertical hills, covered in Spruce pine trees and snow, with heavy fog at the tops, and apparently wild boar as well. Milo and Cookie donned their Garmin GPS tracking collars and we were all kitted out in high visibility gear, a requirement for hunting. The Hunt Master gathered our group and gave safety instructions, including what could and could not be shot.

We broke off into various sections and within a few minutes as I was in a pick up with a very nice couple, Anna Marie Krampe and Michael Sprenger and making our way up one of the slopes by way of a snowy track to prepare for the hunt. Julia suggested that, in order for me to see the best of the driven hunt, I go with Michael and Anna Marie as they are driving boar week in and week out for various hunts and it would give me the best chance to see anything on that particular drive.

The Guns made their way to individual high stands which gave them an ideal position for any oncoming Boar. The stands were of an open type as opposed to the enclosed High Seat version we are used to seeing. Most vehicles I saw that were owned by a Gun had a small metal basket on the tow bar, which can be used to transport boar, deer, foxes etc. I simply could not imagine getting far down the M2 with a Sika Stag on a basket on the back before someone called the police, but here it was as common as a spare wheel!

Michael rumbled along the tracks until we got very high and deep into the forest and as I climbed out of the vehicle I immediately felt the cold, which was very crisp, fresh and dry with the smell of freshly cut pine. Just behind us a Subaru vehicle pulled in, driven by Alex, one of the fittest people I have ever met. What followed was nothing short of a military operation and as Michael and Anna removed aluminium boxes from the vehicle, now draped in heavy duty vinyl curtains to protect it. Every aluminium box had jackets, collars and leads for each dog in the box. Each dog was brought out



Recovering a boar.



German game transport.



Julia Szeremeta with Milo, winner of Memorial Rudolfa Kristla.

individually, a mix of Irish terriers, Airedale crosses, Patterdales and a Swedish Lyka, as well as a Bavarian Mountain hound. Each was fitted with a Kevlar jacket and a tracking collar and then placed back in the vehicle. Michael and Anna, now also kitted out in high visibility Kevlar, added a belt with slip leads for each dog, a rather large knife and a 4x56 short barrelled rifle with open sights on a double sling: these guys were not messing about.

Prior to this I gave little thought to the risks of boar hunting, but of course an animal weighing several hundred pounds hitting you with razor sharp tusks at over 30 mph is not something to take lightly. I had been told of several incidents where hunters had been 'tusked,' one in particular causing a severed artery with the hunter airlifted off the mountain. A little different from lamping rabbits in the Emerald Isle!

Dogs and hunters set off and within less than a minute an Irish Terrier cross opened up, followed by the rest. Anna called for me to look and just as I did, a very large and angry boar smashed through the cover putting the dust-like snow several feet into the air and crossed the track with several dogs in pursuit, a sight I will never forget. Just a boar to my hosts, just another snowy day in a large forest, but to me it was simply amazing.

The pace quickly picked up and I realised that not only was everyone very fit, but I was very unfit. I quickly lost Michael as he kept up with the dogs and Anna Maria, Alex and some other hunters kept in a long line as we crossed the forest. It was cold, the trees in front of me had branches to the ground covered in 'icing sugar' snow and every time I walked it kicked up a dust of snow in front of me almost like a fog.

The dogs bayed ahead and every so often a rifle shot would ring out or a Gun would call a greeting from a high stand as we passed.

The ground got ever steeper and each time I thought we were taking a breather, Alex would call to me: "Move about 50 metres back and go up again." As I moved, he would be halfway up the next hill. Anna Maria, with a full suit, belt and a rifle on her back smashed ahead like a spaniel and I stuck well in behind her as the snow built on my knees, and the ice cold air pierced my throat — absolutely delightful. My standard choice of attire for country sports and day to day work is Harkila Pro Hunter X which can be a little on the warm side for early autumn and late winter. But here it was excellent along with my newly acquired Heatrub Ultimate, from a company called Zerofit. Used alone under my jacket when I was walking, it kept my body heat under control.

Three and a half hours quickly passed and as we caught up with Michael and some other beaters, he said we would be leashing up the dogs and heading back down the mountain for a short interval before the second drive. To be totally honest I was quite glad. It had been a hard 3.5 hrs and I had my work cut out to keep up with my German friends who appeared to glide up the slopes, through the snow and cover.

The nine boar and a roe deer shot on the first drive arrived on the baskets carried by individual Guns and some by trailer - another military-like operation. A local butcher oversaw the process and with two A frames and some help he had the boars and deer gralloched in a few minutes while we had delightful strong black coffee and a 25ft long table packed with typically German fare, beside a very welcome bonfire kept going by seasoned wood from the forest. When in the company of people speaking an entirely different language I often feel quite out of place, yet standing around the bonfire with two dozen other hunters speaking German I felt very much at home!

Julia asked how I had got on and I showed her some photos I had taken, and she could obviously tell that I was quite taken by the whole affair and had thoroughly enjoyed it. Her Teckels Milo and Cookie had worked well on the first drive and we decided for the second where I would be joining her, Cookie and I would accompany Cider on the next drive. I was Cider's guest of course, as even at this early she had seen more boar than me! Julia fitted her with a Garmin Collar which probably weighed more than her, in case she happened to be misplaced in the forest and we set off for the second and even more enjoyable part of the day.

A short drive later, we loosed Cookie and Cider, with Michael and Anna starting further ahead and working their way around. Within less than a minute Milo was completely gone, his Dachshund bay echoing through the now almost flat woodland which was navigated a lot more easily. Guns again stationed themselves on the various high stands throughout the forest and were so well out of sight at times that I even walked past them! The Teckels hunted on, I stopped, took my breath and looked all around — too many times we are caught up in the excitement and enjoyment of things to really enjoy them at the time and I took a few short minutes to appreciate the forest, the snow, the sounds of the Teckels and that we were here and enjoying the moment in Germany, a place I have longed to hunt in for so long. I walked along a ride and Milo slipped across in front of me and as I took a deep breath he opened up like a bloodhound. Seven or eight roe deer broke from cover less than 50 yards ahead. The trees, snow, weather, and the sight of beautiful roe deer taking a split second decision which way to go as a Teckel snapped at their heels will be forever engrained on my mind. Magical.

Three hours later we collected up the Teckels and Julia carried a now wet and bedraggled, but still keen, young Cider to the Jeep. As we wound down the hill we met Valkar tying some tape to a

hedge. As he and Julia chatted, I worked out that a boar had been shot but not recovered, so he was marking the tree to return with a tracking dog.

We arrived at the rendezvous point where more boars and deer were being gralloched, the coffee was again on the boil and there was even more food than there was the first time. I noticed Alexander was very busy and had now a large square of spruce branches with four burning logs on the corners, on which were placed the boars and deer from the hunt which had received the 'Bruch' or last bite, as a respect to the animal and a part of the German hunting tradition. Each Gun was then called individually by name by our host and depending on how many he had shot, a small sprig from the forest was taken from a basket and touched on one or each animal before the Hunt Master gave the sprig to the Gun for his hat after they doffed their hats to each other.

Then the highlight of the day arrived for me, as we had the pleasure of several minutes of the Fürst Pleiss (German Hunting Horn), with each tune having a different significance from the type of animal shot to a tune in respect of the hunt and the animals giving their life. As the horn stopped we placed our hats back on and the crackling fire was the only sound to be heard. I looked up at the mountains covered in snow, the spruce trees and the mist. I looked down

at the Teckel at my feet and the truly genuine hunting men and ladies surrounding me and felt very lucky to have had such an experience. At times I wish we had the same traditions here, as I think country sports would be all the better for it. A phone call the following morning informed us that Valkar and Alexander had to attend hospital to get stitched after they tracked the injured Boar which turned out to be quite irate with the entire situation and had tusked them both in the skirmish that ensued before it was dispatched. A little more dangerous than pigeon shooting I think!

My sincerest thanks to Julia Szeremeta and Marcus for their hospitality, kindness and friendship and for everything they did to assist me with Cider and for showing me how Teckels CAN and SHOULD be trained. Also thanks to Anna Maria Krampe and Michael Sprenger for letting me tag along and see some serious dog work and to the many friendly hunters I met on my German adventure. These are days I shall look back on fondly and smile. Waidmannsheil!

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Wildfowl and Hare in Holland



Niels swings on a goose.

The alarm ejected me out of bed at 5am and I made the one hour drive from my home in Zuid (south) Holland to a hamlet in the flat farming polders of Noord (north) Holland, about 20 minutes outside the Dutch capital of Amsterdam.

I was greeted by Frans whom I'd met 6 years earlier during a wild boar and deer hunt in the Netherlands' eastern Veluwe region. Originally born and raised in Tasmania, I had moved to The Hague a good number of years ago. Frans had invited me on a hunt in Noord Holland some years ago and we had been meeting here every year since. Frans' daughter, Jitske joined us, accompanied by her friend Bart-Jan and Niels, whom I had joined on several hunts previously. Camiel, a long-time mate of Niels, was also on the team.

On this morning, Niels and I would be going together to a goose hide at the end of a kilometre-long paddock (also known as a polder). These paddocks, like much of the Dutch farming and residential land, are about a metre under sea level. The low lying land is shielded from flooding by dikes of built up earth

ramparts running parallel to canals and other water bodies.

We walked towards the pink horizon in the East with the sun was rising. It was a beautiful clear and crisp morning with not a breath of wind. As we reached the hide, I could hear the morning calls of thousands of geese roosting on the waters of a wide canal behind a high dike. Judging by the sheer volume of wildfowl noise, I thought that we were soon going to be in for quite an experience.

We were after the introduced and

heavily built Canada geese, smaller European greater white-fronts, greylags and mallard duck. Niels and I spent a few minutes setting up goose decoys on the pasture near the hide concealed at the end of a drainage ditch and covered in camouflaged netting. Niels' year-old Vizsla gundog Harvey, was quivering with excitement.

We had downloaded our caller with goose chatter and calls

As the darkness changed to a



Harvey retrieving near the waterway.



And still the geese swung over us.

gunmetal blue and candy floss pink sky, we looked on in awe as dozens of formations of geese flew high overhead. The wind, which often forces the birds to come in lower, was absent this morning and it looked like conditions were going to be challenging. We had brought along a megaphone caller, a new piece of kit, which used downloaded recordings of goose chatter and calls. Hopefully, this would bring

them lower to take a look at our decoys. Niels was the main gunner today as my chief task was to record the action with my camera. It was a spectacular morning, flocks of migrating birds heading south for the winter filled the air and European spoonbills, silver egrets and cormorants flew around our hide, unaware of our presence.

The goose numbers in this region of the Netherlands was especially high and

the district was inside a 20 metre radius of Schiphol Airport. This meant that the Dutch government had decided to allow goose shooting to reduce the threat to air traffic.

More geese flew over but they stayed high. The birds movements were reflected on the water of the drainage ditch, and Harvey let out excited whimpers every time he saw them.

A single duck making its way towards us low and fast and Neils told Harvey to be still. When it came into range, he stood up and swung onto the bird. The first shot missed but the second achieved a better result and a male mallard dropped from the sky.

Unexpectedly, a group of greater white-fronted geese came in at a low angle from the South and they were also moving fast. Niels rose and fired twice, but the birds kept going unscathed.

It wasn't long until another flight of geese came in and when they were overhead Niels rose and fired. A bird dropped out of the air off and landed in the paddock across from our hide.

Harvey went into action and crossed the flooded ditch, quickly located the bird, but he wasn't sure what to do with it. He sniffed and nudged it with his nose and tried to get a grip on the bird's body. He seemed to spook and hesitated a little but did pick it eventually.

Before long, the light had cleared and the combination of our megaphone caller and the decoys proved tempting for a flight of three greylag geese. The birds circled lower and lower and when they were about 30 metres away shots rang out. This time Neils' first shot claimed the bird closest to us. The remaining two quickly tried to regain altitude but they weren't fast enough and a second shot hit. Harvey found the first bird and brought it over to us. This bird had been winged, so Niels finished it quickly. We placed the birds among the decoys and went back to the hide and waited.

The high-flying waves of greater white-fronted geese were now replaced by more numerous numbers of greylag geese and it didn't take long for them to



This time there was mallard approaching.



Frans with one of the ducks.

find our decoys. Four greylags circled high above as the megaphone screeched. They made a second pass and then came in to land just as Niels lined one up and fired dropping the first bird among the decoys where it lay still. The others reacted and flew over the dike, making it not possible for a second shot.

We decided to call it a morning as the sun was getting higher in the sky. As we started packing up the decoys. Another group of geese flew over. Luckily Niels was ready and managed to drop one just before it went over our heads and Harvey didn't have to travel far in to retrieve it. We carried the birds back to the farmstead and it looked like the still conditions had factored in for the others as well, with only a couple of birds to show for the morning. Our megaphone seemed to have given us an edge by attracting geese.

From the small hamlet, we moved to an area renowned for its large numbers of European brown hare. The hare thrived on rich pasture and crop land and they had few predators to lower their numbers. In the Netherlands, the paddocks are long strips of land separated by shallow canals or drainage ditches. These trenches filled with water also act as fences to keep livestock and fleeing hares in. The technique often used in this part of the world was to set up 'shooting posts' at the end of a paddock and then use beaters to drive the hare towards the waiting guns. The



Jiske was well pleased with her hare.

beaters also have the opportunity to shoot if it's safe to do so.

On newly sown grass field, a hare 50 bounced off under a fence in the distance

As we walked out onto the first paddock, the mud was not as deep as it had been in years gone by, probably due to the drought that the Netherlands had experienced a few months previously. It seems unlikely, but this normally waterlogged country had seen its driest period in decades, causing water shortages and even the much revered potato crops had also been badly affected. We looked out over a field of a newly sown grass and watched a hare about 50 metres away bounce off into the distance. The Guns manning the end shooting posts hadn't reached their position yet, so the hare made it to the end of the paddock unhindered and zipped under a fence.

Once everyone was in position, we spread out in a line and moved forward noisily, walking diagonally left to right to push the hare ahead of us. In the distance, a flock of mallard ducks came

in low over Camiel's position, the 'crump' of a shot sounded and one of the birds dropped into a canal and Frans retrieved it. Due to the wishes of the farmer, dogs were not allowed on this property, so all the retrieving had to be done by hand.

As we continued the drive, hare sprang off out ahead of us and the guns of the shooting posts came to life. It was only the first paddock and already we had bag was increasing. The next paddock was filled with a recently harvested crop of cauliflower. Some few heads of the crop had been left by the harvester and I hoped that this still attracted hare to it.

Frans was on the far side, Willem and Jitske were in the middle and I was on the outside edge. Before long hares were springing away from us in the distance and, about halfway, a hare that had waiting for the last possible moment exploded into action. The fast moving animal went in the opposite direction than expected and Jitske had to twist to get her Berretta 20 gauge onto it. She snapped off two quick shots but the hare didn't stop.

We reached the end of the paddock to the gun post guys who were delighted to report they had collected another three hare. This place was living up to expectations despite the dryer conditions.

We moved onto another paddock full of cauliflower and, almost immediately, a hare sprang into action 20 metres to Jitske's right and she raised her Berretta and fired. The hare summersaulted through the air and smiling broadly Jitske walked over and picked it up. Frans also had luck with another hare that went behind him and he snapped off two shots to bag it.

We had been on the paddocks for just two hours and enough hares had been shot to satisfy everyone's game meat needs. Niels had so many that he could hardly stand up under the weight of them as he carried them back to the farmhouse. In this neck of the woods, it is traditional that everyone carry out what they had shot. At the end of the afternoon, we had a nice mix of duck and hare for our larders and I thought there no better way to spend a weekend, than with friends out hunting.

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On the spoor of the spiral-horned kudu

The wildlife has free range over a total of 800,000 acres.

If I was going to take a shot at the kudu we'd been tracking all day, it would have to be now. And it was going to be like threading a needle – there was no way of getting closer, swirling wind and after cover open ground. I'd have no choice but to find a path for my bullet through the dense scrub. Time was not on our side: the area was teeming with wildlife, and at any moment we'd be scented. We had already heard a large group of buffalo bounce around to our immediate east just 100 yards away beyond the cover we were in. Moving slowly and silently, I identified what I thought would be a good enough window through the arid mess of vegetation not unlike a roll of barbed wire. I could see the animal clearly, and steadied the rifle fore end on sticks. As I did so, the kudu, though still unaware of our presence, turned to walk away. It was now or never.

Of all the spiral-horned species, the kudu is one I've longed to hunt and I

was fortunate enough to be in the Savé Valley Conservancy in East Zimbabwe with Marc Newton, MD of Rigby, where the wildlife has free range over a total of 800,000 acres.

This extraordinary place, my veteran PH Butch Coates explained, is a product of the late 1980s, when 18 landowners decided to pull down the cattle fences and make the change from farming to safaris: "They realised it was vital to the wildlife and the ecosystem, but also that it would be more profitable. When the area was farmed for cattle, the wild animals were persecuted. Not only did they take up resources by grazing, but there was hoof and mouth disease that they were spreading, so they had to be shot to maintain healthy cattle herds." Zebra and wildebeest were both targeted, and buffalo were wiped out in the region. Kudu, eland and impala remained, though in smaller numbers than today, and of course predators were also trapped, shot or poisoned. The

latter, Butch tells me, make an astonishingly fast recovery, and the Conservancy now has to ensure that they do not become too many in number, as that will affect prey species.

Anti-poaching units on each property

Butch works at various reserves in the valley as a freelance PH but often hunts with clients from Sango. Sango Lodge, which at 160,000 acres is the largest property in the conservancy. Butch makes no bones about the fact that the lodge is a business, so has to make money: "The lodge takes a lot of investment to run with over 100 directly people employed to run it, but in the end, if we don't have healthy, sustainable numbers of game animals, there would be no business, so it's in our interests to maintain a healthy population. "There are anti-poaching units on each property, as well as a specific rhino anti-poaching unit, which



Anti poaching units are on every property.

is run independently. The rhino unit can go anywhere on the Conservancy. They also protect elephants from ivory poachers.” Poaching, it seems, is still an issue, but, Butch says, it is more for meat, and varies from year to year: “This year we had bad rains, so locals are struggling to get by, which means the bush meat poaching is higher.”

The Conservancy is still suffering from the effects of the notorious “Cecil” incident, despite the fact that both the hunter and the PH were found innocent in court of any wrongdoing. Today, every lion, leopard or elephant hunt in Zimbabwe has to be accompanied by a National Park Ranger, the expense of which is passed on to the hunter. The Conservancy works on a strict quota for certain game species. Six elephants a year, six lions and 23 leopards can be hunted over the entire area, with the individual property’s size dictating their share of this.

Marc and I were also shooting bait for leopard for another member of our

hunting party who had booked to shoot leopard, elephant, buffalo, crocodile and hippo, all of which are totally free range and wild in the Savé valley. Sango is responsible for providing the entire Conservancy with leopard bait. Zebra, Butch explained, was by far the best: “It’s fat, soft meat, and there are plenty of them.” Meanwhile, another party of hunters were out hanging bait that Marc and I had shot with Butch’s colleague Thierry Labat. Whilst doing the rounds, the group had spotted a huge old warhorse of a kudu bull, the likes of which are very rare to be seen in the wild. The call came on the radio: “Butch he’s a giant, 57 inches at least. If you want a decent kudu come now!”

The decision was easy, despite knowing that the tracking wouldn’t be, for we were at least two hours’ drive away from Thierry’s position. Thierry had marked the place he’d seen it disappear into cover with a piece of white tissue on a thornbush so we would have a start point. Be that as it may, it

‘It’s in a group and they’re feeding,’ Ringi whispered.





We needed to get up close with the open sights.

The culled Kudu was huge and old, well past breeding age.



was going to need to be a masterclass in tracking. A good two hours after the bull had been seen, we locked in on the tissue and the challenge ahead of us. Luckily, our tracker Ringisai or Ringi, was one of the most skillful I've ever had the pleasure to see at work. Ringi was immediately able to read sign that was only visible to him and not my unpracticed eyes. There were no snapped branches, no tracks, turned stones or rocks at all as far as I could see, but he kept on intently following the spoor.

Initially, we covered the ground fairly fast, and it was clear the wind was in our favour, but it was also clear that we had a lot of catching up to do. "It's in a group," Ringi said, "They're feeding." It seemed to me like some sort of magic trick, as we worked our way

through thick bush in pursuit of an animal we hadn't yet laid eyes on. The area was the real deal. True Big Five country, with elephant, buffalo, rhino, lion and leopard all in residence. All of which could jeopardise not just the hunt but our very lives, the thickness of the bush meant that we might not realise danger was upon us until it was too late. At one point, the sounds from close by told us we were in close proximity to a herd of buffalo, one of the most dangerous animals to man in this area. Tensions rose as we not only worried about being charged, but also that the animals might spook the bull.

We'd need to get closer for a shot with the open sights

Two-and-a-half hours of following an unseen quarry in an area that carries a

high density of dangerous game takes its toll on the nerves, so when we first spotted the kudu, a behemoth of a bull, my heart pounded in my chest. At 200m away, we were in thick brush, and the kudu was below us, in a patch where the ground opened up a bit more. We'd need to get closer for a shot with the open sights. Creeping through the brush, trying to be as silent as possible to get within range. At 150m, I knew the shot was going to be on very soon.

Finding a gap through which to shoot was no easy task, and to complicate matters even more, the animal was now facing away but lower than us, its back and spine the only real target I could see. The bull started to move off. I focused, trying to push the intensity of the moment to one side, not to think about all the effort that had gone into tracking the animal and of course its size which was deeply intimidating. Taking the best shot I could muster, I dropped the bull on the spot with one of the best I can remember taking under pressure. The 400 grain DGX punched through the cover and landed between the spine and scapula between the shoulders instantly disabling this magnificent creature. We wasted no time in the approach. He was huge, and old. The front of his horns were worn smooth, almost to ivory, and the "bell" which is formed by the first curl at the bottom of the horns was enormous. Butch thumped me on the back, estimating the age at eleven years, well past breeding age.

Marc and I waited by the kudu, Butch leaving his rifle with us – this was predator country, after all. Butch warned us it might be an hour or two before he came back: "I'll have to cut a path to get the bakkie here, so sit tight." While the wait for Butch's return was tense, and every crack or sound set my mind leaping, it also gave me time to reflect on the day. A pure masterclass in tracking, but also to experience the extraordinary evidence of conservation at its best, that culminated in a kudu bull of a lifetime which was something I'd not forget in a hurry.



The front of his horns were worn smooth, almost to ivory.

Kudu

Tragelaphus strepsiceros, or greater kudu is listed as of “least concern” on the International Concern for Conservation of Nature, unlike its cousin, the lesser kudu of Tragelaphus imberbis, which is “near threatened.” With an estimated population of 480,000 occurring in eastern and southern Africa, the kudu is currently rising in numbers, particularly on conservancy and private land. Classified as an antelope, Tragos is the Greek for “he-goat” and elaphos the word for deer. Strephis is the word for twisting and keras for horn, which is

where the scientific name comes from.

As with many of the antelope species the males tend to be solitary, though they can live in bachelor groups. Males only join the females during the mating season. Calves grow quickly, and are almost independent of their mothers at just six months. The bulls tend to be much larger than the cows, and are very vocal, using grunts, clucks and gasps. The horns start to grow when the bull reaches six to 12 months old, producing one twist at two years old and the full two-and-a-half twists at six years old. Very occasionally, they

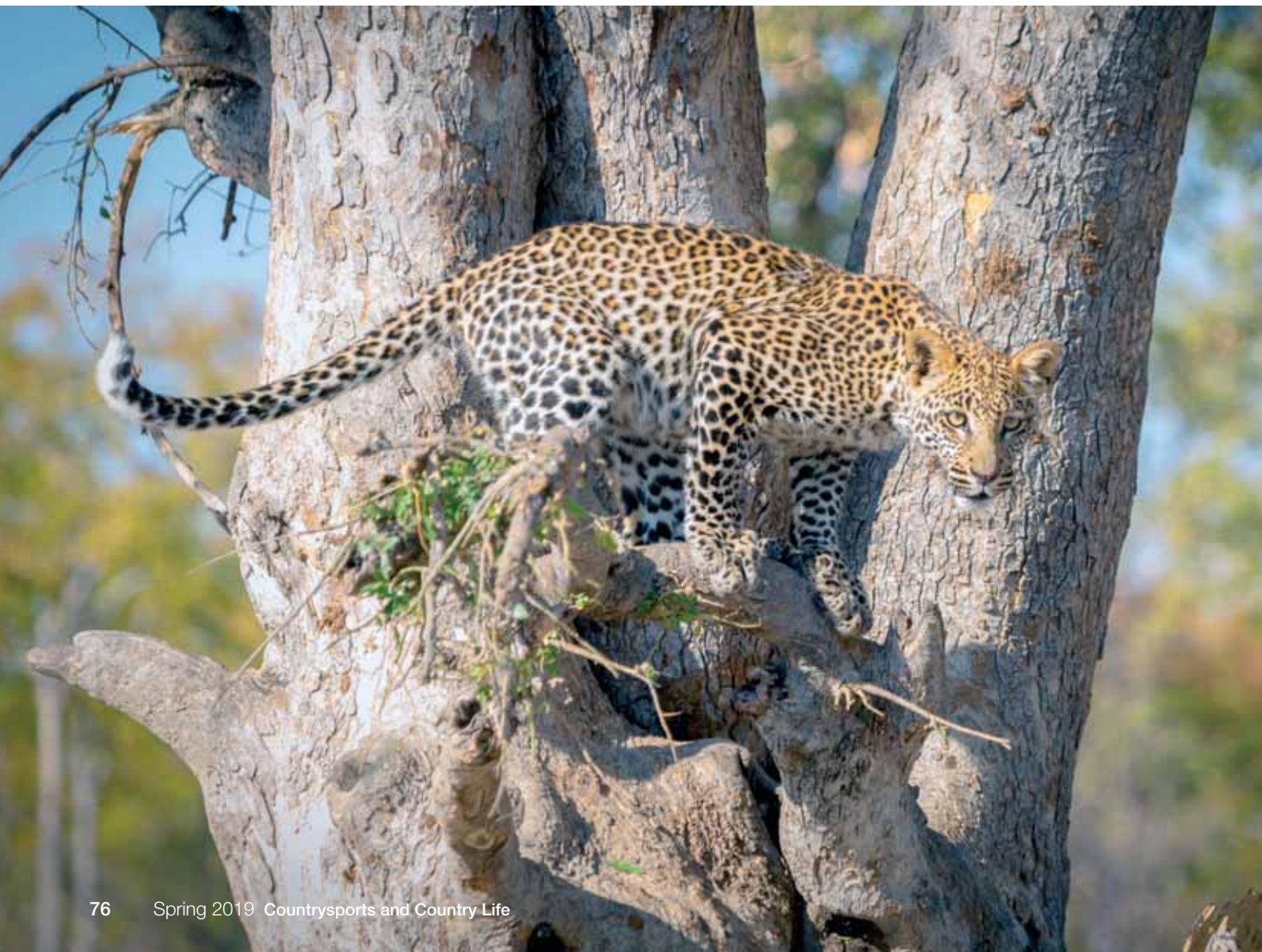
will have three full twists to their horns. One of the largest species of antelope, bulls can weigh up to 270kg or more, and can be 160cm tall at the shoulder, while cows are much smaller at around 100cm high at the shoulder, and are hornless. The cows also don’t possess the white strip across the nose that bulls have. Like all antelope, kudu are extremely hardy, but unlike many antelope does not have the speed or stamina to escape predators in open country. They are athletic and nimble, however, and can leap over shrubs or bush to avoid being caught – hence a favoured habitat being in thick bush.

Kit Box

London Best .416 Rigby with open sights www.johnrigbyandco.com

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Steady Shooting

It's well-known in the shooting/hunting world that any accurate shot from a rifle must be discharged from a steady platform. Without firm support, even the most sophisticated and expensive rifles along with corresponding ammunition will not perform. Bench-rest shooters have a ready-made platform from which to shoot as have target shooters using elbows, slings etc. The most difficult area is probably the hunting field where the rifleman has to rely on nature to provide some form of "rest". This can be a boulder, handy branch, mound of earth or whatever.

Sometimes it's necessary to take the shot straight from the shoulder, which is a big ask for many shooters. Using a colleague's shoulder as a prop has been known to happen, probably to the detriment of someone's hearing. Leaving aside the usual suspect causes for a duff shot - trigger snatch, buck fever, misting scopes or other reasons, an accurate off-hand killing shot is difficult at the best of times.

Deer stalking back in the day, I began using the then very popular stalking stick, a staff topped with a fork fashioned from a piece of antler. This proved to be unsatisfactory, as it had to be shortened to keep the rifle level, was prone to wobbling and was more of a hindrance than a help. Others had more favourable experiences than I did, so I had no problem complying with a Professional Hunter's request to leave the stick with him when heading home from an African safari.

There was an occasion out there when a stumbling PH vainly tried to step in front of me to set up two wooden sticks held together by a piece of string, while a Cape buffalo heading in our direction was rising dust as he gathered momentum. No thanks! Around that time, rifle-attached bi-pods had become popular so I invested / tested, found the rifle to be unbalanced and removed the bi-pod immediately to where it remains stored, untouched, several decades later. Double-legged shooting sticks gained popularity as did variations with three

legs. I tried them all and none worked to a level that was handy to carry or set up. From that point on, if a natural rest wasn't available in the field or on the hill, I relied solely on off-the-shoulder shots, always practising regularly between seasons.

Two fast, long and accurate shots had to be taken

Down the years that situation remained unchanged, until the 2017/18 deer hunting season when stalking in County Wicklow with well-known hunting professional John Fenton. Culling Sika Hinds, we found ourselves in a situation where two fast, long and accurate shots had to be taken. No natural rest was in sight and prone shots weren't feasible due to undulating terrain. I had been aware of John carrying a set of shooting sticks but had taken little notice. It only became obvious that they were something different when he asked if I would have a problem using his sticks for the two shots. He rapidly unfolded what can best be described as a mobile bench-rest.

The tubular unit consisted of adjustable supports fore and aft for the rifle with 4 legs meeting at the base where solid, pointed "high heels" ensured firm contact with the ground. Both shots were taken rapidly from this steady rest and I was astonished at the support that they afforded and curious as to what they were and where they came from. Originating in Denmark, they were already available in Ireland and I made it my business to secure a set in time for the 2018/19 season. It didn't end there - just prior to last Christmas, John Fenton let me know that the Danish designer and manufacturer of these Viper-Flex shooting sticks was in Ireland on a hunting trip and invited me to meet him.

Claus Christiansen is an engineer by



Shooting position using the stalking stick - 007.



Claus Christiansen demonstrating his Viper-Flex shooting sticks.

profession and also an enthusiastic hunter. He told me that he had been shooting from a very young age but suffered for many years from “buck-fever” — the usual symptoms are increased pulse-rate and a wildly thumping heart, making a steady shot nigh impossible. He decided to do something about it, sat at his drawing board and commenced designing various forms of mobile rests and shooting sticks. Through trial and error he finally arrived at the design we had used that previous season in County Wicklow.

The Viper-Flex Styx Elite is an extraordinary shooting accessory

Production of Viper-Flex shooting sticks commenced on a small scale and the new innovative accessory rapidly became popular in Europe. As demand increased so did the business and Claus now has five full-time employees working in the manufacturing facility. Currently these shooting sticks are available in eighteen countries. He is also planning further expansion into Southern Europe and the USA.

The latest improved version, Viper-Flex Styx Elite, is an extraordinary

shooting accessory. It’s made from black anodised aluminium, is strong, stable and can be used from the standing, kneeling/sitting and prone positions. The front rest or cradle has been widened allowing the rifle to cover a wider area without moving the legs. In fact it can be used back-to-front, also as a rest for binoculars if required. Equipped with easily adjustable legs plus a carrying handle, it weighs only 1.1 kg retracts to 115 cm

and will fit comfortably into a rifle case. This provides a mobile and very steady gun-platform in all types of terrain — something most of us would have thought impossible several years ago.

Having spent more than half a lifetime avoiding them, I have to admit that Claus Christiansen’s Viper-Flex Styx Elite design has overcome pretty-well all of my reasons for not using shooting sticks.



Sika Stag - shot taken from 300m using the shooting sticks.

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ART & ANTIQUES

With winter hopefully behind us spring brings new energy and enthusiasm. So isn't it time to start cleaning out and clearing out the clutter that has accrued over the past year or so.

And what better place to start than in the attic, or roof space, where objects of interest or scorn are always consigned when someone wants them to be out of sight and out of mind. Who knows what gem is hiding up there, waiting to be found and bringing the finder a welcome return on what was once thought of little worth.

"There's nothing of value in my attic," I hear the sceptics call. But don't be too sure. Remember the old Chinese vase which was found in an attic just over a year ago. No one really thought much about it at the time. But they were proved wrong at a French auction when it sold for no less than £14.3m. Of course it wasn't just any ugly old vase. It was an item of exquisite beauty. The vase, produced for the courts of the Qianlong Emperor (1735-1796) was certainly never created for holding daisies. Henry Howard-Sneyd, Sotheyby's chairman of Asian Art summed it up well when he said: "Chinese art has been admired and collected across Europe for centuries but the importance of certain pieces is occasionally lost over time."

And that is the nub of the matter. Things that were once fashionable can lose favour, not only on the auction scene but also in the home. The fads of one generation are not always followed by succeeding ones. So when an item, be it a painting, a



Oisín Kelly bronze sold for €36,000 (ADAMS)



Erskine Nicol, painting of a highlander realised €32,000 (ADAMS)

piece of china, an unusual vase or whatever goes out of vogue, if it isn't sent to a charity shop or disposed of in some other way it usually goes up to the attic. And there it lies, for years until it is re-discovered.

The vase in question had been left to the grandparents of its owners by an uncle. And when considered of little use or value it had been placed in the attic. Because it was of exceptional rarity and the only example of its kind and that is why it made so much at auction.

Who says another one isn't out there somewhere just waiting to be found? Of course not every attic has an 18th century piece of valuable Chinese porcelain hidden under the cobwebs. But there could be a wealth of items waiting to be found, valued and sold on at auction. There could be valuable paintings that never graced a wall, important first edition books that never felt a thumbprint, or tea sets that never held tea.

Yes, the world of the attic or the roof space is one worth exploring and at no better time than springtime. I have no doubt there are countless houses throughout Ireland where pieces of art, furniture, ceramics and others are hidden in plain sight.

That ugly, out-dated chest of drawers which once graced the sitting room but is now being used as a storage vehicle in the garage could be worth a Continental holiday. That dusty old painting could be a Paul Henry, a Jack Yeats or who knows what? And on the subject of paintings it is interesting to learn that high-end Irish art is attracting new money at auctions here and abroad.



Rory Breslin 'Mask of the Atlantic' went for €17,000 (ADAMS)

But warnings have been sounded that while quality prices are being paid for high quality paintings the supply of such paintings is not a strong one. In late autumn, Ian Whyte of Dublin auction house **WHYTE'S** stressed that the scarcity of top Irish works of art was presenting a wider challenge to the auction world.

His words were qualified by James O'Halloran of another prominent Dublin auction house, **ADAM'S** who added, "the market is continuing to gather strength but the lack of high quality supply is hindering its progress." So in the back of someone's attic, lumber room or even garage they could be an art 'sleeper' waiting to be woken and brought to a market which would certainly appreciate its presence.

Of course with a strengthening market would-be vendors, witnessing the healthy returns others are receiving, may decide to release greater numbers of top quality paintings to that market. But will the months ahead bring us the excitement which was created by the Armada table which smashed furniture records by selling for over 400,000 euros.

Then there was Jack B Yeats's 'Pilot Sligo River' which topped the paintings scene by falling under the hammer at €370,000 and William Scott's abstract work, 'Painting 1959' which realised €245,000.

But it is not only Irish items which have been selling well. Asian lots have won their place on the Irish market scene and there could be a few more record breaking lots lurking in the shadows somewhere in Ireland and perhaps in a rural, rather than an urban environment.

Wouldn't it be nice to come across something akin to the fine green jade Qing dynasty seal which sold for 280,000 euros at Sheppards last autumn or even the Chinese famille rose jug which made 30,000 euros against a high estimate of 1,200 euros in an Adams sale.

It pays too, never to take your eye off collectibles. What one man may scorn another would kill for. So was it any surprise that a bottle of Mitchell's Cruiskeen Lawn Old Irish whiskey made €6,000 at a southern sale or that a whiskey advertising mirror depicting the same brew went for €11,500 at the same sale.

Yes, there are items that can be sold but first they have to be found. Go look for them.

IN THE SALES ROOM

ADAMS held a significant sale of Irish Art in December when a limited edition Oisín Kelly bronze sold for €36,000 while an Erskine Nicol painting of a highlander realised €32,000 and a Gerard Dillon oil, €30,000. Roderic O'Connor's 'Seated model,' an oil, made €24,000 while a Dan O'Neill, 'Jeanie' went at €23,000.

Among other lots were, Rory Breslin 'Mask of the Atlantic' a bronze, €17,000; Michael Farrell, 'Third Very Real Irish Political Picture,' €15,000;

Maurice MacGonigal, 'Thatcher' €14,000; Louis le Brocqy, 'Battersea Boy' €14,000; Edwin Hayes, 'Merchantman' €13,000.

Without doubt Dublin auction house **ADAM'S** had a hugely successful year in 2018 and in over a total of 19 auctions they brought in €11.6m which



Jack Yeats, 'Man with wrinkled face' went for €245,000 (WHYTES)

is quite an achievement and gives them continued recognition as Ireland's leading auction house. A total of €3.3m was achieved across four Important Irish Art sales, with Walter Osborne's 'Gathering the Flock' realising a magnificent

€206,000. The popular 'At Home' and Country House Collections sales together realised €3.8m while the jewellery sales accounted for just over €2.5m and an average sold rate of 80pc. All in all, a year to remember.

Dublin auction house **WHYTE'S** state their last year's results were the best since 2007 with selling rates exceeding 80 % in the majority of the art sales and several record prices being achieved. Some notable results were: Jack Yeats, 'Man with wrinkled face' €245,000; Louis le Brocquy, 'Image of Beckett', €200,000; Margaret Clarke, self portrait, €48,000, Basil Blackshaw, 'Race horse', €40,000.

In their October auction, another Jack Yeats sold at €370,000 and the sale itself brought in receipts of €1.6m, marginally less than the November event.



(Above)
Louis le Brocquy,
'Image of Beckett', sold
for €200,000
(WHYTES)



Basil Blackshaw,
'Race horse', realised
€40,000
(WHYTES)

HUNTING ROUNDUP

AROUND THE MEETS

The Meath Hunt's opening meet at the former Bishop's Palace, Ardraccan House saw my season begin. Now owned by American racehorse owner Charlie Noell, who was one of the sixty strong mounted field, this estate has been sympathetically and meticulously restored making it a truly wonderful venue for a lawn meet. Also in the mounted field was former jockey and racing broadcaster Richard Pitman.

Huntsman Kenny Henry, who hunts the doghounds, had on a fit looking 20½ couple which included 3½ couple of a very large new entry. Kenny's elder brother, John jnr, was field master while joint masters Andrew Boyd, Norman Williamson, Richard Trimble and Pat Dillon were also "on parade". The boys' father Johnny Henry was among the car followers casting an eagle eye over everything and Kenny was assisted by whippers-in Barry Finnegan, the professional, Brian Black and Johnny Clarke.

A series of draws all around Ardraccan proved blank as did the covert at Tara Mining block. At an old, derelict cottage on New Line hounds put one fox afoot to give a hard, fast hunt to Bohermeen Chapel, behind which it went to ground.

We had seen this good fox cross the road at Ongenstown with hounds very quickly onto him but this was not a good scenting day and periods of hounds being on terms were intermittent. A further series of draws proved blank and, as this had been an 11am meet, Kenny Henry blew for home in mid afternoon. A nice pipe opener!

North Down Foxhounds' huntsman Barry Jones Had on a 12½ couple mixed pack, including 2 couple of his new entry, for their opening meet at Carrickmannon, outside Ballygowan. He was assisted by his brother Philip and Robert Campbell on this bright, even sunny, day. Lesley Webb MFH is presently "off games" due to a broken

leg, sustained in a recent bad fall, so her brother, Mark, was field master in her absence.

The first draw, at Johnny MaCartan's proved blank but a move to Robert McVeigh's saw a brace go afoot with one fox taking hounds towards the quarry where they were stopped and cast back to take on the other fox. A fast hunt then ensued through Simpson Gibson's, Sammy Hanna's and Sammy Haslett's. At one stage this fox ran parallel to New Line where we car followers were watching before crossing the road and circling back into McVeigh's. Hounds pushed him into Gareth McVeigh's then William Alexander's but lost him, after a good, bracing hunt. Hounds hunted well throughout considering that they had to contend with both slurry and cattle in several places.

The County Down Hunt's meet at Begney Lake, Dromara, took place on a wet first Saturday in November which was surprisingly mild though it was still



Huntsman Declan Feeney with the East Down Foxhounds at Gargory outside Castlewellan.



Sam Wilson from the Ramery Inn, Ballynahinch giving a stirrup cup to County Down Hunt Joint Master Ian Moore at the Boxing Day meet in the town.

not a day for standing idly around.

Thankfully, huntsman Ian Donoghue and his 12½ couple mixed pack kept everyone on their toes on this busy day. Assisted by whippers-in James Black and Garry Porter and with joint masters Ross McCandless and Ian Moore in charge of a forty-five strong field the huntsman kept things moving right around the Begney Hill area.

The rain was at times driving hard into everyone's faces and Ian Donoghue and his hounds, including 3½ couple of his new entry, applied themselves throughout and fully deserved the compliments paid to their huntsman when he blew for home.

The County Down Hunt held their traditional Boxing Day meet on a cool, bright day in the market town of Ballynahinch.

Huntsman Ian Donoghue had on a 12½ mixed couple pack while joint masters Ross McCandless and Ian Moore had charge of a sixty strong mounted field.

After parading the town Ian Donoghue moved to the Downpatrick side of the town and a fast spin ensued, with hounds running strongly on what

seemed to be reasonably good scent.

In no time they were at Raleagh off the Crossgar Road and then Creevyargan where another fast spin was enjoyed before Ian Donoghue blew for home on this mild day which had really shaken away any post Christmas lethargy.

The East Antrim Hunt held their post Christmas meet at the Parkgate home of their recently appointed joint master John Minford and his wife Pamela.

Huntsman Robbie Hodge had on a 10½ couple mixed pack and was assisted by James Jenkins, Benjamin Gilmore and Rocco Hodge. John Minford had charge of some forty riders, including some visitors from the Staintondale Hunt in North Yorkshire.

The huntsman drew several coverts as he moved back towards the kennels, at Ballysavage, then drew round Ballymoggie Church of Ireland church, before drawing Will Warwick's but there was no one at home in any of these coverts.

However, matters improved at the Planting at Alan Curry's. Here, one customer went afoot to give a brisk hunt into some bright sunshine, which

hounds found difficult to face, but they kept at it, only to lose their fox on the riverbank at Ivan Andrews's.

Robbie Hodge has brought in Staintondale, College Valley, North Tyne and Fell blood and is particularly impressed with Staintondale Regent 12. The hounds on view certainly persevered on this bad scenting day.

On our return to the meet I was impressed to find that John and Pamela Minford have converted a two storey barn into a party building. The lower floor has a shower room and a kitchen while the upper floor bears a plaque naming it "The Huffin' Room." It is furnished with everything to help it achieve its purpose.

My holidays meets concluded with my visit to the **North Down Foxhounds'** New Year's Day meet in the lovely village of Crawfordsburn. At The Olde Inn the Rice family had, as usual, a very warm welcome for everyone and this included stirrup cups which went down very well.

Huntsman Barry Jones had on a 10½ couple mixed pack with his brother Philip and Robert Campbell whipping-in while field master Mark Webb had

fifty riders to oversee. After a brief address, by Richard McLaughlin, a large crowd of well wishers and a smaller number of protesters watched as Barry Jones moved off along the Main Street towards Ballyrobert. Several people commented on one placard held by a protester which said “go vegan.” We all assumed that it was an exhortation to the hounds!

Barry Jones first drew David Jackson’s before moving on to Smith McCann’s but they were blank as was Smith’s brother Nicholas’s. He went back into Smith’s and then Johnston’s but fared no better. A move through Wesley Henderson’s and then Caroline de Montmorency’s saw no change in fortunes, as was the case in Jeremy Hughes’s.

This was proving to be a very poor scenting day which continued through both Alan McFarland’s and his brother Ian’s and resulted in Barry Jones blowing for home at John Ritchie’s. It was heartening to see the very seriously ill Mr Ritchie insisting on his sister, Eileen Steele and her husband Terry, bringing him out in his wheelchair to see hounds. Everyone was then

shepherded across the busy Belfast to Bangor Road by excellent Police attention to enable us to savour more of the Rice family’s hospitality.

Tynan and Armagh Foxhounds Annual Charity Event, the New Year’s Day Children’s Meet in Richhill. Andrew Phillips sent this report with photographs by kind permission of: Mark McCall Photography - markismccall.com

The event saw a great turn out of horses and ponies with over 90 participants. Stewards and Chaperones carried out a fine job ensuring all were safely returned to their parents. Tynan and Armagh Foxhounds would like to thank the landowners by whose kind permission this meet was possible as well as Richhill Presbyterian Church for allowing use of their car park.

Many thanks must also go to all our brave participants. The event generated £1600.00, which was split between two local charities, Air Ambulance NI and CRY NI (Cardiac Risk in the Young NI). The cheques were presented just before the off from the Phillips’ family home, where members and visitors were welcomed at the host’s home with hot

toddies to generate much needed heat into the riders as the day was beautiful but very cold.

Huntsman Keith McCall had on twelve and a half couple ably assisted by the Whippers-In Philip Singleton and Samuel Phillips. The Joint Masters, Brian Dougan, Wilson Faloon and Roy McCall along with Field Master Andrew Phillips had charge of a field of 26.

The first draw was in Allen’s Railway, which proved blank and the field then continued to Stevenson’s planting which again was blank. The field continued to Hamilton’s land, where a fox was raised, which took the field over several farms, crossing the Hamiltonsbawn Road into Lowry’s Lough. The fox then continued onto Dunn’s land where after 2.5 miles, it was given best. Another fox was raised in R. Black’s planting, which travelled over A. Nicholl’s railway, continued onto H. Moffatt’s lands where he went to ground. Keith McCall, Huntsman, then blew for home around 4.30pm. Members retired to the host’s home once more to enjoy the heat from the fire and great hospitality supplied by the ladies of the hunt.



Huntsman Barry Jones at the North Down Foxhounds New Year meet in Crawfordsburn.



Smiling faces at the cheque presentation.



Rose Livingstone in action.



Amber Lucas takes the hayfield fence.



Holly at the drop fence.

Alex Phillips jumping.



Beth Phillips on Rosie 12.2 is safely over.

The Phillips family organised the fundraiser.



A fantastic season of foot hunting in the Midlands

In mid November I joined the Rockview Foot Harriers in South Kilkenny in excellent fox hunting country near Templeorum. This rolling landscape is covered with forest and fields and there are lots of foxes here. We met at 9am at a crossroads on a mild, drizzly, grey morning and took our pack of 15 couple very eager hounds down a lengthy laneway and into the adjacent conifer plantation. The pack was speaking for a couple of minutes. It hardly stopped speaking for the next six hours.

This was a real red letter day. We didn't catch any foxes but the scent was excellent and the pack kept going for much of the day. After about three hours chasing the same fox five couple broke from the main pack and pursued another fox in pretty much a straight line, for two or three miles, over a rocky low hill and down into a huge conifer forest. Fortunately this breakaway group was spotted by a couple of eagle-eyed followers in their car, and we loaded up the hound trailer with the other dogs, hopped in our cars, and went to the forest where the five couple were now hunting. When we arrived we could see they were having a whale of a time and it took a herculean effort on our part and an awful lot of patience to gather them all in. Eventually, after a lot of blowing and hollering, they began to return, in dribs and drabs to the huntsman. I am sure all dogs slept extremely well and long that night after what had been a very long hunt. After six hours we returned to our cars where we ate sandwiches and drank tea.

Towards the end of November I joined ten members of the Lakeland Beagles for a hunt by the shores of Lough Ennell. Our meet was about halfway between Kilbeggan and Mullingar, at a traditional farmhouse,



Richard Bonham and his pack in front of Lisnabin Castle, County Westmeath.

and after a short walk we were enjoying beautiful views of the big lake and its surrounding broadleaf woodland and pastureland. This is lovely hunting country and we always find hares here.

After an hour of trying, the nine couple of beagles found a scent, opened up and soon were but a short distance behind a fine, big hare. This animal was constantly taking sharp turns to left and right, and doubled-back a few times. We lost the scent a few times but, after a long time spell casting around, eventually picked up the trail again. On a couple of occasions when we lost the scent the pack had overshot the trail and had continued on for a field or two until their music petered out and we realised we had lost contact. We brought the pack back to where we guessed the hare

might have taken one of its turns, cast about for a while, and eventually found the line again. Overall, the pack went very well for an hour and a half taking us through woodland, across rutted, rough country, and down by the side of the lake. The sky was blue, there was a cool wind and at about four thirty the moon rose above the treetops, its size impressively large.

The scenting conditions during October and November were a mixed bag and the general feeling was that, with a couple of notable exceptions, the hunting hadn't been great. What in effect this means is a lot of walking about, casting in coverts, and not much in the way of music and excitement. In the first couple of weeks in December the scenting conditions were really



The Lakelands were showing fine form the whole day.

positive. I have no idea why this is so. The weather, the temperature, didn't seem very different. Perhaps it was a bit milder and therefore better. Scenting conditions is one of those topics, upon which much has been written, but I don't think anyone really understands it. It would be interesting to get a few scientists in the field so they could do a proper scientific study of the matter! Therefore we could understand why some days are screamers, whereas on other days there is not a peep. It would be interesting to know what are the best conditions for the most favourable hunting.

Hounds tore off, zigzagging across a brook

On the first Saturday of December I was hunting ten miles east of Kilkenny City in lovely, undulating country. We started at 9am and I was feeling a bit tired and lethargic, not having the same spring in my step that I usually had. The hounds were casting about for about 30 seconds, found scent, emitted fantastic music and tore off down the valley, zigzagging across the bubbling brook; and didn't stop until an hour had elapsed. I sensed from the excitement of the music at the very beginning that we could well be in for a good one. I started jogging after the pack and eventually my lethargy lifted and I warmed up. The underfoot terrain was really tough at

times. We were up to our knees in the cold water when we crossed the stream and at one stage were up to our waist in the boggy ground. We saw some tarmacadam and took to that instead. Eventually the pack checked at an old stone bridge over the stream at the bottom of the valley. We cast about and found again after several minutes. In a large field the pack caught up with the fox and dispatched it. A nearby bull and cattle looked on unconcerned. It had been a fantastic start to the day. The scenting conditions remained fair for the following five hours and we chased three more foxes but didn't catch any. The local farmers joined us for a while. They were very friendly, obviously strong lovers of field sports traditions, and were also glad that there was less vermin on their land. They owned a

large dairy farm, and about 50 cattle were being milked as we walked through their yard.

The scent with the Lakeland Beagles was also excellent during the first half of December. We hunted the farmland around lovely Lisnabin House near Killucan. Lisnabin is owned by the very kind and decent Wentges family who were very hospitable to us and were obviously delighted to see some beagling taking place on their property. They plied us with sausages and hot port. The packs spent about an hour hunting a hare in a large mixed wood. At one stage we came across a wide drain. A couple of people leapt across. I normally leap across as well but on this occasion I thought this drain was a bit too wide. Luckily there was a footbridge nearby.

The weekend after, the Lakeland met at Bridge House Stud near Ballinacarrigy where we were once again most hospitably treated, this time by the very friendly Badger family. The weather was dreadful. Monsoon-like rain. We battled on even though the weather had that feel of perhaps remaining bad for a couple of hours at least. Thankfully, the rain eventually eased after half-an-hour. The pack found scent right at the start of the day, and took off with great enthusiasm across a couple of pasture fields. I jogged after them, feeling the tiredness in my leg muscles after the exigencies of the hunt the day before.

We came to a wide drain festooned



The Rockview Foot Harriers in attractive country in south Kilkenny.



A quick phone check in the field.

with briars. I made a strong leap, using a considerable amount of my strength. I would have safely made the other side if it hadn't been for a thick briar which snagged my leg and tripped me. I landed on my stomach with significant force in the stream below. I was soaked up to my chest. I laughed and the others looking at me laughed. I accidentally touched the wire strand. It was electrified. It's a well known fact that the current in wet skin can be several times greater than the current in dry skin. It was a most unpleasant experience. I jogged after the pack towards a sitka spruce wood and the hunt continued for another hour in the wood, until we emerged onto a wide expanse of bogland near the Royal Canal.

Throughout much of December a high pressure system was settled over Ireland and the weather was calm and pretty much frost-free. There was only one night of frost during the month. This dry, calm weather was partly to be welcomed because it meant the driving conditions were pretty safe. It was doubly advantageous in that none of the hunts were cancelled. People began to look suspiciously at the weather. "We will pay for it later," they said, referring to the feeling that it sometimes seems that Nature balances herself out. Therefore, a long period of dry weather can be followed by a period of very wet weather. Likewise a long period of dry, frost-free weather in the winter can be followed by inches of

snow and freezing conditions. It's of course illogical but it can feel like that. The phrase "we will pay for it later" also could be part of the Celtic instinct that life is a tough journey and we should never get too complacent, but should always factor in negative possibilities.

Hounds were sometimes not far behind

This calm weather continued well into January and I met the Rockview at a quarry in the townland of Ballyfoyle on the first Saturday of the new year. Christmas, as it so often is, had been all-consuming and I hadn't been out hunting for a couple of weeks. The huntsman drew the quarry and within a couple of minutes the pack found and were pursuing a fine big fox through a baby plantation up a slope towards a wooded valley. We perched ourselves on top of a tall mound of stones in the quarry and watched the action. For the next 15 minutes we enjoyed a great view of the hunt. The fox described a very wide circle and the hounds were sometimes not far behind. It seemed that the scenting conditions were very favourable. Finally, after watching a great chase, the fox went to ground and we descended from our high perch. We walked up the long slope and joined the huntsman and the other members of the field. Rory decided to move onto another covert. We hunted for a total of seven hours, covering a lot of ground and enjoying great exercise. We flushed

out three fine looking foxes and the scent remained mostly pretty good throughout the day, although it was occasionally patchy. It was dusk when we called it a day and began blowing for the hounds who were scattered over a steep slope of forestry. It took about half an hour to gather them all in and then we walked back the few miles to the meet, in the dark.

The winter was a mild one with only a couple of frosts until mid January when the weather turned colder for a prolonged spell. I joined the Lakelands on the second weekend in January just before the weather turned colder. I rang the huntsman, Richard Bonham, and asked him how to get to the meet. He started to tell me but then realised it would be easier to meet me in the square in Castlepollard, which I did, following his hound trailer for half an hour across country to a club member's house somewhere on the Meath / Westmeath border.

We hunted for a couple of hours

Once again the hospitality was exceptional with the Lakelands and we were treated to hot ports, sausages and sandwiches in the kitchen before setting out. Sometimes if you get too ensconced and comfortable in these convivial pre-hunt settings it can be hard to motivate yourself out into the elements and the great outdoors.

There was a fantastic turnout of people for the meet, about 40 people, which was really heartening to see. Beagling has waned a bit in popularity in recent years therefore it was a good boost for morale to see such a positive turnout. Fortunately, the hunt itself proved as decent as the hospitality and the turnout, with the pack of eight couple enjoying excellent scenting conditions. We hunted for a couple of hours in a large plantation and then the quarry and pack broke free out into lovely, open country. This was reclaimed land and the farming practice was tiptop here with perfect grass fields, sturdy post and wire fencing and new-



Good exercise with wonderful scenery.

looking gates. The rolling country here looked like glacial remnants, perhaps eskers or drumlins, always something which adds to the attractiveness of a landscape. The eight couple flew along in this landscape, making lovely music. For those who don't know, the beagle has a higher pitch to its cry than a foxhound when hunting a line. They are also not fast enough, usually, to catch a hare. People follow beagles because of the pleasure of the chase, the sociable nature of the occasion, the good exercise and the scenery. And the exercise can be very good indeed. For those who are seeking a really good workout a day's beagling will certainly fit the bill.

The following weekend the frosty weather had set in and I joined the Rock View in lovely hunting country just south of Jerpoint Abbey. Several Welshmen from the Carmarthenshire Hunt were joining us and I met three of them at the Clubhouse Hotel in Kilkenny City, and drove them out to the meet. They were very friendly and chatty and said they had enjoyed a great night in a number of the city's pubs the

evening before. Kilkenny of course is a really interesting and historic city and a lovely place to spend a couple of days. I was impressed with the Clubhouse Hotel, which had an old world feel. This was where the Kilkenny Foxhounds used to have formal meetings and to also socialise. One story has it that a hunting horse was brought up the stairs to the dining room where it was jumped over an obstacle in order to prove to doubting Thomases that it possessed an impressive leap!

Fortunately for the Welsh visitors the Rockview enjoyed probably its best day of hunting during the season on this particular Saturday. The scent was excellent and the hounds engaged in several very good chases up and down a long, attractive, wooded glen. This was a place where we gave chase to no less than eight foxes, catching two of them. In one 19th century, slab-covered drain the hounds flushed out no less than five Renards which caused an almighty commotion. Several of the hounds ran after one smallish fox which was going like a bat out of hell. It scrambled like a lunatic up over a tall, dry stone wall

with the hounds only a few centimetres behind it. Despite the hounds going super fast they were unable to apprehend this particular speedster, which fled down the broad, gently angled slopes of the glen and into forestry. Soon there was music echoing around the glen, with about 20 enthused foot followers in pursuit. One of the foxes, a big lad, described a very wide circuit and was heading back towards the 19th century drain, and was almost at it, when a few hounds caught up with him and called it a day.

After a lengthy period in the forestry the speedster managed to shake of his pursuers and the music went quiet. By this stage we had been out for seven hours and it was time to head homewards. Rory began to wind the horn, calling his pack back to him. It took a long while, they were scattered over a wide area, but eventually we had all 15 couple and ascended back up the glen to the meet, where we ate our sandwiches and tea by the lights of a car because it was completely dark now. The Welshmen declared it an outstanding day.

DAERA Inland Fisheries — Angling Outreach Programme Expands



The Department of Agriculture Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA) Inland Fisheries for 2019 are once again not increasing the prices of DAERA angling licences and DAERA permits. The last price increase in either angling licences or permits was 2016. Angling as a recreational activity represents excellent value for money.

As the depressing issues surrounding Brexit take over the news, why not take yourself away from it all for the day and go fishing.

DAERA Inland Fisheries, Angling Outreach Programme is expanding with the introduction of its Angling Events Fund (AEF). The fund provides up to a maximum of £500 towards angling events undertaken by angling stakeholders, community groups, schools, etc. The purpose is to encourage new anglers to the sport who have never fished before. The target groups are juveniles, females, minority groups and those from socially deprived areas.

In such a short space of time, many of the Angling Events Fund applications are now moving towards educational based events by many angling stakeholders, who are working with local schools. The events give children a wider environmental awareness of the habitat and life forms in the river on which



Look and learn event run by Polish Anglers NI at a local School supported by DAERA Inland Fisheries.

fish depend on for survival. This in turn demonstrates to children taking part how healthy the river is and emphasises the importance to children the importance of how their actions can protect and maintain that environment.

The classroom look and learn event is followed by a practical day fishing under supervision of qualified angling instructors where the children can look for evidence of the aquatic insects they examined in the classroom and catch the fish they seen pictures off.

The feedback from participants to the angling stakeholders is very positive, more and more schools are seeing the benefits of this programme for the children.

Inland Fisheries staff will be attending the Celebration of Sport event taking place at the Valley Leisure Centre,



An angling event organised by U Fish Coaching working with local schools, which was supported by DAERA Inland Fisheries



The smile says it all.

Newtownabbey on the 12th April 2019.

The event, organised by Department for Communities, gives visitors the opportunity to try a range of sports and leisure activities.

Among the attractions at the DAERA Inland Fisheries stand is a virtual angling simulator, which gives visitors a flavour of what it's like to get a bite and reel in a game fish. There are also lessons in the skill of fly casting, with the public encouraged to try their hand. In addition, there are free angling goodies and a demonstration of the fly tying craft.

Angling is a sport open to people of all ages, abilities and backgrounds. It continues to be one of the most popular activities in Northern Ireland, with local people and visitors from further afield. Also, it brings a range of health and

wellbeing benefits.

By participating at this event, DAERA Inland Fisheries are hoping to encourage more people, and young people in particular, to get involved in angling. Events such as this are a key part of that as we aim to raise awareness. Anglers will know the benefits of heading to a river bank and spending a few quiet hours surrounded by nature. But for young people, who may be more used to video games and computer screens, it might not be the most obvious way to spend their leisure time.

Events like this show the enthusiasm young people have when it comes to trying something new. Hopefully, it'll help to inspire the next generation of anglers.

DAERA Inland Fisheries will be at further shows throughout the summer, including the Irish Game Fair & Fine Food Festival at Shanes Castle on 29th and 30th June and the Bushmills Salmon and Whiskey Festival also in June and everyone is invited to come along.

This is an important year for DAERA Inland Fisheries as 2019 is recognised as The International Year of the Salmon (IYS). The International Year of the Salmon is a project launched by NPAFC and the North Atlantic Salmon Conservation Organization (NASCO) and other partners. The IYS focal year will be 2019, with projects and activities continuing into 2022. The IYS aims to engage the public, political representatives and the science community with a view to highlighting the importance of salmon as a biological and economic resource and to raise awareness on the many challenges and uncertainties salmon face.

DAERA Inland Fisheries intends to raise awareness through outreach and education programs which will be key components of the

IYS and a way of engaging across all demographics to highlight the challenges as outlined.

Inland Fisheries will be delivering outreach events throughout the year and the main highlight will be the Salmon and Whiskey Festival in June where the Inland Fisheries will have a display and educational display relating to the important salmon conservation work undertaken at the Bushmills Salmon Station.

You can find out more information on the Angling Outreach work undertaken by DAERA Inland Fisheries, by contacting:

DAERA Inland Fisheries, Angling Outreach Team,
Kloyndyke Building, Cromac Avenue, Belfast BT7 2JA
Telephone 0300 200 7860 E-mail
anglingcorrespondence@daera-ni.gov.uk



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Why Do People Choose Females Over Male Dogs?

I do not have the definitive answer to this question but in this article, I will explore evidence to support the hypothesis that people generally think working bitches are superior to dogs. I will confine myself to pointers and setters as I have some experience in this area.

The question arises every time someone I know has a litter of working puppies. The breeders' complaint is always the same: "I could sell twenty bitches but there is no interest in the dog pups." I often wondered why this is so. My father used to say that shooting men always found a bitch smarter than a dog and therefore more useful. Another reason I have often heard is that a bitch is less headstrong and easier to train than her male counterpart. I have heard field trial people say that a bitch is more stylish and, on her day, can be unbeatable.

There are obvious drawbacks to owning a bitch. She comes into season usually twice a year during which time she has to be isolated from competition for 21 days. Most bitches then lose power, interest or both over the next nine weeks in sympathy with their pupping time. The extent of this loss depends on the particular heat as well as bitch. But it is common that bitches are not competed with or worked seriously over these 63 days. The other factor is kennelling arrangements where owners decide on one sex only kennelling. Surely a male kennel is as likely to be chosen as a female kennel?

The main advantage of owning a bitch is that you can breed; however, I am not sure if this drives the demand for female puppies. To date, only three of the nine females produced by my Ballydavid litters have been bred, compared to six males used in stud of the eleven produced.

Therefore, one could suppose that people prefer bitches because they are superior in terms of working ability. Field trials for setters and pointers are set to mimic a shooting day and therefore are a reasonable test of a dog's hunting ability. Firstly, I set out to see what the male/female participation rates across field trial competitions are. Secondly, I consider some of the successful kennels and look at the male/female ratios of field trial champions they have trained. Finally, as the Irish Championship is the blue riband event of the field trial calendar, therefore, one would expect more female to male winners if indeed bitches are superior. Of note to readers as I commence writing this article I have no idea of what the findings will show.

I examined programmes spawning a number of years with a three-year differential. The results were interesting ranging from 42% to 46% female participation but never over 50% participation. Therefore, it seems that male dogs more than hold their own in terms of competing. Again, this could be due to females in heat.

The second test is to look at well-known kennels competing with pointers and setters. By the nature of looking at kennels alone, one would expect these

breeders to primarily compete with bitches. I will widen the scope to individuals who have been very successful with dogs or bitches. I will try to look across the spectrum of breeds that compete under the pointer and setter trials. The detail will be kept at summary level for readers who may not be intrigued by listing a huge number of dogs.

For Irish setters I have chosen the kennels of Sheantullagh, Lisduvoge and Maodhog. These kennels have produced Championship winners and numerous FTCHs.

Ray O'Dwyer is the President of the Irish Red Setter Club and International Irish Red Setter club and last year won the inaugural European snipe championship in Ireland with Sheantullagh Boss.

"When I became interested in the breed in the 1970s, there were definitely more top-class female Irish Setters than males. The reason for this was that many of the dogs were slower to point and from a field trial perspective, you had to wait until they were ready and therefore people were more inclined to favour bitches. In the last 40 years, I have seen an evolution that has resulted in Irish setter males coming to hand earlier and now there is little or no



Sheantullagh Boss 2017 winner of the European Snipe Championship.

Photo: R. O'Dwyer

difference in this regard between dogs and bitches”.

For Ray’s dogs, the proportion of male to female FTCHs is 60:40 in favour of males.

Probably one of the hardest questions for any trainer to answer are there top five dogs: These are listed as Sheantullagh Merlin (F), Sheantullagh Captain, Sheantullagh Boss, Sheantullagh Drill (all M), Sheantullagh Uno (F). The proportion is 60% in favour of males for top dogs.

No preference from a ‘training point of view’

On the question of preference of dogs or bitches? “As a breeder I have always tried to find bitches to continue the line and therefore I’ve always kept more bitches than dogs, but I have no preference from a ‘training point of view’ between the two. Dogs have the advantage that there available for work all the time, they don’t have the interruptions of coming in season and of rearing puppies and the associated dips and peaks of form that are associated with bitches. Top class bitches can be practically unbeatable as their season approaches, when they are indefatigable, competitive, and so clever around game. I was fortunate to have profited from this situation by having consecutive runs of wins, i.e. Furl and Merlin in such circumstances. The undeniable fact is that there are no top-class dogs without sound tail female lines and therefore the future of any breed is based on the bedrock of female lines. This is true in all performance animals, in the blood stock industry when you hear a commentator say a particular high-class colt has a stallion’s pedigree, they are commenting on the fact that they come from a high class producing female line.

However, when all is said and done, for me, there is something wonderful about a stylish Irish Setter dog in full flight: the athleticism, the raw physical power, the sheer relentlessness of it, that appeals to me more than the elegance of the female. This is clearly a matter of

taste but it has been tempered by a lifetime of experience, as there is nothing more frustrating than having all the work done in preparing a bitch for trials, see her at her best and then finding her in season the day before the trials start”.

Pat Reape who has won the Irish Championship on three occasions most recently in 2017 and 2018 with FTCh Ballinahemmy Mike.

Pat can understand the preference for bitches over dogs “if your bitch is of high quality one would like to breed and sell puppies. Some lines of bitches mature quicker than dogs making them easier to train. For those who shoot, bitches start to work and set earlier. Dogs can be harder to train and more headstrong and for those who shoot the dogs may not mature until 2 – 4 years old”.

The proportion of female to male champions for Pat is in favour of bitches at 62%. Pat’s choice of best dog he has owned is the undisputed FTCh Lisduvoge Aileen who won back to back Irish Championships including a Dog of the Year award. She is now an outstanding shooting bitch. Pat has no personal preference between dogs and bitches. “For me it is watching the pup mature into a champion or a hunting dog which the red setter is bred for, no matter what the gender”.

Aidan Dunne of Maodhog kennels has won IKC Championship with FTCh Jamail Adam and has recently won the inaugural snipe championship with FTCh Blackstairs Behenny and produced numerous FTCHs over two decades.

Aidan prefers dogs to bitches mainly due to the disruption of the heat cycle for females. It also means “you are inclined to start bitches earlier in their training in an effort to do as much as possible between heat cycles”. With dogs you can relax and take your time because they are always available”. The proportion of female to male champions is 57%.

For the most difficult question; Aidan’s first FTCh, Toirneach Gillette

(M) taught him more than any other dog. The author’s preference would be FTCh Maodhog Suantrai (F) for her strike rate while FTCh Jamail Adam was the most dramatic but had a short trialling life. The common view was that FTCh Ikerrin Crouch & Hold (M) was the best due to his longevity, consistency and success. This would rate 66% in favour of males for top dogs.

Turning to English Setters

For English setters there have been a number of successful promoters. John Geoghegan would be recognised as making this breed highly competitive and popular since the 1980’s.

John Geoghegan of Lefanta fame had 27 FTCHs. The split of FTCHs between male and female is 52% in favour of dogs. He lists his best dogs as Storeskars G’Snorre (D), The Blue Maestro (D), Mighty Viking (D), The Queen (B), Lefanta Cindy (B), Knocksmall Moose (B), Lefanta Pip (B), Miss Katie (B), and Ballinacolly Roamer (D). This indicates a 55% split in favour of bitches. However, when pressed to choose three of his best from this group they would be G’Snorre, The Blue Maestro and Lefanta Cindy which is a 66% split in favour of males.

In contemporary times both Gortinreagh, Ballyellen and Capparoo produce a large number of great dogs competing at field trials.

Ger Devine through his own prefix of Gortinreagh and Bill Connolly’s Ballyellen has enjoyed enormous success for over a decade with setters. He handled Bill Connolly’s FTCh Ballyellen Cara to the GB Championship in 2016. Ger reckons its approximately a 50%/50% split between males and female champions in his kennel. He rates his best dogs as Int FTCh Gardenfield Warrior (D) and Int FTCh Ballyellen Cody (D). However, Int FTCh Lefanta Kira (B) would be able to compete with these dogs. The split again being 66% in favour of males.

Billy Grace of Capparoo kennels

came into the public conscientiousness through breeding the famous FTCh Capparoe Boy for the late Tom Dunne. With a strong female line, he has produced many excellent English setters. "I have no preference between dogs or bitches and find it equally satisfying to work with both" he says. Three Capparoe dogs won the I.K.C. Dog of The Year, Capparoe Tintreach, Capparoe Tork and Capparoe Boy, who also won The Irish Championship.

Billy has produced a high proportion of female champions at 83%.

Billy rates his best dog as the current FTCh, Snipe Ch, Capparoe Jata (F). FTChs Capparoe Jip and Lassie (F) while Tork is his best male. This proportion is 75% in favour of females.

Christy Davitt of Blackstairs trained a number of FTChs across different breeds but was principally recognised as an English setter man having great success with FTCh Lochgorman Sorcerer and FTCh Blackstairs Spice. The proportion of FTChs he has produced is split 60% in favour of dogs. Christy reckons males are easier in that the female cycle makes it very frustrating working with females. Interestingly, he estimates some of the popularity for females certainly on the continent refers to the fact that many Gundogs are house dogs and therefore the odour of a male is significantly stronger. He reckons his best dogs were FTCh Blackstairs Spice (M) and FTCh Blackstairs Sioux (F). This indicates a 50%/50% split for his top dogs.

Jack Nash used to say "beware of the handler who arrives to compete with one dog. He will have it polished and trained perfectly". None is truer than the following gentlemen Kieran Walsh who has won IKC Dog of the Year awards with both FTCh Capparoe Tintreach (M) and the legendary Blackstairs Geronimo (M). George Forbes won the IKC Championship with FTCh Ballyellen Moss (M) and FTCh Knocksmall Torv (M) has had enormous success over the past seasons.

Jim Sheridan the famous promoter of red & white setters proportion of female



The great Geronimo as a puppy in one of his first finds on grouse. He later won the Derby that year.
Photo: H. Brady

FTChs is 57%. However, of pups he has bred and sold, there has been eight male champions and just one female champion. He puts this down to preference for males of successful handlers such as Des Linton. Jim's own preference now would be males due to red & white setters coming into season regularly on six months and recovery can take several months. While difficult to rate his best of champions FTChs Craigrua Flame (M) and Craigrua Devin (M) and Pallasgreen Harriet (F) would be the top. This indicates a 66% split in favour of males.

Pat Dooley of Wildfield pointers proportion of female champions is 40%. He has no preference for male or female however his strain get very "soft" after their heat cycle for about 16 weeks. It would be hard to look past FTCh Darinish Starbright, a pointer bitch as his best dog to this point. This indicates a 100% choice of female for Pat's top dogs.

The last question to test the supposed working superiority of the females over the males is to test the proportion of female Irish championship winners since 1959 to 2018. This stands at 40% which coincidentally equates approximately to participation rates. The Irish Championship is a once-off annual event and therefore perhaps is not the truest proxy for superiority of performance. I had requested a list of FTChs from the Irish Kennel Club which would show over a period from 1980 the split between dog and bitch field trial champions.

In summary, due to the demand for bitch puppies felt by most breeders, I tested why this demand was so. In my own rather limited experience of

breeding puppies, most of the female puppies bred were not themselves bred. Colloquially, this experience was replicated across other breeders. I hypothesised that if the demand for female puppies was not for breeding purposes, it must be because they are superior workers to their male counterparts. The first test concluded that participation rates were between 42% - 46% over a twenty-year period. This may suggest unavailability of bitches due to female cycles or that more males achieve the field trial standard. The second test was to receive feedback from leading promoters and kennels. Being breeders, there should be a bias towards keeping females. This is borne out with the overall proportion of female to male champions being greater in most but not all of these kennels. However, when these top trial people were asked to pick their all time greatest, the choice in most cases was in favour of male dogs. The final test was to record the sex of the winners of the Irish Championship since 1959. While it is just two days over a year, it is a substitute proxy in the absence of overall male/female FTChs. The rate of 40% for females would indicate that they are not as successful as males in the blue riband of the pointer and setter trialling year.

If you are choosing a puppy and are not interested in breeding, it is worth considering the reliability and availability of a male dog. While the female may have advantages in terms of ease of training, they are also usually more sensitive and easier to fall out with. In the sport of field trialling at a general level, the male dogs can more than hold their own.

Terrier, Lurcher & Whippet Show Roundup

The Mid and East Antrim Christmas Dog Show Sunday 16th December 18.

The festive season had arrived in full swing and when it came to a little jollification and some 'me' time, the Mid and East Antrim Christmas Dog Show was the place to be. This first-time Christmas Dog Show was a great success from start to finish and was a welcome break from the trials and tribulations of the Christmas razzmatazz.

Although it was icy cold weather, the

good men and women of the canine world came out in strength for a day of festivities and showing. Denver McMeekin was there with some very pipping hot homemade game soup, and game stew etc., all very tasty indeed. Showing commenced at approximately 12.30.

Results:

Children's Handling Class Lilly Thompson with Chico

Overall Champion Puppy Adam with Rio

Overall Champion Whippet Lisa Dumigan with Frankie

Overall Champion Lurcher David Mc Crory with Striker

Overall Champion Terrier Darren Crawford with Jill

Overall Champion and Best in Show Darren Crawford with Jill

Reserve David Mc Crory with Striker

Many thanks to the judges on the day: Whippets/Mark Mc Callion; Lurchers / Breandan Coleman; Terriers / John Barr; Children's Handling Class / Tracy Gill.



Overall Champion Lurcher David McCrory with Striker.



Overall Champion Terrier and best in Show Darren Crawford with Jill.



Overall Champion Whippet Lisa Dumigan with Frankie.

DOG SHOW CALENDAR

2019 SEASON

Sunday 3rd March	Owen Juggy Ryan Memorial & Michael Carroll Memorial Racing Day, Roscrea
Sunday 31st March	Avondhu Fox Hounds Dog Show, County Cork
Sunday 7th April	Carlow Charity Dog Show & Race Day
Sunday 14th April	Laois Lurcher, Terrier & Whippet Club Dog Show & Race Day, Abbeylax.
Sunday 21st April	Killure Working Terrier & Lurcher Club Dog Show
Sunday 28th April	Armagh Sporting Dog Charity Show
Sunday 5th May	Dublin Working Terrier Club (DWTC)
Sunday 5th May	Rockview Harriers Annual Working Terrier, Lurcher & Hound Show, Danesfort
Sunday 12th May	Mourne Lurcher & Terrier Charity Dog Show
Sunday 12th May	Golden Vale Foxhounds Dog Show, Clonakenny, Roscrea
Saturday 25th May	NI Countrysports Fair, Scarvagh House, Scarvagh
Sunday 26th May	NI Countrysports Fair, Scarvagh House, Scarvagh
Saturday 1st June	North Armagh Working Terrier Club, Race Day only
Sunday 2nd June	North Armagh Working Terrier Club, Dog Showing only

IRISH COUNTRY LIFESTYLE FESTIVAL, GALWAY RACECOURSE, BALLYBRIT

Galway Racecourse, Saturday 15th June 2019

Galway Racecourse, Sunday 16th June 2019

Sunday 23rd June North Tipperary Hound and Dog Show

IRISH GAME FAIR & FINE FOOD FESTIVAL

Shanes Castle, Antrim, Saturday 29th June 2019

Shanes Castle, Antrim, Sunday 30th June 2019

Sunday 7th July	Kiltrough Lurchers Show
Sunday 14th July	Working Terrier Show (Kevin Maguire's Show)
Sunday 25th August	Mickey Quinn's Bumper Charity Dog Show and Raceday, Armagh



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The IKC AV Spaniel Championship sponsored by Feedwell



Officials and competitors stand in front of Dundarave's fine Italianate mansion at the start of the Championship.

The Irish Kennel Club's 43rd AV Spaniel Championship (excl. IWS. and Cocker Spaniels) was held on the grounds of Dundarave and Cherry Valley estates by kind invitation of Dr. Peter and Nuailin Fitzgerald on 14 & 15 December 2018.

The event was originally arranged to take place on the Copeland Islands by kind invitation of Mr Steve Marsden, before mother nature in the form of inclement weather took its toll, forcing all concerned to activate plan B, which ran very smoothly. Considering the amount of coordination and reorganisation that needed to be carried out over a period of a week or so before the event took place, the outcome was a credit to all involved.

From the first day of the championship at Dundarave, the welcome and hospitality of the hosts towards the event was evident, with car parking facilities laid on for everyone, along with a chuck wagon for those that needed a cuppa and a snack.

Judges for the two days were Ivan Wilson and Mick Walsh with John Butler taking on the role of Referee. Ian Chapman, estate manager as Steward of the beat guided the trial around the

ground throughout the day with courtesy and without fuss.

The Championship attracted an entry of thirty three English Springer Spaniels, eleven Dogs and twenty two



Louis Rice and his dog Sliabh Cushla went on to win.



The run off.

Bitches, the oldest being six and the youngest being twenty three months. The weather for the day was kind, dry and cool with a good breeze. The ground, a mixture of woodland, low laurel, rhododendrons, thickets of snowberry shrubs, briar, white grass, rushes and some game crop, presented each dog with opportunities to excel on many types of terrain and varying cover and most of the competing dogs did meet multiple types of terrain during their runs and gave a good account of their hunting ability on the different type of ground they encountered. But as is the case in most trials, dogs fell by the wayside for one reason or another.

DAY 1

With one withdrawal, thirty-two dogs went to post and the event got under way at precisely 9.30 am when dogs number one and two were called into line, with Ivan Wilson taking the uneven numbers to the left hand line and Mick Walsh taking the even numbers.

No.1 Eddie Scott's ESSB Broomfield Anna hunted with good pace and style in open woodland where she had a find 'gone away,' before having a retrieve on a cock pheasant that had broken loose, ending her first run.

No. 2 Louis Rice's ESSB Sliabh Aoife hunting in low laurel and brashings had a quick find, which broke on the other side of the cover. The judge asked Louis to call his dog in and brought him to other side of cover where a mark to the fall was given. "Aoife" was sent for retrieve but did not locate the bird and was called in by the judge who went forward to look for it. When not found, Louis was brought back into original cover to hunt on and after a short hunt the dog picked the

bird she had been sent for earlier, ending her run.

No. 3 Philip Taylor's ESSB Portcaman Cassie started her run with a short hunt in woodland before being brought out for a retrieve on the lawn in front of the estate house which she successfully picked. Philip and "Cassie" started hunting again in thickets of snowberry and laurel where they had a find and a retrieve to finish off their first run.

No. 4 Terri Siwek's ESSB FTCh. Surefly Sassy from straight off the lead was brought to grass area for a retrieve on a cock bird that had been shot earlier, which, with a small amount of handling she picked successfully. Moving to new ground "Sassy" hunted thickets of snowberry with nice pace and ground treatment before hunting light briar where she had a find and a retrieve to end her first run.

No. 5 Peter Avery's ESSB FTCh. Deepfleet Sanchez. A release pen was the beat for Peter and his dog where "Sanchez" hunted with pace and style and during which she had a find, which when shot fell outside the pen. Handler and dog were taken out of the pen for the retrieve which when picked, ended their run.

No. 6 Norman Blakeney's ESSB FTCh. Colcourt Firecrest Cast off in



Norman Blakeney's Cowarnecourt Midnight Sun waits for next cast.

light cover of laurel and thicket of snowberry which she tackled with pace and style and from which “Jazz” had a double flush, picking both birds before ending her first run.

No. 7 Murt Walsh’s ESSB FTCh. Sharmar Coco. Hunted with pace and drive in a release pen with cover of rhododendron and snowberry shrubs, where it had a find, ‘gone away,’ before a bird that broke loose and fell outside pen where Murt and “Coco” were taken for the retrieve before she finished her first run.

No. 8 Willie Edgar’s ESSD FTCh. Greenbrush Ice. Hunting in thickets of snowberry shrub and laurel with pace and style before having two retrieves on loose birds, finished his first run with a find on a hen pheasant.

No. 9 Lars Meincke’s ESSD DK FTCh. Springerdale Del Gardo. Hunted nicely with pace and drive in release pen with same cover as no.7 rhododendron and snowberry thickets in which they had a find and retrieve, to complete their run.

No. 10 Eddie Byrne’s ESSB Sansa of Killyvoua. With pace and drive, this bitch hunted in scrub and laurel where she had a find and, on her way out for the retrieve, she met with the added distraction of more game flushing



Eddie Scott waiting to go into line with the judge, Ivan Wilson.

before she successfully retrieved the bird, ending her run.

No. 11 Steven Blackwell’s ESSD. Luthmhor Draco. The defending champion (winner of the 2017 I.K.C. A.V. Spaniel Championship) hunted rhododendron and laurel with pace and style in which it had a find ‘gone away,’ before flushing another bird some way out, bringing an end to their run.

No. 12 Louis Rice’s ESSB FTCh. Sliabh Cushla. Straight off the lead, was taken to the other side as second dog down to try for a bird that was not picked and Louis’ dog continued her run on various types of terrain and cover consisting of thickets of snowberry shrubs in woodland, woodland with grass ground cover, game crop and finally bracken and gorse where “Cushla” had a find and when sent, got right to the fall but the bird escaped through a wire fence. Cushla then hunted on and had a retrieve on loose woodcock to end her first run.

No. 13 Ronan Gorman’s ESSD Bishwell Barrett of Comonshall. Ronan’s dog started off with pace and style before having two finds, the first of which was shot a long way out. Both Ronan’s dog and dog No. 12 were tried on it but judges decided it was a runner and long gone and both dogs hunted on, the second find when shot, fell in the vicinity of the car park which was over a drain on the opposite side of an avenue, which, when retrieved ended Ronan’s run.

No. 14 Pat Green’s ESSD FTCh. Kilcarra Snowie, cast off in mixed cover of briar and light laurel which it hunted



Eamonn Taaffe and Peter Avery.



(l/r) Tom Brennan,, Ricky Cashin and Mick Walsh.

with drive and pace before being sent for a bird which came from the other side, but it failed to locate it, ending Pat's run.

No. 15 Eamonn Taaffe's ESSD Int. F.T.Ch. Hollydrive Bert. "Joey" Started his first run with a short hunt in the avenue under rhododendrons where he retrieved two pheasants and a rabbit before moving into a release pen with light cover to continue his run where he picked a loose bird that had been shot earlier to end his run.

No. 16 Roger Shore's ESSD Glengoole King. Started in briar and fallen timber before moving into laurel all of which it hunted with good pace and style, before having a find and retrieve to end its run.

Dog No. 17. Dessie Donnelly's E.S.S.B. Int. F.T. Ch. Hollydrive Abbey hunting with drive and pace in rhododendrons from where a loose cock pheasant broke and fell in an area the judge deemed to be unsafe to send the dog for the retrieve. Having walked out and picked the bird himself the judge then hunted Dessie and "Toodles" on, which, in this part of their run, saw her hunt low briar from where another bird broke and was retrieved before being called over to the other line to try for the bird dog no.14 had failed to locate which "Toodles" picked successfully. Then hunting on she had another find, ending her run.

No. 18 Shane Gainly's ESSB Garrisoncullin Tio. This bitch hunted with drive and pace along a lane with cover of briar and snowberry thicket in which it had a very good find, not shot. Moving into low briar the dog again hunted with pace and style, below the briar at all times again flushing a pheasant, which she successfully retrieved to end her first run.

No. 19 John Kesshan's ESSD Balley Clear Flash started its run in open woodland hunting with nice pace and

style before handler lifted the dog.

No. 20 Hugh Houston's ESSB. Hunted snowberry thickets and laurel where it had two finds and two retrieves before completing its run.

No. 21 Eddie Scott's FTCh. Broomfield Tara. Started her first run in a game crop before moving into woodland where "Tara" without having a find did have a retrieve before her run ended.

No. 22 Pat Green's ESSB Shiftwell Holly. Hunted along edge of woodland with grass verge and light cover where she had a find and retrieve before hunting on, having another find to end her first run.

No. 23 Peter Avery's ESSD FTCh. Deepfleet Van Persie. In its first run, this dog hunted with pace and drive in a ditch of green briar from which it was called out of for a retrieve on a loose bird, which, when picked, hunted on again in the same type of cover where it had a find on a hen bird, 'gone away' ending "Van Percie's" run.

No. 24 Adrian Doris' ESSD Clodahill Pele. In its first run in thicket of snowberry shrub and briar which it hunted with pace and style, from where it had a find and retrieve, before ending its run in a strip of low woodland with a



Louis Rice's Sliabh Aoife waiting to cast off under the watchful eye of judge Mick Walsh on the first day.



Shane Gainley with his dog Garrisoncullin.
ground cover of grass.

No. 25 P.J.Davitt's ESSB FTCh Glenhestbeg Della had her first run in gorse with briar running through it, from which she produced two finds, the retrieve on the first find saw her being called out of cover before being sent to pick the bird which she did successfully. The second retrieve saw "Della" being sent from where she had her find in the cover and with one cast picked the bird.

No. 26 Raymond Wilson's ESSB F.TCh. Meadowbeat Neala of Greenbush started its first run in woodland with light ground cover of grass before hitting heavy cover of shrubs and briar along a narrow ditch which when hunting with drive and pace had an excellent find, not shot. While hunting on she produced another very good find from cover and a successful retrieve, to end her first run.

No. 27 Jeremy Organ's ESSB FTCh Mulraven Medlaress of Cinderash did not run.

No. 28 Norman Blakeney's ESSB Cowarencourt Midnight Sun cast off with pace and style on grassy verge along a drain adjacent to woodland then into briar which she also hunted very well before being brought back to try on bird which had fallen into drain, when she did not locate the bird the judges

went out to look for it and when not finding it, deemed the bird had run and as second dog down. "Sunni" was then hunted on through cover into a small plantation with ground cover of white grass and brought over to try for a bird on other side without success, when judges searched for the bird, they found it hung up. Sunni was then moved into a game crop where she had a find and retrieve to end her run.

No. 29 Alan Sankey's ESSB FTCh. Brocklinton Betty. Hunting in gorse and briar with pace and drive, a loose bird broke cover and was shot falling over sheep wire fence and when she was lifted over the fence and sent for the bird "Betty" made a good job of the retrieve before she was brought back to hunt on, where she had another find which also fell over the same fence and was successfully retrieved ending their first run.

No. 30 Louis Rice's ESSD Sliabh Bomber began its run in a game crop which he hunted with style and pace before moving into light woodland then moving into woodland with heavy briar cover continuing to hunt with drive and finally hunted snowberry thickets and laurel where it was sent for two retrieves the first which it picked successfully but the second bird it failed

to locate, ending Louis run.

No. 31 Kevin Somers' ESSB Muggleswyck Lilly hunted a cover of green briar which she did so with pace and drive where she had a find on a wounded hen which she also retrieved, before ending her first run.

No. 32 David Maher's ESSB Gardenrath Tikka when just off the lead was sent on a wounded cock bird which had run, this she retrieved successfully before being hunted on along a road with a bank falling away from the road down to a small stream in woodland, where a bird she had pushed lay but when sent and after a number of casts she failed to reach the area ending her run.

No. 33 James Casey's ESSB FTCh. Blackguard Ivy started with a short hunt before being brought across to the other line to try for a bird that dog. No.30 had failed to locate and which "Ivy" also failed to locate. James was then sent for a retrieve on a loose bird which it picked but the bird he had been tried on a few minutes earlier was located, ending his run.

No. 4 Terri Siwek's ESSB FTCh. Surefly Sassy was to be the last dog on day one having its second run.

Having judged all thirty-two dogs in their first run and one dog in its second run on day one, proceedings came to a halt at 3.30 P.M. and all made their way back to the carpark where The Championship Assist. Hon. Sec. Tommy White announced the dogs that would be required for the second day, which amounted to twelve dogs, Nos 1, 6, 8, 12, 15, 18, 23, 24, 25, 26, 29 and 31.

DAY 2

The meet for day two was Cherry Valley Estate and once again car parking facilities and chuck wagon were available in the estate yard. The weather was not to be kind on the second day, with driving rain and wind for most of the time, but this did not dampen the spirit of the day.

The first two dogs of the twelve that were called back for a second run, were brought into line and day two of the

championship got under way at 9.35 am.

No.1 Eddie Scott's ESSB.

Broomfield Anna. Cast off in her second run with pace while hunting briar and scrub, before being asked to try for a bird the dog on the other side had failed to locate. The judges looked for the bird and when not found both dogs were hunted on. Anna hunted on through briar before having a find on a partridge which was shot and fell in the vicinity of a drain, but when sent for the retrieve she failed to locate it and ended her second run.

No. 6 Norman Blakeney's ESSB FTCh. Colcourt Firecrest. Her second run took place in a young plantation with light ground cover, from where a woodcock broke which was shot and fell into cover. When sent "Jazz" was not able to locate it; having been called up the judges went out to search for the bird and without finding it they scrubbed the retrieve as they thought the bird may have been hung up in the cover. Hunting on, Jazz had a retrieve on a loose bird before having another find and retrieve, which brought her second run to an end.

No. 8 Willie Edgar's ESSD FTCh. Greenbrush Ice. Had only just started its second run when called over to try for bird that dog No1 failed to locate and which Willie's dog did not locate, ending his second run.

No. 12 Louis Rice's ESSB FTCh. Sliabh Cushla. Had her second run in a release pen where she hunted with pace and style flushing a partridge "gone way" hunting on to flush a hen pheasant that fell outside the pen and when brought outside to retrieve the bird she did so successfully. Casting off again "Cushla" had another find in briar which was not shot, ending her second run.

No.15 Eamonn Taaffe's ESSD Int. FTCh. Holleydrive Bert had his second run in a release pen in which stood the ruins of a cottage covered in ivy and briar. When cast off, "Joey" immediately hit the cover. A bird broke loose and fell outside the pen. Joey



Judges and Referee.

hunted on with drive, another bird broke cover, which the dog acknowledged.

The bird, when shot, fell into the ruin of the cottage and the handler opted to try for it through a door opening in the ruin not realising there was a dividing wall inside the building which impeded the dog's access while searching for the bird and when brought to the other side of the building there was no way in, so Joey ended his second run by picking the bird that was shot earlier and had fallen into the adjacent field.

No.18 Shane Gainly's ESSB.

Garrisoncullin Tio. In her second run "Tio" hunted with drive and pace before picking a cold retrieve which had been shot earlier outside the pen. Hunting on she then picked a wounded partridge before having another find on a partridge to end her second run.

No. 23 Peter Avery's ESSD FTCh. Deepfleet Van Persie. Had its second run in a young beech wood plantation with heavy cover from which he flushed a cock bird from briar and when shot, fell into a grass field beyond a ditch and barbed wire fencing. Dog and handler were taken over the fencing and sent for retrieve which was successfully completed bringing an end to their second run.

No. 24 Adrian Doris' ESSD

Clodahill Pele. Hunted in gorse and rhododendrons in the first part of his second run where it picked a partridge before changing ground and into a young beech plantation where it hunted along a drain before it was called across the line to try for a partridge that dog

No.31 had failed to retrieve. "Pele" failed to locate the bird before being called up, the judges went out to look for the bird and found it, ending Adrian and "Pele's" second run.

No. 25 P.J.Davitt's ESSB FTCh. Glenhestbeg Della. "Della's" second run took place in beech wood with ground cover of briar, grass and rushes where she had a find on a partridge which when sent for took a number of casts before success was achieved. "Della" was then hunted on having another find and retrieve ending her second run.

No. 26 Raymond Wilson's ESSB FTCh. Meadowbeat Neala of Greenbush. As in her first run, she hunted heavy cover of briar along a ditch before moving out to lighter cover where she flushed a covey of partridge one of which was shot, across a hedge, falling into a grass field. When sent, she made her way into the field where she needed a number of casts before picking the bird to end her second run.

No. 29 Alan Sankey's ESSB FTCh. Brocklinton Betty. Started her second run in low woodland in which she had a find that was not shot. "Betty" was then moved to new ground and while sitting, before Alan cast her off, some partridge moving in front of her proved to be too great a temptation and she moved, bringing an end her run.

No. 31 Kevin Somers' ESSB Muggleswyck Lilly. In her second run "Lilly" had a short hunt before being called in for a retrieve on a partridge that had been shot earlier, but the temptation of a lively partridge, running

along an adjacent fence, proved too much for "Lilly," ending her run.

At 11.30 am the judges had finished seeing all of the twelve dogs go through their paces on day two and having compared their books they called two dog for a run off, No 12 Louis Rice's ESSB FTCh. Sliabh Cushla and No. 23 Peter Avery's ESSD FTCh. Deepfleet Van Persie.

With the run off (which was held in a field of game crop / set aside) complete the Hon. Sec. called seven of the twelve dogs that competed on day two for the compulsory water exercise required under IKC rules. Those called were Nos 6, 12, 15, 18, 23, 25 and 26.

With the water exercise completed successfully by all seven dogs, it was back to the car park to discard the wet clothes and then into the estate's very comfortable and warm log cabin for the presentation of awards.

Prior to the presentation, the Chairman of IKC Championship Committee, Pat Green thanked the hosts, Peter and Nuailin Fitzgerald for inviting The IKC to hold the Championship on the beautiful grounds of Dundarave and Cherry Vale, Feedwell for their very generous sponsorship, all who placed ads in the Championship Programme, The Guns, The Estate Manager Ian Chapman for his role as Steward of the Beat on the day and the work he and the estates' game keepers, Alan Greer and Robert Mc Burney put in preparing the ground for the event and David Doherty for all his help prior to the event and for the great work he did as Chief Steward.

Pat then thanked Steve Marsden and his team, both for the invitation to hold the Championship on the Copeland Islands and the work they had carried out to ensure it's success and understood how disappointed Steve must have felt when the weather took its toll on the possibility of holding the event on the Copelands.

Pat continued by thanking those who helped in any way in the preparation at Dundarave and Cherry Valley prior to the event and all those who helped over

the two days, including the I.K.C. Sec. Marion Campbell for the enormous amount of work she carried out in the back ground, all of which ensured the success of the 43rd IKC AV Spaniel Championship.

The Chairman then handed over proceedings to Tommy White to announce the awards, which were so kindly presented by Mrs. Nuailin Fitzgerald.

RESULTS

1st and winner of the J. Mc.Grath Perpetual Cup

Louis Rice's ESSB FT.Ch. Sliabh Cushla

Sire: Wyndhill Brett of Stagsden.

Dam: FTCh. Sliabh Treasure.

The winner was also presented with the R.Mc Elhinney Perpetual Cup as the highest placed Irish Dog in the Championship along with the Eastern Region Army Game Club Perpetual Trophy as breeder resident in Ireland, the produce of whose kennel was placed highest in the Championship.

2nd and winner of the Parkmaple Perpetual Trophy

Peter Avery's ESSD FTCh. Deepfleet Van Persie

Sire: F.T. Ch. Helmsway Henry

Dam: Rosebay Fuschia of Deepfleet.

3rd and winner of the Combined Spaniel Clubs of Ireland Perpetual Trophy

Raymond Wilson's ESSB FTCh. Meadowbeat Neala of Greenbush

Sire: Belvden Collingwood.

Dam: Langattack Luna.

4th and winner of the Cretoka Perpetual Trophy

Norman Blakeney's ESSB F.TCh. Colcourt Firecrest

Sire: F.T.Ch. Chinacook Roberto.

Dam: Not So Little Rascal.

Diplomas of Honour

Eamonn Taaffe's ESSD Int. FTCh. Hollydrive Bert

Sire: Int. FTCh. Skronedale Romulus.

Dam: Hollydrive Kylie.

Shane Gainley's E.S.S.B. Garrisoncullin Tio

Sire: Churchview Chunnel.

Dam: Clio of Levalley.

P.J.Davitt's ESSB FTCh. Glenhesbeg Della

Sire: Int. FTCh. Skronedale Romulus.

Dam: FTCh. Whitehope Euro.

Also awarded the Carthageinne Perpetual Trophy for best retrieve at the Championship.

The Dermot Cahill Guns' Award to the gun the handlers most enjoyed having shoot over their dogs, was presented to Fintan Kelly Jnr.

The Guns Trophy to the dog the guns most enjoyed shooting over, went to Peter Avery's Deepfleet Van Persie.

The Duisk Perpetual Cup for the most points accumulated in field events under I.K.C. rules during the current season (excluding the 2017 Championship) up to and including the 2018 Championship was presented to Mick Walsh's Hollydrive Pretty Polly.

Louis Rice, as Championship Winning Handler thanked the host, the judges, the guns and all concerned on behalf of the handlers. Louis said how delighted he was to win the Championship with Sliabh Cushla as he had won a British Championship and was second in an Irish Championship with her dam.

The Judges thanked the Championship Committee for inviting them to officiate at the event and spoke of what they were looking for in a dog when judging it. They congratulated those in the awards and added that on another day and with a bit of luck falling their way, many of the dogs that competed could easily go on to win a Championship.

Representing the sponsors Feedwell Animal Products, Jeff McMaster said that Feedwell had been involved in sponsoring field trials for many years and indeed have been main sponsors to the Championship over the past few years and were delighted to be so, and congratulated all the award winners

Finally, the Committee were delighted to be able to confirm that the Championship had been invited back to Dundarave in December 2019.



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1. Award Winners and Judges at the I.K.C. 2018 Spaniel Championship.
2. Mrs. Nuailin Fitzgerald presents the winners trophies to Louis Rice as, Breeder, Owner and Handler of the winning dog, Sliabh Cushla.
3. Peter Avery receives his 2nd. place award.
4. Raymond Wilson with his 3rd place award.
5. Norman Blakeney is presented with fourth place rosette by Mrs. Nuailin Fitzgerald.



1. Mrs. Nuailin Fitzgerald presents PJ Davitt with the trophy which was awarded to his dog for best retrieve at the Championship.

2. Shane Gainley receives a Diploma of Honour.

3. Flintan Kelly receives the Dermot Cahill Guns Award.

4. P.J. Davitt is presented with a Diploma of Honour.

5. Eamon Taaffe receives a Diploma of Honour.

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The IGL Retriever Championship 2018



The parkland which was to feature each morning.

The 2018 IGL Retriever Championship was held at Packington Hall on 3rd, 4th and 5th of December, by kind permission of Lord and Lady Guernsey. It is difficult to imagine that barely ten minutes distant from Birmingham Airport, there exists this quintessentially English sporting Estate, replete with Palladian manor, parkland, deer herd and surrounded by mixed agricultural land including cereal and fodder beet crops, ideal for sporting shooting.

Head-keeper and Steward of the Beat Matt Nesbitt and his tweed besuited team of Keepers added greatly to the atmosphere, and produced three memorable days of trialling. The Judges were, on the right Jim Gale and Les McLean, and on the left Barry Taylor and Mark Bettinson.

For those of a statistical mind, there were fifty-eight runners, two of which were Golden Retrievers, thirty-six had achieved FTCh status, nineteen were bitches, and the dominant sire was FTCh Copperbirch Paddy, bred in Ireland by Keith Matthews and owned by Billy Steel Snr. This was the twenty-seventh consecutive championship being run by John Halsted (Jnr or young John if you prefer), and for the second time he had qualified to run an impressive five dogs.

The Irish were represented by seven

dogs as follows:

Declan Boyle with FTCh Miller McDuff as the current Irish Champion;
Tony Rodgers with Highwalk Galway
Sean Diamond with FTCh Copperbirch Mandela
Kieren Coey with Crosstone Trickster
Tadh Kelly with FTCh Carrickview Holly

Billy Lundy with Int FTCh The Newcam Boss

Harry Gillanders with Ffymongain Celt

It was with some trepidation that, in pouring rain and a poor forecast, we gathered early for the formal announcements, before lining up to walk fallen bracken which ran as boundaries to the estate Golf Course and the first shot which was fired at 9.05am.



John Halsted at the water with his three award winners.



Attempting the retrieve anxiously watched by Tony Rodgers, Declan Boyle.

Partridge and pheasant came readily to hand, and the Judges made sensible use of birds with retrieves in round one mostly in front of dogs, but where appropriate cross retrieving of minimal distance was also used. Soon to be eliminated was Sue Berman with Suthcharic Eve who refused to lift a woodcock and was subsequently eye-wiped by John Halsted with FTCh Asterix Aguzannis of Chatsworth. Early into action for the Irish was Tadh Kelly, who in his own words “had two handy ones more or less in front.” Job Done! Harry Gillanders fared less well and was eliminated for poor heelwork when in line. Game was plentiful, but the Judges, quite understandably were setting high standards, and dogs with indifferent work were being discarded.

Achieving early success as the morning progressed and the weather brightened were Jamie Bettinson with FTCh Cynhinfa Ladislav and Steve Richardson with FTCh Birdsgreen Cluedo of Wedgenock, who had been so unlucky on the last day of the 2017 Championship.

Just before lunch, we moved from the Estate parkland to an area of root crops, surrounded by standing maize or woodland, which of itself held much game. Head-keeper Matt Nesbitt expertly coordinated beaters and guns to produce birds from the crops, mostly in groups of 4-5, so that retrieves could be had from the line, which now stretched to some 150 yards. This *modus operandi* was to set the pattern for the trial through to the end of day two.

Retrieves, still for first round dogs, were long and testing, no more so than for Jane Coley with FTCh Flagonhall Hermes of Waterford, who successfully negotiated two long blinds in the fodder beet. Success also came to Billy Steel Jnr with FTCh Harperrig Breac who eye-wiped Steve with FTCh Shallowbeck Baker Boy.

A partridge shot over an open hedge proved the downfall of three of the Irish, as Declan Boyle, Tony Rodgers, Sean Diamond and also John Halsted with FTCh Jarailstar Rocky Road of Blackhatch were eyewiped by the Judges. Pushing a dog through a hedge

and leaving it to hunt was to become a crucial issue, particularly on the second day. Kieron Coey was thereafter eliminated on his second retrieve for failing to pick a bird in open beet.

The first day ended with a display of real brilliance from David Field and FTCh Ariystryn Ulrich, who was unlucky two years ago at the Championship at Ampton. Close to a hedge a bird fell and ran and casting his dog to the fall, David left the dog to it and Ulrich cast and re-cast himself on the line, to eventually return with a very live runner to the acclamation of guns and crowd alike.

Back at HQ, secretary Sandra Onens confirmed that forty dogs were required for day two, with Tadh Kelly and Billy Lundy the only Irish survivors.

Day 2

Day two dawned very dry and frosty, in contrast to the inclement weather earlier, and scenting conditions seemed to improve. We again commenced in fallen bracken in the parkland, before moving on to fodder beat and later

standing maize and sorghum. Birds were flushed from the walk up or alternatively from neighbouring game crop or woodland.

Retrieves, in accordance with Championship standards were now long and testing and any blemish from dog work resulted in competitors being dropped. Among the most common faults were poor delivery, or dogs blinking on pick up, unusual at this level. Among early casualties were Kirsty Cousins with FTCh Dunjailin Nickel and Dimes of Westerkames, a Golden Retriever from Italy, Think Twice Uh La La La which was eyewiped by John Halsted with Brocklebank Bronze of Chatsworth, and Lorna Sanaghan with Julval Sofia who was dropped for indifferent work. Some very good work across the line was seen from last year's winner David Lissett with FTCh Buccleuch Zena, and Tim Brain with Amanco Tirpitz of Flypatch.

A moment of drama unfolded halfway up a field of beet, when a gun shot a very high pigeon which landed over a hedge. This proved to be the downfall of Jamie Bettinson, Steve Richardson and John Halsted with FTCh Brocklebank Navigator of Chatsworth. David Latham with Fendawood Harold who retrieved the bird, nonetheless had trouble with the hedge and was dropped before the next round. Shortly afterwards Julia Redpath who was having a good run with Hassycott Sea Snipe eyewiped Neil Appleton with Applebriar Storm.

A partridge shot over a hedge, which looked likely to run, looked like providing further difficulties, but after Billy Steel Jnr had been tried, gamekeeper Matt Nesbitt intervened and asked that the Judges declare the retrieve void, as the wounded bird was dangerously close to a busy road. Handler relief was palpable!

Just before lunch the Irish challenge ended when Tadh Kelly was eliminated for dropping a bird on delivery, and Billy Lundy was eyewiped in beet by Annette Clark.

Thirty dogs were called forward for



Billy Steel and Breac returning after a brilliant run.

the third round and the Judges now stretched retrieves to demand pin point marking and decisive handling when necessary. Annette Clark was having a very good run with FTCh Castlemans Gobi of Garronpoint, and was laying down a clear marker with exceptional work. Early to fall at this stage, however, were David Lissett with FTCh Buccleuch Zena who had a bird shot which landed wounded some 150 yards behind the line. Zena went straight to the fall, and returned to a triumphant round of applause from the gallery. Unfortunately the bird retrieved was cold, probably having been shot the previous day, and David was asked to send Zena back to the fall to hunt for the bird shot. Failing to find, Zena was

called up, only to be eyewiped by Leigh Jackson with Laggengill Dawn of Blackgrass. The Trial progressed to the end of round three, when stumps were drawn and back at HQ, Sandra Onens announced that nineteen dogs were required for the final day.

The Final Day

With the threat of torrential rain ahead of us, day three returned to the fallen bracken in the parkland where a very long line progressed to decide the final outcome, on a ready supply of partridge, pheasant and woodcock. Headkeeper Matt Nesbitt had done a superb job with his staff of flanking in game and we were quickly into sustained action which produced some



Award winners, Judges, Host and IGL Officials.

thrilling work. Among the first casualties was Pippa Williams with the last Goldie, Castlemans Soul Mate, who was unable to pick a nominated pheasant and was eyewiped by Nick West with Smithsteads Layla. Unfortunately on his next bird Nick was eyewiped by Donnie Leitch with FTCh Garslake Dunbar, who was maintaining a good overall run.

Next in line came Billy Steel Jnr with FTCh Harperrig Breac and to everyone's consternation, a cock bird was shot which immediately ran. Billy cast Breac to the fall, put his hands in his pockets and let the dog take a strong line, picking the bird some 150 yards away and returning to tumultuous cheers of admiration from a knowledgeable gallery. This was great work, produced at just the right time in the trial. Not much later, a similar performance ensued when Breac was second dog down on a runner which Paul Truby and FTCh Sandicliffe Jude of Millershook failed to pick. Breac again picked the strong runner with minimal handling. The field was now dwindling with Jane Colley, Rodger Kettley and Leigh Jackson all falling by the wayside and as we headed for the water, eight dogs remained.

The water test was well conceived with birds falling on or over a large lake, and some testing retrievers followed. John Halsted had some logistical problems solved by some sensible judging, with three dogs in line

at the edge of the lake. After all dogs had completed the water test, the Judges declared Championship over, and everyone returned to HQ. Much was the speculation as everyone assembled for the announcement of the results, which Secretary Sandra Owens declared as follows:

Results

1st Billy Steel Jnr with FTCh Harperrig Breac
Lab Dog born 09.03.14
Sire FTCh Leadburn Mist Dam Spylan Showgirl of Harperrig
2nd David Field with FTCh Artistryn Ulrich
Lab Dog born 13.03.13
Sire FTCh Cyhinfia John Dam Artistryn Quail
3rd Lady C Carter's Brocklebank Bronze of Chatsworth handled by John Halsted
Lab Dog born 20.03.13
Sire FTCh Asterix Aguzannis of Chatsworth Dam Jaywills Berry of Houghton
4th Mr R Hinks FTCh Casltlemans Gobi of Garronpoint handled by Annette Clark
Lab Dog born 20.03.14
Sire Brockweir Blitz of Smithsteads Dam FTCh Tweedsot Thistle of Levenghyl

Diplomas of Merit

Donnie Leitch with FTCh Garshake Dunbar

David Latham with Nettlebrae Andy of Fendawood

Mrs C Finlan with FTCh MacGiriaght Foxy Lady handled by John Halsted

Lady C Carter with FTCh Asterix Aguzannis of Chatsworth handled by John Halsted

The winner had been presented with two golden opportunities at just the right time and taken them with supreme work to take his title, and many congratulations to Billy Steel Jnr for whom this is his third success in this Championship. David Field had also shown exceptional work on a runner at the end of day one. Other dogs in the awards had shown great ability, but over the three days just did not have that "lift" which comes from a brilliant eyewipe or runner.

By any standards this was an exceptional Championship. Packington was at it's best and the IGL again proved its management and organisational ability in running this, the Blue Riband of the Retriever Trialling season.

On a personal note, I would like to thank Clare Wood, Sue Schofield and the evergreen Tess Lawrence of the IGL for their help and assistance to the Press, thus enabling us to witness at close quarters this superb event, thereby enabling us to report in an authoritative way, the events as they unfolded to such a magnificent and worthy conclusion.



Winner Billy Steel Jnr with FTCh Harperrig Breac and his trophies.



Judges Les McClean and Jim Gale chatting with Headkeeper Matt Nesbitt.



David Field with FTCh Artistryn Ulrich finished in second place.



Seen it all before – John Halstead Snr chats with Tess Lawrence.



Last day competitors.



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Winter Field Trials for Pointers and Setters

The last stake of the traditional calendar was the Irish red & white setter trial on the 29th October in the very cold Dublin mountains. Another good entry with some overseas competitors and judges Revd. Seamus O'Neill and Larry Quinn were generous of their time and energies. The winner was Joan McGillycuddy's FTCh Ballydavid Starjet of the Kingdom with a find on a single grouse in the very last brace of the trial. Second was Des Linton's Craigrua Nevin.

This year would be the Inaugural Snipe Irish Championship to be held in the Midlands and with so many overseas competitors several clubs held a festival of snipe trials in preparation for the big event. These events would

also have international awards on offer. The Gaelic Gundog League started proceedings on the 21st November with a large oversubscribed entry due to the large contingent of overseas competitors particularly from France. Huge gratitude is due to Ollie Naughton, Jim McCormack and Vincent Flannelly for their preservation work on the bogs of this very underrated game bird. There was a different location for each of the five days of competition with more than a plentiful supply of snipe.

The winner of the Gaelic Gundog League with a CACIT was the Gordon setter bitch Halma des Rives de la Penfeld handled by JP Rivoal from France. Second place and RCACIT was to Hugh Brady's FTCh Malstabodarna Idun of Ballydavid and third place to

Jim Crotty's pointer Brackbawn Thunder. Fourth and fifth were to Bruno Fasoli Irish setter J'Irlande des Sorcieres du Sancy and Patsy McCarthy's Irish setter Brackbawn Fiach. All dogs were graded excellent by judges Jim Sheridan and Christy Davitt.

The next day was hosted by the Irish Red & White setter club and judged by brothers Vincent and Edward Flannelly. In another oversubscribed event, the maximum of thirty dogs went under judges' orders. The winner was another French man with Bruno Fasoli's Irish setter J'Irlande Des Sorcieres Du Sancy with second to Ken Watterson from the Isle of Man with his stylish Irish setter Erinvale Nippy Glow and third to Bruno Fasoli's other Irish setter Diablo Du Val



Winner and CACIT of the Gaelic Gundog League was Halma des Rives de la Penfeld handled by Jean-Pierre Rivoal.

Photo L Westron



Bruno Fasoli and winner of Red & White setter club J'Irlande Des Sorcieres du Sancy
Photo L Westron

De Loue. Fourth was Nenagh man, Billy Grace's English setter Capparoo Aife. Ray Monroe was fifth with Irish red & white setter Granaghsburn Nebraska and sixth to the previous day's winner Jean- Pierre Rivoal Gordon setter Halma Des Rives De La Penfeld.

The final day before the snipe championship was the Native Breeds Society for Irish Red and Irish Red & White Setters. The weather changed and was very cold making scent conditions rather difficult with snipe tending to lie on the edges of the bogs. Judged by Michael Houston (Strabane) and Jim Crotty there was an excellent standard of dogs reflected by seven brace being returned for a second run. The winner was Monaghan man, Kevin Quinn with his Irish setter Sheantullagh Bronagh

with second to Alan Bartley with his Irish setter Ballinahemmy Pretty Bell while third place went to Hugh Brady's FTCh Malstabodarna Idun of Ballydavid and fourth to Alan Bartley's Lisduvogue Tyson. All dogs were graded excellent.

The Irish Snipe Championship held on the 24th and 25th November was kindly sponsored by O'Neills dog food, K-9 Care, Irish Hawking Club and the Creggan Court Hotel, Athlone the headquarters for this festival of field trials. The Championship perpetual trophy was commissioned from the renowned French sculptor Pierre Ajacques.

There was also the Irish Kennel Club Tommy Dunne memorial trophy presented in memory of Tom of Borrisoleigh of Goldshield fame. A



The Irish Snipe Perpetual trophy.
Photo R Monroe

maximum of fifty dogs were on the programme under renowned judges Patsy McCarthy, Vincent Flannelly and Pat Dooley. After a rather cold, windless day there were some standout performances, Joe O'Sullivan's pointer FTCh Gardenfield Quest one of many. This was reflected in twenty-three dogs returned for Day 2.

Michael Houston's pair of pointer FTCh Ardclinis Francie Frank and Irish setter Danby Rocky, Linda Westron's pointer FTCh Goddrib Florence, Joe O'Sullivan's FTCh Gardenfield Quest and Irish Setter Gardenfield Rena, Anthony Mulhall's Brackbawn Fainohe and pointer Gardenfield Riva, Aidan Dunne's Irish setters FTCh Blackstairs Behenny, FTCh Maodhog Ciatog and Maodhog Feochadan, Alan Bartley's Lisduvogue Tyson, Christy Davitt's Blackstairs Tess, Franj-Joseph Nordmann's Malstabodarna Odin,

Joe O'Sullivan with FTCh Gardenfield Quest.

Photo L Westron





Donal O'Leary's English setter Kerry's Pick Up, Billy Grace's Capparoe Aife, Paraig Kiely's pointer Avondale It's Me, Jean-Pierre Rivoal Gordon setter Halma des Rives La Penfeld, Bruno Fasoli's Irish setters Diablo du val de Loue and J'Irland Des Sorcieres du Sancy, Joan McGillicuddy's brace of Int FTCh Ballydavid Starjet of the Kingdom and FTCh Ballydavid Gaelforce of the Kingdom and Hugh Brady's FTCh Malstabodarna Idun and Malstabodarna Embla.

There were some memorable displays in perfect conditions to allow dogs run hard and wide with still adequate game for all dogs. Dogs were given generous time in the second round to improve themselves.

At the end of the second round, a further brace was called for additional opportunity, Joe O'Sullivan's Gardenfield Rena and Aidan Dunne's Maodhog Feochadan while the rest of the gallery enjoyed a fantastically complete lunch provided by the Championship.

At the end of this brace, the cavalcade of cars moved back to Athlone to wait for the results of the first ever Irish Snipe Championship. While a few dogs were eliminated in the second round, most dogs improved their position and therefore there was a huge number of owners with expectations at the award ceremony.

*Billy Grace at the second day of the Irish Snipe Championship with Capparoe Aife.
Photo L Westron*

*Hugh Brady working out Malstabodarna Embla on the second day of the Irish Snipe Championship.
Photo L Westron*

*Championship secretary Christy Davitt working out Franjo Nordmann's (Germany) Malstabodarna Odin on second day of Irish Championship.
Photo L Westron*





The winner of the first Irish Snipe Championship was Aidan Dunne with FTCh Blackstairs Behenny after his final run.
Photo L: Westron



Michael Houston was second with Int FTCh Ardclinis Francie Frank.
Photo R Monroe

The winner was announced as Aidan Dunne's FTCh Blackstairs Behenny with second place to Michael Houston's pointer Int FTCh Ardclinis Francie Frank. Third was Joan McGillicuddy's Irish setter FTCh Ballydavid Gaelforce of the Kingdom

and reserve to Jean-Pierre's Rivoal Gordon setter Halma des Rives de la Penfeld. The breeders' trophy went to Maeve Waters as breeder of the winning dog.

So, this was the end of an eventful pointer and setter field trial season.

With effectively no spring trials in 2018, this year saw significant development in the sport and some memorable days and dogs.

Next issue will cover the review of 2019 Spring events, weather permitting.



Prize winners:
Hugh Brady (3rd),
JP Rivoal (4th),
Aidan Dunne
(1st), Michael
Houston (2nd):
Photo R Monroe.

Some Trial Memories 2018



Second placed Ardclinis Francie Frank.

Photo L Westron



Halma des Rives de la Penfield.



Donal O'Leary with Cindy's Pick Up and Kerry's Pick Up.



Joe O'Sullivan & Gardenfield Rena.

Photo L Westron



*(Left)
Ken Watterson
travelled from
Isle of Man.
Photo R Monroe*

*(Right)
Michael Houston
& Ardclinis
Francie Frank.
Photo R Monroe*



The Kennel Clubs 89th Any Variety Spaniel Championship 2019 (Excluding Cockers) 10/12 January 2019

On the evening prior to the Championship, a generous reception was hosted by His Grace, The Duke of Abercorn. The Marquess of Hamilton (by whose kind permission the Championship was to take place on the beautiful estate over the next three days) made a warm welcoming speech, which was well received by Club Committee, Judges, sponsors, officials and all present. This atmospheric evening set a great beginning to the event, since the company had the feeling a quality Championship was about to unfold.

Baronscourt is well known to Field Trial handlers for its hospitality and where it has hosted the North West Ulster Spaniel Club's Open Qualifying Field Trial for more than thirty years.

Hallowed ground indeed, renowned for variety of cover and always a quantity of game sufficient to test the abilities of handler and dog. With the Estates reputation so well known to all, expectations were high and certainly the following days proved to be exceptional.

The standard which everyone on the estate set was impressive: Stephen Pollock, Head Gamekeeper, his under-keepers Janette Pollock, Alan Scott, Justin Sproule and their team did a great job, plus Lord Hamilton and Matt Stuart the estate's Agent just set the seal on it with their genuine interest in the dog work. Lord Hamilton bought a fishing day and The Kennel Club lunch for four at the Auction, while in the daytime he was constantly up with the Judges in the

line, such was his enthusiasm.

First Day

The Car Parks were overflowing as a great crowd assembled to hear The Spaniel Club Chair Anne Greeves and Club Secretary Liz Russell set out the order of the day. In welcoming all, especially those from Greece, Sweden, Denmark, Spain, America and Australia, they expressed their gratitude to the estate team and the local folk who had supported the organisation of the event.

Sadly Anne, Liz and Steve Russell Club Chief Steward will be retiring from office in March. The three were a fantastic team and will be a hard team to follow and greatly missed. Everyone knows the dedication and hard work they put in to bring the Club to its



A retrieve from the lake on the first day.



A small section of the enthusiastic crowd.

present efficient position. Best wishes to them and the new Officers and Committee for the future.

The four well experienced Judges were also introduced: Steve Bolton (England), David Lisset (Scotland), Wesley Thomas (Wales) and Paul Rawlings (England). All have judged here in past years.

Thirty-seven Springer Spaniels (twenty-five Field Trial Champions) presented for Judgement. Thirty-seven handlers plus owners took the short walk out to the specially prepared woodland nervously anticipating whatever the fates held in store for them today.

The trial started, high bank on the right hand side, dogs under Judges Paul Rawlings and Wesley Thomas with Steve Bolton and David Lissett on the left working on the flat towards the lakeside. The four guns were Mark Clifford, Justin Shepherd, on the left Peter Holmes and Willie Megaughin on the bank.

Almost immediately two shots rang out, the trial was into game and underway. This was the tightest bit of cover, bramble, shrubs plus reeds and marsh grasses along the lake side. Shortly after, the woodland floor opened up into lovely mixed broken cover, dead bracken with rhododendrons interspersed, scenic country with great viewing for spectators and perfect for hunting spaniels. Game was evenly spread through the three days, no excess

and certainly no shortage. Dogs needed to hunt for it, so each handler had a good run with time to settle the dog, getting the pattern and ground treatment right so the dog could be shown to best advantage. Just what the Doctor ordered and the Judges were looking for. Even the weather was just right and held well for the duration.

First dogs in line were Ft Ch Broomfield Tara handled by Eddie Scott on the right with Ian Openshaw on the left handling Ft Ch Mountvue Heidi. Broomfield Tara finished in 3rd Place while Mountvue Heidi unfortunately went out on her second run. Both dogs set a great standard in this run for others to follow as the day progressed.

As the trial moved on, other dogs required a little handling for success on awkward retrieves from the lake, while

others showed a little reluctance to enter cover for a retrieve. Overall dogs handled well when required. Some outstanding hunting runs with a couple of steady finds were seen followed by smart retrieving.

Shooting was good, the guns were experienced well known field trial handlers, selected by Willie Megaughin, and were shooting for the dogs.

The Judges were looking for hunting ability, style and pace with a straight run out well marked retrieve.

The day finished with spectators happily discussing the work of the dogs, each having a good word for a favourite or a strong critique for another. Spectators had had a good view and missed nothing, excitement and anticipation mounted for the morrow.

Second Day

With thirty dogs still in the stake, further into the woodland on similar open ground, the trial recommenced travelling east towards Newtownstewart. Apparently the same conditions, same guns, same Judges still looking for the same quality of work, but something had changed. Was it scenting conditions? Atmospheric pressure? Whatever it was complications arose.

Dogs seemed to struggle on retrieves. Those through, or over the hedge and fence along the Golf Course with grass being mowed was hard on dog and



Hollydrive Pretty Polly retrieves to Mick Walsh.

handler and a distraction, even though they kindly stopped cutting to assist. Failed retrieves were collected unexpectedly causing Judges to make difficult decisions. Complications arose, head scratching and cross-the-line discussions were required in the interests of fairness which caused delays, so progress was not as smooth as normal. Only the Judges can see everything and in dispensing justice gave the benefit of any doubt to the dogs. It was here that some of the dogs which were to feature in the Awards and Diplomas lost a little ground receiving a lesser mark than a smooth clean run would have achieved.

Final Day

Eighteen dogs were still in contention, some having completed their second run. Any dog with a B+ had been discarded per custom after the first day, only one on the second. So those dogs having had their second run behind them were, I believe, double "A" dogs, leaving those with one run as single A hoping to achieve another or better.

This was a 'hunting' Championship and the quality continued. Although I saw a couple of dogs which some spectators said had had a great first run, I couldn't agree on their second run. Flat running, not checking cover or scent - more like gundog test work - was not pleasing. Did they qualify on easy open grassland? I have no doubt the Judges downgraded them, since finds and hunting ability were the Judges basic requirements over the three days.

Phillip Taylor from Co. Antrim with Portman Cassie had a good run finishing with a difficult runner having flushed two birds to his extreme left and right. Paul Rawlings moved well forward to the right of the line to watch the bitch working. Mick Walsh from Waterford who was last year's winner with Int. Ft. Ch. Hollydrive Sally looked good this time running Hollydrive Pretty Polly bred out of Hollydrive Sally.



Des Donnelly with winning bitch Int. Ft Ch Hollydrive Abbey.

Having completed the final run of the last spaniel, as usual the Judges went into a huddle and the discussion took some time in the bright sunshine. Tension mounted as the crowd speculated on what was going on. Hopeful handlers paced up and down keeping their dogs warm and trying to look relaxed. Who would be called for a run off? Was someone 'on ice'? Eventually the Championship concluded with the words 'trial over.' The Judges were in agreement, smilingly they confirmed there was to be no run off.

Summary

Full honours were shared by Ireland, Scotland and England and my congratulations to all concerned. First

place went to Des Donnelly from Dublin with Int. FTCh. Hollydrive Abbey. This bitch was Second in last year's Championship to her litter sister Hollydrive Sally. Both bred by Mick Walsh sired by Des. Donnelly's Int. FTCh. Dog Skronedale Romulus. What an achievement! Without doubt Hollydrive Abbey had two outstanding hunting runs including good work on a couple of unsuccessful second dog down retrieves gave her the golden top spot. Following close behind in second place was Jim Adamson from Scotland with FTCh. Lochandaimh Kim of Jenoren. He had some very good finds in the hot spot at the Golf Course. In third place was a top handler from Scotland Eddie Scott with FTCh.



Jeremy Organ on the Golf Course - 'Look we got it!'

Broomfield Tara while Fourth Place went to Englishman Jim Dransfield handling FTCh. Drunbrigg Early Purple.

These four would have gained double As or better. Diplomas of Merit were also awarded to thirteen A dogs listed below. Micks Walsh's breeding at Hollydrive Kennel was the premier kennel with the Top Sire being Int. FTCh. Dog Skronedale Romulus.

This is the fourth time the British Championship has come to Northern Ireland, a signal honour which reflects the quality of our Irish dogs and the wonderful ground we have available due to the hospitality of our estate owners. Judges verdict: "Ground excellent and whole organisation fulfilled all expectations."

Thanks are due to The Spaniel Club Officers and Committee, Anne Greeves and Liz Russell in particular and also to our Sponsors Skinners, Marsden's, BASC. Thanks also to the local advertisers CANI, CALOR, Tommy Beattie Guns & Ammo, Shaun Harte at Tasca Tankers, Cunningham Coates and Chris Dagens at Horatio Todd's, plus all those kind folk who supported the auction. Special thanks of course to Host Estate Baronscourt, the Gamekeepers Team and all our local helpers who donated so much to another successful Championship.

89th Spaniel Championship Results

- * First: Plus Best Hunting Spaniel and Best Bitch Int. Ft Ch Hollydrive Abbey Handler Des. Donnelly
- Second: FTCh Lochandaimh Kim of Jenoren, Handler James Adamson
- Third : FTCh Broomfield Tara, Handler Eddie Scott
- Fourth: FTCh Drunbrigg Eary Purple, Handler Jim Dransfield

Diploma of Merit

- Happyboy Harry Handler C Lewis
- Killhopemoss Gilberto of Spannerwood, Handler Wayne Swiggs
- * Int. FTCh Hollydrive Bert Plus Best Dog, Handler Eamonn Taffe
- Rothievale Privet of Cindersash, Handler Oliver Organ
- FTCh Surefly Sassy, Handler Terri Siwek
- FTCh Deepfleet Van Persie, Handler Peter Avery
- Killhopemoss Bedazzled, Handler John Semmens
- FTCh Bucklawren Krusoe, Handler Simon Jones
- Sliabh Lola of Crispico, Handler Carl Colclough
- FTCh Buccleuch Hamish, Handler Jim Dransfield
- FTCh Mulraven Medlaress of Cindersash, Handler Jeremy Organ
- * Portcaman Cassie, Handler Philip Taylor Plus Best Newcomer Award
- Hollydrive Pretty Polly, Handler Mick Walsh
- * indicates dogs which qualified in Northern Ireland



Trials Over say Judges Paul Rawlings, Wesley Thomas, Steve Bolton and Dave Lisset.



In Second Place was Jim Adamson.



(Above) First Place - The Banchory Cup presented by Lord Hamilton to Des Donnelly.

(Left) Phillip Taylor receiving his award.



(Right) The John Lukies Guns Award was presented by John's daughter Sue Tattersall.



(Left) Host for the Championship was Lord Hamilton, Marquess of Hamilton.

(Below) Anne Greeves (L) and Liz Russell starting proceedings.



(Above) Head Gamekeeper Steve Pollock (R) with Judges Steve Bolton & Dave Lisset.

(Below) Robin Young in charge of crowd control.



First Irish Kennel Club Cocker Spaniel Championships Success!



The Gallery was buzzing with excitement.

It was clear when arriving at the meet for the inaugural Irish Kennel Club Cocker Spaniel Championships shortly before 8am on 28th December 2018 that something special was happening. There was a palpable ‘buzz’ amongst the large crowd that had gathered at the Bannville House Hotel from all corners of Ireland and indeed further afield.

The event was held at Drumbanagher Estate, Co. Armagh by kind invitation of the Close family and experienced gamekeeper and well-known cocker supporter Bryan Byrne.

Drumbanagher Estate turned out to be an excellent venue for the inaugural Irish Kennel Club Cocker Spaniel Championships. The course consisted of mature woodland with an understory of ivy and snowberry, interspersed with bramble that tested dogs fairly and gave every competitor a relatively equal opportunity to shine. Game supply was perfect, coming to hand at regular intervals and was dispatched

consistently well throughout the day by a very competent team of guns.

The highly experienced quartet of Norman Blakeney and Tim Crothers from Ireland, Welshman Stuart Morgan and Eddie Scott from Scotland had the honour of judging this prestigious event.

Event sponsors included William Connolly Red Mills, Country Sports Ireland, Irish Country Sports & Country Life magazine, Jane van Soest-Smith, Declan Boyle and Sporting Saint.

THE CHAMPIONSHIP BEGINS

The first pair of dogs called into line amid beautiful spring-like sunshine were Brian Crothers’ Three Mile Lady on the left under Norman Blakeney and Stuart Morgan and Martin Power with Dubfire Bella under Tim Crothers and Eddie Scott on the right. Martin Power managed to survive his first run when he completed a tricky retrieve of a partridge close to the estate wall. Unfortunately, temptation got the better of Brian Crothers’ little bitch.

Next up was Kim Vartry’s Delphaven Domino, handled by Bryan Whittaker. This dog threw down the gauntlet to other competing dogs with some stylish hunting and smart retrieving.

Paul Cassidy’s Sperrinside Ellie had a nice find and retrieve on a pheasant to complete her first run, but unfortunately Derek Bell’s Dashing Dave had no luck on a retrieve in a field and was eliminated.

Brian Crothers had better luck with his second dog Tamneymartin Ferrin, which had a nice positive find on a partridge and made a good job of the subsequent retrieve.

Corondown Silk of Clearmeadow owned and handled by Andrea Perrett had an eye-catching first run. Hunting with pace and style this pretty golden cocker bitch had finds on pheasants and partridge and finished her run with a very good long marked retrieve on a hen bird.

Domnall Creamer’s bitch Maessyderwen Millgi registered an eye



Winning dog Gardenrath Cadillac at the water retrieve.



Ready to go!

wipe with a very good blind retrieve in a field, before succumbing to temptation on a partridge. Christy Hasson's consistent performer Ardcaein Chase also came unstuck on a very tempting partridge.

Next up was Eamonn Cunningham with Drumnascamp Riona. This little bitch made short work of a blind retrieve of a partridge followed by a very positive find of another partridge in heavy cover.

Jason McGonigle's cocker bitch Sperrinside Fia Beag undoubtedly had the longest run of the competition, before finding and retrieving a rabbit and completing a blind retrieve on a partridge.

Another eye-catching run was delivered by Dubliner Mick Finglass and Gardenrath Monet. Hunting with considerable pace and drive, Monet found several hen pheasants and completed a long marked retrieve through cover on one of them.

Tom Hayden's Gardenrath Cadillac, which was handled by Adrian Doris hunted very well and completed her run with a positive find on a pheasant and a slick retrieve down a lane. Cadillac had responded positively to the challenge laid down by earlier dogs and wasn't going to be shook off easily.

Enthusiasm got the better of Drumnascamp Osita owned and handled by Eamonn Cunningham.

Next up was Jamie Smith's 2018 British Cocker Championship winner Abiann Flawless. This beautiful black bitch's hunting was spectacular – full of pace, drive and abundant style. Flawless found a wounded hen and then retrieved a cock pheasant, blind from water before enthusiasm got the better of her – much to the disappointment of the gallery who were thoroughly enjoying watching her.

Last dog to run in the first round



A nice retrieve amongst the trees.

was Mick Walsh's Mallowdale Quim. This young dog served noticed of his future potential with some spectacular hunting before succumbing to temptation on a partridge that literally ran under his nose.

SECOND ROUND

In the second round Bryan Whittaker and Delphaven Domino built on their earlier good work with some nice positive game finding and slick retrieving. This was now the standard that other competitors had to match.

Martin Power's Dubfire Bella concluded her second run with a lot of work on a retrieve of a cock pheasant shot onto a laneway. Too much work to be considered for an award.

Sperrinside Ellie with Paul Cassidy in the driving seat found game positively, stayed in contact with him in a very hot corner and completed 2 retrieves of 2 cock pheasants – one in woodland and one in a field - to successfully complete his championship.

We were now in heavier cover with a lot of game present, which added to the degree of difficulty for competing dogs. Brian Crothers Tamneymartin Ferrin, Andrea Perrett's Corondown Silk of Clearmeadow, Eamonn Cunningham's Drumnascamp Riona, Jason McGonigle's Sperrinside Fia Beag and

Mick Finglass's Gardenrath Monet were all casualties of these difficult conditions.

Last dog to run in the inaugural Irish Kennel Club Cocker Spaniel Championships was Tom Hayden's Gardenrath Cadillac handled by Adrian Doris. Cadillac was in a very hot spot close to the estate wall with a lot of pheasants present. However, she hunted tidily, despite considerable temptation and produced her game positively. Cadillac also encountered a wounded duck which after being asked to retrieve it did so without any complications despite the fact that it had run.

With the trial now complete the 4 judges briefly conferred and 3 dogs were called to water. All 3 dogs successfully completed the water test and the results of the first Irish Kennel Club Cocker Spaniel Championship were as follows:

RESULTS

1st Tom Hayden's Gardenrath Cadillac, handled Adrian Doris

2nd Kim Varty's Delphaven Domino, handled Bryan Whittaker

3rd Paul Cassidy's Sperrinside Ellie

The winner was presented with the appropriately named 'Dare to Dream' Cup, a new Championship trophy sponsored by cocker handlers ensuring

that all would have a part in the championship. The winner also received a beautiful piece of crystal presented by Albert Titterington and will have a portrait done by the talented Jane Smith.

At the awards ceremony, cocker dog Ardcaein Chase was rewarded for his consistent performances throughout 2018 by winning the 'Irish Cocker Spaniel of the Year' award.

Mark Stewart thanked all those who had supported the event and in particular main event sponsors William Connolly Red Mills and Country Sports Ireland without whose help the event would not have been possible.

Jim Sheridan Chairman of the Irish Kennel Club Field Trial Committee congratulated the organisers on a really well run championships and felt it would quickly become established as an important event in the Irish sporting canine calendar.

As the curtain came down on a very successful and extremely well organised first Irish Kennel Club Cocker Spaniel Championships, the last word goes to event judge Norman Blakeney. In his speech at the awards ceremony, Norman used the well-known proverb 'mighty oaks from little acorns grow.' Judging by the success of the first Irish Kennel Club Cocker Spaniel Championships he could well be right.

Championship Action



Championship Prizewinners and Officials



Winning Handler Adrain Doris receiving his Trophy.



Second Prize went to Kim Varty, owner of Delphaven Domino.



Third place was awarded to Paul Cassidy.



Christy Hasson received the 'Irish Cocker Spaniel of the Year' award.



The Judges



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The 52nd Irish Retriever Championships

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1st day competitors.

(photo: Jan Evans)

I'm still not entirely sure even now that I would be able to find my way to Corrard Shoot, the venue for this years Irish Retriever Championships. It is one of those rare gems set somewhere along the shores of Upper Lough Erne in Enniskillin that only the most determined souls will find on a cold wet day in middle winter.

We were here by the kind invitation of Mr Robert Hogg and Guns. This would be the first time Corrard Shoot had hosted the Championships and I know that a huge amount of effort and

work went into preparing the ground throughout the year and continued throughout the duration of the Championships. From the moment we drove across the narrow land-bridge on that dark, cold, Friday morning on the 14th of December, the shoot's manager Mr Ivor Glenn could not have been more welcoming or accommodating.

Our judges this year were Mr Michael Corr (Ireland), Mr Gary Wilson (Ireland), Mr Keith Bedford (England) and Mr Les Mclean (Scotland).

As always this event relies on the

generosity from our hosts for allowing us to attend their ground and also from donations received by the various retriever clubs throughout the country and also from long time supporter of Irish dog sports Connolly's Red Mills.

Accessed by a land-bridge the shoot ground unfolds out into the lake. The slight rise in topography keeps the water, for the most part, at bay but leaves it nonetheless exposed to whatever extremes of weather that inevitably occur when wind and rain travel across wide expanses of water in the northern parts of Ireland in winter....and it was the weather that became the dominating factor as the competition progressed.

Extremes of weather however, are part and parcel of why our gundogs were developed the way they were and, of all the groups of gundogs, it is the retriever breeds whose roles have perhaps become the most diverse. They are companions not only of the gun on a driven shoot but also to wildfowlers and rough shooters. They must be patient enough to sit and wait for long periods of time by the peg, the foreshore or the pigeon hide; yet alert enough to be sent at a second's notice to retrieve a wounded bird moving quickly through cover or across water. Weather and ground are the two biggest influencing



The Guns

(photo: Jan Evans)



Championship Judges

(photo: Jan Evans)

factors in hunting affecting the way scent is carried and how birds work.

As we left the shooting hut and made our way up the path a faint promise of daybreak lightened the horizon. An east wind, though, may have been a cautious reminder from the lake that we were here on her terms and that she would carry the ultimate decision in how events might play out in the coming days.

This year 37 dogs qualified for the Championships. Of those 7 did not run. Two handlers started with two dogs, Mr Matty Lambden running FTCH Ulverton Punch and FTCH Tamrose Aragon, and Mr Gerard Murdock running Astraglen Assault of Dunamoira and Stauntonvale Terrano of Dunamoira. All dogs running were Labrador Retrievers bar one Mr John Williamson running a Golden Retriever bitch Tealcreek Isla.

I stayed with Judges Mr Michael Corr and Mr Keith Bedford who took the uneven numbered dogs for the first drive and their first round of retrieves, the competitors took their places at the top of the hill. They were well back from the line of Guns below us, who formed a wide arc spanning from the lake shore to our left and spreading out in front of a birch mixed wood across a narrow ditch and into the grass field to our right.

The even numbered dogs and

handlers followed their judges, Mr Gary Wilson and Mr Les McClean down the hill and across a bridge to our right where they lined up at the back of the drive against a hedge which offered some respite from the relentless wind.

Under Irish Kennel Club rules each dog takes a single retrieve from one side of the line and then moves across to the other side. In this way judges on both sides of the line have the opportunity to see all dogs early on in the competition.

As the dogs and handlers settled themselves in line the horn blew signalling the start of the first drive and the judges gave their first instruction to their charges to remove their dog's leads and put them away.

From our vantage point at the top of the hill we could watch the drive unfold. The spaniel men worked their dogs to the back of the wood and slowly wielded their way towards the gun line. They kept their dogs tight, quartering close and moved with precision changing the direction of the beating line as required, ensuring birds broke evenly and in small bursts rather than large flushes.

The birds flew well rising quickly through the trees to clear the hill behind the guns. Those that broke through the line untouched whistled low past the dogs at the top of the hill as they made their way to cover behind. Not a single

dog moved, they remained steadfastly focused on the action down below in front of them. As the drive continued and the spaniels worked deeper into the woods from across the lake behind us, an east wind started to gain momentum. It pushed up the hill and found its way into every exposed piece of skin. Handlers started to shuffle simply in an effort to keep warm but the dogs remained resolute, they stayed quietly and stoically attuned to where the birds fell and what action would be required of them once this drive was over.

Somewhere in the distance a horn sounded, signalling the end of the drive. As the guns and spaniel men drifted away, the job of clearing the ground quickly commenced. The wide open spaces and a strong wind bringing low temperatures were going to influence the dog work greatly, something which became more apparent as the initial birds were picked and the dogs needed to find the trickier birds that might have fallen into pockets of the marshy ground at the bottom of the hill. Two dogs were lost from the uneven numbers in the first round FTCH Corrib Darcy and FTCH Copperbirch Mandela, both failing to find. Word reached us that, from the even numbered dogs, both Crosstone Trickster and Ffynongain Celt were also gone.

Second round retrieve dogs started to arrive from the other side of the line and FTCH Derryad Moss and Int FTCH Drumgoose Warlord, a previous Championship winner, both completed their respective retrieves in quick succession. One bird remained to be found on our side and this proved to be the undoing of both FTCH Watergreen Jasper and last year's winner Int FTCH Miller McDuff. Both dogs cast well to the area given and handled extremely well, holding and covering the area and hunting very efficiently but failed to find. A third dog, FTCH Watergreen Hunter was tried. His handler, Mr Tom Lowry, cast him slightly more to the right and perhaps being a slower paced dog or turning on the wind at just the right time he found the bird.



2nd Day Competitors

(photo: Jan Evans)

With our ground complete and swept again we moved down the hill to the relative comfort and shelter which the hedge offered where the four judges had the opportunity to confer and compare notes before moving onto the second drive.

I followed my two judges and their charges across another narrow little bridge, then through a wood where we were met again with the full force of the wind that tore across the lake. White horses whipped up against the dark grey water of the lake and already chilled from our earlier stint at the top of the hill, humans and dogs alike rounded their shoulders and turned their sides to protect themselves as best they could against the onslaught.

Once again from somewhere far away, a horn sounded signalling the start of the second drive. In my mind this was a particularly hard drive for dogs to endure. Not only because of the relentless wind and cold but because of the unusual direction from where the birds came from. They flew from behind us where they followed the shoreline rising to clear the woods at the end. One bird fell with a splash just ten meters in front of where we stood and

this proved too much for FTCH Cherrymount Anorchist.

It was from this drive that, in judge Michael Corr's opinion, the retrieve of the day took place. Dog No. 30, a black labrador bitch named FTCH Carrickview Holly, owned and handled by Mr Tadgh Kelly came to the line for her third retrieve of the day. A pheasant had been brought down out in the water but with the strong wind it had drifted out along the shoreline behind a bank of reeds. She took the cast along the shoreline, pushing through the area where birds had been picked before her and when asked took a clean left cast into the water in front of the reeds. She swam out against the foam caps pushed up by the east wind until asked, then responded promptly to her handler where he needed to push her back into the reeds to find the bird. It's hard to portray how difficult it is to work a dog at a distance in water with the distraction of wind noise and cold, but she took each instruction as given and, against a high chop and frigid water temperatures, she stuck to the task, picked up the scent and brought the bird to hand.

Three other dogs that also caught the

judges attention on the first day were Highwalk Galway handled by Mr Tony Rodgers, Shimnavale Jasmine of Drumnamoe handled by Mr John Barr jnr and FTCH Tamrose Aragon handled by Mr Matty Lambden, they all stood out for their excellent clean handling and game finding abilities.

The light which the day might have promised at dawn never came, and by late afternoon, when each of the fourteen dogs remaining had completed four retrieves we returned to the cosy little shooting hut where a warm coffee was much appreciated in an effort to thaw numb fingers and toes.

The start of the second day saw eleven dogs brought forward to the line:

No. 3 - Tealcreek Isla Handler Mr John Williamson

No. 4 - Int FTCH Drumgoose Warlord Handler Mr Billy Lundy

No. 7 - Luna Ruff Handler Mr Eamon Murphy

No. 9 - Trefaldwyn Kribensis of Shadowbrae Handler Mr Richard Johnston

No. 15 - Astraglen Assault of Dunamoira Handler Mr Gerard Murdock

No. 17 - Listooder Great

Handler Mr Daniel McKelvey

No. 21 - Highwalk Galway

Handler Mr Tony Rogers

No. 23 - FTCH Tamrose Aragon

Handler Mr Matty Lambden

No. 27 - Shimnavale Jasmine of
Drumnamoe Handler Mr John Barr jnr

No. 30 - FTCH Carrickview Holly

Handler Mr Tadgh Kelly

No. 31 - FTCH Rosenallis Enzo

Handler Mr Jim Carnegie.

A yellow storm warning was in force. We were thankful the wind had dropped off but the low cloud brought a steady rain that alternated throughout the day from heavy to very heavy....it was wet!!

The first drive was situated in a field that fell away to the lake on our left and a long mixed deciduous wood in front. Two guns were placed in the field with the remaining guns placed along a narrow track that cut along the base of the woods.

After having been thoroughly tested the previous day with long periods of steadiness in line, the start of the day offered a series of quick shots and prompt retrieves as the dogs worked throughout the drive. Here retrieving, while acknowledging the fall of a second bird, was tested. The warmer temperatures and increased moisture no doubt played a significant role in aiding scenting ability and very little separated the dogs as we ended the sixth round of retrieves and headed to the beet crop where everyone knew the final cut would be made.

So, after two days of testing dogs, where the weather played as much a part as the ground in how retrieves played out, we were down to our final seven dogs:

Int FTCH Drumgoose Warlord

Handler Mr Billy Lundy

Trefaldwyn Kribensis of Shadowbrae

Handler Mr Richard Johnston

Highwalk Galway

Handler Mr Tony Rodgers

FTCH Tamrose Aragon

Handler Mr Matty Lambden

Shimnavale Jasmine of Drumnamoe

Handler Mr John Barr Jnr

FTCH Carrickview Holly

Handler Mr Tadgh Kelly

FTCH Rosenallis Enzo

Handler Mr Jim Carnegie

One yellow labrador and six blacks spread out across the top of the game crop. Hard weather, no matter how prepared one is for it, takes its toll, it wears you down, numbs the senses. We expect a lot from our dogs and, although I would say the ground was not testing in relation to cover, it brought different challenges where weather and wide open spaces proved the undoing of some quality dogs. It was a trial of endurance for dogs and handlers and the ones that came out on top in the end showed tenacity, an ability to remain steady under high pressure situations, superior handling, casting and game-finding abilities.

After a further two rounds of retrieves where we lost one further dog, FTCH Tamrose Aragon, the judges were satisfied they had a result.

The final 6 dogs took their obligatory water retrieve and we returned to the shooting hut where the presentation took place.

Championship Chairman, Mr Damian Newman addressed a packed and steamy shooting hut. He thanked the markers, stewards, number changers and also Mr Gary McCutcheon for the loan of his quad over the two days. Thanks and appreciation was also extended to the clubs for donations towards the cost of running a Championships and to Connolly's Red Mills for their generous sponsorship.

The Chairman then invited the judges to say a few words and Mr Keith Bedford stepped forward to speak on behalf of his fellow judges. He said he was honoured to be asked to judge at such a prestigious event. He thanked the shoot owners and commended the keeper on the amount of work he did over the two days, assisting them in any way he could. He spoke of how well the guns shot under such testing conditions throughout the Championships and reiterated the quality of dog work he witnessed over the two days. Keith took his seat back with his fellow judges

and the Chairman commenced the presentation.

RESULTS

First Place and Judges Choice No.

27 - Shimnavale Jasmine of
Drumnamoe Handler/Owner Mr John Barr jnr.

Trophies received by the winner:
Redmills Perpetual Trophy
Winners Trophy- sponsored by Mr Albert Titterington
The Knight Frank Ganly Walters
Perpetual Cup

The Barbara Eustace Duckett
Memorial Trophy

The Maude Perpetual Challenge Cup.
She also won: The Fred McGuirk
Perpetual Cup as the highest placed
bitch.

Irish Countrysports and Countrylife
Perpetual Trophy for Guns Choice.

The Cromlix Perpetual Trophy for
the best Labrador Retriever in the
Championship.

Second Place No. 9 - Trefaldwyn
Kribensis of Shadowbrae
Handler/Owner Mr Richard Johnston.

Trophies Received: The Auckland
Perpetual Trophy
2nd Place Trophy

Mr Johnston was also awarded: The
Ballyfremea Cup as breeder of the
winning dog/bitch.

The Sam Jennett Raughlin Trophy as
Breeder of the winner of The Irish
Retriever Championships presented by
Mrs Lillian Jennett.

Third Place

No. 21 - Highwalk Galway
Handler/Owner Mr Tony Rodgers
Winner of The Robert O'Farrell
Triple Crown Perpetual Trophy

Fourth Place

No. 30 - FTCH Carrickview Holly
Handler/Owner Mr Tadgh Kelly
Winner of The Barra Flynn
Memorial Perpetual Trophy.

Diploma of Honour

No. 4 - Int FTCH Drumgoose Warlord
Handler/Owner Mr Billy Lundy

Diploma of Honour

No. 31 - FTCH Rosenallis Enzo
Handler/Owner Mr Jim Carnegie.

The Prize Winners (photos: Mary Murray)



Mr John Barr jnr owner/handler of Shimnavale Jasmine of Drumnamoe won the Championship.



Mr Richard Johnston owner/handler of Trefaldwyn Kribensis of Shadowbrae won 2nd place. Richard also won the Ballyfremra Cup for breeding the top Irish placed dog/bitch.



Mr Tony Rodgers owner/handler of Highwalk Galway won 3rd place.



Lillian Jenet presenting the Sam Jenet Raughlin Trophy to Mr Richard Johnston, who bred the winner of the Championship.



Mr William Connolly presenting Mr Tadgh Kelly with 4th place trophy owner/handler of Ftch Carrickview Holly.

A very worthy winner, Shimnavale Jasmine of Drumnamoe at just two and a half years old. I had watched her on the first morning of the Championships take a 150yard retrieve in a single cast, from the top of that very cold hill down through a band of dead grass, across a drain, over a fence and promptly find the bird she was sent for. She had done enough to leave an impression on the judges the first day and continued to shine through in atrocious conditions on the second day displaying game sense beyond her years. Surely a bright future ahead of her. Well done to her owner Mr John Barr jnr and her breeder Mr Richard Johnston.



Championship Action 2019

Photos by Jan Evans





Championship Action 2019

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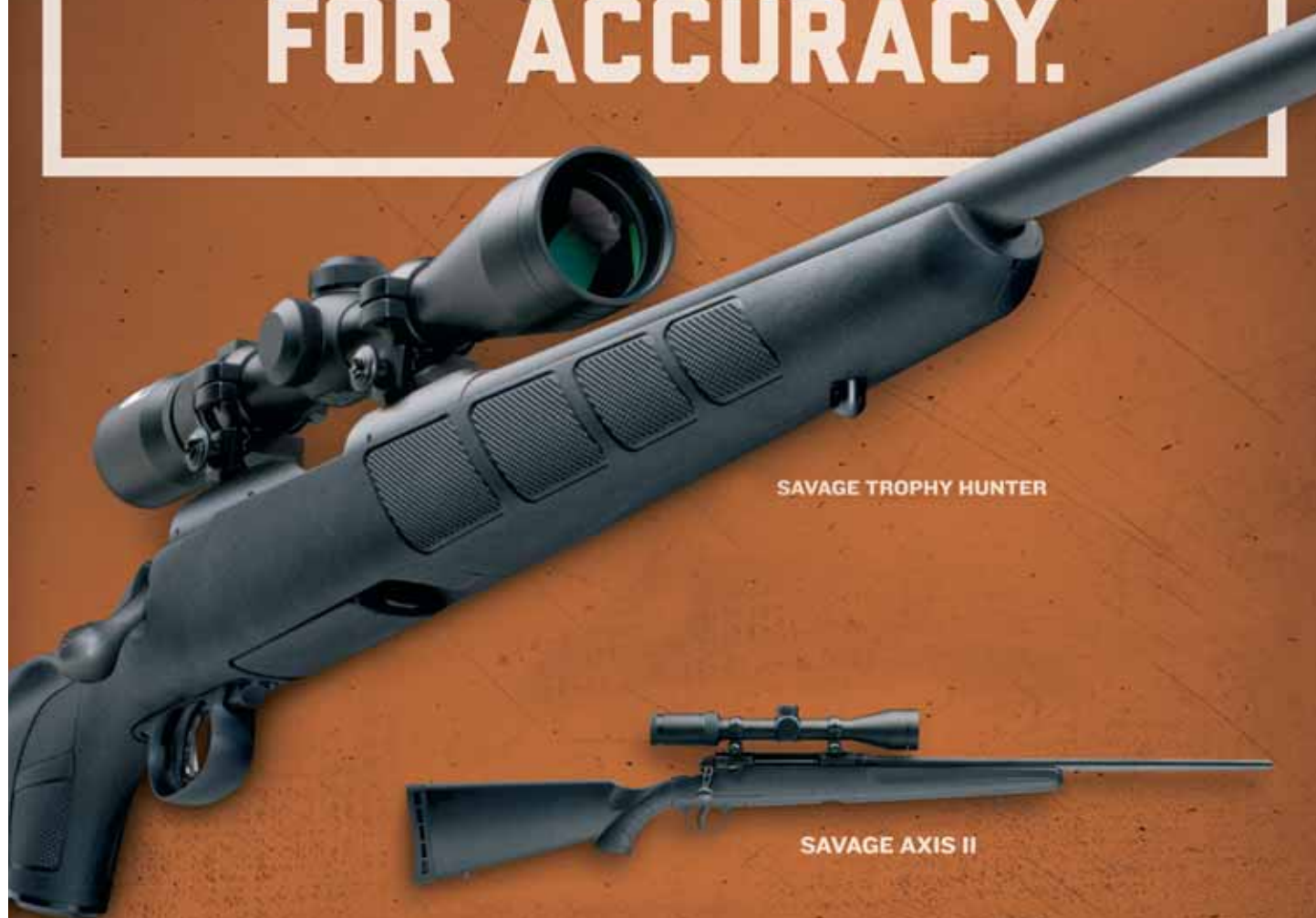
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